Disenchantment: The Formation, Distortion, and Transformation of Identity in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*

A Thesis Submitted to

The Faculty of the School of Communication

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts in English

By

Lydia Katherine Christoph

November 9, 2009

Liberty University

School of Communication

Master of Arts in English

Dr. Branson Woodard	Thesis Chair	Date
Dr. Emily Heady	First Reader	Date
Dr. Gaylen Leverett	Second Reader	Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Table of Contents……iii

Introduction……..1

Chapter 1: "*Great Expectations* and Dickens' View of Identity Transformation"…….....……2

Chapter 2: "Fairy-Tale Identity Illusions in a Moral Universe"……22

Chapter 3: "The Characters Who Enable Pip's Identity Distortion"…….45

Chapter 4: "The Nature and Effects of Pip's Identity Distortion"…….....64

Chapter 5: "Identity Transformed"……92

Works Cited…….112

Introduction:

In 1860, Charles Dickens owned and edited the periodical *All the Year Round*. Due to several installments of Charles Lever's dry and interminable *A Day's Ride*, sales of *All the Year Round* were slipping. Driven primarily by economic necessity, Dickens realized that he needed to begin a new, more exciting story in *All the Year Round* if he wanted to increase or even simply hold onto his readership. Dickens accomplished his goal: out of his many novels, *Great Expectations* has enjoyed tremendous popularity since it was first published. Edgar Rosenberg recounts the story of a rare book dealer in Los Angeles in the 1990s who listed for sale "mint condition" copies of presumed first editions of "*Oliver Twist* at $5,000; *A Tale of Two Cities* at $8, 500; and *Great Expectations* at $45, 000" (399). *Great Expectations* has been widely read both in serial and bound form ever since it was first published, and remains a highly popular classic to the present day.

Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861) contains a wealth of moral, social, and philosophical insights. Rife with rich characterizations, fairy-tale elements, grotesque and bizarre plot twists, Victorian social issues, and a beautifully thoughtful and imaginative commentary on the universal human themes of loss, guilt, abuse, identity, money, social status, and love, this novel remains an outstanding example of truly great art, both popular and classic. *Great Expectations* stands out among Dickens' writings as a story that does not end as happily as many of the author's other works, and in fact possesses two separate endings.[1] In this book, Dickens uses the young protagonist Pip to explore the idea of the identity of the Victorian gentleman in relationship to his society, employing fairy tale constructs to ridicule the romantic illusions of the time period. A *bildungsroman* of epic proportions, the formation, distortion, and redemption of Pip's identity illustrates Dickens' narrative of secular transformation.

Chapter 1: *Great Expectations* and Dickens' View of Identity Transformation

When considered within the body of Dickens' work, *Great Expectations* stands apart as a powerful expression of Dickens' later social and theological views. Dickens' great friend John Forster wrote in 1874 that "Dickens' humour, not less than his creative power, was at its best in this book" (287). *Great Expectations*' fairytale plot, alternate endings, creative characters, and deeply meaningful themes have long held sway over critical and popular readers alike. Seminal Dickens scholar J. Hillis Miller writes, "*Great Expectations* is the most unified and concentrated expression of Dickens' abiding sense of the world, and Pip might be called the archetypal Dickens hero" (249). Although Pip is a radically different hero from Scrooge, Oliver Twist, Amy Dorritt, or other more typical Dickensian protagonists, he embodies characteristics of Dickens' thought in extremely vivid and complex form. Pip's story of identity formation in a nineteenth-century English context demonstrates how Dickens' life and writings, influenced by spurious and inconsistent theological beliefs, express the idea that sin is largely social rather than personal, and that therefore redemption is a secular rather than a religious concept, illustrated in two different ways in the multiple endings to *Great Expectations*.

Although unique among Dickens' characters, Pip also remains an archetypal Dickensian protagonist in his attempts to form his identity. As Miller adds, "The typical Dickens hero, like Pip . . . has no given status or relation to nature, to family, or to the community . . . Any status he attains in the world will be the result of his own efforts. He will be totally responsible, himself, for any identity he achieves" (252-53). *Great Expectations*, like many other Dickens works, investigates themes of identity, social class, and relationships. Dickens protagonists such as Pip, David Copperfield, Esther Summerson, and Martin Chuzzlewit engage in the search for a unified, coherent identity. They must learn who they are in themselves and in relation to the rest

of the world. Pip's quest to find his true identity is especially tragic and multifaceted, remaining one of the finest examples of Dickens' tendency toward realism in his vision of the world. This vision is both Victorian and timeless, for while at first Pip believes his identity is that of a gentleman, the most coveted position in Victorian society, he eventually realizes that a true gentleman is one characterized by gentlemanly qualities, not one merely possessing gentlemanly trappings.

The story of Pip's transformation into a gentleman, like *David Copperfield* and large portions of *Bleak House*, is told by a first-person narrator. Characters in need of redemption generally become rather disagreeable, and Pip's story fits this pattern. Although likeable enough at the beginning as a kind and abused orphan, Pip eventually becomes a guilt-ridden snob who outwardly comes to conform to society's idea of a gentleman while despising his true friends and engaging in a self-destructive relationship with the dangerous Estella. Established firmly within the *bildungsroman* or coming-of-age genre, Pip's story is the tale of a young boy whose identity is distorted as it is forming, but is eventually reconstructed in the end. Because Pip becomes twisted, however, he becomes less and less likeable, with some exceptions, as the novel progresses. Yet it in order for readers to be instructed and find catharsis in Pip's transformation, they must be able to identify with the deluded young man. Christopher Ricks writes that a character's personal confession of guilt is the best way for an audience to empathize with a displeasing protagonist such as Pip becomes. Ricks states that this "is of course just what Pip's first-person narrative does. The effect of using the first-person is completely to reverse the normal problem about keeping a reader's sympathy. [People] do not, in the ordinary way, have much difficulty in liking someone who tells [the audience] how bad he has been" (670). Pip's

identity re-formation is far more powerful because of his sadder-but-wiser narration throughout the course of his ethereal, haunting story.

Not only a sympathetic tale of forming and re-forming identity, *Great Expectations* is also a fairy tale gone wrong. Unlike *Oliver Twist*, a typical Dickens fairy tale in which the characters do not change or grow and nearly all the good characters live happily ever after while the bad characters are punished, *Great Expectations* is a Cinderella story in which the protagonist goes from rags to riches to rags again. John Forster, one of Dickens' best friends and biographers, reproduces Dickens' statement in 1860 that he had begun a new novel called *Great Expectations* that started as a "grotesque tragicomic conception" somewhat similar to *David Copperfield* in its young protagonist who grows to manhood throughout the course of the story (285). Although David's story involves growth and change, he is allowed the fairy-tale ending that Pip is denied. Paul Pickrel notes that *Great Expectations* is "a fantasy of sudden transformation" (219), and it is a similar kind of fairy-tale transformation which characterized Dickens' own life and the society he lived in.

Charles Dickens and his Victorian culture were both larger than life. Dickens' story is very nearly a myth, a Cinderella tale of desperate poverty replaced by magnificent prosperity. A poor boy possessing little more than industry, creativity, and intelligence, Dickens worked his way up from slaving as a blacking factory worker to being the most famous writer of his time. Wildly successful from his mid-twenties onwards, Dickens married, had children, was known for his championing of social justice, and acquired the fabulous old mansion Gad's Hill that as a child he had dreamed of owning. In a more global context, Dickens' story would be the epitome of the American Dream, had it taken place in the United States. Despite his personal success, however, Dickens was troubled by the arrogant optimism of some of his Victorian

contemporaries who believed that the Industrial Revolution, the expansion of the British Empire, or the innovations in science, technology, or religion were causes for limitless overconfidence, whatever their dehumanizing cost. Humphrey House writes, “The disappointment of Pip’s expectations, following upon the discovery of their source, is taken to be an expression of disgust at the groundless optimism and ‘progressive’ hope of mid-Victorian society” (“George” 204). Although the setting of the novel is pre-Victorian, *Great Expectations* is outstanding as a picture of class-conscious Victorian national thought and culture.

Although awash in materialism and class-consciousness, Victorian society also possessed many outstanding benevolent social activists such as Florence Nightingale and John Stuart Mill. A strong advocate for social reform, Dickens was known for taking action to help everyone from prostitutes to orphans. *Great Expectations,* like Dickens’ other works, is a story with a message. The novelist’s unparalleled fame afforded him a broad platform upon which to proclaim his beliefs about helping the underprivileged. Buried in Poet’s Corner at Westminster Abbey with a tombstone that reads “England’s most popular author,” Dickens wrote novels of social reform built on a framework of semi-biblical morality. J. Hillis Miller called him a “Christian moralis[t]” (274), although this nomenclature could be disputed based upon Dickens’ personal moral standards and the absence of true religion in his works. Victorians were highly biblically literate, and Christian sentiments were very popular in proper British society. A man with a powerful voice among the upper and lower classes alike, Dickens brilliantly wove real social and emotional problems into his works. Championing the cause of the orphan and the uneducated, Dickens attempted through his works to entertain, inspire, and explore and propose solutions to the social and moral problems of Victorian England. Major themes in Dickens’ works include social injustices, poverty, education, and crime. These themes are relatively common in

Victorian literature, but they are greater than both the era and the medium in which they are presented, and literary history has proven Dickens' extraordinary ability to illuminate these issues beyond the capabilities of other Victorian writers.

Dickens was tremendously popular on both sides of the Atlantic, despite the fact that his religious views expressed increasingly unpopular levels of heterodoxy, and his novels often issued scathing social critiques. The style and characters of Dickens' novels are so jovial and delightful that the author's name was turned into an adjective: someone or something "Dickensian" is cheerful, old-fashioned, humorous, and socially compassionate. Famous as the man who revitalized the celebration of Western civilization's most beloved holiday, Dickens has been called by author Les Standiford "The Man Who Invented Christmas"; while definitely a literal overstatement, this nomenclature is not far off the mark in spirit. As a result of Dickens' novels and his five Christmas stories in particular, the author is remembered as the novelist of jovial domesticity who brought tidings of benevolence and good cheer to a poor and weary world. A Dickensian story generally involves themes of love, social injustice, charity, and abuse, often including a change of heart in a character who has behaved badly. However, the characteristically Dickensian change of heart displayed by the crotchety miser Scrooge from *A Christmas Carol* stands in stark contrast to the change of heart experienced by another notable Dickens protagonist, the young man Pip in *Great Expectations*.

While *Great Expectations* is similarly Dickensian in terms of its style, bizarre and humorous characters, moral themes, and social criticisms, it is a much darker work than *A Christmas Carol*. Dennis Walder explains that as Pip's story opens, its somber tone is immediately set by a horrifying twist on the familiar Dickens Christmas. Pip's Christmas Eve in the graveyard with the terrifying Magwitch and the abominable Christmas dinner at which Pip is

outrageously mistreated comprise a “Christmas for the fallen,” a largely sad, frightening, and morbid affair (201). Close to the end of his life when Dickens wrote *Great Expectations*, his ideas of domestic bliss had been embittered and distorted by his own marital and social failures. The author known for extolling the virtues of domestic bliss eventually ended up separating from his wife and poking fun at organized religion in his writings. Dickens called for social justice in his novels, extolling the virtues of assisting the poor and celebrating the benevolence of the human spirit, but in later years he looked at the world through pain-dimmed eyes and saw the problem of a change of heart as far more complex and hard won than the conversion experienced by Scrooge nearly twenty years earlier.

Scrooge’s typically Dickensian transformation is sudden, dramatic, and relatively painless: literally overnight he goes from being a selfish miser to a benevolent philanthropist. Clearer knowledge of himself and the world around him brings him to change his thoughts and behavior from self-centered to others-centered. Pip’s conversion, however, is more of a redemption, is not as typical of Dickens, and occurs gradually over time in concert with a great deal of suffering. While Scrooge’s perceptions and behaviors change, resulting in a man who seems completely different from his former self but is really just a penitent who has realized his wrongdoing, Pip’s entire identity—the very foundation of who he is as a person—changes in his process of transformation. Pip’s identity was distorted from the very beginning of the story, however, so his saga, far more complex and engaging than Scrooge’s (partly as a result of its much greater length), is edged with much stronger light and shadow. While Scrooge’s story is one of sudden conversion, Pip’s is one of the gradual formation, distortion, and redeeming transformation of the identity.

Despite the disparities between Scrooge's and Pip's transformations, however, they share one vital commonality: both are secular, rather than Christian. Regardless of Dickens' protestations of love for the New Testament, in point of fact, the conversions in Dickens' stories are all highly secular. For the author, redemption and the formation of personal identity were hugely overshadowed by external social and moral, rather than internal spiritual or emotional causes. According to Dennis Walder, "The process of conversion or change—a sudden inner enlightenment perceived as the product of external action not necessarily divine in origin, but tending to carry a burden of religious implication—becomes increasingly important" to Dickens' later novels (113). For Charles Dickens and the Victorian novel in general, redemption was more of a moral and social choice than a heart transformation. Influenced by the Christian humanism of John Ruskin's social gospel of mercy and justice for the poor, Victorians often believed that a social effort like British imperialism, illustrated in Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden," was an objective akin to the cause of God, and that indigenous peoples around the world and even poor Englishmen ought to be reformed and civilized into proper members of society. In *The Moral Art of Dickens*, Barbara Hardy writes, "The great conversion of the Victorian novel is not a religious conversion but a turning from self-regard to love and social responsibility . . . In [Dickens] . . . the hero is converted by seeing and understanding his defect and its origins" (27). This conversion is self-accomplished, inasmuch as the protagonist "sees and understands," but usually the external circumstances in the Dickens novel are the catalysts that allow the hero to come to this enlightenment.

Although the change of heart in *Great Expectations* is uniquely characterized by forgiveness, this expiation is not Judeo-Christian. Dennis Walder writes that the plot of the novel does actually involve "the familiar underlying pattern of sin, repentance, and regeneration"

(200). However, the sin is more social than personal, the repentance does not involve the Divine, and the regeneration is self-originating. Walder writes that what makes *Great Expectations* unusual is its emphasis on forgiveness (200). A great many people in the novel have wronged Pip, and he has wronged people himself, so he must learn both to forgive and be forgiven by the end of his story. Even the nature of this forgiveness is secular, however: J. Hillis Miller explains that "no character in Dickens finally achieves authentic selfhood by establishing direct relation to God" (276). Pip's quest for a unified identity involves such gentle attributes as love and forgiveness, but not the traditional Christian Source of these concepts. Coming from Dickens' Unitarian perspective, forgiveness in *Great Expectations* is merely human attitudes and actions responding to remorse.

For Charles Dickens, atonement and redemption were social rather than religious. Dickens' humanistic religion correlated closely to that of art critic and social philosopher John Ruskin. Editor John Howard Whitehouse discusses Ruskin's influence on Victorian Britain, explaining that Ruskin proclaimed a social gospel of compassion for the poor and socio-political reform (10). Ruskin and Dickens disliked each other, but both worked tirelessly to alleviate the sufferings of the needy. While Dickens' social activism in his life and works was commendable, Janet Larson explains that despite the fact that Dickens assimilated terminology, ideas, and allusions from Scripture into his novels, essays, and speeches whenever convenient, this did not mean that Dickens himself was a true believer. She writes, "The novelist who wants the design of a vicarious atonement for a Sydney Carton can borrow it from the New Testament without having to believe the doctrine as rooted in fact or as necessary to salvation" (13). For Dickens, the Bible was merely a helpful catalog of virtues, full of memorable good teachings and examples of benevolence and generosity, not an essential, divinely-inspired key to salvation. In

Dickens' world, expiation of guilt and redemption from social evil were made possible through secular, not divine, love and self-sacrifice.

Humanistic views of the deity of Christ shaped Dickens' liberal Unitarianism. Walder informs his readers that "like Carlyle, [Dickens] believed in a conception of conversion which did not primarily involve an acceptance of Christ, or the innate sinfulness of man, but which did involve a spiritual transformation affirming a new consciousness of oneself and one's place in the universe" (114). Such an undefined "new consciousness" might have been anything from Hindu reincarnation to a Transcendental Over-soul, were it not for the fact that Dickens still lived in a predominantly Christian-influenced society, despite the increasing efforts of men such as Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, John Ruskin, and Matthew Arnold to contribute to the secularization of society. With the advent of German Higher Criticism that viewed the Bible like any other literary text open to analysis, Mary Anne Evans' (George Eliot's) translation of David F. Strauss' unbiblical *Life of Jesus*, Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories that blurred the distinctions between man and animals, and scientific debates over medical ethics, many things such as God and healing that had previously been viewed as sacred were now coming open to interpretation and attack. Despite his humanism, Dickens held Christ and the New Testament in extremely high regard, and as he is recorded to have written in the publisher's forward to his children's book *The Life of Our Lord*, "I have always striven in my writings to express veneration for the life and lessons of Our Saviour" (4). However, like David Strauss and the ideas he propounded in *Life of Jesus*, Dickens believed that Christ was a good moral teacher, but not God, and makes this clear in his own *The Life of Our Lord*. Part of the reason that Dickens disbelieved the divinity of Christ was that according to Karl Ashley Smith, Dickens was unconvinced of the inerrancy of the Bible (11). Certainly, if any part of Scripture is inaccurate,

then even the divinity of Christ itself is questionable, and in this respect Dickens' views are logically coherent.

In *The Life of Our Lord*, Dickens tells many of the stories of the New Testament in simplified form, but his writing goes further than mere simplification, extending into falsehood. He distorts the message of the gospel into one of humanitarianism, peace, and goodwill, not one of deity and redemption. According to Dickens, when the angels came to tell the shepherds of the birth of Christ, rather than their unequivocally redemptive message recorded in Luke 2.11 ("For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord"), they give a Latitudinarian announcement:

> There is a child born to-day in the city of Bethlehem near here, who will grow up to be so good that God will love Him as His own Son; and He will teach men to love one another, and not to quarrel and hurt one another; and His name will be Jesus Christ, and people will put that name in their prayers, because they will know God loves it, and will know that they should love it, too. (13)

In the gospel according to the Latitudinarians and Dickens himself, flawed humanity is *unloving*, not *unsaved*, and people need a good teacher to tell them to "not hurt one another," rather than a Savior to take the punishment for their sins.

Dickens did not believe in the concept of original sin, and as a result the evil in his books is largely depicted as the fault of an oppressive society that recklessly destroys innocent individuals. According to Pelagian doctrine, which was condemned by the Catholic Church as heresy, there is no such thing as original sin, and therefore man is able of his own free will to make positive moral choices, without supernatural aid. In an article in the *Rambler* from 1862, authors J. M. Capes and J. E. E. D. Acton write that "Dickens knows nothing of sin when it is not

crime" (624). While Dickens does clearly recognize the existence of sin in the world, it is true that for the most part he sees sin as a vague and abstract social issue, not as a personal and specific problem. Therefore, from his perspective, mankind does not need specific redemption from sin—he just needs to be at peace with his fellow men and do good unto them. The Dickens redemption from "quarrel[ing] and hurt[ing] one another" is both Pelagian and Latitudinarian: it both denies the that Christ is the divine Savior man needs to obtain forgiveness of sin (Latitudinarianism) and exclusively exalts personal morality (Pelagianism)—in doctrinal disputes, everything can be solved with human reason and the guidance of the Holy Spirit—and things such as church government, doctrine itself, and established church practices are "irrelevant." Within *Great Expectations,* then, Pip must learn to improve his personal morality, as throughout the book he succumbs to pride, a subversion of morality, and learns to despise, rather than love, his neighbor. Angus Wilson writes, "Pure love as the means of redemption of flawed, weak, or sinful men" (4) is the mechanism by which Dickens characters arrive at a change of heart.

Dickens' religion was shaped by the idea of benevolence, demonstrated in James 1.27: "True religion and undefiled is this, to visit orphans and widows." Although not meant to be a comprehensive statement of Christianity, this verse illustrates general moral guidelines which strongly pervaded Dickens' life and writings. According to Karen Hattaway, "As Dickens emphasized the morality of his characters' actions more than their intentions, his entire notion of human regeneration came to rest on the enactment of particular spiritual principles. Men . . . had to discover religious and moral truths and then give them shape through the agency of physical action" (148). Dickens' characters attempt to gain social acceptance, help the poor, and find valid identities through doing good deeds rather than seeking God, and their sins are largely

social, not moral. As a result, Dickens' characters do not really need Christian redemption. Magwitch, for example, although a convict, first became a criminal "thieving turnips for [a] living" (259), but this act is not seen as morally wrong, only socially undesirable. Having been locked away in jail and transported to Australia, Magwitch returns to England and states, "Whatever I done is worked out and paid for!" (247), implying that through his sufferings he has earned the right to expiation. As such, Magwitch's crimes are not personal against the man who owned the turnips or anyone else: they are merely vague crimes against society, paid for through labor and hardship. Magwitch's complexity makes him a more realistic character than other Dickens individuals, but still not one who needs forgiveness. Many of the worst characters in Dickens are the static villains of fairy tales, and thus are incapable of achieving any sort of growth, change, or redemption as a result. Because of Dickens' Pelagian theology, he did not believe that man was sinful; therefore, when a Dickens character "falls," it is not a spiritual fall and the character does not need a spiritual redemption *per se*; rather, Dickens' fallen characters need social restoration.

As a result of his benevolent religious views, Dickens was an outspoken social reformer, working tirelessly both in print and in person to rescue the downtrodden. Dickens believed that fallen individuals were disadvantaged people who had been corrupted by society. According to scholar Norrie Epstein, regarding his work in reforming prostitutes through Urania College, "Dickens believed that a prostitute was . . . a woman with a disease rather like madness, who if treated with 'particular gentleness and anxiety,' could in fact be 'cured'" (210). From Dickens' perspective, almost anyone like Pip the snob or Nancy the prostitute from *Oliver Twist*, who were basically "good" but whose lack of social opportunities resulted in a "fall," could be

"cured." Dickens' views of redemption contribute to a false redemption narrative; according to Dickens, redemption is earned.

Dickens' particular brand of religion was never totally consistent with Unitarianism, Latitudinarianism, Pelagianism, or even the teachings of Christ, and his views changed over time. A.O. J. Cockshut explains that "Dickens's religion, a kind of loose, moralistic, Anglicanism-cum-unitarianism was perfectly sincere. But . . . it lacked consistency" (13). The height of inconsistent irony, perhaps, for Dickens, was that he was known as the moralistic novelist of hearth and home—but he separated from his wife and took up with the actress Ellen Ternan in the last several years of his life.

While it is certainly true that most people display inconsistencies between the way they live and what they believe, Dickens' discrepancies were amplified through his writings. Janet Larson alludes to Bunyan's famous allegory, explaining that in the *Life of Our Lord*, "Dickens inadvertently courts the ironies of a Mr. Facing-Both-Ways. He does not allow that Jesus is really divine . . . yet he credulously reports the miracles, the most powerful signs that Jesus is God" (11-12). Admittedly, Dickens' little rewritten New Testament was never intended to be a public statement of his doctrinal positions, was not published in his lifetime, and was written for his children. However, Dickens' omissions from the gospel stories are telling. Larson states that "the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy in Christ's messiahship as well as the temptation of Christ, the sacramental significance of the Last Supper, and the story of Pentecost" (11) are all missing from *Life of Our Lord*. Dickens wanted to emphasize Christ's healing and teaching ministry among the poor: a Christianity based loosely upon the benevolence of Christ and lacking some of the more significant supernatural events of His ministry was one that Dickens was entirely

comfortable with. For the author, Christ was important not for His deity, but for His message of love for the outcasts and His example of helping the needy.

Consequently, Dickens writes Pip's identity distortion as a study of twisted emotional-socio-economic values, not spiritual deficiency. As a fallen character, Pip possesses an identity that for much of the novel is characterized by remorse, guilt, and shame. Jack Rawlins explains that most critics view *Great Expectations* as either a story of "Pip's personal moral failure," or of "society's moral failure" (667). One of the great questions of the book is the analysis of guilt: who is at fault? Pip or society? More explicit examination of what wrongs have actually been committed by Pip or society provides a background for the redemption of Pip's identity: if Pip is morally culpable, then he is in need of personal redemption, and he is defined by his fall and the necessity of restoration. If the primary fault lies with society, however, then Pip must simply learn to overcome society's negative projections of guilt onto himself. Dickens seems to answer that the wrongdoing lies both within society and also within Pip (though mostly within society), although unlike for Pip, no real provision is made for the restoration of society.

The question then becomes what exactly society and Pip are guilty of, respectively. Society is certainly guilty of abusing and distorting Pip's identity. This abuse, in turn, produces tremendous shame in Pip, which overshadows his guilt for actual wrongdoing. Growing up, Pip is abused by most of the adults in his life, and by his older sister in particular. Pip's story is told in both first and third person, and at the outset he explains, "Within myself, I had sustained, from my babyhood, a perpetual conflict with injustice. I had known, from the time when I could speak, that my sister, in her capricious and violent coercion, was unjust to me. I had cherished a profound conviction that her bringing me up by hand gave her no right to bring me up by jerks" (54). Mrs. Joe repeatedly announces that she has "brought [Pip] up by hand," a phrase ostensibly

meaning that she took great care raising her young brother, but in actual fact an ironic statement referring to severely damaging emotional and physical abuse. Emotional abuse tends to produce overwhelming feelings of shame within children; the small victims, like Pip, are led to believe as a result of their caregivers' "capricious and violent coercion" that they must be valueless, since they are treated in a way that badly undermines their self-worth. In relation to society, the abused child generally believes that he is far less significant than other children who are treated better than he is, and therefore, like Pip, many will seek ways in which to earn significance.

Pip's great expectations of education, money, and social status stem in part from the abuse he received at the hands of the adults in his life. Jack Rawlins explains how blame for tolerating abuse includes even the kindly Joe, who "insists that his father was a good man and that Mrs. Joe is a good woman, in fact that everyone is good and that in general the sun is shining brightly when Pip knows it's raining" (670). Everyone else aggressively abuses Pip, thereby eroding his self-concept, but through his well-intentioned but disastrous passivity, Joe inadvertently sends Pip the message that Pip is not worth defending. Additionally, despised by Estella and made to feel dreadfully ashamed of who he is and where he comes from, Pip reacts by deciding to become someone he will not be ashamed of being, a man of great expectations. Mortified and devalued by the abuse of adults and the scorn of the wealthy Estella, Pip searches for redemption throughout the novel, needing to have his shame relieved so that he can form a coherent identity by dealing with his guilt. Encouraged passively or actively by most of the other characters in the novel to believe that Miss Havisham is his benefactress, that he can become a gentleman merely by acting and looking the part, and that Estella is meant to be his bride, Pip lives for a long while in world of illusory fairytale expectations where all his dreams come true and he is blissfully free of moral responsibility to God or his fellow man.

Pip's great dreams, for the most part, lead him into the misdeeds of which he is actually guilty, resulting in the distortion and temporary loss of his true identity or soul. The appearance of guilt in his life first begins, however, with the convict Magwitch. For years after stealing food and a file for the convict, then lying to Joe by omission about the matter, Pip is haunted by tremendous guilt, shuddering under the weight of self-condemnation. He states, "I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right [tell Joe the truth] as I had been too cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong" (37). Both his association with a criminal—a member of the most despised class of society—and his own criminal complicity in the affair torture Pip interminably. Later, in his desires to impress Estella with his money and education and become a true "gentleman," Pip betrays his old friends Joe and Biddy and snubs other true friends. In contrast to his childhood courtesy to the terrifying Magwitch that first night on the moors, when Pip and Magwitch are later reunited, Pip has almost nothing but contempt for the uncouth, socially unacceptable convict. Magwitch, Joe, Biddy, and others, do not fit in with Pip's grand new expectations, expectations that turn out to be an imbalanced response to Estella's beauty and a partial result of the education and opportunities presented through Magwitch's money. Pip's sins against his friends are expiated, however, as he finally comes to understand his faulty assumptions about his own identity, his need to love and appreciate Magwitch, and the necessity of ending his obsession with Estella through a combination of illness, great shock, and other adverse circumstances.

The nature of Pip's identity reconstruction is somewhat ambiguous owing to the controversial existence of the two different endings to the novel, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five of this document. In the original, shorter, and rather abrupt ending, Pip's identity is redeemed through hard work, love of Magwitch, Joe and Biddy, and forgiveness of

Miss Havisham only. He has lost everything he ever cared for except Joe and Biddy, and has suffered so much that his life will probably never be truly happy. In the revised ending, however, both Pip and Estella's redemptions are more meaningful and complete, because if Pip and Estella finally end up together, it is because they have both changed enough for the better that they can finally be truly worthy of each other and capable of maintaining a healthy relationship.

In the revised ending, both Pip and Estella are humbled and redeemed through suffering, and if and when they finally are united, it is because they are finally morally worthy of each other, each having atoned or suffered for his or her misdeeds. In the original ending, Pip's secular redemption is more of a social vindication: Estella finally comes to understand what it is like to feel Pip's anguish. Pip says that suffering had finally "given her a heart to understand what my heart used to be" (359), and with this minimal satisfaction, Pip is apparently content. But this small personal justification seems weak and halfhearted, even for a secular identity reconstruction. In the revised ending, the redemption, although still secular, is far more complete with a total identity transformation of Pip, Estella, and their relationship.

While this transformation involves nothing explicitly divine, it does involve forgiveness. Pip must come to forgive Miss Havisham, Magwitch, and Estella, some of the people who have wronged him the most, and is in turn forgiven by Joe. Humphrey House summarizes this secular redemption, stating that despite all Pip's snobbery and pride, "he is made to appear at the end of it all a really better person than he was at the beginning" (156). The ever class-conscious Dickens creates a situation in which regardless of the lies of worthlessness inflicted upon Pip by a value-distorted society, Pip is able at last to transcend both his own and society's misdeeds, confront his actual guilt and wrongdoing, and find a secular expiation in loving Magwitch, working hard, and forgiving and being forgiven. In the end, Pip finally comes to an

understanding of himself and a place in his character development at which his inward self correlates with his outward circumstances, resulting in a coherent identity. In both endings, Estella is humbled and sad, earnest in her empathy with Pip. In the second ending, she has been so changed that she is finally capable of having a somewhat healthy relationship with Pip. Although this is not a Christian redemption, Pip is not forgiven by God and does not necessarily ever find true happiness, with or without Estella, he does at least end up with a more realistic identity that is much closer to that of a true gentleman than he ever could have had before enduring all the pain and tragedy throughout the story.

Charles Dickens' life and theological views heavily influenced *Great Expectations*. As a result, Pip's identity distortion and guilt are caused not by original sin, but by an unkind and abusive society which encourages him to live in a fairytale world of illusion. Throughout an odyssey of fabulous expectations, great fortune, unrequited love, and tragic disillusionment, Pip falls from virtue (i.e., his identity is distorted), resulting in tremendous personal loss, but Pip eventually relinquishes his hollow "great expectations" in order to find his complete self. When his expectations and misconceptions are shattered by the return of Magwitch, Pip is forced to face the self-centered snob that he has become; he realizes that he has betrayed his friends for an illusory life fraught with false comrades and phantom dreams. Pip must learn to humbly accept himself for who he is in real life, not who he wishes to be in his fantasies, before he can obtain a coherent identity. His shallow, external, gentlemanly self, built on a foundation of both deliberate and inadvertent deception, must be confronted and changed in order for Pip's true self to be redeemed.

Endnote

1. In the original but non-preferred ending, Pip leads a quiet, hardworking life as a clerk in an import company. One day while he is walking down the street with little Pip, Joe and Biddy's child, he sees Estella in a carriage. She has married a country doctor after the death of her abusive husband Drummle, and suffering has made her sympathetic towards Pip. In the revised ending, Pip is also a hardworking clerk, but one night he goes to the ruined garden of Satis House and meets Estella there. She has been changed by Drummle's abuse from an icy, heartless snob into a kinder and gentler woman, has not remarried after Drummle's death, and seems likely to remain with Pip as he envisions "the shadow of no parting from her" (358), a phrase taken by many to mean that Pip and Estella will marry and live wisely ever after, if not entirely happily.

Dickens changed the ending to *Great Expectations* on the advice of his friend, literary critic and novelist Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton. Bulwer-Lytton put years of thought and study into constructing a poetics by which great literature could be judged. Edwin Eigner explains that Bulwer-Lytton considered a happy ending to be a more classical standard of art, and an unhappy ending a more popular standard for the Victorian era, so he encouraged Dickens to change the sad ending to make it more timeless (107-8). Two of the most notable Dickens scholars, Humphrey House and J. Hillis Miller, have conflicting opinions about the endings. Of the revised ending, House merely says without any explanation that "the final marriage to Estella is wrong" (157), but Miller in contrast supports the revised ending. Beginning with the change in Pip's relationship to Magwitch, as the protagonist learns to accept the disreputable old convict on the basis of simple love and appreciation, Miller explains that Pip's change of heart towards Magwitch lays the foundation for a "transformation of his relation to Estella" (274). In the

second ending, Pip's outlook on life and love has changed so much that it is permissible for him at last to win the prize of Estella. Miller says that suffering has "transformed them both. It is only when Estella has been tamed by the cruelty of her bad husband that she and Pip can enter into a wholly different relationship" (277). This defense of the second ending seems both emotionally and logically coherent, because although Estella's conversion occurs off stage, as it were, it is difficult to judge whether or not her entire identity, like Pip's, has totally changed; however, for Estella to be able to empathize with Pip as she does, it does seem as though her entire personality would have to be different from what it had been previously. Critic Eldred Wilden concurs, saying that Estella's past died with Miss Havisham on some level, and that it seems reasonable to believe that Estella is changed as a result (186). The deaths of the abusive Miss Havisham and Drummle would certainly have had an effect on the girl's life, and seems likely that this change would have been for the better.

Chapter 2: Fairy-Tale Identity Illusions in a Moral Universe

Pip's stages of identity formation, transformation, and distortion are shot through with the golden light of fantasy. The harsh injustices of the abusive society that comprises Pip's world are made more bearable and sometimes even engaging through Dickens' technique of using folklore devices both to soften and to exaggerate Pip's difficulties. Although a beautiful princess, a dastardly villain, a decaying mansion, a bizarre fairy godmother, and untold wealth might seem at first glance to be elements of a classic fairy tale, in *Great Expectations,* these elements actually combine to create the opposite of a fairy tale: a disillusioned, realistic saga. In Dickens' fairy-tale-that-is-not, the protagonist is not a hero, he loses almost everything, the treasure vanishes, the "princess" turns out to be the daughter of a convict, the fairy godmother is actually a witch, and a well-bred gentleman is found to be the blackest scoundrel. *Great Expectations* seems to have anticipated the trend in such modern American fairy tales as *Shrek* and *Enchanted,* as the novel takes classic fairy tale constructs and stands them on their heads. With the American fairy-tale parodies, the point is mostly to satirize society's cultural values, although each tale does have a distinct moral; however, these caricatures do not suggest something better to replace what they are satirizing. With Dickens' *Great Expectations*, the purpose is more serious: to warn British individuals and society against the failure of the Victorian fairy-tale identity and call for a renewed search for moral values transcendent of social class and material possessions. Like many modern American fairy stories, Dickens' novel is a distorted fairy tale, as it uses fantastical elements to criticize cultural fantasies and make a profound moral statement regarding a realistic view of social and personal identity.

Charles Dickens loved the magic and wonder of fairy tales all his life and incorporated this delight into his novels. From the three Christmas spirits to Wemmick's "castle" to Oliver

Twist's happily-ever-after, Dickens' novels are rife with whimsical characters, settings, and plots that would be wildly improbable if not impossible in real life. *Great Expectations* displays Dickens's love for fairy tales principally in its characters. As the novel begins, Pip is set upon by a terrifying convict on an eerie Christmas Eve night in a graveyard, and the book only becomes more fantastic from that point onwards. Pip, the apparently typical poor, abused orphan hero so popular in fairy tales, meets fairy tale characters such as the beautiful but distant "princess" Estella; Miss Havisham the decaying jilted bride; Joe, the strong and kindly blacksmith; Herbert, the kind and true "prince;" Compeyson the desperate criminal, and Orlick, the villainous and slouching devil. Miss Havisham is particularly fascinating. Pip describes his first introduction to her:

> Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. Some bright jewels sparkled on her neck and on her hands, and some other jewels lay sparkling on the table . . . She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on—the other was on the table near her hand—her veil was but half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her bosom lay with those trinkets, and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers . . . all confusedly heaped about the looking-glass. (51)

The jilted bride Miss Havisham is one of the most fantastic of all Dickens' characters, and from the beginning of the novel onwards, Pip is expected to accept the bizarre, personified in people and places such as Miss Havisham and Satis House, as commonplace.

Like the fantastic characters, many of the settings in the book are the stuff of myth and fantasy. One of the most striking locations in the book is Miss Havisham's home, Satis House.

Satis House is a dwelling haunted by the past, heavily gated and barred, and when Pip first visits the place, he remarks that "all the brewery beyond stood open, away to the high enclosing wall, and all was empty and disused" (48). The decaying house is even stranger inside, however, as Pip discovers when he is led down a forbidding hall and presented to Miss Havisham. The house is lit only by candlelight, and a great wedding feast decays on a table in a room full of dust and cobwebs.

In addition to the characters and settings, the plot of *Great Expectations* is also the stuff of folklore. Pip the orphan is abused by his wicked older sister. He visits a fantastic castle-house and meets a woman he comes to believe is a fairy godmother and a girl who seems to be a lovely princess. Then one day he is given a fabulous fortune. Upon this inheritance, Pip enters the glittering world of the London social scene, and his dreams seem to be almost magically coming true. His identity changes from that of the metaphysically lost orphan boy into that of the wealthy, powerful gentleman with the right education, clothing, servants, and club membership. *Great Expectations* turns out to be an inverted fairy tale, however, because Pip's gilded life comes to a shattering halt.

Consequently, *Great Expectations* is not merely a fairy tale, because Dickens recognized that the sunny lenses of fairy tales created a distorted picture of reality. Therefore, Dickens borrowed the contrasting images of light and darkness, and good and evil found in fairy tales to highlight inconsistencies in Victorian society. In *Dickens and the Invisible World*, Harry Stone explains that despite all of its fairy-tale elements, *Great Expectations* is actually an "inverted fairy tale" (299). From the beginning of the novel, the reader is warned that Pip's fairy tale is not to be an ordinary one. Although orphaned and abused like many traditional fairy tale protagonists, when Pip goes to visit Miss Havisham, he finds a bride in yellowed white

surrounded not by new beginnings, but death. Cobwebs, mice, and spiders fill the room, festooning and attacking her ancient moldering bridal feast. Staring at the ghastly Miss Havisham, Pip says, “Once I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now, wax-work and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me [in the person of Miss Havisham]” (51). Contrary to a traditional fairy tale in which the old woman would either be an evil witch or a powerful and beautiful fairy in disguise, Miss Havisham is much more ambiguous. Later on in the novel, Pip sees the Bride of Death as the “Witch of the place” (69), but when a mysterious benefactor bestows fabulous wealth upon him, he wrongly concludes that the money is from Miss Havisham and comes to see her as a benevolent fairy. Pip’s blacksmith-apprentice identity is distorted from the moment that he enters Miss Havisham’s house and begins to desire to become a gentleman. After Pip receives the first installment of his inheritance, Miss Havisham slyly takes credit for Pip’s Cinderella-like transformation. Congratulating Pip on his new, expensive clothing, Miss Havisham acts “as if she, the fairy godmother who had changed [him], were bestowing the finishing gift” (122). Pip’s confusion of Miss Havisham the witch with a fairy godmother is one of the most striking examples of the novel’s fairy tale distortion.

Dickens’ story is an inverted fairy tale because, as Pickrel notes, it is set in a “moral universe” in which “actions have consequences, choices matter, [and] . . . privileges entail responsibilities” (221). In a typical fairy tale, the consequences of the wicked queen’s offering the poisoned apple to Snow White are magically erased when her prince comes along and kisses her. The consequences of Hansel and Gretel’s parents leaving them in the woods are fantastically circumvented by the breadcrumbs and pebbles, and even the witch’s attempts to eat them result

in the triumph of good over evil. In the sort of fairytales one reads to children, good and magic usually conquer all, regardless of believable human choices or disastrous actions. Pip's story, however, contains fairy tale characters like the "good" convict who gives away a fortune but dies in prison, and the "evil" society lady who ends penitent but in a flaming inferno. Many of the characters and their relationships are not what they seem, and are more complex and realistic than fairytale.

Not only does Pip's "fairy tale" include disastrous consequences for poor choices that are not native to fantasy, but also in a larger context, the plot of the novel itself is distorted: Pip goes from rags to riches back to rags, an occurrence that is not supposed to happen in the world of fantasy. Yet throughout *Great Expectations,* Dickens implies that it is actually society's perception of genuine value, not the concept of the fairy tale, which is distorted. Elaine Ostry writes that in order "to make the fairy-tale realization of true worth in a society that does not recognize it, Dickens must reverse the fairy tale" (23). In order for his tale to have a realistic moral in fairy-tale Victorian society, Dickens uses the fairy tale to turn society's values upside-down. Two-thirds of the way through the novel, everything goes horribly wrong in Pip's life when he discovers that the convict Magwitch, far from being an evil ogre, is actually his economic fairy godfather, Miss Havisham has actually been an evil witch all along, and Estella, far from being princess-like, is the daughter of a murderess and a convict. Chesterton remarks, "When [Dickens] sets out to describe Pip's great expectations he does not set out, as in a fairy tale, with the idea that these great expectations will be fulfilled; he sets out from the first with the idea that these great expectations will be disappointing" (200). Dickens uses Pip's revelation to both reject the idea of original sin in individuals and direct blame toward his Victorian society members who believed that life was a fairy tale, that Britannia was morally superior to all other

empires, that religion was nothing more than either a lovely or oppressive ritual, that the poor were well taken care of, and that their moral responsibility to their fellow men was minimal to non-existent.

Although Dickens enjoyed fairy tale constructs and used them to elicit humor and delight in the body of his work, he also directed these fantastical components in scathing social criticism against the New Poor Laws, the justice system, the Tractarian sect of the Anglican Church, and other social evils. An outspoken champion of social justice, especially for the poor, Dickens wrote *Great Expectations* partly to criticize the fantasy mindset of Victorian England that encouraged people to think that horrific physical and economic conditions were not only permissible, but a just consequence for "inferior" members of society. Jerome Meckier examines the situation:

> Not surprisingly, Victorian England considered itself a Cinderella story of national proportions . . . [Britain's] rise could be elevated to a popular myth . . . in novels of the day, because it fit the seemingly miraculous changes that nineteenth-century England had undergone between the early 1800s and 1860: from beleaguered island to world power on the brink of global domination. When Victorian novelists imbued their fictions with Cinderella motifs, they ingratiated themselves with a middle-class reading public eager to be congratulated on its moral and material situation. (9)

Victorian society had thoroughly bought into the fairy tale of middle-class mobility, and as a result the Cinderella motif appeared in Victorian literature repeatedly, as the empire upon which "the sun never set" made phenomenal improvements in industry, and technology. Humphrey House concurs with Meckier: "*Great Expectations* is the perfect expression of a phase of English

society: it is a statement, to be taken as it stands, of what money can do, good and bad; of how it can change and make distinctions of class; how it can pervert virtue, sweeten manners, and open up new fields of enjoyment and suspicion" (159). The Victorian Age was the Age of Cinderella, in which money allowed dreams to come true and artificially created happily-ever-afters, but also the age in which children labored 10-hour days in factories and were hanged or transported for picking pockets. Elaine Ostry states specifically that "Dickens use[d] the plot, motifs, and theme of 'Cinderella' in *Great Expectations* to develop the social as well as psychological themes of the novel" (17). Not just any fairytale distortion, Pip's story is a corruption of perhaps the most classic of all fairy tales.

Pip's fairy-tale journey to become a gentleman mirrors his society's pursuit of socioeconomic identity within its context of rapid growth. Amidst the tremendous wealth flowing into the British Empire, the technological and industrial innovations, and the social class pretensions, Dickens feared that England had begun to lose her grasp upon the truly valuable, and he writes *Great Expectations* in part as a warning to his fairy-tale contemporaries. Elaine Ostry explains: in *Great Expectations*, "Pip frames his social advance in the form of a fairy tale, yet he has a superficial view of the genre, for he does not address the moral basis for advancement usually present in the fairy tale. As a result, his fairy tale becomes a cautionary tale instead, and Pip learns . . . the necessity of fostering morality while gaining status" (18). Yet the semi-autobiographical *Great Expectations* was cautionary not only to the Victorians, but also to Dickens himself. To Dickens the author, the novel was indicative of his success in warning his contemporaries to care more about people's characters than their clothing and to hold themselves to higher moral than social expectations.

Dickens uses the fairy tale constructs of Pip's story in an attempt to help his fellow Victorians see themselves for who they really were. J. R. R. Tolkien writes that humanity needs fantasy to accomplish the "regaining of a clear view . . . [Society] need[s] . . . to clean [its] windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity" (146). Dickens' purpose in *Great Expectations* was exactly that: to use fairy tale influences to aid his society in obtaining a clear view of its behavior. One great problem faced by Pip is a distortion of values that involves seeing the external as more significant than the internal. Dickens attempted through his novels to remind his society of what was truly valuable in life, and Pip goes through a great deal of misery before he is finally able to see value clearly.

Pip's story is both microcosmic and critical of the larger context of Victorian society. In *Great Expectations,* Dickens uses the paradigm of a fairy tale to make a statement about Victorian ideas regarding class identity and social morality. Victoria's Britain was consumed with conceptions of social class and identity, and regarding Pip's illusory quest to become a gentleman of wealth and status, Robin Gilmour states that "*Great Expectations* is the most complex and satisfying fictional examination of the idea of the gentleman in the Victorian period" (143). With the phenomenal advancements brought to England by imperialism, the Industrial Revolution, and revolutionary new ideas in areas such as art, religion, and science, Victorian society was peculiarly challenged by a collective identity crisis. Pip's fairy-tale journey to become a gentleman mirrors his society's pursuit of socio-economic identity within the boundaries of the rapidly changing British Empire. In such a context, fairy tales were particularly appealing. Michael Kotzin describes the situation:

> Beset by a changing world, the Victorian could find stability in the ordered, formulary structure of fairy tales . . . He could be taken from the corruptions of

> adulthood back to the innocence of childhood; from the ugly, competitive city to beautiful, sympathetic nature; from complex morality to the simple issue of good versus evil; from a difficult reality to a comforting world of imagination. (28)

Although the Age of Victoria was generally a trifle more civilized than the darker and more violent Regency age preceding it, the second half of the nineteenth century in Britain still contained multitudes of abusive workhouses, inhumane child labor conditions, desperate and poverty-stricken prostitutes, and full debtor's prisons. Dickens' writing was wildly popular among the rich and poor alike of his time, and one reason for this popularity may well have been the welcome escapism offered by his realistic but also fantastic novels.

In *Great Expectations*, Dickens both glorifies the magic of fairy tales and uses that magic to satirize a society who lived as if social and economic fairy tales were true at the expense of the poor and needy who worked cruelly long hours and half-starved in workhouses. According to Dickens, it is society, not the fairy tale, which is distorted. Pip and the Victorians desired prosperity, but were perfectly content for others to be the ones soiling their hands to make that prosperity possible. Ostry explains, "A true fairy tale hero . . . is lucky because he is good: Pip wants the reward of the fairy tale without the moral work that must be done to deserve it" (26). With such radical reversals and complexities, Dickens' work is satiric of his society that believed itself to be fantastically privileged.

Dickens could personally identify with this national Cinderella identity, however—his life was something of a fairy tale itself. According to Meckier, Dickens's "rise from label paster in Warren's Blacking Warehouse to squire of Gad's Hill reads like a Cinderella story . . . At Gad's, Dickens was an internationally famous author" (15), enjoying unprecedented success and popularity as one of the best-loved English writers to ever live. Yet Meckier remarks that despite

Dickens's phenomenal achievements, "Dickens' life [was] a series of disappointments." The unrequited love for Maria Beadnell, the death of Mary Hogarth, the terrible marriage to Catherine Hogarth, and difficulties with his health, society, and children all served to remind the novelist that a fairy tale life was not all that it seemed on the surface (15). Fairy tales needed morals and love in order to comment truthfully about life, and Dickens' fantastic earthly sojourn was no exception. It was, perhaps, partly as a result of this quest for love and morality amidst the fairy tale of his own life that Dickens wrote *Great Expectations*. It seems at least slightly ironic, however, that the bard of hearth and home who had recently separated from his wife and taken up with an actress should use a moral paradigm to criticize the lack of morality in his society.

The moral universe of the traditional fairy tale remains incomplete and one-dimensional. Usually in fairy tales, the good do not pay for their sins, for they are not complex enough to have any faults. Fairy tales generally contain a great deal of rescue (such as Prince Philip's liberation of Sleeping Beauty), but not redemption, for redemption involves the reclamation of the fallen. The bad characters in fairy tales are impossible to redeem, and the good characters are too good to need redemption. Even ambiguous characters like Rumpelstiltskin tend to end badly in fairy tales, as they do not conform closely enough to the standards of good in the fairy tale universe, and are therefore evil by default. In fairy tales, evil is external and usually appears in the form of either the abuse of the protagonist or the malevolence of horrible witches, monsters, and sorcerers. Evil is criminal, not sinful, in fantasy literature, for the bad characters commit evil acts such as theft, murder, abuse, or disinheritance because their natures are inherently evil, and the good characters generally commit only good acts. Yet in fairy tales, crime is intensely personal: Snow White's stepmother tries to kill her out of jealousy; Maleficent attempts to kill Briar Rose out of wounded vanity; the wicked stepmother does not allow Cinderella to go to the ball out of

spite and jealousy. In *Great Expectations*, however, Dickens assents to the idea that it is generally society, not individuals, that is the source of evil and corruption in the world, in marked contrast to the personal evil of the fairy tale paradigm. Dickens also critiques the superficial moral identity of his society by distorting and expanding the moral framework of the traditional fairy tale, creating morally ambiguous characters and morally complex plot situations.

Dickens' respect for Christian values remains a common thread running throughout his novels, yet because the novelist held a popular view of Christianity flavored by the heresy of Latitudinarianism throughout his life, his moral system considered evil mainly a social concept, rather than personal attitudes and actions. Not entirely consistent, however, Dickens blames Pip's (and by inference Victorian) society for the evil in *Great Expectations,* while still holding Pip accountable for his misdeeds. According to G. Robert Strange, Dickens implicates everyone in *Great Expectations* in a common human guilt, "though Dickens' interpretation is theologically heterodox" (117-18). Due to his unbiblical theological leanings, Dickens' views of crime versus sin are telling. Humphrey House explains:

> Virtue is for [Dickens] the natural state of man . . . 'We can all do some good,' says David Copperfield, 'if we will' . . . [W]here the moral condition of the world is reviewed he always adopts the view that man as the child of a good father is himself good, and that the evils of the world are obstructions which prevent him from being himself. He rejected Original Sin . . . Edith expects repentance of Mr. Dombey, but she does not say that he has sinned. Evil is always terrifyingly real, but the source of it is obscure. (111-12)

In *Great Expectations*, the only character possessing self-generating evil is Compeyson, the gentleman criminal. Yet Compeyson is also one of the only flat characters in the novel, and the

source of his evil is utterly inexplicable and unaddressed. In *Great Expectations*, as the rest of in Dickens' later works, House explains that badness is represented as "a stronger impersonal evil, created by society" (112). Although displayed more keenly in some characters than others, such as Orlick as opposed to Pumblechook, evil in Dickens is Latitudinarian: it is social and vague rather than personal and specific. Orlick is the product of a disadvantaged environment, and Pumblechook the victim of damaging social expectations. In such a context, man's nature is not evil—merely the society around him. For Pip specifically, it is not until he begins to experience the wounds of insidious social expectations and the delusions of money and pride that he starts to go morally astray.

Pip, like many fairytale heroes, is more sinned against than sinning, and his actual sins are quiet ones of failing to do good rather than actually committing evil acts. Pip does not possess original sin—it is society that distorts his identity. Chesterton writes, "Pip . . . [is] meant to show how circumstances can corrupt a man" (199). Such thinking implies that Pip bears far less responsibility for his moral fall if it is his external environment rather than his internal motivations that have twisted his soul. In either case, however, the end result remains the same: Pip's identity is tragically distorted. In fairy tales, the hero or heroine has to overcome the personal and external evil of a terrible dragon, wicked witch, gruesome troll, or malevolent king; in Dickens' moral paradigm in *Great Expectations*, however, Pip has to battle the internal shame he experiences as the result of an oppressive society and construct a new identity to purify himself of the poison of his great expectations.

Despite being encouraged to form delusive expectations by practically all the major characters in the novel, Pip bears moral responsibility for his poor choices, many of which are influenced by his desperate obsession with Estella. Miss Havisham tells Pip, "You made your

own snares. I never made them," although a few lines earlier she admits that she "let [him] go on" in his delusions (269), fully understanding that he was deceived. Pip did believe that he could spend money irresponsibly and without consequence and that Estella could be his despite her indifference, delusions that were definitely arrogant, but other than that, he was encouraged and deluded in his false expectations by practically all the other characters in his life, especially Miss Havisham, at the time he came into his expectations. The fact that Pip is encouraged by his society to have great and illusory expectations seems contradictory to the fact that Pip is accountable for his moral choices, but both are nonetheless true. However deceived Pip is about socioeconomic priorities, he knows that it is wrong to snub Joe and waste his fortune, but he does these things regardless.

Fairy tales abound with moral choices, and *Great Expectations* seamlessly integrates the fantastic and the virtuous. Unlike fellow Victorian Oscar Wilde, though, Dickens believed that art should be not only beautiful, but useful, and by Dickens' standards something that was morally educational was certainly useful. A great defender of the value and charm of fairy tales, Dickens was incensed when his friend George Cruikshank illustrated a book of fairy tales with a Victorian moral agenda forced upon them. Constantly attempting to make his writing useful to mankind, neither too escapist nor too realistic, Dickens, according to James Marlow, "could not be satisfied with a world without hope or an art without use. Like fairy tales, his art must have its 'usefulness.' The ultimate use was, as he wrote Forster, to 'help make people better'" (21). But Dickens believed that there were some very particular ways in which to help people become better. In his "Frauds on the Fairies," Dickens hotly wrote that Cruikshank had no right to impose Victorian agendas such as temperance upon traditional fairy tales. The case Dickens made was that if everyone changed fairy tales to suit his own agendas, much wonder and

goodness would be lost to the world. Dickens, according to Harry Stone's article "The Novel as Fairy Tale: Dickens' *Dombey and Son*," viewed much of his writing as "fairy tales," but the author's definition of such stories was "his special fusion of fairy story, fantasy, myth, magic, and folklore" (2). In *Great Expectations*, Dickens' literary code of ethics permitted him to both use and critique the fairy tale genre in order to delight his audience and make a statement about morality, identity, and society.

When Cruikshank published his didactic fairy tales, Dickens was incensed over what he considered to be a corruption of folklore. To illustrate his opinion, in "Frauds on the Fairies" he rewrote the Cinderella story with great political correctness. In this version of the classic tale, the Juvenile Bands of Hope, Board of Health, the King's feast of "artichokes and gruel," and Cinderella's father's death from shaving with "warm water instead of cold" contribute to a unique version of the story. According to Dickens, Cinderella deeply ponders the question of the "Ocean Penny Postage," and goes to the ball dressed in very non-traditional clothing. When she finally marries the Prince and becomes his consort, she burns down all newspaper offices that publish opinions that disagree with hers, and generally becomes a tyrant ("Frauds on the Fairies"). The difference between *Great Expectations* and the story in "Frauds on the Fairies" is that *Great Expectations* never claims to be a fairy tale *per se*. Also, *Great Expectations* is much too realistic a story to be able to smoothly conform to the fairy tale paradigm. Many of the characters are too complex, the plot reverses the fairy tale, and the psychological narrative is too involved for a standard folk tale. Dickens' point in "Frauds" is that the enchantment of fairy tales should not be distorted by false morality.

Like Dickens and his Cinderella parody, satirist James Finn Garner has tried his hand at reinventing the tale, making it more politically correct and culturally relevant in the process.

Both Dickens and Garner, although definitely trying to entertain, were also attempting to engage in meaningful social criticism. Both authors attempted to make the point that people who try to deconstruct, sanitize, force agendas upon, or otherwise twist fairy tales can end up distorting them beyond all recognition. An example of Garner's wit appears when Cinderella languishes at home, wishing to attend the ball. As she sadly sits listening to records, an unusual-looking old man suddenly appears in the room and addresses her: "'I am your fairy godperson, or individual deity proxy… So, you want to go to the ball, eh? And bind yourself into the male concept of beauty? Squeeze into some tight-fitting dress that will cut off your circulation? Jam your feet into high-heeled shoes that will ruin your bone structure? Paint your face with chemicals and makeup that have been tested on non-human animals?'" (33). Cinderella, of course, immediately responds in the affirmative. As in Dickens, Cinderella's clothing (and therefore cultural identity) is an issue in the revised story, and Garner's Cinderella ends with all the men at the ball killing each other and all the women starting a comfortable-clothing manufacturing enterprise. Dickens, it seems, might well have approved of Garner's parody-with-a-point, because unlike Cruikshank, Garner twists the story (like Dickens) to make fun of those who enforce their own cultural and political agendas on children's stories. Garner, like Dickens, wishes to preserve the wonder and magic of fairy tales, because as Robert Siegel says, fantasy possesses a "power to take us out of our skins—away from the small, limited, half-life that is our ordinary consciousness—and to give us an experience of a larger, more complete life, in which we hear the music of the turning spheres" (356). Dickens uses fairy tale elements in *Great Expectations* in an effort to give the materialistic Victorians a larger, transcendent perspective on their lives and priorities.

Jaded and disillusioned twenty-first century America has recently exhibited a fascinating Dickensian trend in the nature of its popular fairy tales. *Time Magazine*'s James Poniewozik

explains: “Once upon a time, in a land near, near by, there were fairy tales. Brave princes slew dragons and saved fair damsels. Princesses and scullery maids waited for brave knights and true love. The good were pretty, the evil ugly, the morals absolute” (83). Many traditional fairy tales, such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Saint George and the Dragon* do certainly fit this pattern. In each story, a violent battle rages between uncorrupted good and terrifying evil, and in the end the innocent protagonists are rewarded for their virtue and kindness.

With the advent of the twentieth century, and specifically a green ogre named Shrek, however, Poniewozik argues that everything has changed in magical lands. In the *Shrek* movies, Poniewozik says, suddenly “[h]andsome princes were mocked, damsels saved themselves, and ogres and dragons were shown to be decent folks once you got to know them” (83). Much of this twenty-first century satire doubtless was intended to perpetuate humor and react against Walt Disney’s incredibly numerous, wildly popular, and largely traditional fairy tale retellings. “Fractured” fairy tales are popular these days, and even the Disney Corporation has begun buying into this postmodern mindset. In many ways, the United States has realized Dickens’ worst fears for his own society: with a loss of absolute morals and a culture of entertainment, the disillusion of postmodernism has caused many to become as socially blind and self-absorbed as the Victorians criticized by Dickens in *Great Expectations*. Crossing the Atlantic and fast-forwarding over a hundred years, *USA Today* notes that in 2006, Americans gave $295 billion to charity; but *Forbes* explains that in 2007, Americans spent a much larger $390 billion eating at restaurants. Although America does give more generously to the needy than other nations, its citizens display a marked distortion of values, still spending on average far more money on themselves than on benevolence. Dickens’ warning to his self-absorbed society is as timely today as it was one hundred and fifty years ago.

Like most adolescents modern Americans, and several Victorians, Pip not only has difficulty seeing the true value of worthwhile things, but also has great difficulty seeing himself for who he truly is. In fairy tales, Cinderella's identity is ultimately that of a princess who only languishes for a while as a servant; Dick Whittington is actually Lord Mayor of London, and the frog is really a prince. Fairy tales are stories of transformation, but they tell of changing circumstances revealing fixed identity, not malleable identity highlighted by more static environments. Although Pip's economic and social circumstances are indeed radically transformed more than once throughout the course of the novel, the significant transformation is in his identity.

The crisis of finding a meaningful identity is as old as the temptation in the Garden of Eden when man was offered the false chance to be like God, and in the world of fairy tales, identity is similarly challenged in the paradigm of the powerful versus the powerless. Historically, the concept of power has traditionally emanated from a basis of morality and virtue; yet in *Great Expectations*, this is not the case. For young orphans like Cinderella, Snow White, and Dick Whittington, whose wholesome characters remain unaffected by their hostile environments, it is their circumstances, not their identities, which are transformed from weakness to strength. Their identities are completely upright and static throughout their stories despite their circumstantial transformations. In such stories, the good young orphans generally go from poor to rich or from unloved to loved, but their characters do not actually change. In *Great Expectations*, however, Pip experiences a radical external transformation from poor to rich, but at the same time his internal character begins to change from decent to snobbish. Eventually Pip's circumstances are transformed back to poverty, but at this point his identity is reformed into a far more benevolent version of itself. Pip's multi-layered transformation imitates that of

fairy tales, but is much more profound because it occurs on multiple levels, not just in outside circumstances and appearance. Stone states in "The Novel as Fairy Tale" that the basis of *Great Expectations* and many of Dickens' other novels is the "waif theme," that of the abandoned orphan (11). Identity is a particular problem for young orphans, for under normal circumstances, a person has identity bestowed upon him by his family—the powerful parents bestow identity upon the powerless children. Obviously, good parents generally confer a wholesome identity upon their children, and abusive, absent, or apathetic parents generally impart distorted identities upon their hapless dependents. Pip is especially disadvantaged, for he is not only an orphan, but also the ward of a physically and emotionally abusive older sister.

Although Pip was attacked by the Tickler, fed pins in his bread and butter, and half-drowned in Tar-water, the real identity-distorting scars inflicted on him came from the emotional abuse. In the article "Understanding and Reporting Child Abuse," the authors quote the *Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics* in defining emotional abuse as "'a repeated pattern of parent or caregiver behavior that conveys to a child that he or she is worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, or only of value to meet someone else's needs'" (Behrman, ed., qtd. in Twaite and Rodriguez-Sredniki 446). Emotional abuse tends to radically undermine the personal worth and value of the abused. As a result, abused children generally grow up with negative self images and struggle greatly with trying to find or create value at the core of their identities. Emotional abuse or neglect is often a factor in fairy tales as well. Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel, and Shrek are all victims of such emotional violence. To be more specific than mere abuse, though, Pip, like Cinderella, Snow White, and Aladdin, is an emotionally abused or neglected orphan, and as such grows up without the positive inherited identity that can be instilled even in children with abusive parents. Yet for Pip, unlike the fairy tale heroes and heroines, his context in a

bildungsroman makes his story one of a child transformed over the course of time into a confident young person with a stable identity. In fairy tales, it is the circumstances, not the protagonist himself, who is transformed.

Devoid of an inherited family identity, like several fairy tale heroes, Pip creates his own identity from virtually nothing. In one of the very first lines of the novel, he explains, "I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip" (9). A "pip" is another word for a seed or embryo, and Pip is consistently defined by his potential for growth that is always just out of reach until the coming of Magwitch near the end of the novel. Tragically bereft of any family history or anecdotes, Pip not only has to name himself, but also does not know anything about his dead parents and brothers—he imagines who they were based upon his examination of their tombstones. Joseph Gold explains that Pip's first awareness of "the identity of things" in the graveyard on Christmas Eve is an outstanding English illustration "of the most ancient questions, 'who am I?' [and] 'why am I here?'" (242). In Pip's search for a meaningful identity, Dickens has incorporated the desire of all humanity to understand its existence and find a place in the world. Because Dickens allows Pip's story to be narrated by a sadder, older, and wiser Pip, Gold states that Pip becomes the person he is as a result of telling his story, for in order to recount the history of his life, Pip is forced to come to terms with his past (244). Although Pip's past does not make him who he is, but is rather a significantly influential factor, acknowledging his past mistakes and delusions in narrative form does aid Pip in forming a more coherent and realistic identity. The only identity aspect that Pip really inherits at the beginning of his story, from his family, is the degradation by his abusive older sister.

Like Cinderella, Snow White, Dick Whittington, Hansel and Gretel, and even Harry Potter, Pip faces many instances of dehumanizing emotional abuse while growing up. When

unjustly harangued by Mrs. Joe, Pip remains polite as he asks about the prison ships: "'Mrs. Joe . . . I should like to know—if you wouldn't much mind—where the firing comes from'" (12). Mrs. Joe eventually responds by implying that little boys who ask too many questions will end up in those same prison ships. During the unfortunate tragi-comic Christmas dinner with Mrs. Joe's friends and relatives, Pip is forbidden to talk. To make matters worse, Pip is regaled by snide and nasty comments from the grown-ups. He is admonished to "be grateful," told that the young are wicked by nature, and unjustly compared to a pig. Mr. Wopsle describes for Pip in graphic detail what terrible things could have become of him as a baby, were it not for the charity of his sister. Encouraged by Mr. Wopsle, Mrs. Joe recounts an enormous list of the troubles that Pip has caused her, and Pip's only response is his understandable desire to "pull [Mr. Wopsle's Roman nose] until he howled" (25-26). Rather than throwing a tantrum, answering back, or even resorting to violence in the face of such abuse, Pip merely desires to engage in a little nose-pulling.

Yet while Pip does not fight the emotional abuse, his identity is indelibly scarred by it. Treated as an animal by Mrs. Joe and her friends, Pip is left with the idea that at his ultimate core, he has no value at all as an individual. As a result, Pip's very identity must eventually be reconstructed in order for him to be at peace with himself. Due to his sister's heavy-handed upbringing, he has become "morally timid and very sensitive" (59). Because negative value is bestowed upon the orphaned Pip by his abusive sister and her friends, growing up, Pip eventually comes to define himself by what he is not in order to have any hope of a valuable, meaningful identity in Dickens' secular fairy tale paradigm. J. Hillis Miller writes that Pip "is characterized by desire rather than possession. His spiritual state is one of an expectation founded on a present consciousness of lack, of deprivation. He is, in Wallace Stevens' phrase, 'an emptiness that

would be filled'" (251). In many fairy tales, from Snow White to Harry Potter, the disadvantaged protagonist generally elicits sympathy from the reader due to the dearth of parents, love, acceptance, or power in his life.

Made to believe by his abusive society that he is an inherently worthless person, Pip would rather be defined by what he lacks than by what he has. Miller explains that as a result of his obsession with the haughty and wealthy Estella, Pip's "essence is defined entirely by negations (he lacks the education, language, manners, and fine clothes of a gentleman . . .), but even a definition in terms of what he is not is better than no definition at all" (266). Yet when Magwitch appears and shatters the façade of gentlemanly education, language, and manners, Pip's identity is re-formed as he is forced to come to terms with who he actually is and what he has become, not who he hopes to become. In *Oliver Twist*, a far more traditional fairy story in terms of plot than *Great Expectations*, the questions of Oliver's identity are somewhat artificially resolved. Miller writes that young Oliver's noble identity is bestowed upon him externally by the circumstances of his past (330). Pip, however, is a more realistic protagonist in a paradoxically more realistic fairy tale, who unlike Oliver has to find and create his own identity as a result of the abuse and orphaning he has suffered. Pip's struggle is to discover what is truly valuable in his life and social priorities.

Pip largely loses the good intentions that originally shaped his identity through two major social events: meeting the wealthy Miss Havisham and becoming infatuated with Estella, and inheriting at age eighteen "great expectations" from an unknown benefactor. As G. K Chesterton states, the story of *Great Expectations* is the account of a civilized human being who becomes so overwhelmed by the socio-economic demands of civilization that he comes to emotionally betray his true friends (197). In Dickens' paradigm, Pip's identity and moral values are distorted by

external forces and pride (Pip's natural response to those forces) rather than by a real Christian conception of original sin residing destructively within his heart. Therefore, at the end of the story, the eventual redemption of Pip's soul or moral identity is more of an external social reconstruction than a spiritual and internal regeneration. G. Robert Strange states, "Pip himself renounces his childhood by coming to accept the false social values of middle-class society" (116). In a world in which evil is a social and symbolic concept rather than a tangible and spiritual crime, Pip's worst problem is external—the socially acceptable emotional abuse and identity distortion he has suffered as an abused, lower-class orphan.

Great Expectations contains tremendous irony in its critique of unrealistic and harmful social expectations. Dickens' title seems deliberately ironic: it seems entirely appropriate that an upside-down fairy-turned-realistic tale should possess a paradoxical title that points to the social issue that the author is attempting to turn inside-out through critical analysis. Certainly, though, most of Dickens' books involve happy expectations and end happily, and *Great Expectations* is a notable exception, for even if one accepts the second ending as definitely involving a permanent union of Pip and Estella, both characters have been so scarred and broken throughout the course of the novel that one might seriously wonder if either will ever be truly happy in his or her lifetime. Although bearing strong influences of folklore in its settings, characters, and plot, the novel stands ultimately as a fantasy-edged piece of biting social commentary.

Dickens views his task as an author to dramatize how Victorian society has distorted the fairy tale; he pokes fun at Pip's lack of perspective while using that myopia to critique Victorian social blindness. Pip's identity, which comes to be characterized by his socio-economic-romantic expectations, is largely defined (and in the process distorted) externally by the members of his society. In Dickens' retold fairy tale, Pip's wildest dreams all come true—for a while. Yet when

he, like many of the Victorians, focuses more on external magic than internal morality, his values are subverted in his fairy-tale quest to have all his wishes granted. Not completely to blame, however, Pip's great fairytale expectations are heavily encouraged by members of his society. As a result of his and his contemporaries' flawed value system, Pip's beautiful Cinderella world violently explodes when he discovers that the socially disreputable convict Magwitch was responsible for his dreams coming true all along. In Dickens' own life, the sad irony was that while he achieved a fairytale lifestyle of tremendous wealth, fame, and approval, one of the most important aspects of the fairy tale—his romantic life—did not end the way that all good fairy tales do: happily ever after. In *Great Expectations,* the hero suffers and changes for the good, which is not generally a fairy-tale theme. The plot of the novel is an anti-fairy tale: the hero goes from riches to rags, all his dreams are shattered except perhaps the last and greatest one, that of marriage to the lovely Estella, and he must go through great difficulty in order to find redemption (which does not appear in fairy tales). Dickens' inverted fairy tale leaves the reader with the breathtaking magic of the invisible realm and the virtuous moral of the real world.

Chapter 3: The Characters Who Enable Pip's Identity Distortion

In the magical Dickens world, one of the greatest evidences of literary wizardry is in the creation of Dickens' characters. Dickens' novels are rife with Ebenezer Scrooges, Miss Havishams, David Copperfields, and Madame DeFarges. Whether round or flat, intricate and complex or ludicrous and cartoonish, Dickens' characters are inescapably memorable. Pip is something of an Everyman: a child with decent instincts who wants what nearly all men want—to be someone the world will take notice of. Pip is not remarkable for his horde of gold, his moldering bridal feast, or his fascination with the guillotine: rather, he is a common man who is influenced more than influencing and is unusual, in part, for the effect of the fantastic characters in the novel upon him. In the non-Christian but virtuous Dickens world, characters are influenced and shaped by their society rather than their personal sins, and as a result, Pip's identity comes to be defined by his great expectations that are largely the result of the deceptions of the other characters in the novel and society in general.

Literary giant G. K. Chesterton has remarked, "All [Dickens'] books might be called *Great Expectations"* (200), and such a title might appropriately be given to Dickens' own life as well. From his earliest days, Dickens desired to be a prosperous and respected man, and rise above the station to which he had been born. Young Pip, like Dickens, holds very high expectations for himself. A poor boy destined to become a blacksmith, Pip has great dreams instead of becoming a rich, respected, well-educated gentleman and winning the hand of the cold but beautiful Estella. Like many who desire greatness, however, Pip becomes savagely disillusioned throughout the course of the story as he discovers that his reasons for wanting everything he had ever wanted were based upon false assumptions.

These expectations were fairly typical of the hopes of many in the Victorian era. In the age of the railroad, industrial revolution, Great Exhibition, and British colonial expansion, many Victorians were changing their destinies. Men born into servitude, hard labor, or poverty were suddenly being given the opportunity to amass untold wealth if they worked hard enough or were in the right place at the right time. No longer were the upper classes the only ones with the money and power. "Great Expectations" was a specifically monetary term that was also peculiarly Victorian, and generally referred to the socioeconomic prospects and opportunities of a gentleman. Yet the title of the novel by Dickens has lost some of its evocative power, for in today's world, "expectations" usually refer to guidelines placed upon someone or standards to live up to, a vast difference from Victorian socioeconomic hopes, dreams, and opportunities.

Pip's expectations possess striking moral implications in the context of the novel. William Axton notes the connection between social expectations and morality in the Dickens literary paradigm: since the source of evil in Dickens is social rather than individual, Axton writes that Pip's crime is "asking more from life than, under the limitations imposed by one's nature, station, or the general conditions of existence, it can reasonably expected to return. The habit of holding great, but unrealistic expectations of life is the source of wrong [and] evil . . . in *Great Expectations*" (279). Although Pip's expectations are unrealistic, they are in some ways very understandable, and even noble in that it is a good thing to aim to walk among the stars: the problem is that Pip wishes to be great for his own satisfaction, not for the good of others. Pip wants desperately to leave his blue-collar blacksmith job behind and become a learned and distinguished gentleman. Left with nothing, not even an identity or a past inherited from his parents, Pip the orphan desires a future and a life bright with happiness and promise. Yet Pip's expectations are not entirely of his own making, and it is in the absence of an inherited past and

identity, as well as in the deception and encouragement of those around him, that his expectations flourish.

Pip's expectations are partly rooted in the boy's lack of a past, and therefore an identity. This deficiency of an inherited self is clearly displayed from his first lines at the beginning of the novel:

> 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 . . . As I never saw my father or mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them . . . my first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. (9)

Not only does Pip name himself, but he even imagines a family history for himself containing hypothetical personalities for his dead family members. Pip's self-naming is indicative of his having not only to find but also to create his own identity. Scholar Keith Selby deduces a great deal from this opening:

> [Pip] literally does not know who he is . . . Pip has no past, and hence no relationship to anything. Consequently, not only does he possess nothing (and much of *Great Expectations* is about the desire to possess), but he also has no status in the world, because he is wholly alienated from it. He has no place anywhere, and is nobody . . . [This situation] impresses very forcefully on our minds a sense of Pip's isolation in the world, and the need for him to build relationships with other people in order to discover who he is. (35-36)

While the statement that Pip "has no place anywhere" may be a bit of an exaggeration, as Pip is provided with food, shelter, and clothing by his sister and with genuine love by Joe, it is not far off from the truth.

From the beginning of the novel until the return of Magwitch, Pip's identity is defined by the expectations placed upon him by the adults around him. Critic Philip Allingham compares Pip to the orphan-hero of another famous *Bildungsroman*, Huckleberry Finn. He writes that "in both novels the protagonist struggles to find a morality of the heart, even though it may be at variance with society's expectations and dictates" (447). Pip, like Huck, is raised by a relative who cares little for him. Pip relates one of his sister's constant attempts to make him feel guilty that he is alive:

> "If it warn't for me you'd have been to the churchyard long ago, and stayed there. Who brought you up by hand?" "You did," said I. "And why did I do it, I should like to know!" exclaimed my sister. I whimpered, "I don't know." "I don't!" said my sister. "I'd never do it again! I know that . . . It's bad enough being a blacksmith's wife (and him a Gargery) without being your mother." (14)

Because Pip is an orphan, raised by a shrewish sister many years older, he lacks the memories of parental affection that usually begin to shape the identities of young children. From the beginning, his sister's mistreatment of him sends young Pip a clear message: "You are not worth the trouble it takes to raise you." Psychologist Saul Kassin explains that the field of psychology has explored the "nature versus nurture" debate for many years. Many psychologists hold that nurture, or the way in which someone is raised, makes him who he is. Kassin writes that several other experts in the field believe that nature, or a person's "biological blueprint," works together with nurture to create a person's identity (363). Both nature and nurture are important, and while

Pip's nature is mostly innocent, his nurture leaves much to be desired, resulting in a distortion of his identity. A sad and universal truism of human nature is that people's impressions of themselves are generally formed or at least influenced by how others view them, and while Joe, Pip's sister's husband, has always been a kind presence in Pip's life, Joe is more of an equal than a father, and a child without parents is a child without an inherited meta-narrative to which he can connect his identity.

As a result of Pip's lack of inherited identity, he can in some ways become any sort of person he wants to be. On the other hand, at the start, he is too young to be very different from the picture of himself that cruel or neglectful adults present him with. At the disastrous Christmas party, Pip is informed by the foolish Mr. Hubble that the young are all "naterally wicious" (26), and Pip is expected to take heed accordingly. Without any evidence whatsoever, it is implied to Pip constantly that he is "wicious" and "ungrateful," and that he should do everything within his power to make amends for these sins. Pip knows in his subconscious that somehow, he has no intention of being "wicious" or ungrateful and that his sister's treatment of him does not encourage gratitude, but he is not yet sure what he is, if not defined by these derogatory labels.

Both Pip and Dickens' identities were shaped by several traumatic defining incidents in their lives. Pip's meeting with Magwitch, first visit to Satis House, and acquisition of Magwitch's money all occur in the first third of the story. Reconnecting with Magwitch after several years, learning that Miss Havisham is not his benefactor, and publically identifying with Magwitch all define Pip in the second and third parts of the novel. Dickens was defined by his terrifying experience in the blacking factory, his parents' favoritism of his sister Fanny who was allowed to attend a prestigious school as a child, his rejection by Maria Beadnell, the death of

Mary Hogarth, the purchase of Gad's Hill, and the eventual failure of his marriage. As with Pip, several of Dickens' defining incidents involved either love or money and social class, and Dickens has translated many of these incidents into Pip's semi-autobiographical story.

The first defining incident of his life that Pip is able to remember is his violent introduction to the convict Magwitch. In the novel's first few paragraphs, Pip is assaulted and turned upside-down by a fearsome-looking, manacled man who demands that Pip bring him food and a file or be horribly killed. After overcoming his initial terror, at his second meeting with Magwitch, having brought file and food, Pip kindly opines about Magwitch's health and remarks that he is glad the man enjoyed his meal (21). Despite his polite treatment of the convict, Pip is long-scarred by the event: believing himself, like Huck Finn, to have broken an irrevocable social rule by aiding a man on the wrong side of the law, and feeling tremendous guilt at his theft of the food and file from his brother-in-law and sister, Pip thinks that he is morally tainted for years afterward, so much so that this idea becomes a part of his identity. At the Christmas dinner shortly afterward, when the soldiers come to look for the blacksmith, Pip believes that he is not only the one sought by the law, but that he deserves to be so hunted. In an "agony of apprehension" (30), Pip is terrified that he has been caught at last by the authorities for helping the convict, and realizes later as he is unable to tell Joe the truth of the incident that he is "too cowardly to do what [he] knew to be right" (37). As a result, insidious guilt definitively gnaws at Pip's identity for years as he believes himself worthy of condemnation for helping the convict, for stealing the food, and for failing to tell Joe of the truth afterwards.

As his search for identity continues, Pip's life is shaped by a second defining incident when he is asked to come and visit Miss Havisham. Treated like literal dirt by the haughty Estella, and like a servant merely useful for taking orders by Miss Havisham, Pip's great

expectations surprisingly begin to form and become part of his identity as a result of his dreadful visit. G. Robert Strange indicates that as a result of Satis House, “Pip acquires his false admiration for the genteel; he falls in love with Estella and fails to see that she is the cold instrument of Miss Havisham’s revenge” (116). Raised by an uneducated blacksmith, Pip is suddenly exposed to great wealth, cruelty, and eccentricity when he meets the Havishams. Their ill treatment of him would certainly have some kind of devaluing effect on Pip no matter what, as anyone would likely have difficulty remembering his or her inherent value as a human being when treated as badly as Pip was. But Pip also experiences emotional abuse from his harpy sister Mrs. Joe, who constantly reminds him that he has no right to be alive, so his identity has already been distorted by unjust devaluation of his person. Discovering Satis House is so much more definitive and damaging to Pip, however, because of his ensuing self-destructive obsession with his primary tormentor, Estella.

Having been suddenly introduced to such a beautiful, superior, rich young lady, the rustic Pip feels ashamed of his upbringing due to Estella’s disdain, and also a desire to become a gentleman—so that he can impress both Estella and himself, proving to himself that her contempt of him is (or will someday be) groundless and undeserved. Pip’s expectations and identity begin to center on and flow from his dreams of Estella from this point onward. As a result, Pip’s expectations are destined never to be realized because of their flawed focus, and his identity doomed to incompleteness and distortion until he is able finally to see Estella and his affection for her for as shallow and destructive. Pip believes that he is capable of becoming a gentleman “someday,” an admirable assumption that lends itself more easily, perhaps, to a poor orphan than a poor child who has parents to tell him that he will never rise above the station in life to which he is born. With some education, money, manners, and reputation, Pip schemes, his

very identity could be that of a gentleman. Unfortunately, it takes Pip many years to realize that external trappings contribute little to no part of what makes a true gentleman.

In his quest to find a valid identity, Pip has a self concept that is largely shaped by vast and subtle deception, some self-made, but mostly other-made. The self-made aspects of Pip's illusions are straightforward: Pip believes that Miss Havisham is his secret benefactor first because he *wants* to believe it—he hopes that through this patronage, he will eventually be able to obtain the hand of his love Estella, and second, because he simply does not know any other rich people who might be prompted to take the slightest interest in him. Also, his benefactor has chosen to use the lawyer Mr. Jaggers as an intermediary between Pip and himself, and in a tragic coincidence, Jaggers is Miss Havisham's lawyer as well as Magwitch's.

Yet much of the considerable deception in the novel surrounding Pip's expectations and identity is foisted upon Pip by others. Comparing Pip and Huck's moral education stories, Allingham notes that both are "self-told tales of the growing up of children in harsh environments and among deceptive adults" (449). Pip is deceived about his identity and his expectations in life from the beginning. When Pip is first invited to Satis House, his sister remarks that "this boy's fortune may be made by his going to Miss Havisham's" (45), and thereby Pip is encouraged from the beginning to believe that Miss Havisham may one day be his benefactor. When Pip does eventually inherit a great deal of money, the first minor character to mislead him is Uncle Pumblechook.

When Uncle Pumblechook learns of Pip's inheritance, he erroneously assumes that Pip's benefactor is the eccentric Miss Havisham, whom Pip has entertained for so long. Instantly attempting to take some measure of credit for Pip's newfound wealth, Uncle Pumblechook comments, "'To think . . . that I should have been the humble instrument of leading up to this, is

a proud reward'" (119). Had Miss Havisham been Pip's actual benefactor, there would have been at least slight justification for Pumblechook's pride, as it was initially he who orchestrated Pip's first visit to Satis House, but the truth, of course, discovered much later, was that Pip's patron was not Miss Havisham.

Yet while Pumblechook and the other townspeople of Pip's village simply jump to wrong conclusions about the identity of Pip's benefactor, it is the lawyer Jaggers, possessing full knowledge of the benefactor's true identity, who encourages Pip's illusions from the very beginning. The first to inform Pip of his expectations, Jaggers begins to deceive Pip by omission. In the entire novel, Jaggers is one of perhaps only three characters who know that Miss Havisham is not Pip's benefactor. Yet while Jaggers realizes that Pip believes a lie regarding the identity of his benefactor, Jaggers makes no efforts to discourage Pip from these erroneous beliefs. Philip Allingham illuminates the situation:

> Jaggers . . . proposes that Matthew Pocket, to whom Pip has heard [Miss Havisham] assign a place of honor at her funeral, serve as Pip's tutor. The lawyer in his capacity as mentor of the criminal class is well aware that Pip is jumping to a spurious conclusion because the boy so desperately wishes to believe that the eccentric brewery heiress is grooming him for marriage with her ward. Jaggers . . . deceives Pip by withholding information, an act that for Dickens is tantamount to lying. (465)

When Pip finally discovers that the convict Magwitch has been his benefactor all along, and confronts Jaggers regarding the subject, Jaggers utterly refuses to accept complicity in Pip's illusions. Pip generously absolves Jaggers of his silent deception, saying, '"I am not so unreasonable, sir, as to think you at all responsible for my mistakes and wrong conclusions; but I

always supposed [my benefactor] was Miss Havisham.' 'As you say, Pip,' returned Mr. Jaggers . . . 'I am not at all responsible for that'" (251). Despite his obvious involvement in Pip's illusions, however, Jaggers would seem to bear far less of the blame than Miss Havisham.

The next character to deceive Pip regarding his expectations, in a far more deliberate manner than Pumblechook or Jaggers, is Miss Havisham herself. When Pip comes ostensibly to take his leave of Miss Havisham on his way to London to become a gentleman, but really to thank her for what he believes is her patronage, one of Miss Havisham's disagreeable relatives, Sarah Pocket, is present throughout the whole exchange. Miss Havisham craftily questions Pip about his expectations, acting as though she has an intimate knowledge of the situation, and Pip says that "she quite gloated on these questions and answers, so keen was her enjoyment of Sarah Pocket's jealous dismay" (123). Sarah Pocket is angry at this point because she too believes that Miss Havisham is giving money to Pip rather than to her and her relatives. Miss Havisham, according to Linda Raphael, "acts on the belief that it is only through dehumanizing and often brutal deceit and abuse" (709) that she can control Estella, Pip, and her relatives. In point of fact, Miss Havisham actually seems to enjoy Pip's delusions. When Pip sadly asks her whether or not it was kind of her to encourage his illusions, Miss Havisham replies with fury that her own life has been so tragic that she bears no responsibility to ever show anyone kindness (269). While Pip's deceptions are in part air castles stemming from his own desires, it would seem that far more deception was practiced upon Pip, especially through Miss Havisham, than originated with him.

This deliberate deception on Miss Havisham's part in the face of Pip's obvious illusions likely has a twofold cause. William F. Axton analyzes the situation:

> By making Estella into an object of Pip's idolatrous infatuation . . . and by encouraging the young man in his erroneous belief that he is Miss Havisham's protégé, secretly elevated to genteel status in order to make him a suitable partner for the celestial Estella, [Miss Havisham gets] revenge . . . in raising expectations that must be frustrated. (290)

It is little wonder that Miss Havisham would play a significant role in dashing the expectations of someone else, however, because Miss Havisham herself presents a strikingly vivid picture of dashed expectations. Having lived for years a willing prisoner of the past, she has locked herself away in grief and self-pity over being jilted on her wedding day. Axton goes on to note that while part of Miss Havisham's motivation in using Estella and deceiving Pip is to avenge herself upon the male sex for her long-ago jilting, the other part of the issue is that as long as Pip thinks that he is Miss Havisham's protégé, the despicable Pockets will think so as well—and Miss Havisham despises her cousins enough to take great pleasure in their and Pip's false beliefs about his patron (68). Pip, unfortunately, like Estella, is being used by Miss Havisham throughout most of the novel, and it is only when she finally realizes the damage she has done to him that she begins to suffer any remorse.

While characters like Pumblechook and the other townspeople of Pip's village innocently believed that Miss Havisham was Pip's benefactor, and while people like Miss Havisham and Jaggers either made no effort to undeceive Pip or deliberately tried to deceive him, the Pocket family's attitude about the matter is equally damaging to the young man, perhaps because it is so entirely unconscious. The Pockets, Miss Havisham's relatives, simply take it for granted that Pip is receiving the inheritance that could be rightfully theirs. In Chapter 22, Herbert tells Pip of how he once hoped that Miss Havisham would like him enough to bestow some of

her money on him, but even though Miss Havisham clearly rebuffed him, and seemed to have accepted Pip instead, Herbert clearly bears no ill will. Pip states, '"I felt he as perfectly understood Miss Havisham to be my benefactress, as I understood the fact myself"" (144). Yet while Herbert and Matthew Pocket's family is generally good-natured towards Pip from the beginning, some of the other Pockets are not so kind. They, too, believe that Pip has supplanted them, but they react to this in a very negative way. Sarah, Camilla, and Georgianna Pocket are not at all pleased that, as they suppose, Pip has stolen away their fortune, and Sarah in particular gives Pip evil looks every time he visits Miss Havisham after coming into his fortune.

From the innocent support of Pumblechook and the Pockets to the deliberate support of Miss Havisham and Jaggers, Pip's illusions are yet supported by one other major individual: Magwitch, the convict. Abel Magwitch is the source of Pip's expectations, in more ways than one. After Pip's kind but terrified act of supplying the convict with food and a file years earlier, Magwitch makes a fortune in Australia and is eager to reward the young country boy who helped him. Yet Magwitch's motives are not entirely pure. While his generosity to Pip is beyond question, bequeathing to the boy hundreds of pounds every year, Magwitch is using Pip for his own purposes.

Magwitch's identity is defined by poverty and desperation from the very beginning of his life. Having no family to speak of, the uneducated and starving Englishman becomes a thief of necessity, and eventually falls in with a gentleman criminal by the name of Compeyson. In Chapter 42, Magwitch tells Pip the story of how Compeyson betrayed him, and when the two stood trial together, Magwitch's sentence was double that of Compeyson's, and Magwitch was treated far worse than his erstwhile friend, because of the simple fact that Compeyson was an educated gentleman, and Magwitch was an uneducated convict. In Pip, Magwitch saw a chance

to exact a complicated kind of revenge on the society that betrayed him due to his lack of gentility. Magwitch decides to give Pip a fortune, with instructions that Pip should take it and become a cultured gentleman as a result. In "George Bernard Shaw on *Great Expectations*," Humphrey House's criticism is pointed: "Magwitch is no benevolent idealist whose goodness may regenerate society; he is a power-lover and a snob, whose specious generosity all but corrupts Pip and brings about his good almost by chance" (217). Although this perspective may be slightly overstated, it certainly bears a measure of truth. In making Pip a gentleman, although Magwitch genuinely cares about Pip, the convict comes to create and "own" a man who was what he himself could never be—a refined and educated male respected by the high society that once betrayed the lowly convict.

Magwitch's expectations of Pip are far different, however, from those of the rest of Pip's society. In contrast to the cruel adults at the Christmas dinner table, Magwitch treats Pip with great kindness when he tells Joe that it was he, Magwitch, who stole the food and file. Pip is shocked and horrified to learn that Magwitch proceeded to spend years ranching in Australia, faithfully sending Pip money and "liv[ing] rough so that [Pip] should live smooth" (240), but the fact remains that Magwitch wanted to provide Pip with the means to be happy and acquire status, unlike Mrs. Joe's friends who would have been glad to see Pip grow into a hypocritical, sniveling blacksmith. Finally, Magwitch is so desperate to see his beloved "son" (241) that he throws caution away and sails back to England where a certain death penalty awaits him if he is caught. Although Magwitch's motives are not completely pure and to an extent he uses the act of turning Pip into the gentleman Magwitch could never be as a form of social revenge, the old convict does truly love the boy.

Whatever the motives behind Magwitch's generosity, however, the fact remains that in the face of Magwitch's silence, Pip is inevitably led to wrong conclusions. Thus, Magwitch is also indirectly responsible for the illusory nature of Pip's expectations. Of course, the convict might have feared that Pip would refuse the money if he knew its source, but this possibility is unlikely because when he finally returns to Pip years later, he asks, '"But didn't you never think it might be me?" to which Pip fervently replies, "Never, never!" (241). Magwitch's inexplicable silence on the matter of his generosity may simply have been a plot device used of necessity by Dickens. Philip Allingham believes that "Dickens deliberately misleads the reader (as Pip himself was misled by Miss Havisham) as to the source of the Great Expectations and the intention behind bestowing them. The question of Dickens's relative dishonesty is directly related to the serialized publication of the novel" (452). Dickens could not allow Magwitch to reveal his patronage early on in the novel, for his readership might have fallen off, and the suspense of the work would have been aborted. The novel is, indeed, far stronger with Magwitch's shocking revelation two-thirds of the way through the story than it would be without it—however, in this act of deception perpetrated by Dickens himself, Magwitch is left perhaps the guiltiest conspirator of all in the deceiving of Pip. Jaggers and Miss Havisham could have and probably should have undeceived Pip, or at least failed to encourage his illusions—but the secret of the expectations was not theirs—it was Magwitch's. Yet Magwitch is the center of Pip's expectations in more than just a financial way, for it is Magwitch who is the father of the beautiful Estella, the love of Pip's life and the reason behind much of his expectations.

Estella Havisham—or perhaps rather Pip's idea of Estella—is probably more responsible inadvertently for Pip's expectations than any other character, but unlike the other characters, Estella actively discourages Pip's expectations. Before he ever obtained Magwitch's money, Pip

wanted to be a gentleman for the sake of the ethereal, wealthy Estella. The inexorable series of events that was Pip's expectations was set in motion by Pip's very first visit to Satis House. At the end of the visit, Dickens writes, "Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day" (60). And that first link was Pip's desperate infatuation with Estella.

When Estella first meets Pip, she labels him "common," an insult which Pip can hardly bear. Later she exclaims, "'He calls the knaves, Jacks, this boy! . . . And what coarse hands he has. And what thick boots!'" (52). Insulted for his lack of culture, education, and appearance, Pip is devastated. He writes, "Her contempt for me was so strong, that it became infectious, and I caught it" (52). Yet he is fascinated by the beautiful girl, although miserable from her scorn.

Although Pip's entire life comes to revolve mainly around the slender hope of winning Estella's hand in marriage, Estella bears almost no complicity in Pip's illusions, however, for she repeatedly informs him that she has no heart and that she will never love him. Pip dreams on, however, "against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be" (179). As a result of the impossibly flawed foundations of his expectations, Pip's dreams are doomed to destruction. Eventually, Estella and the expectations she engenders in Pip become a part of his very identity.

Because of their foundation of illusion, Pip's expectations are doomed from the beginning, but they cause tremendous devastation in Pip's life as a result of their peculiar nature. Because he believed that Miss Havisham intended him to marry Estella for so many years, Pip's ruinous illusions lasted so long that they began to distort his soul. Not only was Miss Havisham not Pip's patron, but neither was Magwitch's money nor Estella a meaningful object upon which

to build his hopes, dreams, and identity. For almost the entirety of the novel, Estella's cool indifference to Pip plays an ironic part in the reason why he is so infatuated with her. Gwen Watkins discusses the hopelessness of Pip's infatuation:

> For [Pip] [Estella] is Circe, the Siren, the Lorelei, Rappacini's Daughter, all myths of alluring and unattainable love, so that it is a shock to the reader when Herbert, who is not one of her victims, coolly reduces her to the level of an ordinary girl: "She's a Tartar . . . That girl's hard and haughty and capricious to the last degree." She would be as effectively lost to Pip if she married him as she is when she marries Drummle, since her rejection of his love is as disastrously necessary to him as that love itself. (55)

Not only are Pip's expectations based upon delusions about the origins of his money, but they are also based upon love for a girl who is incapable of love. Pip's expectations and his very identity are destined for destruction, because they are based upon a world that does not exist, a world in which Estella could return his love and Miss Havisham is his fairy godmother. Watkins describes the pathos of Pip's tragedy: "If what is loved is not lovable and cannot love in return, if water will not cure a man's thirst, if Adam forever longs for a Paradise forever lost, what is he to do?" (57). Until Pip realizes the truth about the origins of his money, until Estella becomes capable of love, and until Pip is able to form a more realistic identity, he is consigned to utter failure.

Pip's identity is so completely tied to Estella that he comes to the point where almost every decision he makes stems from his obsession with her. When she tells him to forget about her, Pip exclaims:

> You are part of my existence, part of myself. You have been in every line I have ever read since I first came here . . . You have been in every prospect I have ever seen since . . . 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 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. (272)

Pip knows that Estella is not good for him, due to her cruel scorn, her careless indifference, and her general lack of humanity, but for most of the novel after he discovers she is not meant for him, he finds himself incapable of letting her go. It is only when Pip learns to relinquish his desperate infatuation that he is afforded the opportunity finally to possess what he has so long desired. Pip's impossible love for Estella is impossible until both he and Estella change dramatically, and until Estella becomes capable of love and understanding. The very end of the novel, however, in both versions, would seem in fact to support the idea that at last, Estella is indeed transformed through suffering.

Encouraged by everyone from the unwitting Uncle Pumblechook and the Pockets, to the actively or silently deceptive Jaggers, Miss Havisham, and Magwitch, Pip's expectations are conceived in illusion. Yet as with Dickens' deception via Magwitch, the very world which Dickens has created for Pip lends itself to fantasy. Paul Pickrel introduces the ethereal qualities of *Great Expectations*: "The story is a fairy tale, with a terrible ogre, Magwitch, a wildly eccentric fairy godmother, an exquisite princess, and a sudden magical transformation" (96). With the fantastic and bizarre elements introduced by Magwitch and his gold, Miss Havisham and her haunted house, Wemmick and his castle, etc., *Great Expectations* contains many

characteristics of fairy tales which intensify the fictional experience of external factors that contribute to Pip's identity and illusions.

Pip's identity is built on fairy tales because his life has actually been a fairy tale. Pickrel explains that Pip is only so culpable for his false expectations and self-deception:

> Pip is not entirely to be blamed in all this. His early life was fantastic; his contacts with creatures like Magwitch and Miss Havisham could only encourage the habit of fantasy in him; and then in adolescence to have his wildest dreams realized, to be suddenly transformed from a humble village apprentice to a young Londoner with great expectations—what result could all this have except to make the boy suppose that the world is indeed whatever his fancy would like it to be? How could he avoid supposing that he was one singularly excused by the gods from facing consequences? (227)

Until Magwitch returns, Pip does not have to face any consequences of his actions except for emotional anxiety. Before the return of the convict, Pip's life is a Cinderella story. Tzvetan Todorov explains that fairy tales are the "stablest narrative form," and can involve situations that are currently static, but open to change. Change transpires, and the main character must deal with the crisis. Eventually, "equilibrium is . . . reestablished, but it is no longer that of the beginning" (163). Pip's story fits beautifully with Todorov's narrative form: it involves a static situation that changes with the arrival of Magwitch, the introduction to Estella and Satis House, and the acquiring of Magwitch's money. Pip's identity is defined not only by others' opinions of him, but also by the social narratives available to him. Pip begins to see his life as a fairy tale, even until the time when Magwitch comes and shatters all his expectations, turning his happy Cinderella fairy story into the dark Misnar's Pavilion fairy tale. *Great Expectations* oddly

enough is in many ways an anti-fairy tale. Harry Stone speaks of the story analogously to Magwitch's holding Pip upside-down over the gravestone as "the inverted fairy tale that Dickens… tell[s]" (299). Pip's saga is the story of a boy whose dreams "magically" come true for a time, but at the end of his fantastic tale he loses the money, the identity, and the illusions of a gentleman, and it is only possible, not certain, that he gains Estella in the end.

Pip's expectations of becoming a well-educated, wealthy, and respected gentleman parallel Dickens' own, but unlike Dickens' expectations, which seem to have been motivated far more by simple internal willpower than external encouragement (excepting the negative reinforcement of the blacking factory), Pip's expectations are formed by and center almost exclusively on others. From those who innocently assume erroneous conclusions about the source of Pip's expectations to those who deliberately deceive him, to the one girl for whom he sells his soul, giving up his internal values of kindness and humility for pride and good appearances, Pip's expectations are largely formed by and on account of others. Because of Dickens' unbiblical theological perspective, Pip's identity is distorted by his society, not his personal sins. After striving desperately for years to forget and escape his humble origins through becoming a gentleman externally, Pip finally discovers that one need not have money, class, or education to be a true gentleman. All one really needs is kindness and love. Although Pip's identity rehabilitation is not Christian, as it does not involve personal sin, it does borrow from Christian ideas of love and sacrifice, affirming the true worth of positive moral values. Only after Pip's moral transformation can his quest to become a gentleman be re-formed on a genuine, meaningful foundation, and his expectations become realistic.

Chapter 4: The Nature and Effects of Pip's Identity Distortion

The concept of what it meant to be a gentleman or gentlewoman in Victorian Britain was a highly complex and socially nuanced one. For centuries in this remarkably class-conscious world of dukes and dustmen, a person's parentage had defined his station in life. The well-born and titled were highly respected by society, whether or not they had any money attached to their family names. Several of these upper class citizens possessed the opportunities to marry well, sit in the houses of Parliament, and go nearly anywhere and do practically anything they wanted to. In Dickens' *Great Expectations*, the question of what a true gentleman is strongly permeates the entire story. In order to achieve his great expectations, Pip decides that his identity must be defined as that of a gentleman, the Victorian symbol of all that is civilized and cultivated. Yet for both Pip and his society in general, the popular image of a gentleman was fundamentally economic and social, translating into an idea of correctness and power in appearance rather than personal qualities, and therefore it is not until he receives the power of Magwitch's money (which he thinks comes from Miss Havisham) that Pip has any hope of realizing his gentlemanly expectations. After spending countless pounds and hours in becoming a quintessential Victorian gentleman, however, Pip is violently forced to confront the twisted moral standards and counterfeit socioeconomic identity that he has constructed for himself, realizing that they are based on false expectations of a life spent with Estella and living richly and "happily ever after" without moral responsibility to the Divine, society, or anyone else.

The physical stability between economic comfort and abject poverty could change as quickly as a walk through the door of debtor's prison in Victorian England. Enjoying the security of a supposedly stable family financial situation, Charles Dickens was raised as a lower-middle class boy until the appalling day when his father was hauled away to prison by his creditors.

Suddenly, everything changed for Dickens. Robin Gilmour writes that the author "discovered for himself how thin and precarious was the partition that separated a lower-middle-class family from the abyss of urban poverty in the early nineteenth century; and he knew from his own experience how intensely that partition might be valued by those threatened with the drop into the abyss" (107). Dickens would go on to spend the rest of his life rigorously avoiding the financial difficulties of his parents and fighting to maintain his gentleman status; with the ominous threat of debtor's prison looming above them, this obsession with retaining both the status and security of the middle class was a struggle for many in the Victorian Era. This battle would translate into *Great Expectations*; it is the thinness of the partition between comfort and poverty and the moral principles that separate the two with which Pip and *Great Expectations* are so urgently concerned.

Like Pip, Charles Dickens experienced more than one significant change in social status; he went from being a Navy officer's highly literate son to a desperate factory boy to the most celebrated author in England. A. N. Wilson quotes Walter Bagehot, stating that at Dickens' death, the novelist's influence over the entire nation was unparalleled by any other Englishman (336). Yet despite his widespread popularity, Dickens always struggled to be accepted by the elitist aristocracy, a conflict mirrored somewhat in the social aspirations of Dickens' protagonist Pip. Dickens' father was born of illiterate servants, but his mother was the daughter of a Navy pay officer. As a result of his father's "marrying up," Dickens' social status was something approaching middle class. Yet this established place in the social strata was terrifyingly challenged in 1824 when Dickens' father was sent to debtors' prison and young Charles was forced to work in a blacking factory so as not to be a burden to his family. Suddenly, the young Dickens saw all his long-cherished hopes of becoming a well-educated gentleman vanish into the

evil smoke of the factory. The great expectations and identity itself of the sickly little boy who loved to read were severely and horrifyingly challenged. Of this time in his life, Dickens wrote to his friend John Forster:

> No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I . . . felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in my breast. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written. (Forster 22)

Dickens would never forget his terrifying brush with poverty, and to the end of his life he relieved its torment. Forster reproduces a statement in which Dickens discusses the permanent distortion of his identity caused by the factory experience: “My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations that, even now—famous and caressed and happy—I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children—even that I am a man—and wander desolately back to that time of my life” (Forster 22). Although his servitude in the factory lasted only three months, the young Dickens was not to know that he would be released so soon from his torment. He was never to forget his hopeless feelings of entrapment in a seemingly futureless existence, and it is understandable that he spent the rest of his life driven by a powerful ambition to become “learned and distinguished,” a position far removed from that of the blacking factory boy.

Like Dickens, Pip wants desperately to leave his blue-collar blacksmith job behind and become a learned and distinguished gentleman. Written in a semi-autobiographical style, *Great*

Expectations tells Pip's story, but at various times it also tells Dickens', and as a result Dickens made sure to re-read his more directly semi-autobiographical novel *David Copperfield* before writing *Great Expectations*, to avoid repeating himself. During his childhood in the blacking factory, Dickens always held himself aloof from the other boys, because he considered them the common sort of people who actually belonged in a blacking factory. In an autobiographical fragment, Dickens wrote of his fellow workers: "Though perfectly familiar with them, my conduct and manners were different enough to place a space between us. They, and the men, always spoke of me as 'the young gentleman'" (qtd. in Forster 28-29). Dickens, like Pip, seems to have desperately longed to be better than his early surroundings. Having lived throughout his life in the lower, middle, and upper class, however, Dickens himself came to realize that being a gentleman involved deeply held moral values, not just education, money, and reputation. Pip, however, is forced with great difficulty to learn that great expectations and money are not the sum requirements for being a true gentleman.

In the strictly class-conscious Victorian England, despite the growing rise of the middle class, men like Dickens, who wanted to be more than they were, were mocked by the landed aristocracy. Noted scholar G. K. Chesterton describes Dickens' difficulties:

> When people say that Dickens could not describe a gentleman, what they mean is . . . that Dickens could not describe a gentleman as gentlemen feel a gentleman. They mean that he could not take that atmosphere easily, accept it as the normal atmosphere, or describe that world from the inside . . . Dickens did not describe gentlemen in the way that gentlemen describe gentlemen . . . He described them . . . from the outside, as he described any other oddity or special trade. (125)

Although Dickens might have wished to be a born gentleman, it seems that his minimally middle-class birth may have been a great artistic asset. Critic Robin Gilmour discusses the differences between Dickens and his greatest literary rival, William Makepeace Thackeray, who was of more genteel birth than Dickens, and therefore was able to describe gentlemen "from the inside." But Dickens, it seems, had the distinct advantage over his competitor, for Dickens' outsider status "gave him an insight into the Victorian pursuit of gentility, and the role of the gentleman in the structure of nineteenth-century society, which a born insider like Thackeray could never have" (107). Despite the talent and insider knowledge of his rival, Dickens is far more widely read by the common man today than the more elitist Thackeray.

Dickens' fixation with the idea of the gentleman was one common to his society in general. Gilmour writes, "Dickens shared to the full in the Victorian ambivalence about the relative claims of inherited and acquired status . . . Dickens was capable of asserting his qualities as a self-made man as well as his claims as a gentleman's son" (108). Although not the son of landed aristocrats, Dickens was minimally able to assert status gained through good birth. In the new age of industrial tycoons and oil barons, however, wealth and status began to have less and less to do with birth, and more and more to do with talent and hard work. If being a gentleman was a matter of external wealth, education, and accomplishments, then Dickens did in fact attain gentleman status. But Dickens was wiser than perhaps the average gentleman, and he realized that a true gentle man was not so much rich or educated but kind and respectful to everyone.

One of the great difficulties in Pip's search for identity in a Victorian context is the question of what makes a true gentleman. The Era of Victoria saw a change in the socioeconomic status of certain members of the populace. For hundreds of years, the citizens of England had been more or less consigned to be who they were born to be. Dustmen begat

dustmen, and dukes begat dukes. Yet with the tremendous technological and industrial innovations that began occurring during the 1800s, some Englishmen obtained the opportunity to alter their fate. As the poor English protagonist of the medieval film *A Knight's Tale* so aptly said, "A man can change his stars." Although a dramatic reversal of fortune such as William Thatcher experienced in the film would have been wildly improbable in his own fourteenth century, by the Victorian era, such things, while not common, were at least slightly more likely. A. N. Wilson writes that the Victorian era "was the period of the most radical transformation ever seen by the world. Before [the Victorians] major industrialization was confined to a few towns in Britain. After them the whole world was covered with railways and factories; and the unstoppable rise and spread of technology would continue into the age of Silicon Valley" (1). With the coming of the Industrial Revolution, imperialism, and tremendous advancements in science and technology, common working men began to have access to economic advancement. Untitled, new money citizens were not viewed in the same way as old money, titled aristocrats—but during the Victorian Era a strong middle class composed of originally working class people began to arise. Terry Eagleton writes, "The landed aristocracy increased in material strength and social standing throughout the nineteenth century, but at the same time the relative importance of agriculture and the wealth of the landed class in relation to other classes suffered a sharp decline" (5-6). Working class men such as merchants and bankers who had made great fortunes could marry aristocratic women and have aristocratic children, particularly when such aristocratic women came from respected and titled but poverty-stricken families.

The Victorian English gentleman was the social pinnacle of his society. Harold Perkin states, "The leisured gentleman was the ideal at which the whole society aimed, and by which it measured its happiness and ambitions" (55). Becoming a gentleman was the hope of many in the

middle and lower classes of Victorian society. Gentlemen were universally respected, and had seemingly endless social, political, and economic opportunities. According to Harold Laski, speaking of the concept of the English gentleman that was formed in the Victorian Era, "the gentleman had persuaded the world to believe that he was the final term of human evolution" (19). All of common society looked up to the gentleman and aspired to be like him, but only a select few were able to obtain gentlemanly status.

In 1748, Philip Dormer Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield, wrote letters to his illegitimate son on the distinguishing characteristics of a gentleman, that a century later the Victorians would still use to define an aristocrat. According to Chesterfield, such a man had to be independently wealthy, generally deriving his income from owning land. His gentlemanly attributes included poise, social acceptance, flattery of others, dress, manners, and conversation (53, 74, 80-81, 103-106). In other words, one could not be a gentleman without acting, dressing, and thinking the part. Chesterfield does make some mention of "introspection," the treatment of women, laughing inaudibly, and a few other things that could be an attempt to focus on internal rather than external qualities, but Chesterfield's main thrust throughout his writing is to have good manners, treat women well, and avoid conversation about one's flaws solely in order to appear well bred as a social norm, not as a moral virtue.

By contrast, published just a few years prior to *Great Expectations*, Samuel Smiles' hugely popular *Self-help* explicates the moral ideals identifying the Victorian gentleman. The true gentleman, Smiles writes, is honest, hardworking (if necessary), and a man of integrity. He is given to courage, generosity, and self-sacrifice. Smiles writes that a true gentleman's nature is defined by his "moral worth," and says that "the Psalmist briefly describes him as one that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteously, and speaketh the truth in his heart [Psalm 15.2]."

The ultimate tests of true gentility, however, are how much kindness and compassion the gentleman displays to those subordinate to himself (360-80). Although Smiles' ideas were good, and his book was well-read (especially by the working and lower classes), unfortunately many of the more wealthy Victorians felt that it was both easier and more important to cultivate external appearances than internal qualities, and as a result, while there were many great Victorians of fine Christian character such as Charles Haddon Spurgeon and John Henry Cardinal Newman, there were many more who went to church only because they were expected by society to do so, and otherwise lived self-centered lives.

Although *Great Expectations* is one of the only novels in which Dickens closely examines the idea of the gentleman, another popular Victorian author, Anthony Trollope, was obsessively fascinated with the gentleman question throughout his writings. In one of Trollope's novels, *Doctor Thorne*, the gentleman question is answered emphatically by the character of Mary Thorne, who asks "What makes a gentleman? What makes a gentlewoman? What is the inner reality, the spiritualized quintessence of that privilege in the world which men call rank . . . ? What gives, or can give, or should give it? And she answer[s] the question. Absolute, intrinsic, acknowledged, individual merit" (75). Pip himself, being "new money," and lacking any sort of noble inherited past or others-centered upper-class social priorities, finds himself the sort of gentleman that Chesterfield, but not Smiles or Trollope, would have approved of in many ways. For much of the novel Pip sees the concept of a gentleman too simply; until the return of Magwitch, he believes that a true gentleman is defined only by his outward trappings and possessions.

In addition to concerned fathers like Chesterfield, social critics like Smiles, and novelists like Dickens and Anthony Trollope, scholars like John Henry Cardinal Newman also had much

to say on the subject of the gentleman. In his *The Idea of the University*, Newman discusses the goal of education. He writes that education should not just involve pouring useful facts into people, but that education should rather equip them to live life better. The man who lives life well, the true gentleman, according to Newman, is "one who never inflicts pain." He is compassionate, patient, self-controlled, and wise, and cares more about his moral character than his material affluence (1041). Dickens, it seems, would have appreciated the virtuous characteristics inherent in this ideal, because in the end it is this sort of man that Pip realizes he needs to become in order to be a true gentleman.

Pip comes to understand this truth, but he learns it the hard way; while it is a good thing to wish to become a better person, become better educated, and have more influence on society, Pip goes further than this. He wants to be rich as only the poor man can, and his future goals are admirably larger than many of his contemporaries, but his motivations for wanting to become a gentleman are fundamentally selfish, focused on escaping Estella's contempt and Mrs. Joe's emotional abuse of him, and as long as he attempts to become a gentleman to please or impress someone else, he will never achieve his goal.

As a result of Estella's painful scorn, in a desperate desire to impress her, Pip begins to see the world through her eyes and values things from an external perspective, based upon whether or not Estella (representative of the upper class of England) would find worth in them. After his first visit to Satis House, he realizes that Estella would probably not think well of Joe, the person who loves him most in the world: "I thought . . . how common Estella would consider Joe, a mere blacksmith: how thick his boots, and how coarse his hands. I thought how Joe and my sister were then sitting in the kitchen, and how I had come up to bed from the kitchen, and how Miss Havisham and Estella never sat in a kitchen, but were far above the level of such

common doings" (60). It is little wonder that when Pip suddenly obtains a fortune, he gradually turns his back on Joe, as one unfit to fraternize with the gentleman Pip thinks he has become. Thus, the essence of Pip's identity begins to be inextricably woven into his obsession with Estella.

Pip fails to perceive true worth accurately in people and situations on a consistent basis. When he has been recently installed as a gentleman in London, and Joe makes the trip up to visit him, Pip is unhappy. He says, "Not with pleasure, though I was bound to him by so many ties; no; with considerable disturbance, some mortification, and a keen sense of incongruity. If I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money" (169). Pip is ashamed of Joe, for Joe is "not a gentleman," defined by Pip as one who is uneducated, ill-mannered, and poor. Pip's motivation doubtless stems from the fact that he has so lately renounced his own humble origins, and does not wish in any way to be reminded of them. Pip's utter rejection of his past, however, leads him to become a sort of faux gentleman, as he becomes accustomed to the external looks, manners, education, and money of a gentleman, but does not work at all on making his character truly gentle. Instead, Pip values the empty wealth of unhappy people like the Havishams and the Finches of the Grove. Throughout Pip's rise as a gentleman, and Magwitch's responsibility in that effort, Dickens is clearly making a statement about the nature of a true gentleman; as Pip learns to his chagrin, a real gentleman is not one who is so externally, but instead is a person like Joe who treats others with kindness and respect despite being taken advantage of by them.

Men like Joe, Herbert, and even Magwitch are contrasted with Pip as examples of true gentility. After Pip has consistently snubbed Joe, Joe returns to London as Pip lies deathly ill. Joe patiently nurses Pip back to health and pays off his frivolous debts. Herbert, born a gentleman, is

nonetheless extremely poor. Yet he always has a cheerful attitude regarding his fortunes or lack thereof, and works hard to get ahead in the world, not expecting things to be handed to him. Even Magwitch, a criminal and a social outcast, draws blame away from Pip for the food and file theft, then years later bequeaths great sums of money and educational opportunities upon him. Both Pip and Magwitch fail to realize that while one does not have to be of noble birth to be a true gentleman, regardless of money, education, and respectability, one must absolutely possess kindness and humility, or utterly fail in being a gentleman. Yet despite his misconceptions of what it means to be a real gentleman, Magwitch actually manages to accomplish this very feat. It is only when Pip comes to appreciate the love that despised, felonious Magwitch has had for him for years, watches the uneducated, poor, and lowly blacksmith Joe pay off his debts and nurse him through his long illness, and manages to forgive the finally repentant and ruined Miss Havisham that he fully understands that a true gentleman is one regardless of his social status or bank account. When Pip finally realizes the irony that sometimes a criminal can be more of a gentleman than he himself can be, and that the qualities of a true gentleman are more internal than external, it is then that his moral education reaches its climax, and he is finally able to truly begin to find his identity.

Because his identity as a gentleman is based upon flawed assumptions, Miss Havisham is not his fairy godmother, and Estella is not his fairytale princess, Pip's expectations must of necessity end in failure. To Magwitch, the origin of his expectations, and to Pip, the poor country boy, becoming a gentleman requires only money, manners, connections, and education. After all, the black-hearted villain Compeyson was viewed as a "gentleman" by the court that tried him and Magwitch, and all he had to support this claim were manners, bearing, education, and an accident of birth. When Magwitch finally explodes back into Pip's life, the old convict is

delighted to discover the material aspects of Pip's gentlemanly status. He walks around Pip's rooms remarking first upon his pocket watch, "a gold 'un and a beauty; that's a gentleman's, I hope! Look at [the] linen; fine and beautiful! Look at [the] clothes; better ain't to be got! And [the] books too . . . mounting up, on their shelves, by hundreds!" (241) Like Magwitch and the vast majority of Victorian society, Pip has come to believe that a gentleman is defined by his social, rather than moral attributes. As long as he only understands what a gentleman is on a surface level, Pip can never be truly gentle.

Pip is not the only character in the novel who is challenged and molded by distorted moral and socioeconomic standards, however, and his pursuit of the ideal of nineteenth-century gentility is sharply contrasted with and formed in relation to the secret daughter of convicts who is ironically raised as an aristocrat, Miss Estella Havisham. Complex and paradoxical, Estella is the beautiful but severely emotionally damaged adopted daughter of the eccentric Miss Havisham. Estella and Pip meet when she is about fourteen years old, and her identity is still being formed. Pip and Estella have a great deal in common, despite their vastly different socioeconomic upbringings and social expectations. Harry Stone remarks that throughout the book, Pip "is contrasted with Estella, who has been distorted by the same agencies which twist him" ("Fire, Hand, and Gate" 668). Ideas of gentility and social status, emotionally or physically abusive mother figures, and self-delusion all play significant roles in the distorting of Pip and Estella's identities.

Like Pip whose upper-class life is made possible by a member of the criminal class, Estella is surrounded by similar irony. Stone notes that Estella, far from being the lovely fairy tale princess that Pip believes her to be, is actually the daughter of the convicts Magwitch and Molly (677). Although Estella was born into the lowest class imaginable, her fate was utterly

changed when the lonely Miss Havisham adopted her. But Miss Havisham's favors turned out to be so detrimental that Estella might well have been better off if she had been raised an orphan in a workhouse. Stone explains:

> Estella possesses only the externals of ladyhood; in reality she is a blighted creature who mirrors Pip's own blight. Estella is a "lady" in the same ironic sense that Pip is a "gentleman"—both have been "made"; both have been fashioned impiously as instruments of revenge; both unknowingly stem (one by birth, the other by adoption) from the déclassé Magwitch; both are further distorted by the witchlike Miss Havisham. (677)

Estella and Pip both hold to radically distorted views of gentility, as each of them has been raised or encouraged to be genteel in outward appearance only. Although one is the daughter of a brewer and the other a daughter of convicts, Miss Havisham and her ward Estella enjoy significant social status as a result of an external quality, their significant wealth.

Although both Pip and Estella are responsible for making their own ill-advised moral choices, both young people are largely products of harsh and vengeful mother figures, thereby making the attaining of true gentility extraordinarily difficult for both. Estella's mother figure, Miss Havisham, having been jilted on her wedding day, has become shockingly selfish and bitter in response to her pain. Having no friends or relatives able or willing to meet her emotional needs, Miss Havisham allows her soul to become twisted and scarred, trying vainly to stop time, to live in the dead and lonely past, and to seclude herself rather than face reality or attempt to meet others' needs. Pip speaks of how Estella grew up, "her baby intelligence . . . receiving its first distortions from Miss Havisham's wasting hands" (235). As a result, Miss Havisham's "daughter" Estella is raised to deny and suppress her emotional needs of acceptance and mercy,

corrupting those internal needs into external scorn and cruelty. Mrs. Joe makes no attempts to meet Pip's emotional needs whatsoever, and is constantly complaining that she has gone to a great deal of trouble in "raising" him. Raised by women with badly twisted moral and emotional priorities, Pip and Estella find themselves morally deformed from the very beginning.

Raised by the twisted Miss Havisham to wreak revenge upon the entire male sex, Estella never really had the opportunity to develop healthy emotions or values, because from the start of her life, Miss Havisham taught her to develop a cruel and unsympathetic psyche. Miss Havisham, haughtily ignoring basic internal values of respect and compassion in her social interactions with Joe, Pumblechook, the Pockets, and others, teaches Estella to have an identity based on pride and indifference. Apparently, Miss Havisham did mean well when she started raising the little girl: she tells Pip, "When [Estella] first came to me, I meant to save her from misery like my own. At first I meant no more . . . But as she grew, and promised to be very beautiful, I gradually did worse, and with my praises, and with my jewels, and with my teachings, and with this figure of myself always before her . . . I stole her heart away and put ice in its place" (298). Out of an initial desire to protect the young orphan girl, but then later manipulating a unique opportunity, Miss Havisham, like Dr. Frankenstein, creates a deformed creature that was never given the opportunity to be fully human in order to attempt a futile vengeance upon the male sex. Similarly, the despised and lower-class Magwitch attempts to transform Pip into a high society gentleman as another variety of social revenge. Both Miss Havisham and Magwitch, like the majority of Victorian society, perpetuate the distorted moral and socioeconomic principles that first warped them to begin with by encouraging those weaker than themselves to value wealth and social status above kindness and decency.

Eventually, both Pip and Miss Havisham are faced with the horrific consequences of denying internal values when Miss Havisham asks for Estella's love: Estella remarks with chilling indifference that she is incapable of love, explaining to Miss Havisham, "If you ask me to give you what you never gave me, my gratitude and duty cannot do impossibilities" (230). In contrast to Estella, Pip is taught at first to have external social priorities through want; while Estella's shallow priorities are centered on her silks and jewels, Pip's values (before he possesses the money from Magwitch) are formed in reaction to his lack of money and education, but in the end, the effects are the same: both the "made" gentleman and gentlewoman are found to have badly twisted socioeconomic principles.

As a result of Miss Havisham's emotional abuse, Estella's moral and social identity is formed without normal emotions, her soul extinguished, and all that is left to aid her in constructing her self-concept are external identity-substitutes such as jewels and money. Miss Havisham's eccentric lifestyle of vengeance is a luxury that only the very rich could afford: were she a working-class woman forced to value mere survival above emotional satisfaction, Miss Havisham would have probably been propelled back into honest labor after being jilted, and might never have ended up a self-destructive recluse. Pip's social and emotional identity, like Estella's, is badly distorted, but Pip at least possesses enough of a moral foundation that he balks at cruelty and tries to treat others well, for the most part. In this way, Pip is more of a gentleman than Estella is a gentlewoman, for Pip at least occasionally demonstrates the desire to be kind, noble, or generous, whereas Estella does not, except in the matter of Pip and Bently Drummle. Pip's identity, like Estella's, however, is twisted by having money and an artificial position in the upper classes. As a result of Estella's scorn upon his first visit to Satis House, Pip is made to feel

the shame of his lower-class status. Morris explains that to counter this shame, Pip imagines his life as an upper class fairy tale:

> In [Pip] . . . there is an awakening of desire for all that is perceived as uncommon: for the glamour, refinement, and exclusivity of Estella as a carefully constructed image of desire . . . Pip as character is seduced by a fairy tale of wealth . . . indicated in the images he is represented as inventing . . . Coaches, golden dishes, enormous dogs, flags, and swords are props from a spectacle of fairy tale pomp. (112)

Subsequent to his introduction to Satis House, Pip knows that he is poor, that being poor is shameful, and that the rich, known by their material status symbols, are not ashamed of their socioeconomic state.

Because of this physical observation of the visible differences between rich and poor, Pip's ideal upper class gentleman is external and insincere. Handed large sums of money and instructed to go to London and "become a gentleman" through means of education and wealth, Pip is at a loss to even begin to understand the nature of a true gentleman. Gilmour discusses the fact that due to his low birth, unlike the other Dickens heroes David Copperfield and Oliver Twist, "Pip is always and only the blacksmith's boy, his struggle is to acquire rather than to recover gentility, and he is not allowed to forget or ever truly escape from his rude beginnings" (116). Like Dickens himself, who was born into the middle class but achieved prestigious social status, Pip begins in humble origins but arrives at great social success. But the internal price that Pip pays for his external gentlemanly status is far higher than he ever could have imagined. Unfortunately, aside from going into debt obtaining the proper clothes, jewelry, furniture, friends, and education, Pip has no idea what gentility truly is, and Dickens constructs a

fascinating analysis of the idea of the Victorian gentleman through Pip's anguished journey to refinement.

While the internal qualities of a true gentleman were genuinely far more important than the external ones, both kinds of characteristics were essential to the nineteenth-century British conception of a gentleman. Pip's idea of a gentleman is uniquely Victorian, in that it is situated firmly in the era's social expectations, but it is also born out of the simple desire to be better than he already is and to be the kind of gentleman that Estella would marry. Dabney explains that after Pip is made aware of his "coarseness" and "poverty" by Estella, his moral ideals change, and later "his patronage of Joe and insensitivity toward Biddy are explicitly linked to the image of Estella in his mind" (130). In order to be socially good enough for the coldly radiant girl, Pip knows that he will have to become a gentleman externally. Because Estella's world revolves around external signs of gentility, and because she had never had an example in her life of true nobility, the only sort of gentleman she cared about was one who was equal to her in social status, regardless of his "moral worth."

While still a small boy in the village on the moors, Pip is generally honest and hardworking, happy in his destiny of becoming a blacksmith and possessing positive moral standards. Even at a young age, Pip exhibits the desire to better himself, and his ambitions seem to be healthy and noble. While teaching Joe to read one night, Pip tells Joe that he "should like to be" a scholar (39). From Joe, Pip learns to value friendship, loyalty, and honesty. He feels extremely guilty for stealing food and a file for Magwitch, then not telling Joe afterwards. After his first visit to Satis House, Pip is dismayed by the Havishams' condescending external standards which clash so violently with Joe's. His ideas about his own unimportance and uncertain status and his plans for the future are irreparably altered from that point onwards. As

he is about to become Joe's apprentice, he remarks, "I had believed in the forge as the glowing road to manhood and independence. Within a single year, all this was changed. Now, it was all coarse and common, and I would not have had Miss Havisham and Estella see it on any account" (86). Pip's valuation of honest labor and his happy anticipation of a steady, working-class job completely fade when he comes into contact with the superior and aristocratic Havisham ladies. Suddenly, his identity is sharply realized as lower class rather than upper class, and coarse and common instead of cultured and refined. His previously anticipated blacksmith job becomes a reminder of everything about him that is lowly and unrefined. With this devastating realization of commonness comes Pip's intense desire to cross the class partition and become cultured, refined, and upper class, or in other words a gentleman worthy of upper-class esteem and the hand of the cold but beautiful Estella.

Although there were some, like Samuel Smiles, who insisted that gentlemanliness involved qualities like courage and kindness, many in the Victorian era knew that while quality character might make them decent individuals, it would probably not bring them good social or economic opportunities, so many chose to be gentlemen and women as defined by a largely exterior value scale. Pip's human and reasonable desire to get ahead in life is uniquely Victorian and appearances-oriented, but at its core, it largely springs out of the romantic desire to be good enough for the proud lady Estella. Dabney makes the connection between society, amorality, and Estella:

> Moral corruption spreads in two ways in *Great Expectations*: by overt act—dramatically direct influence—and by seepage from a generally corrupt society. The direct line of infection runs from Compeyson, through Miss Havisham and

> Magwitch, through Estella, to Pip, who is rotted by his expectations. The expectations are at the centre of the novel, and they are centred on Estella. (128)

Pip's identity is focused on his society's class expectations, and those expectations originate in a person who cannot possibly fulfill them.

As Pip comes to focus on outward appearances more than inward qualities, he inexorably begins to lose his soul or identity while it is yet forming, as he comes to the point of crisis in which he meets Estella at the young age of thirteen. Pip comes to despise his occupation as a blacksmith, and is discontent with his "coarse hands and . . . common boots" (53), *i.e.* the external reminders of his life as a poor commoner. Pip detests his life, his friends, (for they are common), his occupation, and those interior and exterior qualities in himself which he perceives to be "coarse and common." As the objects and ideas Pip values become more and more distorted, especially after he begins to receive money from Magwitch, Pip starts to lose his understanding of what truly matters in life. Pam Morris relates that not only do Pip's closest relationships become distorted as a result of his expectations, but also that his very identity is lost. "The materialization of that fairytale 'golden image' of wealth . . . represents a second loss—or forging—of self. Pip is shown to mark his changed expectations by a metamorphosis of self-image" (113). Because his priorities are based on the dream of Estella and the society around him, and because these values are largely external, Pip's standards begin inevitably to shift and change. Whereas prior to meeting Estella, Pip valued Joe for his kindness and love, the forge for its proximity to Joe, and his home for the presence of Joe, post Estella, Pip begins to despise all of these things as he comes to see them through the eyes of the haughty and shallow heiress. Morris states that Pip's furniture, accessories, servant, and club membership all "present his

transformation into gentleman as merely a matter of buying the appropriate style of display" (114). Pip comes to literally wear his values on his sleeves.

Although Pip's values come in large part to mirror Estella's, Pip is set apart by his guilty conscience and his lack of accurate self-assessment. An important difference between the two young people is that Estella, while far less compassionate than Pip, does at least attain a highly accurate self-evaluation. Barbara Hardy notes that Estella, as well as three other Dickens women, "see themselves for what they are, and do not like what they see" (59). Estella knows that her moral standards are distorted, but while she does not see fit to remedy this issue, she does nonetheless attempt to be honest with Pip about it. During a stroll in the neglected garden at Satis House one day, Estella informs Pip, "You must know . . . that I have no heart" (183). Although Pip refuses to believe this disclosure, Estella does her best to convince him of the truth of her dehumanized soul. Throughout the novel, Pip is unable or unwilling to see his own actions and motivations clearly or objectively, however, and it is this ambiguity which nearly cripples him in time of crisis. Pip's illusions are a microcosm of the larger beliefs that characterized certain members of Victorian society who thought that they were morally superior both to other nations and their own poorest citizens, and were unable to see their hypocrisy.

Pip, in contrast to Estella, feels genuine shame and regret regarding his abuse and misdeeds, indicating the presence of a painful conflict between pride and humility in his soul. For Estella, however, because her ethical principles and human nature have been so dreadfully warped by Miss Havisham, the girl feels little or no real guilt, shame, or remorse for anything that she does. Having been raised with the presence of at least one genuinely loving person in his life, Pip is far better able to feel the difference between love and hatred, and unlike Estella, Pip every once in a while experiences a twinge of conscience as he watches pieces of his soul burn to

ashes. When Joe awkwardly gives Pip's indenture papers to the boy rather than to Miss Havisham, Pip says, "I am afraid I was ashamed of the dear good fellow—I *know* that 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" (82). Narrating in retrospect, Pip the grown man realizes that his being ashamed of Joe was an act of disloyalty, and was so only because he valued Estella's good opinion more than he valued Joe's. Later, Pip states, "It is a most miserable thing to feel ashamed of home. There may be black ingratitude in the thing, and the punishment may be retributive and well-deserved; but that it is a miserable thing, I can testify" (86). Looking back, Pip realizes that he displayed ingratitude in his discontent with his home and friends—but he held to that ingratitude nonetheless. Pip explains to the reader that although he had originally looked forward to being a blacksmith prior to meeting Estella, his happy hopes of enjoying the trade are dashed upon meeting the icy Estella, who is socially far above a blacksmith's boy (86). Thus, Pip's contentment with his friends, home, and trade is relentlessly diminished, and although Pip feels guilty for his pride and ingratitude, he continues to display those same qualities.

Pip's greatest acts of perfidy, however, are in relation to his truest friend, Joe. When Joe comes to see Pip in London, Pip makes no effort to make Joe feel welcome or wanted (172). Due to Joe's lower-class upbringing, Pip no longer wants to be associated with an individual that he deems so beneath him. Upon his next visit to Miss Havisham, instead of staying with Joe, Pip rationalizes himself out of such an awkward situation, and stays at the Blue Boar. He tells himself that Joe is not expecting him and that he would be imposing upon his brother-in-law to come and stay with him. Knowing that this small act is one of betrayal, however, and burdened with guilt, Pip sends Joe "a penitential codfish and a barrel of oysters . . . as a reparation for

having not gone myself" (189). At this point, Pip has learned to substitute external financial values for internal personal ones. Pip's values have come to be inverted as a result of his selfishness, self-delusions, social environment, pride, and obsession with Estella.

Although Pip is certainly at fault for snubbing Joe and Biddy and giving himself airs, one strong and shocking reason for Pip's withdrawal from his friends does create a case in his favor. Having worked so hard to become a socially acceptable gentleman, Pip naturally shies away from all reminders of his early involvement with the lower classes, especially his experiences with convicts, the ultimate lowest class of society. Morris states that *Great Expectations* "not only unmasks the interconnection of money, crime, and power hiding beneath glamorous spectacle, but also it stages a scandalous return of the repressed and criminalized poor" (108). Joe is a study in unfortunate collateral damage—because he reminds Pip of the poverty he has tried so desperately to eradicate and forget, and is so ill at ease in London drawing rooms, Pip comes to see Joe as someone who is both socially unacceptable as a friend, and unpleasantly reminiscent of his lower-class past.

Though Pip tries desperately to escape from the humiliations of his old life, the one thing that relentlessly haunts him is the unmistakable violence of his early identity formation. Having experienced violence through his abusive sister and her friends, his early contact with Magwitch, and his later contact with other convicts, Pip is unable to shake the shame of the abuse and guilt from having aided an escaped convict, eventually discovering that his aristocratic lifestyle holds an unbreakable connection with the lower classes and even the underworld itself. Victorian society was just barely removed from the rampant and savage violence of the eighteenth century. The Victorians were just starting to pull away from the "shocking brutality of the criminal code" (Gilmour 128), and it is for this reason that Dickens set *Great Expectations* in the earlier part of

the nineteenth century, although he actually wrote the story in 1861. Gilmour explains the significance of the novel's historical setting:

> By evoking the earlier period so deliberately, and in particular by reminding his readers of the brutal way in which a primitive society treated its criminals, Dickens is able to show the complex origins of the Victorian preoccupation with refinement and gentility—how the desire to become a gentleman was not just a snobbish aspiration out of one's class, but was also a desire to be a gentle man, to have a more civilized and decent life than a violent society allowed for most of its members. (129)

The Victorian idea of the gentleman was in part a reaction against an old world of tragic and shocking violence. In a world of exhibitionist public hangings, humiliating pillories, overcrowded prisons, and extremely harsh punishments for minor offences, many people of the Victorian lower classes longed, like Eliza Doolittle of a slightly later time, for a "loverly" life in which bare survival was not their highest concern, and their basic needs were comfortably met. For Pip, survival had been a part of his life for as long as he could remember. Gilmour states that "Mrs. Joe's system of bringing up by hand is sanctioned by a primitive rural society, and it is harsh, unjust, brutalizing and morally diminishing" (130). Throughout his childhood, Pip is physically and verbally abused by Mrs. Joe. Her friend Mr. Hubble, who unlike Dickens does apparently believe in original sin, calls Pip "naturally wicious" (26), and except for Joe, the other adults in Pip's life generally treat him as little better than an animal. Pip even "consider[s] himself a young monster" (58) after he lies to Joe about the visit to Miss Havisham's house. Upon meeting Magwitch and stealing food from Mr. and Mrs. Joe, Pip himself becomes a perpetrator of the violence of the lower class.

Violence was inextricably linked to moral standards in the Victorian Era. Magwitch illustrates the plight of the poor with terrifying clarity; at this time, many turned to thievery or prostitution simply to get enough food to eat. Morris states, “Magwitch is intended to represent the scapegoat poor of prosperous Mid-Victorian England, criminalized and punished for the guilt of poverty” (117). Although poverty led many of that era to commit crimes, poverty was certainly not always avoidable for any industrious person, and therefore many were not responsible for their poverty. A. N. Wilson explains that the Victorian “middle-class liberals, with their sanitation acts, education acts, board schools and churches, throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, wanted not merely to improve conditions for the poor but to improve the poor . . . Dickens always knew that this was a misguided, not to say odious, ambition (335). The idea of progress was so utterly vital in the period, partly because the Victorians badly wanted to leave their violent past involving the inhumane treatment of criminals behind. Many well-meaning Evangelicals of the time and others perpetrated great judgment and oppression on the poor and the criminal, patronizing them by viewing poverty as a disease and trying to treat it. Although crime was certainly an undesirable social problem, many religious and government officials tried to solve it using unethical religious, emotional, physical, and financial manipulation.

As poverty and violence shape Pip’s self-definition, his experience is far more universal than merely personal: Gilmour notes, “His predicament is representative of a social class in the act of emergence; specifically, of the Victorian middle class in its emergence from primitive origins. He needs civilization because he is so acutely aware (as the born gentleman Herbert cannot be) of its opposite, and consequently he overvalues it” (137-38). Pip’s dilemma is as old as class distinctions themselves, and his eagerness to escape from the primitive to the civilized is

a macrocosmic example of “keeping up with the Joneses.” For moderately affluent Americans today mere survival is not a vital concern; therefore, having a nicer house, car, iPod, job, or vacation has become the equivalent social standard for the Victorian socioeconomic gentleman desire.

Pip’s illusory world of external socioeconomic expectations comes crashing violently down on his head when he learns that Magwitch is his mysterious benefactor. When Magwitch reveals the truth, Pip says, “All the truth of my position came flashing on me; and its disappointments, dangers, disgraces, consequences of all kinds, rushed in in such a multitude that I was borne down by them and had to struggle for every breath I drew” (240). Not only is Pip devastated to learn that Miss Havisham is not his benefactor, and that therefore he has not been groomed and dandified for Estella’s sake, but also, he is horrified to discover that all his attempts to escape the dark violence of his past are for naught, and that it is that very violence itself that has made his rise in social status possible. Because Pip’s great expectations and very identity itself are constructed upon an external foundation, his expectations are utterly shattered by Magwitch’s revelation. Stone writes that “Pip must take responsibility for his corruption. Yet the moment of corruption is imposed upon him” (“Fire, Hand, and Gate” 676). Although Pip’s exposure to Satis House and Magwitch’s money do result in Pip’s corruption, Pip certainly possessed some opportunities to resist the creeping decay of his soul. When Pip comes face to face with Magwitch towards the end of the novel, Pip is suddenly forced to realize that his very soul, his entire identity, is based on a lie. All his hopes and dreams for the future immediately appear to be distorted and unattainable, and Pip is left to wonder who he really is, what he truly values in life, and how on earth he can live in poverty after having lived as a gentleman, in a

world where a gentleman is defined by either his parentage, or his money, or both. Pip snobbishly decides that Magwitch's money is "tainted" and that he, Pip, can no longer accept it.

One ironic aspect of Pip's disillusion, however, is the fact that even had he known all along that Miss Havisham was not his benefactor and even if he had loved Biddy, not Estella, he might well have ended up becoming the same kind of gentleman that he did in fact turn into. Dabney notes, "Pip dreams of marrying a beautiful lady whom he loves to distraction and living happily ever after on an unearned income. This is a standard dream . . . it is the achieved ambition of a majority of all the heroes of all the novels written in the eighteenth and nineteenth century" (136-37). Pip is the consummate class-conscious Victorian gentleman, and he values the same external things that his society values, neglecting the importance of Samuel Smiles' internal qualities of nobility. Here Dickens' brilliance is displayed exquisitely: in making Pip like so many other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel heroes but allowing Pip's dreams to be smashed and severely disrupting his fairytale ending, Dickens creates a character that is much more realistic than other heroes such as Mr. Darcy, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, or Charles Darnay. Because Pip never really encountered any true gentlemen in his life other than Joe and Herbert—and both of these men were poor and struggling to survive—Pip did not readily have access to a model of true gentleness. Lacking this sort of guide, Pip had only society and its shallow external standards and his obsession with Estella to guide him. Joe was far too coarse in his manners, birth, and upbringing, and Herbert was far too poor and hardworking to present to Pip viable models of generous, sophisticated gentlemen. As a result, Pip's story takes a turn for the better when his deeply flawed ideas of a gentleman are completely destroyed.

The devastation of Pip's illusions is in some ways similar to Estella's disillusionment. Raised without authentic love or empathy, Estella's identity never included much kindness or

compassion. However, Dabney says that "Dickens constructs . . . a purgatory for Estella" (146) in her abusive marriage to Bently Drummle, and through this torment Estella finally realizes, like Pip, that she has been proud and selfish, basing her identity upon meaningless externals rather than internal priorities.

When Pip and Estella are confronted by great suffering and the destruction of their illusory values, only then is the opportunity for any kind of redemption possible in their lives. Faced with the reality of their value distortions, each is challenged to re-form his or her identity in correlation with kindness and humility. For Pip, being expected to show gratitude and friendship towards Magwitch becomes the turning point in his shallow existence. After attempting to help Magwitch escape the country, Pip finally comes to empathize with the convict, and he tells the reader that "in the hunted wounded shackled creature . . . [was] 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" (332). Only once Pip finally comes to terms with his selfish love of money and prestige at the expense of his humanity is he able to show great loyalty and love to Magwitch, humble himself before Joe and Biddy, and obtain a sort of works-based absolution from his guilt. For Estella, the turning point takes place outside of the story, as she is terrorized and abused by Drummle. She tells Pip that "suffering has been stronger than all other teaching" (358), and has clearly been changed for the good as a result. Once the identities of Estella and Pip are thus brought to crisis, the two are then afforded the capacity for rebuilding their souls, and re-forming their identities into that which is more humble and compassionate.

Throughout the trials and frustrations that Charles Dickens experienced in his quest to become a Victorian gentleman, the author came to believe deeply in the necessity of holding an

accurate perception of one's life priorities. Like many Victorian society members, Pip's moral and socioeconomic values have an external, social, romantic, and monetary slant, and his idea of the nature of a true gentleman is deeply flawed. When Pip's expectations and very identity are shattered by the appearance of Magwitch and his inescapable relationship to violence near the end of the story, Pip is prompted to come to terms with the hollow and false identity that he has constructed for himself, based upon flawed premises of what was truly valuable in life. It is only when Pip's gentleman identity is inadvertently destroyed by Magwitch, its patron, that Pip is able to begin to understand his need for the internal values that define a true gentleman. Estella's soul, scarred as it was being formed, is similarly undone by her abusive husband Bently Drummle outside the pages of the book, and it is only after this suffering that she, too, is afforded the opportunity to construct a new identity for herself based upon qualities of true nobility.

Chapter 5: Identity Transformed

Great Expectations is a story about identity, specifically the identity of the protagonist Pip and the origin, distortion, and transformation of his identity and the resulting clarification of the relationship between himself and the world around him. *Great Expectations* begins with Pip's announcement in the second sentence of the novel, "I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip," and several lines later that "my first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things" (9) was formed during the story's opening incident with Magwitch in the graveyard on Christmas Eve. Pip's name, emphasizing the concept of growth, is extraordinarily fitting. Unique names often characterize their possessors in literature: Peter Pan, for example, another orphan boy, has a name appropriately reminiscent of the Greek god Pan, a god of nature and nymphs. As an abused orphan, Pip is not only completely lacking in a positive bestowed identity, but he is also so undefined that he actually names himself. Consequently, Pip's journey to finding his true character involves great struggle and conflict and contains many missteps and failures. Throughout the course of Dickens' novel of transformation, Pip must learn to claim his identity through recognizing the difference between morally-induced guilt and socially-induced shame, and coming to accept the loss of his illusions and the love or forgiveness of those whom he has wronged and been wronged by, regardless of whether his redemption ends up being more social or moral in nature.

Despite his belief in moral virtue, Dickens substitutes the more religious concept of sin for the more secular idea of crime in his novels. Critic Dorothy Van Ghent theorizes that "the Dickens world requires an act of redemption" (166). However, this redemption does not involve the Christian idea of original sin. In Dickens' literary paradigm, Van Ghent explains, individuals and society itself are in need of social redemption: all of society should concern itself with

helping the poor, proactively discouraging crime, and giving to the needy. Although Pip's life apparently does not involve original sin, he nonetheless possesses an incredibly guilty conscience. Van Ghent goes on to state that Pip's perpetual sense of guilt is an inheritance of a collective social and metaphorical "sins of the fathers" (166-67), and in some way this fits with Dickens' views of evil originating in society rather than individuals. However, this vague hypothesis fails to take into account any specific wrongdoings that Pip has actually committed or the emotional abuse he has suffered. Pip's guilt is different from his shame, both of which haunt him daily. Pip confuses the two, however, and his social shame resulting from the abuse he suffered at the hands of his sister, her friends, and Estella and Miss Havisham comes to overshadow his actual guilt for attempting to assume a shallow gentlemanly identity at the expense of his true friends. Gwen Watkins writes, "In few children is the young self so developed that it can sustain its 'first feelings' against the disapproval, perhaps the condemnation, of those it loves and needs" (8). Like most children, young Pip was utterly unable to retain or even begin to form a healthy identity in the face of his orphaned state and the violent physical and emotional abuse perpetrated by most of the caregivers in his life, so his identity is defined from the first by shame.

Pip feels ashamed of simply being alive, and worthless and unloved as a result. His sister constantly reminds him that she brought him up "by hand," yet simultaneously implies that Pip was not worth the upbringing. When he has been to visit his parents' graves in the churchyard without informing her, Pip is appalled by his sister's outraged reaction. He recounts the conversation: Mrs. Joe asks, "'Who brought you up by hand?' 'You did,' said I. 'And why did I do it, I should like to know!' exclaimed my sister. I whimpered, 'I don't know.' 'I don't!' said my sister. 'I'd never do it again'" (14). From his earliest years, Pip is raised to believe that he is

utterly valueless as a person. Despite Joe's kind assurances of Pip's value, Mrs. Joe is a far more powerful and dominating figure in Pip's life, so she is the one Pip listens to, not the kindly but powerless Joe. In this way, Pip becomes an unwitting accomplice to the destruction of his still-forming identity. Watkins cites a relevant case study by Karen Horney in which the patient articulates the self-destruction of an emotionally abused person's identity:

> How is it possible to lose a self? The treachery, unknown and unthinkable, begins with our secret psychic death in childhood—if and when we are not loved and are cut off from our spontaneous wishes . . . It is a perfect double crime . . . not just the simple murder of a psyche, that might be written off [but] the tiny self also gradually and unwittingly takes part. He has not been accepted for himself as he is . . . Therefore he *must* be unacceptable. He himself learns to believe it and at last even takes it for granted. He has truly given himself up. (10)

Pip's identity is distorted from his very earliest years. Having no parents or even parent substitutes to instill in him a positive identity, and having only the loving but passive Joe to combat his abusive and powerful sister's violence, Pip's identity is initially stamped with the insidious marks of negative worth. It is not until Pip goes through achieving conventional social acceptance and then deliberately choosing social rejection that he is able to form a positive identity and see his actual worth.

Yet prior to his ultimate identity transformation, when he first meets Estella, Pip suddenly begins to envision a self-worth paradigm which he supposes may afford him a foundation upon which to build a positive identity. Watkins states that an emotionally deprived child who is raised to believe in his "badness" or worthlessness "may find the lack of love so intolerable that unconsciously he decides to destroy his 'bad' self and create a new self that will

be loved and accepted" (8). Upon first being introduced to the wonders of the upper class through his initial visit to Satis House, Pip suddenly begins to dream of an identity he might one day attain that could bring him social acceptance: the identity of the gentleman.

Because all he consciously searches for is social acceptance, the gentlemanly identity that Pip begins to construct in earnest at eighteen when he inherits a fortune is an identity that is solely focused on external social mores. In America today, adolescents are careful to wear the most stylish (i.e., expensive) designer clothes, be seen at the most popular hang-outs, and own the most popular devices such as cell phones, iPods, and laptops. Neil Howe and Bill Strauss explain that for major consumer corporations today, marketing is aimed almost exclusively at children and their parents, creating a child-centered consumer economy (284). In upper-class circles, teens are expected to engage in all the correct musical, sporting, or academic opportunities such as orchestra, soccer, or Ivy League educations. Similarly, Hattaway writes that the Victorian Era was "[a]n industrial economy that emphasized material production combined with a social order that recognized possessions to be the final measure of a person's significance" (10). Human nature in the Victorian Era was similar in that the attainment of respect from one's peers meant that in his tortured quest for personal value, Pip would have to obtain the correct education, spend the right amount of money, be seen at popular locations, live in socially acceptable accommodations, and wear all the proper clothes and accessories. In this way, Pip was trying desperately to be accepted by his society and to convince himself that he did in fact possess genuine worth as an individual, as he looked to society's acceptance to validate his worth. In allowing his society's views of power (which translated into economic and class distinctions) to determine his values, Pip moves further away from establishing a realistic identity and genuine relationships.

Dickens is correct in recognizing that society at large needs to be redeemed, but since he rejects the Christian paradigm of original sin, he must look to purely social crimes to find the root of societal evil. Criminals such as the dishonest and cruel, but not excessively malevolent Compeyson, or the dishonest, vengeful, and uncouth but otherwise honorable Magwitch, and crimes such as greed, self-centeredness, false piety, and materialism are the social and abstract, rather than personal and religious misdeeds inhabiting the Dickens world, and this terrestrial sphere consequently perceives itself as needing a social rather than a religious conversion. The idea of social redemption, especially for the poor and abused, appealed to Dickens. In *Great Expectations*, much of Pip's tremendous shame stems from his haunting sense of worthlessness: as a result of Mrs. Joe's abusive upbringing, he feels almost that he has committed a crime merely by being born. He states, "I was always treated 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" (24). Pip's "crime" in being born is clearly not a moral transgression, however. Watkins explains that for unloved children in Dickens' works, the crime of being born is an enormous source of anguish. In examining this problem, Watkins postulates that "Dickens may have been trying to convince himself that 'the crime of being born' was a social one and that therefore it could be forgiven, and the innocent little criminal redeemed, by society" (111). Characters like Magwitch and Orlick are viewed by Dickens as unfortunate products of their society, and not really morally deficient human beings. Pip's materialism and snobbishness, as well as the shame he feels as a result of being badly mistreated by his society, are according to Dickens effects of destructive social expectations rather than moral failure.

The Victorian novel, almost by definition, required some kind of conversion or change of heart. From Eliot's Daniel Deronda to Dickens' Scrooge, from the remorseless Dorian Gray to

the horrific Mr. Hyde, from Kurtz of *Heart of Darkness* to Mr. Rochester of *Jane Eyre*, dramatic transformation occurs repeatedly. However, the various kinds of conversion are not always from worse to better, and can be of any variety from economic to moral to social or romantic. Oftentimes, though, the Victorian literary transformation is positive. Barbara Hardy explains that "The typical conversion of the great Victorian novel is not a religious conversion but a turning from self-regard to love and social responsibility" (27). To the educated Victorian reading public, highly-catechized but adrift in an intellectual sea of Higher Criticism, Darwinism, and secular humanism, the message of love and social responsibility was easier to stomach than that of the forgiveness of sins. Such intellectual confusion made a major contribution to the rise of the Tractarian and Broad Church parties on the Victorian religious front, and according to Hattaway, these high church factions tended to elevate the Incarnation higher than the Atonement in their teachings (20). The difficulty with this trend was that it exalted the humanity and charitable works of Christ while neglecting His divine nature, thereby encouraging loving social reform but downplaying any obvious need for genuine conversion from sin. Dickens was perfectly happy to accept these unbiblical ideas as his own, and this mindset spilled over into his creative writing.

Yet despite Dickens' secular views of the loss and redemption of the soul, which translated practically into the social distortion and transformation of the identity, his novels are filled with Christian virtues and biblical allusions. Bible stories and characters are mentioned throughout Dickens' novels, not a surprising occurrence in literature of the Victorian Era. With church attendance in significant decline, but thorough Biblical knowledge extremely pervasive, the population of Victorian England in general both expected and enjoyed Biblical allusions in its leisure reading material. Dickens used biblical references throughout his writing to both

appeal to his audience and draw upon established cultural capital to enhance the depth of his works. In Dickens' stories, as in traditionally moral fairy tales, evil is generally punished, good is generally rewarded, and those who cause pain to others end badly, while the abused and oppressed usually end well.

Great Expectations presents no exception to this general rule, and Pip's story is rife with Biblical allusions and Christian virtues. Joe, clearly an admirable character, shows compassion to Pip and pays off his debts. Herbert, another noble individual, always treats others well and is not jealous of Pip, even though he believes that Pip has usurped his inheritance. G. Robert Strange explains that at a certain point in the narrative, "Pip's story culminates in a sudden fall, the beginning of a redemptive suffering . . . which illustrates several religious paradoxes: he can only gain by losing all he has; only by being defiled can he be cleansed . . . In suffering with and finally loving the despised and rejected man [Magwitch] he finds his own real self" (11). In Biblical terms, it is only when Pip chooses to "lose himself" for the sake of Magwitch and give up all his social aspirations, his revulsion of the convict, and his personal selfishness that he is able to find the existential boundaries that define him and his relationship to the world around him. Nina Auerbach discusses the Fallen Woman in nineteenth-century literature, and explains that for Hester Prynne, her "fall alone enables her to stand up" (37). Similarly, it is only through the shattering of his false identity and social expectations that Pip is able to become a transformed individual with a stable and genuine identity, at peace with the loss of his illusions. From Dickens' secular, but Christian-flavored perspective, Pip must learn to embrace the Other, the thing he least wishes to do, in order to truly be able to define himself. The destruction of Pip's illusions affords him the opportunity to reshape his identity in a way that had never been emotionally possible for him previously.

For most of the story Pip is defined by his expectations, those great dreams of social, educational, and economic advancement, but his expectations are shattered when Magwitch returns two-thirds of the way through the novel. In Pip's life, Barbara Hardy explains that "the main converting event is his discovery of the source of his expectations" (46). This is not at all a religious experience. Pip is merely shocked and horrified to realize that not only is his mysterious benefactor not Miss Havisham, but also that the benefactor is actually a convict. As the devastated Pip discovers, since Miss Havisham is not his benefactress, then he is not destined either for marriage to Estella or life in the prestigious Satis House. A. O. J. Cockshut explains Pip's pathos: although Pip thought that it was acceptable to live irresponsibly on Miss Havisham's money, when he discovers that it is Magwitch instead who is his benefactor, he is brought to terms with his financial, moral, and social irresponsibility. As a result, "Pip is forced to realize that his horror of Magwitch is irrational; and hence to question everything he has taken for granted" (165). Having blithely believed his life a fairy tale, Pip suddenly begins to understand that the loss of his illusions is the loss of his very self.

Pip begins to see the colossal foolishness of having built his identity around the idea of becoming a socially acceptable gentleman and marrying Estella; shockingly, the great expectations that he had thought were being realized are immediately and perhaps forever out of his reach. Pip is unable to accept that the convict, a man who represents the lowest part of the lower classes, an aspect of his identity from which Pip has deliberately tried to escape, is actually financially responsible for making Pip the gentleman he has become. Once he realizes that the money is "tainted," Pip refuses to accept it (256), although this is quite simply an act of pride. Although Magwitch's motivations for his generosity were complex and somewhat self-serving, they did involve genuine love, and the money was honestly earned. Pip had no charitable reason

for refusing to continue to accept the money. Because his identity was so class-conscious and external, he simply could not stand to obtain his social status through the means of a lowest-class citizen.

Although after inheriting “great expectations” Pip believes that his life is a fabulous fairy tale, when Magwitch reappears he discovers that his tale, rather than being a traditional Cinderella story, is closer to a cautionary tale in which everything goes horribly wrong at the end and they all live unhappily ever after. Jerome Meckier remarks, “Dickens’s anti-fairy tale not only turned Cinderella upside down, but actually replaced it with a more pertinent paradigm for the nature of things. In Dickens’s retelling of the century’s favorite fairy tale, Cinderella’s rise, which Pip thinks to emulate, turns into a fall, a replay of the collapse of Misnar’s pavilion in the *Tales of the Genii*” (2). The nature of Pip’s fall is complex. He does not, like Faust, simply make one terrible, enormous choice, a “deal with the devil” that destroys his soul and compromises his integrity. Rather, his fall is more like the gradual degeneration of Dorian Gray, who wished for eternal youth and discovered that in the process he could sin outrageously and hardly suffer any consequences as a result. Dorian Gray went to one insidious tavern he should not have gone to, then another. He thoughtlessly ruined one innocent girl, then another. In the end, he found copious amounts of blood and debauchery on his hands, or at least on the hands of his portrait. Pip, consumed with guilt over having stolen from and lied to Joe about the food and file for Magwitch, tries desperately to forget his shameful early connection to the social outcast. Upon meeting Estella and Miss Havisham, he decides that he wants to escape as far from the lower classes as possible, and desires to become a gentleman. When Pip is finally presented with the money that can make his dream possible, he, like Dorian Gray, fails to realize the emotional price he will end up paying for becoming the person he wants to be. The person that Dorian Gray

became was pure evil: from Dickens' perspective, the person that Pip became was not evil, but merely hollow and snobbish. Through small compromises such as neglecting to write or visit Joe, and allowing himself to be ashamed of Joe and his lower-class upbringing, Pip falls slowly into the deceptive abyss of selfishness. On another level, however, Pip "falls" when the economic source of his upper-class status is revealed to be from the lowest, most despised class of society, and realizes that his very identity is completely based upon an illusory fairy tale.

Although Pip's fall does consist in a betrayal of his true friends, in Dickens' secular paradigm it is not a religious fall *per se*. Yet what Dickens could not escape was the fact that in a moral universe, all moral falls must of necessity be connected to that which is spiritual. Therefore, Pip's fall was certainly spiritual in some ways, despite Dickens' secular intentions. Joseph Gold explains:

> Faced with choices, burdened by fear and obligation, what else is Pip undergoing but the Fall? First Birth, then Fall, and finally Redemption through understanding and love: this is the story of *Great Expectations*. Even the hint of the redemption to come is contained in this first chapter, for the boy has the capacity to feel compassion for the man, the compassion that is later to reassert itself when Pip returns to the best impulses of childhood. (243)

Redemption is an integral part of most truly magnificent stories—whether a man finds his true love, finds himself, gives his life to save his friend, or gives away his fortune to help the poor, the deeply meaningful resolution of grave conflict in most great novels is a kind of redemption, on its most simplistic level an exchanging of something broken for something whole. Despite Dickens' attempt to borrow from Christian morality while ignoring Christian spirituality, *Great*

Expectations presents in Joe's forgiveness of Pip and Pip's acceptance of Magwitch an echo of Christ's ultimate redemption of sinners.

When Magwitch unexpectedly arrives, Pip's self-concept is shattered. Pip likens the return of Magwitch to a scene from the Arabian fairy tale "The Enchanters, or Misnar the Sultan of India." In this story, a great rock is suspended beneath the ceiling of a vast pavilion. One night in secret, the deposed hero, Misnar the sultan, is led through caves to a rope, and told to cut the rope. The released rope snakes at lightning speed through a series of tunnels to the pavilion, where two evil sorcerers are sleeping below the stone. The stone was suspended by the rope, and so when the rope is cut, the ceiling of the pavilion suddenly falls on the sorcerers, utterly destroying them. Pip says, "In an instant the blow was struck, and the roof of my stronghold dropped upon me" (235). Magwitch's return is similar to the annihilation of the sorcerers, because for Pip, it is nearly as devastating and just as surprising.

Pip is forced to come to terms with his twisted identity when Magwitch returns to England. With the shocking re-entrance of the convict in his life, Pip's identity is suddenly shown to be external and illusory, based upon his desires to create a socially acceptable self, especially one that would be fit for marriage to Estella. Ever since the first day that he met her, Pip desired to become the kind of man who would be "good enough" socially for Estella. (Because Estella had no religion and virtually no heart, Pip never had to be concerned about being good enough morally or spiritually for his beloved.) J. Hillis Miller writes of Pip and Estella's first meeting, "On this day [Pip] makes the original choice of a desired self, and binds his destiny inextricably to Estella . . . In choosing Estella, Pip alters and defines the entire world, and gives it a permanent structure pervaded by her presence" (265). Pip's desires to be found valuable, rooted in his experiences of emotional abuse, to possess a unique and defined identity,

although unfortunately one based on social and emotional illusions, and to be a gentleman, that personage who enjoyed the height of society's respect and admiration, were all pale in comparison to his desire to be defined by Estella. Yet if one attempts to define himself by what cannot be, his identity will be doomed to destruction.

Pip's self-defining love for Estella was as self-destructive and illusory as it was desperately impossible. He loved Estella with a love that was "against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be. Once for all; I loved her none the less because I knew it, and it had no more influence in restraining me, than if I had devoutly believed her to be human perfection" (179). Hopelessly bound to Estella with emotion rooted in the unmet needs of childhood which Estella could never possibly fulfill, Pip was illogically and unbearably in love with an illusory idea that could never become reality. J. Hillis Miller writes, "Pip's love of Estella is by its very nature a self-deception, because it is a love which is based in its own impossibility. It depends in its innate nature on the fact that it can never be satisfied" (265-66). Pip's fictional search for love was likely born from Dickens' eternally unrequited search for romantic happiness in his own real life. Watkins theorizes that Dickens may have spent all his life emotionally as the "rejected child seeking desperately . . . for the mother he never had," and that this tragic emotional warp was responsible for Dickens' constantly unfulfilling relationships with women (24-25). Pip, without Dickens' knowledge, even, may have spent his life until the end of the novel searching for a woman to replace the "mother he never had," as not only did Pip not have an actual mother, but also his surrogate mother (older sister) was abusive, the opposite of what a mother should be. As a result of the emotional abuse that both Dickens and Pip received from their mother figures, both grew up used to relationships with women that were neither fulfilling nor healthy. Forster, Dickens'

longtime friend and biographer, reproduces an autobiographical fragment written by Dickens, in which the great Boz explains the details leading to the end of his employment in the blacking factory, possibly the most damaging experience of Dickens' life. Dickens states that while his father was agreeable to his leaving the factory, he remembers with undying resentment his mother's opposing feelings: "I never shall forget, I never can forget that my mother was warm [eager] for my being sent back" (qtd. in Forster 32). In other writings, Dickens continues to clarify the fact that he harbored almost nothing but ill feelings toward his mother. Having such damaged mother-son relationships, for both Dickens and Pip, in attempting to escape their maternal abuse, these victims rejected their damaged mother-son relationships by settling for whatever crumbs of emotional satisfaction they could derive from demeaning or unsatisfying romantic relationships rather than attempting to forge healthy give-and-take bonds with others. Watkins surmises that for Dickens, "perhaps betrayal and loss were so strongly associated with his pattern of love that he needed them as much as he needed the love" (24). Certainly no one *needs* betrayal, but for those that have been emotionally abused, sometimes they have grown so accustomed to betrayal that they are uncomfortable living without it.

Pip's fairy-tale identity is based on his desires to escape the lies of the abuse he has suffered and be found a valuable and meaningful human being in a highly class-conscious society. He has come to define himself by Estella and by socio-economic expectations. Estella is a part of Pip's very soul: some time after he realizes that Miss Havisham never meant him for Estella, Pip exclaims passionately:

> 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 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 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. (272)

With the coming of Magwitch, Pip realizes that both his dreams of being a respected society man with education, manners, and money and also his dreams of possessing Estella are unalterably disrupted. He realizes that his identity has been based upon the unrealities of myth and illusion. He is not a male Cinderella, Estella is not to be his bride, he has completely misunderstood what it means to be a true gentleman, based his social identity upon things of external rather than internal significance, and he has lost the kindness and integrity he once had in rejecting his true friends for the sake of his illusions. Pip, like all of Victorian society and Dickens himself, has been living in a world of rosy expectations and blithe impossibilities. Yet unlike Dickens, who was never truly happy because he never discovered how to be content with attainable things, and unlike some prominent Victorians, especially those consumed with imperialism, Pip manages in the end to construct an identity that is grounded both in reality and in genuine love.

Pip's identity is reconstructed through love. When Magwitch returns from Australia to England and Pip is first confronted with the repulsive but pathetic and loving convict, the young man is horrified and disgusted. Magwitch represents not only an unwelcome and criminal problem in Pip's life, but also the utter destruction of his previous identity. Shaken and distraught, Pip wanders about attempting to make sense of the wreckage of his life and to decide how on earth to go on. Eventually, however, a change comes over Pip. In one of the last chapters of the novel, Pip has decided to take Magwitch safely out of England and help him escape to a

foreign country. In doing so, Pip will be leaving his friends, his social realm, and his money behind him. But on the morning of the escape attempt, Pip says that instead of worrying about where he would end up or how long he would stay there, that all he cares about is “Provis’s [Magwitch’s] safety” (322). In all likelihood, Pip’s emotional evolution from despising to loving Magwitch was heavily influenced by his prior experience with forgiving Miss Havisham.

After Miss Havisham has deliberately misled Pip to believe for years that she is his benefactress, she asks to see Pip one last time. Pip, still in awe of this wealthy but reclusive paragon of society who was born to things he could only dream of, returns to the house where his dreams of a great identity were first born and distorted. During the visit, Miss Havisham reveals her own limited redemption as she desperately explains her final realization of how badly she has hurt and distorted both Pip and Estella’s identities and begs for Pip’s forgiveness. Miss Havisham’s redemption becomes a part of Pip’s as he forgives her. A hint of the dramatic reversal in Pip’s snobbish and illusory life is evidenced in his speech to her: he explains to her that in his life “there have been sore mistakes . . . and I want forgiveness and direction far too much to be bitter with you” (297). In humbly coming to identify with and forgive one of his foremost tormentors, Pip begins to recognize and forgive what is distorted within himself, and realize his transforming identity in relation to the world around him. With enough years, tragedy, and distance between them, Pip at last is able to see himself as a valid entity separate from the powerful, damaged old woman, and comes, as John Henry Cardinal Newman advises, to begin to be a man who “never inflicts pain” and is able to identify with everyone (1041) because he is finally able to see his own faults in clear enough perspective that he can be emotionally detached enough to truly care for others.

From this position of a humble, separate identity grounded in the realistic knowledge of his own faults and illusions and an understanding of the distance between himself and others, it is a short step for Pip to become Magwitch's closest friend. Pip resolves to leave everything behind him to help Magwitch escape, then faithfully refuses to leave the dying old convict throughout his subsequent trial, imprisonment, and death. In finally coming to accept Magwitch, the symbol of all that he has desperately been trying to escape socially and economically for so many years, as his friend rather than his enemy, Pip at last is able to become a true gentleman with a clearly defined identity that is founded in reality rather than fairy tales. Pip's identity transformation is completed when Joe forgives him, tends him through his illness, and pays off all his debts.

Although Pip is unable in the end to return home permanently, marry Biddy, or become a blacksmith again, these sad difficulties add to the novel's realism and do not detract from Pip's identity restoration. The ultimate question of the story, however, is in the ending. The two endings each present a picture of two different types of redemption. Urged by Edward Bulwer-Lytton to change the unhappy original ending of the novel so that Pip and Estella would finally end up together, Dickens surprisingly listened to his friend and changed the ending of the novel. Bulwer-Lytton was a literary critic who devised standards for great literature, and Edwin Eigner states that "as regards to *Great Expectations,* Dickens was probably urged to forego what his friend [Lytton] considered a fashionable unhappy ending, designed to gain immediate popularity, and encouraged to substitute for it a conclusion more in keeping with what looked in 1861 like the time-tested rules of English narrative romance" (107-8). The controversial multiple endings to the novel have given rise to many questions. Critics argue that a happy ending does not fit with the rest of the novel, which is in some places almost unbearably sad, and that Estella has

been so cruel to Pip that he is better off without her. The novel is more realistic and better artistically if Pip and Estella remain forever apart, they say.

One ending presents a more social and secular view of redemption, while the other ending displays a more moral perspective. Critics have argued for decades about the believability of the revised ending: the general consensus is that Dickens should have persisted with the first ending and that the second ending does not fit with the tenor of the book. However, there are a few notable exceptions to this. One of the foremost critics in the majority camp, George Gissing, opines that had not Dickens changed the ending of the novel as per Bulwer-Lytton's advice, that *Great Expectations* would have been "nearly perfect," and that since the entire novel was written in a "minor key," the tragedies and lessons of the novel would have stood out in sharper relief had not Lord Lytton suggested a happier ending (627-29). Famously acerbic George Bernard Shaw also disliked the lighter ending, stating that *Great Expectations*' "beginning is unhappy, its middle is unhappy, and the conventional happy ending is an outrage on it." Shaw thought the idea that "anyone could ever have been happy with Estella [was] positively unpleasant," and that because no one could live "happily ever after" with the icy Estella, the second ending was overly sentimental and unbelievable (638). For most of the novel, the emotionally abused Estella is cruel and nearly heartless towards Pip and completely ruthless towards all other men; however, Shaw's reading does not consider the idea that Estella may have been drastically changed by suffering, so much so as to become a different and possibly much better person. In both endings, she has changed enough that she extends true sympathy to Pip, in any event. In the first ending, however, Pip must make do merely with Estella's shared social empathy; in the revised ending, Pip and Estella finally may be able to enjoy the happy reward of forgiveness and humility.

An unusual perspective that is nonetheless favorable towards the first ending is Christopher Ricks'. The critic writes that in the second ending the awfulness of Miss Havisham's destruction of Estella is "made hollow by this softening of Estella" (673), but he seems to overlook the fact that Miss Havisham has been forgiven for her misdeeds, however terrible, and that as a result it would seem permissible for Estella to have broken free from Miss Havisham's abuse and to have found genuine forgiveness herself. Although as Herbert tells Pip, Miss Havisham may have raised Estella as cruel and unfeeling so that she could "wreak revenge on all the male sex" (139), in the end Estella has certainly overcome this emotional distortion to some extent, finding either a social or moral redemption, depending on the different versions of the novel's ending.

With its extensive details of London middle and upper-class society, its treatment of crime and criminals, its pictures of education and abuse, and countless other facets of Victorian society, *Great Expectations* contains a great deal of realism; yet it does not seem as though the realism is marred or the meaning distorted by a final and permanent reunion between Pip and Estella in the book. By the end of the story, both Pip and presumably Estella have suffered and changed so much that they are completely different people from who they once were. In this way, while they could never have previously attained a healthy or realistic relationship, by the end of the tale they have both presumably changed enough that while probably never destined to be completely happy (years of constant, distorting abuse do not wear off so easily), it certainly seems possible that both Pip and Estella are now capable of finding some measure of realistic, respectful happiness with each other, as they are each finally able to assess the other for who he or she truly is. Their identities have finally been formed and transformed, and the results are hauntingly lovely.

This later version of redemption is more complete than that contained in the novel's original ending. In the first ending, Pip merely finds peace in working hard and hearing Estella's expression of empathy for him one afternoon from a carriage window. In this ending, Pip has lost everything but his friends Herbert, Biddy, and Joe, finds some satisfaction in honest labor, and receives a measure of vindication from Estella's confession of her abuse at the hands of Drummle. Yet this redemption, although perhaps more realistic than that of other novels such as A Christmas Carol, is less-satisfying and even perhaps less grand artistically, for if after everything Pip has suffered through and learned at the end he only receives a more realistic identity involving a little peace and a little vindication, the reader may be left feeling that the entire core of the story was not worth the tragedy that Pip experienced.

If, however, one accepts the second ending, and believes in the most optimistic interpretation possible of it, Pip and Estella's identities and relationship have been so drastically changed that it seems entirely appropriate for them to finally end up together. The difficulty here is that because Estella's transformation occurs off stage, it is difficult to gauge the depth of her growth. Also, in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, the witchy female protagonist is tamed through the well-intentioned emotional abuse of Petruchio, and all's well that ends well. By contrast in *Great Expectations*, however, Estella apparently experiences character reformation through badly-intentioned and brutal physical abuse. This mechanism does seem an unlikely vehicle to bring about redemption, but the women of Dickens' novels were not generally changed for the better in any other way. The second ending, if perhaps more fantastic, is certainly more satisfying than the first, and contains a more complete view of redemption for both Pip and Estella.

Angst-ridden and brilliant, Charles Dickens lived an unhappy life that was the result of abuse, rejection of God's supernatural power, and poor choices. Although achieving phenomenal wealth and fame in his lifetime, Dickens was never satisfied, and eventually worked himself to death for the applause of his audiences. A man with fabulous expectations that were realized economically but never emotionally, because he could never quite come to terms with his weaknesses and form a unified and healthy identity of his own, Dickens achieved literary greatness, but never true happiness. In one of his most significant works, *Great Expectations,* the protagonist Pip manages to achieve in his life what Dickens never did, for despite being abused and deceived by almost everyone around him from his earliest years, being encouraged to form great and illusory expectations, being handed large sums of money for which he was nearly unaccountable, and being rejected by the one great love of his life, Pip manages in the end to come to terms with his eventually shattered false identity and form a more realistic, secure, humble, and compassionate self-definition. Pip becomes a vicarious savior as his internal qualities finally match his external reality, and he finds contentment in residing there. He might never live a completely happy life, but in the revised ending he at least has probably achieved the two things he sought most all along, to marry Estella and to be a true gentleman, and these would seem to be accomplishments worth all the pain and tragedy it took to get Pip there.

Works Cited

"Americans Give Record $295B to Charity." *USA Today* 25 June 2007: n. pag.

A Knight's Tale. Perf. Heath Ledger and Mark Addy. Dir. Brian Helgeland. 2001. DVD. Sony Pictures, 2002.

Allingham, Philip V. "Patterns of Deception in *Huckleberry Finn* and *Great Expectations*" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 46.4 (Mar. 1992): 447-472. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Liberty U Lib. Lynchburg, VA. 05 Jan. 2009 <http://www.jstor.org >.

Auerbach, Nina. "The Rise of the Fallen Woman." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction 35.1* (Jun. 1980): 29-52. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Liberty U Lib. Lynchburg, VA. 5 Aug. 2008 <http://www.jstor.org >.

Axton, William F. "*Great Expectations* Yet Again." *Dickens Studies Annual* 2 (1972): 278-93.

Capes, J. M., and J. E. E. D. Acton. "Dickens Knows Nothing of Sin When It Is Not Crime." *Rambler* Jan. 1862: 274-276. Rpt. in *Great Expectations*. Ed. Edgar Rosenberg. Norton Critical Edition. New York: Norton, 1999. 623-624.

Chesterton, G. K. *Criticisms and Appreciations of the Works of Charles Dickens*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1911.

Cockshut, A. O. J. *The Imagination of Charles Dickens*. New York: New York UP, 1962.

Dabney, Ross. *Love and Property in the Novels of Dickens*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1967.

Dickens, Charles. "Frauds on the Fairies." *Household Words: A Weekly Journal Conducted by Charles Dickens*. 8.184 (1 Oct. 1853): 97-100. Ed. Philip V. Allingham. 23 Jan. 2006. *Victorian Web*. 27 Feb. 2009 <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/pva/pva239.html>.

---. *Great Expectations*. Ed. Edgar Rosenberg. Norton Critical Edition. New York: Norton, 1999.

---. *The Life of Our Lord*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934.

Eagleton, Terry. *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975.

Eigner, Edwin M. "Bulwer-Lytton and the Changed Ending of *Great Expectations*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction 25.1* (Jun. 1970): 104-108. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Liberty U Lib. Lynchburg, VA. 5 Jan. 2009 <http://www.jstor.org >.

Epstein, Norrie. *The Friendly Dickens*. New York: Penguin, 1998.

Forster, John. *The Life of Charles Dickens*. Ed. Ernest Rhys. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1927. 2 vols.

Garner, James Finn. *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*. New York: Macmillan, 1994.

Gissing, George. *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*. London: Blackie & Sons, 1898.

Glimour, Robin. *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981.

Gold, Joseph. *Charles Dickens: Radical Moralist*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1972.

Hardy, Barbara. *The Moral Art of Dickens*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970.

Hattaway, Karen Ann Kennett. "Entering into the Kingdom: Charles Dickens and the Search for Spiritual Regeneration." Diss. Rice University, 1981.

House, Humphry. "George Bernard Shaw on *Great Expectations*." *All in Due Time: The Collected Essays and Broadcast Talks of Humphry House*. London: Hart-Daivs, 1955. 201-220.

---. *The Dickens World*. London: Oxford UP, 1960.

Howe, Neil, and Bill Strauss. *Millennials Rising: the Next Great Generation*. New York: Vintage-Random House, 2000.

Kassin, Saul. *Psychology*. 3rd Ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson-Prentice, 2001.

Kotzin, Michael. *Dickens and the Fairy Tale*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1972.

Laski, Harold J. *The Danger of Being a Gentleman*. New York: Viking, 1940.

Linder, Melanie. "How the World Spends its Money." *Forbes* 30 July 2008: n. pag.

Marlow, James E. "Memory, Romance, and the Expressive Symbol in Dickens." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30.1 (Jun. 1975): 20-32. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Liberty U Lib. Lynchburg, VA. 11 Feb. 2009 <http://www.jstor.org >.

Meckier, Jerome. *Dickens's Great Expectations: Misnar's Pavilion Versus Cinderella*. Lexington, KY: UP of Kentucky, 2002.

Miller, J. Hillis. *Charles Dickens: the World of His Novels*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1958.

Morris, Pam. *Dickens's Class Consciousness: A Marginal View*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.

Newman, John Henry. "Discourse 8. Knowledge Viewed in Relation to Religion." *The Idea of a University*. *Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. 8th ed. Vol. 2. New York: Norton, 2006. 1035-1042. 2 vols.

Ostry, Elaine. *Social Dreaming: Dickens and the Fairy Tale*. Studies in Major Literary Authors 16. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Perkin, Harold. *Origins of Modern English Society*. London: Routledge, 1969.

Pickrel, Paul. "Teaching the Novel: *Great Expectations*." *Essays on the Teaching of English: Reports on the Yale Conferences of the Teaching of English*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960. 216-229.

Poniewozik, James. “The End of Fairy Tales? How Shrek and Friends Have Changed Children’s Stories.” *Time* 21 May 2007: 83-85.

Rawlins, Jack P. “Great Expiations: Dickens and the Betrayal of the Child.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 23.4* (Autumn 1983): 667-683. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Liberty U Lib. Lynchburg, VA. 22 Sept. 2009 <http://www.jstor.org >.

Ricks, Christopher. “*Great Expectations*.” *Dickens and the Twentieth Century*. Ed. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1966. 199-211.

Rosenberg, Edgar. “Launching *Great Expectations*.” *Great Expectations.* Norton Critical Edition. By Charles Dickens. Ed. Edgar Rosenberg. New York: Norton, 1999. 389-426.

Selby, Keith. Excerpt. *How to Study a Charles Dickens Novel*. London: Macmillan, 1989. n. pag. Rpt. in *Readings on Great Expectations*. Ed. Lawrence Kappel. San Diego: Greenhaven P, 1999. 34-45.

Shaw, George Bernard. “Introduction.” *Great Expectations*. By Charles Dickens. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947. v-xx. Rpt. in *Great Expectations*. Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Edgar Rosenberg. New York: Norton, 1999. 631-641.

Smiles, Samuel. *Self-help*. London: J. Murray, 1958.

Smith, Karl Ashley. *Dickens and the Unreal City*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield, Philip Dormer. *Lord Chesterfield’s Letters to His Son and Others*. London: Dent, 1938.

Stone, Harry. *Dickens and the Invisible World*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1979.

---. “Fire, Hand, and Gate: Dickens’ *Great Expectations*.” *The Kenyon Review* 24.4 (Autumn 1962): 662-691. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Liberty U Lib. Lynchburg, VA. 27 Jun. 2009 <http://www.jstor.org >.

---. “The Novel as Fairy Tale: Dickens’ *Dombey and Son*.” *English Studies* 47 (1966): 1-27. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Liberty U Lib. Lynchburg, VA. 27 Feb. 2009 <http://www.jstor.org >.

Strange, G. Robert. “Expectations Well Lost: Dickens’ Fable for His Time.” *College English* 16.1 (Oct. 1954): 9-17. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Liberty U Lib. Lynchburg, VA. 28 Jan. 2009 <http://www.jstor.org >.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Trans. Richard Howard. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1975.

Tolkien, J. R. R. “On Fairy-Stories.” *The Monsters and the Critics, and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983. 109-161.

Trollope, Anthony. *Doctor Thorne*. London: Dent, 1967.

Twaite, James A., and Ofelia Rodriguez-Srednicki. “Understanding and Reporting Child Abuse: Legal and Psychological Perspectives: Part Two: Emotional Abuse and Secondary Abuse.” *Journal of Psychiatry and Law* 32 (Winter 2006): 443-481. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Liberty U Lib. Lynchburg, VA. 10 July 2009 <http://www.jstor.org >.

Van Ghent, Dorothy. *The English Novel: Form and Function*. New York: Rinehart, 1953.

Walder, Dennis. *Dickens and Religion*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981.

Watkins, Gwen. *Dickens in Search of Himself*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987.

Whitehouse, John Howard, ed. *Ruskin the Prophet, and Other Centenary Studies*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1920.

Wilden, Eldred J. “Enjoy Dickens With Me.” *The Dickensian 62.350* (Autumn 1966): 185-187.

Wilson, A. N. *The Victorians*. New York: Norton, 2003.

Wilson, Angus. *The World of Charles Dickens*. New York: Viking, 1970.