THE USE OF TRIANGULAR FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN DICKENS' GREAT EXPECTATIONS

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PREFACE

Like many twentieth century readers unfamiliar with Dickens, I had assumed that the creator of Little Nell and Scrooge was little more than a chronicler of Victorian England, a nineteenth century Hogarth of words. I was fortunate to have this unmerited, prejudiced point of view altered through an introduction to a new Dickens in a course offered by Dr. Mary Rohrberger in the Victorian Novel. I discovered that not only was Dickens a very fine craftsman, but that he is also among the finest novelists in the English language. In an attempt to analyze the reasons for Dickens' success, I found many incisive articles concerning Great Expectations, but none of them developed an idea suggested to me by Dr. Rohrberger concerning the novel; that is, a study of Dickens reveals great concern with family situations. These family relations consisting of a triangular pattern of father-mother-child (or children), are continually changing for each of the characters in the novel. Thus it seems possible that the complexity of Great Expectations, a quality noted by many critics, might indeed be related to such a triangular structure. It is this theory then (that the structure of the entire novel is related to the constant shifts within the family triangles) which motivated the writing of the thesis.

I would particularly like to thank Dr. Mary Rohrberger for her patience and assistance. To Dr. D. Judson Milburn and Dr. Samuel Woods, Jr. go my appreciation for the hours they spent as members of my committee. A final note of thanks goes to Anne Delap and Vera Milburn who endured so graciously the progress reports and revisions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although Charles Dickens has consistently been popular with the general reading public, his critical reputation has fluctuated tremendously in the past one hundred years. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries critics refused generally to consider Dickens as anything more than a humorist or sentimentalist. In the last twenty years, however, there has taken place considerable reevaluation of Dickens, and as Lord David Cecil writing in 1958 suggests, Dickens' reputation has risen considerably:

> Age and experience also reveal to me that I have treated some authors inadequately. What I have said about Dickens.... may be true, but it is not enough. The more he is studied, the richer and deeper does Dickens appear. That symbolic and imaginative strain in his genius that makes him kin to the Elizabethan dramatists permeates his work to *a* degree I had not realized when I wrote this essay on him [1935], appearing not just in an occasional episode or phrase but often in the basic conception of his tale.[1]

Another change in the direction of Dickensian criticism is that the earlier humorous works such as *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist* are usually relegated to the critical background[2] while the later novels--*Our Mutual Friend*, *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Great Expectations*--receive the majority of critical attention. Due primarily to the post-

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[1] *The Victorian Novelists* (Chicago, 1958), p. vi.

[2] Notable exceptions are Arnold Kettle's essay on *Oliver Twist* in *An Introduction to the English Novel* and J. Hillis Miller's treatment of three of the earlier novels in *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels*.

Jamesian concern for detecting the structural pattern or design in a literary work, most of the critical essays written about the so-called "dark" novels concentrate upon structural rather than biographical or sociological problems. Although thorough studies of Dickens, both in book and article form, have proliferated in the last twenty years, the complexity of Dickens' art unquestionably leaves room for further investigation. Even though an extensive study of structural devices is beyond the scope of this study, it still seems profitable for Dickensian scholarship that a close investigation be made of a single structural device in one novel, in this instance, Great Expectations.

Literary criticism has not always viewed Dickens with a friendly eye. Partly as a result of the influence of the continental novelists such as Flaubert, Balzac, and Zola, assessments of Dickens prior to the twentieth century were often hostile, if not openly derogatory. Particularly did Dickens' fellow British and American novelists take issue with him concerning problems of characterization, structure, and style. For example, Anthony Trollope placed Thackeray and George Eliot above Dickens because his characters "are not human beings...It has been the pecularity and the marvel of this man's power, that he has invested his puppets with a charm that has enabled him to dispense with human nature."[3] Trollope does not limit his criticism to characterization alone: "Of Dickens's style it is impossible to speak in praise. It is jerky, ungrammatical, and created by himself in defiance of rules."[4] George Eliot, suggesting that Dickens' characters have no soul, stated, "We have

[3]An Autobiography, ed. Bradford Booth (Los Angeles, 1947), pp. 207-208.

[4]Ibid., p. 208.

one great novelist who is gifted with the utmost power of rendering the external traits of our town population; and if he could give us their psychological character--their conceptions of life, and their emotions--with the same truth as their idiom and manners, his books would be the greatest contribution Art has ever made to the awakening of social sympathies."[5] And George Henry Lewes remarked that when reading Dickens "...one is reminded of the frogs whose brains have been taken out for physiological purposes, and whose actions henceforth want the distinctive pecularity of organic action, that of fluctuating spontaneity."[6] Lewes accused Dickens of being a caricaturist whose characters belong to the world of "hallucination." It was, however, Henry James who offered the most scathing attack on Dickens as artist. Having discussed particular episodes in his review of Our Mutual Friend, James concludes

> Such scenes as this are useful in fixing the limits of Mr. Dickens' insight. Insight is, perhaps, too strong a word; for we are convinced that it is one of the chief conditions of his genius not to see beneath the surface of things. If we might hazard a definition of his literary character, we should, accordingly, call him the greatest of the superficial novelists. We are aware that this definition confines him to an inferior rank in the department of letters which he adorns; but we accept this consequence of our proposition. It were, in our opinion, an offence against humanity to place Mr. Dickens among the greatest novelists. For to repeat what we have already intimated, he has created nothing but figure. He has added nothing to our understanding of human character.[7]

Reflecting on the nineteenth century attitudes toward Dickens, Lionel Stevenson has said that it was not until theories of the novel ceased to

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[5] Essays (Edinburgh-London, 1885), p. 194.

[6] "Dickens in Relation to Criticism," Fortnightly Review, XVII (1872), 141-154. Quoted by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr., eds. The Dickens Critics (Ithaca, New York, 1961), p. 65.

[7] Views and Reviews (Boston, 1908), pp. 159-160.

be dominated by naturalism that Dickens was "suddenly hailed as one of the major creative writers of all time."[8]

The adverse criticism initiated in part by Lewes and James extended into the early part of the twentieth century also. The major objections continued to be about the lack of depth in Dickens' characters and his lack of craftsmanship. Alice Meynell, writing in 1903, remarked that "There is laughter for his humor, tears for his pathos, and contempt for his authorship."[9] Lord David Cecil, who twenty-five years later changed his mind, commented on the unevenness of the Victorians in general and Dickens in particular saying that "He /Dickens/ cannot construct, for one thing. His books have no organic unity; they are full of detachable episodes, characters who serve no purpose in furthering the plot." Cecil then concentrates upon his objections to Dickens' treatment of plot: "After pages of humourous conversation, Dickens will remember there should be a plot, and will plunge back for a paragraph or two into a jungle of elaborate intrigue."[10] Cecil's ultimate attack, however, is upon Dickens' method of characterization: "He cannot draw complex, educated or aristocratic types. And what is more unfortunate, even in his memorable figures he shows sometimes an uncertain grasp of psychological essentials."[11] Even though he is essentially friendly to what Edmund Wilson calls the "jolly Dickens, George Santayana suggests that "... in spite of his ardent simplicity and openness of heart, how insensible

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[8]Quoted by Fred Boege, "Recent Criticism of Dickens," Nineteenth Century Fiction, VIII (1953), 178.

[9]"Charles Dickens as a Man of Letters," Atlantic Monthly, XCI (January, 1903), 52-53.

[10]Cecil, p. 23.

[11]Ibid., p. 49.

Dickens was to the greater themes of the human imagination--religion, science, politics, art."[12] And George Gissing, another "jolly" Dickensian, in a burst of magnaminity remarks "Of psychology--a word unknown to Dickens--we, of course, have nothing; to ask for it is out of place."[13]

To summarize, the tone of the adverse Dickensian criticism in the early twentieth century seems to me significantly different from that of the nineteenth. The nineteenth century criticism such as Lewes and James showed an open hostility toward Dickens since he did not fit into the period's prevailing artistic mode, realism. Because they did not see the existence and subsequently the value of Dickens' primarily symbolic method of writing fiction, such critics dismissed Dickens as an inferior artist. The early twentieth century critics, such as David Cecil, did admit that Dickens may have had something to say--he simply did not have adequate control of his material. Perhaps another reason for their greater leniency was that Dickens in the early twentieth century posed no immediate artistic threat. An examination of the PMLA Index for the 1920's and 1930's supports such a contention since very little scholarly material was then written about Dickens. Both admiration and scholastic revival were to come some twenty years later.

Although most Victorian scholars give credit to Edmund Wilson's essay on Dickens in The Wound and The Bow for initiating the Dickensian revival, a number of critics in the early twentieth century also wrote favorably of Dickens. Most of these critics, however, offer an interpretation of what George H. Ford calls the "fat man's Dickens." Following

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[12]Soliloquies in England (London, 1922), p. 210.

[13]Quoted by Warrington Winter, "Dickens and the Psychology of Dreams," PMLA, LXIII (1948), 1004-1005.

in the tradition of John Forster, Dickens' friend and early biographer, such writers as George Gissing,[14] G. K. Chesterton,[15] George Santayana,[16] and to a lesser degree E. M. Forster[17] and Douglas Bush,[18] emphasize the early Dickens novels and almost totally neglect the later, darker works. Thus such critics speak warmly of Dickens' sublime humor, his unforgettable characters such as Pickwick and Betsey Trotwood, his revival of a "merry England" of coaches and Christmas. The following quotation from Chesterton's evaluation of Great Expectations is illustrative of the heavily biographical, non-structural approach of such criticism: "Dickens was often called a sentimentalist. In one sense he sometimes was a sentimentalist. But if sentimentalism be held to mean something artificial or theatrical, then in the core and reality of his character Dickens was the very reverse of a sentimentalist. He seriously and definitely loved goodness. To see sincerity and charity satisfied him like a meal. What some critics call his love of sweet stuff is really his love of plain beef and bread."[19] Similarly George Santayana, after suggesting that Dickens "put the distinction between good and evil in the right place"[20] states, "In every English-speaking home, in the four quarters of the globe, parents and children will do well to read Dickens aloud of a

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[14]Charles Dickens (London, 1898).

[15]Appreciation and Criticism of Charles Dickens (London, 1911) and Charles Dickens (London, 1906).

[16]Irving Singer, ed. Essays in Literary Criticism of George Santayana (New York, 1956), pp. 210-223.

[17]Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1927).

[18]"A Note on Dickens' Humor," From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad, Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, eds. (Minneapolis, 1958), pp. 82-91.

[19]Chesterton, Criticisms, p. 206.

[20]Singer, p. 221.

winter's evening; they will love winter, and one another, and God the better for it."[21] Although the approach taken by Chesterton and Santayana is somewhat offensive to the post-Jamesian critic concerned with design, Gross and Pearson in their introduction to Dickens and the Twentieth Century suggest that "it is the big books, like Chesterton's, Forster's, Gissing's, Johnson's and Lindsay's that seem to get over the feel of Dickens....Dickens's novels work very directly on our feelings ...."[22]

Not all of the early twentieth century criticism dealt, however, with Dickens' intentions and humor. Two critics, E. M. Forster and Percy Lubbock, both attempted to find in Dickens something of the craftsman. Although Forster does not totally avoid the biographical, he does make some attempt to uncover a reason for the appeal of Dickens's characters:

> The case of Dickens is significant. Dickens's people are nearly all flat....Nearly everyone can be summed up in a sentence, and yet there is this wonderful feeling of human depth. Probably the immense vitality of Dickens causes his characters to vibrate a little, so that they borrow his life and appear to lead one of their own....Part of the genius of Dickens is that he does use types and caricatures, people whom we recognize the instant they re-enter, and yet, achieves effects that are not mechanical and a vision of humanity that is not shallow. Those who dislike Dickens have an excellent case. He ought to be bad. He is actually one of our big writers, and his immense success with types suggests that there may be more in flatness than the severer critics admit.[23]

Forster's remarks indicate a significant shift in the critical assessment of Dickens. Indirectly Forster has tried to answer the objection that

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[21] Ibid., 223.

[22] (London, 1962), p. xix.

[23] Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1927), pp. 108-109.

Dickens fails in characterization, and in so doing anticipates the critical reevaluation that was to come twenty years later. Also anticipating that important critical shift was Percy Lubbock's The Craft of Fiction written in 1929. In rather lengthy discussions of David Copperfield and Bleak House Lubbock, making no reference to biographical or historical detail, suggests that Dickens is superior to Balzac because his mind was never divided against itself: "The method which he finally worked out for himself was exactly what he required. There might be much to say of it, for it is by no means simple...."[24]

The bulk of twentieth century Dickensian criticism--most of it written since 1940, with the volume increasing almost every year since then--has not, concerned itself with "the fat man's Dickens." Rather most critical work has a decidedly thin man's approach; it studies the more somber, serious Dickens. The assessment of the serious Dickens has taken many directions--biographical, sociological, and structural. Of the many critics that have approached Dickens from the biographical point of view, the most valuable study is that of Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens, His Tragedy and Triumph.[25] Mr. Johnson usually minimizes the biographical influence in his interpretations of the respective novels, essentially isolating literary criticism from biography. K. J. Fielding's Charles Dickens, A Critical Introduction[26] parallels Johnson's method and is also a valuable study. Other critics such as Edmund Wilson and Mark Spilka make occasional references to biographical material, but do

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[24]The Craft of Fiction (London, 1931), p. 214.

[25](New York, 1952).

[26](London, 1953).

not rely upon it to cement their theses.[27]

Another attempt to take Dickens seriously is represented by those critics who view Dickens' novels as valuable social documents. Of this type, one of the oldest and most valuable contributions to the Dickens revival is the series of introductions to such novels as Hard Times and Great Expectations written by George Bernard Shaw. Morton Zabel suggests that Dickens' influence on Shaw was mostly political; Little Dorrit, he says, influenced Shaw more than Marx did.[28] Shaw does not, however, limit his discussions to the purely social level as does another older social historian, T. A. Jackson. In his book, Charles Dickens, the Progress of a Radical,[29] the marxist view of Dickens is given--a valiant Victorian who in his later novels exposes the evils of a capitalistic society. It is Edmund Wilson, however, that incorporates most successfully the social and historical framework of Dickens' world into a systematic examination of Dickens as artist. In fact, it was Wilson's essay, "Dickens: The Two Scrooges,"[30] that inspired--or so most critics agree--the bulk of the criticism of the 1950's and 1960's. Wilson stated that "The typical Dickens expert is an old duffer who...is primarily interested in proving that Mr. Pickwick stopped at a certain inn and slept in a certain bed."[31] George H. Ford, in his helpful and thorough study of

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[27]The biographical approach as seen in Ada Nisbeth's Dickens and Ellen Ternan and Una Pope-Hennessy's Charles Dickens may be of interest to the historian, but have little bearing on a structural study. Attempts to psychoanalyze Dickens, as seen in the works of Julian Symons and Jack Lindsay have little more critical value than do the more traditional biographies.

[28]Craft and Character in Modern Fiction (New York, 1957), p. 11.

[29](New York, 1938).

[30]The Wound and the Bow (Boston, 1941).

[31]Ibid., p. 2.

Dickens' criticism considers the influence of Wilson immeasurable: "Although Mr. Wilson's study is primarily a fresh portrait of the men, it also employs a fresh approach to the novels. He is aware, first of all, that we are dealing with a great novelist, rather than a political economist, whose function is to make the reader share experiences through concrete persons and concrete objects."[32] Another essayist that should be mentioned as part of the revival is George Orwell who also wished to de-emphasize the so-called proletarian and revolutionary aspects of Dickens' work. "The truth is that Dickens's criticism of society is almost exclusively moral."[33]

Of greater importance than the sociological and biographical treatments to this study are those critical works which emphasize that Dickens was truly an artist, a novelist capable of developing material structurally. George Ford points out that Edmund Wilson could also be called the father of the structural movement: "Edmund Wilson's application of such a reading [symbolic] to single novels...marks a turning point in the discussion of Dickens' status."[34] In general terms Percy Lubbock had anticipated the structural, non-biographical approach to Dickens in 1931 as did--in a lesser sense--E. M. Forster's discussion of round and flat characters in 1927. More specifically, Arnold Kettle in his 1951 essay on Oliver Twist states in his conclusion that "There is pattern behind that power, art behind the vitality, and if we recognize this in Oliver Twist we shall not come unarmed to Dickens's later, more mature and greater books: Bleak House, Little Dorrit, Great Expectations,

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[32]Dickens and His Readers (Princeton, N. J., 1955), p. 251.

[33]Dickens, Dali, and Others (New York, 1946), p. 3.

[34]Ford, p. 252.

Our Mutual Friend."[35] If, however, there was one article that was to anticipate the direction of most Dickens study in the last fifteen to twenty years, it would have to be Dorothy Van Ghent's "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers."[36] Written in 1950, its discussion of how Dickens' technique--the coincidences, even some of the melodrama--is an essential part of his world view prepared the way for what has become the most popular critical approach to Dickens criticism--the structural. Of the book length studies of Dickens in this mode,[37] the most significant study is J. Hillis Miller's Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels.[38] Miller reveals his method in the introduction to his collection of essays:

> Though it is true to say that a work of literature is rooted in its age, in the life of its author, and in his conscious theories about art and morality, and though, in the other direction, any single novel by Dickens can legitimately be viewed as a self-contained entity, there is still another way of looking at Dickens' work, a way which to some degree reconciles the dichotomy between these extreme approaches. This way reverses the usual causal sequence between the psychology of an author and his work. It seems a work of literature not as the mere symptom or product of a preexistent psychological condition, but as the very means by which a writer apprehends and in some measure, creates himself. The given conditions of a writer's life, including his psychological nature as well as the culture he lives in, are merely the obstacles or materials which he transforms and vanquishes by turning them into novels or poems, that is, by giving them a different meaning from the one they had in themselves.[39]

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[35]"Oliver Twist," An Introduction to the English Novel, I (London, 1951), p. 138.

[36]Sewanee Review, LVIII (1950), 419-438.

[37]See Taylor Stoehr's Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance and Robert Fleissner's rather oblique Shakespeare and Dickens.

[38](Cambridge, Mass., 1958).

[39]Miller, p. viii.

Concerning Great Expectations specifically, it may be observed that regardless of the approach taken to Dickens, be it Chesterton's, Shaw's, or Van Ghent's, most critics have found the novel to be one of Dickens's finest works.[40] Chesterton found it great because it was "symbolic--an expression of a certain truth of experience."[41] Shaw stated that it was "all of one piece and consistently truthful...the most perfect of Dickens' work...."[42] Edmund Wilson observed that "In Little Dorrit and Great Expectations there is...a great deal more psychological interest than in Dickens' previous books. We are told what the characters think and feel, and even something about how they change."[43] Somewhat more specific is Walter Allen's comment in The English Novel concerning the later novels: "There is the movement of the plot, which is mechanical and often distorts...the true shape of the book. But there is also the movement of the symbolism, and this is something entirely different and something new in our fiction."[44] Thus there is general agreement that Great Expectations has "shape," "change," and symbol, but little definite suggestion as to how these qualities are achieved. Harry Stone does much to clarify the point. The achievement of Great Expectations "owes much to Dickens' reliance on the suprarational. Through that reliance he gained a large family of functionally associated techniques--repetition,

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[40]Richard Burton, in Masters of the English Novel (New York, 1909), notes that Great Expectations is Dickens' greatest novel, always liked by the public, but generally abused by the critics of that time.

[41]Chesterton, Criticism, p. 203.

[42]Quoted by Richard Barnes, A Critical Commentary on Dickens' Great Expectations (London, 1966), p. 8.

[43]Wilson, p. 61.

[44](London, 1954), p. 194.

ritualism, leitmotiv, Doppelganger, magical symbolism, and the like--which he found suggestive and congenial. By means of these techniques he imbued the simplest objects of the everyday world...with the archetypal fears and fulfillments of fairyland."[45] As Stone suggests, there are multiple structural devices at play in the novel. Dorothy Van Ghent, whose excellent essay concerning Great Expectations has been of considerable aid to me, states that Dickens' technique is a reflection of his vision. Thus even often condemned devices such as coincidences and the pathetic fallacy (hats and rooms are described in human terms whereas human beings are not) reveal Dickens' world view. "Dickens lived in a time and an environment in which a full-scale demolition of traditional values was going on, correlatively with the uprooting and dehumanization of men, women, and children by the millions...."[46] Mrs. Van Ghent notes other structural elements such as the fairy tale motif--an element which Harry Stone calls "a mythic pattern."[47] Taylor Stoehr considers the structure of the novel to be its dream sequences[48] and Mark Spilka says that "Its dreamlike quality is not accidental, since it is based on the author's growing conviction that life itself is like a nightmare."[49] Another structural possibility is that Dickens relied partially on literary antecedents. Monroe Engel suggests that Adam and Eve's condition in

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[45]"Fire, Hand, and Gate: Dickens's Great Expectations," Kenyon Review, XXIV (1962), 690.

[46]"On Great Expectations," The English Novel: Form and Function (New York, 1953), p. 128.

[47]Stone, p. 666.

[48]This is also noted by Shirley Grob in "Dickens and Some Motifs of the Fairy Tales," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, V (1964), 567-579.

[49]Dickens' "Great Expectations: A Kafkan Reading," Twelve Original Essays on Great English Novels, Charles Shapiro, ed. (Detroit), 1960), p. 104.

Paradise Lost, turned out of the garden with "All the world before them," is essentially the same position that Pip finds himself in at the end of the first part of Great Expectations.[50] Robert Fleissner rather obliquely suggests that the structure is patterned after Hamlet and he believes that Wopsle's Hamlet is the novel's central metaphor.[51] That is, the theme of revenge in Hamlet is also the major theme in Great Expectations.

Numerous other critics have also suggested specific structural patterns in Great Expectations that deserve notice. For example, Thomas Connolly believes that money is the structural symbol that makes the "root plot" and all the "hair plots" come together.[52] Richard Barnes develops the idea of a patron motif; Pumblechook seeks to be a patron, Magwitch and Miss Havisham are patrons, and Pip is patron to Herbert. "Each brings out an aspect of patronage so that at the end of the book we have viewed the relationship from all angles."[53] Arnold Drew suggests that the structure is based upon two strands of action (Miss Havisham being one, Magwitch the other),[54] while Earle Davis sees three strands of action: Pip-Magwitch, Pip-Miss Havisham, Magwitch-Compeyson.[55] Julian Moynahan, in a particularly perceptive essay, suggests that Dickens has presented essentially two dramas: "...Dickens's novel defines its hero's

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[50]The Maturity of Dickens (Cambridge, Mass., 1959).

[51]Dickens and Shakespeare (New York, 1965).

[52]"Technique in Great Expectations," Philological Quarterly, XXXIV (1955), 48-55.

[53]Barnes, p. 57.

[54]"Structure in Great Expectations," Dickensian, LII (1956), 126.

[55]The Flint and the Flame (Columbia, Missouri, 1963), p. 257.

dream of great expectations and the consequences stemming from indulgence in that dream under the two aspects of desire and will, of regressive longing for an excess of love and of violent aggressiveness. In the unfolding of the action these two dramas are not presented separately. Instead they are combined into Dickens's most complex representation of character in action. Pip is Dickens's most complicated hero, demonstrating at once the traits of criminal and gull, of victimiser and victim."[56] The last two structural analyses to be mentioned--Wenterdorf's and Bell's--in many ways resemble the approach that I wish to take. That is, they both see characters in formal types of relationships. Karl Wenterdorf (essentially extending an idea about contrasted pairs as set forth by Harry Stone) suggests that there are "contrasted characters who are literally extensions of Pip in that they are both psychological and physical doubles. They are conceived in the tradition of the original Faustian hero, a tradition with which Dickens must have become acquainted through his lively interest in the theatre."[57] Vereen Bell explores another type of relationship: "...there is nothing like a sound and intelligent parent-child relationship; the normal course of nature has been tragically perverted. Some of the children are orphans, either utterly alone or dominated brutally by parent surrogates...it seems natural that Dickens should have hit, perhaps unconsciously, upon the bleak parent-child relationship as a kind of unifying metaphor for

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[56]"The Hero's Guilt: The Case of Great Expectations," Essays in Criticism, X (1961), 77.

[57]"Mirror-Images in Great Expectations," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXI (1966), p. 205. Stone, 669.

his total vision."[58] Mark Spilka[59] also makes use of the parent-child relationship in developing his most helpful analysis of Great Expectations. The parent-child relationship that Bell mentions briefly Spilka develops more fully, and I shall make considerable use of Spilka's insights in the following chapters.

As Van Ghent, Stone, Spilka, and others have demonstrated, there are operating in Great Expectations a considerable number of structural devices. What I would like to suggest is that the parent-child relationships--so obvious that almost every critic makes some note of it--is more formal and complex than Bell, even Spilka, has suggested. I hope to demonstrate that the major characters, particularly Pip, are grouped together in triangles. Each triangle consists of the basic family unit--mother, father, and child (or children). The familial relationships established in the triangle may not necessarily be in a physical sense alone, but in a psychological one as well. More important, however, is Dickens's ability to manipulate these triangles; that is, in order to produce the complexity for which the novel is famous, Dickens constantly shifts the relationships within the triangles: children become parents, parents children, brothers fathers, fathers brothers, etc. Another aspect of this study is the light it casts upon the problematic second ending. I should like to suggest that the original ending is more psychologically true because it, like all other major events and details, logically fits into the triangular family pattern.

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[58]"Parents and Children in Great Expectations," Victorian Newsletter, No. 27 (1965), 21.

[59]Dickens and Kafka (Bloomington, Indiana, 1963).

CHAPTER II

PIP'S FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The shifting triangular pattern is so important to Dickens' design that he introduces it immediately in the first chapter. Repeatedly thereafter, Dickens presents not only Pip, but a series of children who in some way have less than adequate relationships with their parents, the entire novel becomes a landscape of disrupted, incomplete or inverted triangular relationships. One finds through a close examination of the introductory chapters not only the presence of several familial triangles, but also an indication of how Dickens manipulates seemingly insignificant events in order to foreshadow the shifts that occur consistently throughout the novel.

> My fathers family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.
>
> I gave Pirrip as my father's name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister--Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them... my first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, 'Also Georgiana Wife of the Above,' I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. (p. 3)[1]

What strikes the reader is that the older Pip recalling his youth begins,

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[1]All references from Great Expectations will be listed in parentheses at the end of the quoted passage. I am using the Rinehard Edition (New York, 1966).

logically enough, with a discussion of the family. One quickly learns that the normal family triangle--mother, father, and child (or children)--has broken down. So great is Pip's solitary condition that the first sentence in the second paragraph even suggests that Pip questions whether he ever belonged to a father or a mother. It is significant too that Pip does not immediately inform the reader that he is being cared for by Mrs. Joe. She is simply mentioned as his sister and nothing else. Collectively these details strongly suggest that Pip is not only physically an orphan, but psychologically one as well. Thus the importance of the pattern here established, that of an incomplete familial triangle, is emphasized by its immediate introduction.

The first expression of this search is Pip's desire to know what his biological father, Philip Pirrip, was like. This wish or goal initiates a search for a father that will lead Pip from one family triangle to another. The importance of the scene in the cemetery is noted by Robert Stange: Pip looks at the "monuments which communicate to him no clear knowledge either of his parentage of his position in the world....He's an orphan who must search for a father."[2] Closely related to this search is Dickens' use of the two palindromes as names for Pip: Pip Pirrip, forward and backward the same. Here Dickens has cleverly anticipated both the search and the ultimate outcome of the shifts in the triangles: the same isolation found in the beginning. Pip ends as he begins, wiser perhaps, but still alone. Although Pip may rest somewhat secure for a time in any familial situation, either as child (as with Joe and Biddy) or as reluctant parent (to Magwitch and Miss Havisham), ultimately every

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[2]"Expectations Well Lost: Dickens' Fable for His Time," College English, XVI (1954-1955), p. 10.

triangular situation breaks down leaving Pip the outsider that he originally was. Mark Spilka, in his comparison of Dickens and Kafka, points out that "the 'family idea' is central for both authors. Though Dickens glorifies the family...he also makes the disrupted home an index of disrupted culture."[3] Thus the broken or disrupted Pirrip family triangle seen early in the novel is a symbol both for theme and plot. In short the shifting family triangle, breaking down and then rebuilding, becomes the total structure of the novel, neatly manipulated by Dickens to bring about unity.

The search for a stable family that is to move Pip from one triangle to another is also foreshadowed in the first chapter by Magwitch's symbolically significant act of tilting Pip. As he surveys the bleak and barren churchyard, the young Pip begins to cry, and as he does he first encounters the convict Magwitch--"a fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg--a man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones...who limped, and shivered, and glared and growled...." (p. 2) Magwitch, after having asked what Pip's name was and where he lived, empties Pip's pockets by turning him upside down repeatedly:

> After each question he tilted me over a little more, so as to give me a greater sense of helplessness and danger.
>
> 'You get a file.' He tilted me again. 'and you get me wittles.' He tilted me again. 'You bring 'em both to me.' He tilted me again. 'Or I'll have your heart and liver out.' He tilted me again.
>
> I was dreadfully frightened, and so giddy that I clung to him with both hands, and said, 'If you would kindly please to let me keep upright, sir, perhaps I shouldn't be sick, and perhaps I could attend more.' (pp. 3-4)

The brilliance of Dickens' design does not, of course, become totally

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[3]Spilka, Dickens and Kafka, p. xiii.

apparent until Magwitch reappears later in the novel even though his plan for Pip's "great expectations" has had the effect of constantly tilting Pip, just as he has done here. In retrospect, however, one sees that the criminal's appearance precisely at the moment of Pip's "first identity of things" has considerable importance in the novel's design. First, one recalls Magwitch's pointed interest in Pip's parentage:

> 'Now lookee here!' said the man. 'Where's your mother?'
> 'There, sir!' said I.
> He started, made a short run, and stopped and looked over his shoulder.
> 'There, sir!' I timidly explained. 'Also Georgiana. That's my mother.'
> 'Oh!' said he, coming back. 'And is that your father alonger your mother?'
> 'Yes, sir,' said I, 'him too; late of this parish.'
> 'Ha!' he muttered than, considering.... (p. 3)

Through this conversation with Pip the convict is integrated into the familial pattern that permeates <u>Great Expectations</u>. The information here gained by Magwitch--that Pip is an orphan--leads him later to the grandiose scheme to render Pip a gentleman. The effect of Magwitch's scheme is also suggested in this first meeting between the two. That is, the constant tilting of little Pip by Magwitch foreshadows the tilt and change that Magwitch's money will have on Pip's later life. This tilting, or shifting of Pip's position, is never, however, divorced from the idea of family. Dickens introduces the two together and the union is maintained throughout.

From the above mentioned introduction to Pip and his familial situation, Dickens rapidly constructs another unsatisfactory family triangle in the second chapter. One learns that even though Pip is an orphan in the "historical" and psychological sense, he actually is part of a "family." The situation is not a happy one:

> My sister, Mrs. Joe Gargery, was more than twenty years older than I, and had established a great reputation with herself and the neighbors because she had brought me up 'by hand.'

> Having at that time to find out for myself what the expression meant, and knowing her to have a hard and heavy hand, and to be much in the habit of laying it upon her husband as well as upon me, I suppose that Joe Gargery and I were brought up by hand. (p. 6)

As the neighbors--society--see Pip's family relationships, it is quite simple: Joe, the father; Mrs. Joe, the mother; and Pip, the child. But for Pip, Joe is no more satisfactory a father-image than Mrs. Joe is a mother-substitute: Speaking of Joe, Pip says, "He was a mild, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish, dear fellow--a sort of Hercules in strength, and also in weakness." (p. 6) Pip also relates that he and Joe are "fellow-sufferers": "I always treated him as a larger species of child, and as no more than my equal." (p. 7) Thus what society sees as a father-son relationship is in fact a pair of brothers. And certainly Mrs. Joe plays the archetypal step-mother to both of them. "You'll drive <u>me</u> to the churchyard betwixt you, one of these days, and oh, a pr-r-recious pair you'd be without me!" (p. 8) Diderick Roll-Hansen remarks, "Fellow-sufferers whenever the shrew is 'on the Ram-page,' the man and the child have formed a secret league in spite of the differences in age."[4] Thus at this stage of Pip's--and the novel's--development, poor Pip finds himself in a rather bewildering family situation. As Vereen Bell points out, "Joe, it is true, loves him, but Joe is a child himself, to be taken for granted, more a companion than a father; and Pip is still too innocent to understand what Joe's love means."[5] Schematically the possibilities could be diagrammed as follows: As the world or society looks at Pip, he might belong to either of these triangles:

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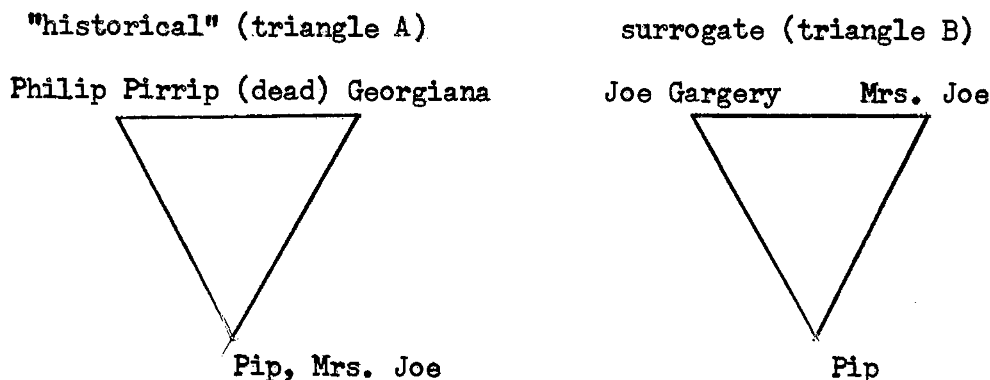
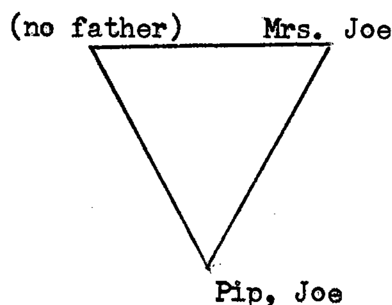
[4]"Characters and Contrasts in <u>Great Expectations</u>," <u>The Hidden Sense</u>, ed. Maren-Sofie Rostvig (New York, 1963), p. 219.

[5]Bell, p. 23.



But realistically, Pip, as he looks at himself, finds the family triangle thus:



Thus all three characters--Joe and Mrs. Joe, as well as Pip--find themselves in ambiguous family roles. Mrs. Joe is both sister and mother to Pip, wife and mother to Joe, orphan herself. Joe's position is as ambiguous and perhaps it leaves him even more impotent and baffled than it does his wife-mother. But it is Pip's situation that is most complex (as befits the leading character). The natural father is dead, and the surrogate father (Joe) fills that role only in a vague way, if at all. The real mother is dead, too, and substituted is the sister who is worse than no mother at all. Even though he is surrounded by shelter and has sufficient food, Pip lacks a true home as much as when he was on the desolate marsh with the convict. This ambiguous family situation will continue to haunt Pip even in his subsequent familial relationships. As Mark Spilka notes, "the violation of childhood peace defines existence; (Dickens') heroes never escape from that experience, but continually repeat it in later life, under the dominance of harsh parental figures....

The lonely child remains oppressed and lonely, even as an adult, and... he inflicts upon others the very wrongs from which he suffers."[6] As Spilka suggests, the ambiguous position that Pip finds himself in does violate his childhood peace, and consequently molds and shapes his desires and actions. Thus Pip says of himself, "I was always treated as if I had insisted on being born in opposition to the dictates of reason, religion, morality, and against the dissuading arguments of my best friends." (p. 22) The result of Pip's treatment by his sister-stepmother is a tremendous sense of guilt--a feeling so strong that when the soldiers come to the Gargery's house on Christmas Day searching for escaped criminals (including Magwitch), Pip immediately identifies himself with the convicts: "When we were all out in the raw air and were steadily moving towards our business, I treasonably whispered to Joe, 'I hope, Joe, we shan't find them.'" (p. 33) When the soldiers, accompanied by Wopsle, Joe, and Pip, do find the convicts and Pip recognizes Magwitch, Pip refers to him as "my convict" some ten times--an action that prepares the reader for the coming identification of Pip with Magwitch. Too, a pattern of guilt--the result of hostility on Pip's part toward the parental figure--is here established.

In the early pages of Great Expectations Dickens also establishes within the triangular pattern one of the dominant motifs of the novel, that of the fairy tale. The terrifying and oppressive nature of the adult world as viewed through a child's eyes is symbolized by the sudden appearance of Magwitch, coming up from a grave threatening to eat Pip, and by the cruel stepmother, Mrs. Joe. Such creatures haunt the orphan children such as Pip and Biddy (even Joe's parents are dead), making a

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[6]Spilka, Dickens and Kafka, pp. 103-104.

grotesque mockery of reality. Pip is never totally able to escape a family situation free from this nightmarish element. Thus the fairy tale motif provides a form of transition from one set of triangular relations that Pip finds himself in to another. The first triangle's evil stepmother is replaced by a fairy godmother, Miss Havisham, in a later triangle, etc. Harry Stone has pointed out that the fairy tale is actually inverted,[7] and his observation reinforces the suggestion that inversion is found everywhere in people's expectations and particularly in their families.

Having developed for seven chapters Pip's initial family situation, Dickens makes the first major shift in the plot of Great Expectations as he moves from the forge on the marsh to Satis House in the town. There in a decaying mansion the reader is introduced to the person who will ironically become Pip's first positive mother-figure, Miss Havisham. Uncle Pumblechook, that gluttonish favorite of Mrs. Joe, comes to the Gargerys to inform them that Miss Havisham wants a boy to come "play" for her. Pumblechook, whose bond with Mrs. Joe is perhaps their mutual desire to rise socially and economically, seizes the opportunity to ingratiate himself with both Miss Havisham and Mrs. Joe by taking the hapless Pip to entertain the mysterious recluse. Pip's first impressions of Miss Havisham are little more than an extension of that grotesque world inhabited by the likes of the convict Magwitch and Mrs. Joe: "I had heard of Miss Havisham up town--as an immensely rich and grim lady who lived in a large and dismal house barricaded against robbers, and who led a life of seclusion." (p. 51) In short, she is just another witch.[8] But

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[7]Stone, p. 662.

[8]Ibid., p. 667.

helpless Pip, without a father to protect him from a stepmother's schemes, is packed off by Miss Havisham's emissary, the corn-chandler Pumblechook.[9] It seems possible that Dickens might have developed Pumblechook as a stepfather, fitting him into a triangular pattern with Miss Havisham as step-mother. But he rather pointedly excludes this possibility. When Pumblechook takes Pip to Satis House, Miss Havisham's forbidding residence, he asks Estella, Miss Havisham's adopted daughter standing at the gate, "'If Miss Havisham wished to see me,' returned Mr. Pumblechook, discomfited. 'Ah!' said the girl, 'but you see she don't.'" (p. 55) As a result of this action Pumblechook remains a peripheral character--as do all characters who are not fully integrated by Dickens into the triangular patterns.

Although the movement of the plot to Satis House results in the formation of a new triangle, Dickens moves slowly, allowing for a slow, natural transference of filial affection. Left in the dark to play cards with Estella, Pip does not immediately see Miss Havisham as a mother-figure. Dickens uses this first encounter with Miss Havisham to introduce, however, an element that will aid immensely the breakdown of Pip's surrogate family relationships; Pip meets Estella, and it is Estella who creates within Pip the dissatisfaction with his social status that makes easier the break with the Gargery triangle. Pip, as the result of his first meeting with the females of Satis House, observes that "My sister's bringing up had made me sensitive. In the little world in which children

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[9]Pumblechook's occupation, that of corn-chandler, seems symbolically correct. Since it is he who first "plants the seed" concerning Miss Havisham he in one sense can justifiably claim to be "father" of Pip's expectations. Ironically, but still psychologically correct, he becomes at best a false father just as Miss Havisham is a false mother.

have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice....I had know, from the time that I could speak, that my sister in her capricious and violent coercion, was unjust to me." (p. 62) Pip's observation comes after he sees for the first time an alternative to Mrs. Joe. Pip's resentment toward his sister is Dickens' method of preparing the reader for both the dissolution of the previous triangle and the formation of another. Further indication of the breakdown to come is witnessed in Pip's behavior when he returns from his first visit with Miss Havisham. Faced with the curious, malicious nature of Mrs. Joe, Pip quickly seeks to protect Miss Havisham:

> I felt convinced that if I described Miss Havisham's as my eyes had seen it, I should not be understood. Not only that, but I felt convinced that Miss Havisham too would not be understood; and although she was perfectly incomprehensible to me, I entertained an impression that there would be something coarse and treacherous in my dragging her as she really was (to say nothing of Miss Estella) before the contemplation of Mrs. Joe. (p. 65)

As Pip tells a series of outrageous and delightful lies about Miss Havisham and her house, he feels a sense of obligation only toward Joe, who like the child he is, believes the stories about the dogs, coaches, and flags. Pip, at the end of that episode, reflects to himself, "That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me....Imagine one selected day struck out of it [life], 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." (p. 72) The point that should be emphasized is what occurrence actually made that day a memorable first link in a chain. It was the start of a transferal of Pip's familial feelings from the Forge to Satis House, an

event that is to repeat itself throughout the novel leading ultimately to Pip's exclusion from any family.

The new Havisham triangle previously hinted at takes a more definite shape when inadvertently perhaps, Miss Havisham begins to actively assume the role of mother to Pip. As a reward for his efforts to entertain her, Miss Havisham offers to pay the price of Pip's indentures. Although a relatively minor financial transaction when one considers the immensity of her fortune, it still is used effectively by Dickens in the gradual breaking down of the original triangular patterns. First one observes Mrs. Joe's reaction to the news that Joe is to go with Pip to Miss Havisham's concerning the indentures. "When I got home at night, and delivered this message for Joe, my sister 'went on the Ram-page,' in a more alarming degree than at any previous period. She asked me and Joe whether we supposed she was door-mats under our feet, and how we dared to use her so, and what company we graciously thought she was fit for?" (p. 98) Obviously Mrs. Joe senses that she is on the verge of losing her prerogatives as a mother--and perhaps as a wife; she knows that Miss Havisham is replacing her. And Joe's position has taken a significant shift as a result of his transactions with Miss Havisham. With the act of indenturing, Joe takes on a different role in relation to Pip; he is more of a father than simply a childhood companion.[10]

Thus a new triangle has formed containing Miss Havisham, Joe, and Pip. Though the life of this triangle is some four years, it ultimately

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[10]Special attention is given this scene by Ruth Vande Kieft in her article "Patterns of Communication in Great Expectations," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XV (1961), 325-334. She states that the meeting between Joe, Pip, and Miss Havisham is like a ceremony--bonds are taken: "Joe turns this potentially disagreeable business interview into a ceremony of love; he makes vows of duty and affection." (p. 329) Also noted is the triangular pattern of the conversation.

is destroyed by Joe's inability to influence Pip's thinking. The indenturing also renders credible the assumption on Pip's part later in the novel that the source of his great expectations is Miss Havisham. The meeting between Miss Havisham and Joe also foreshadows the destruction of the triangle; Pip is terribly ashamed of Joe's countrified manners and indicates that if he must sacrifice either Joe or Estella, it will be Joe:

> Home had never been a very pleasant place to me, because of my sister's temper. But Joe had sanctified it, and I believed in it....Now, it was all coarse and common, and I would not have had Miss Havisham and Estella see it on any account. How much of my ungracious condition of mind may have been my own fault, how much Miss Havisham's, how much my sister's, is now of no moment to me or to any one. The change was made in me; the thing was done. Well or ill done, excusably or inexcusably, it was done. (p. 107)

At this point in the novel, Pip enters a stage of considerable confusion. He feels conflicting loyalties to two different sets of familial triangles. His lack of loyalty to the older triangle produces within him an almost immediate sense of guilt--toward his father-brother Joe, and also to Mrs. Joe, the mother-sister. For example, in order to make himself more appealing to the newer triangle that includes Miss Havisham, Pip among other things tries to increase his education. In doing so, he realizes that he is creating problems with Joe: "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." (p. 110) The guilt feelings concerning Joe, either as brother in the old triangle, or as father in the new, are not so great as the ones toward the mother-figure Pip has abandoned. It is not possible, Pip discovers, to be loyal to two mothers at once. To use Dorothy Van Ghent's term, Pip's guilt is concretized in the George

Barnwell incident. Pip has been forced by Pumblechook to endure Wopsle's rendition of the tragic ending of the murderer, George Barnwell. When Pip returns home he learns, not to his delight as might have been expected, from one so long mistreated by her, but to his horror that Mrs. Joe has been attacked, struck down with a convict's leg iron.

> With my head full of George Barnwell, I was at first disposed to believe that I must have had some hand in the attack upon my sister, or at all events as her near relation, popularly known to be under obligations to her, I was a more legitimate object of suspicion than any one else. But when, in the clearer light of morning, I began to reconsider the matter and to hear it discussed around me on all sides, I took another view of the case, which was more reasonable. (pp. 120-121)

One observes that Pip's sense of guilt in the case follows the growing acceptance on his part of a new mother-image; he, in effect, has been "killing" Mrs. Joe within his own psyche. Orlick, not Pip, struck down Mrs. Joe, but as Julian Moynahan points out, Orlick is created by Dickens "only...as an aspect of the hero's own far more problematic case."[11] Stone concludes that Orlick is nothing more than "a projection of Pip's darker desires and aggressions, and a manifestation of primal evil...."[12] What Moynahan and Stone have observed is quite true, but what they do not discuss is the source of Pip's "darker" wishes: in order for Pip to have a new mother he must dispose of the old one. Orlick serves Dickens well in this capacity and thus Stone has rightly supposed that Orlick's function is to act out Pip's base desire to kill his mother.

With Mrs. Joe out of the way for all practical purposes, Dickens moves Biddy into the Gargery household. Thus the raw material for a new triangle is collected, but Dickens does not at this point in the narrative

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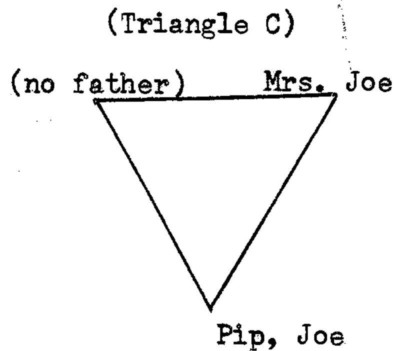
[11]Moynahan, p. 73.

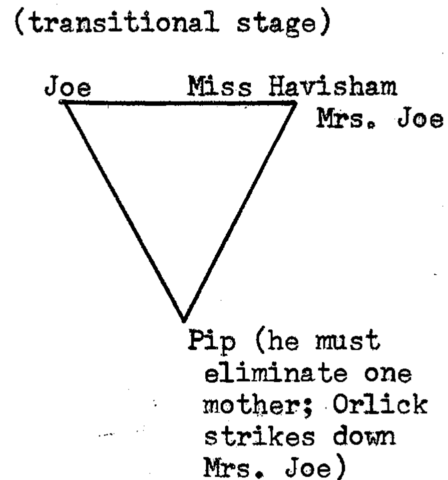
[12]Stone, p. 669.

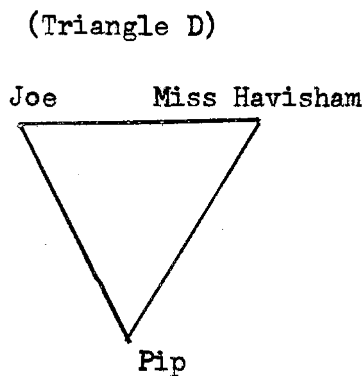
choose to develop its full possibilities (see a fuller discussion of Biddy's role in triangles in Chapter III). Pip bides his time, working with Joe at the forge, waiting for his deliverance by his unpredictable fairy godmother, Miss Havisham. At last Jaggers, whom Pip had earlier seen at Miss Havisham's in his position as lawyer to her, mysteriously appears to announce to him that indeed Pip has great expectations. "I am instructed to communicate to him...that he will come into a handsome property. Further, that it is the desire of the present possessor of that property, that he be immediately removed from his present sphere of life...."(p. 139) And Pip's response? "My dream was out; my wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality; Miss Havisham was going to make my fortune on a grand scale." (p. 139) With Jaggers' announcement a new triangle forms to replace the tension-filled, guilt-ridden one composed of Pip as child to Miss Havisham and Joe. Pip eliminates Joe as father-figure admittedly a position that Joe reluctantly held. The mother-figure reigns supreme with only the indifferent agent, Jaggers, as a potential father figure for the regularly fatherless Pip. Thus the very nature of the new triangle suggests or predicts its ultimate failure: there is no security-giving father. (In one sense there is no mother since Miss Havisham is actually not the mother of his expectations as he assumes.) Nevertheless, Pip prepares to leave for London, departing from his "fairy godmother, with both her hands on her crutch stick, standing in the midst of the dimly lighted room beside the rotten bride-cake that was hidden in cobwebs." (p. 160) Ironically, though Miss Havisham is indeed not the mother of Pip's expectations, Dickens has associated her type of motherhood with a special kind of decay, thus foreshadowing well the growing corruption of her new son.

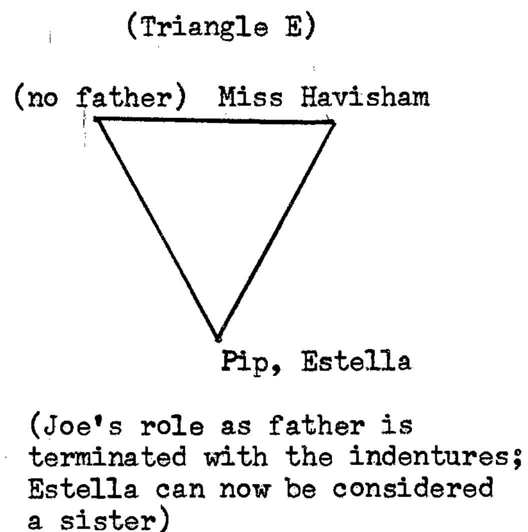
To summarize then the structure of the novel to this point (the end

of the first section) the following diagrams will be helpful. Through a series of shifts, Triangle C has all of its original members eliminated as follows:









Thus the original Triangle C has totally broken down and the old Pip no longer exists as before. With each new triangle there is a new Pip.

Although the second stage of Pip's development takes place in new surroundings (London), Pip cannot escape from the difficulties and tensions created by his familial relationships. Clearly the old triangular relationships involving the Gargerys are no longer relevant to Pip, but even the new triangle seems unsatisfactory to Pip for he still searches

for a father in order to make it complete.[13] Dickens presents Pip with two possibilities--Jaggers, his financial and/or legal guardian, and Matthew Pocket, his tutor. Jaggers certainly performs certain functions of the father; he provides for Pip financially (even though the money belongs to someone else), and as Pip observes the reactions of Jaggers' clients in Little Britain, he remarks that the "testimonies to the popularity of my guardian made a deep impression on me, and I admired and wondered more than ever." (p. 167) Such a statement indicates that Pip is willing to view Jaggers as a surrogate father, but Jaggers does not chose to cooperate. Pip's affairs are simply a matter of business, and Jaggers' symbolic gesture of washing his hands applies to any emotions he might have had toward Pip as well. John Hagan's statement that Jaggers appears as "a wise and disillustioned Olympian"[14] suggests that Jaggers is not capable of any truly human commitment; therefore, any desire Pip might have to be a son to Jaggers is thwarted: "...I said to Wemmick that I hardly knew what to make of Mr. Jaggers's manner. 'Tell him that, and he'll take it as a compliment,' answered Wemmick; 'he don't mean that you <u>should</u> know what to make of it.--Oh!' for I looked surprised, 'it's not personal; it's professional: only professional.'" (p. 200) And in the words of Jaggers himself: "As I have told you before, I am the mere agent. I execute my instructions, and I am paid for doing so. I think them injudicious, but I am not paid for giving any opinion

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[13]The confusion Pip feels about his parentage continues to exist on the conscious level. When Mrs. Pocket asks about Pip's mama, Pip recalls that "This unexpected inquiry put me into such a difficulty that I began saying in the absurdest way that if there had been any such person I had no doubt she would have been quite well." (p. 188)

[14]Hagan, p. 178. Also to be noted is that the Jew refers to Jaggers as "Holy Father." (p. 168)

on their merits." (p. 292) Thus Jaggers maintains an icy, objective attitude toward Pip consistently.

The case with Matthew Pocket is quite different. In contrast with Jaggers, "he placed himself on confidential terms with me in an admirable manner: and I may state at once that he was always so zealous and honourable in fulfilling mine with him." (p. 198) But the contract is strictly a business one. Pip notices that Matthew Pocket is rather a failure as a father. His household is chaotic; Matthew seems too weak to control the antics of the servants and the idiocies of his position-obsessed wife. Such a man would scarcely supply the strength Pip might want and need in a father. Also, Pip no doubt recalls that Miss Havisham has a strong if perhaps unmerited aversion to Matthew. The most important reason for Pip's rejection of Matthew is that Pip ultimately assumes part of the role of the father to Matthew Pocket's own son, Herbert, even though Herbert does not know it. Pip sets Herbert up in business in order to provide him security that his father did not. Thus in London Pip does not find a satisfactory father-image, and the triangle--and Pip's happiness--remains incomplete.

Other problems within the familial structure confront Pip in addition to those concerned with the search for a father image. Dickens in the meantime brings Estella back from France where her education has been completed. In doing so, another complication develops within the triangular structure. The sadistic Miss Havisham asks Pip to come see her, knowing full well that Pip loves Estella passionately while Estella feels only disgust toward Pip. What Miss Havisham actually does is to satisfy her sadistic urges by her manipulation of the triangular situation. That is, both Pip and Estella are the children of Miss Havisham--thus they are in her eyes brother and sister. It is during this encounter

that Miss Havisham first refers to "my Pip." And as Pip observes, "She had adopted Estella, she had as good as adopted me, and it could not fail to be her intention to bring us together." (p. 234) Pip, of course, does not understand the full implications of his remark. Certainly Miss Havisham has brought them together, but her purpose is beyond the imagination of the naive Pip. Miss Havisham plays upon the incest taboo by encouraging the sexual desire of the brother for the sister. The hopelessness of Pip's incestuous desires for Estella become then the sadistic instrument of Miss Havisham's long-awaited revenge upon men.

The elements of revenge, incest, and possessiveness--all suggested in the first post-childhood meeting between Pip, Estella, and Miss Havisham--are cleverly reinforced in a scene that immediately follows the Satis House reunion. The scene, of course, is that of Wopsle,[15] alias Waldengarver, playing Hamlet. Even though most critics have failed to see its relevance as anything other than pure Dickensian comedy, it actually reinforces the complications in Pip's latest triangle. When one compares Pip with the characters in Hamlet, it becomes apparent that Pip in many ways is similar to Claudius: he has killed a brother (Pip's rejection of Joe because he would be offensive to Estella) for the love of a sister (Estella). Essentially both Pip and Claudius are incestuous, a condition which in turn motivates their actions. This parallel Pip does not see; he only recognizes his similarity with Hamlet. Following Wopsle's presentation, Pip says that "Miserably I went to bed...and miserably thought of Estella, and miserably dreamed that my expectations were all cancelled, and that I had to give my hand in marriage to

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[15]Hagan, p. 62. Hagan points out that Wopsle's hopes to revive the drama mimic Pip's expectations; his failure foreshadows Pip's.

Herbert's Clara, or play Hamlet to Miss Havisham's Ghost..."[16] (p. 261) Somehow, seeing Hamlet has caused Pip to believe that his expectations (of which Estella is certainly a part) will never materialize. Possibly the reason for the realization is that he has witnessed the futility of both Claudius' (and Hamlet's) incestuous drives.

As in the first stage of Pip's life the second stage is also accompanied by a rather undefined but very real sense of guilt and again its source is the severe conflict found within the familial triangular pattern. It is then no artistic accident that Pip visits Newgate while he awaits Estella's arrival in London; the visit to a prison is the symbol of his own feelings of guilt concerning Estella. "So contaminated did I feel, remembering who was coming,[17] that the coach came quickly after all, and I was not yet free from the soiling consciousness of Mr. Wemmick's conservatory, when I saw her face at the coach window...." (p. 267) The tension of the second stage triangle (E) has become so great for Pip that he notes

> As I had grown accustomed to my expectations, I had insensibly begun to notice their effect upon myself and those around me. Their influence on my own character I disguised from my recognition as much as possible, but I knew very well that it was not all good. I lived in a state of chronic uneasiness respecting my behavior to Joe. My conscience was not by any means comfortable about Biddy....I should have been happier and better if I had never seen Miss Havisham's face, and had risen to manhood content to be partners with Joe in the honest forge. (p. 275)

It should be apparent then that the same hostility that Pip felt toward his first mother-figure, Mrs. Joe, has been transferred after some observation and experience to Miss Havisham, that heartless manipulator of his

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[16]Italics mine.

[17]Ibid.

sexual desires. Thus what Lionel Trilling has said of Little Dorrit is equally true of Great Expectations: Dickens presents a number of "false and inadequate parents," all examples of "delinquent parenthood."[18] Pip, the victim of Miss Havisham's design, resents his newest mother, but the full effect of her influence on Pip's personality and actions is not apparent until the revelation of his first true father-figure, Magwitch. Pip then fails Magwitch just as Miss Havisham has failed him.

The reader has been skillfully prepared by Dickens for Pip's discovery that the father of his expectations is a criminal such as Magwitch. Pip, as has been demonstrated, thinks of himself as a criminal. His identification with George Barnwell, Hamlet--even Newgate itself--and his uneasiness concerning the death of his sister, Mrs. Joe, all manifest Pip's deep sense of guilt. The conscious recognition of his criminality is, however, another matter. This is evidenced by Pip's shock and horror upon discovering that the "fountainhead" of all his expectations is the convict in the churchyard, Magwitch. That the previously futile search for a father should end with Magwitch's filling the position is a thing Pip had never considered. "The abhorrence in which I held the man, the dread I had of him, the repugnance with which I shrank from him, could not have been exceeded if he had been some terrible beast." (p. 324) Magwitch, however, delights in Pip's confusion: "Look'ee here, Pip, I'm your second father. You're my son--more to me nor any son." (p. 324) And ironically Magwitch remarks, "You ain't looked slowly forward to this as I have; you wosn't prepared for this, as I wos. But didn't you never think it might be me?'" When Pip probes further and finds that there was no accomplice in Magwitch's act, as he

[18] The Opposing Self (New York, 1955), p. 60.

had hoped, the Havisham triangle (E) dissolves immediately. Pip's reaction:

> Miss Havisham's intentions toward me, all a mere dream; Estella not design for me; I only suffered in Satis House as a convenience, a sting for the greedy relations, a model with a mechanical heart to practice on when no other practice was at hand; those were the smarts I had. But, sharpest and deepest pain of all--it was for the convict, guilty of I knew not what crimes, and liable to be taken out of those rooms where a sat thinking, and hanged at Old Bailey door, that I had deserted Joe. (p. 328)

With the appearance of a new father and the emergence of a new triangle, Pip reflects on those triangles of the past and feels bitterness toward his false mother, and nostalgia for the rather inept but loving child-father, Joe. But as Diderick Roll-Hansen points out, "the third stage is wholly dominated by the Magwitch theme, which has only been stated earlier but not developed until in [sic] Chapter XXXIX. There is now little room for Joe, the real father figure of the novel, who is here superceded by the grotesque pretensions of the convict."[19] Pip has now become motherless, and with the criminal as father Dickens logically ends "the second stage of Pip's expectations." The triangles consistently break down then rebuild--incomplete, however--destined it seems to always collapse, leaving Pip frustrated and confused.

Pip's first response toward Magwitch is quite naturally one of revulsion, and he seeks to find some way to rid himself of this ironically unwanted father. "I would sit and look at him, wondering what he had done, and loading him with all the crimes in the calendar, until the impulse was powerful on me to start up and fly from him." (p. 341) Spilka suggests that Pip's revulsion is not basically social snobbery as it might first appear; in fact, Magwitch is "less the victim of Pip's

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[19]Roll-Hansen, p. 221.

social-snobbery than of his hatred for all fathers and the world they have left him...his revulsion from the Jaggers and from the blacksmith shop in the country is grounded in his disillusionment with adult experience."[20] Spilka's remarks seem to me only partly correct. Certainly Pip's experience with fathers has been unfortunate, but as dissatisfied as he may be by their inadequacies, he nevertheless continues to seek them out. What then prevents Pip from deserting Magwitch? Herbert suggests an obvious way for Pip to rid himself of Magwitch--simply stop taking the money. Pip rejects such a solution for the very practical reason that he is in debt and has not really been trained to take up any calling. But Dickens hints rather strongly that there may be a stronger, hidden reason. Pip says, "...the dreadful truth is, Herbert, that he is attached to me, strongly attached to me. Was there ever such a fate!" (p. 345) And it must be remembered also that the same Magwitch had literally risen from the first father's grave to assert authority over Pip as a child. In short, the residual childhood experience is at play. Dorothy Van Ghent states, "Pip carries Magwitch (his 'father') within him, and the apparition of the criminal is the apparition of Pip's own guilt."[21] It is Pip's recognition of the parallels in their lives that allows for the change of heart in Pip and provides ultimately for his acceptance of his "father." Magwitch, like Pip, was a deserted child: "I've no more notion where I was born, than you have--if so much. I first become aware of myself, down in Essex, a thieving turnips for my living. Summun had run away from me--a man--a tinker--and he'd took the fire with him, and left me wery cold." (p. 349) Pip also learns that Magwitch

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[20]Spilka, Dickens and Kafka, p. 115.

[21]Van Ghent, "Todgers," p. 431.

has risked death to claim him as his son and this ironically will result in another reversal in the triangular patterns. As Pip struggles to keep Magwitch safe from Compeyson, he slowly accepts Magwitch as father, but at the same time he assumes the role of father to Magwitch. "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 saw only in him a much better man than I had been to Joe." (p. 453) The orphan Magwitch seems to have found a father at last in Pip--someone who will love and protect him from the world. But Magwitch's safety is an illusion; Pip cannot save him. In fact, everytime Pip is forced by circumstances into the dominant, parental position in a triangle, he fails his "children." Not only with Magwitch is this true, but also with Miss Havisham. When Pip visits her she falls at his feet asking for forgiveness for all the misery that she has created, both for him and for Estella. Although Pip forgives her for the sins she has committed against him, he still cannot forgive her actions toward Estella, and Miss Havisham is driven to say "'If you knew all my story,' and she pleaded, 'you would have some compassion for me and a better understanding of me.'" (p. 405) But Pip, obviously a godlike father-figure who can remove guilt and sin in Miss Havisham's eyes, avoids the father role she would assign to him. As he leaves Satis House Pip thinks he sees Miss Havisham hanging to a beam--the illusion no doubt the result of his inward feelings of guilt toward Miss Havisham. He returns to the house and finds Miss Havisham where he left her, but immediately upon his entering the room she bursts into flames. Pip puts out the fire, but burns himself in the process--symbolic of his failure to save Miss Havisham. Later Pip in London

is haunted by his guilt: "If I dozed for a minute, I was awakened by Miss Havisham's cries, and by her running at me with all that height of fire above her head. This pain of the mind was much harder to strive against than any bodily pain I suffered." (p. 410) Even though it would not be fair to say that the death of either Miss Havisham or Magwitch was Pip's fault, Pip no doubt is discouraged from ever taking a father's role because of his failures, real or imagined. This theory is certainly supported by Pip's immediate return to the role of a child following Magwitch's death in prison.

With Magwitch dead, Pip is again left an orphan, the only figure remaining in the triangle formed along with the convict, or so it would seem. One must recall, however, that Magwitch is Estella's natural father. A number of critics have been dissatisfied with this detail, seeing in it only another example of Dickens' love of the coincidental. What they fail to see is that through this "coincidence" Dickens has kept alive the incest taboo that separates Pip and Estella. Once Magwitch's return destroys Miss Havisham's triangle, Pip no longer sees her as mother. It also logically follows that Pip would no longer be brother to Estella since the familial relationship that made them related no longer exists. But Dickens does not allow the incest taboo to die, for the very next triangle that Pip moves into, that one where Magwitch is father, also includes Estella. Thus the parents change, but the brother-sister relationship Dickens retains and thereby prevents any successful culmination of the romantic interest (see Chapter IV for a fuller development of this point.) Taylor Stoehr suggests other implications concerning the Pip-Estella relationship:

> The motif of the deserted or illegitimate (and therefore disinherited) child is very frequent in Dickens...Pip is himself a deserted child, whose parents have died...and his

> unwillingness to accept a second father is perhaps in part due to his resentment of the original deprivation. The discovery that Estella was also a deserted child and at the same time that she was not willingly abandoned, makes it possible for Pip slowly to accept Magwitch's love; Estella's story brings his own resentment into the open, as it were, and also exonerates the 'father' of them both.[22]

Vereen Bell also suggests that "Pip and Estella have in common the fact that they are both the instruments of someone else's vengeance, that both --either actually or in effect orphans--have their true natures distorted and corrupted by a foster parent's selfish purpose."[23] Thus as Stoehr and Bell have noted, the common parenthood of Pip and Estella is integral to both the plot and the theme. They do not note, however, that Dickens has made such possible through the use of a triangular, familial structure.

After Magwitch's death, Pip himself suffers a form of symbolic death, one that coincides with the termination of another triangle. Pip almost succombs to a violent fever, and the poor child, orphaned by Magwitch's death, is left to suffer in London. Joe, faithful and patient, comes to care for him and as he does so another triangle begins to form: "I was slow to gain strength, but I did slowly and surely become less weak, and Joe stayed with me, and I fancied I was little Pip again." (p. 474) So strong is Pip's desire to find a family that he plans to write to Biddy and say, "If you can like me...if you can take me like a forgiven child...if you can receive me like a forgiven child...." (p. 480) The statement of course is dramatically ironic. Pip does not know that Biddy will indeed receive him as a child because she has unbeknownst to Pip married Joe, Pip's most recent father-image. As Martin Meisel

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[22]Stoehr, p. 126.

[23]Bell, pp. 23-24.

suggests, "...Biddy and Joe replace the parents who failed the first Pip, first through death, then through harshness and helplessness..."[24] Once Pip has recovered from the shock of finding Joe and Biddy married, he delivers a highly ambiguous statement to the newly-weds:

> Dear Joe, I hope you will have children to love, and that some little fellow will sit in this chimney corner of a winter night, who may remind you of another little fellow gone out of it forever. Don't tell him, Joe, that I was thankless; don't tell him, Biddy, that I was ungenerous and unjust; only tell him that I honoured you both, because you were so good and true, and that, as your child,[25] I said it would be natural to him to grow up a much better man than I did. (p. 487)

Certainly Pip is suggesting that with such parents as Joe and Biddy their own child would attain a morally sound background; but Dickens has so phrased the remark that it could be read that Pip has humbled himself to the point that he admits that he is an unlearned child when compared with their rustic maturity. Pip's childlike status is even more noticeable when compared with the maturity of the former child Joe. Certainly Dickens' characterization of Joe at the conclusion of Great Expectations is not that of the servile man-child in the opening chapters, for Dickens allows Joe to reproduce. Joe and Mrs. Joe are conspiciously childless, and this too is explainable in light of the triangular structure. As I have previously suggested, Mrs. Joe was more mother than wife--a role that Biddy does not assume. Robert Stange comes close to the point: "At the end of the novel Pip finds the true light on the homely hearth, and in a last twist of the father-son theme, Joe emerges as a true parent--the only kind of parent that Dickens could ever fully approve,

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[24]"The Ending of Great Expectations," Essays in Criticism, XV (1965) 329.

[25]Italics mine.

one that remains a child."[26] It seems to me that Dickens clearly emphasizes that it is Pip who has remained a child, not Joe. Joe has accepted his role as protector while Pip still seeks to be protected. Because of Pip's continual search for a father, he is, unlike Joe, incapable of assuming the adult role for any sustained period of time.

Dickens does not compromise in the concluding pages of the novel; Pip's last family triangle breaks down also. Ultimately, Pip is forced out of the Joe-Biddy-Pip triangle if by nothing else than the birth of a new Pip. The reader learns too that Pip has gone to the East to live with Herbert and Clara. Since Dickens doesn't develop this particular threesome, there is actually nothing to suggest that Pip has become involved in any familial relationships with the Pockets. Dickens does not need to do so. Through the long and often involved shifting of Pip from one either unstable family situation to another, Dickens leaves Pip as he was found--an individual not integrated, a person who would logically live in the East, an expatriate both psychologically and geographically. Thus the importance of the familial triangles in shaping Pip's destiny is quite obvious at the end of _Great Expectations_: first, Pip's life has been presented in three stages, that of the naive child, the corrupted snob, the older but wiser young man; each stage has contained a different series of triangular relationships. When a shift occurs within the triangle, there is a corresponding shift in both Pip's character and fortune. While other characters are either killed off (Miss Havisham, Magwitch, Mrs. Joe), vanquished in some manner (Pumblechook, Orlick), or form a new family (Joe and Biddy, Herbert and Clara, Wemmick and Miss Shiffins), Dickens has excluded total happiness for Pip by manipulating the

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[26] Stange, p. 14.

triangles in such a way to leave Pip in one--alone. As J. Hillis Miller so correctly observes,

> The Dickensian hero is also alienated from the human community. He has no familial tie. He is an orphan, or illegitimate, or both. He has no status in the community, no inherited role which he can accept with dignity. He is characterized by desire, rather than possession. His spiritual state is one of an expectation founded on a present consciousness of lack, of deprivation. He is, in Wallace Stevens' phrase, 'an emptiness that would be filled.'[27]

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[27] Miller, p. 251.

CHAPTER III

PARALLEL TRIANGULAR RELATIONSHIPS

Although Dickens makes greatest use of the shifting, familial relationships in his characterization of Pip whose changes in fortune are the novel's main concern, Dickens does, however, construct a number of similar triangular relationships, some familial, some romantic, that parallel the same structure used in the development of Pip's affairs. Even though these secondary triangles are not as complex as Pip's, the series of supporting triangles are used effectively by Dickens to give support to the major strand of action represented by the shifts in Pip's familial fortunes. To comprehend the totality of Dickens' design it is necessary to examine those supporting triangular relationships that involve such characters as Biddy, Mrs. Joe, Estella, Miss Havisham, Joe, and Magwitch. Such an examination will reveal to how great an extent the shifting triangular pattern dominates the structure of *Great Expectations*.

Missing Parents

Before examining each individual's role as revealed by the supporting triangles, it should be pointed out that Dickens repeatedly presents "orphan" characters. That is, nearly every major character in *Great Expectations* finds himself in a triangle where the parents are missing and in some way this condition has affected his outlook and behavior. Even unsympathetic characters such as Mrs. Joe are made somewhat more

understandable when one learns that she has been forced to forego the full, normal development of an adolescent and assume at an early age the role of mother to her younger brother Pip. Although Mrs. Joe becomes an orphan late in her childhood, it still leaves her both bitter and cruel. In a fit of rage Mrs. Joe tells young Pip, "I may truly say I've never had this apron of mine off since born you were. It's bad enough to be a blacksmith's wife, and him a Gargery, without being your mother." (p. 8) And Pip's other cruel sister, Estella, has been molded into her heartless form by a step-mother since for all practical purposes, Estella's true parents, Magwitch and Molly, are "dead" in relation to her. Even the sadistic Miss Havisham has been left an orphan, somewhat late in life, but even so Compeyson is still able to take advantage of her because she has no familial support.

Of the basically sympathetic characters--Biddy, Joe, Magwitch, Herbert, Clara, and Wemmick--all in some way are without parents. Biddy serves as a constant reminder to Pip that all orphans do not have to be selfish and disloyal, and when his sense of guilt becomes almost overpowering, he consistently thinks of the purity represented by Biddy. In other words, because of Biddy, taken in by Wopsle's incompetent great-aunt, Pip cannot totally justify his snobbish "gentlemanly" airs simply because he has no parents. Biddy's faithful sister-like dependability demonstrates to Pip that being without parents does not necessarily justify cold self-interest. Biddy's loyalty to Pip is in marked contrast with other examples of filial behavior: Arthur Havisham betrays his sister, Estella tantalizes Pip, Pip in turn feels that he has betrayed his sister Mrs. Joe. Thus when Pip seeks forgiveness for his life of snobbery in London, it is to Biddy that he turns. When Biddy finally marries Joe it is the union of the two uncorrupted orphans. For Joe, too, has

suffered at the hands of an unreasonable father. "My father, Pip, he were given to drink, and when he were overtook with drink, he hammered away at my mother most onmerciful....And he hammered at me with a wigour only to be equalled by the wigour with which he didn't hammer at his anwil." (p. 45) Even though the elder Gargery's drinking drives himself and his wife to an early death, Joe is able--again in contrast with Pip--to forgive: "'Though mind, you, Pip,' said Joe, with a judicial touch or two of the poker on the top bar, 'rendering unto all their doo, and maintaining equal justice betwixt man and man, my father were that good in his hart, don't you see?'" And Pip's reply spells out the difference between these two children. "I didn't see; but I didn't say so." (p. 46) At this particular early point in the novel, Dickens has within a triangular pattern made both Joe and Pip the children of Mrs. Joe. Their different reactions to the failures, intentional or otherwise, of their fathers ultimately shapes the difference in their fortunes. The orphan child who forgives and accepts ultimately prospers and the marriage of Joe and Biddy is a monument to that truth.[1]

The fact that a character is without parents, living in an incomplete family triangle, serves Dickens well elsewhere in the novel. For example, the major factor in Pip's acceptance of Magwitch is that Pip, subconsciously perhaps, sees in Magwitch's parentless childhood a parallel to his own condition. Dorothy Van Ghent points out that Pip "bows down" not to Joe, to whom he is both "privately and literally guilty,"

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[1]Even though Pip does learn to accept Magwitch, his remark at the death of the convict--"God forgive him a sinner"--bears a trace of condescension Joe is incapable of. Also, Pip forgives Miss Havisham for the wrongs she has perpetrated upon him, but he refuses to forgive her for the wrongs against Estella--thus making the forgiveness incomplete.

but to Magwitch.[2] In forgiving Magwitch (and it is questionable if Pip totally forgives him), Pip literally seeks to expiate his own crimes, his own guilt, because in a sense Magwitch is Pip. In short, Pip can love Magwitch because they both are victims of parental failure. Dickens uses Herbert and Clara to demonstrate another aspect of parental delinquency; that is, even though parents live, they may still fail their children. The death of old Bill Barley allows for his daughter Clara to find happiness, another testimony to the failure of the parent to provide love. And Herbert, Clara's husband, presents even another yet different case. He is the only character in the novel who knows that both of his parents are alive. But to what end? His father, Matthew Pocket, is so ineffectual that Herbert is only too glad to leave the household, and Pip must take the responsibility for securing Herbert a place in the world.[3] And the mother herself is a hopeless child, a mother in the biological sense only. Thus when Herbert tells Pip of his plan to marry Clara he says, "The blessed darling comes of no family, my dear Handel, and never looked into the red book, and hasn't a notion about her grandpapa. What a fortune for the son of my mother." (p. 458) Therefore Dickens seems to deliberately expose the failure of parents from every angle conceivable. Death alone does not make a child an orphan. With the exception of Joe and Biddy's marriage at the end of Great Expectations, there is nothing that resembles a truly complete, healthy family situation. The one father-son relationship that does seem to be satisfactory, Wemmick and

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[2]Van Ghent, The English Novel, p. 138.

[3]Such an acceptance of responsibility of Pip's part provides him considerable psychic relief: "It was the only good thing I had done, and the only completed thing I had done, since I was first apprised of my great expectations."

the Aged P, is ironically (but logically enough within the context of the novel) inverted; Wemmick out of necessity treats his father like a child, warming his toast and tucking him in bed. Mark Spilka states, "That Wemmick is fatherly toward his childish father is the point to grasp. For the love between them is possible only by an exchange of roles, or by the revelation of the father's vulnerability and of his need for love and care."[4] Spilka then implies that Wemmick's relationship with his father symbolizes Dickens belief that reconciliation with the father is possible only in an idealized situation which in itself becomes an absurdity. In her discussion of child-father relationships Dorothy Van Ghent notes,

> The 'crime,' in Dickens, is evidently a permutation of multiple motivations and acts, both public and private, but always with the same tendency to convert people into things, and always implying either symbolically or directly a child-parent situation. The child-parent situation has been disnatured, corrupted, with the rest of nature; or rather, since the child-parent situation is the dynamic core of the Dickens world, the radical disnaturing of her is what has corrupted the rest.[5]

Biddy

Dickens goes to great lengths to draw parallels between Pip and Biddy, and they have more in common than just the fact that they are both orphans. Dickens provides Biddy with surrogate parents, Wopsle vaguely as father and his great-aunt as mother, parallel in their inadequacy with Pip's surrogate parents, Mrs. Joe and Joe. When Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt "successfully overcame that bad habit of living" (p. 127), Dickens moves Biddy into the Gargery household in order for her to take care of the now

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[4] Spilka, "Dickens' Great Expectations: A Kafkan Reading," Twelve Original Essays on Great English Novels, ed. Charles Shapiro (Detroit, 1960), p. 119.

[5] Van Ghent, The English Novel, p. 135.

incapacitated Mrs. Joe. A number of complications result from this move, most of them within Pip. At this particular juncture in the novel, Pip feels loyalty to two sets of triangles, one centered about Satis House, the other around the Forge. He wants to see Biddy as a sexual object, but his desire for Estella ironically intervenes: "Imperceptibly I became conscious of a change in Biddy, however. Her shoes came up at the heel, her hair grew bright and neat, her hands were clean. She was not beautiful--she was common, and could not be like Estella--but she was pleasant and wholesome and sweet-tempered." (p. 126) Pip thus sees Biddy more as a sisterly type, but the identification is at best ambiguous. Torn between seeing Biddy as sister or as sexual object, Pip's reactions to Orlick's interest in Biddy symbolizes his dilemma: "I was very hot indeed upon Old Orlick's daring to admire her; as hot as if it were an outrage on myself." (p. 133) Thus as it was earlier with Mrs. Joe, Orlick commits the act that Pip himself cannot do because of his ambiguous feelings toward the object involved. Harry Stone has discussed well the significance and source of Pip's confusion: "Estella is both good and bad sister and good and bad sexual object--a bifurcation which is developed more elaborately than usual in Great Expectations by the use of two additional sister figures. Mrs. Gargery, who rears Pip, but is also his sister, is a persecuting mother-sister figure. Biddy is first a sexual sisterly confidante--later becomes sexual object and dashes Pip's hopes by marrying Pip's step-father."[6] Significantly enough, while Pip is agonizing over Biddy, Joe remains loyal to Mrs. Joe, and sees Biddy neither as sister or sexual object--initially. Because Pip has, even though the identification is somewhat vague, identified Biddy as a sister,

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[6] Stone, p. 665.

he cannot marry her for the same reason that he later cannot marry another sister, Estella. Joe, however, has never made such an identification with Biddy and is free to marry her once Mrs. Joe has conveniently died. Thus Biddy at the novel's end is very secure within the only totally complete familial triangle (Herbert and Clara, Wemmick and Miss Skiffins conspiciously do not reproduce) in Great Expectations. As Harry Stone suggests, "Pip fails to marry the true princess in the primary fairy tale. Joe, the true prince does win her, and so fulfills a minor fairy-tale theme."[7] It might be added that the reverse of that happy fairy tale is the failure of Pip and Estella to come together, the children of revenge-seeking ogres. Biddy finds success and Pip does not and this occurrence bears directly on the theme of the novel. Pip must assume part of the responsibility for his failure in the world. He and Biddy started from essentially the same point--both orphans, both with surrogate parents, but both not corrupted with the false hope for great expectations which destroys. It is also important to note that with the union of Joe and Biddy Dickens escapes the totally negative, deterministic attitude reflected in other Victorians such as Thomas Hardy.

Estella

Since Estella and Pip are parts of several of the same family triangles to discuss her triangular relationships borders on redundancy. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that Dickens uses Estella additionally as a point of contrast with Biddy. Estella, sister to Pip as is Biddy, but in a different set of triangles (those with Miss Havisham as mother and Magwitch as father), fails to find happiness because she,

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[7] Stone, p. 668.

like Pip, is the victim of great expectations also--not her own so much as those of her foster mother, Miss Havisham. Miss Havisham expects to greatly avenge her hate toward men through Estella and therefore trains her to have no heart. As the adopted child of Miss Havisham, Estella assumes that her true parents are dead; she knows nothing of them and thus like the other children of the novel she, psychologically at least, is parentless, relying instead on an inadequate surrogate mother, Miss Havisham (a continuation of the pattern that Pip and Biddy and Joe follow). Even though her true parents (Magwitch and Mr. Jaggers' Molly) live, she is an unaffected by them as Pip is by his parents in their graves. Unlike Pip, Estella never knows the humanizing effect of even one adequate family member and Dickens seems to suggest that she is therefore the logical mate for the brutish, inhuman Drummle. The familial triangle that Drummle, Estella, and their child form is the opposite of the warm, loving family established by Joe and Biddy. Pip stands somewhere between the almost mindless innocence of Joe and Biddy and the corrupted arrogance of Drummle and Estella. There is no suitable mate for Pip, a person who finds herself on the same level of experience and knowledge. Even though the second ending suggested to Dickens by Bulwer-Lytton tries to soften Estella in order to make her equal in sensitivity with Pip, it does not seem true to the underlying design of the novel (see Chapter IV). Because of her scheming and sadistic step-mother Estella has no heart; to give her one in a sentence or two totally ignores the familial histories that Dickens so carefully constructs.

Mrs. Joe

The third sister figure to Pip, his biological one, Mrs. Joe, is also portrayed within a number of triangular patterns. But Mrs. Joe's

problem is somewhat different from those of Biddy and Estella. Although it is not made clear what Mrs. Joe's relationship was with her parents, it is made quite evident that she lacks an adequate husband figure. Children Mrs. Joe has--Pip whom she does not want and Joe who unfortunately is married to her. Thus Uncle Pumblechook serves not so much as a father figure to Mrs. Joe, as the term uncle might suggest, but as a grotesquely humorous husband substitute. Mrs. Joe and Pumblechook, not Joe, see themselves as the parents of Pip's expectations[8] and at Christmas Dinner it is Pumblechook, not Joe, who seems the fitting mate for such an insensitive person as Mrs. Joe. Later, Dickens uses Orlick (as he will do again to show Pip's dilemma) to show the tension within the Gargery familial triangle. Pip has received permission from Joe to spend the day in town and Orlick, also working at the forge, asked for equal treatment. "'Now, master! Come. No favouring in this shop. Be a man!'" (p. 114). Orlick, in front of Mrs. Joe, has struck the vital nerve--not in Joe who is too naive to understand fully the implications of Orlick's remark, but in Mrs. Joe. Orlick taunts her further by referring to her as the "foul shrew, Mother Gargery" and stating that "I'd hold you, if you was my wife. I'd hold you under the pump, and choke it out of you." (p. 115) Joe finally through his brute strength overpowers Orlick, but as with Pip's feelings toward Biddy and Mrs. Joe, Orlick has brought the hidden resentment of Mrs. Joe toward her child-like husband into the open. The reader should not then be surprised that after Orlick

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[8]John Lindberg, in his article "Individual Conscience and Social Injustice in Great Expectations," College English, XXII (1961), 118-122, states that "Mrs. Joe's passion for respectability is central to the main theme of Great Expectations because more than any other person she has had the shaping of Pip's conscience, his infantile and perdurable sense of right and wrong." (p. 118)

strikes her down with the convict's leg iron Mrs. Joe, instead of hating him, humbles herself toward Orlick. Orlick was the masculine image, the dominant personality that she evidently felt she needed, a type of man that Joe was not. Also, after she has been clubbed by Orlick, her position in the Gargery household is reversed. Julian Moynahan sees her demise at the hands of Orlick as part of another pattern that rather obliquely reinforces the idea of familial relationships. He suggests that all the false parents to Pip, including Mrs. Joe, are punished for their part in Pip's corruption: "Mrs. Joe, Miss Havisham, Estella, Pumblechook are all patrons of Pip--all are in some way punished bludgeoned, burned, beaten, robbed), all have in some way hurt Pip, stood between him and his desires."[9] As the result of her punishment or reversal, Mrs. Joe becomes a child and Joe becomes a protective father figure. She becomes a sister again to Pip, no longer the dominating mother. This event coincides chronologically with Joe's assuming the role of father to Pip as a result of the indentures; ironically Joe the child has become a father figure to both the Pirrip children. Such a shift, paralleled throughout the novel by other shifts, reflects the general instability of the Dickens world.

Miss Havisham

Possibly the most influencial female character, as far as Pip is concerned, is Miss Havisham, and Dickens constructs her family history in such a way to render her actions credible. Through Herbert Pocket the reader learns that Miss Havisham has suffered greatly because of the actions of her family. Her mother died, her father married "privately"

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[9]Moynahan, pp. 71-72.

his cook and to that union came a half-brother, Arthur. Because the father was so devoted to the daughter, to the virtual exclusion of the son, the brother seeks revenge upon the father through the sister and does so by collobrating with Compeyson who jilts Miss Havisham after having taken a great deal of her inheritance. Without parents to protect her, the spoilt child, as Herbert her kinsman calls her, falls victim to Compeyson. In one sense, Compeyson is the instigator not only of Miss Havisham's woe, but of all the evil that takes place in the novel. It is he who has embittered Miss Havisham and has ruined Magwitch, who in turn use Pip and Estella to wreak their vengeance on the world.[10] Why then, if the triangular pattern is indeed one of the major structural devices, is Compeyson not made a part of any of the familial triangles--directly? I would suggest that the shadowy Compeyson[11] like Orlick and Jaggers are symbols purposely kept out of the basic human familial patterns because they, in fact, are inhuman.[12] Jaggers always maintains his distance from humanity through the symbolic act of washing his hands (the association with Pilate seems appropriate) and Orlick, as Harry Stone says, is more Satanic than human.[13] Howard Jones sees the function of Compeyson as follows: "In Great Expectations Dickens has at last mastered the truth that evil indirectly glimpsed is more powerful upon the imagination than evil met head-on in a collision with good."[14] Compeyson,

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[10]Hagan, p. 172.

[11]A quality pointed out by Davis, p. 258.

[12]It should be noted that when an inhuman character--such as Drummle--is placed in a triangle the result is misery and final destruction.

[13]Stone, p. 669.

[14]"On Rereading Great Expectations," Southwest Review, XXXIX (1954), 333.

then, is more a personification of abstract evil than an actual human being; his exclusion from direct involvement in the human triangles emphasizes this point. Also, Miss Havisham's "fiat" with Compeyson restates the idea of moral responsibility. Miss Havisham, like Pip, cannot be forgiven for her behavior simply because she was sinned against.[15] Thus all these factors, the emphasis on moral obligation, the effect of evil, are reflected by the more human--fallible as they may be--characters within the familial triangles; although not directly included in a triangle, their influence is apparent only within the familial situation. Thus when Miss Havisham seeks revenge against Compeyson--and all men--she first assumes the role of mother, initially to Estella and later to Pip. In a sense, she and Magwitch become the inverted fairy tale parents for Pip and Estella, both offering material (Miss Havisham's jewels and fortune, Magwitch's money) as incentives to carry out their desires for revenge against a world that has hurt them. When Miss Havisham becomes aware of the evil of her actions and desires, she, like Mrs. Joe, has her place in the familial triangle reversed. She becomes a child seeking forgiveness from Pip and the absent Estella. Thus a shifting triangular pattern--from sinned-against child to sinning parent to sinned-against child (Pip only partially forgives her)--again is used by Dickens to record Miss Havisham's tragedy.

Joe

Certainly one of the functions of Joe is to provide contrast with Pip, or, as Joseph Hynes states, "Joe and the symbolic forge-fire are the

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[15] Meisel, p. 285.

moral constants of the novel."[16] Also suggesting that Joe is a static character is Monroe Engel's statement that "Joe Gargery...remains in the Eden of innocence throughout the novel, and is the control or fixed point in relation to which Pip's wandering is measured...."[17] To a degree both Hynes and Engel are correct. It would be wrong, however, to assume that Joe remains static, for he also is manipulated by Dickens in a number of triangles, many of them discussed previously in relationship to Pip. Joe's history, as much as Pip's, is determined by shifting triangular patterns. The very reason that Joe married the odious Mrs. Joe is to escape the loneliness that resulted from the death of Joe's mother. It is not surprising then to discover that Joe's relationship with his wife is more of a son to a mother than of a husband to a wife. After his mother's death, Joe finds himself in a very ambiguous situation, from the point of view of family. He is both father (as husband to Mrs. Joe and master at the forge) and brother (as the child of Mrs. Joe, victim with Pip of her Ram-page) to Pip. His failure as husband is concretized by the outburst from Orlick that casts aspersions on his maturity and masculinity. When Mrs. Joe is struck down, Joe must assume the role of father to Mrs. Joe which signals the breakdown of the second triangle (Mrs. Joe-Joe-Pip) and prepares for the final triangle that Joe finds himself in, husband to Biddy, father to both Pips. It may be that Joe does remain innocent, but because of the shifting triangular relationships there is a movement from a naivete bordering on stupidity to a wiser innocence. Joe, in short, is not the static character that many critics assume him to be. The birth

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[16]"Image and Symbol in Great Expectations," Journal of English Literary History, XXX (1963), 287.

[17]Engel, p. 159.

of Little Pip is a symbol of the change in Joe. From psychologically castrated child dominated by the mother figure Mrs. Joe, to the productive husband able to assume familial responsibility, Joe's progress is in sharp contrast with Pip's, another factor in what Richard Barnes calls the overriding irony of the novel.[18]

Magwitch

In addition to Joe, Dickens uses the triangular pattern to develop Pip's other father figure, Abel Magwitch. The history of Magwitch as a child, deprived of parents, left alone to grub for turnips down in Essex, makes it difficult to register any emotion other than pity for him. Thus the destruction of the convict's initial familial triangle produces sympathy for Magwitch who otherwise might have seemed a totally disgusting character. Pip, like the reader, is finally able to accept Magwitch knowing that he was the victim of parental irresponsibility. Further sympathy for the criminal is evoked as one learns of the second triangle Magwitch becomes involved in. Pip, in one of the major sub-plots of the novel, pieces together the information that Magwitch, separated by his criminal life from his wife, has lost his baby daughter. Magwitch, victimized not only by society but by his fellow criminal Compeyson as well, is not even allowed the continuation or comfort of his family. Such a desire for a family is certainly one of the motives that prompts Magwitch to provide Pip with great expectations, the third triangle (Magwitch as father, Pip as motherless child) that he enters into. This third triangle, where Pip learns that his true father is Magwitch, takes an ironic turn, however. As Dorothy Van Ghent has noticed because Magwitch

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[18]Barnes, p. 45.

is forced by circumstances into passivity, he becomes a child to Pip, relying on him for safety and deliverance.[19] Clearly Dickens has relied on the shifts within Magwitch's familial affairs to provide the motivation for most of the major events in Great Expectations. The major plot, that which revolves around the reversal in Pip's expectations, can be traced to Magwitch's desire to have a son whose good fortune would ultimately allow the father of such a son vicariously a place in the social system as well. Certainly the Pip-Estella sub-plot is linked with Magwitch's failure to provide for his natural daughter, and as I have discussed in Chapter IV, the common fatherhood of Pip and Estella ultimately prevents both their marriage and a conventionally happy ending for the novel.

Through Magwitch Pip becomes aware that the dilemma of his own familial difficulties parallel those of the subordinate characters. This discovery points out how important the idea of family and the changes occurring within the family triangle were to Dickens' design. The fact that nearly all the major characters are victims of shifting, insecure familial relationships creates the tension that has caused Great Expectations to be considered one of the darkest of Dickens' "darker" novels.

[19] Van Ghent, The English Novel, p. 137.

CHAPTER IV

FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND THE QUESTION OF THE SECOND ENDING

When Charles Dickens agreed to Bulwer-Lyttons's suggestion that a happier ending would be more appropriate for Great Expectations, he unleased a controversy among many of the Dickensian critics. This second ending has Pip and Estella meeting each other by accident at the site where Miss Havisham's house had once stood some eleven years after Magwitch's death. There in a "cold silvery mist" Pip discovers an altered, more compassionate Estella. As they leave the ruins of Satis House, Pip says, "I took her hand in mine, 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." (p. 493) Thus the suggestion is rather broadly made that at last Pip and Estella will marry, becoming a somewhat sophisticated, more urbane and worldly-wise parallel to the marriages that have taken place between the simplier folk of the novel--Pip and Biddy, Herbert and Clara, Wemmick and Miss Skiffins.

In marked contrast to the Lytton-inspired second ending is the original and more somber ending. In it Dickens makes no concessions toward a happy reconcilation:

> It was two years more before I saw herself. I had heard of her as leading a most unhappy life, and as being separated from her husband, who had used her with great cruelty, and who

> had become quite renowned as a compound of pride, brutality, and meanness. I had heard of the death of her husband from an accident consequent on ill-treating a horse, and of her being married again to a Shropshire doctor who, against his interest, had once very manfully interposed on an occasion when he was in professional attendance upon Mr. Drummle, and had witnessed some outrageous treatment of her. I had heard that the Shropshire doctor was not rich, and that they lived on her personal fortune. I was in England again--in London, and walking along Piccadilly with little Pip--when a servant came running after me to ask would I step back to a lady in a carriage who wished to speak to me. It was a little pony carriage which the lady was driving, and the lady and I looked sadly enough on one another.
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> 'I am greatly changed, I know; but I thought you would like to shake hands with Estella too, Pip. Lift up that pretty child and let me kiss it!' (She supposed the child, I think, to be my child.) I was very glad afterwards to have had the interview; for in her face and in her voice, and in her touch, she gave me the assurance that suffering had been stronger than Miss Havisham's teaching, and had given her a heart to understand what my heart used to be.

The question is, of course, which of the endings is more consistent with the narrative detail that had preceded them both. Dickens' friend and biographer, John Forster (who mildly objected to the change) recorded the letter that Dickens wrote to him explaining his reasons for the alteration:

> You will be surprised to hear that I have changed the end of Great Expectations from and after Pip's return to Joe's, and finding his little likeness there. Bulwer, who has been, as I think you know, extraordinarily taken by the book, so strongly urged it upon me, after reading the proofs, and support his view with such good reasons, that I resolved to make the change. You shall have it when you come back to town. I have put in as pretty a little piece of writing as I could, and I have no doubt the story will be more acceptable through the alteration.[1]

Dickens may have indeed written a pretty little piece of writing, but it has failed to satisfy the majority of the critics. George Bernard Shaw remarked, "Dickens wrote two endings, and made a mess of both."[2]

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[1]The Life of Charles Dickens (Philadelphia, 1874), pp. 368-369.

[2]Quoted by James Reed, "The Fulfillment of Pip's Expectations," Dickensian, LV (1959), p. 12.

Martin Meisel also refuses to place one above the other, but declines to call either a mess. Quite to the contrary, he feels either is satisfactory and somewhat sidesteps the issue by suggesting that the true ending is the introduction of Joe and Biddy's little Pip.[3] And Taylor Stoehr sees no reason at all for the controversy: "Actually, there is little difference between the versions. What is important in both endings is not the reconciliation of the lovers, but the comparison of fates and the final statement of hope--the possibility of understanding through suffering."[4]

In all fairness it must be said that some of the critics build impressive cases for the legitimacy of the second ending. In defense of Dickens' choice, Edward Wagenknecht states that Great Expectations is Dickens' greatest novel of reconciliation. "It is on this ground that I have elsewhere argued, contra Forster and the many who have followed him, that Dickens was wise, not foolish, in altering the ending to bring Pip and Estella together at last, for why should she be left out, or why should we assume that she is less capable of learning from experience than Pip himself has been?"[5] Monroe Engel would seem to agree stating that "There are no triumphantly happy endings in Dickens' later novels. Instead, there is the second chance that comes after chastening and acceptance."[6] Engel also notes that the rapprochement comes well after their "misspent youths." Probably the most prestigeous critic supporting

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[3]Meisel, p. 331.

[4]Stoehr, p. 133.

[5]The Man Charles Dickens (Norman, Oklahoma, 1966), p. 235.

[6]The Maturity of Dickens (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959), p. 167.

the legitimacy of the second ending is J. Hillis Miller. Basically however, his discussion is simply an expansion of the arguments presented by Wagenknecht and Engel:

> The second ending is, in my opinion, the best. Not only was it, after all, the one Dickens published (would he really have acceded to Mrs. Grundy in the mask of Bulwer-Lytton without reasons of his own?), but, it seems to me, the second ending, in joining Pip and Estella is much truer to the real direction of the story. The paragraphs which, in the second version of the ending, close the novel remind us, in their echo of Milton, that Estella and Pip are accepting their exile from the garden of false hopes. Now that the mists of infatuation have cleared away Pip and Estella are different persons. They go forth from the ruined garden into a fallen world. In their world their lives will be given meaning only by their own acts and by their dependence on one another. Pip...now loves and is loved by another fallible and imperfect being like himself.[7]

The arguments then for the original ending emphasize the point of view that Great Expectations is conciliatory in nature, allowing for the second chance, and thus, they say, the union of Pip and Estella fits into a pattern, or if one wishes, is thematically correct.

Since a larger number of critics object to the second ending than approve of it, there is a correspondingly larger number of reasons given to suggest that the first ending is better. The weakest argument, in my opinion, is one based upon biographical data given by Edgar Johnson. He suggests that the Pip-Estella love affair parallels Dickens' affair with Ellen Ternan. Thus, "In love, too, then, Pip's 'great expectations,' like Dickens's own, have been disappointed and deceived, and ideally the story should have ended on that loss, as Dickens originally planned."[8] The obvious weakness in Johnson's argument is that he is forced to go outside of the novel itself to prove what is an artistic question rather

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[7] Miller, p. 278.

[8] Johnson, p. 992.

than a biographical one. In the same unfortunate biographical approach to Dickens, George Gissing, writing in 1898, seemed more disturbed about Dickens as writer than about Great Expectations as literature: "Dickens meant to have left Pip a lonely man, and of course rightly so; by the irony of fate he was induced to spoil his work through a brother novelist's desire for a happy ending--a strange thing indeed to befall Dickens."[9] Gissing, like many who champion the original ending fail to suggest why specifically Dickens intended to leave Pip as he did. In fact, most of the discussions about the controversy are extremely vague--Earle Davis's remark, for example: "It merely keeps the final pages from complete harmony with what had already been accomplished."[10] The same general approach is reflected in Dabney's assessment as well: "It is all right for Magwitch to have...faith, but not for the rest of us. The patched-on second ending is a great mistake, false in substance and in tone; the original ending is incomparably better."[11] Dabney concludes by stating that the second ending is nothing more than "a sentimental gesture." Some critics do, however, make attempts to give more specific suggestions as to why the second ending somehow does not seem right. Thomas Ricks, for example, suggests that the alternate ending violates the characterization of Estella, and also diminishes the evil that Miss Havisham's actions are to represent. "Everything we know of Miss Havisham and her bringing up of Estella is made hollow by this softening of Estella, since we find, not that we must forgive the tragic Miss

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[9]Gissing, p. 66.

[10]The Flint and the Flame (Columbia, Mo., 1963), p. 262.

[11]Love and Property in the Novels of Dickens (Berkeley, 1967), p. 147.

Havisham, but there was not really anything to forgive."[12] It is Mark Spilka, however, who comes closest to giving a full and accurate explanation that justifies the appropriateness of the first ending. He particularly takes issue with J. Hillis Miller, calling his interpretation a collection of misleading "grandiose terms." In answer to Miller, he writes:

> This conversion does considerable violence, moreover, to 'the real direction.' Pip's change occurs in terms of parent-child relations; he matures in his attitude toward the convict-father, but this is not the same as sexual maturity. With the explosion of his childhood dream, his only bond with Estella is that of sympathy for shared distress. This might suffice for Joe and Biddy, in the sexless realm of rustic childhood; but Pip and Estella are shown as sexual entities, and, for Dickens, there is no convincing way to unite them which includes their sexual nature....But setting aside his lack of authority here, the whole question of Pip's worth in the past, and of Estella's present worth, is overplayed in the second ending....The original ending keeps faith with their experience; the second ending exploits it, rather shamelessly, in the interest of romance.[13]

What I should like to suggest as the most reasonable explanation for the superiority of the first ending is only hinted at by Spilka. The reason that the first ending is psychologically true is, as Spilka says, a result of parent-child relations. What Spilka does not point out, however, is that Dickens has very carefully constructed the entire novel in terms of parent-children relationships, and that the second ending is a definite violation of such a construction. As has been pointed out in Chapter II of this discussion (and by other critics as well) Pip and Estella are by virtue of the triangular structuring of the material brother

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[12]Dickens and the Twentieth Century, eds. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson (London, 1962), p. 210. A similar point of view is presented by Richard Barnes (A Critical Commentary on Dickens's Great Expectations, London, 1966, p. 45) who finds the second ending "false to the ironic design and mood which gives the novel its unity."

[13]Spilka, Kafka and Dickens, p. 279n.

and sister. Through no fault of their own they have been the children of Miss Havisham in the second stage of the novel, Estella "officially" adopted and Pip thinking himself her godson. Their closeness is pointed out by Estella herself. "We have no choice, you and I, but to obey our instructions. We are not free to follow our own devices, you and I." (p. 268) Not only does Estella realize that she and Pip are controlled by the same malign force--Miss Havisham--but she feels a perhaps reluctant closeness to Pip in that both of them are looked upon as enemies by Miss Havisham's greedy, inheritance hungry relatives. Certainly Sarah Pocket, Camilla, and company, see the two children as united, the inheritors of their mother's fortune. And Pip too notices the relationship as defined by Estella as he recalls that he and Estella "were mere puppets" (p. 271) and puppets, Pip might have added, manipulated by the same puppeteer.

It is actually not necessary for Estella to tell Pip of their closeness for Pip himself recognizes that Miss Havisham has rendered it impossible for him and Estella to marry. When confronted with the knowledge of Estella's marriage to Drummle, he remembers that it is an event "prepared for before I knew that the world held Estella, and in the days when her baby intelligence was receiving its first distortions from Miss Havisham's wasting hands." (p. 316) Thus Dickens anticipates what twentieth century psychologists have demonstrated: the manner of adult life is determined primarily by the events of childhood. Pip too must recognize subconsciously, perhaps, that the same "wasting hands" were also at work during the formidable years of his youth when his natural affections were being corrupted by fallacious "great expectations."

Pip discovers, however, that Miss Havisham is not his mother (even though she continues to see him as a son until the time near her death when she and Pip switch parent-children roles). This discovery, as I

have suggested previously, temporarily destroyed the brother-sister relationship since he and Estella no longer had a common parent. Pip, assuming Estella were willing, then could have married her without violating the incest taboo. Dickens has, however, already married Estella to the villainous Drummle, a union that is destroyed also. What then would prevent Pip from marrying Estella once Drummle has been disposed of, a detail found in both the first and second endings? To repeat a point previously made, Dickens has deliberately contrived a new triangular relationship after the dissolution of the Satis House triangle (Miss Havisham--Pip and Estella as her fatherless children) that keeps the brother-sister relationship in tact. That is, Magwitch becomes father to both Estella and Pip. Once Pip is sure that Magwitch is also Estella's father, he entertains no illusion about him and Estella ever coming together. For example, while at the mercy of Orlick in the kiln Pip contemplates the consequences of his death, and he thinks of Estella, but first only in terms of Magwitch, their mutual father: "Estella's father would believe I had deserted him, would be taken, would die accusing me." (p. 431) This same scene also indicates how far from his mind the possibility of marriage with Estella is as Pip says, "And so quick were my thoughts, that I saw myself despised by unborn generations --Estella's children, and their children." (p. 432) Pip has obviously excluded the idea of marriage with Estella because, as the order of his own words reveal, he thinks of her within a familial context. He most unfortunately sees Estella both as a sexual object and as an untouchable member of the family. James Reed states that from the novel's beginning Dickens has placed Pip in a pattern of double loyalties and "Each element of this twin loyalty is hostile and exclusive of the other, involving

Pip inevitably in the betrayal of one."[14] Although Reed does not mention the point himself, the triangular familial relationships is the source of these divided loyalties throughout the novel (should Pip be loyal to Mrs. Joe or Miss Havisham, Magwitch or Joe, etc.) and the situation with Estella is no different. Pip is a loyal lover, but at the same time a loyal brother, and the division ultimately, as it has been throughout Great Expectations, is in Pip himself.

It should be remembered too, that Estella is part of Pip's expectations. Pip erroneously believes that Estella will, at the appropriate time, be delivered to him. Dickens' choice of name for Estella reinforces the idea of expectations--she is the unreachable star, cold and distant. Dickens choses, however, to systematically dispose of Pip's expectations, be they financial, social, sexual--or familial. While other characters in the novel, Pip's peers, find familial security, Pip does not; they have not been corrupted in the same ways that Pip has been with false expectations. Therefore, to put Pip happily in a family structure, which the marriage to Estella in the second ending would imply, seems a definite violation of a pattern that Dickens has maintained consistently for Pip. Monroe Engel in his defense of the second ending says that "As Miss Havisham's foster-daughter and her false heir, Estella and Pip cannot come together. As Magwitch's true daughter and his deprived heir, they will."[15] Engel's remark needs some revision. Dickens has placed Pip in one familial relationship after another, all of which fail in some manner. His association with the Gargery household as a child produced confusion and guilt. The Satis House triangle resulted in little more than

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[14]Reed, p. 13.

[15]Engel, p. 166.

resentment toward the mother-figure and incestuous desires for the sister. Although his relationship with Magwitch might have been successful, time and the inversion of the father-son roles in that triangle ends in failure too. Joe and Biddy cannot conceive of Pip as a son; therefore Pip is left alone. For a successful family unit to exist, there must be mutual acceptance among the members of the triangle. Pumblechook would have "adopted" Pip; Pip would have allowed himself to be adopted by a Jaggers who does not want him, and by Joe who never sees Pip as anything other than a brother. There is only one instance where father and son both recognize each other as such and that is the recognition between Pip and Magwitch. Thus Pip might have had an appropriate and lasting father-image but circumstances interrupt any familial security such a model might have produced. So inadequate have Pip's parental figures been to him, as Mark Spilka points out, and so inadequate has he been when forced to take a parental role himself, Pip is characterized by Dickens as psychologically incapable of forming a family unit.

Since Pip does accept the role and responsibilities of son to Magwitch even for a short time, Pip is doomed to continue in the role of brother to Magwitch's true daughter, Estella. Thus as the palindromes in the first chapter have foreshadowed, Pip ends as he began, isolate and alone, all parents having died either physically or psychologically like the first parents, Philip and Georgiana. Because of these repeated parental deaths, the tone of Great Expectations is consistent throughout, and therefore as George Bernard Shaw states, "Its beginning is unhappy; its middle is unhappy; and the conventional ending is an outrage on it."[16]

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[16]Quoted by Barnes, p. 43.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

George Orwell once stated that "Dickens is obviously a writer whose parts are greater than his wholes. He is all fragments, all details--rotten architecture, but wonderful gargoyles--and never better than when he is building up some character who will later on be forced to act inconsistently."[1] Orwell's remark is representative of those critics who refuse to take Dickens too seriously. They admit that he is powerful, but maintain that he is an uneven artist, a rotten architect. The charge that Dickens is fragmentary, unable to subordinate parts to the whole, a creator of grotesques and little else, is based upon a superficial reading of his better novels. Dickens in his later, "darker" novels is keenly aware of design, and Great Expectations is a prime example of his mature art. In Great Expectations Dickens has used shifting familial triangles to develop the different elements of the novel such as characterization, plot, and theme.

The importance of the shifting familial triangle in the process of characterizing Pip, the protagonist, is seen throughout the novel. Each of the three stages of Great Expectations (Pip's childhood, Pip's years as a London gentleman, and Pip's loss of expectations) finds Pip in a different triangle and consequently in a different phase of character development. Stage I of the novel (Chapters I-XIX) is dominated by the

[1]Orwell, p. 65.

harsh and unsympathetic mother-figure to Pip, Mrs. Joe. The inadequacy of this initial familial situation facilitates the shift in Pip's affection toward the dominant triangle of Stage II (Chapters XX-XXXIX), the fatherless Satis House triangle which includes Miss Havisham, Pip and Estella. The patterns of parental failure, guilt on the part of the child toward other family members, and ultimate disintegration of the triangle are repeated in Stage II. There is, however, progression within the triangular structure. Parental failure in Stage I is the result primarily of circumstance; parental failure in Stage II is the product of conscious manipulation. That is, Mrs. Joe fails as a mother because she herself was the victim of earlier inadvertent parental failure. Miss Havisham, however, mothers Pip in order to carry out her revenge on all men. Mrs. Joe may be inadvertently cruel, but Miss Havisham is purposely malign. Also, in Stage I Pip's guilt results from rejection of the mother-figure, as evidenced by Pip's reactions toward Orlick's attack on Mrs. Joe; in Stage II, Pip feels guilt toward the brother, Joe. Such a change in guilt feelings parallels the change in the nature of parental failure. Pip's guilt feelings toward Mrs. Joe were the result of matters out of his control. The guilt Pip feels toward Joe, however, is the result of Pip's conscious desire to better himself by leaving his brother behind. Thus Stage II portrays Pip's growing consciousness and corruption which results from his new familial loyalties to Miss Havisham and Estella. The last section of the novel, Stage III, (Chapters XL-LIX) marks the end of Pip's expectations, his false hopes, and, of course, his snobbery. The reason that all three of these things occur is that another triangle forms around the convict Magwitch. When Pip at last discovers the father that the previous family triangles lacked, the father is a criminal, the concretion of Pip's own feelings of guilt or crime

toward Joe, Biddy, and even Miss Havisham. This final triangle that Dickens constructs results in devastating self-knowledge on the part of Pip. He longs to return to innocence following Magwitch's death, as symbolized by his desire to become child to the perennially innocent Joe and Biddy. His experience, however, in the various preceding triangles has excluded such a possibility. Like Huck Finn, Pip cannot return to the past; his experience with a series of bizarre and inadequate parental figures has shaped him so that he is the outsider, the observer but not the participant. Dickens' understanding of human psychology, as reflected in his use of cause and effect relationships in order to characterize, makes it difficult to understand the charge of Henry James and others that Dickens is unrealistic. What they failed to see was the realism of Dickens is not so much of place and event but of the mind. Fortunately Kafka and Dostoyevsky recognized Dickens' genius, a genius that is reflected in their own work.[2]

With Dickens it seems impractical to isolate the discussion of plot and theme as distinct from characterization. Certainly the character of individuals produces the plot and the individuals and their actions are the theme. E. M. Forster defines plot as "what" but also "why" (which obviously points out the close connection between characterization and simple action).[3] In Great Expectations the shifting familial relationships provide both. The main action of the novel (the "what") is concerned with a series of reversals that accompany the discovery of the source and ultimate loss of Pip's great expectations. The cause (the

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[2]See Mark Spilka's discussion of the similarities between Dickens and Kafka in his book, Dickens and Kafka.

[3]E. M. Forster, pp. 126-154.

"why") of one of the reversals, the loss of Pip's material expectations, is that Magwitch's criminality finally dooms him. But one recalls that Magwitch might have never entered into a life of crime had he not been abandoned by his parents. Thus it could be said that Magwitch's initially disrupted familial triangle motivates the main thread of action in the novel. Events in the sub-plots (such as Pip's relations with Miss Havisham and his love for Estella) also are motivated by shifts in the family triangles. Pip believes that Miss Havisham is the mother of his expectations and that those expectations include Estella's hand in marriage. The discovery of Magwitch as the father of his expectations (which forms another triangle) ends those illusions for Pip also. As Pip's triangles shift, so do his expectations. It should be noted that subordinate characters such as Biddy and Herbert who influence the plot are usually motivated by some factor in their own familial triangles. Biddy is able to marry Joe rather than Pip because there have never been any family ties between her and Joe as there has been between Pip and Biddy. And one recalls that Biddy comes to know Joe because she, an orphan, has no where else to go but the Gargery household. Thus plots and sub-plots are unified through the prevailing structural device of the familial triangle. Also, by observing the shifting action of the triangles, one becomes aware of the novel's dominant theme: the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. Through the structure of the novel Dickens reveals his belief that in a world where manipulation and self-interest prevails, one can expect little more from the initiated individual than resignation. In addition, certainly two of the most prevalent of literary themes, appearance versus reality and the loss of innocence, are conveyed through the triangular device. The final triangle with Magwitch strips away all appearances and Pip becomes totally

aware of his corrupted self.

The shifting triangular device has served Dickens well. It has enabled him to perform the necessary tasks of the novelist. Contrary to the opinion of both the hostile Jamesian critics and the friendly "fat man" Dickensians, Charles Dickens is a highly conscious artist controlling details with skill. Dickens, as Dorothy Van Ghent states

> ...saw his world patently all in pieces, and as a child's vision would offer some reasonable explanation of why such a world was that way--and, by the act of explanation, would make that world yield up a principle of order, however obscure or fantastic--so, with a child's literalism of imagination, he discovered organization among his fragments.[4]

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[4]Van Ghent, The English Novel, p. 128.

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