Disappointing Great Expectations

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Unrequited love is the largest of the many disappointments in *Great Expectations*. The revised ending may or may not relieve readers of the burden of imagining a permanently thwarted Pip; the centrality of unrequited love is more than thematic, and goes far beyond the protagonist's desperate love and its fate at the novel's end. As the most salutary effect of unrequited love may be its securing of perception from an omnipotence that would reduce it to hallucination, disappointment paradoxically "grounds" the subject of *Bildung* by thwarting the unification of character and first-person narrator toward which the development ostensibly aims. The question of unrequited love thus brings into focus that literally exorbitant constitution of the subject—and the particular canniness of Dickens's novel in rendering a structure common to the narration of development.

UNREQUITED love is the greatest of the many disappointments in *Great Expectations* (1861). Disappointment is repeatedly inscribed in the novel in ways large and small; ultimately, the novel suggests that growing up is itself an experience of disappointment and disillusionment—above all, with oneself. The revised ending may or may not relieve readers of the burden of imagining a Pip permanently thwarted by unhappy love; to probe the sources of this thoroughgoing disappointment is to find that the centrality of unrequited love is more than thematic and goes far beyond the protagonist's desperate love and its fate at the novel's end. Tracing the novel's hyperbolic renderings of the subject's relation to others—self-origination is made curiously interchangeable with an utter transparency to the designs of others—this essay explores the consequences of the way that the emergence of character is unsettlingly bound up with its retrospective narration. Within that recursive loop, disappointment may be what prevents the writing of the self from coinciding with a subject-annihilating omnipotence. In other terms, the most salutary effect of unrequited love may be its securing of perception from an omnipotence that would reduce it to

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Victorian Literature and Culture, Vol. 54, No. 1, pp. 1–31.
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doi:10.1017/S106015032610028X

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015032610028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

hallucination, and disappointment paradoxically "grounds" the subject of *Bildung* by thwarting the unification of character and first-person narrator toward which the development ostensibly aims.

The question of unrequited love thus brings into focus that literally exorbitant constitution of the subject. For Franco Moretti, Dickens epitomizes the way that stunted development is not merely an attribute of characters in nineteenth-century English novels of development; English novels of this period (*Middlemarch* excepted) are themselves stunted, ethically and psychologically, in their refusal of adulthood. Attention to paradoxes of narration and to the particular logic of self-constitution in the text, however, point to the particular canniness of Dickens's novel in rendering a structure common to the narration of development.

* * *

Early in the novel, Pip, having learned from Mr. Jaggers of the life-changing promise of an inheritance, must wait to depart for London and that new life, among other reasons, so that he can be measured for a suit. "My clothes were rather a disappointment, of course," he writes, after the suit is finished: "Probably every new and eagerly expected garment ever put on since clothes came in, fell a trifle short of the wearer's expectation."[1] A bit of moralizing, this, and pitched over the head of the boy whose experiences are narrated, it makes of Pip's becoming a gentleman a sort of fall. Clothes first "came in" with Adam and Eve, who raced in shame to cover themselves after tasting the forbidden fruit; in that context, all clothes fall "a trifle short of the wearer's expectation" to the degree that they expose, by covering them, the corrupt bodies they would hide. To fall, and to fall "a trifle short": the joke is not only bodies exposed by clothes that are too small, but the understatement of "trifle" in this eschatological register. The ever (self-)censorious first-person narrator no doubt gestures ironically not only toward the small vanity that Pip shares with most of us, which makes us think that a new shirt, or a haircut, will make us anew, and beautiful, but also toward another order of expectation and disappointment. "The world lay spread before me" ends chapter XIX and "the first stage of Pip's expectations" (150); the description of Pip, leaving behind Joe and Biddy and the life of a blacksmith's apprentice, echoes that of humanity's first disobedience and all its consequent woe: "The world was all before them, where to choose/ Their place of rest, and Providence their guide,/They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow/Through Eden took their solitary way."[2] Such large-scale letdowns are written even in the smaller steps of this novel, which, from start to finish, is a story of disappointment. One cannot even

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look forward to a pork pie or an after-dinner brandy without having one's hopes dashed.

Unlike Adam and Eve, Pip steps into the world east of Eden alone. Unrequited love is one of life's biggest disappointments; the multiple endings of *Great Expectations* raise the question of whether readers can tolerate it, even vicariously, on Pip's behalf. Whether or not unrequited love is sustained for the eternal afterlife of Pip after the novel ends, unrequited love is central to the text's preoccupations—formation and education, the end of innocence, the autonomy of other minds and desires. In one sense, the novel's repeated disappointments chart the friction of desire's encounter with reality: however good a pork pie would taste just now, the fact is that an escaped convict has already eaten the only one in the vicinity, just as the postprandial brandy will be ruined, too, because a panicked boy, working in the dark and without conscious malice, has poured tar into it. The fact that those we love often will not love us back is perhaps but the most acute form taken by the friction with incompatible desires that makes up the daily commerce of living with others; disappointment in Dickens is one of the ways his fiction marks the encounter of individuals with the social.

The disappointments in *Great Expectations* go far beyond such thwarted hopes—suggesting, ultimately, that growing up is disappointing. Why should that be? It is not merely that our dreams encounter the limitations of our particular capacities and circumstances: we cannot all be astronauts, or senators, or once-in-a-generation virtuosos of the lute. It is also that to be some particular thing—a gentleman, or even a great lutenist—involves a sacrifice, the sacrifice of the potential to be someone else. (Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle" draws the further corollary, that to sustain that potential is to sacrifice another one—that of being someone in particular.) Andrew Miller has movingly explored this predicament—to be one person involves consigning to oblivion all the possible others—even as he also suggests both the beauty of acceding to that singularity, in all its contingency and arbitrariness, and the many ways that we carry those unled lives with us in the one life we do lead. However one reads the multiple endings with Estella, the centrality of unrequited love in the novel is also signaled by Pip's return to the forge to find Biddy married to Joe: there will be no refuge, either, in a return to a prelapsarian past, no picking up of dropped threads. Life's journey is one-way; the retrospective narrator bodies forth both the fantasy of moving in reverse and the impossibility of its realization.

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Great Expectations, famously, renders this becoming-someone as a "chain" that binds us:

> That was a memorable day to me . . . . But it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been. Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day. (67)

The "chain" evokes not only the forge but the shackling of the convict, the encounter with whom is literally the decisive event for Pip's fate: Pip's figure knows what neither the young character nor the reader yet knows about the fate that will have bound him. Miller's beautiful reading of this passage concludes his account of the novel: "'Think how different its course would have been': the injunction is of a piece with the less openly voiced invitations throughout the novel to conceive of the lives Pip is not leading as internal to the life he is."[3] The insight is at once individuating and generalizing: for Pip, there is perhaps something excoriating (of his vanity, his sense of being exceptional) in "But it is the same with any life." It is perhaps also unclear what one is supposed to ponder here, or why, exactly, or what one is meant to do with the knowledge. The realization seems to be that one's life, or any part of it, must necessarily have a beginning that could be pinpointed to the day, and one encounters the day by thinking on the chain. Why should that be cast as an admonition, and why should it take the form of epitaph?

For it is striking that an epitaph's admonition—"Pause, you who read this"—then speaks of the beginning of a chain. For Miller, the epitaph stands over the unled lives that find their place, too, in that chain: "Pause, traveler—*sta viator*—pause you who read this: *Great Expectations* suddenly becomes not just epitaph-strewn but an epitaph itself, enjoining us to contemplate the mortality that we ostensibly share with Pip, as our pause here anticipates the full stop to come. Dickens recasts the *sta viator* trope, as he has recast the *bildungsroman*, his performance of both reflecting not (solely) on a life as it developed but also as it did not"[4] That's a startling possibility: *Great Expectations,* narrating a starting out, is "itself" an epitaph. Having a beginning, or telling of it, becomes synonymous with commemorating an end, or with ending itself; Miller offers a decisive account of one reason that might be the case. To have one life, we bury the lives that could have been but weren't. That one life is riven apart in other ways, too—by the fact, most notably, that it is written. For the first-person Bildungsroman, the formation of the voice (the ostensible goal of

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development) brings the novel to an end. The developing character, then comprising the narrative he will have narrated, is also dissolved in that passing beyond the bounds of the novel.

David Copperfield's (1850) closing address completes the circuit, merging character and narrator in its final lines:

> Now, as I close my task ... these faces fade away. But, one face ... is above them and beyond them all. And that remains.
>
> I turn my head, and see it, in its beautiful serenity, beside me. My lamp burns low, and I have written far into the night; but the dear presence, without which I were nothing, bears me company.
>
> O Agnes, O my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward! (717)

Turning to present tense, the closing address makes the repeated "now" both the time of the writing and the time of the novel's action—"now, as I close my task ... I now dismiss"—which calls to mind the end of "my life," unifying, in ending both, the lived "life" and the written "life" that were split by the novel's opening: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record ..." (1). In *Great Expectations*, on the contrary, character and narrator never coincide.[5] The moment in *David Copperfield* is valedictory; the end of *Great Expectations* is sadder and yet keeps open the generative gap that produces the text. Agnes's face, and implicitly his own, seeing it, may remain among all the faces that "fade away," but such claimed permanence leaves no gap between that triumphant moment and the "close" of his life, "when realities are melting from me like the shadows that I now dismiss." A first-person voice narrates *Great Expectations*, but it never joins up with the Pip whose development we follow. The narrative voice of *David Copperfield* dissolves itself in realized benediction; that of *Great Expectations*, ever expected, never comes to be.

That gap is crucial for, among other things, the question of whether Pip's desire for Estella remains unrequited. David Copperfield, bidding us farewell, gazes at Agnes; Pip reports anticipating being with Estella. "I took her hand in mine," we read, in what is sometimes taken to be the happiest of the novel's endings:

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> And we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her. (450)

The forge's light is sublimated into the light of sunset as the novel draws to a close; the ending, and its symbolic closure, tempts one with an intimation of desire's satisfaction.[6] To read the sentence as a statement of Pip's union with Estella, however, endorses his view: for all his current certainty, he might nevertheless later see the shadow he couldn't see then. If narrator and character coincide, then "I saw" resolves into a narrative present: I see no shadow of another parting. Pip, then, could turn his head, and see, "now," Estella's beautiful head beside him, as David sees Agnes's. Without such a resolution, we remain within the narrative past tense, and, since Pip's expectations are nearly always disappointed, it seems all the more likely that this apparently confident statement is but one more instance of deluded optimism. (The echo of the end of *Paradise Lost* likewise points in this direction.) Our consolation is perhaps to think of Pip forever expectant; for all the gestures toward closure, definitive disappointment remains deferred.

That *Great Expectations* begins in a cemetery is thus one moment among many where the rendering of *Bildung* is self-consciously schematic. Orlick's near murder of Pip invokes the structure that is implicit in the cemetery: forge and kiln—the novel's muse of fire, and repeated horizons of glowing light—as paired symbolic elements, make formation an (almost) closed circuit, a return to the beginning that also dissolves the subject of the text.[7] The kiln scene is like something out of Hitchcock; virtuosically, the novel creates suspense where it ought to be impossible; the retrospective first-person narrative ought to guarantee that Pip survives. The suspense raises the possibility that he doesn't. The valedictory address in *David Copperfield* makes explicit the coming-into-being of the first-person voice, and the consequent dissolution of the character he narrates. In *Great Expectations*, that dissolution moves inside the text. Pip having passed through the kiln, the novel can end. (Other elements in the text could be rendered this way—for example, the coming together of all the plots. Compeyson's betrayals link Miss Havisham and Magwitch, and, through them, Pip and Estella. Everything circles back to a primal disappointment, which is then repeated. The structure of the novel inexorably pairs Pip and Estella; if closure entails

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their coming together, the question of Pip's desire then becomes the question of closure itself.)

If Pip does not join up with himself, as David does, and become the narrator who will have told the story, that latter figure then is left to haunt the text, an uncanny return that also entails his erasure. Thus, in one of the novel's creepier moments, Pip finds, after an eleven- (or eight-) year absence,[8] that Joe and Biddy have had a child—whom they have named Pip:

> upon an evening in December, an hour or two after dark, I laid my hand softly on the latch of the old kitchen door. I touched it so softly that I was not heard, and I looked in unseen. There, smoking his pipe in the old place by the kitchen firelight, as hale and as strong as ever, though a little grey, sat Joe, and there, fenced into the corner with Joe's leg, and sitting on my own little stool looking at the fire, was—I again! (447)

Circling back, Pip meets himself, not as constituted narrator but as someone else. Joe remarks that they called him Pip, hoping "he might grow a little bit like you"—an extraordinary act of aggression toward Pips old and new. To accede too quickly to the apparent sentimentality misses the point: Pip once again finds that he is redundant, and replaced.

Pip dutifully has the boy repeat the novel's beginning: "And I took him down to the churchyard, and set him on a certain tombstone there, and he showed me from that elevation which stone was sacred to the memory of Philip Pirrip, late of this Parish, and Also Georgiana, Wife of the Above" (447). Structurally, the mania for coming full circle seems almost deranged, and though the novel seems to want to pass it off as gratifying, the effect is uncanny, a pint-sized anticipation of James's "The Jolly Corner." The new Pip, like James's ghost, embodies the life the old one might have had if he had stayed home—never met Magwitch or Miss Havisham, never left the forge. An unrealized past made a potential future, the doubling of this cloven life also figures the split between Pip the narrator and Pip the character. "I was not heard, and I looked in unseen": the older Pip haunts Joe's house like a narrator returned to tell of his life. Like the child in Pater's "The Child in the House," Pip himself becomes the revenant or ghost.[9] As Daniel Heller-Roazen notes of "The Jolly Corner," "If the 'awful' alter ego appears to Brydon as a 'man' of 'substance and stature,' it may be simply because 'the black stranger' is, in truth, exactly what he seems to be—because, in other words, it is Spencer Brydon, and no one else, who is the roaming ghost."[10] The haunting here

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links the divide between present and past to that between narrator and character.

This later scene might explain a possible perplexity of the novel's opening chapter:

> Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dikes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.
>
> "Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"
>
> A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin. (3–4)

David Kurnick cannily notes the moment's temporal quandaries, and the hallucinatory way Pip's dawning "impression" of the world seems to bring this catalyzing encounter into being: "*Great Expectations* begins with a wildly improbable coincidence. The very day on which Pip comes to awareness of himself as an orphan, as a geographically situated existence, and as a name—in other words, as a social being—is also the day on which he meets the benefactor who will give shape to that being. Odder still: Pip grows 'afraid of it all' just before Magwitch looms up to threaten him. It is as if Pip has first experienced the fear and then conjured a character who can serve as a container for it."[11]

This is not an uncommon structure in the text: recall the way that Pip's ecstasy of guilt at Christmas dinner seems to call soldiers, bearing shackles, to the door. An astute rendering of a child's effort to calibrate the relation between inner and outer worlds, and to learn how desires

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come to be regulated by social norms, it depicts childish self-absorption as a moment in such an education. Punishment's failure to materialize can be almost disappointing because it intimates a limit to infantine omnipotence; Winnicott, indeed, might be read as suggesting that developing an autonomous relation to others involves the realization that one's parents (like all authorities) are not omniscient, which is another way of saying that one is not oneself omnipotent. For Barbara Johnson, while "the unleashed destructiveness of exaggerated vulnerability or of grandiosity without empathy is amply documented," "using people" takes on ethical value to the degree that the subject learns not to be paralyzed by an illusion of omnipotence.[12] I am not certain that Pip ever learns this lesson, and his pleasure in guilt marks something of a sustained fantasy of his destructive and reparative powers. The narration here charts a psychological order of causality. The temporal quandary (Pip is afraid before Magwitch appears, and his existential realization appears to precede the event that catalyzes it) is a classic instance of *Nachträglichkeit*, the deferred action or reverse causation (psychic effects that cause their own preceding causes) that Lacan highlights in Freud. I take Kurnick's point to turn on its literalization. There is no difficulty if one understands the first paragraph as a retrospective narration glossing the effect of the encounter, which explains what catalyzes the realization. Pip's discovery that he was "afraid of it all" would then generalize the fear that, occasioned by the convict, is narrated afterward. The difficulty is that these different levels are assimilated one to another.

Puzzling over this paragraph, I think that the difficulty might be reconciling "was Pip" (or the central realization of "identity") with the other uses of the past tense. The past tense of the verbs mark represented thought. Pip's realizations—that his parents and siblings *are* "dead and buried," the bleak place *is* "the churchyard," the wilderness *is* "the marshes," and the low leaden line *is* "the river"—are rendered in a past tense that marks them as represented thought (as Ann Banfield terms free indirect style: the change in tense is a grammatical marker of represented thought). At the moment of the encounter, the river and the marshes "are"; narrated, they "were." The siblings, likewise, "are dead and buried," which also means, however, that they "were." Pip comes to know the world in two different but parallel ways: that Philip, Georgiana, Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger "were dead and buried" creates a narrative setting, pointing to human events that Pip, in the narrated past, comes to know as past (and as final), as having already happened when he emerges on the scene. These events are, the parallel

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structure suggests, analogous to "the identity of things," though that "identity" works in two different ways. The low leaden line "was" the river in a different way than Philip and Georgiana "were" dead and buried, and the two phrases can be generalized as two different, although overlapping, kinds of insights. "I am inexorably in a particular place" follows from the realization that "that, that, and that are named 'churchyard,' 'marshes,' and 'river.'" "This life is unexchangeably mine" follows from the realization that those others are dead ("I am an orphan," certainly, but also the existential sense of singularity derived from the intuition of death). The culminating insight, "that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip," crosses these. Coming to himself as already constituted, it is as if Pip experiences himself, even in the present, as the later narration of his consciousness. The quandary Kurnick notes follows from the blurring together of narrator and character—an enacting of the Bildungsroman in miniature insofar as the coming to consciousness of the main character is at once the subject and the mode of narration. Extending the character beyond itself, it also ensures a proleptic erasure. Hence the uncanny sense that Pip, too, belongs in the graveyard—that he "was" just as Philip, Georgiana, and all the little, late, lozenge-shaped children "were."

Pip comes to himself and immediately confounds himself with another: the small bundle of shivers mimics a larger one, the convict who shivered. As Miller notes, a wavering of subject and object registers as movement simultaneously from the outside-in and from the inside-out. Miller renders this structure as a circle: "The inward division depicted in this originary moment—signaled even in the syntax of Pip's sentence, stretched out as he is between subject and object—is soon further unfurled in the homologous sentence where the breeze of Pip's consciousness wafts him out from his present position in the churchyard, across the marshes, and out to the sea, only then to blow him back to encounter himself abruptly, now from outside."[13] That circuit is also a temporal one; the opening wafts out from the graveyard to the moment of writing and loops back again. Pip's later encounter with new Pip thus replays, if inversely, Pip's opening encounter with himself. The psychic mechanism of *Nachträglichkeit* is not just depicted in the text; it is an aspect of its narrative structure, intimately related to Pip's disappointments, and to unrequited love.

The structure Miller notes in these sentences—"the breeze of Pip's consciousness wafts him out … to blow him back to encounter himself … from outside"—is also the structure of formation in the text, which

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repeatedly oscillates between two hyperbolic versions of agency: a power of self-formation verging on hallucination and a total transparency to another's will, or to circumstance—as Miss Havisham forms Estella, or Pip is made by his expectations. ("Expectations" blurs the line between self and world, marking both a promised inheritance and an inner state, planning, possibly delusorily, for the future.) That circular structure might be why the text sometimes appears to suggest these two alternatives are interchangeable; it makes it difficult to tell the difference between autoformation and being formed by another, or by circumstance. Those alternatives are visible in the novel's opening: "My father's name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip" (3). Pip's unusual authority to name himself is founded on the debility of his infant tongue;[14] the rest of the chapter turns from the claim of power to an exploration of helplessness: within a page, the church will be upside down because he is being held in the air by the convict. *Great Expectations* asserts a profound power of self-making and limns an equally profound helplessness before the schemes and manipulations of others.

Pip's opening claim thus links helplessness to the writing of the self that constitutes *Great Expectations*: "I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip" names him as the novel's narrator. Desire presents a similar structure: in desire, one is the prey of one's own consciousness and in that self-mastery is left feeling vulnerable to another's power. ("You made me love you," the song says; "I didn't want to do it" [Monaco and McCarthy].) However coercive her beauty, Estella never asks to be loved, and Pip, like any lover, can reasonably be said to seduce himself. "The unqualified truth is, that when I loved Estella with the love of a man, I loved her simply because I found her irresistible. Once for all; I knew to my sorrow, often and often, if not always, that I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be. Once for all; I loved her none the less because I knew it, and it had no more influence in restraining me than if I had devoutly believed her to be human perfection" (216). Pip's ostensible indifference to his object of desire—tautologically, "I loved her simply because I found her irresistible"—leaves him helplessly in the grip of that object. When he finally discovers how thoroughly he has been manipulated by Miss Havisham, he must also accede to her angry retort: "You made your own snares. *I* never made them" (334). Having said things like "Love her, love her, love her! If she favours you, love her. If she wounds you, love her. If

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she tears your heart to pieces—and as it gets older and stronger it will tear deeper—love her, love her!" (223), and having knowingly fostered Pip's impression that she is his benefactor, the claim is tendentious: she has, in all fairness, done more than a little snaring. In fact the novel outlines snares of an indeterminate agency. Pip has been formed by Miss Havisham no less than Estella has—precisely because he has made his own snares. Pip tends to make such traps for himself, but the structure is generalizable. To live is perhaps to entrap oneself: expectation is a structure of self-ensnarement, as it is also a promise from the world that, beyond one's control, shapes one. Pip's dedication to his unrequited love for Estella affords him the self-sacrificial *jouissance* of repeatedly returning to the traumatic scene of his own emergence.

The two hyperbolic versions of formation—*causa sui*, and total transparency to another's will—turn out not to be opposed; expectation and self-ensnarement meet in the writing of the self. The text immediately juxtaposes Miss Havisham's power to form and Pip's writing of himself. On the same page, we find Estella's haughty rejoinder to Miss Havisham's tormented plaint at her coldness ("I am what you have made me. Take all the praise, take all the blame; take all the success, take all the failure; in short, take me" [283]) and Pip's beautiful rendering of self-ensnaring:

> The candles that lighted that room of hers were placed in sconces on the wall. They were high from the ground, and they burnt with the steady dulness of artificial light in air that is seldom renewed. As I looked round at them, and at the pale gloom they made, and at the stopped clock, and at the withered articles of bridal dress upon the table and the ground, and at her own awful figure with its ghostly reflection thrown large by the fire upon the ceiling and the wall, I saw in everything the construction that my mind had come to, repeated and thrown back to me. My thoughts passed into the great room across the landing where the table was spread, and I saw it written, as it were, in the falls of the cobwebs from the centre-piece, in the crawlings of the spiders on the cloth, in the tracks of the mice as they betook their little quickened hearts behind the panels, and in the gropings and pausings of the beetles on the floor. (282–83)

The passage restates the delusion he describes immediately before it, his sense that Miss Havisham's dwelling on Estella's suitors, so torturous to him, signals his exemption, his special place as the man intended for her. This figural rendering of his delusion aligns his expectations with the world Miss Havisham has made of her disappointment; both are forms of world-making that figure inner states. The decay and the stagecraft of her monstrous self-destruction is, perilously, a figure not only for seeing what

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one wants to see but for the novel itself (as a created world, and as the writing of a consciousness).

The passage moves between the time of its occurrence and the time of its narration, oscillating between its meaning for Pip the character and, retrospectively, for Pip the narrator. "I saw in everything the construction that my mind had come to, repeated and thrown back to me"; in retrospect, it is about his self-made snares, his delusory expectations. As a description of his past state of mind, the passage glosses Pip's understanding of Miss Havisham's glee at Estella's treatment of (other) men:

> I saw in this, wretched though it made me, and bitter the sense of dependence and even of degradation that it awakened—I saw in this that Estella was set to wreak Miss Havisham's revenge on men, and that she was not to be given to me until she had gratified it for a term. I saw in this, a reason for her being beforehand assigned to me . . . . I saw in this that I, too, was tormented by a perversion of ingenuity, even while the prize was reserved for me. I saw in this the reason for my being staved off so long and the reason for my late guardian's declining to commit himself to the formal knowledge of such a scheme. In a word, I saw in this Miss Havisham as I had her then and there before my eyes, and always had had her before my eyes; and I saw in this, the distinct shadow of the darkened and unhealthy house in which her life was hidden from the sun. (282)

The very emphasis on the narrator's shaping power, the conspicuous rhetorical structuring of the passage—the anaphoric repetition of "I saw in this"—highlights the delusory status of the past thought. The knowing emphasis separates Pip's willful earlier constructions from his later rhetorical shaping of his material even as it risks drawing them together, just as Pip here is more or less explicitly linked to another artist of disappointed love. Two figures are caught up in the constructions of their own minds: Miss Havisham, looking "as though she were devouring the beautiful creature she had created" (282), dwelling upon Estella's "roll" of ensnared men "with the intensity of a mind mortally hurt and diseased," and Pip, "tormented by a perversion of ingenuity." (Pip's formulation, "the distinct shadow of the darkened and unhealthy house," anticipates "I saw no shadow of another parting from her" and is another indication of the way that the ending encrypts within it the self-made snares of Satis House.) When the text, turning to the spiders, mice, and beetles across the hall, offers a figure for that series of narrated perceptions, it redoubles the remove—"writes" over the already written. "I saw in this . . . I saw it written, as it were": the latter phrase points to the

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way these various markings and movements are figures for figures.[15] The falls, tracks, gropings, and pausings unite—as figures of "as it were" written traces—the thoughts, incipient movements, hesitations, movements, and markings left by the small creatures in the farther room.

The second half of the paragraph is metafigural, too, insofar as it is self-consciously rhetorical—"written, as it were." Particularly at the end, the cadence captures one's attention—to my ear, a movement from anapests to iambs, where weaker stresses leave the ghost of remaining anapests in other ways of dividing up the words into feet. (One might also imagine a sprung line with only the first syllables of gropings, pausings, and beetles stressed, as the sentence waits to come down on *floor*.) In any event, one becomes highly aware of the sound, which evokes the hesitations and delays, the momentary suspensions and headlong rush of small creatures—a structure also apparent in the deviation from parallelism in "as they betook their little quickened hearts behind the panels." The *OED* offers this sentence as the example of a transitive use of "betake," where the object implies reflexivity (meaning "to resort, make one's way, turn one's course, go"). Coming to themselves as young Pip comes to himself in the marshes, the mice betake themselves in betaking their little hearts—they commit themselves, or have recourse to an action, by taking up their quickened hearts. At the center of the sentence, these murine hearts, hidden in each tiny breast, are also secreted behind the panels—evoking both the remove of other minds animated by opposed desires and the quickening of Pip himself, and enacting, in the far room, the movement of Pip's mind across the hall to the other room behind the wall. (The beginning of the novel repeatedly has small Pip picked up or carried. That helplessness then comes together with an imaginative or perspectival mobility, as the church is turned upside down.) The passage no doubt also sticks in the memory because of the unusual plurals: crawlings, gropings, and pausings, where verbs are made into nouns and then made plural (signifying repeated actions). The text thus pairs "natural" or "given" plurals—falls, hearts, tracks, spiders, panels, beetles, and mice—with these "made" ones, and thus once again highlights its own making. The crawlings, gropings, and pausings, moreover, mark a writing-like action—thought both struggling to find itself and to find an outlet in expression.

The passage's metafictional qualities bring together Pip and Miss Havisham—which is not surprising: writing figures the inscribing on Pip and Estella of her desires and long-ago baffled hopes. In a sense, Pip writes what Miss Havisham has written: "You made your own snares. *I*

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never made them" (334). Pip puts his construction on appearances as her "awful figure" is thrown "large by the fire upon the ceiling." Her ghostly reflection thrown figures her own making of this ghastly room, her resentment remade in Estella, Pip's twisting of his perceptions to fit his expectations, and his later writing of his life. The latter half of the paragraph moves to another construction—to Pip's imaginings of what is happening in "the great room across the landing where the table was spread," to constructions of the mind, and to a sort of *in situ* narration.

When he identifies himself as a small bundle of shivers or, looking in unseen and unheard, finds himself in his accustomed corner, Pip encounters himself, Miller writes, "from outside." Like the ghost in "The Jolly Corner" for Spencer Brydon or, for Freud, the uncanny image that surprises him in a train's swinging mirror, these figures are *almost* himself. In registers large and small—from the narrative's movement toward its beginning and the voice that will speak it, to the shape of sentences—the text travels in a circle, like Pip pushing Miss Havisham round and round her darkened room. Or rather it almost does. The circle almost closes—embodying the generative gap between Pip the narrator and Pip the character. "I saw no shadow of another parting from her": if for no other reason, Pip's desires remain unrequited because that circle doesn't close. Consider, then, a rhetorical form that often appears in Joe's vicinity:

> My father, Pip, he were given to drink, and when he were overtook with drink, he hammered away at my mother most onmerciful. It were a'most the only hammering he did, indeed, 'xcepting at myself. And he hammered at me with a wigour only to be equaled by the wigour with which he didn't hammer at his anwil. (43)

No doubt the text gently mocks Joe's eloquence—the mind-bending but artful violation of parallelism. Yet that ostensible rhetorical lapse marks something hopeful and, for Dickens, sanctified—that Joe can turn being "hammered at" into a way of not hammering at others, of sheltering them from harm, even, to the degree that he can. A form of disappointment, perhaps: but the sentence's not lining up with itself leaves an opening for Joe—and recalls the gap between expectation and realization at the novel's end.

Magwitch's sponsoring of Pip marks a similar redemption. If the story of his upbringing, crime, and punishment is a case history of how societies produce their own pathologies, breeding the crimes they presume to punish, it is also a case history of the ways that individual consciousness can, to a degree, escape such formation. (Magwitch's voice enters the

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text, momentarily nestled within Pip's own, with the undeveloped story of that formation: "Summun had run away from me—a man—a tinker—and he'd took the fire with him, and left me wery cold" [321].) Pip must forswear the direct material benefits of the inheritance (though he has no choice); his moral epiphany is framed as a relation to Joe:

> For now my repugnance to him had all melted away, and in the hunted wounded shackled creature who held my hand in his, I only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor, and who had felt affectionately, gratefully, and generously, towards me, with great constancy through a series of years. I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe. (415)

Magwitch's relation to Joe—and to Miss Havisham and Biddy, for in contrast to Pumblechook, both are formative figures for Pip's development—would be worth dwelling on. For the moment, though, I am struck by the unclosed circle: "I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe," which recalls "he hammered at me with a wigour only to be equaled by the wigour with which he didn't hammer at his anwil." Critics have given many insightful (and conflicting) accounts of what the association of Joe and Magwitch represents for Pip and his various forms of guilt. But what if, against expectations, part of what Joe teaches Pip is rhetorical, a mode of expression central to the narration of consciousness that will have realized his development as a gentleman?

Such a structure appears to run counter to what Pip professes to demand of himself. Critics beginning with Dorothy van Ghent have attended to the question of Pip's conscience; the book's subject, van Ghent writes, "is the etiology of guilt and of atonement." For van Ghent, Dickens explores the guilt not of the "father" or of "some public institution," but the "guilt of the child"; the child as "original individual" must "necessarily take upon himself responsibility for not only what is to be done in the present and the future, but what has been done in the past, inasmuch as the past is part and parcel of the present and the future."[16] The Miltonic echoes in the book point to guilt that exceeds any reasonable judgment of Pip's thoughts or deeds; his guilt in coming-into-himself is constitutive, like original sin. For Julian Moynahan, Pip's sense of responsibility for faults ostensibly overblown as "crimes" is the clandestine sign of Pip's awareness of the instrumentalizing of others involved in his upward mobility—enacted, then, in the form of projection, with Orlick as Pip's double defining "Pip's implicit participation in the acts of violence with which the novel abounds."[17] Shifting the critical focus from guilt and crime, Robert Newsom points to the signal

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importance of shame in Dickens, making the distinction that where guilt bears on possibly culpable action, shame bears on identity; exposed guilt might result in punishment, whereas exposure in some sense is shame. Linking the preponderance of shame in Dickens to the autobiographical account of his time in Warren's Blacking Factory, he sees in such scenes ciphers of "a rich and varied host of scenes of sexual discovery."[18] William Cohen specifies a possible source of shame in the text, namely masturbation, which he finds coded in the novel's obsessive reference to hands: "when hand and genital organ touch, the former (speakable) can connote the latter (unspeakable)."[19]

Guilt and shame are also, constitutively, effects of the narrator's retrospective relation to the character he was. The guilt about his treatment of Joe—and, with Joe, of Biddy—is, among other things, one of the places where the novel exacerbates, for effects of irony, the gap between the striving character and the narrator who judges him. The mortifying fantasy of providing a feast of roast beef for a grateful town, awed by his ascent to means (137); his shame about Joe's behavior (at Miss Havisham's and, later, when he visits Pip in town); and so on: these are occasions for censorious commentary from a narrator ashamed of his past behavior (ashamed, often, of his past shame). "Whatever I acquired, I tried to impart to Joe. This statement sounds so well, that I cannot in my conscience let it pass unexplained. I wanted to make Joe less ignorant and common, that he might be worthier of my society and less open to Estella's reproach" (102). He tells saintly Biddy that she displays "a bad side of human nature"; "I again warmly repeated that it was a bad side of human nature (in which sentiment, waiving its application, I have since seen reason to think I was right)" (140). Such moments draw our attention to the gap separating young Pip from the narrator who looks back on his actions.

Pip's seizing of occasions for censorious commentary takes the perspective of a narrator ashamed of his past behavior (ashamed, often, of his past shame). Such moments underline the gap separating the striving character and the narrator who judges him. Shame, perhaps predictably, is a possible consequence of such a retrospective gaze. Shame about our treatment of others or about not having known things (how to behave ethically, or even how to use particular linguistic idioms) is, depending on one's particular constitution, an index of having learned in the first place. Shame may be an inevitable part of teaching and learning.[20] "The way to perfection," writes Walter Pater of Leonardo, "is through a series of disgusts": the cellist Paul Tortelier, chastising a young

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person in a master class, explained that "good taste forms through thousands of disgusts," a disgust at oneself, perhaps above all. The fish has gone bad, and so you spit it out; henceforth, the tutored young cellist will know how fishy it would be to shift just *there*.[21] The development of taste often borders on shame, for mistaken enthusiasms, for disgusts that had yet to form. Such shame is not inevitable, though it seems to be for those of us who share certain traits with Pip; not to feel it perhaps relies on a holding off of identification, a willingness to let a past self abide within its own world, live within the sense it quickened. (Among the many pleasures of Henry James's works of autobiography is the generosity that marks his relation to his younger self—interested, because never fully detached, and fondly critical where the implication, because it is acknowledged, need not be disavowed.) The narrator of *Great Expectations* often seems to wish he could short-circuit that process and arrive at the beginning fully formed; his dwelling on the shame also shows, performatively, the need for time to learn.

The character Pip is highly attuned to shame, and to authority. His guilt at stealing food for the convict—and his sense that even the ruminating cows stand in judgment of him—foretell the censorious narrator who will revel in the betrayal of his later ambition or his shame about Joe. A different account might dwell on the sexual etiology of that formative guilt: "Conscience is a dreadful thing when it accuses man or boy; but when, in the case of a boy, that secret burden co-operates with another secret burden down the leg of his trousers, it is (as I can testify) a great punishment" (12).[22] Still another account might emphasize the social dimensions of Pip's shame and guilt.[23] The stratification of Pip's society, and the increasing (but still limited) possibilities for mobility within it make the emergence into adulthood an anxious, and a guilty, affair. (Novels tend to valorize both class mobility and loyalty to the class one has left behind.)[24] The novel in English, starting with *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), repeatedly, and disingenuously, invokes as an ideal a character contented with his lot—invokes him as a foil for the striving main character. Had Pip remained a contented blacksmith's apprentice, the resulting novel would have been as dismal as the tale of a Robinson Crusoe who stayed home, happy with his modest means. Pip's guilt is central to this novel's rendering of the particular ways that a boy of this period can make himself into an adult.

Yet for *Great Expectations*, these questions of guilt and character change are not merely questions of Pip's particular psychology, or even of the representation of class consciousness. Contentment, and remaining

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in place, runs counter to the narrative form—which includes, too, the emergence not of a particular character but of character itself. There would be no gap between character and narrator, and nowhere for the character to go. The new Pip is not just an alternative future; he is Pip without a future, embodying a desire for stasis: Pip's apparent gratification comes from the idea that he can (vicariously) be a proper son to Joe, one who doesn't want what Joe can't give him. The repetition, however, suggests that symmetry will fail again; the new Pip will have expectations of his own. The repetition as a form of attempted structural closure entails a different order of generative gap; they can only go back to the graveyard and find again that the character to come can only fail to be.

For Franco Moretti, the English Bildungsroman "leaves us, so to speak, with an empty stomach"; it is "the worst novel of the West."[25] Dickens is representative of this disappointing novel form, presenting characters who are fundamentally stunted in their development: the English novel, with the exception of *Middlemarch* (1871–72), repeatedly seeks to affirm the perspective of the innocent, and is (in his reading) a childlike genre that fails to reach the maturity and sophistication of the genre in other national literatures.[26] Arguably, however, this is a self-conscious strand in Dickens and central to his sounding of the problem of character (in all its senses). In *Great Expectations*, the exploration of the disappointment of growing up makes such stuntedness less a psychological or social limitation than a way of examining the profound difficulties—logical, psychological, existential—of emergence.[27] Without contesting the rich history of Marxist-influenced readings of the Bildungsroman after Lukács, which often focus, like Moretti, on questions of social assimilation or resistance, I aim here to explore paradoxes of inception that appear in novelistic imaginings of the emergence of consciousness—and the relation, in the Bildungsroman, between emerging consciousness and its retrospective narration.[28]

Great Expectations makes such paradoxes of inception central to Pip's character. Indeed, stasis exerts a powerful attraction on Pip; his self-censure raises the question of what would have been adequate as a show of gratitude to Joe. Pip's fever, and Joe's sojourn nursing him, suggest that it would entail a return to helpless childhood: "I fancied I was little Pip again. For the tenderness of Joe was so beautifully proportioned to my need, that I was like a child in his hands . . . . Joe wrapped me up, took me in his arms, carried me down to it, and put me in, as I were still" a "small helpless creature" (434). Pip, getting well, even fakes it, pretending to be

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weaker than he is for Joe's sake. Miss Havisham dramatizes the risks—and the terrible appeal—of going nowhere; for Pip, there is deep appeal in the fantasy of remaining a child, remaining one for whom Joe's companionship is enough. Some aspects of his guilt refer to particular culpable attitudes and actions—compromising accedings to the compromised values of merchants and others, or ugly snobberies—but, at root, his is the guilt of becoming a person. Serge Leclaire, referencing Freud's "A Child Is Being Beaten," suggests that, to live, it is necessary to kill His Majesty the Baby—to destroy the ideals and fantasies of one's life sheltered by one's parents. "I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe": this marker of an asymmetry internal to the constitution of the first-person Bildungsroman is also a rhetoric of nonreciprocation. Magwitch's exorbitant investment in Pip mimes Joe's and underlines the impossibility of returning the love that has formed us.

More compelling, perhaps, than the story of Pip's love for Estella is this thematization of unrequited love; Pip cannot love Joe as Joe loves him. To do so could only undo him, leaving him a (disappointing) monument to Joe's love. (Pip will never explicitly reflect on it, but his relation to Joe allows him to play out a version of his love for Estella from the other side—to be the object of a love that he cannot return. His guilt about Joe is thus also the flip side of his dogged persistence in desiring someone who does not love him back; he remains within an economy where love *should* be returned.) Thus the chiasmus implicitly marks a failure of reflection (Pip's love cannot mirror Joe's back to him) and replaces it with another reflection—Magwitch's love for him, which exceeds his own love for Joe. There is no doubt a necessary violence, and a rank ingratitude, in thus failing to be adequate to the investments of those to whom one owes everything; not taking that step, however, is much worse, and culpable in a different register of ethics. Pip's formative guilt registers the way that Pip himself is a figure for emergence or becoming. The episode of Pip's fever, like the figurative death at the kiln, stands in for the dissolution inherent in the becoming-a-voice that, as the novel's horizon, also unwrites it. Both return us to the graveyard at the beginning and end of the novel. The new Pip allows our Pip to hive off as a separate character the fantasy that he might remain a child. That fantasy can then perhaps be laid to rest and, in being laid to rest, figure, in its very dissolution, the voice (likewise divided from itself) that will have told the story.

For all that the episode of Pip's illness dramatizes a perverse element of his particular psychology, in other words, it also dramatizes the

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structure of the novel, the narrator's return to childhood—with the difference of the narrating consciousness. Read on the level of character psychology, it marks a regressive fantasy; read as metanarrative, it renders the production of the narrative voice in a circular return that finds, in that return, a crucial difference from itself. "I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe"; "he hammered at me with a wigour only to be equaled by the wigour with which he didn't hammer at his anwil." These are at once thematic and rhetorical markers of the circular structure of narrative self-constitution. Narratively, such a rhetorical structure is expressed, I noted, by Pip's return to himself: "I found out for certain ... that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip"; "there, fenced into the corner with Joe's leg, and sitting on my own little stool looking at the fire, was—I again!"

It is also marked by moments of visual projection or distortion: "her own awful figure with its ghostly reflection thrown large by the fire upon the ceiling and the wall." The risk of the return to oneself is, perhaps expectedly, less that one will discover one is the pawn of others than that one will discover there is no way to escape oneself—that one will find there is only hallucination.[29] The question is perhaps whether Pip can escape his own head, or the recursive structure that makes it possible that his consciousness will coincide with his writing of it: "I called myself Pip, and I came to be called Pip." One of the arresting fantasies of unrequited love is that consciousness, turning back on itself, might seize the power to make a difference—might produce a change in the reality it obsessively contemplates. The fantasy is punctured by its proximity to hallucination. Pip's narration suggests that the difference from oneself perhaps saves one from becoming Miss Havisham or from becoming locked within the hallucinatory reflections of one's own mind. For Pip, and perhaps not just for Pip, the unhappy consequence is that, likewise, when it comes to desire, only unrequited love can save one from this hall of mirrors—from a desolating, isolating, even world-dissolving omnipotence.

The appearance of Estella at the (revised) end of the text is not only wildly improbable as an event (both go back to Satis House a single time and find each other there); it also appears to be something like a hallucination:

> I could trace out where every part of the old house had been, and where the brewery had been, and where the gates, and where the casks. I had done so, and was looking along the desolate garden-walk, when I beheld a solitary figure in it.

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> The figure showed itself aware of me as I advanced. It had been moving towards me, but it stood still. As I drew nearer, I saw it to be the figure of a woman. As I drew nearer yet, it was about to turn away, when it stopped, and let me come up with it. Then, it faltered as if much surprised, and uttered my name, and I cried out:
>
> "Estella!" (448–49)

His mind, reconstituting the past, calls into being a "figure"—what, in Dickens's lexicon, often stands in for incipient meaning, for a shape or form almost become meaningful. (In *Our Mutual Friend* [1865], that use becomes almost obsessive.)[30] Here, the repeated pronoun "it" keeps Estella on the verge of animation, as Pip recognizes first a human form, then a woman, and finally (after she calls his name) Estella. She (or "it") embodies here Estella's status throughout the text—a "pure" object of desire, the perfect negative image of Pip's desires. Her upbringing with Miss Havisham makes her desire not someone else but no one at all—the pure negation of Pip's desire.[31] As with any "figure," a question is whether the meaning is (at last) recognized or (from the beginning) imposed, because made. Her appearance at the site of Satis House has something of the hallucinatory quality of the soldiers materialized at the blacksmith's door or of the convict who arrives just in time to give body to an existential realization. Her sudden materialization there, on the novel's penultimate page, furthers one's sense that the ostensibly happy ending is a form of wish fulfillment. Here, moreover, the hallucination is explicitly tied to retrospection: "I could trace out where every part of the old house had been." The lining up of the world with Pip's imaginative reconstruction thus links his act of narration (a similar reconstruction) with the bodying forth of a longed-for "figure."

This late moment recalls Pip's earlier encounters—two of the text's "stranger" moments, as he calls them—with the "figure" of Miss Havisham, hanged:[32]

> It was in this place, and at this moment, that a strange thing happened to my fancy. I thought it a strange thing then, and I thought it a stranger thing long afterwards. I turned my eyes—a little dimmed by looking up at the frosty light—towards a great wooden beam in a low nook of the building near me on my right hand, and I saw a figure hanging there by the neck. A figure all in yellow white, with but one shoe to the feet; and it hung so, that I could see that the faded trimmings of the dress were like earthy paper, and that the face was Miss Havisham's, with a movement going over the whole countenance as if she were trying to call to me. In the terror of seeing the figure, and in the terror of being certain that it had not been there a moment

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> before, I at first ran from it, and then ran towards it. And my terror was greatest of all when I found no figure there.

Running to and fro, not unlike the startled small creatures he will imagine in the far room upstairs, Pip then comes to himself, as he puts it, when he sees "Estella approaching with the keys, to let me out" (60). Late in the novel, after bidding her farewell, he pauses downstairs: "I fancied that I saw Miss Havisham hanging to the beam. So strong was the impression, that I stood under the beam shuddering from head to foot before I knew it was a fancy—though to be sure I was there in an instant" (373). The second hallucination leads him to go back upstairs, where he witnesses her near immolation, and is able to save her from immediate death.

The sense of *figure* shares with the later passage with Estella an uncertainty of perception—Pip's hesitation about a shape that may turn out to be a human form. Explicit here is what is perhaps implicit in the later moment; that uncertainty is also about whether there *is* a shape, whether it is a perception or merely a projection of the mind. That may be one reason to understand the ultimate terror: "And my terror was greatest of all when I found no figure there." The account is explicitly mediated by later reflection ("I thought it a strange thing then, and I thought it a stranger thing long afterwards"). Both passages highlight not only *figure* but *fancy*: "A strange thing happened to my fancy"; "I fancied that I saw"; "I stood under the beam shuddering from head to foot before I knew it was a fancy." A word with a long, complex history, *fancy* is a contraction of fantasy—*phantasia* in Latin, *φαντασία* in Greek—"to make visible." Its senses include the spectral; hallucination; a capacity, similar to but distinguished from imagination, for the mental representation of things; a mental image; invention; an arbitrary notion (resting on no solid grounds); a caprice; individual taste, especially an amorous inclination or love; taste or critical judgment; and, perhaps most strangely, the art of boxing, pugilism, or sporting in general (*OED*)—which, of course, is how Pip first meets Herbert. The "fancy" here thus seems not unrelated to the text's work of narration—to the content of the education or formation that will have made Pip a gentleman, and the novel itself, as thought made visible. The second Pip, the pendulous Miss Havisham, the figure of a woman walking at Satis House: specters or ghosts or thoughts made visible, they might render, equally, hallucinations and the narration's making of an imagined world. Not coming full circle is perhaps one way to stave off the threat of hallucination. "I saw no shadow of another parting from her": the immediate sense of *shadow* here is an (in this case,

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portentous) interruption of light, a future clouded by the prospect of evil. The "shadows" dismissed at the end of *David Copperfield* have the sense, rather, of ghosts or figments, or productions of the mind like the "walking shadow" of Macbeth's poor strutting and fretting player on the stage. Read in the context of the threat of hallucination, Pip might therefore be read to assert at the end, that, for once, he did not see a ghost. Holding apart character and narrator, and thus denying Pip the realization of one last expectation, perhaps protects him from hallucination and the terror of finding no figure there.

At the end of *On the Emotions,* Richard Wollheim describes the "narrative" of our desires' interactions with the world, a repeated circle in which satisfaction and frustration are anticipated and reacted to. "Suppose," he writes,

> that the world either was impervious to our emotions, or instantly and utterly capitulated before them. Suppose ... that, whenever we loved someone, our love was never returned, not out of indifference or because love had been pledged elsewhere, but because the thought of such reciprocity never occurred to the person. Or suppose that, whenever we were angry, the object of our anger dropped down dead. Our emotions either totally determined the lives of others, or made no impact on them whatsoever. Furthermore suppose that this was, not only how the world was, but how, in our phantasies, we represented it. Our emotions would, I suspect, die of the lack of interaction, or of the lack of narrative.[33]

The story of development told by *Great Expectations* dwells, from the beginning, on ostensibly contradictory visions of the self's making, oscillating between hyperbolized visions of self-making by textual decree and a total malleability to others' connivings. In such hyperbolic renderings, the novel also makes fictional decree and patterning confront the dumb, unpatterned contingencies of circumstance. Uncoupled from parental relations, Magwitch's exorbitant investment in Pip appears both more arbitrary than a parent's and more justified, narratively (his loss of a child just before he meets Pip, and his own desertion by his father). Likewise, Estella's relation to Pip's desire is given a complex narrative explanation (her upbringing, the story of Compeyson, Arthur, and Miss Havisham), yet, like any erotic preference, it is both overdetermined and utterly without justification. "I loved her simply because I found her irresistible"; those who don't love us simply don't find us irresistible. The arbitrary coincidences in realist fiction are simultaneously markers of aesthetic patterning and ways of letting the world in to patterns that would otherwise die from being too controlled.

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For Alex Woloch, if Dickens's novels are structured by weak protagonists besieged by charismatic and memorable marginal characters, *Great Expectations* "magisterially represents what it feels like to *be* a weak protagonist, as Pip is constantly overwhelmed by the marginal characters who surround him." The novel "is the story of a first-person narrator stuck in a third-person narrative world—a world in large part shaped by the structures and logic of Dickens's own earlier omniscient novels."[34] The moments of helplessness—iconically, his being held upside down by Magwitch but also the writing of his fate by Magwitch, Miss Havisham, Mr. Jaggers, and, ultimately, Compeyson—are narratively foregrounded; they are accompanied, too, however, by moments where the power of the first-person voice threatens to overwhelm the reality of the depicted world—a threat that merges with a hallucination which indexes the omnipotence that the child is justified in dreading. One thinks of Mr. Wopsle, playing Hamlet, seeing Compeyson "sitting behind you there like a ghost" (358). Wopsle, ostensibly onstage, sees Pip, unconscious that he is being watched; the simile ("like a ghost"), recalling the ghost in *Hamlet,* turns Pip's box into a kind of stage, and the reversal enacts the other reversals here: Pip, thinking the drama is elsewhere, is in fact the protagonist of the scene, and the inept Hamlet turns out to be as marginal a character as the actor playing him is in the novel. That oscillation of central and marginal characters replays that of narrative power: Pip is at once an unknowing cog in the turning of plots he fails to grasp and the central power, his psychic conflicts, writ large, made visible on the stage of the text. Such omnipotence, with its hallucinatory power, and the disappearance of the subject and its volition charted by Woloch's account of the besieged protagonist are not, this novel suggests, opposed. And they come together in the unclosed temporal loop of "I saw no shadow of another parting from her." Such is the disappointment of being a subject, and the curiously decentered centrality of the protagonist in this first-person novel of development.

Notes

1. Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 146. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
2. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, XII:646–49.
3. Miller, "Metaphysics," 790–92 (quote on 791).
4. Miller, "Metaphysics," 792.

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5. John O. Jordan writes that "The past tense of Pip's conclusion contrasts significantly with the present-tense narration adopted by David Copperfield in the final chapter of his autobiography. In *Copperfield*, the life lived and the life narrated coincide at the end, leaving no gap to interrogate as in the case of *Great Expectations*" ("The Medium," 88n11). On the opening of *David Copperfield*, see also Ohi, "Autobiography."
6. The original ending, which leaves Estella married to someone else, makes clear that the desire remains unrequited. For Victor Xavier Zarour Zarzar, the revised ending marks not desire's satisfaction but its perpetuation, attesting not that Pip's desire has been resolved in marriage but that he has failed to get over her. That fully unhappy ending, then, marks the culmination of the interference the Estella–Miss Havisham plot exerts on the novel as Bildungsroman, thwarting the would-be closure of the Magwitch plot: "the revised ending, . . . by refusing to do away with Pip's desire for Estella, . . . strains the novel's relationship to the conventions of its genre" ("Authoring Desire," 347). Many critics have noted that the revised ending hardly seems a happy one. Jordan notes that the earlier descriptions of Estella are given by the narrator, looking back; these passages are "scarcely the language or the tone of a man who has found peace of mind." Jordan also notes that the past tense in "I saw no shadow" "invites us to question what he sees now and why so much is left unsaid," arguing that it attests to Pip's failure to let go of his desire for Estella ("The Medium," 81, 82). Paroissien argues for the superiority of the original ending, suggesting that the revisions betray the aesthetic vision coherently realized in it (designed explicitly to frustrate tired novelistic conventions); various forms of reference indicate for him that the (unmarried) Pip who narrates the novel is "elderly" and expresses a hard-won contentment with his modest position as a clerk ("Clarriker, Pocket, and Pirrip," 283). On the critical debates concerning the novel's endings, see Rosenberg, "Putting an End."
7. On the erotics of this scene, see Cohen, "Manual Conduct," 237–38.
8. On the revision of the number of years Pip spent abroad, see Paroissien, "Clarriker, Pocket, and Pirrip," 288–89.
9. On this structure in Pater, see Ohi, "Queer Atavism."
10. Heller-Roazen, *Absentees*, 198.
11. Kurnick, "Stages," 94.
12. Johnson, "Using People," 105.

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13. Miller, "Metaphysics," 776.
14. Jordan notes that if Pip "is his own author," he is "by the same token . . . a walking misnomer—an imposter living under an assumed name even before he agrees to be known as Handel." Jordan also notes that "Pip" means "seed" ("The Medium," 85, 80).
15. On the repeated "I saw in this," see Zarzar, "Authoring Desire," 351–52.
16. Van Ghent, "On *Great Expectations*," 130, 136.
17. Moynahan, "The Hero's Guilt," 64. Jordan suggests that the ghosts in the novel are markers of guilt: "often the ghosts reflect a side of Pip's character that he tries to repress—violence, criminality, erotic sadism. In this sense, they reveal the secret life of the novel" ("The Medium," 77).
18. Newsom, "The Hero's Shame," 16.
19. Cohen, "Manual Conduct," 230.
20. Newsom notes that the shame Estella instills in him begins at the very opening of the novel: "At Satis House, Pip's education in 'the identity of things,' begun on the novel's first page, completes a critical stage, for it is there that his imagination is impressed with the limits of his own village, family, and self. For the first time he knows not simply that he is Pip, but he is able to look at himself from the standpoint of some wider perspective outside of himself" ("The Hero's Shame," 18). On teaching and shame, see also Hanson, "Teaching Shame."
21. Pater, *Renaissance,* 81. The tutored cellist was twenty-year-old Clive Greensmith, who would become a great cellist (most famous for his years in the Tokyo String Quartet). Excoriating Greensmith for a shift in the Dvořák cello concerto, Tortelier also says, "if you were Jacqueline du Pré . . ." Few musicians could live up to that.
22. For perhaps the definitive account of sexual guilt or shame in the novel, see Cohen, "Manual Conduct."
23. Kathleen Sell emphasizes both the "class shame" in Pip's access to the life of a gentleman (premised on a life without labor) and the shame of Pip's (failed) access to heterosexuality—shame, therefore, both at his effort to leave behind the homosocial world of men for heterosexual conjugality with Estella and his failure to do so, and his concomitant "inability to construct a secure masculine identity for himself" ("The Narrator's Shame," 203, 209).
24. The genre of the Bildungsroman is often read as about the developing subject's relation to social norms. For Franco Moretti, it is only during the phase of the classic Bildungsroman—perhaps

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embodied solely by Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* novels and Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*—that the central character's maturation brings him into harmony with his society. "We had begun," Moretti writes, "with a specifically 'bourgeois' dilemma: the clash between individual autonomy and social integration. The image of the escape from freedom, which places the desire to 'belong' within the individual psyche itself, is, as it were, its solution. When the logic of social integration has been interiorized, turning into a desire that the individual perceives as his 'own,' as his *greatest* desire, in fact, to which all others can be subordinated and sacrificed—then socialization is no longer felt as mere necessity, but as a value choice: it has become *legitimate*" (*Way of the World*, 67). Balzac finally dismantles the illusion that "social progress and individual growth could be parallel processes" (163). For Bakhtin, where novels had given either a static character seen against the backdrop of a changing world or a character whose development is brought into relief by a static world, the innovation of the Bildungsroman is to show both developments simultaneously. In his typology, "The fifth and last type of novel of emergence is the most significant one. In it man's individual emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence" ("The *Bildungsroman*," 23). The archetype, again, is Goethe's two *Wilhelm Meister* novels, and so the harmonization of the social and the psychological is linked, centrally for Bakhtin, to Goethe's particular historical sense—which makes a place significant, for instance, only to the degree that it embodies human history. For a reading of the novel in relation to the Bildungsroman, see Taft, "The Work of Love."

25. Moretti, *Way of the World*, 213, 214.
26. "Contrary to *Wilhelm Meister*, in the English novel the most significant experiences are not those that alter but those which *confirm* the choices made by childhood 'innocence.' Rather than novels of 'initiation' one feels they should be called novels of 'preservation'" (Moretti, *Way of the World*, 182). With George Eliot, "everything changes"; finally, for him, an English novelist is concerned not with "insipid" or innocent characters but with adults (214). Eça de Queiroz agreed with this assessment; for him, too, George Eliot was the only English novelist of this period who wrote for grown-ups.
27. On the emergence of character in Dickens, see Ohi, "Proto-Reading."
28. For a concise statement of Moretti's understanding of how the genre contains the anxiety of social upheaval by rendering it as the

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(temporary, individual, psychologized) turbulence of youth, see Moretti, *Way of the World*, 230.

29. Moynahan phrases this in terms of Pip's fantasy of a fairy-tale life: "a fiction wherein the world is made to conform to his desire and will" ("The Hero's Guilt," 67). Unrequited love serves, he argues, to show "fantasy in collision with reality. Pip learns that the world is not a vast mammary gland from which he can draw rich nourishment with moral impunity. He finds he must hunger and struggle like all the rest. Furthermore, he must accept the unhappy fact that his participation in the old dream of great expectations has hurt real people" (68–69). Cohen emphasizes a different but related aspect to what I am calling "hallucination" here. Its effort to shut down the sexual intensities to which its clandestine thematics of masturbation give rise closes down even monogamous heterosexuality: "Though the novel entertains a range of sexual designations, exchanges, developments, and diffusions, the sexual hegemony in which it issues becomes so powerful as finally to suspend not only that order's own idea—institutionalized heterosexual monogamy—but anything that exceeds the fantasy of the solitary subject" ("Manual Conduct," 251–52). Ultimately, that sexual intensity comes to reside in "solitary reading"; masturbation lives on, that is, in the novel's refusal of closure (252). On masturbation, hallucination, and modern consciousness, see Bersani, "Ardent Masturbation."
30. On this term in *Our Mutual Friend*, see Ohi, "Proto-Reading."
31. Gail Turley Houston notes that Estella is "the nightmare version of the Victorian female bred to have no desires, no appetites, trained to be desire and to be object of appetite" (17, cited in Sell, "The Narrator's Shame," 218).
32. These scenes form something of a crux for readings of Pip's guilt, beginning with van Ghent and Moynahan. For Moynahan, they mark Pip's childhood fantasy of omnipotence, which then seems to spill out in the retributive violence that Pip's enemies (or those who thwart his will) suffer in the book.
33. Wollheim, *On the Emotions*, 221.
34. Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 178–79.

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