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SELECTED NOVELS BY DICKENS

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By
DEBORAH MOORE, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Deborah Moore, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Graham Petrie

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is intended to explore the relationship between Dickens's use of 'type' characters and the portrayal of goodness in his novels. The 'benevolent old man', the 'impulsive young hero', and the 'good and simple man' are identified as Dickens's primary 'types' of 'goodness', and their development is traced over the course of selected novels ranging from Pickwick Papers to Great Expectations.

Dickens's original formulation of goodness is a simple one and his naivete as well as his artistic immaturity is reflected in characters, like the Cheeryble brothers, whose uni-dimensional virtue ultimately renders them absurd. Over the course of his many novels Dickens develops a more complex moral view that endeavours to explore the interplay of good and evil within the individual. Great Expectation's Magwitch is, perhaps, the best example of the increasing moral complexity of Dickens's art.

This thesis also examines the journey of the 'impulsive young hero', another of Dickens's 'types' of 'goodness', from dependence upon the providential figure to self-determination and moral autonomy. Early heroes like Nicholas Nickleby and Martin Chuzzlewit remain subordinate to the will of the 'benevolent old man' in order to guarantee their future prospects. As Dickens matures as a novelist, however, the 'benevolent

old man' becomes an increasingly less powerful figure and, as a result, the hero is forced to become more responsible for his own existence. Through his rejection of Magwitch's fortune in Great Expectations Pip constitutes the final movement in the hero's search for self-determination.

As the 'benevolent old man' appears in increasingly abrogated forms the 'good and simple man', the final Dickensian type of goodness that is discussed in this study, becomes the representative of the pure virtue that was formerly the province of the providential figure. The 'good and simple man', is, however, invariably a member of the lower classes and his social helplessness reflects Dickens' gradually declining faith in an ameliorative middle class.

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Much of the critical response to Dickens's novels is affected by what P.J.M. Scott in Reality and Comic Confidence in Charles Dickens (1979) calls "critical schizophrenia"¹. On the one hand critics like G.K. Chesterton and Robert Garis insist that Dickens is a natural genius or, in other words, a man without art:

...the 'great novelists' were deeply schooled in certain disciplines, which came to be their habits, which were their necessary and appropriate procedures in shaping their literary structures and expressing their moral vision, and which were utterly unfamiliar to Dickens and utterly antithetical to his essential nature and genius. For Dickens characteristically worked in a literary and moral mode that ordinarily is taken by readers seriously interested in art to be incapable of producing 'high art'. 2

In Dickens the Novelist (1970) F.R. and Q.D. Leavis argue that "Dickens was one of the greatest creative writers [who] developed a fully conscious devotion to his art, becoming as a popular and fecund, but yet profound, serious and wonderfully resourceful practising novelist, a master of it"³. Dickens the Novelist is concerned, however, only with those novels subsequent to Dombey and Son (1848), an omission that carries the tacit implication that the earlier novels are inferior in quality.⁴ Some of Dickens's supporters have gone to such extremes as to suggest that it is not Dickens's art itself that is questionable but rather the

critical standards that are currently used to evaluate his novels:

...The revaluation of Dickens...is not to be achieved by blackballing his nomination for membership of the realist club, and finding an alternative basis for his inclusion--as a hired entertainer, perhaps, allowed to use the bar. It can only be achieved by disbanding the club altogether: the critical preconceptions behind most of the reformist criticism, deriving as they do from the doctrine and practice of novelists like James, simply do not satisfy the demands made on us by Dickens's quite different art.

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It would seem wise, given this 'critical schizophrenia', to adopt a synthesized stance when evaluating Dickens's fiction. It is counterproductive, for example, to view Dickens as a natural genius without conventional technique because his art clearly follows a developmental pattern. Dickens's novels are progressively more unified and manifest an increasing complexity not only in the relationship between thematic and symbolic concerns but in the delineation of character as well. Given this evolutionary pattern, it seems arbitrary to reject the early writings in which one finds the genesis of many of Dickens's later, more critically acceptable, novels. While Dickens's reputation has, perhaps, been diminished by the demands of the "psychological realism of Tolstoy and George Eliot"⁶ one cannot simply dismiss these criteria in favour of an interpretive stance that is more sympathetic to Dickens's mode

of perception. To reach a productive understanding of Dickens it would seem that one must first acknowledge that Dickens is a conscious artist as opposed to "someone who indulges...in an ecstasy of spiritual possession or some kind of automatic writing"? One must accept, as well, the developmental nature of Dickens's fiction in order to properly access the early novels and since much of the complexity of Dickens's art lies in its ability to controvert itself, an understanding of the operative forces in these early novels is critical.

Many critics find Dickens's 'good' characters objectionable and tend to dismiss them as wooden, lifeless, or as testimony to Dickens's shortcomings as a novelist. Conversely, the vigour of Dickens's portrayal of evil often receives critical acclaim:

...We can readily recognise the appeal of a Squeers or a Quilp, for example, as lords of misrule. They are creatures who have found outlets for energies which civilised social relations necessarily constrain. Opposed, however, against the tremendously correct Nicholas Nickleby or the actually debilitated Little Nell, we have the right to ask if in the end these monsters have not walked off not only with some of the imaginative sympathy stirred up by the works in which they appear...but with the terms themselves of serious and responsible debate there. If it be objected that Nicholas Nickleby and The Old Curiosity Shop are those of Dickens's early works where his immaturity counts most for weakness, it remains nevertheless significant that Dickens's writing is

all alive in treating of such figures as Squeers or Quilp...and is wooden, develops expectable tropes...in characterising Kate Nickleby and her aristocratic pursuers or the mendicant girl of the later work. 8

Much of the perceived imbalance between good and evil in Dickens's novels is a function more of the nature of the principles themselves than of Dickens's method of characterization. Perhaps because Judeo-Christian and classical moral and ethical antecedents posit that self-abnegation is necessary for spiritual growth, evil is almost always portrayed as idiosyncratic and as the indulgence of the ego. Although there is no dearth of literary precedents that substantiate the assertion that evil is, by its very nature, more 'interesting' than virtue, Paradise Lost's Satan is, perhaps, the most notorious example of the charismatic dimension of vice.

The early failure of Dickens's 'good' characters is not, however, entirely attributable to the insipid nature of virtue. Dickens's early belief in the purity and the ameliorative power of goodness is a naïve one and seems to be more an element of dream or fantasy than carefully constructed fiction. This original philosophical and artistic naïveté generates characters, like Mr Brownlow and the Cheeryble Brothers, the seamless purity of whose virtue ultimately renders them absurd. Over the course of his many novels, however, Dickens develops a more mature moral

vision and it is in his much criticized 'good' characters that this progress is most apparent. It is my intention, therefore, to trace Dickens's artistic and philosophical development in selected novels with particular consideration of his 'good' characters.

In that they tend more to represent particular ideas than emerge convincingly as discrete individuals, the virtuous characters in Dickens's fiction are, for the most part, 'typical'. Although both the literary and dramatic tradition that precedes Dickens abounds in the use of 'types' the most probable origin of the Dickensian 'type' is the 'character':

...The character is a literary genre: a short, and usually witty, sketch in prose of a distinctive type of person. The genre was inaugurated by Theophrastus...who wrote a lively book called 'Characters'. The form had a great vogue in the earlier seventeenth century; the book of characters then written by Joseph Hall, Sir Thomas Overbury, and John Earle influenced later writings in the essay, history, and fiction. 9

The influence of the character sketch is most obvious in Sketches by Boz (1836), but the predilection and facility for brief, humorous and often gratuitous 'characters' is evident throughout Dickens's work.

Dickens's 'good' characters, though numerous, tend to resolve themselves into four main types: the 'benevolent old man', the 'impulsive young hero', the 'good and simple man', and the 'innocent heroine'. Dickens's 'innocent

heroine', although one of the primary types of goodness, will not be fully discussed in this study. Characters like Rose Maylie, Kate Nickleby, Ruth Pinch, Esther Summer-son, and Amy Dorrit are invested with a host of Victorian attitudes that make them unusually difficult for the modern reader to accept. The peculiar nature of the 'innocent heroine', then, prohibits her inclusion with the more immediately accessible types and demands individual attention.

This study will focus upon those early novels, Pickwick Papers (1837), Oliver Twist (1839) and Nicholas Nickleby (1838), in which the types under consideration are established and those later novels, Martin Chuzzlewit (1844), David Copperfield (1850), Bleak House (1853), Little Dorrit (1857) and Great Expectations (1861), in which these types undergo transformations that are significant to the central argument. Those novels that have not been discussed in detail are consistent with the argument but are not critical to its demonstration. The single exception to this is Our Mutual Friend (1865) which constitutes an anomalous reversion to the earlier pattern of Pickwick Papers and Martin Chuzzlewit and is, therefore, outside the scope of the study.

Chapter 1

One of the most prevalent of Dickens's typical characters is the recurring figure of the 'benevolent old man'. He appears in the early novels--Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist, and Nicholas Nickleby--as the personification of goodness and selfless charity. Mr Pickwick, Mr Brownlow, and the Cheeryble Brothers are each a variation upon a central concept of goodness and manifest a number of physical and psychological similarities. Dr Strong of David Copperfield is another of these truly benevolent old men. In Martin Chuzzlewit and Bleak House, however, the figure of benevolence reveals himself to be less than perfect. Old Martin, for example, exhibits minimal self-control as well as questionable judgment while Mr Jarndyce, despite every effort, cannot save Richard Carstone. Unlike his predecessors, Jarndyce is neither omniscient nor omnipotent. In later novels, like Little Dorrit and Great Expectations, there is a perceptible shift in the author's world view and Dickens's manipulation of the 'benevolent old man' in particular is an index of his own growing disillusionment. Figures of false and corrupt benevolence arise to populate a fictional world in which goodness is virtually ineffectual.

The 'benevolent old man' makes his initial appearance in Dickens's first novel, Pickwick Papers. Mr Pickwick is the first in a long line of corpulent, occasionally comic

figures, possessed of preternaturally prepossessing countenances and open wallets, that runs throughout Dickens's fiction. Pickwick establishes the type and, typical of Dickens's complexity, deviates from it as well.

In appearance the benevolent old man is invariably a portly figure with silver hair and a general quaintness of attire. Pickwick in gaiters is the prototype of this figure.

...What a study for an artist did that exciting scene present! The eloquent Pickwick, with one hand gracefully concealed behind his coat tails, and the other waving in air, to assist his glowing declamation; his elevated position revealing those tights and gaiters, which, had they clothed an ordinary man, might have passed without observation, but which, when Pickwick clothed them--if we may use the expression--inspired involuntary awe and respect. 10

Whether he is clothed in a "bottle-green coat with a black velvet collar"¹¹, as Mr Brownlow is, or in the "broad-skirted blue coat...with no particular waist...drab breeches and high gaiters"¹² of the Cheerybles, the 'benevolent old man' is always characterized as respectable-looking or, perhaps more to the point, as prosperous.

One of the more salient characteristics of the 'benevolent old man' is, predictably, his philanthropy. Pickwick is repeatedly described as possessing a 'philanthropic countenance' and although, objectively speaking, his acts of benevolence extend little beyond a gold watch,

given to Isabella Wardle, and small testimonials to the inhabitants of the Fleet, the spiritual largesse evident in his treatment of Jingle is sufficient proof of his generosity of spirit.

Pickwick is also 'typical' in that he is unmarried and without immediate family. His situation, which is shared by later benevolent old men like Mr Brownlow, the Cheerybles and Mr Jarndyce, makes him an ideal surrogate parent. He is viewed by his followers, Winkle and Snodgrass in particular, as their leader--a figure whose wisdom and authority they respect and whose judgment they do not question. Dickens insists upon Pickwick's paternal status in the novel primarily in the context of Pickwick's relationship to women. "[H]is behaviour, when females have been in the case, has always been that of a man, who, having attained a pretty advanced period of life, content with his own occupations and amusements, treats them only as a father might his daughters"¹³ In his toast to the bride and groom in Chapter 28, "A Good-humoured Christmas Chapter", Pickwick states that he is "happy to be old enough to be her [Isabella Wardle's] father; for, being so, I shall not be suspected of any latent designs when I say, that I admire, esteem, and love them both"¹⁴ It is not unusual, then, that the ladies of Dingley Dell, in their turn, treat Pickwick like a father or a favourite old uncle.

Pickwick's paternal status has a dual function in the novel. It underlines the absurdity of the Bardell breach of promise suit by showing how far from a trifler with female affections that Pickwick truly is, and this serves, in its turn, as a further indictment of the judicial system that convicts him. Pickwick's fatherly demeanour also lends a measure of credibility to the fact that Arabella Allen and Mr Winkle turn to Pickwick for both approval and assistance subsequent to their elopement.

While the 'benevolent old man' performs a more complicated function in Dickens's later fiction, his role in the early novels is comparable to the role of the 'deus ex machina' in Greek theatre. It invariably falls upon the figure of benevolence to resolve the problems of those around him and to set the other characters upon the path to happiness and prosperity. Pickwick, for example, must not only forgive and reform Alfred Jingle, he must rescue Mrs Bardell from the machinations of Dodson and Fogg, reconcile Mr Winkle Junior with Mr Winkle Senior and Arabella with her brother Benjamin, settle Samuel Weller's domestic affairs, and so cleverly invest the elder Mr Weller's money that he "had a handsome independence to retire on, upon which he still lives at an excellent public house near Shooter's Hill, where he is quite revered as an oracle: boasting very much of his intimacy with Mr Pickwick and retaining a most unconquerable aversion to widows".¹⁶

It is clear that the 'happy ending' of Pickwick Papers depends upon Mr Pickwick's actions. It is far from clear, however, how Mr Pickwick has acquired the wisdom and the decisiveness that must necessarily prompt such actions. The 'benevolent old man' is usually characterized as a withdrawn and contemplative or philosophical figure and there is a suggestion that his experience of life and of evil is, for the most part, vicarious. Pickwick is, perhaps, the most obviously unwordly of Dickens's 'benevolent old men'. He begins his adventures in Pickwick Papers possessed of the clear and unsuspecting nature that is characteristic of the early examples of the type. The over-riding impulse of the 'benevolent old man' is to want to believe the best of all men and it is this weakness, if one may call it such, that allows Pickwick to be so completely taken in at the outset of the novel by the cabman's ridiculous assertions about his horse.

'How old is that horse, my friend?' inquired Mr Pickwick, rubbing his nose with the shilling he had reserved for the fare. 'Forty-two,' replied the driver, eyeing him askant.

'What!' ejaculated Mr Pickwick, laying his hand upon his notebook. The driver reiterated his former statement. Mr Pickwick looked very hard at the man's face, but his features were immovable, so he noted down the fact forthwith.

'And how long do you keep him out at a time?' inquired Mr Pickwick, searching for further information.

'Two or three weeks,' replied the man.

'Weeks!' said Mr Pickwick in astonishment --and out came the notebook again.

'He lives at Pentonwil when he's at home,' observed the driver, coolly, 'but we seldom takes him home, on account of his veakness.'

'On account of his weakness!' reiterated the perplexed Mr Pickwick.

'He always falls down when he's took out o' the cab,' continued the driver, 'but when he's in it, we bears him up werry tight, and takes him in werry short, so as he can't werry well fall down; and we've got a pair o' precious large wheels on, so ven he does move, they run after him, and he must go on--he can't help it.'

Mr Pickwick entered every word of this statement in his notebook, with the view of communicating it to the club, as a singular instance of the tenacity of life in horses, under trying circumstances. 17

Pickwick Papers is concerned primarily with Mr Pickwick's forays into the realm of experience. Pickwick begins the novel as something of a middle-aged infant and his innocence is clearly a device that is manipulated by Dickens for the purposes of both comedy and satire. Pickwick's naïveté makes him something of an outsider--much in the same way that Mark Twain's Huck Finn is an outsider--a condition that allows him to view each new scene from a fresh perspective. Pickwick is, then, a perfect vehicle for satire as his impressions of the election at Eatanswill (Chapter XII) clearly illustrate.

It must be noted, at this juncture, that the narrative voice, or 'editor', of Pickwick Papers takes unusual license, in chapters like that referred to above, in equating his vision with that of his protagonist. The

narrative voice does endeavour to lend itself credibility by claiming, at various intervals, to be quoting from the "multifarious documents confided to him"¹⁸ that chronicle Pickwick's adventures. For the most part these claims to authenticity are unnecessary since the editor tends to identify his perspective with Pickwick's with a reasonable degree of consistency. The remainder of the novel is delivered from an omniscient point of view with the narrative voice arranging the facts much as an editor would. Pickwick's point of view is used whenever a particular satirical point is to be made or whenever the comic potentialities of a situation require it. There are instances, however, when the narrator departs from both the Pickwickian and omniscient points of view and turns his ironic vision on the protagonist himself. While the editor's treatment of Pickwick in these cases, which will be discussed below, is invariably playful and tongue-in-cheek, these shifts in perspective not only confuse the reader but also seriously undermine Pickwick's later efficacy as the final arbiter of the events of the novel.

The plot of Pickwick Papers demands that Pickwick perform an authoritarian function in the novel (i.e. that he resolve the conflicts that bring about the climax of the novel and thus precipitate its denouement), while elements of his characterization militate against the successful

performance of that role. The 'benevolent old man' adopts as his most fundamental attribute a goodness that is based upon an almost childlike innocence--an innocence that impairs his ability to function in a corrupt environment. As Sam Weller points out, Pickwick "rayther want [s] somebody to look arter [him] wen [his] judgment goes out a wisitin".¹⁹ The unavoidable conclusion to be drawn from the symbiotic relationship that exists between Sam Weller and Pickwick is that it is virtually impossible, in Dickens's terms, to be both good and worldly.

Since Pickwick Papers is the only novel by Dickens in which the figure of benevolence acts as the protagonist as well, Pickwick's centrality affords a unique perspective on the problem of goodness in Dickens's fiction. As protagonist it is only natural that Pickwick bear the burden of Dickens's main concerns in the novel. At the outset of Pickwick Papers Dickens's preoccupations are clearly comic and Pickwick, therefore, is constrained to act as Dickens's primary comic vehicle. It is in the nature of the humour that surrounds Pickwick that one finds the critical flaw inherent in Dickens's initial conception of goodness. The comic situations in Pickwick Papers are generated out of Pickwick's innocence. Pickwick is presented to the reader through a series of compromising and embarrassing incidents that are the direct outgrowth of his unsuspecting, unworldly

nature. It is this same innocence and unworldliness, however, that is the foundation of Pickwick's goodness and there is a tendency throughout Dickens's fiction to equate the two. Pickwick's innocence makes him appear ludicrous and the inevitable corollary, therefore, seems to be that there is something fundamentally ridiculous in his goodness as well. Dickens could, conceivably, have avoided this difficulty through the use of a more complex point of view. The goal of a more complicated perspective would be to make the 'world's' contempt for Pickwick's innocence rather than that innocence itself, the object of derision. Such a point of view would require a reliable narrative voice that would consistently direct the reader's sympathies in Pickwick's favour. The narrative voice in Pickwick Papers, however, often cannot resist the temptation to adopt the worldly perspective and ridicule Pickwick as well.

If any dispassionate spectator could have beheld the countenance of the illustrious man, whose name forms the leading feature of the title of this work, during the latter part of this conversation, he would have been almost induced to wonder that the indignant fire which flashed from his eyes, did not melt the glasses of his spectacles --so majestic was his wrath. His nostrils dilated, and his fists clenched involuntarily, as he heard himself addressed by the villain. But he restrained himself again-- he did not pulverise him. 20

While, in this instance, Dickens's tone is obviously playful

it does, nonetheless, render Pickwick's righteous indignation over Jingle's effrontery mildly ridiculous. There is something undeniably ludicrous about the notion of the 'angel in gaiters' pulverising anyone. In and of itself, this passage is a harmless indulgence of Dickens's comic impulse, but the cumulative impact of this and similar diversions is more than Pickwick's credibility as an authority figure can bear. To the world of the novel Pickwick is good, lovable and mildly ridiculous. The editorial voice is content to acquiesce to this assessment and so the reader comes to view Pickwick as lovable but ridiculous and, therefore, far removed from the dispenser of natural justice that Dickens appears to want him to be.

One could, of course, argue that Pickwick matures over the course of the novel, particularly as a result of his experiences while incarcerated in the Fleet. Such a development in character would lend substance to his ameliorative role late in the novel. If such a change takes place, however, it, like young Martin Chuzzlewit's reformation or old Martin Chuzzlewit's change of heart, is sudden and virtually undocumented. It is not until Great Expectations that Dickens develops, in the person of Pip, a convincing psychological portrait capable of supporting the dynamics of change.

The 'benevolent old man' appears next in Dickens's

second novel Oliver Twist.

The old gentleman was a very respectable-looking personage, with a powdered head and gold spectacles. He was dressed in a bottle-green coat with a black velvet collar; wore white trousers; and carried a smart bamboo cane under his arm. He had taken up a book from the stall, and there he stood, reading away, as hard as if he were in his elbow-chair, in his own study. It is very possible that he fancied himself there, indeed; for it was plain, from his abstraction, that he saw not the bookstall, nor the street, nor the boys, nor, in short, anything but the book itself: which he was reading straight through: turning over the leaf when he got to the bottom of a page, beginning at the top line of the next one, and going regularly on, with the greatest interest and eagerness. 21

In that he is middle-aged, prosperous and somewhat abstracted, Mr Brownlow conforms admirably to the physical type of the 'benevolent old man'. Brownlow shares, as well, the celibacy that is characteristic of the type while his heart, the organ of benevolence, is reputed to be "large enough for any six ordinary old gentlemen of humane disposition"²² Mr Brownlow is similar to Pickwick in that he appears to have a very trusting nature. He believes in Oliver's inherent virtue, for example, although all the evidence is against the child. While Mr Brownlow's faith in human nature is a positive attribute, characteristic of the type, it has no basis in fact. Mr Brownlow apparently does not know why he trusts Oliver, as he himself admits. "I have been deceived, before, in the objects whom I have endeavoured to benefit; but I

feel strongly disposed to trust you, nevertheless; and I am more interested in your behalf than I can well account for, even to myself".²³ While it is clear to the reader, who has travelled with Oliver since his birth, that Dickens intends for him to be a 'good' character, little objective evidence exists to attest to that fact. There is, then, no logical basis upon which Mr Brownlow can construct his apprehension of Oliver's 'goodness'. Although such a logical base may not be necessary for the realization of 'goodness', it is unlikely that Brownlow, who is characterized as an emotionally withdrawn and scholarly man, would act so decisively in the absence of such a base. The ability to perceive 'goodness', then, remains an intuitive one and while the trusting nature of the 'benevolent old man' is acceptable in its own right one would, perhaps, prefer that his faith be the product of a wisdom based on experience rather than the outgrowth of simplicity or instinct.

Mr Brownlow leads a quieter existence than Pickwick --a lifestyle that is more in keeping with that of the later manifestations of the type. An early disappointment has led him to seek the safety of literary pursuits and, although he has not "made a coffin of [his] heart",²⁴ Brownlow does appear to have withdrawn from the world. There is, in effect, a marked tendency on the part of the 'benevolent old man',

to withdraw from most distressing circumstances. Just as Brownlow retreats from life after the death of his betrothed and the disgrace of his friend, so too does Pickwick retreat from the unpleasantness of the Fleet..

From this spot, Mr Pickwick wandered along all the galleries, up and down all the staircases, and once again round the whole area of the yard...There were the same squalor, the same turmoil and noise, the same general characteristics, in every corner; in the best and the worst alike. The whole place seemed restless and troubled; and the people were crowding and flitting to and fro, like the shadows in an uneasy dream.

'I have seen enough,' said Mr Pickwick, as he threw himself into a chair in his little apartment, 'My head aches with these scenes, and my heart too; Henceforth I will be a prisoner in my own room.' 25

Unlike Pickwick, Brownlow is not the protagonist of his particular novel and, as a result, his characterization lacks the variety and the vitality of his predecessor's. Brownlow's rough edges are not softened by the humanizing influence of comedy nor is he given depth through genuine suffering. Dickens tells us of the tragedies of Brownlow's life; he does not illustrate them and, therefore, they remain less than emotionally convincing. Mr Brownlow is not a source of comic relief in Oliver Twist and Dickens's comic concerns do not interfere with his putative status as the novel's authority figure. There is, however, an even larger stumbling block to Brownlow's credible acquittal

of the role assigned to him and this obstacle is to be found in the structure of the novel itself. A well constructed novel unravels organically and logically through a series of confrontations generated from the novel's main concerns and while this logical progression does not necessarily exclude the use of coincidence or chance in the novel, it does require that the end result be both rational and appropriate. A poorly constructed novel, on the other hand, is often forced to derive its impetus from the excessive and irrational use of chance. Oliver Twist is a novel that is filled with coincidence but, unlike later novels such as Bleak House that also contain a disconcerting number of coincidences, Oliver Twist lacks the cohesion of symbol and image that renders coincidence plausible. As an outgrowth of the faulty plot structure of Oliver Twist the resolution of the novel comes to depend almost exclusively upon Mr Brownlow. To the 'benevolent old man' falls the task of recognizing, seeking out and foiling Monks; of uncovering Oliver's unfortunate but genteel parentage, not to mention his relatively substantial legacy; and of removing the stain from Rose Maylie's name. It is also left to him to provide Oliver with the middle class upbringing that his sufferings and virtue appear to deserve. Even an author who deals in characters of unusual substance and motivational complexity would be hard-pressed to create a figure capable of supporting the overwhelming

burden of incongruity concomitant to such a mass of coincidence. Dickens, however, seldom achieves a consistent and convincing psychological portrait and Mr Brownlow is certainly not one of Dickens's most developed characters. There is, in effect, no logical consequence of the plot that points to Mr Brownlow's being privy to so much of Oliver's history, nor is there a clear motive for Mr Brownlow's delving so deeply into the orphan's past. Oliver's 'goodness', which appears to be the driving force behind Mr Brownlow's interest, remains a nebulous construct--an article of faith rather than a demonstrable reality. Brownlow is, ultimately, little more than a 'deus ex machina', a contrivance used to extricate the characters from the vicissitudes of the plot. With all of the arbitrary efficacy of a 'deus ex machina' he solves the novel's most critical mystery, thus enabling the 'good' characters to make their way to the required 'happy ending' --Oliver becomes a gentleman, Rose and Harry Maylie marry, Dr Losberne retires and becomes a country gentleman while Mr Grimwig continues to do "everything in a very singular and unprecedented manner, but always maintaining with his favourite asservation, that his mode is the right one".²⁶ While this is all very much in keeping with the Victorian bourgeois ideal, it is very far from the reality of the novel--the reality of poverty, squalor and violent death that is the fate of Dickens's 'evil' characters. Mr Brownlow remains well-intentioned but unconvincing as

Oliver Twist approaches its sentimental conclusion and, although one knows that virtue has again triumphed over evil, one is not quite sure as to how that victory came about.

Nicholas Nickleby is the last novel in which Dickens's 'benevolent old man' appears in his original form. The Cheeryble brothers are the final statement of Pickwickian goodness; the embodiment of Dickens's own faith in the ameliorative influence of a benign middle class.

...But what principally attracted the attention of Nicholas, was the old gentleman's eye,--never was such a clear, twinkling, honest, merry happy eye as that ...his head thrown a little on one side, and his hat a little more on one side than his head...with such a pleasant smile playing about his mouth, and such a comical expression of mingled slyness, simplicity, kind-heartedness, and good-humour, lighting up his jolly old face, that Nicholas would have been content to have stood there and looked at him until evening, and to have forgotten meanwhile that there was such a thing as a soured mind or a crabbed countenance to be met with in the whole wide world. 27

The Cheeryble brothers are "earnest and guileless"²⁸ and beam upon one another with "looks of affection, which would have been delightful to behold in infants".²⁹ Both possess, as well, "the utmost serenity of mind that the kindest and most unsuspecting nature could bestow".³⁰ The Cheerybles, like Mr Brownlow, are reputed to have had their share of

disappointment but, again like Mr Brownlow, adversity has only served to enhance their innate benevolence. The Cheerybles are unrivalled in Dickens's fiction for both their charity and their apparently genuine concern for those around them and, as testimony to Dickens's belief in the efficacy of these humane impulses, their generosity seems to permeate their surroundings.

...Everything gave back, besides, some reflection of the kindly spirit of the brothers. The warehousemen and porters were such sturdy jolly fellows that it was a treat to see them. Among the shipping-announcements and steam-packet lists which decorated the counting house wall, were designs for alms-houses, statements of charities, and plans for new hospitals. A blunderbuss and two swords hung above the chimney-piece for the terror of evil-doers, but the blunderbuss was rusty and shattered, and the swords were broken and edgeless. Elsewhere, their open display in such a condition would have raised a smile, but there it seemed as though even violent and offensive weapons partook of the reigning influence, and became emblems of mercy and forbearance.

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The role of the Cheeryble brothers in Nicholas Nickleby is not as arbitrarily authoritarian as that of Mr Brownlow in Oliver Twist. The discovery of the conspiracy between Ralph Nickleby and Arthur Gride and their designs upon Madeleine Bray, for instance, depends upon the efforts of Newman Noggs. Madeleine's rescue, furthermore, is contingent upon Nicholas's ardour and the timely intervention of Providence. While the Cheeryble twins are not physically

instrumental in the downfall of the novel's villains, their moral support of the course of action adopted by the other characters is a necessary prerequisite for both the success and the moral rectitude of the endeavour. Nicholas's abduction of Madeleine Bray, for example, remains in a state of moral ambiguity until it is, in essence, sanctified by the approval of the Cheerybles.

...The brothers, upon their return, bestowed such commendations upon Nicholas for the part he had taken, and evinced so much joy at the altered state of events and the recovery of their young friend from trials so great and dangers so threatening, that, as she [Mrs Nickleby] more than once informed her daughter, she now considered the fortunes of the family 'as good as' made. 32

It must be pointed out, for the purposes of subsequent discussion, that the moral approval of the Cheerybles is immediately translated into a pecuniary reward for Nicholas Nickleby. In other words, the young hero's well-being and future prospects are inevitably tied to the 'benevolent old man's' approval of his actions. The repercussions of this situation are explored in greater depth through the relationship between another young hero and another unusual 'benevolent old man' in Martin Chuzzlewit.

The Cheeryble brothers play an important role in the curtailment of Ralph Nickleby's illegal and immoral activities but, unlike previous 'benevolent old men' their role in the denouement of the criminal subplot of the

novel is a fundamentally passive one. In other words, Ralph Nickleby's downfall is not the result of the efforts of the Cheeryble twins alone but is, rather, the result of the combined efforts of a number of characters, like Newman Noggs and Frank Cheeryble, who act either on their own recognisance or as agents of the twins. Strictly speaking, then, it is not integral to the plot that the Cheerybles be present at the final meeting with Ralph, but their presence is necessary to the psychic balance of the novel. The function of the Cheerybles is, ultimately, that of figureheads in the final ritualistic confrontation between good and evil. It is proof of the developmental nature of Dickens's art, furthermore, that Ralph Nickleby's undoing in Nicholas Nickleby, unlike Monk's downfall in Oliver Twist, is shown to be the inevitable consequence of his own actions rather than the penalty imposed upon him from outside the novel by an external moral source.

The Cheeryble brothers are spared, then, the incongruity of Brownlow's position since the burden of evidence against the novel's villain does not rest exclusively upon them. Their somewhat arbitrary dispensation of domestic bliss at the novel's close, furthermore, is almost forgivable in that it seems only appropriate that the traditional comic reconciliation of marriage be the province of the novel's most comic positive characters. In that the role of the Cheerybles in the resolution of Nicholas Nickleby is

not so overdetermined as that of previous 'benevolent old men', one would imagine that they would be more successful at meeting the demands of the plot than were their predecessors. Such, however, is not the case. The Cheeryble brothers are Dickens's most consistently comic 'benevolent old men'. Pickwick is undoubtedly a superior comic creation and there is a certain poignancy to the humour that surrounds him that is absent from Dickens's characterization of the Cheeryble twins. The Cheerybles lack the potential for tragedy and disillusionment that is so integral to Pickwick, and this renders them all but lifeless and allows them to develop in a more pedestrian comic vein. The end result of this development is that it is next to impossible to take the Cheeryble brothers seriously. Their appearance and demeanour alone, although Dickens can hardly be held responsible for the similarity, begs a comparison to Lewis Carroll's Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee. Their excessive and vocal regard for one another, for Tim Linkinwater, and for the small circle of individuals who are the objects of their benevolence, tends to negate itself through sheer overstatement. There exist, furthermore, a number of inconsistencies inherent in their position in the fictional world of Nicholas Nickleby that tend to further undermine their overall credibility. The world of Nicholas Nickleby is, for the most part, the corrosive environment of Ralph Nickleby, Arthur Gride, and Mr Squeers. It is a

world in which injustice and abuse are commonplace; a world whose characteristic impulse is self-serving avarice. One must wonder, then, how the Cheeryble brothers managed to survive, let alone prosper in such an environment. One can only wonder, indeed, since Dickens fails to articulate the fundamental properties of the goodness that allows the Cheerybles to pass unscathed through the world that has entirely dehumanized Ralph Nickleby. While it is a moot point as to how far one can extrapolate from any novel before doing both oneself and the author an injustice, questioning the simple existence of the Cheerybles in an otherwise corrupt environment does not seem unfair. Dickens attempts to make a moral point by establishing the Cheerybles in apposition to Ralph Nickleby and, in essence, that moral point founders because the Cheerybles have little credibility within the parameters of the novel itself. It could, of course, be argued that Ralph Nickleby is a contrived melodramatic villain whose development as a character is no more detailed or convincing than that of the Cheerybles. This criticism does, in fact, hold true for Ralph Nickleby as an autonomous figure. It must not be overlooked, however, that corruption, vice and vanity are indigenous to Nicholas Nickleby and, therefore, that Ralph Nickleby is simply an exaggeration of a pervasive influence. Goodness, on the other hand, is the province of a handful of characters who

are in the throes of a constant struggle against the evil influences of their environment. Without a defined system of ethics to give them substance, Dickens's 'good' characters cannot help but be overcome by the preponderance of lust, hypocrisy, and avarice that surrounds them in Nicholas Nickleby.

The tension between environment and characterization affects not only the Cheerybles but the majority of Dickens's 'benevolent old men' as well. The figure of benevolence is usually cut off from the world of the novel and, apparently, is impervious to the forces--generally evil--that govern that world. Much of the incongruity that arises from this isolation is attributable to Dickens's refusal, or inability, to present a system of ethics or, in other words, to fully delineate that conflation of predisposition and experience that constitutes the 'good' man. There is, however, another factor that contributes to the problem of goodness as it is defined by the 'benevolent old man', and that factor is Dickens's ambivalent attitude towards money.

An integral feature of Dickens's characterization of the 'benevolent old man' is that paragon's wealth. In order for the figure of benevolence to perform the requisite acts of charity and generosity he must be wealthy. In order for the 'benevolent old man' to perform his authoritarian function (ie: to resolve the primary conflicts in the novel)

it is necessary for him to have some societal influence which, in Victorian terms, requires money as well. It is without question that the possession of money, in Dickens's eyes, meant freedom and respectability. Beyond that, however, Dickens's attitude towards wealth, which must naturally affect his characterization of the 'benevolent old man', is far from definite.

It is clear in Dickens's fiction that money is a necessary thing. Nicholas Nickleby, for example, has no further end in mind than toiling virtuously for his daily crust--with, of course, a few morsels left over for his dependents. Many Dickensian characters actively pursue wealth but the number of 'good' characters that pursue it successfully are few and seem to follow a particular pattern. Their labour is described as 'honest' and 'humble' and their success is usually based more upon their virtue and their earnestness than it is on their business acumen. Their business dealings, furthermore, are described only in the most general of terms. Dickens's virtuous capitalists are clerks, like Nicholas Nickleby, who are befriended by 'benevolent old men'; or who make their money by sudden and mysterious means, preferably outside the novel, like Walter Gay; or who seem to succeed through pure application, like David Copperfield. Dickens's vagueness in connection with the means by which his 'good' characters make their

fortune is, of course, deliberate. A thriving entrepreneur himself, Dickens was more than aware that monetary success required, if not intentional ruthlessness, at least a degree of selfishness and opportunism that was incompatible with his view of true goodness. It is only when one encounters the Cheeryble brothers that the schizophrenic tendencies generated by the paradoxical nature of the figure of benevolence become obtrusive. The 'benevolent old man' must be rich in order to be benevolent but he must remain unworldly in order to be 'good'. In Pickwick Papers and Oliver Twist Dickens avoids the difficulties inherent in these conflicting demands upon the 'benevolent old man'. Pickwick is a retired businessman, which obviates the necessity of presenting him in a worldly light, while Mr Brownlow's occupation remains unknown. Since the methods by which they acquired their fortune are not integral to either Pickwick's or Brownlow's characterization, Dickens's vagueness in this particular area does not affect their validity. The Cheerybles, however, are characterized in what was later defined in American literature as the Horatio Alger tradition. Typical of the 'rags to riches' formula, the Cheerybles are poor, underprivileged youths who, apparently, achieve material success through the practise of such virtues as honesty and perseverance. The 'luck and pluck' rise of the Cheerybles is, unfortunately, a fait accompli in Nicholas Nickleby. The twins, furthermore, are never presented as pursuing their

virtuous course in mundane, day-to-day activities. Dickens has no difficulty detailing Dodson and Fogg's typically immoral business dealings nor does he baulk at exploring the depths to which Ralph Nickleby sinks in his pursuit of gain. One must question Dickens's reluctance to subject the Cheeryble brothers to similar scrutiny since, ultimately, the failure to fully illustrate the relationship between what would appear to be, in Dickensian terms, the irreconcilable opposites of innocence and the quest for material success undermines the Cheeryble brothers' integrity as moral exempla.

In Nicholas Nickleby another 'type' of 'goodness' makes its first full-fledged appearance in Dickens's fiction. Although Mr Winkle, as he appears in the latter portions of Pickwick Papers, and Harry Maylie in Oliver Twist are definite forerunners of the type, the 'impulsive young hero' is first expressed completely in Nicholas Nickleby. The titular hero of the novel, Nicholas is conceived upon highly melodramatic lines that reflect Dickens's love for the theatrical. Nicholas is, for the most part, one of Dickens's least interesting and uni-dimensional heroes. He is, in the final analysis, little more than a cartoon of the qualities of honour, nobility and chivalry that he is intended to express. While his characterization is clumsy, Nicholas Nickleby's situation and particularly his relationship to the Cheeryble brothers are significant and provide

a starting point for the analysis of later, more complicated figures and relationships.

Like every Dickensian hero, Nicholas has been deprived of a parent, a loss that is shared by every participant in the 'type' from Nicholas, through Martin Chuzzlewit, David Copperfield, Richard Carstone, Arthur Clennam, and Pip to John Harmon. The typical Dickensian hero is fatherless, a condition that places him in a precarious position in the paternalistic society of Victorian England. He is compelled to 'make his own way in the world', so to speak, with neither the guidance nor the financial assistance that it was a father's duty to provide. It is the hero's search for a vocation and the independence concomitant upon self-sufficiency that provides the putative impetus to Dickens's early novels. Until Nicholas encounters the Cheeryble brothers, however, Nicholas Nickleby is primarily an illustration of how the hero fails to prosper on his own. Prior to the introduction of the Cheerybles, Nicholas occupies several positions, to each of which he is ill-suited. The first of these, as a schoolmaster at Squeers's Yorkshire school, comes to a disastrous conclusion. Chafing at the subservient nature of the position and outraged by the brutality inflicted upon the inmates of the institution, Nicholas physically assaults his employer, Mr Squeers. While Nicholas's violent refusal to compromise his integrity in Squeers's

service is testimony to his high spirit and manly virtue, it does nothing to improve the conditions at Dotheboys Hall. Nicholas acts with a rashness characteristic of Dickens's earlier heroes and although his intentions are laudable his actions are ill-considered, impulsive, and fundamentally ineffectual. It is not until Nicholas enters the sphere of influence of the Cheeryble brothers that he comes to exert a force in the novel. Supported by the Cheeryble twins he is in a position to provide for both Kate and Mrs Nickleby and, therefore, effectively negate Ralph's evil influence. Nicholas's character per se does not change as a result of the patronage of the Cheerybles. His rescue of Madeleine Bray, for example, is one of his most impulsive and potentially disastrous actions. Although Nicholas's motives and deeds remain quantitatively constant throughout the novel, his relationship to the 'benevolent old man' lends his later actions significance and allows the hero to act as the agent of lasting and beneficial change.

Given the paternalistic structure of Victorian society, the power of the Cheerybles and Nicholas's dependence upon them is not unusual, nor, in a psychological context, is the search for a father figure unprecedented in fiction. The absolute and arbitrary power of the figure of benevolence in Dickens's early fiction, however, does place the hero of the novel in an untenably passive and

impotent position. In Oliver Twist, Dickens avoided the problems that this excessive passivity creates by casting a child in the role of protagonist, while in Martin Chuzzlewit he constructs his hero along more rebellious lines. Nicholas Nickleby, however, remains flawed by the fundamental impotence of its hero, an impotence that renders him predictable and uninteresting--a fatal flaw in a novel that abounds in intriguing, often gratuitous comic creations that tend to align themselves on the side of evil.

Chapter 2

Dickens's 'benevolent old man' and 'impulsive young hero' reappear in his sixth novel, Martin Chuzzlewit. They appear, however, in an altered form. Old Martin Chuzzlewit and his grandson exhibit neither the simplicity nor the selflessness that characterize the earlier 'types' of 'goodness'. Both characters manifest obvious and critical flaws in character that, prior to Martin Chuzzlewit, were unthinkable in Dickens's 'good' characters. They are, in effect, among Dickens's first mixed characters; characters who commit a multitude of sins but who also possess the potential for virtue. While neither Martin Chuzzlewit Sr. nor Martin Chuzzlewit Jr. fulfill the promise of their early appearances they do, nonetheless, represent a substantial innovation in Dickens's use of character types.

The most significant aspect of old Martin Chuzzlewit's role as the 'benevolent old man' in Martin Chuzzlewit is that, from the outset of the novel, he is, both in appearance and demeanour, an inversion of the 'type'. Dickens's initial presentation of old Martin is of a man with a "will of iron and a voice of brass"³³ surrounded by an "air of secrecy and distrust"³⁴--all in all a striking contrast to the cheerful openness and naïveté of the figure of benevolence as it appears in earlier novels. Unlike previous providential figures, old Martin has a suspicious nature and a narrowness

of vision that allows him to perceive only the malevolent side of human nature:

'Oh yes,' cried the old man, 'I think so! and in your telling me "I think so," I recognise the true unworldly ring of your metal. I tell you, man,' he added, with increasing bitterness, 'that I have gone, a rich man, among people of all grades and kinds; relatives, friends, and strangers; among people in whom, when I was poor, I had confidence, and justly, for they never once deceived me then, or, to me, wronged each other. But I have never found one nature, no, not one, in which, being wealthy and alone, I was not forced to detect the latent corruption that lay hid within it, waiting for such as I to bring it forth. 35

Old Martin's illness, both real and feigned, is, in effect, the physical manifestation of the spiritual malaise that has tainted his perception and rendered all human contact abhorrent to him. It is not until truly disinterested virtue reveals itself to him through the actions of Tom Pinch, Mary Graham, and finally young Martin himself that old Martin's physical and spiritual rejuvenation can take place. Old Martin's cynicism, however, is not without justification. By surrounding old Martin with opportunistic relatives like Pecksniff, Dickens not only provides a credible cause for old Martin's misanthropy but generates sympathy for him as well. In the final analysis, even old Martin's apparently unnatural rejection of his grandson is, in part, softened by young Martin's obvious selfishness as it emerges in the context of the latter's relationship with both Tom Pinch

and Mark Tapley. Old Martin is, in Geoffrey Thurley's view, a "tortured patriarch, surrounded by his hypocritical tribe"³⁶ and in a world fraught with hypocrisy and avarice his plea for genuine affection sounds an intensely human note.

Despite the contradictions inherent in his original characterization, old Martin Chuzzlewit ultimately assumes the role of the 'benevolent old man' in Martin Chuzzlewit and, as is the case with previous figures of benevolence, the resolution and the denouement of the novel rely almost exclusively upon him. Overcome by young Martin's filial piety and virtue, not to mention the unflinching goodness of Tom Pinch, old Martin casts aside the fawning Pecksniff and re-establishes his humbled grandson as sole heir and object of his affections. The novel closes with the predictable flurry of marriages--Martin and Mary are united (a plan, as it turns out, that has been near and dear to the old gentleman's heart all along), Mark Tapley marries Mrs Lupin, and Ruth Pinch marries John Westlock.

While the modern reader may regard the nuptial conclusion of Martin Chuzzlewit with a somewhat jaundiced eye, it must be understood that Dickens is working within a comic convention and cannot, in fairness, be completely castigated for the overt sentimentality of his closing chapters. What remains unacceptable, however, is the major role that old Martin plays in this conclusion. The plot

of Martin Chuzzlewit hinges, for the most part, upon old Martin's plan to secretly test his relatives by means of a feigned feeble-mindedness. While it is conceivable, given old Martin's peculiarly warped perspective, that he could concoct a scheme of this kind, it is unfortunate that Dickens chose to keep old Martin's intentions secret. In The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure, Geoffrey Thurley, in arguing for the validity of old Martin's concealed decision as a structural device, maintains that

...The fact that this Martin's stratagem is concealed from us, and revealed only at the end, in throwing our minds back retrospectively over what was experienced as uncertainty, only serves to increase the strength and solidity of the overall design. 37

Any argument along these lines presupposes an unusual amount of both reader attention and enthusiasm. On the one hand Dickens's omniscient narrative stance seems to encourage reader confidence in the narrator's reliability. In that there are no tangible indications of old Martin's hidden intentions,³⁸ the reader, like Pecksniff, experiences no uncertainty as to old Martin's senility nor, given the narrator's pretensions to reliability, is there any reason for the reader to be suspicious of the information he or she is given. The potentialities of the situation develop to the point of what appears to be a critical impasse. Whereas in Great Expectations Dickens is artistically and psychologically

prepared to allow his tragedy of missed possibilities to unfold organically, thus arriving at a much stronger though, perhaps, less emotionally reassuring conclusion to the novel, in Martin Chuzzlewit he finds it necessary to inject an unknown factor--old Martin's stratagem--into what had been a closed system. Such an action is tantamount to a betrayal of the narrative contract of implicit trust on which Martin Chuzzlewit is based. The reader is, in effect, just as surprised as Tom Pinch when old Martin appears at his door. While one rejoices wholeheartedly at the 'justice' of Pecksniff's downfall and the romantically appropriate 'boy gets girl' ending of the novel, there remains something disconcerting about the fact that both of these moral triumphs are arrived at through questionable means.

Young Martin Chuzzlewit, the 'impulsive young hero' of the novel, resembles Nicholas Nickleby in a number of ways. Although Martin is not as relentlessly virtuous as his melodramatic counterpart, both characters are young, unusually striking in appearance and given to rash, impulsive acts. They share a comparable situation as well. Nicholas Nickleby is forced to make his own way in the world as a result of the death of his father while young Martin is constrained to seek his fortune in America because of a quarrel with his domineering grandfather. It is important to note, however, that it is a conflict of will rather than

the demise of the parental figure that sends Martin out into the world and that the conflict is based upon an emotional consideration--Martin's desire to marry his grandfather's ward, Mary Graham. Given the same dilemma (ie: his love for Madeleine Bray) Nicholas Nickleby endeavours to subvert his affections rather than confront and, perhaps, alienate the Cheeryble brothers. Martin Chuzzlewit is, in effect, the first Dickensian hero to actively assert his independence from the figure of the 'benevolent old man'. It is interesting, too, that this rebellious hero is paired with a compromised figure of benevolence--a linking that suggests a psychic correlation between the hero's passivity and the strength of the providential figure.

Although young Martin Chuzzlewit participates in the 'type' of the Dickensian hero as it is established in Nicholas Nickleby, in terms of his characterization Martin constitutes a substantial improvement over his predecessor. Whereas the wooden Nicholas represent the virtues of manhood--bravery, chivalry, and the 'feeling' that was of such significance to the Victorians--Martin Chuzzlewit is an individual whose character and perception are flawed by the singularly human vice of selfishness. In Nicholas Nickleby Dickens celebrates the triumph of virtue in almost allegorical and highly melodramatic terms. In Martin Chuzzlewit, on the hand, Dickens endeavours to trace the development, within an individual, from ignorance to a partial understanding

of self.

Martin's problem is his love of 'self' or, perhaps more precisely, his egocentricity, and Dickens is unusually successful in its presentation. Young Martin's self-absorption is not lamented upon by the narrative voice but is presented, with admirable restraint, through his interaction with other characters and particularly with Tom Pinch:

...My engagement with the young lady I have been telling you about is likely to be a tolerably long one; for neither her prospects nor mine are very bright; and of course I shall not think of marrying until I am well able to do so. It would never do, you know, for me to be plunging myself into poverty and shabbiness and love in one room up three pair of stairs, and all that sort of thing.'

'To say nothing of her,' remarked Tom Pinch, in a low voice.

'Exactly so,' rejoined Martin, rising to warm his back, and leaning against the chimney-piece. 'To say nothing of her. At the same time, of course, it's not very hard upon her to be obliged to yield to the necessity of the case: first, because she loves me very much; and secondly, because I have sacrificed a great deal on her account, and might have done much better, you know.'

It was a very long time before Tom said 'Certainly;' so long, that he might have taken a nap in the interval, but he did say it at last. 39

The delicate irony implicit in Martin's "to say nothing of her" --for, indeed, he does 'say nothing' of Mary's difficulties--is refreshing in the context of Dickens's 'good' characters who are most often so virtuous that they engender more animosity in the reader than sympathy. Martin's

selfishness makes him human and his 'humanity' makes him appealing. This appeal is enhanced, furthermore, by the fact that Martin's preoccupation with himself is an unconscious one and an outgrowth of his upbringing rather than a deliberate perversion of his nature:

Martin's nature was a frank and generous one; but he had been bred up in his grandfather's house; and it will usually be found that the meaner domestic vices propagate themselves to be their own antagonists. Selfishness does this especially; so do suspicion, cunning, stealth, and covetous propensities. Martin had unconsciously reasoned as a child, 'My guardian takes so much thought of himself, that unless I do the like by myself, I shall be forgotten.' So he had grown selfish.

But he had never known it. If any one had taxed him with the vice, he would have indignantly repelled the accusation, and conceived himself unworthily aspersed. 40

While young Martin's characterization is a noticeable improvement over that of Nicholas Nickleby, it is certainly not one of Dickens's most successful character studies. The majority of the reservations one holds about young Martin's status as a believable character have their origin in the abruptness and apparent arbitrariness of his 'change of heart'. For the modern reader, whose sensibilities are in tune with the astringent psychological realism of George Eliot and Henry James, Martin's conversion is simply too sudden and too complete to be credible. One must realize, of course, that Dickens is again operating within a Victorian convention. Illness and the suffering

that accompanies it was "an important moral agent because they [the Victorians] believed in the value of human suffering".⁴¹ "Martin Chuzzlewit discovers through physical illness and pride's abasement, the utter selfishness of his early life, and acquires the virtues of 'humility and steadfastness' ".⁴² Martin's 'change of heart' can be seen, then, as the product of the traditionally purgative and redemptive process of illness. As Geoffrey Thurley points out in The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure, Martin's conversion does, nonetheless, have a degree of psychological validity. Martin does not emerge from his illness as a 'new man', so to speak, but gradually arrives at an understanding of his 'self' and a partial perception of the inadequacies of that 'self' through his attendance upon Mark Tapley. It is only through his recognition of Mark's selflessness that Martin can perceive the weakness inherent in his own egotism.⁴³

It seems a moot point, however, as to whether Martin's reformation has a credible psychological basis since the fundamental and insurmountable difficulty with the entire 'change of heart' incident lies in Dickens's handling of the time frame. In the novel's 'time', Martin's growing awareness of his 'self' takes place over the lengthy period of Mark Tapley's illness and convalescence. In terms of the reader's 'time', however, the change occurs

in the brief space of three pages. The gulf between the novel's time frame and the reader's time frame is, in this instance, too broad to be spanned by simple credulity and one can only wonder why Dickens, who is not usually known for the brevity of his descriptive passages, chooses to so drastically compress an event of such significance. Dickens's use of Martin's illness in order to complete the moral design of Martin Chuzzlewit can be explained in terms of the literary convention of illness as a spiritual crisis. It is unfortunate, however, that Dickens merely follows conventions in Martin Chuzzlewit rather than manipulating them and the reader's expectations, as he does in later novels, in order to convey something more powerful.

A recurring theme in Dickens's fiction is the struggle of the hero for autonomy. The primary obstacle to the self-determination that the hero seeks would appear to be the 'benevolent old man' and the authority that he represents. While the 'happy ending' to Martin Chuzzlewit contains a number of unsatisfactory elements, one important factor that contributes to the comic resolution provides an interesting footnote to the relationship between the 'hero' and the 'benevolent old man'. In order for the novel to reach its elaborate nuptial conclusion, young Martin must return to England, chastised by ill fortune, and admit both his folly and his dependence to his grandfather;

...But that I might have trusted to your love, if I had thrown myself manfully upon it; that I might have won you over with ease, if I had been more yielding and more considerate; that I should have best remembered myself in forgetting myself, and recollecting you; reflection, solitude, and misery, have taught me. I came resolved to say this, and to ask your forgiveness: not so much in hope for the future, as in regret for the past: for all that I would ask of you is, that you would aid me to live. 44

While it is true that a confession of this magnitude is necessary to counterbalance young Martin's previous indulgences in the sin of pride and, while it is true that old Martin makes a similar confession later in the novel, the fact remains that the hero must acquiesce to the will of the 'benevolent old man' in order to survive. For both Nicholas Nickleby and Martin Chuzzlewit this yielding is beneficial and appropriate in that both the Cheerybles and old Martin Chuzzlewit have the best interests of their charges at heart. In later novels like Bleak House and Great Expectations, however, the power and the altruism of the 'benevolent old man' is diminished and the relationship between the figure of benevolence and the hero becomes increasingly complex and potentially tragic.

In Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist, and Nicholas Nickleby the 'benevolent old man' functions as a locus for the abstractions of innocence and goodness that appear, in one form or another, in every Dickens's novel. In Martin Chuzzlewit, however, the 'benevolent old man' as

a 'type' appears in a much altered form. The original Pickwickian vision of simplicity and charity has, for all intents and purposes, evaporated and the truly 'benevolent old man' begins to be replaced by figures with selfish motives and much abrogated power. Old Martin Chuzzlewit is, then, the first in a series of perversions and manipulations of the original 'type'. For Dickens, however, the existence of pure goodness and innocence was integral to his fictional world and the demise of the 'benevolent old man', therefore, provided the genesis of a new 'type' of 'goodness'. Martin Chuzzlewit's Tom Pinch is the first manifestation of this new 'type' which includes such later figures as Mr Peggotty and Joe Gargery. This 'good and simple man', as he shall be called for the purposes of this study, is humble, self-effacing, generous, and--what marks an interesting shift in Dickensian thought--a member of the lower class. Pure virtue, it would seem, is no longer the province of the middle-classes but is to be found, rather, in the socially powerless labouring class. Dickens's vision of a middle-class possessed of the truly Christian virtues of Mr Pickwick acting as an ameliorative social force seems to have disappeared. Confined to the lower classes, true goodness can no longer be expected to act as a vital or wide ranging force for social change. Socially impotent, pure virtue can only operate on the personal level and can only affect those with whom it comes

into immediate contact.

Tom Pinch performs a number of important moral functions in Martin Chuzzlewit. As the 'simple man', Tom acts, in Robert McCarron's terms, as a "moral touchstone"⁴⁵ for the other characters in the novel. It is Tom's innate virtue, for example, that is used as a counterpoint to young Martin's selfishness. It is each character's response to Tom, furthermore, that is the most reliable index of his or her moral worth. Old Martin's altered perception of Tom Pinch perhaps best illustrates the latter's moral function in Martin Chuzzlewit.

And then he told them how, resolved to probe this Pecksniff, and to prove the constancy and truth of Mary (to himself no less than Martin), he had conceived and entered on his plan; and how, beneath her gentleness and patience, he had softened more and more; still more and more beneath the goodness and simplicity, the honour and the manly faith of Tom. And when he spoke of Tom, he said God bless him; and the tears were in his eyes; for he said that Tom, mistrusted and disliked by him at first, had come like summer rain upon his heart; and had disposed it to believe in better things. 46

Old Martin's gradual perception of Tom's intrinsic value reflects his own movement towards moral maturity.

In "Dickens' Heroes, Heroines and Heroines", Leonard F. Manheim places Tom Pinch in his 'heroid' or, in other words, semi-heroic category. Although Manheim's concern is with "multiple projection, the psychological decomposition ...of the author's dynamic drives onto a number of characters"⁴⁷

more than with the study of discrete 'types' in Dickens, his identification of Tom Pinch as a semi-heroic figure is, nonetheless, valid. Although young Martin is the titular and emotional hero of Martin Chuzzlewit, Tom Pinch is its moral hero. Through Tom, Dickens presents a mode of behaviour and a way of life that, from the outset of the novel, we are aware that young Martin would do well to emulate. Tom Pinch's status as moral hero, however, creates an interesting problem in connection with the love relationship that exists between Martin and Mary. Tom's uncompromised and disinterested devotion to Mary Graham makes him, from one point of view, the more deserving of her two suitors, yet it is Tom Pinch alone who remains celibate at the novel's close--a singular example of virtue unrewarded in Dickens's canon. Given Victorian sexual tensions and Dickens's own squeamishness, it is easy to understand why he found it virtually impossible to convincingly mesh the opposing concepts of virtue and sexuality. The exemplar of goodness and innocence in Dickens's novels has, until this point, been nonsexual simply because of his advanced age. In order to comply with the celibacy that pure virtue appears to demand, then, Tom Pinch must remain an isolated and sterile figure.

While Tom Pinch functions adequately as a moral influence in Martin Chuzzlewit, his credibility as a character is seriously diminished by Dickens's insistence on his virtue.

Blessings on thy simple heart, Tom Pinch, how proudly dost thou button up that scanty coat, called by a sad misnomer, for these many years, a 'great' one; and how thoroughly, as with thy cheerful voice thou pleasantly adjurest Sam the hostler 'not to let him go yet,' dost thou believe that quadruped desires to go, and would go if he might! Who could repress a smile--of love for thee, Tom Pinch, and not in jest at thy expense, for thou art poor enough already, Heaven knows--to think that such a holiday as lies before thee, should awaken that quick flow and hurry of the spirits in which thou settest down again, almost untasted, on the kitchen window-sill, that great white mug...and layest yonder crust upon the seat beside thee, to be eaten on the road, when thou art calmer in thy high rejoicing! Who, as thou drivest off, a happy man...would not cry: 'Heaven speed thee, Tom, and send that thou wert going off forever to some quiet home where thou mightst live at peace, and sorrow should not touch thee.' 48

An apotheosis of this nature is, for the most part, unnecessary in that Tom's virtue is sufficiently apparent in his actions. Such excesses, furthermore, tend to alienate the reader in that they do not allow him to participate in the novel or make his own moral judgments.

...the spectacle, though direct and not at all composed of contrasting elements, remains too constructed; capture of the unique moment appears gratuitous, too intentional, the product of an encumbering will to language, and these successful images have no effect on us; the interest we take in them does not exceed the interval of an instantaneous reading: it does not resound, does not disturb, our reception closes over too soon over a pure sign 49

Dickens's didactic insistence in presenting his virtuous characters undermines rather than supports them. It is

difficult not to suspect the sincerity of the conviction that prompts such exaggerated celebrations of goodness.

David Copperfield, Dickens's "favourite child",⁵⁰ is a difficult novel to assess. Although the novel shares the bildungsroman form of earlier novels in which the hero seeks both fortune and selfhood, David Copperfield does not have a 'typical' hero nor does the hero establish 'typical' relationships. The autobiographical structure and first person narrative stance of David Copperfield makes David a complicated figure that resists typology. While David does manifest aspects of 'typicality' (he is impulsive and ultimately successful) his characterization extends beyond the limits of a 'type' and makes him, like Pip in Great Expectations, one of the few fully realized individuals in Dickens's fiction.

David Copperfield does contain, however, yet another example of the 'type' of the 'benevolent old man' in the person of Doctor Strong. Beneath his "pondering frost"⁵¹ Doctor Strong possesses those characteristics of generosity, "amiability and sweetness"⁵² that are endemic to the 'type'. He is also "the least suspicious of mankind"⁵³ and it is with this quality of simplicity that the Doctor's subplot in David Copperfield is concerned. As I have mentioned earlier, goodness that is based upon a simplistic faith in the virtue of all men would seem to be a liability more than an asset in any figure of moral authority. Through the relationship

between Doctor Strong and his wife Annie, Dickens endeavours to establish simplicity as a positive intuitive force capable of transcending the level of understanding of a conventional wisdom that is based upon experience. While the reasons behind Annie Strong's apparent guilt are somewhat contrived, her emergence from the ambiguous relationship with her cousin with her virtue intact is undoubtedly intended as a vindication of the Doctor's unquestioning faith in the purity of her nature. Annie's fidelity is important to David Copperfield not only because it lends credence to Doctor Strong's characterization but also because it establishes the Strong union as an example for the disillusioned David. It is Annie's reference to her attraction to her cousin, Jack Maldon, as the "first mistaken impulse of her undisciplined heart"⁵⁴ that crystallizes David's own misgivings concerning his "child-wife",⁵⁵ Dora. Yet while the marriage of the Doctor and Annie Strong does function as an exemplar within the context of David Copperfield, it does establish a dubious precedent in Dickens's fiction as a whole. There are conflicts in the apparently asexual union of characters of such disparate ages that the tangential nature of the Strong subplot conveniently avoids. A similar relationship (that shall be discussed later) occurs in Eleak House but, because it involves more central characters, the implications of the union are subjected to a closer scrutiny that reveals, albeit unintentionally, the impracticability of such a marriage.

It would appear, then, that Doctor Strong's simplicity and, therefore, the ingenuous nature of the 'benevolent old man' in general, is affirmed by Annie Strong's virtue. There is, however, a peculiar affinity between Doctor Strong and Mr Dick that tends to qualify the pragmatic dimension of this same simplicity. The friendship that forms between Doctor Strong and Mr Dick would appear to be based upon the former's goodness and gentle condescension and the latter's universal affability.

This veneration Mr Dick extended to the Doctor, whom he thought the most subtle and accomplished philosopher of any age. It was long before Mr Dick ever spoke to him otherwise than bareheaded; and even when he and the Doctor had struck up quite a friendship, and would walk together by the hour, on that side of the courtyard which was known among us as The Doctor's Walk, Mr Dick would pull off his hat at intervals to show his respect for wisdom and knowledge. How it ever came about that the Doctor began to read out scraps of the famous Dictionary, in these walks, I never knew; perhaps he felt it all the same, at first, as reading to himself. However, it passed into a custom too; and Mr Dick, listening with a face shining with pride and pleasure, in his heart of hearts believed the Dictionary to be the most delightful book in the world. 56

Although by no means the product of a feeble mind, Doctor Strong's 'famous Dictionary' in many respects resembles Mr Dick's infamous Memorial. Both occupy a great deal of time, both it seems will never be completed and both are a source of mild amusement to all but their authors. There is an aura of futility, fostered by their eccentric

occupations, that surrounds both Mr Dick and Doctor Strong that suggests a mutual incapacity to endure the vicissitudes of life. David's own reflections on the friendship between the two reinforces this impression of helplessness that sets them apart from the other characters in the novel:

As I think of them going up and down before those schoolroom windows--the Doctor reading with his complacent smile, an occasional flourish of the manuscript, or grave motion of his head; and Mr Dick listening, enchained by interest, with his poor wits wandering God knows where, upon the wings of hard words--I think of it as one of the pleasantest things, in a quiet way, that I have ever seen. I feel as if they might go walking to and fro for ever, and the world might somehow be the better for it--as if a thousand things it makes a noise about, were not one half so good for it, or me.

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It is clear that Doctor Strong and Mr Dick share a child-like innocence that separates them from, and to David's mind (if not Dickens's own), establishes them as a form of antithesis to an increasingly hostile world. While this simplicity is undoubtedly meant to be seen as an enviable quality, one cannot forget that it is ultimately the simplicity of a half-wit and that Doctor Strong is yet another example of the Dickensian dichotomy of unintelligent wisdom. Despite Annie Strong's validation of Doctor Strong's naïve faith in the goodness of human nature, the Doctor's simplicity, which is the basis of his faith, does not emerge as a triumphant force in David Copperfield. The wistfulness tacit in David's "I think of it as one of the pleasantest things,

in a quiet way, that I have ever seen"⁵⁸ is an admission of his awareness that such innocence and simplicity, soothing as it may be to contemplate, can only exist within the confines of the Doctor's garden and under the gaze of the more worldly-wise.

The 'good and simple man' also appears in David Copperfield but, like the 'benevolent old man', his story is only of partial significance to that of the novel's hero. Both Ham and Daniel Peggotty possess the humility, the pure virtue and the inferior social position that is characteristic of the 'good and simple' man. Although both characters come to represent true and homely virtue in juxtaposition to the upper-class decadence of Steerforth, they are, from their first appearance in David Copperfield, difficult to take seriously. This difficulty is most noticeable with respect to Ham and seems to stem from an inconsistency in the narrative voice in the novel. It is hard to reconcile, for example, "chuckle-headed"⁵⁹ Ham's "simpering boy's face and curly light hair that gave him quite a sheepish look"⁶⁰ with the manliness and desperate courage of his later attempt to save Steerforth from drowning. The obvious shift in perspective on Ham may be intended to reflect David's own maturation. It is also apparent that Ham has been significantly altered by the circumstances surrounding Little Emily's disgrace. Ham's original characterization, however, compromises his subsequent role in the novel and prevents him

from acquiring the tragic dimension that his death seems to seek to establish.

Language also establishes a barrier between Ham, Mr Peggotty, and genuine reader sympathy. Many critics have remarked, for example, upon the incongruity, given his upbringing, of Oliver Twist's faultless grammar, yet it is a convention that Dickens uses repeatedly. While characters that speak in dialect are not necessarily evil in Dickens's fiction, one is conditioned by the early novels to perceive proper grammar as an index of virtue. Characters who speak dialect, like Sam Weller and Mrs Gamp, are, furthermore, invariably sources of low comedy in the novels. Mr Peggotty's pattern of speech coupled with his social awkwardness renders him irretrievably foolish, in spite of his obvious goodness, and this ineptitude is even more apparent when it is contrasted with Steerforth's casual charm:

'Well, sir,' he said, bowing and chuckling, and tucking in the ends of his neckerchief at his breast: 'I thankee, sir, I do my endeavours in my line of life, sir.'

'The best of men can do no more, Mr Peggotty,' said Steerforth. He had got his name already.

'I'll pound it, it's wot you do yourself, sir,' said Mr Peggotty, shaking his head, 'and wot you do well--right well! I thankee, sir. I'm obleeged to you, sir, for your welcoming manner of me. I'm rough, sir, but I'm ready--least ways, I hope I'm ready, you unnerstand. My house ain't much for to see, sir, but it's hearty at your service if ever you should come along, with Mas'r Davy to see it. I'm a regular Dodman,

I am,' said Mr Peggotty, by which he meant snail, and this was an allusion to his being slow to go, for he had attempted to go after every sentence, and had somehow or other come back again. 61

In that David Copperfield documents David's physical and emotional development, it is understandable that it would contain conflicting impressions and inconsistent judgments. Unfortunately, Dickens has not yet mastered the fine ironic touch that separates Pip's erroneous judgments from his true insight in Great Expectations. As a result, the reader is unable to make independent assessments of characters like Ham and Mr Peggotty which tends to deprive them of the reader's sympathy.

Bleak House represents a refinement in Dickens's presentation of both good and evil and, therefore, a variation upon the characters that embody these concepts. It is the first of Dickens's novels in which he begins to consistently approximate what we could define as psychological realism. The majority of the characters in Bleak House are mixed characters that have tendencies toward both good and evil, that manifest mixed often ambiguous motives and that exhibit the singularly human dimension of fallibility. There is, for example, no Vice figure in Bleak House--no single melodramatic villain who endeavors to destroy innocence with the directness of purpose of Monks as he plots to destroy Oliver Twist or of Uriah Heep as he conspires against David Copperfield. The villains of Bleak House are numerous--

Tulkinghorn, Vholes, and even Harold Skimpole and the Smallweeds--but none exhibits the concentrated malevolence that is characteristic of Dickens's early villains.

Just as there is no entirely evil character in Bleak House so, too, is there a noticeable absence of entirely good characters in the novel. The 'good and simple man' has, for the moment, disappeared while both the 'benevolent old man' and the 'impulsive young hero' appear in a seriously compromised form. That goodness no longer exists in the abstract and uni-dimensional form that undermined its credibility in earlier novels reflects not only Dickens's artistic development but his increasing pessimism as well. Bleak House, in effect, marks the end of the Dickensian idyll.

At first glance John Jarndyce would appear to be yet another manifestation of the 'type' of the 'benevolent old man'.

The gentleman who said these words in a clear, bright, hospitable voice, had one of his arms around Ada's waist, and the other round mine, and kissed us both in a fatherly way, and bore us across the hall into a ruddy little room, all in a glow with a blazing fire. Here he kissed us again, and, opening his arms, made us sit down side by side, on a sofa ready drawn out near the hearth. I felt that if we had been at all demonstrative, he would have run away in a moment...While Ada was speaking to him in reply, I glanced...at his face. It was a handsome, lively, quick face, full of change and motion; and his hair was a silvered iron-grey. I took him to be nearer sixty than fifty, but he was upright, hearty and robust.

Jarndyce's embarrassment when confronted with any expression of gratitude is reminiscent of the Cheeryble brothers' refusal to stand still to be thanked while his appearance and his association with the creature comforts is characteristic of the 'type' in general. Jarndyce does not, however, share Pickwick's naïve faith in human nature. While he is aware of the failings of those around him and the injustice and neglect that are the consequence of these faults, he refuses, for the most part, to discuss them:

'We thought that, perhaps,' said I, hesitating, 'it is right to begin with the obligations of the home, sir; and that, perhaps, while those are overlooked and neglected, no other duties can possibly be substituted for them.'

'The little Jellyby's,' said Richard, coming to my relief, 'are really--I can't help expressing myself strongly, sir--in a devil of a state.'

'She means well,' said Mr Jarndyce hastily. 'The wind's in the east.'

'It was in the north, sir, as we came down,' observed Richard.

'My dear Rick,' said Mr Jarndyce, poking the fire; 'I'll take an oath it's either in the east or going to be. I am always conscious of an uncomfortable sensation now and then when the wind is blowing in the east. 63

While Jarndyce's reluctance to "disparage or depreciate anyone"⁶⁴ would appear to be the outgrowth of a genuinely charitable nature, it is interesting that the 'east wind' should initially appear in reference to Mrs Jellyby, the 'telescopic philanthropist'. Mrs Jellyby's interest in Borrioboola-Gha and her pursuit of charitable interests

abroad to the detriment of her familial obligations is clearly to be condemned. It is ironic, however, that Jarndyce's charity--which is presumably the exemplar in Bleak House--is, in essence, little more than an inversion of that practiced by Mrs Jellyby. While it is true that Jarndyce befriends Esther Summerson it is only because her aunt's "idiosynchrasy"⁶⁵ prompted her to bring Esther's particular plight to his immediate attention. His initial interest in Richard Carstone and Ada Clare is the product of both consanguinity and their involvement in the Chancery suit. One need only compare Jarndyce's selective benevolence with the generality of the impulse that leads Mr Meagles to adopt Tattycoram in Little Dorrit in order to recognize the very limited and personal sphere of Jarndyce's charity. While Dickens has, in effect, eliminated the disturbing coincidences that marred earlier encounters between the 'benevolent old man' and the future objects of his benevolence, he has also compromised the nature and the social efficacy of the charitable impulse. Mr Jarndyce's reluctance to become involved in matters outside his immediate sphere of influence or, in other words, in things that he himself cannot change is, perhaps, more realistic than the quixotic naivete of Pickwick but it is a sad comment upon the power of goodness as an ameliorative social force. Jarndyce's 'east wind' is, in the final analysis, a tacit admission of an impotence that so permeates his characterization that the only method

for coping with an unpleasant reality that is left to him is a retreat to the 'Growlery".

In that Jarndyce is wealthy, advanced in years, and childless he would seem to be an ideal surrogate parent for not only Esther Summerson but also Richard Carstone and Ada Clare as well, and as the novel's father-figure Jarndyce would appear to fulfill yet another prerequisite of the 'type' of benevolence. Jarndyce's relationship to Esther Summerson is, however, fraught with ambiguities that compromise Jarndyce's status as the 'benevolent old man' in Bleak House. While Jarndyce begins the novel in the 'typical' mode as Esther's 'guardian' and assumes a pseudo-parental stance towards her throughout most of Bleak House, subsequent to Esther's disfigurement Jarndyce steps into the unlikely role of her lover. Through Jarndyce's assurances to Esther that their relationship will remain substantively unaltered Dickens endeavours to render the proposed marriage as innocuous and nonsexual as possible:

'Yes, Esther,' said he, with a gentle seriousness, 'it is to be forgotten now; to be forgotten for a while. You are only to remember now, that nothing can change me as you know me. Can you feel quite assured of that, my dear?'
 'I can, and I do.' I said.
 'That's much,' he answered. 'That's everything. But I must not take that, at a word. I will not write this something in my thoughts, until you have quite resolved within yourself that nothing can change me as you know me. If you doubt that in the least degree I will never write it. 66

Despite this and many other similar disclaimers, the fact remains that the relationship that Jarndyce seeks to establish is traditionally a sexual one and although his actions are well-intentioned they remain questionable for several reasons. The bond that exists between Esther and Jarndyce is filial in nature and Jarndyce's marriage proposal, therefore, verges on the incestuous. One questions the timing of such a proposal as well. While it would seem to be very noble of Jarndyce to offer his name and fortune to a penniless girl who is overwhelmed by her "inheritance of shame"⁶⁷ one would, perhaps, be more sensitive to the nobility of the action if it had taken place prior to her illness and disfigurement when she seemed to be more free to choose. It is clear that Esther's reaction to Jarndyce's offer, her acute awareness of his selflessness and genuine affection, is the response that Dickens hopes to elicit from his readers and it would be perverse to insist that Jarndyce is deliberately opportunistic. The discrepancy between Jarndyce's manifest goodness and the latent ambiguity of that goodness, however, must inevitably undermine his status as a figure of true benevolence.

Although Esther Summerson usurps his role as protagonist, Richard Carstone remains the 'impulsive young hero' of Bleak House. Young, handsome and orphaned, Carstone exhibits all of the prerequisites of the 'typical' Dickensian hero. Richard Carstone, however, does not follow the

'typically' heroic course in Bleak House. Like Martin Chuzzlewit, Richard Carstone has a single weakness but, unlike young Martin, this weakness overwhelms and destroys him. While Carstone possesses the energy and the means with which to become self-supporting, he lacks application and, therefore, moves aimlessly from one profession to another. Esther attributes Richard's restlessness to his inappropriate education while John Jarndyce views it as a consequence of being reared in the shadow of Chancery:

'How much of this indecision of character,' Mr Jarndyce said to me, 'is chargeable on that incomprehensible heap of uncertainty and procrastination on which he has been thrown from his birth, I don't pretend to say; but that Chancery, among its other sins, is responsible for some of it, I can plainly see. It has engendered or confirmed in him a habit of putting off--and trusting to this, that, and the other chance, without knowing what chance--and dismissing everything as unsettled, uncertain and confused. 68

Whatever the cause of Richard Carstone's dilettantism, his inability to find an occupation that suits him leads to his absorption in the Chancery suit and, ultimately, to his death.

While Carston's decline is of definite thematic significance in Bleak House, he is more significant in the context of Dickens's work as a whole for what does not happen to him rather than what does. If Bleak House were written from the same philosophical perspective as Dickens's earlier novels, Richard Carstone would certainly not die. A 'typical' scenario would require that John Jarndyce

somehow facilitate the resolution of the Chancery suit which would, in turn, allow for the realization of Carstone's expectations. Richard, subsequent to a lengthy and debilitating illness, would gradually recover, perceive the error of his ways, reconcile himself with Mr Jarndyce and live happily ever after with Ada Clare. Jarndyce, however, does not save Richard Carstone and the 'impulsive young hero's' death is symbolic of the increasing impotence of goodness in Dickens's fiction. Goodness no longer functions as an active redemptive force in Bleak House. The philosophical uncertainty that gives rise to the over emphasis and occasional artistic falsity of the earlier novels has, then, blossomed into a full-blown doubt about the power of goodness in a predominantly evil world.

With its oppressive prison atmosphere and stifling guilt-ridden relationships, Little Dorrit is undoubtedly Dickens's bleakest novel. It is, as P.J.M. Scott argues, "pessimistic in a way which makes most pessimism look like posturing sentimentality".⁶⁹ Dickens's darkening vision is immediately signalled by the significant absence of typically 'good' characters. There is no 'benevolent old man' in Little Dorrit. The novel abounds rather in figures of false, corrupt and potentially misguided benevolence

The most obviously corrupt providential figure in Little Dorrit is Christopher Casby, the Patriarch of Bleeding Heart Yard. In both appearance and manner Casby resembles

an overblown Pickwick and is, fundamentally, a caricature of the earlier 'type'.

...There was the same smooth face and forehead, the same calm blue eye, the same placid air. The shining bald head, which looked so very large because it shone so much; and the long grey hair at its sides and back, like floss silk and spun glass, which looked so very benevolent because it was never cut

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The tone of this introduction is a clear indication that Casby's benevolence, like Pecksniff's morality, is of a highly questionable nature. In that he is fundamentally too bovine to be diabolical Casby is not, perhaps, so consummate a villain as Pecksniff. Unlike Pecksniff, Casby has not actively cultivated his hypocrisy; he has simply capitalized upon his benevolent appearance. His power finally depends upon the all too human predisposition to equate surface with substance. While Casby cannot be absolved from complicity in his villainy, the Bleeding Hearts must take some blame for their own misery because it is their naïve credulity that helps to make Casby the monster that he is. Casby is, in effect, an ironic comment upon Dickens's earlier fiction in which good and evil were laid out on undeniably simple lines and where there is an almost direct correlation between appearance and reality. The 'shearing' of Casby, then, is an important moment in Dickens's fiction because it is the ultimate deflation of the Pickwickian myth of benevolence. Casby, shorn of the accoutrements

of benignity is nothing more than "a bare-polled, goggle-eyed, big-headed lumbering personage...not in the least impressive, not in the least venerable"⁷¹ In Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist, and Nicholas Nickleby, the 'benevolent old man' is the source of wisdom, purity and goodness. As Dickens's vision darkens, however, and his faith in the 'benevolent old man', and the goodness that he represents, begins to fade the figure of benevolence becomes progressively more corrupt. Casby is the penultimate figure of corrupted benevolence in Dickens's novels and serves as an indictment of the naïve philosophy, expressed in the earlier novels, that encourages the belief that what appears to be good truly is good.

William Dorrit, the Father of the Marshalsea, is the other major figure of false benevolence in Little Dorrit. Like Casby, William Dorrit has pretensions to benevolence but is motivated by entirely selfish interests that make true generosity of spirit impossible. The viciousness that Casby's 'benevolence' conceals is primarily acquisitive. Mr Dorrit's 'benevolence', on the other hand, is the outgrowth of a perverse preoccupation with his position in Marshalsea society. While Mr Dorrit's 'benevolence' is by far the more pernicious of the two, Dickens's portrait of the Father of the Marshalsea is more sensitive than that of the Patriarch of Bleeding Heart Yard. Casby is a static character or "card"⁷² in whom development is, by definition, impossible.

William Dorrit, however, changes over the course of Little Dorrit and is, as a result, possessed of more psychological depth. When he first enters the Marshalsea, Dorrit is a "very amiable and very helpless middle-aged gentleman... well-looking, though in an effeminate style; with a mild voice, curling hair and irresolute hands...which nervously wandered to his trembling lip a hundred times in the first half hour of his acquaintance with the jail"⁷³ Weak by nature, bewildered by his financial affairs, and crushed by the death of his wife, Dorrit clings to his refinement in order to maintain a tenuous, though ultimately degrading, superiority over his fellow prisoners.

It is in his capacity as Father of the Marshalsea that Mr Dorrit is most obviously a perversion of the original 'type' of benevolence. Unlike that of earlier providential figures, Dorrit's benevolence consists of bestowing little more than the dubious distinction of patronage. His advice to others, furthermore, is entirely self-serving and springs from a philosophy of expedience. (Take, for example, his advice to Amy to encourage John Chivery for the sake of the 'family' in Chapter 19.) It is, in fact, only the Father of the Marshalsea's momentary awareness of his degraded condition and the suffering that accompanies that awareness that serves to mitigate what would otherwise be an unqualified portrait of selfishness. In Chapter 18, "A Castle in the Air", the wealthy Mr Dorrit receives a call from the same

John Chivery whose interest in Little Dorrit the Father of the Marshalsea had previously encouraged.

'What else did you come for, sir?'

'Nothing else in the world, sir. Oh dear me! Only to say, sir, that I hoped you was well, and only to ask if Miss Amy was well?'

'What's that to you, sir?' retorted Mr Dorrit.

'It's nothing to me, sir, by rights. I never thought of lessening the distance betwixt us, I am sure. I know it's a liberty, sir, but I never thought you'd have taken it ill. Upon my word and honour, sir,' said Young John, with emotion, 'in my poor way, I am too proud to have come, I assure you, if I had thought so.'

Mr Dorrit was ashamed. He went back to the window, and leaned his forehead against the glass for some time. When he turned, he had his handkerchief in his hand, and he had been wiping his eyes with it, he looked tired and ill. 74

While William Dorrit may be responsible for much of the misery in Little Dorrit, he cannot be dismissed as simply evil. The subtle conflation of responsibility and irresponsibility, of painful self-awareness and total self-oblivion that is endemic to William Dorrit's characterization makes him a far more complex creation than earlier incarnations of hypocrisy and the sensitivity and balance of the portrait of the Father of the Marshalsea is testimony to Dickens's increasing maturity and control as an artist.

If any figure in Little Dorrit is an approximation of the 'benevolent old man' it is Mr Meagles. In that Mr Meagles has a family of his own and does not figure prominently

in the hero's story he is not 'typical' of the figure of benevolence. He does, nonetheless, perform one of the 'benevolent old man's' functions in Little Dorrit by orchestrating the rescue of the hero, Arthur Clennam, from debtor's prison.

Meagles is representative of the middle-class that spawned the Cheeryble brothers; the same middle class that had such an ameliorative social influence in the earlier novels. It is interesting to note, however, the changed results of the charitable impulse between Nicholas Nickleby and Little Dorrit. In Nicholas Nickleby the charity of the Cheerybles is apparently indiscriminating (ie: it is extended to everyone that they come into contact with) and the object of this charity are clearly grateful for the consideration of their patrons:

The toast was scarcely drunk with all honour to Tim Linkinwater, when the sturdiest and jolliest subordinate elbowed himself a little in advance of his fellows, and exhibiting a very hot and flushed countenance, pulled a single lock of grey hair in the middle of his forehead as a respectful salute to the company, and delivered himself as follows:

'We're allowed to take a liberty once a year, gen'lemen, and if you please we'll take it now; there being no time like the present, and no two birds in the hand worth worth one in the bush, as is well known... What we mean to say is, that there never was...such...noble--excellent...free, generous, spirited masters as them as has treated us so handsome this day. And here's thanking 'em for all their goodness as is so constancy a diffusing of itself over everywhere, and wishing they may live long and happy. 75

In Little Dorrit, Meagles's charity is of a similarly unselective nature (ie: the impulse that prompts the Meagles to adopt Tattycoram is not a personal interest in her but a response to the plight of orphans in general.) Tattycoram's response to the Meagles's benevolence is a complex and humanly comprehensive one. She resents the position of inferiority that their charity necessarily places her in and chafes beneath her consciousness of her obligation to her benefactors. Whether or not Tattycoram's resentment is justified is an interesting point which, unfortunately, is not important to this thesis. The more significant aspect of Tattycoram's relationship to the Meagles, for the purposes of the present discussion, is the tacit implication that well-intentioned charity is no longer a sufficient lubricant for the friction that exists between the classes and that there is some flaw at the very heart of society that individual charity cannot remedy.

Mr Meagles is, perhaps, the only character in Little Dorrit who comes to a somewhat tragic end. In his article "The Sad End of Mr Meagles", Stanley Tick concludes that Little Dorrit as a whole "fails to reward...insofar as it is incoherent in both characterization and narrative"⁷⁶ simply because "Mr Meagles' fate in the novel will contradict the expected reward for true virtue"⁷⁷ The virtuousness of Mr Meagles, while it is, perhaps, a point of some interest

to certain critics, would seem superfluous to the issue of his fate. Whether or not one views Meagles's character as flawed, one must inevitably concede that he is a good rather than evil influence in Little Dorrit and does not deserve to lose his daughter. In other words, Meagles's unhappiness with his daughter's marriage cannot be construed as retributory justice for either his treatment of Tattycoram or his Barnacle worship. Meagles's disappointment reflects Dickens's increasing 'realism'--the realization that life cannot be resolved to everyone's satisfaction and that those that suffer in life are not necessarily those that deserve to suffer.

The world of Little Dorrit is, then, a world bereft of ideal goodness in which the only identifiable 'types' of benevolence are false, corrupt or misguided. The profound sense of emotional ennui and spiritual disillusionment that is so much a part of Dickens's view of life in this novel influences his characterization of the 'impulsive young hero', Arthur Clennam. Middle-aged and overwhelmed by a sense of his own inadequacies, Clennam seems an unlikely hero but he does, nonetheless, exhibit certain virtues that raise him to the heroic level as it is defined in Little Dorrit. Clennam is painfully honest and subjects himself to severe self-scrutiny. He also exhibits a genuine interest in those who are in difficulty, like Little Dorrit and Jean Baptist Cavalletto, that transcends class consciousness.

Both of these qualities make Clennam a very appropriate hero for a novel that explores the personal and social ramifications of self-deception and that serves as an indictment of the absurdity of position.

Arthur Clennam is the most passive of Dickens's heroes and this passivity or paralysis of will has aroused much critical discussion. In Jarrett's view, Clennam is a true Gothic hero who "confronts the Gothic castle and descends into it as into a dream"⁷⁸--the dream-like quality of Little Dorrit being used, therefore, to explain the hero's failure of will. For other critics, such as R. Splitter, "Arthur's guilt-ridden impotence stems not so much from his weak, ineffectual father, whom he seems to take after, as from the oppressive and overbearing figure whom he takes to be his mother"⁷⁹. In other words, Clennam's unresolved feelings towards his "Terrible Mother"⁸⁰ are the source of the oppressive guilt that impairs his ability to function. For Geoffrey Thurley, in The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure, Clennam is a failed character who is unable to support the weight of Dickens's thematic concerns.

...As the returning hero of Dickens' basic myth...Clennam represents...a significant development of the myth's inward transformation. It is not only, Do I deserve this inheritance? that he asks himself so persistently, but more, Am I in some way put in the wrong by it? But Clennam's character is unable to sustain the theme adequately. The honest, pondering, groping inability to commit himself to any course of action on his own behalf...his foolish

gambling of his partner's money, the styling himself Nobody--all this makes him too inert, too passive a character to perform the function Dickens seems to have meant him to perform. 81

While Clennam's passivity may be explained in terms of what forces produce and nurture his overwhelming guilt, there is an alternative explanation to be found in the context of his deviation from the 'typical' heroic mode. Dickens's earlier heroes, like Nicholas Nickleby and Martin Chuzzlewit rush impetuously into the world to seek their fortune trusting implicitly in the belief that their sincerity and virtue will meet with the reward it seeks. Their optimism reflects Dickens's own optimistic belief in the inherent goodness of man and in the benign force that orders human existence. This providential force is represented in Dickens's fiction by the 'benevolent old man' and the relationship that is established in the earlier novels between the hero and this 'benevolent old man' is symbolic of the broader philosophical framework upon which Dickens's world view rests. In later novels, like Bleak House, the breakdown in the relationship between the hero and the 'benevolent old man' is symptomatic of Dickens's increasing disillusionment. In Little Dorrit, the 'benevolent old man', who usually functions as the hero's spiritual guide and mentor, has, for all intents and purposes, disappeared and the hero is consequently plunged into a state of emotional and spiritual ossification. The limbo of inaction, then, that Clennam inhabits is

symbolic of the deterioration of Dickens's earlier moral stance. Clennam's eventual union with Little Dorrit denotes a change in Dickens's perspective--a shift from an absolute to a personal philosophy. Happiness is no longer the just reward of the virtuous but rather an elusive state that must be purchased through genuine suffering and self-awareness and defended against a world that is fundamentally inimical to human goodness. As Arthur Clennam and Amy Dorrit leave Saint George's Church, a very different world from that of Nicholas Nickleby and Madeleine Bray awaits them.

...They went quietly down into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed; and as they passed along in sunshine and shade, the noisy and the eager, and the arrogant and the froward and the vain, fretted and chafed, and made their usual uproar. 82

Great Expectations is, in my judgment, Dickens's finest novel. In it he succeeds in reconciling the disparate elements of symbolism and realism that tend to be developed spasmodically in many of his earlier novels.⁸³ Dickens also succeeds in Great Expectations in presenting an unusual number of 'real' characters. By 'real' I do not mean to imply that the figures that populate Great Expectations are, in any way, approximations of one's everyday acquaintance (few, if any, Dickensian characters manifest such circumstantial actuality) but rather that they possess a psychological reality that renders their actions intelligible. Characters like Miss Havisham,

Jaggers, Wemmick and Orlick, for instance, are definitely larger-than-life but they are, nonetheless, developed with a psychological consistency that allows them to function organically within the novel.

According to G.K. Chesterton, who considers Nicholas Nickleby to be "the apotheosis of the pure heroic as Dickens found it, and...in some sense continued it",⁸⁴ Great Expectations "is a novel which aims chiefly at showing that the hero is unheroic".⁸⁵ Although he is 'unheroic' in the Chestertonian sense, Pip is, perhaps, the only modern hero in Dickens's fiction. Like David Copperfield, Pip greatly exceeds the bounds of the 'typicality' that so limits Dickens's other heroes, so much so that there are few points of comparison between Pip and his antecedents. Pip's progress in Great Expectations is unlike that of any other Dickensian hero in that it is more obviously a moral progress than a material one. Whereas heroes like Nicholas Nickleby, Martin Chuzzlewit and, to a degree, David Copperfield labour towards and eventually reach financial and emotional goals, Pip moves gradually towards a more personal set of values by which to order his existence. In many ways Pip's dilemma echoes that of Arthur Clennam in Little Dorrit. While Clennam's disenchantment with society and the Calvinistic values of his childhood is an accomplished fact at the beginning of Little Dorrit, Pip's gradual disillusionment is dramatized in

Great Expectations. Pip's rejection of the arbitrary values that are, in essence, part and parcel of his 'great expectations' parallels Clennam's paralysis of will and his reluctance to become involved with a society that he regards as basically antagonistic to him, while Pip's loyalty to Magwitch and his eventual labour as Herbert Pocket's clerk reiterates Clennam's emotional commitment to Amy Dorrit and their projected life of quiet industry.

In The Flint and the Flame, Earle Davis remarks that "nothing in Pip's character or accomplishments merits any inheritance at all".⁸⁶ It would seem, however, that one is not intended to question Pip's unworthiness per se, but rather the validity of a social ethos that encourages a young man, like Pip, to aspire towards an indolence and social superfluity that is apparently characteristic of the 'gentleman'. Great Expectations is an inversion of the popular belief that social advancement necessitates, by its very nature, a moral progression as well.

In a novel of the calibre of Great Expectations any analysis of 'typical' characters might initially appear to be counterproductive. Most of the characters in the novel are too highly individualized to be accommodated comfortably within the parameters of a specific 'type' and this alone is ample proof of Dickens's artistic maturity. Characters like Magwitch, however, do manifest certain 'typical' elements, albeit in a significantly altered form.

While these 'typical' elements are by no means the sum total of Magwitch's personality they do, nonetheless, provide a means with which to measure Dickens's development. At first glance, for example, Magwitch scarcely resembles the 'type' of the 'benevolent old man'. Closer examination reveals, however, that Magwitch possesses a number of the attributes of the 'benevolent old man'. It is significant, however, that the physical qualities that at one time made Pickwick and other 'benevolent old men', in a sense, beautiful, now contribute to the ugliness of Magwitch. The "shining bald head"⁸⁷ of Pickwick is now the "furrowed and bald"⁸⁸ head of the ex-convict. This may appear to be a minor point of coincidence between the two since, indeed, there are many ways in which Magwitch does not physically conform to the dimension of the 'type' of benevolence. Magwitch's role in Great Expectations, however, serves to further enhance his affinities to the 'type'. Just as Mr Brownlow rescues Oliver Twist from a life of squalor and crime so, too, does Magwitch rescue "the small bundle of shivers"⁸⁹ that is Pip, from a life of comparative misery under the iron rule of Mrs Joe. Pip, like Oliver Twist and David Copperfield, is to be raised as a young gentleman with 'expectations'.

Magwitch deviates from the 'type' in a number of ways but the critical deviation, the one that most clearly shows the progress of Dickens's art, is in his motives for

providing Pip with 'expectations'.

...his reasons for determining to educate Pip are based on more probable grounds than gratitude...Stronger than gratitude was the desire to revenge himself on the society that had unjustly discriminated in Compeyson's favour at his last trial because Compeyson was privileged by education and manners, and the need to show to his own satisfaction that he is not the inferior of the 'colonists' as they insultingly maintained--for even in the colonies his manners and lack of education deprived him of a social position in spite of his honestly earned wealth. Dickens's understanding of these essentially human motives, which are not base, and with which we must sympathize, enriches the character of Magwitch. 90

Unlike the typical 'benevolent old man' whose benevolence is apparently the outgrowth of a highly idealized altruism, Magwitch's largesse is the product of mixed emotions. On the one hand, Magwitch is genuinely interested in Pip and believes that he is acting in the boy's best interests. On the other hand, however, Magwitch is undoubtedly using Pip as an instrument of revenge upon the society that punished him so unfairly. It is the moral ambiguity that surrounds Magwitch that makes him such a complex character-- a character that is far removed from his 'typical' antecedents. In Magwitch one can recognize Dickens's own realization that it is the perceived potential for both good and evil that makes a character both interesting, sympathetic and, in the final analysis, 'real'.

Magwitch establishes the standard not only of

Dickens's artistic development in the realm of characterization but of his moral and philosophical development as well. The original 'type' of benevolence is a character conceived upon god-like lines whose omnipotence and omniscience allow him to order the lives of others. He is, finally, little more than an abstraction--the personification of the naive optimism and sterile morality that suffuses Dickens's early novels. The character of Magwitch, however, is delineated along more human lines and while he attempts to arrange Pip's life with an arbitrary authority that is reminiscent of the original 'benevolent old man', Magwitch only succeeds in destroying himself. Magwitch is representative of a more complex moral viewpoint. Dickens's growth as a novelist is clearly demonstrated if we compare an early creation like the Cheeryble brothers with the more psychologically true Magwitch. The later Dickens is capable of dealing with the limitations of goodness as an agent, and the interplay and even interdependence of good and evil. It is in the wide and worldly grey scale between the absolute white and black of good and evil that men are likely to find themselves most often struggling and the best art should be capable of reflecting that compromise.

Great Expectations is the novel in which the hero's movement towards autonomy and self-determination that was initiated in Martin Chuzzlewit ends in Pip's realization that he and he alone is entirely responsible for what

he has become. Prior to Magwitch's return in Chapter 39, Pip is content to view himself as Miss Havisham's protégé and Estella's intended husband. Pip's initial antipathy toward his true benefactor, Magwitch, is based upon his realization that his expectations of the social advancement that an affiliation with Miss Havisham promised are illusory. Pip's attitude towards Magwitch softens, however, as he comes to acknowledge both his own complicity in the illusion of his 'expectations' and Magwitch's genuinely good intentions. Pip's acknowledgement of responsibility for his own actions leads to his reconciliation with Magwitch. This reconciliation is, however, very different from young Martin's prodigal return to his grandfather in Martin Chuzzlewit. Whereas Martin's sudden recognition of his selfishness prompts his immediate return to his grandfather and the security that that relationship offers, Pip's awareness of his own faults forces him to reject Magwitch's fortune and enter a period of exile in order to expiate his sins. In the more optimistic world of Martin Chuzzlewit it would appear that knowledge of the self is a prerequisite to happiness while in Great Expectations self-awareness is purchased through pain, suffering, and blighted hopes. Young Martin's bond to his grandfather, despite its sentimental overtones, is a bond of submission in that he must reconcile himself to the authority of his grandfather in order to survive. Pip's affection for Magwitch, on the other hand, is a bond of

sympathy rather than duty and an acknowledgement of their mutual culpability in Great Expectations.

"Mild, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish...--a sort of Hercules in strength, and also in weakness",⁹¹ Joe Gargery is the 'good and simple man' in Great Expectations and represents the virtues of honesty and humility that are characteristic of the 'gentle Christian man'. Joe embodies a simple Christian morality that acts as a counterpoint to the immoral atmosphere that is generated by Pip's expectations.

...And then I told Joe that I felt very miserable, and that I hadn't been able to explain myself to Mrs Joe and Pumblechook who were so rude to me, and that there had been a beautiful young lady at Miss Havisham's who was dreadfully proud, and that she had said I was common, and that I knew I was common, and that I wished I was not common, and that the lies had come of it somehow, though I didn't know how.

This was a case of metaphysics, at least as difficult for Joe to deal with, as for me. But Joe took the case altogether out of the region of metaphysics, and by that means vanquished it.

'There's one thing you may be sure of, Pip,' said Joe, after some rumination, 'namely, that lies is lies.' 92

Subsequent to Mrs Joe's death, Joe, Biddy and the Forge assume idyllic proportions in Great Expectations. Life at the Forge is not comparable to the pastoral idyll of Dingley Dell in Pickwick Papers, however, in that it is a spiritual rather than a physical way of life. In a novel that is filled with class consciousness and disaffection,

Joe and Biddy are, in essence, the only characters who are content to be themselves, who, in Earle Davis's words "have no false expectations and accept their humble station in life as proper and necessary".⁹³

Like previous 'good and simple men', Joe's status in the novel is undermined by the very nature of the goodness that he represents. The goodness that Joe embodies is a simple-minded goodness and yet another manifestation of the antithesis between virtue and knowledge that runs throughout Dickens's fiction. The Forge can offer, then, no viable alternative way of life for Pip at the novel's close because it is a pre-lapsarian world from which Pip, who has tasted of the Tree of Knowledge, is prohibited. According to Q.D. Leavis, Joe Gargery has "outgrown the original role of a 'good-natured foolish man'".⁹⁴ in Great Expectations. It would seem, however, that both the novel and the novelist have outgrown the simple formulation of goodness that Joe Gargery represent.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 P.J.M. Scott, Reality and Comic Confidence in Charles Dickens, (London, 1979), p. 2.
- 2 Robert Garis, The Dickens Theatre, (Oxford, 1965), p. 5.
- 3 F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, Dickens the Novelist, (New York, 1970) p. ix.
- 4 This is more than an implication in that the chapter on Dombey and Son bears the epithet 'the first major novel'.
- 5 Geoffrey Thurley, The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure, (London, 1976), p. 2.
- 6 The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure, p. 2.
- 7 Reality and Comic Confidence, p. 3.
- 8 Reality and Comic Confidence, p. 4.
- 9 M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, (New York, 1957), p. 20.
- 10 Charles Dickens, Pickwick Papers, (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 69.
- 11 Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist, (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 114.
- 12 Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 531.
- 13 Pickwick Papers, pp. 570-571.
- 14 Pickwick Papers, p. 470.
- 15 Pickwick Papers, p. 476.

- 16 Pickwick Papers, p. 877.
- 17 Pickwick Papers, p. 75.
- 18 Pickwick Papers, p. 67.
- 19 Pickwick Papers, p. 395.
- 20 Pickwick Papers, p. 210.
- 21 Oliver Twist, p. 114.
- 22 Oliver Twist, p. 129.
- 23 Oliver Twist, p. 146.
- 24 Oliver Twist, p. 147.
- 25 Pickwick Papers, p. 737.
- 26 Oliver Twist, p. 476.
- 27 Nicholas Nickleby, p. 532.
- 28 Nicholas Nickleby, p. 534.
- 29 Nicholas Nickleby, p. 537.
- 30 Nicholas Nickleby, p. 537.
- 31 Nicholas Nickleby, pp. 554-555.
- 32 Nicholas Nickleby, pp. 821-822.
- 33 Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit, (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 79.
- 34 Martin Chuzzlewit, p. 79.
- 35 Martin Chuzzlewit, p. 91.

- 36 The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure, p. 84.
- 37 The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure, pp. 82-83.
- 38 Old Martin's concern regarding Mercy Pecksniff's choice of suitors is the single manifestation of his 'good heart' and this incident is of such a salutary nature that it could be easily overlooked.
- 39 Martin Chuzzlewit, p. 153.
- 40 Martin Chuzzlewit, p. 596.
- 41 John R. Reed, Victorian Conventions, (Illinois, 1975), p. 17.
- 42 Victorian Conventions, p. 15.
- 43 The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure, pp. 92-93.
- 44 Martin Chuzzlewit, p. 744.
- 45 Robert McCarron, "Folly and Wisdom: Three Dickensian Wise Fools", in Dickens Studies Annual, (Illinois, 1977), p. 53.
- 46 Martin Chuzzlewit, p. 888.
- 47 Leonard F. Manheim, "Dickens Heroes, Heroes, and Herooids", in Dickens Studies Annual, (Illinois, 1975), p. 2.
- 48 Martin Chuzzlewit, pp. 117-118.
- 49 Roland Barthes, The Eiffel Tower, (New York, 1979), p. 72.
- 50 Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 47.
- 51 David Copperfield, p. 284.
- 52 David Copperfield, p. 286.

- 53 David Copperfield, p. 286.
- 54 David Copperfield, p. 730.
- 55 David Copperfield, p. 711.
- 56 David Copperfield, p. 310.
- 57 David Copperfield, p. 310.
- 58 David Copperfield, p. 310.
- 59 David Copperfield, p. 376.
- 60 David Copperfield, p. 158.
- 61 David Copperfield, p. 158.
- 62 Charles Dickens, Bleak House, (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp. 112-113.
- 63 Bleak House, pp. 113-114.
- 64 Bleak House, pp. 130-131.
- 65 Bleak House, p. 290.
- 66 Bleak House, p. 665.
- 67 Bleak House, p. 667.
- 68 Bleak House, p. 210.
- 69 Reality and Comic Confidence, p. 181.
- 70 Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit, (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 187.
- 71 Little Dorrit, p. 872.
- 72 W.J. Harvey, Character and the Novel, (New York, 1965), pp. 58-62.

- 73 Little Dorrit, p. 98.
- 74 Little Dorrit, pp. 692-693.
- 75 Nicholas Nickleby, p. 563.
- 76 Stanley Tick, "The Sad End of Mr Meagles", in Dickens Studies Annual, (Illinois, 1974), p. 98.
- 77 "The Sad End of Mr Meagles", p. 91.
- 78 R. Jarrett, "The Gothic Tradition in Little Dorrit", in The Dickensian, 73, p. 155.
- 79 Randolph Splitter, "Guilt and the Trappings of Melodrama in Little Dorrit", in Dickens Studies Annual, (Illinois, 1977), p. 124.
- 80 The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure, p. 223.
- 81 The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure, p. 237.
- 82 Little Dorrit, p. 895.
- 83 Dickens the Novelist, p. 289.
- 84 G.K. Chesterton, Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens, (London, 1911), p. 198.
- 85 Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens, p. 199.
- 86 Earle Davis, The Flint and the Flame, (Columbia, 1963), p. 256.
- 87 Pickwick Papers, p. 187.
- 88 Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 333.
- 89 Great Expectations, p. 36.

- 90 Dickens the Novelist, p. 316.
- 91 Great Expectations, p. 40.
- 92 Great Expectations, pp. 99-100.
- 93 The Flint and the Flame, p. 258.
- 94 Dickens the Novelist, p. 326.

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