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CHARLES DICKENS'S 'CHILD-NOVELS'

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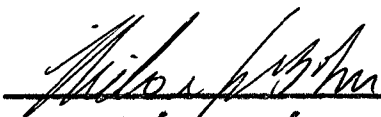
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ABSTRACT

The present dissertation on Dickens's 'child-novels', Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield and Great Expectations, defends the point of view that the author, being a conservative and a philanthropist, can not be interpreted in his first three 'child-novels' as a serious social/political critic and reformer, as it is often assumed. It is here maintained, that only his last 'child-novel', namely Great Expectations, allows him to be seen as such and that it is only here that he deliberately intended to be one.

This thesis argues that Dickens, instead, has to be understood in those four novels very much as a moralist, as a writer who, trying to transform Christian belief into practical rules of behaviour, reminds in certain respects of Don Quixote.

Furthermore it is illustrated here that the author's main motivation to write his 'child-novels' was - probably - his personal desire to write on himself, to relive here his traumatic childhood-experiences and even to resolve in this way certain of his personal problems.

Besides this the dissertation illustrates that there is a clear literary and personal development to be found in Dickens's 'child-novels'. This development leads away from his early melodrama and 'fairy-tale' and also away from his dependence on the preceding literary tradition. Thus the 'old' style and his 'types' as well as his subjective view of reality and his self-pity are given up in the run of the novels. It is maintained, that Dickens moves here toward an objective view and criticism of his contemporary social reality and toward a liberation from the literary tradition, toward a 'new' style and, finally, a very analytic depiction of his characters.

Thus this thesis argues that Dickens's real importance in respect to his 'child-novels' lies in his literary innovations and reforms, that he becomes here the 'Rousseau' of the English literature and, as well, the early Dostoyevsky, Conrad, Lawrence, Kafka and Mann.

RESUMO

Na presente dissertação são analisadas as quatro novelas sobre crianças ('child-novels') de Dickens: Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield e Great Expectations. Argumenta-se que o autor em tela, reconhecidamente um conservador e filantropista, não poderia ser interpretado, em relação às suas três primeiras novelas mencionadas, como um sério crítico político e social. Somente na última das quatro novelas, Great Expectations, ele poderia ser encarado como tal.

Argumenta-se também que Dickens deve ser compreendido como um moralista, um autor que, ao tentar aplicar as crenças cristãs às regras de comportamento, assemelha-se em alguns aspectos a Don Quixote.

Além do mais, pretende-se demonstrar que a principal motivação do autor ao escrever as referidas novelas, foi baseada na necessidade de escrever sobre si mesmo, revivendo assim em ficção, suas experiências traumáticas da infância e dessa forma, até mesmo resolvendo alguns de seus problemas pessoais mais íntimos.

Paralelamente esta dissertação ilustra o fato de que há um claro desenvolvimento pessoal e literário do autor a ser descoberto nestas novelas sobre crianças e que tal desenvolvimento o distancia de suas obras melodramáticas, dos contos-de-fadas assim como de sua dependência da tradição literária inglesa da época. Desta forma, o 'antigo' estilo e seus 'tipos', sua visão subjetivista da realidade assim como sua autopiedade são abandonados no decorrer das quatro novelas. Dickens se volta para uma visão mais objetiva e crítica de sua realidade social, tenta libertar-se da tradição literária vigente,

buscando um novo estilo em que se destaca uma descrição bastante analítica de seus personagens.

Portanto, esta tese argumenta que a importância real das novelas sobre crianças repousa em suas inovações e reformas literárias. Através delas, Dickens se converte em um 'Rousseau' da literatura inglesa e num predecessor de Dostoyevsky, Conrad, Lawrence, Kafka e Mann.

I) INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Reading Charles Dickens's literary works, from Pickwick Papers up to Bleak House or Hard Times, the reader usually has the impression that the author has mainly to be understood as a 'social critic'. Dickens's novels are thus mostly seen as critical descriptions of and reflections on the mid-Victorian society, on its social and political reality. Due to this interpretation the author's main intention in writing is commonly understood as his desire to express his social/political point of view.

Though Dickens's early literary creations combine this criticism with a brilliant and often biting sense of humour, with at times grotesque caricatures and obvious distortions of the objective facts encountered, the author is even here by most of his audience as well as by most of his critics accepted and celebrated as an important and serious 'social critic' - a quality and a fame that finds a still more solid foundation when his later, his 'heavy' novels, particularly Bleak House and/or Hard Times, are considered.

Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield and Great Expectations, four of Dickens's novels which span the full length of the author's creative period - Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby found in its beginning and Great Expectations toward its end - are normally, like the rest of Dickens's works, interpreted as basically 'social' novels. They seem to fit well into the general - and 'traditional' - understanding of this author and his literary intentions. They seem to be harmoni-

ously linked with both prior and succeeding novels, of a clearly social character.

Only a few of Dickens's critics maintain that those four novels have actually to be separated from the rest of the author's literary creations, that they form a 'special' group of novels within the full range of Dickens's works, though, at times, many years and the writing of other novels lie between their respective publications. Those critics, calling this group of novels commonly Dickens's 'child-novels', assume that a fairly clear distinction can and has to be made between those four and his other novels, that those 'child-novels' differ clearly and fundamentally from the remaining ones in respect of their origins and intentions. This difference is - quite technically - seen mainly in the fact that those 'child-novels', like none of the other ones, allow a child to be the principal character and, furthermore, that those novels, unlike the other Dickensian creations, reveal much autobiographical material.

Though all of those critics referred to in this dissertation maintain that the 'child-novels' form a 'special' block of novels within Dickens's literary creations, the encountered interpretations of their respective qualities and intentions differ at times widely, reflecting on certain topics even plain contradictory opinions. Reviewing briefly the criticism made, it becomes obvious that most of those critics focus their interest on the question of whether or not Dickens can or has to be understood in and through his 'child-novels' as a conscious and serious social/political reformer. This problem is the point of departure for the present thesis.

Review of Prior Criticism

It is mainly Raymond Williams and A.E. Dyson who maintain that Dickens has to be seen in and through his 'child-novels' - as in his other works - as a very important and very early English writer who expressed in popular novels a deep-reaching realistic and rather general social/political criticism of his contemporary society, intending clearly and openly to initiate and/or to assist the realization of 'reforms'. As those two critics see it, Dickens's chief concern in writing his 'child-novels' is to give a realistic description and a critical analysis of the actual social and political 'conditions of England'. They state that the author wants mainly to express himself here against the ruling utilitarian philosophy and its implications on society. Going deep beyond the surface matters of the contemporary utilitarian economy, he strikes at those psychological and educational ideas which form the 'philosophical' part of utilitarianism. Not regarding utilitarianism as an advance in civilization, Dickens attacks in and through his 'child-novels' the encountered mid-Victorian 'social reality' as an indifferent, an unnatural one, a reality that 'produces' the alienation of human beings, their depersonalization and dehumanization. I)

Not denying that Dickens actually dealt at length with 'social topics' in his 'child-novels', F.R. Karl, Philip Hobsbaum and Humphry House maintain that the author did not do so in any important nor in any successful manner. They argue that those four novels have a much weaker 'social quality' or 'social impact' than most of his other literary works and point out that this shortcoming is mainly due to the fact that Dick-

ens offered in none of his 'child-novels' - as he did in most of the others - a perceptible social/political programme - and they assume that Dickens actually did not intend to do so. Those critics maintain that the 'social criticism' of these works can not be understood as - and was not intended to be - an objective one, but, instead, as one that simply shows the author's very subjective and personal social and political view, one that projects many of the author's very personal emotions into a critique of society. 2)

And whereas Williams and Dyes state that Dickens in and through his 'child-novels' turns out to be one of the most important critics and reformers of contemporary utilitarian educational ideas and methods, a pedagogical reformer who stands close to the simultaneously occurring Continental movement of the 'young pedagogues' - publishing, actually, here their main ideas - Hobsbaum and Karl maintain that though the author wrote extensively on education - particularly in Nicholas Nickleby and David Copperfield - he can in no way be understood in those novels as a serious or a pioneering English pedagogical reformer. As in his 'social criticism' he here also expresses only his very personal opinion on education, not offering any practicable ameliorating ideas and proposals. Those critics even go so far as to say that Dickens most probably had no connection with and no knowledge of the Continental movement. 3)

The discussion of Dickens's 'character-presentation' in his 'child-novels' reflects - rather surprisingly perhaps - a fairly unanimous result. Almost all of the critics referred to agree with the view that the author's 'child-heroes' are not

presented as rounded and/or developing characters - but as 'types', flat and emphatic. Generally speaking, the critics state that those children are not slowly revealed but directly presented, that they are only - or at least mainly - emblems, embodiments and personifications of virtues, painted without any sharp contours. Those idealized and utterly innocent Wordsworthian children remain throughout the novels very unrealistically depicted, passive, mute and generally uncomprehending little victims of the indifference, neglect, abuse and physical violence of others, children who never reach in any situation the dimension of 'normal' children and much less that of true young heroes. ⁴⁾

Though they basically agree with the interpretations offered by the vast majority of Dickens's critics, Gold and Dyson contradict those statements in respect to certain of the child-characters.

Gold maintains that at least Oliver's life has to be understood as an active one, since the hero, right from the beginning, searches with all his force for his own origins and his own identity and, furthermore, for a world in which he can find the realization of fulfilled 'mother-love'. ⁵⁾

Dyson, limiting his opposition exclusively on Great Expectations, states that the principal character of this late novel, Pip, differs basically from all his forerunners. Pip, unlike Oliver, Nicholas or David, is not born as the innocent Wordsworthian child, but as the 'criminal' one, a child who is born with positive as well as with negative qualities, a 'full' person. Due to this fact the hero - unlike his predecessors - can and actually has to choose for himself whether to become the instru-

ment of confusion and evil or whether to obey his benevolent instincts. He is thus the first and the only child-character among Dickens's 'child-heroes' who is actually responsible for his own actions. 6)

The final topic which is dealt with by all of these critics - though with differing degrees of emphasis - is the one of how and to which extent Dickens's autobiographical material can or has to be understood as an element of importance for the creation of the 'child-novels'. Basically these critics agree on the view that this material had a decisive influence on Dickens's decision to write those four novels, that he intended to reveal here his otherwise hidden traumatic childhood experiences and that he himself saw those novels as a means to relive, ease - and perhaps even solve - his personal problems. 7)

The question of whether or not Dickens has to be seen in and through his 'child-novels' as a serious historian, as a 'realist' and/or as an important innovator or reformer of the English literary tradition do not find a common answer among his critics.

Thus it is only House who maintains that Dickens turns here out to be a serious and successful historian, one of the very few English novelists who are treated with great respect by the professional historians. 8)

Hobsbaum, contradicting House, states that Dickens can not be understood in those novels as a serious historian but that, instead, he has to be interpreted as a reporter, a journalist. Dickens shows himself here as a writer who is not primarily

concerned with giving a realistic and objective description of the facts encountered, but as one who, at least to a certain extent, distorts those facts to express his personal view and/or to make them more communicable to his audience. 9)

Only F.R. Karl reflects on Dickens's importance as an innovator and reformer of the English literary tradition. He states that only through those four novels - and not through his remaining literary creations - the author became the 'English Rousseau', allowing 'Romanticism' to enter into the English popular novels, and, furthermore, he sees Dickens as the precursor to Dostoyevsky, Conrad, Lawrence and Mann, writing as the first English novelist about the threat of disintegration and dehumanization, on which man experiences in modern society.

Statement of Purpose

This dissertation intends to contribute further to the already existing 'general' discussion on Dickens's 'child-novels', trying thus to illustrate why those four novels actually can be seen as ones that form a 'special' group of books within the author's complete literary creations, and, furthermore, attempting an answer to the question of whether or not Dickens can or has to be understood in and through his 'child-novels' as mainly a serious and deliberate 'social critic' and/or 'social reformer'.

Furthermore, this thesis, proposing that Dickens can not be understood as a serious 'social critic' and/or 'social reformer' in those novels, argues whether or not the author's 'real' motivation to write his 'child-novels' was, instead,

a mainly personal one.

Besides this the dissertation intends to shed more light on the reason why Dickens's 'child-novels' are still read in our modern times, trying to point out where those books' 'real' attractiveness should and actually has to rest.

The examinations and interpretations realized and achieved by the author of this dissertation, combined and compared with those provided by the existing critical works on the 'child-novels', lead to the proposition of certain hypotheses. Reflecting this thesis's main content and indicating its basic direction of argumentation, these hypotheses are:

I) that Dickens, being a conservative and a philanthropist, can not be interpreted in his first three 'child-novels' as a serious social/political critic and reformer and that he did not intend to be one.

II) that his fourth novel shows him as a serious social/political critic and reformer and that he here clearly intended to be one.

III) that he has to be understood very much as a moralist, as a writer who, trying to transform Christian belief into practical rules of behaviour, is reminding us in certain respects of Don Quixote.

IV) that his 'driving force', his main motivation to write his 'child-novels' was his personal desire to write on himself, to relive his traumatic childhood experiences in his fiction and, perhaps, even to resolve in this way certain of

his very personal problems.

V) that there is a clear literary as well as a personal development to be found in his 'child-novels'. This development leads away from his early melodrama and 'fairy-tale', away from his dependence on the preceding literary tradition, the 'old' style and his 'types', his subjective view of reality and his self-pity, toward a more objective view and criticism of the contemporary social reality and toward a liberation from the ruling literary tradition, toward a 'new' style, and, finally, toward an almost 'psycho-analytic' character-depiction.

VI) that the author's full understanding and evaluation in respect to his 'child-novels' can only be achieved when he is seen in and through them as the 'English Rousseau' and as a writer who anticipates the early Dostoyevsky, Conrad, Lawrence and Mann.

2. OLIVER TWIST

Melodramatic Quality

Oliver Twist has to be seen as the first English novel which introduced a child as its main character, dealing, furthermore, entirely with the main character's early childhood, not shedding light on his further developments in his adolescence or presenting the hero finally as a grown-up person. Thus this novel differs significantly from any other English novel written by that time.

Reading Oliver Twist the reader finds himself confronted with the moral values of the traditional melodrama. Dickens's world reflects, as his melodramatic forerunners do, the traditional view of a world divided mainly into two groups of human beings: the evil-doers and the noble characters. Thus we encounter the deep-eyed villains in a permanent conflict with the 'heroes' of pure and stainless virtue, and, furthermore, the typically highly elaborated and interconnected incidents which make the plot rich in coincidental situations and, finally, a language that is at once typically, "eloquently explicit and demurely evasive."¹⁾ This novel, replete with melodramatic situations, melodramatic speeches and melodramatic scenes touches, at times, the dimension of grimness. Particularly the first half of the book leads the reader through the often very affecting display of passive suffering on the part of the main-character and is flooded, perhaps even overflowed, with pathos and open sentimentality.²⁾ Softening a too hard and as well unjust criticism, this 'sentimentality' has to be looked at as a rather typical Victorian device in literature: "It will not be denied that Dickens owed part of his taste for sentimentality to the general Victorian partiality for using pocket-handkerchiefs to wipe away tears - perhaps even on such

a low level that no writer could possibly go any lower." 3)

'Fairy-Tale'

Linked to the novel's quality of a melodrama is its fairy-tale character. It is the moral polarities in Oliver Twist, very sharply defined ones, which strongly contribute to this. As mentioned above, Dickens's numerous characters are divided in, on the one hand, the pure, irredeemable evil, embodied in characters such as Fagin, Sikes, and Monks, furthermore, though to a somewhat lesser degree, Mr. Bumble, Noah Claypole and Mrs. Corney, the later Mrs. Bumble. On the other hand, and in a sharp, totally unlinked contrast to them, the reader is confronted with characters who personify the untarnishable goodness, as seen particularly in Oliver himself, but also in his various friends and protectors, characters like Mr. Brownlow, Mrs. Maylie, Rose, Harry, and Mr. Losberne. In between those two extremes there exists, in addition, an intermediate class of characters, who start as evildoers - forced by the evil forces to do so - and who later repent of their assumed wickedness, like Nancy and Charley Bates. But this class of repenting characters is very limited and does not diminish the force of the clear-cut contrast between good and evil in any significant way.

And it is only within the framework of a fairy-tale that the reader can be made to 'believe' in the qualities of those given characters, particularly in the noble qualities which are attributed to the novel's good ones. Because it is only within a fairy-tale that these rather inadequate ghosts of goodness can finally triumph over such extremely forceful evil forces, and only a very elaborate, invented and basically unrealistic machinery of the plot, disclosed in the last pages, can achieve this final and grand victory. 4) The reader can not truly 'believe' that the

power of a Mr. Brownlow is strong enough to ~~destroy~~ the encountered highly sophisticated, well-organized crime. He surely feels that Dickens's characters are very artificially manufactured - and again this is particularly obvious in the good ones. A. E. Dyson puts this fact into the following words: "Reading of the defeat of Monks, and of Fagin screaming in the condemned cell, and of Sikes dangling from his self-made noose, he won't 'believe'. And, furthermore, when the explanations come and we reach a naked complex narrative of the illegitimacy and burnt wills and destroyed evidence, we simply don't believe." 5)

Another device in Oliver Twist that stresses the novel's fairy-tale character is Oliver's recurring, periodic grave illness. Whenever Oliver enters into a 'new world', he does so being on the brink of death. Thus he passes, in the literal sense of the word, unconsciously, without showing any activity on his part, from one state to the other and, afterwards, simply wakes up in his new environment. These passages are often interpreted as his 'rebirths', as his 'resurrections', which move him into the higher spheres of love, signifying his progressive discoveries of 'women', who offer Oliver an ever increasing amount of true motherly love. 6)

Finally it has to be stated that this fairy-tale novel, full though of melodramatic scenes and even uncovered pathos, is not lacking a certain comic quality. This quality could mainly be realized because, right from the very beginning, the novel's outcome was assured: nothing permanently damaging would and could happen to the 'good people', and villainy was certain to be punished and destroyed. The reader could be at ease: this novel was surely and safely embedded in the common pattern of a -unrealistic - Victorian success story.

Character-Presentation

In order to clarify and specify the statements made above, the following paragraph deals with the analysis of Oliver's character in more detail.

It seems to be important to realize the fact that Oliver himself, though highly eloquent, is usually not the principal actor in the melodramatic or 'action' scenes of this novel. Most of those scenes occur when the hero is 'off-stage'. Only very occasionally the plot involves a limited activity on Oliver's behalf and there are only two scenes in the entire book in which Oliver's confrontation with 'evil' takes the form of a rather vigorous action. The first of those scenes is the fight between Oliver and Sowerberry's apprentice Noah Claypole. Noah hits Oliver's most vulnerable point, offending the hero's - unknown-mother and endangering his pure 'mother-picture' by saying: "your mother...a regular rightdown bad 'un " 7) Oliver had been able to withstand all the bodily, physical punishments and cruelties he had to suffer so far, because they had not really touched his 'inner self', they had not been able and not intended to affect his positive mother image. But Noah, hitting exactly at this point, provokes Oliver's reaction. The hero steps out of his passivity, "But his spirit was roused at last; the cruel insult to his dead mother had set his blood on fire " 8) and Oliver runs away.

The only other scene in this novel in which Oliver shows activity on his part is the one in the workhouse, when he asks for another bowl of soup. Oliver was desperate with hunger and reckless with misery, a situation so bad that even he, the fearful and passive child, could not bear this situation any longer. 9)

But in the vast number of other scenes in which Oliver, potentially, if a 'normal' child, could show activity, he is "the

passive, mute, and generally uncomprehending victim of the indifference, neglect, abuse and physical violence of others." I))

Thus, looking at the hero's life, Oliver finds himself in an almost permanent state of suffering. He is almost constantly lonely, suffers from hunger, illness, pain - culminating in the gunshot wound he receives in a robbery in which he was only an unwilling participant. All his suffering is grim and utterly undeserved.

Whenever Oliver actually takes part in a dramatic action - most unwillingly and almost always as the part that is being dealt with - he appears to be 'a poor dummy' II), stunned, bewildered and fearful. Thus the young Oliver never reaches in the novel the dimension of a 'normal' child and, even less, that of a young hero. Actually, he does not even seem to have the quality which allows him to be painted as at least a 'passive' hero, who can react to obstacles that lie across his path. Oliver simply does not perceive any of those obstacles, no matter how menacing they are, and keeps being totally unaware of them. Obstacles thus never can frighten or enrage him.

This presentation of the novel's main character makes it very hard for the reader to form any identification with young Oliver. The reader will surely 'feel sorry' for him - but he will hardly feel more. Oliver, not having any heroic traits, is too much the 'anti-hero' to allow the reader to enjoy a lasting identification with him.

It has to be mentioned here that the above-given analysis of Oliver's character contradicts basically the one given by Gold. This Dickensian critic maintains, that Oliver's entire youth is, right from its very beginning, the hero's active search for his

origins and his identity and, connected with that, his clearly-aimed search for a world in which he can be without fear and in which he can move freely. Oliver is, furthermore, searching for the realization of fulfilled 'mother-love'.¹²⁾

Arguing against Gold's point of view it is maintained here, that Oliver never actually utters this desire in any clear form within the entire novel, that he never shows any activity in materializing those intentions. Undoubtedly there is a certain development toward the fulfillment of true 'mother-love' to be found in this novel, a condition that is finally realized in Oliver's encounter with Mrs. Maylie. And it is true as well that her love, offered to the young hero, matches the one that Oliver always had in his mind - but all this is simply given to him and it can well be maintained that Oliver himself had never any conscious intention to verify his 'imaginary' mother-image in the form of a real and living person.

Having thus stated that Oliver is almost exclusively the passive, uncomprehending victim of this novel, the following part of this work tries to analyze what Oliver actually might stand for. It can quite safely be said that many of the novel's characters are presented as 'types'. Fagin, for example, is, more than a rounded character Dickens's depiction of Satanic malevolence, Mr. Bumble the summation of impersonal officialdom. Oliver, indeed, must be understood as being a 'type' as well, lacking any deep and detailed depiction and presentation. Thus he acts as an emblem and has to be interpreted as the embodiment and the personification of the virtue 'goodness'.

Oliver, the 'tortured' child, is and can not be influenced by any of his encountered environments, good as well as bad ones. His habits and his character do not change, never are en-

dangered, never even superficially affected. Dickens ~~is not~~ ^{is not} the filthy soil of the slums - for a good period of time Oliver's environment - and asks quite directly how one can expect anything but weeds to grow there, the author sees and describes quite realistically the treatment Oliver had to suffer in the workhouse and he concludes that children "will never escape the crippling stigma of pauperism" ¹³⁾ - but all that certainly does not affect Oliver's purity. Up to his first rescue by Mr. Brownlow, Oliver's entire experience of life was mainly suffering and torture, a life that could only make a 'normal' child "either a monster or a wretch" ¹⁴⁾, but young Oliver is not going to be influenced by these utterly adverse conditions. The immense damage that such an environment and upbringing does is only illustrated in the other characters of the 'Fagin-world'.

And since Oliver is the 'personification' of goodness, there is no sufficient space left to illustrate him as a full and rounded character. Dickens's idealization of Oliver does not allow the author to let his hero appear to be a 'living' person. Oliver's character-depiction does not reflect the modest psych-analytic approach, which would allow to let him be presented with more shades and colours - but, instead he is depicted in a way that he does not show any 'contours'. Only one situation in the novel can be found, in which Oliver is described and in which he reacts in a 'normal' way, a way that is a typical one for any young child. It is the scene when Oliver, a child of nine years, has to appear in front of the 'Board', and, being frightened and utterly confused, not knowing what the term 'board' actually means, he bows towards the table instead towards the group of 'gentleman' present. ¹⁵⁾

Summing up what has been said so far about Oliver, his character and his 'qualities', it can be maintained that the hero is a child that does not find a realistic presentation. Oliver is and remains being passive, uncomprehending and unchangeable, being the symbol of purity and goodness, guided by an utterly unreflected and unmotivated 'good sturdy spirit', which nature or inheritance had implanted into him. This leads him unchallenged and safely through the by him basically agitated and adverse environment, showing him in any situation the right direction. He is designed to preserve his Wordsworthian 'original innocence' and, not going through any experiences, inner conflicts or changes of his character, he successfully - and miraculously - reaches his final aim, the Maylies. Oliver turns out to be more an allegorical, a symbolical figure than a real person. "He is one of those ideally good individuals who retain their primal nobility instinctively." ¹⁶⁾ His only will-power, and even that is not based on a mental, a personal decision, is his energy to resist passively against all possible negative influences. Thus, in the author's own words, Oliver functions in the following way: "I wished to show, in little Oliver, the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last." ¹⁷⁾

Realism

It is likely that almost all 'modern' readers will find the characters presented in Oliver Twist and most of the novel's conclusions thoroughly unconvincing, and they could not very well have seemed convincing even to Dickens's contemporary readers either. But does this statement necessarily imply that the reader has to perceive this novel as a pure fairy-tale? Or did Dickens try and succeed in inserting certain 'realistic' elements into

the given fairy-tale framework that actually make the novel somehow carry a social statement? Does this technique, applied by Dickens, provide the author with the opportunity for a searching analysis of the society through which the hero passes, its values, its patterns of behaviour, its human consequences? Is Oliver perhaps, as Gold maintains, "a touchstone of virtue whose passivity tests by its human presence the world it encounters

It can be quite safely assumed that Dickens installed in this early novel only a very limited amount of obvious autobiographical material. This autobiographical influence actually encountered in Oliver Twist is concentrated in the novel's Chapter V, where Dickens refers to the activity of 'blacking bottles'. On the other hand the author confronts the reader with a rather sizeable amount of 'historical realism' in his novel. The most important pieces of legislation in those years were the Reform Bill itself, the new Poor Law of 1834, and the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. As Hobsbaum illustrates, Dickens must have been familiar with the details of argument on both sides of all the questions that this legislation involved.¹⁹⁾ Those new laws are in fact reflected on in Oliver Twist's early chapters: the Eatanswill election, the ancient and loyal borough of Muggleton, the Board of Guardians refer to the contemporary legislative acts.

Dickens's 'historical realism' is combined with an introduction of ample 'local realism'. The place, in which the novel mainly takes place, is a real and well-known one (Saffron Hill, "where it was said all the pocket handkerchiefs stolen by all the pickpockets in London were to be seen exposed in a sort of an

unholy market." ²⁰⁾ Dickens, in making ~~Saffron Hill~~ the central scene of action in Oliver Twist, was thus using a contemporary topical allusion with which his reader was almost certainly familiar beforehand. ²¹⁾

But against those elements of 'historical' and 'local realism', which could suggest that Oliver Twist is a 'realistic' novel, stands Dickens's way of actually putting the story down on paper, a way which destroys this illusion. In the preface of Oliver Twist Dickens says that he had aimed to describe the dregs of life 'so long as their speech did not offend the ear'. This attitude can be partly explained by the common practice in Victorian society that books or periodicals, were read aloud in the family circle, and thus Dickens had to have in mind that a good part of his audience were children. At least because of that he had to 'underestimate' the actual brutality, the squalor, and the filth of the setting in which his story develops. He could not possibly display the full horror and grossness of life that the children in his novel must have lived to the ears of young children in the society. ²²⁾ Dickens's tone is cut off from vulgarity and thus his novel does not reflect a true 'verbal realism'. And since the 'verbal realism', the writing down of things as they were actually encountered, heard, seen, makes an important part of the general 'realism' of a novel, it can be said that the 'realism' encountered in Oliver Twist is thus diminished. Through the absence of a 'verbal realism', the novel's realism is somewhat tamed and the objective facts at least slightly modified, the true life sentimentalized. The following examples try to clarify this given statement: Consider, for instance, the part played by Nancy in Oliver Twist.

She is supposed - in real life - to be a rather thorough-going whore, who is working full-time for Fagin and Sikes. One of her jobs is to keep her eyes on the 'apprentice' thieves, and apparently also to recruit new members for the gang. Thus Nancy's job would certainly have been to use her sex as much as possible with boys like Charley Bates and the Dodger and, most probably, the whole atmosphere in which Oliver lived in London would have been drenched with sex. But since sex was a 'taboo' for the contemporary Victorians, Dickens does not even obscurely hint at its existence. Thus the novel's 'facts' go through the author's rather strict censorship, making them acceptable to the taste of society.

Another example for this 'holding back in acceptable limits', and thus diminishing the realistic impact of the novel, can be seen in Dickens's description of the filth of the slums. Here his depiction is obviously quite inadequate to the truth. For example, when Oliver first goes to Saffron Hill he says that 'the air was impregnated with filthy odours'. What a sophisticated way of saying, clearly, that the streets of those parts of the City were absolutely dirty, full of the emptying of pots, privies etc.

In this not speaking out the real and naked truth, in this kind of reticence, Dickens allows for 'Victorian prudery'. His novel is written in a time when the Victorians cultivated niceness, delicacy and refinement - at least they pretended to do so - a time that was partly the reflection in manners of the Rousseauistic emphasis on sentiment in literature, but that was also, to some extent at least, a protective blind

against some of the worst evils that the new industrial society was generating.²³⁾ Thus Dickens's somehow absurd position is reflected here. Assuming, he had a social intention in writing Oliver Twist, assuming he wanted to expose and correct evils, he felt himself 'muzzled' by a convention to which the evils themselves had given rise. And the increase of consciousness that the 'foul thing' was actually 'foul' meant also an increase both in the wish to turn away from them and in the wish to cure them. This cure could only come about if the 'foul things' were openly and objectively exposed in their full 'foulness' - but the contemporary Victorian society, in all its delicacy and pretensions, did not like to hear about this kind of reality. And due to this 'Victorian sentiment',²⁴⁾ the author could not possibly have realistically presented the crude 'facts' in language. In Oliver Twist the contest between the frank acceptance of the 'fact' as an unwelcome one and Dickens's desire to minimize it because it is unwelcome is quite obvious in many of his descriptions. It can undoubtedly be stated that there is in Oliver Twist an open and honest sincerity in Dickens's manner when he attacks injustice, cruelty, laws, institutions and the economy - but there is an obvious lacking of this sincerity when he attacks the 'cruder consequences' in sex, drink, and dirt.

Having demonstrated above that Dickens does not 'fully' apply a 'verbal realism' and that he thus deforms or softens certain realistic descriptions, the question of what his intention might have been, when he wrote Oliver Twist, rises. As I have so far argued, Dickens appears to be an author with the ambitions and the morality of the 'middle-class'. As H. House puts it, it could be assumed that Dickens was too far removed from the 'real world' of the lower class to assim-

late them fully, but, on the other hand, not removed enough to treat them with detachment.²⁴⁾ That Dickens actually was closely linked with the values of the 'middle-class' can be deduced from the fact that the ideal for the Dickensian protagonist in Oliver Twist is a good income, preferably unearned, an attractive and cosy house, an idyll in which work itself does not figure.²⁵⁾ Oliver finds himself finally in this idyll, gaining - miraculously - a kind of bourgeois happiness in the novel's happy ending.

Social Criticism

The following part tries to answer the question of which the author's possible motivations might have been to write this novel, tries to illustrate his most basic intentions in doing so. Dickens quite obviously criticized certain contemporary institutions in Oliver Twist. He shows authority to be, almost generally, blockish, like the Board, or bumbling, like Mr. Bumble, or half-blind, like the magistrates, or brutal, like the chimney-sweep, or powerless, like Sowerberry. Furthermore, Dickens is treating the official world of Parish and Charity as 'criminal', using the language of a prosecuting attorney, 'grimly convinced of his cause's justice.'²⁶⁾ A few examples only, out of a vast number of possible ones, will be referred to, in order to prove this statement and to clarify the kernel of Dickens's social criticism.

Dickens held strong views on the reformed workhouse, and those views happened to stand against those expressed by the enlightened opinion of the day. He accused this new institution of creating the misery of its inhabitants mainly by separating the members of families from each other. Under the new workhouse rules the mixed membership was kept, but the inmates

and:

"We name our foundlings in alphabetical order. The last was a S, - Swubble, I named him. This was T, - Twist, I named him. The next one as comes will be Unwin, and the Vilkins. I have got names ready made to the end of the alphabet, and all the way through it again, when we come to Z." 30)

Besides the 'depersonalisation' of the inmates, Dickens accuses the institution of the workhouse of cruelty. Dick, Oliver's friend, who does not possess the 'sturdy good spirit' which helps Oliver to survive all cruelties without harm, perishes as a direct consequence of the treatment he had to suffer. Death seems to be a release, a salvation to him: "I dream so much of Heaven and Angels, and kind faces that I never see when I am awake." 31)

The cruelty, practiced in the workhouse, becomes furthermore obvious in the scene in which Oliver asks for another bowl of soup. The image the reader retains is that of a small, slight child, holding his empty bowl out to the burly workhouse master. The boy's modest request is treated as a major insurrection and finds the cruel judgement of the gentleman in the white waistcoat: "That boy will be hung!" 32)

Dickens's view, his social criticism, becomes even more open and clear-cut when the chimney-sweep and his business are looked at. There had been intermittent propaganda against the use of small boys for chimney-sweeping ever since the later part of the eighteenth century. But a solution had never been reached, only some ineffective and half-hearted legislation to put the chimney-sweeping business under some sort of public control. 33) Dickens lets Oliver be saved from the hands of the chimney-sweep by the interference of the magistrates - but this salvation is only based on a mere lucky chance. Quite openly Dickens here accuses Parliament of not being

able to find a national solution for this grave problem.

Finally Dickens's social view and his social criticism will be here illustrated in connection with the 'Fagin-world'. It can be maintained that Dickens used the 'Fagin-world', the 'under-world', horrible as it is, to express his criticism of the 'upper' one. This 'upper' world, the contemporary Victorian society, treated Oliver harshly and taught him nothing. The 'under-world', on the other hand, takes him in, feeds him, and begins very soon with the process of his education. Here, and only in the 'under-world', Oliver encounters 'profession', the artful Dodger and his close associate Charley Bates, who regard themselves as professional men, talk in highly professional terms. The mock-precise tone of Dickens here is more than obvious and the two thieves have to be interpreted as a parody of two young stockbrokers calculating the possibility of an assured future.³⁴⁾ But, though an obvious parody, this scene serves to show the reader that the 'under-world' is a mirror-image of the world itself: capitalistic, acquisitive, self-aggrandizing.³⁵⁾ Here Oliver comes into contact with Fagin, who, though basically the demon, actually is one of the few characters in this novel who show certain characteristics of a benevolent employer. The reader sees Fagin grounding his 'boys' with great care in the elements of their trade, here - and not in the workhouse - they receive a 'good' and profitable education. And though Dickens's ironic reversal of values is obvious, the reader can not help feeling that Oliver encountered here a system that has its values. Whereas Oliver was totally superfluous in the workhouse - and it would have been seen as good if he had actually died like the little Dick - the 'fagin-world' tries to protect

him, tries to make him survive. Here he finds nobody in competition in his desire to survive, but, instead, a 'togetherness'. Fagin's philosophy, a philosophy of mutual dependence, contains a fair amount of potentially 'good' values:

"In a little community like ours... we have a general number one, that is, you can't consider yourself as number one, without considering me too as the same, and all the other young people ... the gallows... an ugly finger-post, which points out a very short and sharp ring that has stopped many a bold fellow's career on the road highway. To keep in the easy road, and keep it at a distance, is object number one with you... To be able to do that, you depend upon me. To keep my little business all snug, I depend upon you. The first is your number one, the second my number one. The more you value your number one, the more careful you must be of mine, so we come at last to what I told you at first - that a regard for number one holds us all together, and must do so, unless we would all go to pieces in company." 35)

A last argument in respect to the 'Fagin-world' seems worthy of consideration. Many of Dickens's critics have tried to interpret this 'under-world' as the author's way of expressing his political point of view in Oliver Twist. The organized world of thieves is thus seen as Dickens's projection of his fear that anarchy, revolution, social unrest will result from the inefficient and insufficient Victorian government. But it looks as if this kind of interpretation is not based on any solid ground, and, contrary to this point of view, it seems to be much more adequate to think that the 'under-world' plays the same game as society. The virtues of the 'new society', of industry and competition are applied by Fagin and, being actually the irony of ironies, Fagin's world proves, as Nancy remarks, to offer the most viable road for Oliver to travel on. Thus it would be a mistake to regard Fagin and his associates as representing, in any sense, rebellion or anarchy. 36)

Conclusions

Summing up very briefly the main statements made above it can be maintained that Oliver Twist is firmly embodied within the framework of a traditional 'fairy-tale'. Linked to that, Oliver's character is painted without sharp contours and he has to be seen as the personification of the virtue 'goodness'. Oliver shows no progressive development through experiences, he maintains, though facing the most adverse environments, his original innocence and is thus a static - and unconvincing - 'type'. Within this 'fairy-tale' the reader encounters a fair amount of historical and local realism - but verbal realism is lacking, diminishing thus the novel's potential realism drastically. Though the novel itself is quite securely based in reality it is not mainly a composite of sharp, perceived particulars. Oliver Twist is not to be understood as a documentation, as Hobsbaum tries to demonstrate, stating: "Much of the description of slum and workhouse could have come with very little alteration out of the pages of the sociologist, Mayhew, and the political economist, Engels."³⁷) Dickens 'invented' life in this novel - though there were real Fagins and Bill Sikes and real Bumbles in the England of his days - but these characters in Oliver Twist seem simply to be parts of one huge invented scene.

The novel can not be valued as a very 'progressive' book, neither can it be called a basically 'social' novel. Oliver's rescue raises the question: What happens to all those boys whom he left behind in the workhouse? Dickens leaves this question open. In losing his emblematic significance, Oliver becomes finally the 'young gentleman', picked out of the vast pool of the unfortunates - by mere chance. The moral values diminish in the second part of the novel, 'goodness' becomes mere philanthropy and kindness, the force is gone and the se-

cond part is mostly given over to melodrama and sentiment of varying degrees of absurdity. Finally, the novel ends - as expected from its very beginning onwards - as a sort of a traditional, 'acceptable' Victorian 'success-story'.

3. NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

Dickens had not yet finished Oliver Twist when he already began Nicholas Nickleby, his second novel to have a child as its main character. This overlap explains, at least to a certain extent, the fact that both novels show a fair number of parallels. But, despite of many similarities, Nicholas Nickleby differs from Oliver Twist in certain rather elementary and decisive particulars.

As Hobsbaum quite adequately points out, one of the main differences between the two novels has to be seen as the following: "Whereas Dickens's heroes had been so far, respectively, an old man and a little boy, the audience had now, for the first time from Dickens's pen, a dashing hero, a pathetic heroine, a picaresque plot, all spiced with melodrama." He continues saying: "The book (Nicholas Nickleby) is a sentimental variant of the picaresque form as practised by Smollett. Its antecedents are obvious. A courageous hero followed by a feeble-minded friend, the thrashing of a cruel schoolmaster in front of his pupils, all these have their roots in such novels as 'Roderick Random' and 'Launcelot Greaves' ".¹⁾ It can not be denied that Nicholas Nickleby is far more picaresque in its outline than Oliver Twist and that this novel quite clearly shows a rather close connection, in form and content, with the preceding tradition in literature.

In order to elucidate the existing differences between the two Dickensian child-novels, the early childhood of the two characters, respectively, will have to be examined more closely. As shown above, Oliver finds himself from his earliest childhood onwards, in a permanent situation of misery and misfortune. He never had a family, a loving mother, who took care of him and he always was the young 'outcast', neglected and

ill-treated, growing up in the most adverse environment of 'inhumane' institutions. Nicholas - contrary to Oliver - is brought up during the first six years of his life, under the loving care of his mother, who offers him security and true motherly feelings. Thus, whenever Nicholas remembers his early childhood, he has the memory of sunshine, peace, love: "...they were all summer mornings then..."²⁾ Only the death of his father starts off the process of deterioration and, step by step, Nicholas finds himself as well in situations of misery and misfortune - but those never quite reach the dimension of despair the reader encounters in Oliver Twist.

Furthermore, it can very well be maintained, that Dickens divided Oliver's experiences and adventures in his second novel into its principal components and distributed them on two different characters: Nicholas and Smike. Oliver's protected character and his 'happy' destiny Dickens gives to Nicholas, whereas he represents Oliver's terrible experiences in Smike - with the important difference that Smike, unlike Oliver, truly suffers their consequences and, finally, dies.

Melodramatic Quality

The basic situation of Nicholas Nickleby is even more clearly melodramatic than that of Oliver Twist. Karl calls it "the very crudest melodrama that Dickens ever wrote"³⁾ and Dyson states "that Dickens let his melodramatic tendencies run riot in Nicholas Nickleby"⁴⁾ The following scenes, taken from the novel, will try to exemplify these statements:

The first of those scenes is the one at Dotheboys Hall, when Nicholas is defending Smike from the cane of Squeers. Nicholas, using a language that could have come out of a Shakespearian melodrama, shouts: "Touch him at your peril! I will not stand by and see it done. My blood is up, and I have the strength of ten

such men as you. Look to yourself, for by heaven I will not spare you if you drive me on!"⁵⁾ Evidently Dickens was here trying for an 'Elizabethan' effect.

The second scene given here is taken from the final part of the novel, since mainly at its end an almost endless number of passages can be found which are couched in language reminiscent at first glance of 'Elizabethan' stage melodrama. Ralph Nickleby dies like this, crying to the church bell:

"Lie on, with your iron tongue! Ring merrily for births that make expectants writhe, and for marriages that are made in hell, and toll ruefully for the dead whose shoes are worn already! Call men to prayers who are godly because not found out, and ring chimes for the coming-in of every year that brings this cursed world nearer to its end. No bell or book for me! Throw me on a dung hill, and let me rot there, to infect the air."⁶⁾

Those scenes, and many unmentioned other ones, drench Nicholas Nickleby in a literally 'theatrical' atmosphere - quite unlike Oliver Twist. But it has to be realized that those 'theatrical' elements not only carry the novel's graveness and its weight, but that they are partially used for comic purposes.

Finally it has to be mentioned that the melodrama in Nicholas Nickleby, contrary to Oliver Twist, has a distinctly sexual basis. The full enormity of evil in this novel is closely linked with the danger of the heroine's loss of innocence, of virginity. "The most terrible of Ralph's 'criminal' plots hinges on his willingness to use Kate, his own niece, as a lure to draw Lord Verisopht even more firmly into his power."⁷⁾

'Fairy-Tale'

In Nicholas Nickleby, as in Oliver Twist, the reader encounters a world which is sharply divided into 'good' and 'evil' and the contest between the clearly defined 'good' and 'bad' characters is carried on relentlessly, without letting any of those forces gain a clear advantage over the other. And, like in any traditional fairy-tale, a new force has to enter into the action to give further strenght to the 'good' characters. Thus the Cheeryble Brothers, the 'fairy-goodfathers' or the 'dei ex machina' appear - quite without logical connections to the novel's events - halfway through the novel, in order to help the noble and young people and their friends in their struggle. And it is mainly those Cheeryble Brothers, and not so much Nicholas himself, who wage the war against the respectably formidable antagonists, villains like Ralph Nickleby, Wackford Squeers and Arthur Gride, winning the victory at last. Those Cheeribly Brothers stand for the personification of the ideal conception of 'natural perfection'. They preserved, inspite of all negative experiences and environments, their simple and honest heart, and their help is based on pure humanity.

The Cheeribly Brothers in Nicholas Nickleby match Mr. Brownlow and his friends in Oliver Twist quite obviously, both being rather artificially manufactured 'forces of goodness' who save the frightingly powerless 'good characters' in their struggle against the immensely strong evil.

Summing up the argumentation, it can be stated that Nicholas Nickleby, like Oliver Twist, stands very firmly in the traditional framework of a fairy-tale.

Autobiographical Influence

As on Oliver Twist, Dickens's autobiographical influence on Nicholas Nickleby is very limited. Again it is mainly Dickens's own experience of having had to work in a blacking factory that finds a rather obsessive and ostensive reference in his second novel. (Chapter XI)

Furthermore, it might be possible to say, that Nicholas carries more autobiographical material than Oliver Twist, since he, like Dickens himself, goes through a very happy early childhood and only after his father's death - Dickens's own father was flung into debtor's prison when Dickens was twelve years old and died soon afterwards - Nicholas is confronted with an increasingly adverse environment. Like Dickens himself, Nicholas is thus torn out of a protected childhood and pushed, rather violently, into a hostile world, in which he has - through despised physical work - to earn his own living.

Character-Presentation

In the beginning of the novel the reader encounters in Nicholas an adolescent who is completely 'inexperienced', full of visionary ideas and who has, like Oliver, a 'good sturdy spirit'. Nicholas's inexperience expresses itself in the fact, that he has a lot of illusions about his future, which he himself sees in the brightest colours: "To be sure, I see it all," said poor Nicholas, delighted with a thousand visionary ideas, that his good spirits and his inexperience were conjuring up before him."⁸⁾ Dickens calls Nicholas here 'poor Nicholas', which surely is an ironical formulation and probably indicates, that here, in Nicholas Nickleby, 'good spirits' alone don't suffice, as they did in Oliver Twist, to let the protagonist find himself eventually overcoming all obstacles.

Nicholas's illusions give the hero, at least at times, an almost ridiculous side. Dyson maintains that Dickens quite deliberately has drawn Nicholas "as his mother's son, with a pronounced, if usually latent, foolish streak in him." 9) This potential foolishness in Nicholas's character, based on his inexperience, becomes for example obvious when he first hears of the available job at Dotheboys Hall. "He starts to erect more elaborate castles in Spain than even the absurdly naive Mrs. Nickleby would dream of designing." 10) He will, he is sure, meet some young nobleman, who is being educated at the Hall, who will make Nicholas's fortune, marry Kate, and restore the family to happiness and prosperity. 11)

Another scene which demonstrates that Nicholas can not be taken altogether seriously is the one when he falls in love at first sight of Madeline.

But, contrary to Oliver, Nicholas makes experiences. Due to those he shows signs of a personal development - even if only a very limited one. After his arrival in Dotheboys Hall, Nicholas goes through a moment of bitter frustration, "...he felt a depression of heart and spirit which he had never experienced before." 12) Now he does not see his future in entirely bright colours any more, but a certain realistic point of view gains force inside him. Contrary to Oliver, Nicholas is very capable of grasping the events that happen around him and of seeing the structures of the organizations and the institutions encountered, very clearly. Whereas Oliver was, and remained being throughout the entire novel, blinded by fear and thus not understanding anything that happened to or around him, Nicholas is up to the organization of Dotheboys Hall very rapidly, and, being fully aware of the role he is supposed to play, he goes through inner tensions and conflicts.

"...when he recollected that, being there as an assistant he actually seemed...to be the aider and abettor of a system which filled him with honest disgust and indignation, he loathed himself, and felt, for the moment, as though the mere consciousness of his present situation must, through all time to come, prevent his raising his head again." 13)

Obviously the protagonist of this novel is much more aggressively on the side of virtue than Oliver. Nicholas quite resolutely seeks out confrontations with 'evil', and, once in them, he shows a fair amount of agility and skill in his actions, "combining verbal facility with physical prowess".¹⁴⁾ This shows, for example, in the scene in which Nicholas knocks down Mr. Squeers in order to save Smike from a cruel punishment. The young David is thus not, as Oliver was, a completely 'passive' hero, reacting only to obstacles across his path. Rather these obstacles enrage or frighten the hero now, demanding his personal reaction, and he is therefore well aware of them.

It can be said that Nicholas thus is, compared to Oliver, fairly 'individual'. He is undoubtedly as representative as Oliver is, but, as the argumentation so far tried to demonstrate, he is by far more 'personalized'. He nevertheless still can not be interpreted as a fully 'individualized' character. The following lines will help to clarify this difference. Though David is a rather clear-eyed person, who goes through experiences, he does not really 'develop' in his character in any significant and 'progressive' way. Like Oliver's, Nicholas's character is rather static, since inherited. Inexperience and illusions had covered his 'true character' wholly, had closed the protagonist's eyes to reflect on himself seriously. The experiences endured by Nicholas allow him to open his eyes to look at himself more objectively and enable him to 'see' who he really is. Thus Nicholas enters into a process of 'finding out' about his own character and he succeeds slowly in doing so. His

self-recognition increases, while his illusions and his inexperience diminish.

It remains to show that Nicholas - like Oliver - is designed as a 'type', a personification of a value. Though the hero's character-depiction undoubtedly reflects a certain 'individualisation', Dickens does not really reach here a 'psychological analysis' of his protagonist - and probably did not intend to do so. Nicholas, who almost always only reacts on his environment, not showing any real creative impulses of his own, and who is, after all, rather static and inflexible in his underlying character-structure, stands for qualities like 'humanity' and 'kindheartedness'. Thus he is, like Oliver, who was conceived as the personification of 'goodness', a personification rather than a true and fully painted 'character'.

Realism

'Historical realism', encountered in Oliver Twist as the reflection on contemporary politics and laws, finds hardly any reflection in Nicholas Nickleby. Furthermore, 'verbal realism' is almost nonexistent. Even more than Oliver Twist, Dickens's second 'child-novel' applies very frequently a highly stylized and unrealistic 'stage-language', found in almost any of the numerous melodramatic speeches. But the reader finds in Nicholas Nickleby a rather frequent application of 'local realism'. The most obvious example in respect to this kind of realism is the Yorkshire School, called Dotheboys Hall. This school and its description is based, almost with absolute certainty, on the 'Shaw of Bowes Academy'. And, since the chapters on the Yorkshire Schools have often been seen as the principal items of Nicholas Nickleby, containing Dickens's most violent criticism, it seems

to be worth dealing with them here at some length.

Probably it had been on Dickens's mind to write on those notorious schools ever since he was a child. In his autobiography the author writes:

"I cannot call to mind, now, how I came to hear about Yorkshire schools when I was not a very robust child, sitting by-places near Rochester Castle, with a head full of PARTRIDGE, STRAP, TOM-PIPES, and SANCHO PANZA, but I know that my first impression of them were picked up at that time, and that they were somehow or other connected with a suppurated abscess that some boy come home with, in consequence of his Yorkshire guide, philosopher, and friend having ripped it open with an inky pen:knife. The impression made upon me, however made, never left me. I was always curious about Yorkshire schools - fell, long afterwards and at sundry times, into the way of hearing more about them - at last, having an audience, resolved to write about them." 14)

In his later life Dickens actually made a journey to Yorkshire - under an assumed name, trying not to awaken suspicion - in order to gather 'realistic' material for his novel. These 'cheap schools', as Dickens called them, advertised regularly in the London papers as teaching Latin, Greek, French, Mathematics and Navigation. Why they clustered in Yorkshire is not known. Often one of the features in the advertisements was: 'no vacations', which, in practice, meant that it was only boys 'unwanted' by their parents and/or guardians who were put into those schools. This gave the schoolmaster of any of those institutions an almost unlimited power, since no boy could tell during his holidays what life at school was like, nor could he, since letters were read, appeal to any outsider for help. All this was quite well known to the public and thus Dickens used, -like in 'Saffron Hill' in Oliver Twist, a contemporary topical allusion with which the majority of his readers was quite cer-

tainly familiar with. And though Dickens did not actually give neither the name of the institution nor the one of the schoolmaster, his readers easily could detect that the novel's 'Squeer of Dotheboys Hall' was taken from 'Shaw of Bowes Academy'. The material encountered is given in such a realistic way - it is almost documentary material - that the contemporary law-case was obvious: The schoolmaster of this Academy had had a case brought against him six years earlier for gross neglect and starvation of boys entrusted to his care. The verdict having gone against him, he had been forced to be more circumspect in his practices. ¹⁵⁾

Concerning the 'realism' encountered in Nicholas Nickleby it is furthermore worth mentioning that Dickens's reader had no problem in realizing that Crummles, the director of the theatre group, was based on T. D. Davenport, a contemporary and very famous actor. Crummle's theatre is as soundly documented as Squeer's school and thus contributes decisively to the novel's 'realistic' atmosphere. ¹⁶⁾

Social Criticism

As stated already in the paragraph on the novel's 'realism', Dickens's social criticism can be found in its purest form in the chapters on the Yorkshire schools. He was by no means a 'pioneer' in this field, since already before him a few writers had tried to illustrate the conditions encountered in those schools, having in mind a sensibilization and a possible reaction of the population against those institutions and their 'educational' methods. The most famous among those writers was Robert Southy, who wrote about the Yorkshire schools in 1807 in his 'Letters from England'. But the reaction had been too weak to have any influence on Parliament and no law-

action had been undertaken so far to abolish these institutions or, at least, to regulate and control their 'educational' practices.

As for Squeers, he operates his Yorkshire school even more sadistically than the parish workhouse in Oliver Twist is run. The deprivation and neglect which the inmates of the workhouse suffer is almost 'benign' by contrast with the outright viciousness which the schoolmaster and his wife employ at Dotheboys Hall.¹⁷⁾ This statement will be exemplified by the quotation - one out of many other equally illustrating ones - of the scene, when Squeers gives an account to Ralph Nickleby of how he paid his doctor's bill after being wounded by Nicholas, reflecting openly his insouciant brutality:

"...after my bill was run up, we picked out five little boys (sons of small tradesmen, as sure pay) that had never had the scarlet fever, and we sent one to a cottage where they had got it, and he took it, and then we put the four others to sleep with him, and they took it, and then the doctor came and attended 'em once all round, and we divided my total among 'em and added it on to their little bills, and the parents paid it. Ha!ha!ha!"
 'And a good plan, too', said Ralph eyeing the schoolmaster steadily.
 'I believe you', rejoined Squeers, 'we always do it. Why, when Mrs. Squeers was brought to bed with little Wackford here, we ran the whooping-cough through half-a-dozen boys, and charged her expenses among 'em, monthly nurse included. I8)
 Ha!Ha!Ha! "

The description of the school's inmates, those 'young noblemen', whom Nicholas has been led to believe he will teach here, have no really corresponding counterpart in Oliver Twist. Here Dickens's 'realism' in the presentation of details reaches a dimension that is new in his criticism and its brutality is almost truly 'shocking':

"Pale and haggard faces, lank and bony figures, children with the countenances of old men, deformities with irons upon their limbs, boys of stunted growth, and others whose long meagre legs would hardly bear their stooping bodies, all crowded on the view together, there were the bleared eye, the hare-lip, the crooked foot, and every ugliness or distortion that told of unnatural aversion conceived by parents for their offspring, or of young lives which, from the earliest dawn of infancy, had been one horrible endurance of cruelty and neglect. There were little faces which should have been handsome, darkened with the scowl of sullen, dogged suffering, there was childhood with the light of its eye quenched, its beauty gone, and its helplessness alone remaining, there were vicious-faced boys, brooding, with leaden eyes, like malefactors in a jail, and there were young creatures on whom the sins of their frail parents had descended, weeping even for the mercenary nurses they had known and lonesome even in their loneliness. With every kindly sympathy and affection blasted in its birth, with every young and healthy feeling flogged and starved down with every revengeful passion that can fester in swollen hearts, hearts eating its evil way to their core in silence, what an incipient Hell 19) was breeding here! "

Dickens's criticism of this institution becomes particularly obvious and graspable when the description of Smike is looked at. Smike's origin is unknown and mysterious, a fact that reminds the reader of Oliver Twist. But Smike's state of suffering, the misery of his life, is by far more touching than that which Oliver had to endure. Worse than Oliver ever was, Smike is exploited by Squeers - doing hard physical work for him - in a brutal and inhumane way. And, unlike Oliver, Smike suffers from the conditions of his cruel environment. Through cruelties and mistreatments his development stopped and he, an adolescent, stands mentally as well as psychologically on the level of a child. Being 19 years old - of the same age as Nicholas - he finds the following description:

"Though he could not have been less than eighteen or nineteen years old, and was tall for that age, he wore a skeleton suit, such as is usually put on very little boys, and which, though most absurdly short in the arms and legs, was quite wide enough for his attenuated frame. In order that the lower part of his legs might be in perfect keeping with this singular dress, he had a very large pair of boots, originally made for tops, which might have been once worn by some stout farmer, but were now too patched and tattered for a beggar. Heaven knows how long he had been there, but he still wore the same linen which he had first taken down, for, round his neck, was a tattered child's frill, only half concealed by a coarse man's neckerchief." 20)

and:

"...its growth (of mind) must be stopped by rigour and cruelty in childhood; there must be years and suffering lightened by no ray of hope; the chords of the heart, which beat a quick response to the voice of gentleness and affection, must have rusted and broken in their secret places, and bear the lingering echo of no old word of love and kindness. Gloomy, indeed, must have been the short day, and dull the long, long twilight, preceding such a night of intellect as his." 21)

Dickens's criticism here, compared with the one encountered in Oliver Twist, is of a quite different, of a more 'realistic' kind. In Nicholas Nickleby Dickens expresses, for the first time in any of his novels, his opinion in a very energetic way, that the negative environment of a child can have and most probably has a lasting negative effect on its further development. Here the negative effects are not suffered only by a rather colourless and 'unimportant' minor character - as it was the case with little Dick in Oliver Twist - but they are attributed to a character of a major importance within the novel, since Smike only lacks the position as a hero to fulfil completely the pattern of a Dickensian child-victim.

Oliver could survive - totally unaffected - all the cruelties and the misery encountered, because he had the picture of his

loving mother steadily in his mind. Smike lacks such a protection, and, consequently, 'shrinks' mentally as well as physically. But his missing of this rather special and to a certain extent fairly unrealistically artificial protection, expresses Dickens's opinion in a much more straight-forward and convincing manner. The reader can now somehow more easily perceive why Smike never could develop any identity of his own and why he has such a confused and distorted relationship with his environment. And though the ending is almost a happy one - Smike finding in Nicholas his first friend and his new home in Nicholas's family - the novel does not resolve this problem in the manner employed in Oliver Twist. Smike, the 'wretched, jaded, spiritless object' ²²⁾ had suffered too much and for too long to be able to recover. His unexpected final 'luck' can not undo his torments and he breaks in consequence of his first unfulfilled love with Kate. Dickens deliberately draws the parallel to Oliver Twist, making thus a fairy-tale-like 'happy-ending' quite probable, but, changing direction only in the last pages of the novel, he confronts the reader with an almost 'cruel' realism. In Nicholas Nickleby Dickens thus does not allow for a 'pure' and traditional 'Victorian ending' of the novel. Though Nicholas carries finally the victory away, there is no 'all-embracing' success, comparable to the one encountered in Oliver Twist, to be found here.

Dickens's criticism in Nicholas Nickleby is obviously not so much directed against contemporary public institutions as such - in this case mainly the Yorkshire schools - as seen in Oliver Twist. Surely his accusation of Squeer's inhumane treatment of the school's inmates, the damage to which greed and ava-

rice can lead, is more obviously Dickens's object of attack. But it seems as if this criticism has to be narrowed in further, to let it really focus on the author's main critical interest. The problem of 'education', actually, could very well be understood as being the basic item of Dickens's criticism encountered in this novel. Without trying to value Nicholas Nickleby as a serious 'Bildungsroman', the attempt to interpret this novel from that point of view - though only in a moderate way - seems to be acceptable and worth-while.

Without doubt, Dickens can be called, through the publication of Nicholas Nickleby, the first English novelist who wrote in a rather extensive - and realistic - way about the consequences of 'childmistreatment' and its probable effects on the once mistreated child's further mental and psychic development. Dickens's description of Smike in Nicholas Nickleby is thus an attack of the author against the contemporary puritanical-utilitarian opinions held on education. Dickens postulates, very much like the early modern pedagoges on the Continent, that the main thing children need in their early lives is 'love' and 'tenderness' and not, like Nicholas, hours and hours of hard studying. Against the common puritanical attitude of starting the teaching-process at the earliest age possible, Dickens advocates to give children an education that helps to develop their fantasies, that satisfies their momentary - and natural - desires and expectations, and he assumes that the scholastic teaching, usually applied in the infants's schools, is of only secondary importance for the child's development. His criticism is directed against an 'education of earnestness' and the in his opinion mostly exaggerated endeavour to develop the child's 'intellectuality' at a very early age already. The

puritanic-utilitarian education implies for Dickens an education aimed at the child's early self-denial and thus he criticizes the contemporary educational methods as "remarkable for stupidity and heartlessness." 23) Dickens believed, contrary to the current opinion held, that the 'school of learning' and the 'school of life' must somehow contrive to keep the child and his naturally inherited structures of an individual person protected and that they have to enable the child to grow up in a way that is one as natural as possible.

Closely linked with Dickens's educational point of view is his description of Crummle's theatre group, which Nicholas and Smike join for some time. In this milieu Nicholas comes to know people, whose lives consist entirely of playing 'roles'. The individual has no space within the tightly knit group to follow any personal development. In their role-playing the group's members have become mere marionettes, who are, even off-stage, not any more capable to lead a normal life. They retreated completely into the theatre-world which becomes thus their full reality - a linkage to the outer, objective reality does not exist any more. 24) Already the children receive a certain function and they are manipulated from earliest childhood onwards to completely fulfil this one function. Those children and adults are totally depersonalized and, literally, transformed into 'things', into 'roles':

"...the infant phenomenon, though of short stature, had a comparatively aged countenance, and had moreover been precisely the same age - not perhaps to the full extent of the memory of the oldest inhabitant, but certainly for five good years. But she had been kept up late every night, and put upon an unlimited allowance of gin-and-water from infancy, to prevent her growing tall, and perhaps this system of training had produced in the infant phenomenon these additional phenomena. "

The linkage between the world of Squeers and the world of Crummles is visible, but the differences are of an elementary nature. Contrary to Squeers, Crummles feeds his 'children' generously and teaches them their trade like a benevolent employer. Unlike the violence of Squeers and his wife, 'love' and 'care' are the principal characteristics of the Crummles's world - and thus it quite surely arouses the audience's sympathy. Whereas Squeers's world is a sinister, dark and cruel one, the theatre group's world reflects an environment that is fanciful and, in its odd way, life-enhancing. It might even stand, though only in a limited way, for a possible escape from reality - welcome, though not permanent. A genuine kindness shines through all its extravagance, and a sense of craft learned and work done is transparent, and thus the theatre world somehow balances and counterweights the horror of Dotheboys Hall.

But Dickens does not want - and does not try - to idealize this world. Nicholas, feeling immediately during his first contact with the group some strange and negative aspects, wants to remain anonymous in it and assumes thus an adopted name, 'Mr. Johnson'. And it is through this somewhat alienated and distanced observer's eyes that Dickens criticizes the world of the artists.

As Crummles's world demonstrates, Dickens's criticism is not only directed against an education that is obviously a harmful one - due to the employed cruelty and the physical mistreatment of pupils - , but his criticism is also directed against a well-intended but 'wrong' education. The comparison of the 'educational' methods of Mr. Squeers and Mr. Crummles, respectively, show that for both of them children are mainly a 'means', a depersonalized 'thing' that serves for making profit. The methods used by Mr. Squeers, however, have an obvi-

ously cruel and inhumane quality, and, as his 'loving care', with which he treats his own children shows, are deliberately employed and are not based on his educational ignorance or incompetence. He is aware of the negative effects that a bad education will almost certainly have on the further development of those children. Mr. Crummles, on the other hand, simply does not see those negative effects of his education. He acts according to his best knowledge and his honest consciousness, not making any difference in the applied education between his own and other people's children. He sincerely believes that he is giving them the best education possible.

Dickens does not end up endorsing any educational advices or doctrines in his novel. He simply, and quite realistically, demonstrates what he thinks is wrong with education in general. Dickens does not refer openly to any contemporary Continental pedagogical theories - and it actually is doubtful whether he knew about them in any details. The author mainly attacks here the obvious 'mistakes' from an emotional basis, accusing the contemporary puritanical-utilitarian values without offering any really practicable alternatives. Thus he can not be taken seriously as a pioneering pedagogical reformer - but he can and has to be taken seriously as a clear-eyed, honest and fervent critic.

Finally it is of interest to try to answer the question of whether Dickens arrives in Nicholas Nickleby at a rather general criticism of the 'modern times'. He did not, as in Oliver Twist, concentrate here his criticism on contemporary laws, public institutions and the like. Education seemed to be in the focus of his interest in this novel. But, though the refe-

rences are perhaps rather subtle, the reader finds Dickens's criticism of 'modern times' as well in Nicholas Nickleby. The negative influences of modern industry and utilitarian economy are portrayed in the novel's character 'Shares'. His name is already symbolic of what he stands for. But the question of 'shares' in Nicholas Nickleby is not really whether the sharing of capital, as a modern technique, leads to economic prosperity or to the crash of Overend and Gurney - but it is rather the one of what quality of living, what kinds of relationships 'Shares' embody. Dickens sees shares, the modern economical way of live in general, as a force that creates behaviour. If the reader asks in detail how those shares actually operate and if he tries to find the answer within the novel, he is actually outside the drama. For shares here are dramatized, standing symbolically for a point of view, an experience of the modern times. Dickens felt, as already seen in Oliver Twist, though now much more clearly expressed, that modern economy - in this case shares - were "replacing men as active creators of the world." 26) And thus Dickens's intention has to be seen as his warning that the modern - in particular the utilitarian - developments might lead to a final and complete dehumanization of mankind.

But this criticism does not come from the contemporary political 'left wing'. Dickens's affiliation with the conservative middle-class becomes obvious also in Nicholas Nickleby. Similar to Oliver Twist's happy and successful ending, Nicholas as well returns to the remote, idyllic and intact 'country-side', where he manages to rebuy his father's house, living, quite happily, a future life among the landed aristocracy.

Conclusions

Though the two novels, Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby, show a fair number of parallels, a fact that can partially be explained through the overlap of their creations, those novels differ on the other hand in certain elementary and decisive particularities. As in Oliver Twist the reader encounters in Nicholas Nickleby one of Dickens's novels that only reflects a very limited influence of the author's 'obvious' autobiographical material. Like the former one, the latter as well is a novel that stands in its outer appearance firmly in the framework of a traditional 'fairy-tale'. The world remains divided in clearly 'good' and clearly 'bad' characters and forces and the Cheeryble Brothers, the 'dei ex machina', assume now the function of the earlier encountered 'goodfathers', as for example Mr. Brownlow. But Dickens's later novel differs from Oliver Twist insofar, as the book is obviously of a more picaresque kind and thus, astonishingly perhaps, more closely linked than its forerunner with the preceding tradition in English literature. The basic situation of Nicholas Nickleby furthermore is even more melodramatic than the one found in Oliver Twist and Dickens was quite certainly trying in his second 'child-novel' for an 'Elizabethan effect'. This can be assumed, since the language used in many of those melodramatic speeches found, resembles strikingly the one employed by Shakespeare.

But the more basic differences between the two novels become obvious only through the analysis of their 'character-conceptions'. As illustrated above, Dickens divided Oliver's experiences and adventures in Nicholas Nickleby and distributed them among two different characters, Nicholas and Smike. Whereas

the author gave Oliver's protected character and his destiny to Nicholas, he represented Oliver's terrible experiences in Smike. Smike, unlike Oliver, now truly suffers from their consequences and finally dies. But the really important difference between the two novels is, that the conception of Nicholas's character is of a fundamentally different kind and quality than Oliver's. Like Oliver, Nicholas is - at least in the beginning - completely inexperienced and mainly guided by the same 'good sturdy spirit'. But, contrary to Oliver, Nicholas is a character who is able to initiate actions and who goes through a certain - if only limited - process of a personal development. And, as well unlike Oliver, Nicholas is very able to grasp the events that happen around him. Detecting immediately the functions of the institutions and people he encounters, the hero now turns out to be a quite clear-eyed and perceptive boy, not any more the 'dummy', the basically fearful and blinded little victim that Oliver was. Nicholas goes through inner tensions and very personal conflicts and stands much more aggressively on the side of virtue than Oliver ever managed to do. He resolutely seeks out the confrontations with the 'evil' and shows in his struggles a fair amount of skill and agility, of verbal facility and physical prowess. He is much more than only this formerly encountered 'passive' hero, he is aware of the obstacles put in his way, and, though sometimes frightened, he does not step aside, giving place, avoiding the confrontation. And though Nicholas is, like Oliver, a static character, a type, the personification of 'humanity' and 'kindheartedness', forbidding thus a far-reaching psychological analysis, he is nevertheless certainly more individualized or personalized than Oliver.

Whereas the reader finds in Nicholas Nickleby, contrary to Oliver Twist, hardly any 'historical realism', and has to realize that the 'verbal realism' is here, as in the novel's forerunner as well of only a very insignificant influence, the 'local realism' encountered in this second of Dickens's 'child-novels' is of an even greater quantity than it was the case in Oliver Twist. Dotheboys Hall, which is a depiction of the 'Shaw of Bowes Academy', and the figure of Crummle, which portrays the contemporary and also well-known actor T. D. Davenport, give the novel a more 'realistic' flavour than Dickens's allusion of 'Saffron Hill' in Oliver Twist managed to produce. Furthermore, this material is now presented in an almost documentary way and differs thus in its form clearly from the rather unrealistic and diluted way of representation that the 'local realism' found in Oliver Twist.

And though Nicholas Nickleby has elicited significantly less critical favor than its immediate predecessor, Oliver Twist, and though, as some of his critics complain, there is too much in Nicholas Nickleby - "it is a meaningless muddle", as Agnus Wilson puts it ²⁷⁾ - Dickens's social criticism is of a quite graspable and biting quality - though perhaps of a more subtle kind than the one encountered in Oliver Twist. In its purest form this criticism is found in the chapters on the Yorkshire schools. Dickens, who followed in his attack on those schools quite probably Robert Southy, does not allow himself to be carried away by his - obvious - personal fervour and manages to keep very closely to a basically realistic description. Though it might be argued that this criticism - at least originally - is not a really social one but more the outflow of the author's

own self-pity - he had to suffer from similar experiences in his own youth - ,that Dickens does not have any tangible and visible social changes in mind and thus expresses in Nicholas Nickleby only his unpolitical, his philanthropical ideas, this novel all the same carries sufficiently enough of generally applicable material in it that, finally, it can be said that the criticism encountered reaches a dimension which is of more than merely a 'personal' kind, but a criticism that can undoubtedly be valued as a social one.

In Nicholas Nickleby the English reader finds for the first time a novel which deals in an extensive and, mostly, realistic way with the damages and effects that childmistreatment can have on the child's further physical and mental development. Smike, who suffered in his earliest childhood already from cruelty, neglect, and abuse, and who is presented - not as Dick in Oliver Twist - as a character of major importance within the novel, expresses Dickens's criticism and his 'educational' ideas in a clear and straightforward way. In Nicholas Nickleby Dickens does not try - after having confronted his Victorian readers with some 'unpleasant' items of truth - as he did in Oliver Twist, to cover all his expressed criticism with a traditional - and unrealistic - Victorian 'happy ending'. Though Nicholas finally wins the victory over the 'evil' forces, this novel can not be very well interpreted as a 'success-story', comparable to Oliver Twist, since Smike dies in the last part of the book and his death is too convincingly described to be forgotten easily.

Though Dickens quite openly attacks the current puritanical-utilitarian values and their realizations in educational methods, he does not end up proposing any ameliorating educational prac-

tices. Thus Nicholas Nickleby can not be called a 'pedagogical' novel and does not show any close connections with the simultaneously published pedagogical novels on the Continent. Dickens does not seem to be seriously involved with the movement of the 'young popular pedagogues' and he is not, as often maintained, a true English pioneering pedagogical reformer.

More obviously than in Oliver Twist, Dickens criticizes in his later novel the 'modern times' in a rather general way. The negative influences of the 'modern' industry and economy - portrayed in 'Shares', who stands symbolically for its results - are seen by the author as a force which creates a 'new behaviour' and which will finally lead to the complete dehumanization of mankind. Thus it can be maintained that Dickens moved from the criticism of individual public and private institutions - as encountered in Oliver Twist - more toward a criticism that is less concentrated on individual institutions as more on the effects that the 'modern times' have on life in general.

Finally Dickens's position inside society ought to be more clearly defined. As in Oliver Twist he turns out to stand solidly on the 'middle-class' ground. Nicholas, like Oliver, ends up finding himself finally in the remote and idyllic country side, establishing himself as a member of the 'landed' middle-class. But, contrary to Oliver Twist, Dickens was in his later novel very careful when he was detaching his benevolent and rich men from the immediate economic struggle. In Nicholas Nickleby he insisted that they had, at least in the past, worked for what they spent so generously. The Cheerybles - contrary to Mr. Brownlow in Oliver Twist - represent now a stage of capitalistic development, in

which the capitalist is normally an active member of some kind of enterprise. 28) And Nicholas, furthermore, does not simply end up - as Oliver - doing nothing but spending his luckily acquired family's wealth - but he becomes the owner of a small firm, an active member of society. Thus these 'good people', who are filling an important social function in society, are now integrated into the productive part of the population. The 'respectable middle-class' - that they as well as Dickens himself represent is now brought out of its almost permanent economic passivity and posed, even if only on its rather tranquil side, into the active contemporary economic reality.

4. DAVID COPPERFIELD

David Copperfield, the third of Dickens's novels which introduces a 'child' as its main character, was published only in 1849, thus not showing a close temporal connection with his former novels of this kind. David Copperfield, the novel which has often be claimed to be Dickens's best work of art, if we look for unity of narration, development and, above all 'the sense of intermingled comedy and tragedy, laughter and tears,'¹⁾ is the author's first novel written in the first person. Thus David is not only the book's hero and main character but, simultaneously, the narrator of the events himself. Contrary to Oliver Twist, who remained up to the end of the novel a 'pure' child-character and Nicholas Nickleby, whose early childhood was reflected on in only a very brief way, the reader finds now for the first time a Dickensian novel that narrates the hero's full life-story from his birth up to his adulthood.

Melodramatic Quality

Reading David Copperfield it becomes very soon obvious that we have come a long way from the simple moral polarities of Dickens's earlier novels. Of course, strong feelings can still be found in this later work, and Dickens's characters are still able of expressing themselves in language of great power,²⁾ but there is hardly a scene encountered which displays a passion as uncompromisingly as do any of the ones encountered in Oliver Twist or Nicholas Nickleby. Dickens has not totally abandoned melodrama in this later work, but the tone created by the author's handling of the first-person point of view does not

easily allow the use of melodramatic devices. As Dyson puts it: "The emotions of the other characters David observes are generally displayed straightforwardly, in action and in speech unmarked by the elaborate stylizations of melodramatic rhetoric, and David's own strong feeling is profoundly modified not only by being internalized but especially by the fact that the passage of many years has imbued it with a lyrical, elegiac - yet often wry - quality too gentle for melodramatic expression." 3)

Certainly there are a number of melodramatic speeches in David Copperfield. When Agnes, for example, tells David about her fears concerning her father's decline in the grip of Wine and Heep, this speech is very expressive of strong feelings in an otherwise calm conversation. 4) Another melodramatic scene can be found when Wickfield pulls himself together long enough to confess his own shameful weakness to David - his sole interval of lucidity in a drunken frenzy which Heep has brought on. 5) Or, furthermore, when Annie Strong tells her husband of her great love for him, 6) the reader undoubtedly encounters a scene that is truly melodramatic. But, though these speeches - not frequent in their number - are fervent and elaborately patterned, they are usually uttered within scenes that do not allow themselves to be engulfed with melodrama, scenes, that do not rise to the degree of emotion required to make them genuinely melodramatic. Thus the melodramatic speeches are somehow isolated and disconnected from the context and don't find themselves embedded in a melodramatic environment. At times the melodrama in David Copperfield even assumes the quality of an obvious 'mock-melodrama', as the scene in which Micawber denounces Heep shows. 7)

Thus it can be maintained that the purely melodramatic devices are used most sparingly in David Copperfield and that there is no really appropriate use for them within the emotional climate of this novel.

As seen in Dickens's earlier novels it was mainly the villains who expressed themselves frequently in melodramatic speeches - but in David Copperfield those villains are remarkably mute. Steerforth, for example, does most of his 'dirty work' off stage, and even Uriah Heep, the arch-villain, does not behave like a 'self-righteously indignant' one ⁸⁾ in his confrontations with David, but uses a language that is at times more hurt-conciliatory than eloquent-justifying. ⁹⁾

Though the novel's material is rich in potential melodramatic or pathetic scenes - as for example the 'death-bed scene' with Dora and his mother, a scene that reaches undoubtedly the dimension of 'Kitsch' - David Copperfield tries obviously any really pathetic descriptions and, actually, pathos is virtually absent.

In David Copperfield, compared to Oliver Twist or Nicholas Nickleby, Dickens's handling of narration has become considerably subtler and less uncompromisingly assertive of moral or psychological states. This novel is thus not written in a declamatory style - as his earlier ones - and the melodramatic speeches and scenes are only used for special purposes of exposition. David Copperfield marks, in other words, a clear step in Dickens's style, leading away from elemental melodramatic situations.

'Fairy-Tale'

David Copperfield is almost completely free of any 'fairy-tale' elements and differs thus in its conception basically

from Dickens's former novels. There is no 'deus ex machina', no 'goodfather', who comes out of the blue to help little David in his struggles. The events evolve in a more natural and realistic way than seen either in Oliver Twist or in Nicholas Nickleby. But, still reminding the reader of Dickens's former novels, particularly of Oliver Twist, David's 'progress' is closely linked with his repeatedly occurring 'rebirths'. With those 'rebirths' his former past vanishes tracelessly, a new period in the hero's life begins and all the formerly made experiences have no further bearing on the coming events. But, although the novel is thus not completely detached from the 'fairy-tale' framework, the actual influence of the rather few 'fairy-tale' elements on the novel's development and its 'logical' construction is not of an obvious and even less a hindering kind.

Autobiographical Influence

David Copperfield shows a far more obvious and extensive use and influence of the author's autobiographical material than its forerunners and is, thus, frequently called Dickens's most autobiographical novel. Dyson states that in this novel Dickens "had summoned up the most anguished memories of his youth, here he had eased their pain and enlarged their meaning." ¹⁰⁾ Assuming that Dickens actually had - and perhaps never lost - a paranoid sense of rejection ¹¹⁾, he made this sense precise and dramatized it by creating a boy-hero who survives - as he himself had done - against the most dreadful odds. But, in order to stress David's - and his own - sense of desolation and rejection as strongly as possible, he reduces his own age from twelve - when he had to work in the blacking-factory after his father had been thrown into debtor's prison to earn his own living -

to eight in the novel and, even more exaggeratedly, represents David as "the little labouring hind, totally orphaned and alone in the world." ¹²⁾

It might be possible to say that the author's intense self-pity is reflected in its clearest form in the following lines, spoken by young David: "I was so young and childish, and so little qualified - how could I be otherwise? - to undertake the whole charge of my own existence." ¹³⁾ Those words, referring to the work David has to do in 'Murdstone and Grinby', the warehouse, divulge Dickens's long-hidden episode in the blacking warehouse - an autobiographical fact already found as well in Oliver Twist as in Nicholas Nickleby. This period of manual work - for five months Dickens had to wash out and label blacking bottles, twelve hours a day, six days a week ¹⁴⁾ - was a traumatic experience in Dickens's life which he could never really overcome. He was so deeply ashamed of himself, having suffered this misfortune, that even his own wife never came to know about it.

Dickens's parents reappear in David Copperfield, with certain changes, as Mr. and Mrs. Micawber. It is interesting to see that Dickens removes them from any intimate connection and puts them forward as mere 'chance-acquaintances'. ¹⁵⁾ And though their presentation can be partly seen as Dickens's expression of his opinion, that his own parents failed to protect him sufficiently, the sting is taken out of Mr. Micawber's improvidence and Mrs. Micawber's reminiscences by the genuine charm of their presentation. Improvident or not, the couple is - as Dickens's parents were - loyal to each other. And their appeal to the reader is the fact that they are always in trouble: creditors, pawnbrokers, the debtor's prison - the odds are heavily against them. Dickens's

'benevolent' understanding of his parents becomes visible through the description of people so incapable of ordering their own lives and who can hardly be blamed for failing to order those of other people. 16)

Dora, David's 'child-wife', a character that does not receive a credible presentation, was based on Dickens's rather idealistic memories of his first love, Maria Beadnell - and not, as it is sometimes maintained, on Dickens's own wife - and, furthermore, David's career, with its easy success from literary endeavours, parallels more than obviously Dickens's own.

Another clearly autobiographical element in David Copperfield is Dickens's reference to the 'cheap-school' that David is sent to by Mr. Murdstone, as a punishment for his defiance and rebellion against his stepfather's authority. The reader finds as the corresponding counterpart in Dickens's autobiography the fact that he himself, after having worked in the blacking factory, had been sent to such a school, called 'Wellington House Academy', in which he suffered, similarly to David, from the cruelties and mistreatments of a sadistic headmaster.

The number and the quality of the given examples demonstrates that David Copperfield is certainly, in its basic elements, very closely linked with Dickens's own experiences and the reality encountered by him when he himself was a boy, or, respectively, an adolescent. Much more than either in Oliver Twist or in Nicholas Nickleby the author's autobiographical material finds a bearing on the content and the development of the events in this book, producing a fine and smooth mixture of fiction and the writer's own lived reality.

Character-Presentation

Young David leads a truly pitiful existence, which easily brings back into the reader's mind the cruelties and mistreatments suffered by little Oliver. He is a young fatherless boy with an ineffectual mother, neglected and tyrannized after the Murdstones 'move in' and 'take over', banished first to Salem House and then - after the death of his mother - to the unspeakable wine and spirits warehouse. Forced to flee - without having much money - from London down to the Kentish coast, he is robbed on his long and lonely journey. But though the first quarter of the book, concerning young David's formidable sufferings before his arrival at Aunt Betsey's - who takes him under her loving care and starts his education - shows the hero's desolation, this desolation is, contrary to Oliver's, not complete. Not only did David, like Nicholas as well, have a real and loving mother and a very happy early childhood, but, even after all family-bonds are gone, there are two women, who act like 'substitute mothers' for young David. Thus he is not, like Oliver was, totally without help and at anybody's prey. Furthermore, and also contrary to his forerunners', David's plight - though hard it is - hardly provokes the reader's feeling of deep pity. When David, for example, bites Mr. Micawber's hand and his stepfather retaliates by beating him up brutally, the reader does not really see only a helpless little child - who provokes pity - but he is told as well of David's furious rage and aggression. There is no word coming from the hero's lips which describe the pains he suffered, there is no trace of self-pity to be found, no pathos can be traced in that scene. And, when David as the consequence of his act of rebellion is confined to his

room for five long days he does not resign in any lamentation to demonstrate or stress his helplessness. That paragraph - like others in this novel - not only evokes only a probably very weak form of pity on the reader's behalf, but, instead, a certain kind of admiration for the novel's young hero.

Another scene, showing David in this light, is the one when he has to leave home for Salem House. Like any 'normal' child, David weeps copiously, "soaking his pocket-handkerchief with tears" ¹⁷⁾ - but again the reader won't be easily sucked into an atmosphere of unqualified pity, because, upset as David is, he clearly reflects "brave efforts to behave like the heroes he has read about in books." ¹⁸⁾

When David is on his long journey down to Kent, the reader feels the hero's desperation and there is nothing intrinsically humorous in David's journey. His account of that ordeal combines realism with a certain amount of exaggeration - but again, self-pity does not play a significant part. The closest David comes to feeling sorry for himself is during the night when he sleeps outside Salem House - but even here, what we have is rather the ability of a sensitive young observer "to see his particular plight in a wider human, spatial, and temporal context" ¹⁹⁾ than a little helpless child who is only afraid and does not know what to do.

Undoubtedly David reflects in his character-conception elements that are well-known to the reader from Dickens's earlier novels. Like Oliver, for example, David decides on running away from the unbearable and cruel 'Murdstone and Grinby' and on trying to find a realization and materialization of his 'mother-picture'. His journey, which is a very long and awkward one, he manages mainly to endure because he, as well as Oliver,

has this guiding 'light' in front of him, lit by the memory of his mother: "But for the quiet picture I had conjured up, of my mother in her youth and beauty, weeping by the fire, and my aunt relenting on her, I hardly think I should have had the courage to go on until next day. But it always went before me, and I followed." 20)

Many similarities of minor importance could be stated to show the, at times, rather close connections between the three novels. But, what is important and what makes David Copperfield basically different from the earlier two 'child-novels' - in particular from Oliver Twist, and to a somewhat lesser degree from Nicholas Nickleby - is the fact that David, already in his very early youth, has the capacity to perceive and record concrete details in a fairly unimpaired way - he is, in other words, Dickens's first child-character who is a very clear-eyed observer. Surely, David frequently modifies his immediate perceptions in the light of later - and more mature - considerations and judgements (as the adult narrator) and naturally many of his observations demonstrate that he is a fallible and vulnerable - since quite 'normal' - young boy. Often there is an obvious inconsistency between what the boy David imagined to be the objective and perceived truth and what the reader or the adult narrator, since experienced, knows about 'reality' - but all this does not influence or weaken the fact that young David is an astonishingly clear-eyed, though necessarily imperfect, observer, who perceives very clearly what is going on around him and what happens to him.

But David Copperfield differs from Dickens's earlier novels furthermore in another respect of probably the same importance.

This novel shows the author's development toward a rather 'realistic' description of the young child, his reactions, his feelings and his perceptions. Dickens succeeded here in describing in a very appropriate way, how the young David begins, with growing consciousness, to discover and perceive his next environment, collecting all made impressions with the help of his sense-organs. Furthermore David's 'childish world of imagination' is portrayed very well, when Dickens describes how David manages to remember his dead father: "There is nothing strange to me, even now, in the reflection that he never saw me; and sometimes stranger yet in the shadowy remembrance that I have of my first childish associations with his white gravestone in the churchyard." 21)

David, contrary to Oliver and Nicholas, reflects such natural 'child-reactions' as jealousy or defiance in a very 'child-like' way: "Gradually, I became used to seeing the gentleman with the black whiskers. I liked him no better than at first, and had the same uneasy jealousy of him..." 22) is David's own description of what he felt when he realized that Mr. Murdstone approached his mother with the intention to marry her.

His defiance finds expression, for example, when his mother, attempting to bridge the ever-widening gap between herself and her son, tries to caress little David before his going to sleep. He tries to withdraw from her touch, "I hid my tears in the bedclothes, and pressed her from me with my hand, when she would have raised me up." 23)

But the height of all sufferings that little David has to go through in his very early youth is the daily lesson he re-

ceives from his stepfather, Mr. Murdstone. His feelings of fear, confusion, rage and even disgust are described in such an exquisite way by the author, that it is worth quoting the scene in its full length:

"Let me remember how it used to be, and bring one morning back again. I came into the second best parlour after breakfast... My mother is ready for me... but not half so ready as Mr. Murdstone... or as Miss Murdstone... The very sight of these two has such an influence over me, that I begin to feel the words I have been at infinite pains to get into my head, all sliding away, and going I don't know where... I hand the first book to my mother. Perhaps it is a grammar, perhaps a history, or geography. I take a last drowning look at the page as I give it into her hand, and start off aloud at a racing pace while I have got it fresh. I trip over a word. Mr. Murdstone looks up. I redden, tumble over half-a-dozen words, and stop... I obey the first clause of the injunction by trying once more... I tumble down before I get to the old place, at a point where I was all right before, and stop to think. But I can't think about the lesson. I think of the number of yards of net in Miss Murdstone's cap, or of the price of Mr. Murdstone's dressing-gown... the case is so hopeless, and I feel that I am wallowing in such a bog of nonsense, that I give up all idea of getting out, and abandon myself to my fate." 24)

Finally it is worth mentioning that David - contrary to either Oliver or Nicholas - goes in his early childhood through a process which could be termed a temporary 'loss of identity'. David, who finds no personal freedom under the strict observance of the Murdstones, and who has lost the formerly close contact with his mother, finds himself in an environment that characterizes to him impersonality, loss of security and warmth, an environment, that is obviously adverse to the little child's aspirations and desires. Unconsciously David tries to counter-balance this force, which disturbs his inner equilibrium, and

he succeeds in doing so by falling in love with Emily and finding refuge in his father's library. Here the compensation goes so far, that he identifies himself with the books' heroes and finally produces a very distorted relationship between himself and his environment. He starts glorifying his own personality and denying any linkage with the objective reality around him. His distance, achieved in this process from his original self, is best seen in his reaction to his mother's death. Quite strangely he does not - at least in overt feelings - show any grief - but pride. He is prouder of the attention given to him by his classmates than sad that his once 'beloved' mother had gone for ever. He fully understands what this loss means to him and his own future - but he is too distant from his inner self to allow for the outbreak of his true - but covered - feelings:

"I am sensible of having felt that a dignity attached to me among the rest of the boys, and that I was important in my affliction... But I remember that this importance was a kind of satisfaction to me, when I walked in the playground that afternoon while the boys were in school." 25)

David's way of finding the path back to his true self is a very long and hard one and a process that actually is one of the main themes that run through the remaining three-quarters of the novel.

David, the adolescent, finds a quite different presentation from David, the child. His character and its development is now not painted any longer in those 'fresh' colours as encountered in the novel's early chapters. David appears at that stage to be a rather superficial and insincere young man - as his fairly 'clowning' courtship with the skittish little thing called

Dora shows - or he shrinks to a mere narrator, not showing any more a deep personal involvement with his own past. The painful experiences he still goes through - though of a different kind now - no longer have this 'actuality' or 'presentness' as the ones encountered earlier undoubtedly had. Thus it can be maintained that the presentation of the adolescent David is much less immediate and convincing. Still being, at least physically, rather a child than a grown-up, he now appears to be a 'premature' adult, a narrator who demonstrates no real involvement any more with his own lived past. An indication of this change in the novel is the fact that the narrator now employs a fair amount of retrospective self-pity in his presentation of events - unseen in the novel's early part. Those reflections let the experiencing child or adolescent somehow shrink in the background, and the 'all-knowing' and mature David speaks through the young one. The following this idea exemplifying scene refers to the one in which David is sent to the wine and spirits warehouse of Murdstone and Grinby:

"I know enough of the world now, to have almost lost the capacity of being much surprised by anything; but it is the matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age. A child of excellent abilities, and with strong powers of observation, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt bodily or mentally, it seems wonderful to me that nobody should have made any sign in my behalf. But none was made; and I became, at ten years old, a little labouring hind in the service of Murdstone and Grinby." 26)

Another example that demonstrates that David's character, his whole existence, does not find any 'realistic' perception any more is very visible in the following lines: "I used to walk about busy with Mrs. Micawber's calculations of ways and means, and heavy with the weight of Mr. Micawber's debts." 27)

The scene shows Mr. Micawber addressing David frequently as though he were only a couple of years his junior - though he he actually is only a boy of ten. Surely it is not very convincing for the reader that a boy of this age could be the 'financial adviser' of a businessman, as Mr. Micawber is. The reached discrepancy between the novel's own reality and its way of being presented - now almost entirely seen from the grown-up narrator's point of view - becomes very clear, and reaches a symbolic dimension, in the scene when the Micawbers leave for Plymouth. Mrs. Micawber, kissing David goodbye on the coach, suddenly - and deeply surprised - recognizes what a little boy he actually is, after all. 28)

It has often been maintained that David, being completely contrary to Oliver and to a lesser degree contrary to Nicholas, is Dickens's first 'child-hero', who reflects the process of a genuine personal, or 'character' development. Whereas Oliver's character was, right from the very beginning, 'fixed' and did not show even the slightest changes within the entire novel, and whereas Nicholas only and mainly 'rediscovered' his temporarily 'hidden' - but savely inherited - character traits, David now is understood as a child who shows, besides finding the way back to his original and true underlying character, the personal acquisition of new, not directly 'inherited' character-qualities, which the novel's hero gains through made experiences. Some go even so far as to say that David not only develops his character - and finally is shown as a 'richer' one - but that he actually changes parts of his originally inherited character-pattern. The following discussion tries to illustrate whether or not those statements can be upheld, or whether some of them

are not really based on a too forced interpretation of Dickens's novel.

Most frequently the above given statements are based on David's 'changing' attitude toward his classmates Steerforth and Traddles. In the beginning David has an almost 'idealizing' view of Steerforth, to whom he subjects without conditions, whereas he does not bother very much about the quiet and reserved Traddles. Steerforth is strong, energetic and his slogan is: "Hide over all obstacles, and win the race!"²⁹⁾ After long years David's attitude toward Steerforth changes. It is not only his principles that provokes David's suspicion, but the fact that Steerforth's formerly 'unobjectionable' character turns out to be penetrated by spots of impurity; in other words, Steerforth grows into one of the novel's villains. Surely this fact - and obviously the clear-eyed observer David has to see this reality - makes it necessary for the novel's hero to reconsider his friendship with Steerforth. He could not possibly keep such a close relationship with an overt villain and thus changes over to Traddles's side, learning how to appreciate his slogan: "Wait and hope!"³⁰⁾ and enjoying a long-lasting friendship with this 'good' character. But this change in David's attitude does not have to be necessarily interpreted as a change of his character. David simply sees the reality and reconsiders his personal connection with the former friend. David goes through a rather long process of doubting, reasoning and - finally - seeing, and his final decision to break up his friendship with Steerforth does not reflect a deeper change in his personality, his character, but, merely, demonstrates the influence of the hero's growing maturity.

If the novel deals at all, as often assumed, with the hero's

'change of character', it does so in a much more subtle way than it deals with the influence of 'education' on the child's development. It can very well be maintained that David's development is not at all due to his own strength, his own efforts, but, entirely, to the influence of education on him. As a very little child David already received an education from Mr. Murdstone. But this education was a cruel, an inappropriate one, an education without love and feelings, and David perceived it as a form of tyranny:

"Firmness, I may observe, was the grand quality on which both Mr. and Miss Murdstone took their stand. However I might have expressed my comprehension of it at that time, if I had been called upon, I nevertheless did clearly comprehend in my own way, that it was another name for tyranny..." 31)

Down in Kent, under the loving care of his Aunt Betsey, David encounters a completely different kind of education. Here, in the countryside, a 'new life' begins for David - the chapter XV is titled "I make another Beginning" - , here he is 'reborn', receives a new name, Trotwood Copperfield, here every thing that had happened so far in his life - even Mr. Murdstone - is forgotten. David starts anew, having found a new mother, and only now his real and lasting education begins. Mrs. Betsey turns out to be David's benevolently guiding educator, having a strong hold on him and, at times, literally pushing him into the right direction. Like Mr. Murdstone's principle hers as well is the 'education to firmness' - but what different ideas one term can cover:

"...what I want you to be, Trot... is a firm fellow. A fine firm fellow, with a will of your own. With resolution... with determination. With character, Trot, with strength of character that is not to be influenced, except on good reason, by anybody, or by anything." 32)

Her educational method, based on warmth and humane values, has an early effect on the learner. Soon Aunt Betsey succeeds in gradually changing David's 'undisciplined' heart, which - naturally - is all the same a basically good one, into a 'disciplined' heart, making a 'fine firm fellow' out of David.

It is worth stressing that only due to this education he, for example, realizes the mistake he made in marrying Dora. His formerly 'undisciplined' heart had misled him, had made him believe that through hard and disciplined work he could realize his aspirations and win Dora's love. He was blinded by his professional success and did not perceive that Dora was a 'child-wife', the personification of 'thoughtlessness', of 'helplessness' and 'dependence'. Furthermore his 'undisciplined' heart is reflected in his vain attempt to 'educate' Dora according to his own - immature - ideas. His marriage, a failure, was thus the result of the giving in to "the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart." 33)

David does not have any inner strong force of his own to start any personal development. After Dora's death, for example, he somehow evades coming problems and his own responsibility and goes for three long years to the Continent. Here, living almost like a monk in his seclusion, he has to wait for Agnes's letters to gather the energy to undertake his next step. Realizing that Agnes, whom he had in a certain way 'ignored' for years, having seen her merely as a 'sister' or a 'better angel', is worth his mature love, he comes back to England. This second marriage stands now symbolically for David's last and final step toward maturity and only now his heart can be called a fully disciplined one.

Surely David is not comparable either with Oliver or with Nicholas in the sense that he is the personification of a virtue. When virtue asserts itself in David Copperfield - and this happens comparatively rarely - it does so rather quietly. Though the reader is prepared to believe in David's essential goodness, he can see for himself that the hero's character is penetrated with a very strong sense of the protagonist's own blindness and inadequacy. When, for example, Dickens lets the reader know how 'noble' David was in certain periods of his life - like the marriage with Dora - the reader is probably meant to take these professions ironically. He actually will more easily deplore David's stuffiness about her, his inability to fight down his growing sense that he has married a woman who is 'unworthy' of him. And though he is later remorseful and feels guilty grief, his former behaviour can not be easily forgotten or nullified. The reader's sympathies will not be on David's but - quite surely - on Dora's side, since she, utterly untalented, tried to cope with the domestic responsibilities, tried to learn about things that matter to her husband, tried to be of some help to him in his work. All this shows that David is not at all, like Oliver or Nicholas, this unfallibly and inflexibly 'good character' - but, that he, at times and mainly due to his immaturity, turns out to be a rather 'negative' person. This truly is one of the basic differences between the Dickensian novels looked at so far.

Summing up the above made statements, it can be said that despite the texture and colour of David Copperfield, David himself is rather inflexibly helpless and inactive, to a certain extent 'wooden'. Despite the presence of adversity, cruelty, even

sadism - which he clearly sees - he does not show strong reactions and he does not really have the counterbalancing force inside himself, to respond in a satisfactory way. He depends on the 'outer' help and reminds the reader thus to a certain extent of Oliver Twist. David somehow remains a 'semi-romantic' hero, his success being all a matter of time, patience and the hero's inner fortitude. David is undoubtedly more than only 'a pleasant but superficial protagonist', as F.R. Karl sees him.³⁴⁾ He does not, as R. Williams maintains³⁵⁾, stand throughout his lengthy ordeal solely on the ground of pure 'goodness', but he is tempted from the single path of righteousness, his devotion to truth and goodness at times wavers - and thus David's character is painted in a much more personal or individualized way as was the case either with Oliver or Nicholas. But Dickens's way of presenting David still does not go so far that it could be said that the protagonist really fights out inner battles and comes out of those inner conflicts as a repentant, a changed person, reflecting a new structure in his personality. The hero's development toward maturity is much more the result of his enduring experiences which however have a merely cumulative function and do not lead David toward having deep 'insights'. The protagonist does not have any more a solely representative function, which was so characteristic for Oliver, Smikes or even for Nicholas - but, on the other hand, the character still does not find a truly psychologically analytic description. And Dickens does not finally allow for a at least limited new composition or a new formation of David's character. David actually remains, deep inside, what he has been from the very beginning - only his surface-appearance, the scope of nuances gets wider with the development of the novel.

Realism

The 'realism' encountered in David Copperfield is of a basically different kind than the one found either in Oliver Twist or in Nicholas Nickleby. This third novel demonstrates no references to the current historical reality and also the local realism is hardly palpable and does not seem to be of much general interest. The local realism that exists in David Copperfield is not - as in Dickens's earlier novels - based on well-known or notorious places in London, thus showing contemporary allusions, but, instead, it is merely based on real but rather unimportant places that have mainly importance only to the author himself and that can be detected in his autobiography. Seeing the local realism from this point of view, the novel undoubtedly is full of 'real' elements, like persons and places. David Copperfield - in contrast to Dickens's earlier novels - demonstrates a slide away from the historical and the generally-known local realism toward a realism that is based on language and the description of the novel's characters. The language encountered in David Copperfield is an almost 'normal', 'every-day' one. Due to the fact that there are hardly any melodramatic speeches to be found in this novel, there is no space and no necessity for any unnaturally elaborate or highly stylized language. The characters - mainly the protagonist himself - are painted in more colours, showing sharper contours and shades. Being thus more rounded characters than those encountered either in Oliver Twist or in Nicholas Nickleby, the reader finds in David Copperfield now a world full of people that seem to be more 'real', more 'living' ones. And those more personalized or individualized characters of this novel stand in clear contrast against Dickens's earlier 'types'.

Thus Dickens's shift away from the historical or the generally-known local realism toward a realism that is based more on the employed language and the character-conception does not diminish but - actually contrarily - increases noticeably the novel's realistic 'flair'.

Social Criticism

Compared, and contrary, to Dickens's former novels, David Copperfield does not put much emphasis on the criticism of contemporary public institutions. The only public institution encountered in this novel, the school that David is sent to, receives no real critical analysis, and though David undoubtedly had to suffer here from cruel mistreatments, the author does not allow for any broad descriptions on which he could base a violent accusation against it. The author stresses that David's 'situation of misery' is not primarily created by those institutions - as it was the case with Oliver and Smike - but that his misery is almost entirely due to the acts of individual persons, particularly the Murdstones. Dickens narrows his social criticism in and poses its focus on 'education' and its influences on the further development of the child. As in Nicholas Nickleby the author condemns the utilitarian or scholastic education of young children - little David who had to suffer from such an education under Mr. Murdstone sees it as mere tyranny - he accuses it of cruelty toward the child, as a heartless attempt to press the child - at its earliest time possible - into a function, not allowing any free or natural development. He contrasts this educational method with the one practised by Aunt Betsey. Though both methods have as their main aim the learner's guidance towards 'firmness',

they differ basically in respect to the means employed. Aunt Betsey's method, though strict and at times even rather severe, all the same is entirely based on love, understanding and warm-heartedness. She knows the aim David has to reach, but she allows him to move toward it at his chosen speed, allows him to commit mistakes and always reaches out her hand again to give her pupil further help. This education, standing in clear contrast to the frequently practised educational methods which were based on the contemporary puritanical-utilitarian ideas (see: Nicholas Nickleby), obviously finds Dickens's consent.

But in David Copperfield Dickens not only attacks the utilitarianism of his time by his reflections on education and its methods. His opposition to the utilitarian movement and its values becomes obvious as well in the scene when Mrs. Micawber kisses David goodbye on the coach. Suddenly she realizes - and honestly surprised she is - that David is not really her husband's junior, but, instead, a little boy. In this scene Dickens's attacks the common practices of the 'modern times' of using children in economical processes. David did not have the chance to live a 'normal' childhood, he could not develop at his own chosen speed, because at a much too early age he had been pressed already into the 'world of work', where, quite naturally, he was exploited in various ways.

But besides those few examples David Copperfield is surprisingly mute as far as the accusations of social abuses is concerned. This novel clearly lacks the fervor with which the author attacked the public institutions and their effects on their inmates's lives as seen in his earlier books. David, giving after all still the clearest view of Dickens's social position, seem main-

ly to be concerned with the shame and horror of manual work, which the young hero had to do. Taking David Copperfield as a whole, it seems as if Dickens actually shows much less insight into public life than in his former novels. David, not having a sound ideal - or even idea - of work does - and wants to - retire to a comfortable life with an easily-earned income. This idea of a finally good income, preferably unearned, of an "attractive and cozy house, a loving family with an able wife and handsome children, an idyl in which work itself does not figure",³⁶⁾ underlies this novel even more clearly than either Oliver Twist or Nicholas Nickleby. Thus David Copperfield demonstrates the author's - at least limited - retreat from his formerly energetic attacks against social abuses, against misery and poverty. This novel, reflecting clearly the mid-Victorian optimism, the picture of the good old 'merrie England', stands sharply against the social reality of the majority of the population and can hardly be seen - at least in this sense - as a 'progressive' novel.

Conclusions

Whereas the first two novels examined - Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby - showed a very close temporal connection with each other, the later overlapping the earlier one actually in its production, this is not the case with David Copperfield. A rather long period of time, approximately 10 years, lies between the writing of the first two novels and the third one. Dickens, meanwhile having written a number of other novels, now offers a piece of art that shows a clear advancement in comparison with its forerunners, if the unity of narration, the development and, above all,

the author's sense of combining comedy with tragedy is considered.

Merely seen from its outer appearance, David Copperfield marks an important step, being the author's first novel written in the 'first person', thus introducing David not only as the story's hero but also as its narrator. Furthermore, this third novel differs from the earlier two ones insofar as now, also for the first time, the hero's full life-story is presented, reaching from his birth up to his age of adulthood.

In David Copperfield Dickens did not totally abandon melodrama, which was so frequently encountered in Oliver Twist as well as in Nicholas Nickleby, and strong feelings can still be found in this novel. But though the characters are at times expressing themselves in language of great dramatic power, and though those respective speeches are fervent and elaborately patterned, these scenes do not rise up to the degree of emotion required to make them genuinely melodramatic. The reason for this fact has to be seen mainly as resulting from the novel's 'first-person' point-of-view, which does not allow easily for the use of melodramatic devices. Now, contrary to the former two novels, emotions are generally displayed straightforwardly, unmarked by any elaborate or highly stylized melodramatic rhetoric. But besides the novel's form its content as well is of a kind which attempts the avoidance of melodramatic speeches, of pathos and sentimentality. The emotional climate of the novel does not offer a really appropriate use for such devices. The villains, for example, - contrary to the former novels - are in David Copperfield remarkably 'mute', not expressing themselves any more in those earlier frequently, and for them typically, found melodramatic speeches. Thus it can be said that this novel marks quite clearly Dickens's step away from the melo-

drama.

David Copperfield, reflecting the author's very limited use of melodramatic devices, also shows a clear diminution of 'fairy-tale' elements applied. Though David goes through 're-births' - well-known 'fairy-tale' elements from Oliver Twist - those unrealistic elements are not any more, as they were in the earlier novels, of an ostensive and at times even almost ridiculous kind. Now the events of the novel evolve in a more realistic, comprehensible and natural way.

Far more obvious than either in Oliver Twist or in Nicholas Nickleby is the installment of the author's autobiographical material in David Copperfield, making this novel to his probably most autobiographical one. Fiction is here closely interwoven with an almost endless number of autobiographical elements, which exert a strong influence on the direction which the novel takes.

David Copperfield, contrary to the former two novels, has a 'child-hero' who had a very happy early childhood and even later, after his mother's death, he still finds 'substitute' mothers on his way, thus never being really at the prey of anyone. After each period of suffered cruelty or injustice he finds a person who gives him warmth and security. But even those periods of obvious misery are of a basically different kind than those encountered in the earlier novels. The young hero's plights now hardly provoke the reader's deep pity any more. Little David is a new kind of a 'child-hero', showing, contrary to Oliver, Smike or Nicholas, states of rage and aggression against his tormentors. Little David does hardly complain about his suffered punishments and his bad situation in general, he shows no self-pity and the reader actually quite easily feels a certain ad-

miration for the young hero, his behaviour and his brave efforts.

One of the basic differences between Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby on the one hand and David Copperfield on the other is the fact that little David is - as his forerunners were not - at his very early age already capable to perceive and record concrete details in a rather unimpaired way, he is, in other words, the first 'child-hero' in Dickens's novels who is a clear-eyed observer.

Furthermore contrary to his former novels, the author shows in David Copperfield a development toward a rather realistic description of a young child, his reactions, feelings and perceptions. Some length of this novel Dickens dedicates to the description of how David begins to discover and perceive his next environment. And David's natural childish imaginations or reactions, his jealousy, defiance, fear, confusion rage and disgust are given by the author in a fairly objective and convincing way.

This rather detailed and at times even 'realistic' description of the young child finds its end with David's entering into adolescence. Now David's character and his development is not painted any more in those earlier encountered fresh colours. In the following chapters the protagonist appears as a rather superficially described young man and the 'person' David shrinks into a mere narrator. The painful experiences which he still goes through have lost their former actuality and presentness.

Similar to the protagonists in Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby respectively, David does not really show a change of

his inherited and underlying character-pattern. He undoubtedly grows more than his forerunners did into a 'pseudo-maturity', and due to this growth, he is more and more able to correct certain of his former attitudes and ideas, which he now comes to see as having been either immature or plainly wrong. But if the novel deals at all with the hero's character-change, it does so in an almost unperceivable way.

Much more obviously the novel is dedicated to the theme of education - reminding the reader thus strongly of Nicholas Nickleby - and its influence on the child's development. David's 'progress' and 'development' is quite certainly not the result of an inner strength of the hero's own; his own efforts don't have the necessary force to change him or his environment, but this 'progress' is mainly due to the influence that education exerts on him.

Whereas the cruel and tyrannic educational attempts of Mr. Murdstone had no lasting influence on David's further development, the warm-hearted and humane one of Aunt Betsey shows early and long-lasting effects. Under her guidance his formerly 'undisciplined' heart is changed into a 'disciplined' one. And this 'disciplined' heart, described by Dyson, has to be understood in the following way:

"...one must learn a higher wisdom of the heart if he would achieve inner strength and peace. The good heart must have no 'alloy of self', must love humanity as well as persons. It must be self-reliant and possess constancy and fortitude in order to be strengthened, not conquered or merely softened, by adversity or sorrow.

The good heart must learn the nature of 'real truth and love' in order to overcome 'evil and misfortune in this world'." 37)

This 'disciplined' heart makes him see himself and his environment in a more objective way. Thus he ends up being the 'fine firm fellow'.

But this education which David experiences under the care of Aunt Betsey does not succeed in creating a force inside the hero himself, which allows and enables him to be more active on his own, to take by himself important decisions. He is not 'firm' enough, in spite of all his education, to take his life entirely into his own hands, he has to wait for Agnes's letter to be able to undertake his 'final' step, which has to be seen in their marriage.

Thus David remains, rather similar to Oliver, up to the end of this novel, a somehow 'blocked' person. Undoubtedly he shows reactions when being confronted with the presence of adversity, cruelty or sadism - more than any of his predecessors were able to demonstrate -, but he as well depends on 'outer' help to overcome certain of those situations and obstacles. Thus it can be maintained that though David is obviously more personalized than either Oliver or Nicholas, he all the same is - deep inside - still rather inflexibly helpless and inactive.

Contrary to Oliver or Nicholas, David can not be seen as a personification of a virtue, such as 'goodness' or 'warmheartedness'. Though the reader is quite surely prepared to believe in David's essential goodness, he easily realizes, that the hero's character is penetrated with a fairly strong sense of the protagonist's blindness and inadequacy. As David's stuffiness about Dora for example shows, he is, at least at times, an even quite deplorable character. He does not stand throughout the novel on

the ground of pure goodness, but is at times tempted from the path of righteousness. Thus the reader's sympathies will not always be unconditionally on David's side. Unlike Oliver or Nicholas, this protagonist is obviously not any more this unfallibly 'good character'.

David, being undoubtedly more than only a pleasant but superficial hero, is - as illustrated above - much more personalized or individualized in his presentation than any of his forerunners were. But the protagonist still does not show deep inner conflicts, resulting in the hero's at least limited change of character. David does not have any more a solely representative function - which was so characteristic for Oliver, Smike and Nicholas - but, on the other hand, his character obviously still does not find a truly psychologically analytic description. Dickens does not allow for a - at least limited - new composition of David's character. The protagonist's deep and inherited character-structures remain being what they have been from the very beginning onwards - only the scope of nuances in his depiction, his surface-appearance, gets wider with the development of the novel.

The realism encountered in David Copperfield is of a basically different kind than the one seen either in Oliver Twist or in Nicholas Nickleby. In Dickens's third 'child-novel' there are no tracable references to the current historical reality and to well-known places to be found. The local realism encountered in this novel is one of neither general knowledge nor of general interest - but only one that is based on Dickens's own life and which is detectable in his autobiographical material.

Instead of producing the novel's 'realistic flair' through those factual elements - as in the two earlier 'child-novels' - Dickens uses here the devices of a normal language and a rather convincing character-presentation to reach this effect.

The social criticism encountered in David Copperfield is obviously of a weaker kind and quality than the one seen either in Oliver Twist or in Nicholas Nickleby. Contrary to those fore-runners the references to contemporary public institutions and their criticism are of a very limited kind in Dickens's third novel, not reflecting any more the author's formerly visible fervour. Now Dickens - more perceptibly than in the earlier novels - mixed very much social criticism with personal emotions, or, what comes to the same thing, he projected very much his personal emotions into the critique of society. For whatever reason, Dickens is somehow retreating from the directness of the accounts quoted in his earlier novels.

A further difference between Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby and David Copperfield has to be seen in the fact that now, in his third novel, the encountered misery is not any more created mainly by public and inhumane institutions but, instead, by the acts of individual people. Thus Dickens narrows here his formerly much broader social criticism in and focuses, finally, mainly on the discussion and criticism of education and its social implications. As in Nicholas Nickleby, Dickens accuses here the frequently practised utilitarian or scholastic education of very young children, and like in the former novel the author speaks out against the attempts of pressing young children at their

earliest age possible into a function, not allowing for the child's free and normal development - actually 'dehumanizing' the the child.

In David Copperfield Dickens elucidates his position against child-work rather strongly, unmatched by similar elements found in the earlier novels. He lets David appear as Mr. Micawber's 'junior', a young child who has no free and 'normal' childhood, but who finds himself already at a very - and much too - early age involved in economical processes.

But, besides those few examples, David Copperfield is surprisingly mute as far as the accusation of social abuses is concerned. Actually Dickens's reflections on society show in this later work an attitude which could almost be called an anti-social one. More than in any novel before, David now expresses vehemently the shame and horror he had suffered from - not too dirty or too hard - manual work and does not show, within the entire novel, a mature idea about work. He had realized that purposeful, disciplined and resolute work does not help to materialize desires and that work, as it is shown in his relationship with Dora, actually might be of a very misleading quality, distancing the person further from the real fulfillment of his aspirations. David does, and expressedly wants to, retire finally in a comfortable life, with an easily earned income - an aim which seems to find the author's full consent. David, even more than his fore-runners, is clearly a potential burger once his personal needs are fulfilled.

David Copperfield, reflecting basically and clearly the mid-Victorian optimism, painting the picture of the good-old 'merrie England', a picture that stands sharply against the depiction

of the reality encountered by the vast majority of the population, can not be called a 'progressive' book, and it does not make much sense to talk of Dickens here as an incipient socialist. More than in his former novels his 'anti-social' and 'anti-modern' conviction finds expression in this novel. Seeing only private charity as the solution of and for all social ills and problems, Dickens turns in David Copperfield out to be deeply separated and divided from any contemporary social movement, that tried to instal the government's social responsibility.

5. GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Great Expectations, the fourth and the last of Dickens's novels which introduces a child as its main character, shows in its form as well as in its content a rather close connection with David Copperfield, and a fair number of items encountered in Great Expectations are - at least unconsciously - repetitions of the former novel. Whereas the publications of Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby overlapped each other in their productions, thus explaining easily for the frequent similarities found between them, a rather long period of time - almost twenty years - lies between the writing of David Copperfield and Great Expectations, respectively, not allowing thus an as simple explanation as given in the first case. But the close connections between the two novels are obvious, being partly of an elementary kind, more basic than the simple formal fact that both novels are written in the 'first person'. But, despite those frequent elements of similarity encountered in Great Expectations, this later work elucidates all the same certain very basic differences in comparison with its direct forerunner. Undoubtedly, the later one is by far of a much grimmer nature - perhaps even the grimmest novel that Dickens ever wrote - and does not offer any of those 'comic' elements, which are so well-known from the other novels examined so far. But this leaving out of 'comic' elements does not mean that Great Expectations is written without the author's 'fine' humour, though this humour does not in any situation reach the dimension of 'comic'. In this novel the encountered humour is solely based on rather simple physical descriptions and these descriptions provide little more than vignettes, and although Dickens had not lost his ability to catch a figure or a gesture with a

photographic 'quick stroke', those passages now appear only in isolation, 'a scene here, a character there, a stray passage occasionally'. 1)

Often Great Expectations is called Dickens's most mature piece of work and many critics maintain that this novel has more than David Copperfield the claim to greatness as a work of art. 2) Supporting this evaluation, F.R. Karl points out that it is rather perceivable that the close plotting gives Great Expectations a unity and a coherence foreign to David Copperfield, which was, with its string of rather randomly arranged episodes and events, actually a 'throwback' to the episodic narratives of earlier fiction. 3)

One of the basic differences between David Copperfield and Great Expectations, perhaps the most important one, is well-expressed by Forster, who says that David Copperfield is closer to the facts of Dickens's life, but that Great Expectations is closer to his spirit. 4) And Pickrel, who points into the same direction, calls this novel 'a kind of the author's symbolic autobiography'. 5)

Melodramatic Quality

As in David Copperfield, Dickens has not totally abandoned melodrama in his later work, though the 'first person' point of view vitally affects, as already shown in the above given discussion on David Copperfield, the melodramatic aspect of this novel as well. But, contrary to David Copperfield, the mere number of 'potential' - though not materialized - melodramatic speeches

found in Great Expectations is by far larger than the number found in its forerunner. This augmentation is mainly due to the fact that the adult Pip - contrary to the adult David - is now able to see his own situation as the young protagonist in retrospect in, at times, very melodramatic terms. Whereas the original 'child-scenes' in Great Expectations are almost completely free of melodramatic devices, or even devices that only have a slight melodramatic touch, it is now the grown-up narrator who has acquired the capacity to express himself in a truly melodramatic way, reflecting on the events that happened in his childhood, long after the events in question actually occurred. This capacity is based on the adult Pip's 'wisdom', achieved through consciously made experiences and his final loss of illusions.

The following example clarifies this statement: When Magwitch returns from his transportation he makes himself known to Pip as his unknown benefactor. Magwitch's own language is very direct, sincere, even crude and lacks completely any melodramatic devices - devices as formerly savely encountered in those revelation-scenes. The remarks that the then still young Pip is able to make in response are rather empty, simple, even foolish. He does not appear as the - perhaps expected - eloquently verbal hero but, instead, he is simply at first puzzled and apprehensive, and subsequently horrified at Magwitch's disclosures. In his then directly given answer there are no devices of an elaborate or highly stylized language to be found - but only the simple and very 'natural' words spoken by a rather fearful adolescent, reflecting his inner insecurity. However, the mature, adult Pip, looking back on this searing revelation-scene, now structures

his response in a clearly melodramatic language, elaborate and highly stylized, organizing his thoughts much more artfully now than he actually had been able to do at exactly the time when the event happened.⁶⁾ The actual scene in itself, happening to the young Pip, though powerful and potentially melodramatic, can not be understood as a melodramatic one. Pip, the adolescent, was then simply not able to articulate himself in those terms he devices much later in his life, and does not allow this scene - like many other ones - to reach its potential melodramatic dimension.

The only - 'seemingly' - melodramatic speech that the young Pip makes in the entire novel is when, having decided to shed his expectations, he comes to say good-bye to Estella and Miss Havisham at Satis House.⁷⁾ But it is in a way that is obviously very inappropriate and unnatural for an adolescent of Pip's qualities and that stands in a sharp contrast with Pip's already manifested behaviour and character, he tells Estella in a very elaborate way - now that there is apparently no chance whatever of a future match between them - that he loves her, and, inflamed by her icy indifference and by Miss Havisham's remorseful attitude, he moves, step by step, in his chosen language toward a purely melodramatic and climatic farewell-speech with which the scene ends.

Estella, the novel's heroine, quite obviously never allows herself to express any of her 'feelings' - it is doubtful whether she has any - in a way which could at least reflect a faint touch of melodrama. Though she employs herself frequently and eloquently in elaborate rhetorical questions and highly pattern-

ed and stylized sentences, she always maintains her basically icy composure throughout the novel, not allowing thus any of the potentially melodramatic scenes in which she finds herself, to reach a truly melodramatic dimension.

The only person in Great Expectations who clearly carries her conception the 'melodramatic force' is Miss Havisham. But even she, though allowing for frequent, but only fragmentary, exclamations, however heartfelt, lacks finally the emotional expansiveness that would qualify the respective scenes as melodramatic ones. The only scene in which she almost reaches the true melodramatic stage is found near the novel's ending. Here Miss Havisham recognizes her guilt, admits that she has gravely erred in her cruel manipulation of Estella, but, though deeply moved, she is simply too inarticulate to let this scene develop and reach a genuinely melodramatic dimension. ⁸⁾ Though this scene is undoubtedly - seen from its mere structure - a highly potential and powerful melodramatic one and though Miss Havisham is one of the novel's 'arch-villains', she herself obviously does not have the potential to rise up to a melodramatic speech. Contrary to Dickens's earlier villains, those encountered mainly in Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby and similar to those found in David Copperfield, Miss Havisham is astonishingly mute in this crucial scene, unable to put her feelings forward in a fluent, coherent, dramatic and elaborate language, which in other definitely non-melodramatic scenes is so typical of her.

It can be maintained that the melodramatic speeches encountered in Great Expectations are kept under the author's very close and careful control. They don't have any more any of those

'Elizabethan effects', they don't remind the reader at all any more of the Shakespearian melodramas, as the first two examined novels clearly had and did. And obviously Dickens intended not to let the in this novel surely existing potentially melodramatic scenes gather this force. Most of those scenes are deliberately 'blocked', principally by the respective character's inability to express himself/herself in a fluent and elaborate way. The actually realized melodramatic speeches, few they are compared to Dickens's earlier books, are now, contrary to most of those, very delicately tailored and artistically inserted into this last novel, thus preventing the reader from perceiving these scenes as too obtrusive.

'Fairy-Tale'

Whereas David Copperfield was almost completely free of any 'fairy-tale' elements - thus differing in its conception basically from Dickens's earlier two here examined novels - , Great Expectations offers a clear atmosphere of a fairy story. Reminding the reader very much of a conventional 'fairy tale', this fourth of Dickens's 'child-novels' reflects throughout its run terror. The scene of Pip with Mr. Magwitch at the very beginning of the novel - Magwitch forcing Pip to steal for him - is indicative of the terror a small, helpless boy would feel in a fairy tale or in a horrible nightmare. This 'evil' atmosphere pervades the novel, surfacing at times in a graspable form, as in the hulks, Magwitch himself, the deserted brewhouse etc. The terror, Pip's own nightmarish anxieties, is ever-present in Great Expectations, the disclosure of a mysterious - and certainly not always a purely 'good' - secret or the imminence of something to be re-

vealed permeates the novel. Furthermore reminding us strongly of a fairy-tale is the fact that the novel offers temptations which can not be refused easily or which entail the kind of denial no human being is normally strong enough to give and, though apparently of great profit, those temptations contain a destructive element that will harm the person who could not resist its temptation. Another true fairy-tale element can be found in Dickens's simple division of his world into 'good' and, respectively, 'bad' characters. In this 'black-and-whitely' painted world it is mainly Joe Gargery who is opposed by Orlick. In Orlick we find all the undefined evil of Dickens's world concretized. He is the 'black' character, the personified lawlessness, the instinct of aggression and destruction, the daemon, the unmotivated hate. Joe, the 'white' and totally 'good' character, on the other hand, is the saintly simpleton of the folk, the personification of unqualified love, of love without reservation, of strength and gentleness, he is the embodiment of honest labour, the real 'gentleman' in this book. ⁹⁾ And, finally, perhaps most convincingly speaking for the influence of the fairy-tale conventions on Great Expectations, Pip's expectations can only be materialized within the framework of a fairy-story. His expectations depend - quite obviously - on a miracle. But then he is suddenly the heir of a large fortune which will raise him socially, making thus his most daring - and rather ridiculous - dreams come true. This miracle finds Dysons following comment: "In Dickens's modification of the folk pattern of the fairy wishing, Magwitch is Pip's 'fairy-godfather', who changes the pumpkin into a coach." ¹⁰⁾

But Dickens, though obviously allowing for fairy-tale elements as shown in the paragraph above, does not create a long-lasting and consistent fairy-tale world in Great Expectations. For as soon as it seems possible, the reality of the social world destroys this image, because Pip - as well as the reader - learns that the money that fulfills apparently all of Pip's hopes comes from a criminal who - perhaps with good intentions - is using Pip to gain as well for himself 'vicarious' respectability. II)

And though, mainly in 'non-romantic' ways, fairy-tale elements appear rather frequently in this novel, the structure of Great Expectations does not match with the patterns of a truly conventional or crude fairy-story, insofar as the hero, Pip, is not at all painted in those brilliant and shiny colours, which are usually encountered in the depiction of a real fairy-tale hero. Pip does not resemble deeply the popular, romantic 'suitor' and Estella, at first the inaccessible heroine, does not finally join the hero in a traditional, 'everlasting' love union. Dickens obviously - and by using rather strong devices of 'disillusionment' - refused to write Great Expectations as a novel of such a traditional kind. The story's ending, in spite of many fairy-tale elements in its run, is not a romantic and happy one, because the hero, when he recovers from all his made experiences, is not at all the 'radiant' hero the reader knows from the tales. He is a 'new' man, serious, responsible and penitent - but, contrary to any typical fairy-tale's ending, he is utterly alone and a complete physical wreck.

Autobiographical Influence

Great Expectations, unlike David Copperfield, shows only a very weak use of 'obvious' and savely detectable autobiographical material. Actually, it is only Estella who can be, with high certainty, rediscovered in the author's material. Estella, being the first effective presentation of a sexually attractive girl in any of the novels examined so far, is in her depiction quite obviously based upon the Irish actress Ellen Ternan, who eventually became Dickens's mistress. ¹²⁾ As F.R. Karl puts it: "Pip's desire for Estella coincides roughly with Dickens's in his own affair with Ellen Lawless Ternan - it is a love as selfish as his desire to be a gentleman." ¹³⁾

But, like David Copperfield, Great Expectations also deals in a fairly extensive way with Dickens's own past. David Copperfield is, obviously, a closer account of the author's personal life than the later novel, but each, although in different ways, reveals the shames and guilts that Dickens felt when he looked back into his past.

The trait of Pip's character, that is most often remarked by critics, is the protagonist's tendency toward snobbery. In fact, this snobbery may very well lead to a different and deeper level, involving the author's own personality. Pip's snobbery, his only very brief reflections on his laborious youth as a blacksmith's apprentice, perhaps is based on the fact that Dickens himself, even as a grown-up person, was very anxious to bury, or at least to conceal, beneath his rather extrovert personality, the traumatic experiences he had to make as a boy, having to

work in a blacking factory. Pointing into this direction, P. Hobsbaum maintains: "Just as Dickens preferred to forget the low antecedents of his family, so Pip, in his affluence, turns his back on his friends. Just as Dickens moved in, but was never part of, a glittering social milieu, so Pip, in polite society, skates over profound social unease." 14)

Thus it can be maintained that Great Expectations, although obviously less explicit in presenting details from Dickens's personal life than David Copperfield, carries over anxieties and fears which are very firmly embedded in the author's mind, while the novel is surely avoiding, for the most part, to directly retell past events. Great Expectations thus seems to be a kind of the author's 'symbolic autobiography', an autobiography that is not meant to be read like his 'factual' one, revealing indirectly the author's most hurting and best-concealed personal experiences, 15) or, as P. Hobsbaum puts it, "a sustained exercise of self-castigation" 16) Due to that, F.R. Karl maintains that Great Expectations, compared with any other earlier novel examined here, appears "to have been mined from deeper material, and the ore accordingly seems far richer." 17)

Character-Presentation

In the beginning of the novel the protagonist, Pip, is introduced as a little boy, seven years of age, an orphan, who is brought up by his twenty years older sister and her husband, the blacksmith Joe. The educational methods applied by his sister are very crude, hard and reflect her lack of understanding for the little boy. Similar to the heroes in Dickens's former

novels, little Pip finds himself as well in a 'situation of misery' - though not mainly a material one. It is the lack of feelings on his sister's side that produce his misery - symbolically she habitually wears an apron, stuck full of needles and pins and does that not offer warmth and protection. But though the early childhood of the novel's hero is not a favourable, a 'good' one, he being bullied by his sister and her friend respectively, mistreated and misunderstood, his misery is not, compared to Oliver's, complete and totally 'dark', because the blacksmith, Joe, who is a very gentle person, protects little Pip from his sister's wrath. In Joe Pip finds a friend and a confidant, on whom he relies and clings with an honest and childish affection.

Pip, living in a cut-off village in the featureless marshes, leads thus a rather unexciting but 'bearable' life - until he encounters Magwitch. This chance-encounter breaks into the protagonist's development and is a truly traumatic experience for the young child. Magwitch, the escaped convict, shivering with age and starving, adrift on the marshes, scares the boy into stealing him some food and drink from his sister's kitchen and - furthermore - a file from Joe's shed to open his irons.

Though the scene of 'stealing' itself does not show a real compassion on the boy's part, it turns out to be an experience, which Pip can not forget. It is mainly the theft of the file that provokes the boy's feelings of guilt. Thus the protagonist enters, for the first time in his life, into a personal conflict, which affects deeply his inner balance of feelings. Pip, during the following night, is literally torn to and fro from his considerations of whether he should or not tell Joe about the theft he has committed. He fears he might be punished, might

lose his only friend's confidence and thus, finally, decides on not telling him. ¹⁸⁾ But he can not easily forget what he had done to his friend and though he calms down soon, trying to forget the experience, again and again he is reminded of this theft.

A fairly long period of time follows during which Pip again lives a completely withdrawn life in the tiny village, learning - with enthusiasm - the blacksmith's trade. And since he obviously can not get into touch with the 'outer' world, with 'Society', that way, 'Society' itself has to impinge upon him. And it does so through Miss Havisham, a 'Lady', living near the village. Her immediate motive is to find a boy to play with her lovely, young niece, Estella. It is the dull nature of Pip's existence, "that renders him curiously vulnerable to overtures from outer spheres." ¹⁹⁾ And thus, under the influence of Miss Havisham and Estella, Pip now starts a very rapid development of his 'view' - up to now more than limited - which is decisive for his future life. Pip himself, after his first visit in 'Satis House' already feels that this event is of a great bearing on his future: "That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me." ²⁰⁾ Surely he still has no clear idea of the nature and the further implications of these 'great changes', he is mainly excited, being directly confronted with a 'new' world, of which he had no knowledge whatsoever. The immediate and direct change in him is provoked by Estella's remark that he is only an ordinary and common blacksmith's child, has rough hands and uncouth boots. Pip had, up to this very moment, never thought about his social status, but the open contempt, which

Estella's remark reflects, makes him be more aware of his social position and of social reality in a wider sense. Pip describes his immediate reaction as follows: "I had never thought of being ashamed of my hands before, but I began to consider them a very indifferent pair. Her contempt for me was too strong, that it became infectious, and I caught it." 21)

A growing discontent about himself and about his previous existence gains form and force inside him and Pip starts feeling ashamed of himself, his occupation and - mainly - of his friend and foster-father Joe. "I am afraid I was ashamed of him - when I saw that Estella stood at the back of Miss Havisham's chair, and that her eyes laughed mischievously." 22)

From now on onwards there is in the formerly absolutely inexperienced and 'blind' - but rather content - Pip a disposition toward discontent with his lot. Before he had met Miss Havisham and Estella, his future life had been based entirely on his idea, his rather enthusiastically followed destination, to become a blacksmith, like Joe. But now it became too obvious for him that Estella would never accept him, as long as he kept his low social status. The decision to give up his former ambitions - and, mainly, his former friend - is not an entirely easy one and Pip goes through his second deep inner conflict, his second, hurting personal crisis. But, finally, he decides on giving up his former life, his former friend, and follow the direction indicated by Miss Havisham and Estella: "I remember that when I got into my little bedroom, I was truly wretched and had a strong conviction on me that I should never like Joe's trade. I had liked it once, but once was not now." 23)

Miss Havisham and Estella, respectively, had shown Pip a glimpse of 'Society' which was far beyond the narrow limitations of his previous life. Having had no experiences of this 'Society' so far being utterly ignorant and blinded by all its glitter - thus not seeing or even suspecting its falsity - Pip begins to aspire to that form of life. Miss Havisham allows Pip - quite deliberately and maliciously - to make his great, unfounded and immature assumption that she is his 'Patron', the 'good-angel', destined to remove him from his former life and, above all, from his former social class. Thus Pip follows her blindly, "only too ready to be her dupe".²⁴ Miss Havisham not only succeeded in shaping Estella as a - physically as well as emotionally - 'frigid' instrument of destruction, but also in making young Pip discontented, and not just with his home, but also with himself as well. He now feels nothing but disgust for his trade, his indentures - and even for his kind friend and master. The gap between Pip and Joe is widening constantly. Pip, in his last - certainly only half-hearted attempt to keep his friendship - tries to 'educate' Joe, tries to make him less ignorant and common. But he does not really want to help Joe, but mainly himself. This attempt is based on his now strongly developed egoism - he wants Joe to be worthier of his own company and less open to Estella's reproach. But Pip's efforts are in vain. Joe does not want - and obviously can not - change basically and young Pip decides on breaking out of his limited existence, leaving behind his former life and friend and his commonness.

The encounter with Miss Havisham opened Pip sufficiently enough to receive yet another 'emissary' from the far-away 'Society', Mr. Jaggers, the lawyer from London. This 'gentleman', who has a rather dirty business, but who is neither kind nor wicked, who once had his

dreams but who now only is an agent payed for any kind of service, helps Pip further to develop his vague ideas and aspirations and supports him firmly in his decision to become a 'gentleman'. Young Pip at that time probably had no clear idea of what it meant to be a 'gentleman' but he is inflamed, infected and he happily, full of great expectations, sets out to London as a typical 'picaresque adventurer'.

Arriving in London, young Pip is rather disappointed. The town itself he finds ugly, crooked, narrow and dirty - far from being the splendid place he thought it was. His new life is now one of idleness and rapidly increasing debts. He wastes his time mainly in pointless chats or in the 'Finches of the Grove'. Perpetually he dances attendance on Estella, who is - now more than ever before - the luminary of his desires. He lives his aspirations - still not realized by him as false and empty ones - and his ideal of life concretizes itself more and more as the ambition to live on an - if possible - unearned income. Soon he is the true parasite, not following any profession, not doing anything to earn his living, only spending carelessly the money that his unknown benefactor provides him with.

This state of idleness, of snobbery, affects Pip's inner-self strongly and directly. His heart, basically a good but a totally 'undisciplined' one, hardens, his egoism and his self-centredness gain increasingly force. This transformation of the protagonist's original character finds its climax when Joe announces his visit to London. The gap between Pip and his former friend has meanwhile widened so much that Pip sees no way of bridging it any more. He is now not only ashamed of Joe's commonness, his

simplicity, but obviously he is full of anger, perceiving Joe as a simple disturbance, perhaps even as a menace, who brings back the unpleasant memories of his past into his new life and who might thus affect Pip's further life as a gentleman in a negative way:

"Let me confess exactly, with what feelings I looked forward to Joe's coming. Not with pleasure, though I was bound to him by so many ties; no; with considerable disturbance, some mortification, and a keen sense of incongruity. If I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money." 25)

In his new life Pip seems to have lost the capacity to see the other people's inner values and judges them merely by their outer appearances, their social skills, their eating- and table-manners. Joe, feeling this transformation of Pip's former character, is nervous, insecure and shyly addresses him as 'Sir'. Later, when Joe is gone, Pip feels ashamed of himself. But this regret is only of a weak and short nature and his shame does not produce an inner crisis. Estella's and Miss Havisham's influence make him forget this 'unpleasant' incident very soon. Though he had intended to visit Joe on his next journey to 'Satis House', they convince him - easily - that this would not be a wise and profitable step to make. Later, the mature Pip writes about it in the following words:

"I never thought there was anything low and small in my keeping away from Joe, because I knew she (Estella) would be contemptuous of him. It was but a day gone, and Joe had brought the tears into my eyes; they had soon dried, God forgive me! soon dried." 26)

But Pip's life as a gentleman, his life of idleness, snobbery, egoism and egotism, does not make up his whole character, and Miss Havisham's and Estella's poisoning influence can not completely paralyze the protagonist's inner forces, springing from his still living original 'good heart'. Very slowly Pip, by himself, realizes the negative effects which his present way of life have on his own personality, and sees how misleading his 'great expectations' actually are: "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." 27)

The first impulse that indicated this still existing 'goodness' of Pip's character became obvious through Joe's visit to London. Pip, having mistreated his old friend, feels afterwards - though only briefly - honest shame about his own performance.

Not long after this event a second - and stronger - movement of his almost buried good character makes Pip aware of his own transformation. His friend, the young gentleman Herbert Pocket, who is, in many ways the gentleman Pip ought to be and with whom gentility comes by nature, is misled by Pip's 'generous' way of spending money and finds himself soon in deep financial troubles. Pip, feeling that his friend's plight is actually mainly his fault, tries to help him by engaging some part of his 'income' to become partner in Herbert's shipping firm. He does not have any future business in mind, just simply wants to help, and thus this step is to be seen as Pip's first reaction against his egoism. The pleasure he gives to his friend creates in him - for the

first time in his new life - a feeling of deep satisfaction:
"I did really cry in good earnest when I went to bed, to think
that my expectations had done some good to somebody." 28)

The next visible sign of the protagonist's growing maturity of his redevelopment of his original 'goodness', has to be seen in his changing attitude toward Magwitch at the very time that the latter is no longer Pip's benefactor, no longer able to help him. Magwitch, actually, has now become a burden for Pip. When Magwitch turns out to be the source of Pip's 'great expectations', when Pip has to realize that it was the convict, who had been for so long his unknown benefactor, Pip, at first, feels nothing but disgust for the man and his revolting habits - mainly his table-manners. The convict now has been sentenced for innumerable crimes, has been transported for life - but has risked his life to come back and see 'his' gentleman. Ill and despaired, he fearfully tries to win Pip's affection. Pip only feels revulsion for Magwitch, but an inner voice tells him that he now has to help the old man and Pip, very hesitatingly in the beginning, is eventually prepared to disguise him, to hide him and, furthermore, lays plans for smuggling him out of the country - risking thus all that he had 'achieved' so far in his new life. Soon he comes to feel pity for Magwitch, and it is not only the feeling one has for any suffering creature, but a very personal one for the convict.

The attempt to smuggle Magwitch away fails and the man is severely injured in his recapture. Pip, sitting by his bed, realizes now that the convict, who had been sustaining him for so long without claiming anything back but affection, deserves more than

his mere pity - deserves his true gratefulness. This feeling, one that Pip had not felt for years, is a reaction that indicates clearly the change in Pip's character. Following words spoken by the protagonist signify that his underlying 'goodness' is - quite steadily and significantly - gaining force:

"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 constantly through a series of years. I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe." 29)

The convict dies before his execution, his possessions are forfeit to the Crown and Pip, thus, loses his 'income'. He now can not sustain his social appearance any more and confides to his friend Herbert: "I am heavily in debt - very heavily for me, who has now no expectations - and I have been bred to no calling, and I am fit for nothing." 30)

In recognizing this, Pip has at least learned at last the beginnings of purpose and self-respect. Through those events, through his change of feeling toward the renegade criminal and his realization of what he really is, an incisive indication is given that the protagonist's sympathies, his human feelings, are growing again and that he now loses gradually his self-destructive egoism. Pip realizes that his expectations were only an illusion and, when his artificially constructed world breaks to pieces, the hero has the force and the courage to see his reality, his position, with a clear and realistic eye, saying: "...it was not until I began to think, that I began fully to know how wrecked I was, and how the ship in which I had sailed was gone to pieces." 31)

But the protagonist's final redevelopment of his 'good heart' is not based on Pip's own mental and moral decisions - but is due to his grave illness, which befalls him shortly after Magwitch's death. And only through this illness the hero regains his 'moral freedom'. In other words, this illness purifies him of his false aspirations, brings him finally back to reality. The purging quality of his brain fever, which 'burns out' his former immature and false assumptions, takes the form of a 'restorative quest', which at first weakens him, bringing him very close to death, before passing him through toward a new life. Pip is brought back to vitality by the care of Joe, the 'good man', the perhaps even 'Christly figure', who ministers to him throughout his long illness. "Through Joe, Pip is put in touch with the forces which constitute the sole thing that can save him: he must return to the loving fold of those who have decency and compassion. Only Joe can warm up the heart frozen by contact with Miss Havisham and Estella." 32)

When Pip returns to life, reborn, so to speak, he is no longer the Pip of 'gentlemanly pretensions'. His 'great expectations' no longer exist and all those connections with his former life died or disappeared. Now Pip is strong enough to ask forgiveness of Joe and to undergo the humility of being forgiven. And perhaps it is this step that actually signifies the hero's development towards maturity. Pip can now again embrace Joe and Biddy, and, moreover, Pip's good deed for Herbert Pocket provides him with the means of economic regeneration through hard work and application. What Pip expects now is much reduced. Life in the future means only small expectations to him. Pip, who had been ready to sacrifice himself, his life, for snobbery, is eventually

saved. He can be redeemed because he is young and was born with a 'good heart' - thus he can be re-educated. Through his illness the protagonist has grown up, to a certain extent 'matured', into the realization "that he himself had been transplanted out of an honest calling into a set of false hopes in a hollow Society and is consequently fit for nothing - how much better, then, to be, like Joe, master of a trade." 33)

The tragic workings of this novel demand that Pip loses his social and, as well, his personal innocence. The illness is for Pip a transition into 'right' experience, and the crucial step toward emotional and intellectual development. Pip lost thus his innocence and gained his 'maturity' - not any more confusing love with passion, respectability with snobbery, pride with vanity. And it is his now achieved 'maturity', that enables him to finally come to terms with himself in respect to Estella. Pip, having lost his source of income, his social status, his gentlemanly appearance, is no match for the heroine any more. But the breaking-up of the relationship between Estella and Pip is not based entirely on the heroine's withdrawal but - at least to a certain extent - also on Pip's realization of the true foundation that this 'union' was based on. He now sees, very clearly, that, having been the 'innocent' young man, he had confused love with passion, that his love had been lacking in joy and selflessness, that it had been, in other words, the love of a yet 'incomplete' person and thus a selfish one. He now realizes that his 'love' for Estella, attached as it was to the snobbery which made him so miserable, likewise never was a source of true and deep joy but that, instead, his 'love' was mainly sexual passion, even masochism, a response to her sadism, her treatment of him as a 'crude arriviste'

and, as well, to her attractive physical appearance. Pip understands now, that her treatment of him had made him wretched, and that even in her elementary frigidity she had been irresistible for him. This 'love', having been an obviously self-destructive one, had reduced him to a mere 'slave' of his passions, rather than having ever really and satisfactorily fulfilled him. Now that 'sanity' has returned to him, he knows that he has to forsake Estella, associated, as she is, with everything that was previously wrong. Once restored to mental and physical health he only can accept - and give - a love that is true and satisfying and Estella, obviously, thus is not the right match for him.

Summing up the above statements and trying a rather general comparison with Dickens's earlier 'child-novels', it can be maintained that Pip, contrary to all his forerunners, received a very detailed, rounded and fairly convincing presentation - at least, as far as his boyhood and his early adolescence is concerned. The conception of the novel's protagonist now reflects the author's ability to paint the young hero's picture - very consistently - in natural colours, allowing Pip thus to become an almost 'real' person. This hero's presentation shows a nearness of the author to his protagonist's inner self that is - though to different degrees - obviously lacking in his former 'child-novels'. Pip's early experiences, his inner feelings and, particularly his inner conflicts, which lead the protagonist to true and 'real' personal crises, his basic childish ignorance and innocence, his illusionary aspirations and fantasies, his growing discontent and disgust, reflect clearly the author's ability to look deeply inside his hero's character. Thus Pip's presen-

tation - not trying to overvalue Dickens's work - can surely be seen as the author's first novel, which is a really successful 'realistic' one. The illustration and description of the child's inner reality bears actually many and fairly close similarities to the modern psycho-analytic approaches found in literature toward the ending of the nineteenth and, increasingly, in the beginning of the twentieth century. It is worth mentioning that the illustrations of Pip's inner conflicts not only show a deep understanding on the author's part but also that they occupy a rather impressive amount of the novel's space. Thus, for example, Pip's theft and the resulting inner conflicts cover the entire first six chapters of the book.

The presentation of the 'older' Pip, now the gentleman in London, lacks to a certain degree this freshness and nearness. The reflections on the protagonist's inner conflicts and transformations, on his inner development, still are of such a kind and quality that they are undoubtedly superior to and unmatched by any presentation of any protagonist found in the earlier novels, but, as stated already, they are less convincingly analytic than the descriptions encountered in the book's earlier chapters. Pip's presentation surely loses all its 'realistic' and analytic values when the reader comes to know about the protagonist's illness and the effects it has on his further development. Here - and quite unnecessarily - Dickens 'falls back' into his conception of his earlier novels, using an unrealistic 'fairy-tale' element as the technical device to explain Pip's ability and strength to take his 'final step' into his 'maturity'. The hero - rather actively directing his fate in certain situations so far - now does not enter - though due to his former presen-

tation he is undoubtedly able to do so - into his 'maturity' by using his own inner forces, which his 'good heart' provides him with. But, instead, this final transformation of his 'undisciplined' heart into a 'disciplined' one, his step against his assumed egoism and self-centredness, his final step of self-recognition occurs through the burning and purging quality of an 'outside' force, which is his suffered illness - not involving any activity on the hero's part.

Surely this 'fairy-tale' element is an isolated one - actually the only one to be found in the entire novel in connection with the hero's character-presentation - but though the only one, it has a strongly devastating effect inside this otherwise fairly 'realistic' novel. And though the protagonist's presentation after his illness again reaches the 'realistic' dimension encountered before, showing his strength to give up Estrella, his former aspirations and to accept 'reality' as it is, the initial 'realistic flair' of the novel is somewhat diminished, if not actually lost.

But, mainly due to the protagonist's description and presentation in the chapters before his illness, it can all the same - and in a generalizing way - be maintained, that the presentation of the main character encountered in Great Expectation is a rather 'realistic' one, that the hero's inner development, his inner feelings and conflicts, his inner structure finds an analysis which is undoubtedly foreign to the author's earlier novels.

Considering the question of whether the protagonist's character changes in his basic structure - reminding us the fact that such a change did not happen to any of the former heroes -

it can be assumed that Dickens wanted to express with the hero's presentation in Great Expectations his personal opinion that a person's basic personality is shaped - almost completely - in his youth and that it never can and never can be changed. All Pip can do, actually, is to learn from his made experiences, how best to deploy and use the 'talents' and 'weaknesses' that he is born with. Pip bears inside himself - contrary mainly to Oliver and Nicholas - not only the pure 'goodness' but 'weakness' as well; he is, in other words, the first of Dickens's main characters who is born with a certain amount of 'guilt'. The hero is, after all, an ordinary mixed human being, "one more 'Everyman' in the long succession of them that literature has represented." 34)

Every hope of altering his condition that Pip ever entertained is smashed over his head, and the only thing that survives is the affection of those who love him - not for what he aspires to be, but for what he really is.

Pip surely develops in his character and the extent of this development can mainly be measured by the degree to which he finds his own 'world-picture' inadequate with the one encountered in the outside 'real' world, finding himself, finally, in the wrong. But it is not the author's aim to show the protagonist's development away from his original character but to let Pip rediscover and regain - through efforts of his own as well as through 'outer' reeducation - his almost lost inner reality. And thus Great Expectations differs basically from Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby, and to a somewhat lesser degree from David Copperfield, where the main theme seemed to be the mere conservation of those 'noble' and 'good' character-qualities

that the protagonist was born with and never lost in spite of all encountered adversities and sufferings. Compared to these earlier novels, Pip's way, which leads through experiences, crises and sufferings, is much more a way of and toward inner maturation. And, like already seen in David Copperfield, the hero in Great Expectations, as well, does not stand throughout the novel on the ground of 'pure goodness', but he as well quite obviously leaves the 'single path of righteousness' various times. But he finds his way back. Pip has to and does rediscover his original qualities - a very hard and hurting process for the protagonist. He had been misled by illusionary aspirations and expectations that were 'implanted' on him, he - as well as Estella - had been used by forces that he himself could not control and his childhood and adolescence had consequently been destroyed. Once grown-up, he now must begin anew, realizing his burned-out past, to construct a meaningful adult life. But this process does not bring him back to his own childhood-world. Contrary to all his forerunners, who succeeded to end up finally in the place that belonged to them inside society due to their birth, Pip does not manage to return to this place. He does - this damaged gentleman - after having regained his mental and physical health, actually attempt his 'pilgrimage' back - he means to claim Joe as his friend and Biddy as his wife - but he soon has to see that his ending is not a happy but a tragic one. He can never return and though he finds himself finally in the village again, he can not fit easily any more into his childhood-world. He, contrary to Oliver, Nicholas, and mainly David, does not finally return into a 'child-persona', a 'Kindergestalt', but he ends up as a fully grown-up and rather mature hero, standing finally inside a new and realistic world,

which has no close connections any more with his former childhood one. Pip loses, as none of his forerunners did, his social and his personal innocence and he finally realizes that his former innocence - which protected Oliver's, Nicholas's and to a certain extent also David's character from all suffering and adversity - had indeed been a false guide for his life.

Pip's character and his development does not allow him to appear as a 'romantic hero'. He, treated by the author instead as an 'anti-hero', is chastened, frustrated and then reduced to his normal size - more than any of Dickens's other child-heroes was - standing in the end on his own, without real hope, broken, provoking more the reader's pity than his admiration.

Compared in particular to David Copperfield, Great Expectations now introduces a protagonist who is not mainly helpless and/or inactive any more. Pip, like David sees the presence of adversity, cruelty and sadism as well with a very clear eye - though David was, contrary to Pip, already born with this capacity, whereas Pip had to acquire it through experiences. But, much more than his forerunner, Pip now shows rather strong reactions directed against those adverse situations, which not only take a physical but also a moral, an 'inner' form, such as his inner conflicts and inner crises show.

As David was finally 'rescued' by Agnes, Pip's final rescue as well depends on some 'outer' help, which takes in this case the shape of a grave illness. But though this 'outer' help allows Pip to come to a clear vision about his own self and his so far lead life, it does not do so convincingly. Whereas David, without Agnes's help, surely would never have reached his final

destination, Pip, himself, before his illness, already demonstrated a very active process of 'retransformation', of the realization of the 'truth', that the 'outer' help can only be interpreted as an additional - and perhaps rather unnecessary, even 'disturbing' - one. Quite without doubt it would have been possible for the author to have let Pip himself, out of his own force, take this final step. The protagonist showed, before his illness occurred, such clear signs of insights and actually of already beginning changes, that a victory based entirely on his own endeavours would have been - contrary to David - a convincing one. In Pip's development toward maturity the made experiences thus have much more force to lead to understanding and self-realization than it was the case in David Copperfield, where experiences mainly had a purely accumulative function, not providing the hero with the capacity to come to a better understanding of his own personality and his own character and thus not allowing him to attempt his own change. But, as already seen in David Copperfield, this activity and force that Pip actually demonstrates, though supported even by the 'outer' help, does not finally allow for a at least limited new composition or new formation of his basic character-structure. Pip, like David, remains what he has been from the very beginning, finally only rediscovering this inherited character traits.

Had the perspectives of the grown-up author mixed often with those of the young hero in David Copperfield, so that David lost at times his childlike characteristics and became the adult in his child-persona, the reader finds those two perspectives sharply divided in Great Expectations. Here the reflections of the

author are clearly separated from those of the young hero himself, allowing thus for a much more natural and psychologically convincing presentation of the hero as a child and/or adolescent. Due to this kind of presentation, Pip does not have any more, and can not have, a solely or mainly representative function. Being painted in a much more personal or individualized way than his predecessors, Pip now finds an almost truly psycho-analytic description, which does not allow any more to see in the hero a personification of a virtue, an emblem, a function which was so characteristic mainly for Oliver, Smike and Nicholas.

Realism

Great Expectations, similar to David Copperfield, differs in respect to its 'realism' basically from the one encountered either in Oliver Twist or in Nicholas Nickleby. Like its forerunner David Copperfield, this fourth of Dickens's 'child-novels' demonstrates no references to the current historical reality and, furthermore, no local realism of any kind - not even of a merely autobiographical quality - found its application in this novel. Not a single generally known, a notorious place with contemporary allusions is given here, and thus this novel is even less connected to a real local setting than its direct predecessor was. More than David Copperfield this novel demonstrates the author's step away from the earlier technique, employed in Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby, of producing a realistic flair through references to actual political events and places. Even more than in David Copperfield the novel's 'realism' is now based on the chosen language and the description of the

book's main characters. Like in David Copperfield the reader encounters here a language that is almost entirely a simple and 'normal' one, and, due to the fact that the actually materialized melodramatic scenes are few and reflect often the character's verbal inability, there are almost no unnaturally elaborate or highly stylized speeches to be found. It is true that Estella employs a style of expressing herself that is highly elaborate and stylized - but she does so very naturally and unexceptionally 'outside' melodramatic scenes.

The characters, mainly the protagonist himself, are painted in even more colours than those encountered in David Copperfield, showing decisively sharper contours and shades. Thus the people presented in Great Expectations - in general - seem almost to be 'living' people and their depiction does not show a forced deformation of their characteristics in order to fulfil a definite and limited function within the novel, as was very obviously the case in Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby. Here now the characters are surprisingly personalized and individualized and have no connections any more - as it was still to a certain extent the case in David Copperfield - with their early forerunners which were depicted so clearly as 'types'. As in David Copperfield - only to a greater extent - this shift away from historical and local realism toward a verbal one and a realistic, almost psycho-analytic description of the novel's main characters does not at all diminish but, instead, does obviously increase the novel's realistic appearance.

It is worthwhile, in this context, to shed some light on the novel's ending. The original conclusion - not published - was a

tragic one, leaving Pip standing on his own, not finding the way back to the place he came from. But, due to Dickens's publisher, the author had to change this tragic ending into a at least fairly happy one. Estella, attached as she was to the snobbery which made Pip miserable for so long, likewise never a source of joy, turns out to be a young widow at the end of the novel. The reader feels that Pip, having gained his senses, can and must not marry her - even a much chastened Estella, who now finds the following description:

"The freshness of her beauty was indeed gone, but its indescribable majesty and its indescribable charm remained. Those attractions in it I had seen before; what I had never seen before was the saddened and softened light of the once proud eyes; what I had never felt before was the friendly touch of the once insensible hand." 35)

But, against all the structure and all the logic encountered so far in the novel, Pip actually does marry her finally and this 'happy ending' - which has to be seen as the 'illness' as the other main 'fairy-tale'-element of this novel - is completely at variance with and in contradiction to what preceded this event. It speaks strongly against the novel's psychological realism that Pip, having now a clear-eyed view of himself, the world - and Estella, returns to her, knowing that she is a woman who - though much changed now - can not give or accept selfless and true love. This ending, based on Estella's utterly unconvincing transformation, seems to be a falsification of all that has taken place in this book. For it is clear that, after Pip has suffered and been 'cured', he has a heart to compassionate and to forgive - but not a heart to accept another unful-

filled love and all spontaneity of love or passion has been 'beaten' out of him. A final love-union with Estella is thus like the last chord of a melody that is out of tune, a noticeable and unrealistically motivated avoidance of Dickens's original grave and inevitable conclusion, a deformation of his original intention and a change and diminution of the moral impact that this novel originally offered.

Contrary to all former novels examined here, Great Expectations demonstrates furthermore an additional realistic aspect insofar as the protagonist finally accepts 'work'. Pip, contrary to all his forerunners, has no place to retreat to, where he can live on an unearned income or on the fortune that belonged to him but had, temporarily, been stolen by a 'bad' person. He does not find himself in the end enjoying a workless life in the quiet countryside - but, instead, working in a shipping firm, participating thus as a productive element in the construction of 'Society'. He is not the parasite any more which he used to be while having been a 'gentleman', but his realization of the truth implies as well that he finally ends up as a person who assumes economic responsibilities.

Finally, and very briefly, the question is posed of whether or not this sensitive increase in realism means a corresponding decrease in the 'comic fantasy' encountered in this novel. This 'comic fantasy', as seen above, was a quite often employed device in such novels as Oliver Twist or Nicholas Nickleby and a device that was considerably less used in David Copperfield. Great Expectations, even more than its direct forerunner, is a 'dark' book, reflecting a 'grim' nature, a book that has - at least in its

original version - a truly tragic ending. This inner structure as well as its psychological realism does not allow for 'comic' elements, giving thus this novel a heavy and grave atmosphere.

Social Criticism

The social criticism encountered in Great Expectations is of a basically different kind and quality from any in the hitherto examined novels. The most obvious difference between the social criticism found in the latter novel and the one found in the earlier books can be stated in the respective 'situations of misery'. Pip finds himself - like all the Dickensian child-heroes typically do - during his childhood and his adolescence in a 'situation of misery'. But this situation is not basically due to the lack of material possessions. More than seen in any earlier of the 'child-novels, this situation is now not any more the direct or even only indirect result of the effects that the cruel and inhumane contemporary public institutions have on the hero - Pip does not find himself during all his childhood or adolescence in any of them. Thus Dickens abandoned in Great Expectations this formerly frequently employed device of using these institutions as the main means to channel his attacks against 'Society'. Not employing those devices any more the social criticism found in this fourth novel is obviously of a much less direct kind, though - as the following discussion will show - the fervour with which the author leads his attacks has not diminished in its force and deepness.

Of great importance for the reader's perception of the author's social criticism in Great Expectations is the fact that

he has to realize that Dickens's understanding of 'crime' has drastically changed. The reader encounters now - much more clearly expressed than in any of its forerunners - two basic kinds of 'crime'. Those two kinds are, firstly, the crime of parent against child, and, secondly, the calculated social crime.

In Great Expectations the child-parent, or, better, the child-foster-parent situation and relationship is a basically dis-natured and corrupted one - mirroring the reality of the contemporary society in general. This relationship, which is here termed the 'private crime', is most clearly illustrated by the fact that Pip, as well as Estella, are 'used' by their foster-parents. They are, though in different ways and degrees, the rather 'helpless victims' of their respective foster-parents, of those dehumanized, inhumane and dehumanizing forces that they stand for. Due to the children's own dependence, their immaturity and their 'innocence' - here a very relative one - they can not control the influences of those forces on them. They, both, are able to perceive with a very clear understanding their respective situations, expressed in Estella's words directed toward Pip: "We have no choice, you and I, but to obey our instructions. We are not free to follow our own devices, you and I." 36)

The fact that these children now - contrary mainly to Oliver and Nicholas and to a lesser extent contrary to David - see their plight clearly, that they know very well that they, as children, are used by their foster-parents to fulfill a function, that their lives serve as a means to materialize their foster-parents's aspirations, augments the impact of this situation. The formerly encountered heroes found themselves undoubtedly

in similar, comparable situations - but none of them had the capacity to reflect on his respective situation with such a clear eye, with such a clear vision and understanding as either Estrella or Pip do. Whereas those former child-heroes had been rather - or completely - ignorant and unperceiving children, not realizing and not being deeply affected by their at times even more adverse environment, the child-heroes in Great Expectations now are child-victims, and more 'real' victims than any of their predecessors, due to the fact that they perceive the cruel and inhumane situation that they find themselves in.

The process of the hero's and the heroine's conversion, the process of the conversion of their spirits into matter, this process of dehumanization and transformation of human beings into mere function-fulfilling, inanimate instruments, is shown in this novel in its clearest form, working out with an almost 'savage' simplicity, in the case of Miss Havisham, foster-parent to Estrella. Miss Havisham is accused by the author of an insane aggression against human life in general, and she uses as the means of her attacks against the 'hated world' a young child, transforming this into a weapon against a world which once frustrated her and broke her heart.

Dickens here, taking the family as a social organization that reflects in its minuteness the reality encountered in the outside, general society. pronounces - more clearly than in any of his former novels - his deep conviction that 'modern society' has lost its touch with the natural and human life. This novel, as Dyson puts it, thus reflects "Dickens's hysteria submerged in his vision of a nature gone thoroughly wrong." 37)

But the most important and far-reaching change, found here in Dickens's understanding of 'crime' is not to be seen in these distorted and dehumanized child - foster-parent relationships, but, instead, in the connection of the 'private' with the calculated 'social' crime, mainly committed by Magwitch. Great Expectations, for the first time, expresses the author's conviction that the two kinds of crime are actually inherent in and dependent on each other. Thus Dickens allows in this novel for a very convincing and detailed illustration of Magwitch's own past, trying to find the reasons for his transformation into a villain. He ends up showing that Magwitch suffered, as did Pip, from the same brutality, the same neglect, from the fact and consciousness that he as well had been dehumanized, 'thinged', transformed into an inanimate instrument - and this 'situation of misery' that Magwitch had found himself in - quite doubtlessly - is understood by Dickens as Magwitch's main reason, his main drive or motivation, to later turn into a criminal villain.

Complicating the understanding of 'crime' in Great Expectations further, Magwitch takes upon himself the role of foster-father to Pip - and whether, as parent, he acts only in a negative way, using Pip as the instrument to fulfil his own original aspiration of entering 'respectable' Society, an aspiration which he now, being a convict, has no longer a chance to realize, or whether he acts in honest charity, without claiming reward, is a major ambiguity which the novel does not answer fully.

The conception and understanding of 'crime' encountered in Great Expectations, unlike any of its forerunners, does not allow

for a clear, simple and unimpaired black-and-white division and distribution of its characters. Those characters - except for Joe Gargery - are neither painted in a totally white nor in a totally black colour. All of them, whether mainly 'good' or mainly 'bad' characters, show spots - though of different sizes - of the contrary colour in their own conception. Here, in Great Expectations, 'good' and 'bad' are more closely interwoven, interdependent on each other, than in any of the former novels. And, it has to be stressed again, the 'bad', in general, is seen by the author mainly as a quality that is resulting from the respective character's suffering of cruelties and mistreatments, the suffering from his own process of dehumanization and transformation by outer forces into an inanimate instrument. In Great Expectations, now, the crime is evidently seen as a permutation and interconnection of multiple motivations and acts - both private and public ones - and it always shows the same basic tendency to convert a person into a thing. In other words, 'crime' is now understood as the act of a depersonalized, dehumanized being. And the 'crime' encountered in Great Expectations is now more pervasive than the sort found in any of Dickens's earlier novels, due to the fact that the 'crime' here is of a much subtler kind, affecting almost all of the novel's characters, since all of them go through a certain process of depersonalization and dehumanization. 'Crime' is identified by Dickens now in a completely new way, since it is not any more primarily the one of a grown-up person who decides deliberately and consciously to commit wrong, nor is it any more the one that has to be seen as being based on the negative experiences made by the character in any of the contemporary public institutions, but it is now a crime committed by a dehumanized person, a person - and

potentially any person - who is affected and transformed through its contact with society - in its widest sense - ,who is robbed of his human soul and changed into an inanimate, function-fulfilling instrument. Thus the contemporary 'modern society' is attacked by Dickens as a society based almost entirely on utilitarian values, which provokes the transformation of its individual members into 'criminals' of varying qualities and degrees.

But Dickens's understanding of 'crime' reaches a further and another completely new dimension in Great Expectations. Now, for the first time in any of his novels, the author expresses his opinion, that the child itself has to be seen as a potential criminal, having inside itself a 'criminal mind'. This quality has to be understood as being inherited by the child. The child, now, is thus not only responsible any more for what it actually does itself, but also for what has been done by its parents in the past. Those past acts are now, genetically, transmitted on the child. This new understanding of 'crime' somehow gives a new dimension to the criticism of society. Society now has to be seen mainly as the mere 'promotor' of qualities that already exist inside the respective members and not - as mainly seen in the earlier novels - as the 'creator' of many or of all those 'bad' qualities demonstrated by the characters. Through contact with society - bad as it is - the child itself shows a reaction that is an individual one; the reflection of its inner, inherited structure decides on the steps it is going to take as its response, its predetermined inner reality chooses the direction. Pip, contrary to all the former child-heroes in Dickens's novels, has to be seen thus as the first child-character who carries, right from

his birth onwards, the 'negative' element already inside his character-structure, and this 'negative' element is set alive through the hero's encounter with Magwitch, the evil force. Whereas characters like Oliver would not even have been slightly affected in a negative way by such a contact, Pip now, due to his inner reality, shows a quick response and follows quite willingly - knowing that he is leaving this single path of righteousness - for the direction pointed out by the convict. Thus, whereas in his earlier books Dickens was obviously concerned to let his respective hero defend himself against a world, which is 'outside', somehow disconnected from his inner-self, Dickens now puts the hero on the trial and - since this world is no longer disconnected from him but finds, instead, that the person's inner structure is 'responsive' - sees him sadly wanting.

Dickens's social criticism here points out that people, through the mere contact with society, are 'thinged' and that things, objects themselves, are becoming more important than people. (38) But, contrary to this latter novel's forerunners, Dickens now not only shows that people are transformed into things, but, actually, objects themselves are now turned into 'living beings'. There is, for example, a fourposter bed in the inn, where Pip goes to spend the night, which turns itself into a quite despotic monster, straddling the room, "putting one of his arbitrary legs into the the fireplace, and another into the doorway, and squeezing the wretched little washing-stand in quite a Divinely Righteous manner." (39), or there are those houses in London, looking down through the skylight of Jagger's office, "twisting themselves in order to spy on Pip like police agents who presuppose guilt." (40)

This projection of human impulses and qualities upon the non-human, as upon beds, houses, hats and the like, could simply be considered as a stylistic embellishment if, on the other hand, people did not show a reciprocal metaphor. Thus people are frequently described by nonhuman attributes. Often a special and highly exaggerated feature or gesture, a mannerism, comes to stand for the whole person. Jagger's huge forefinger, which he bites and then plunges menacingly at the accused, is a rather dissociated part of his body. Further examples are, among many others, Wemmick's 'post office mouth' or the clockwork apparatus in Magwitch's throat that clicks as if it were going to strike. Bearing in mind that the novel's flair is a predominantly 'realistic' one, it seems to be appropriate to try to find in those projections a deeper meaning that the author expresses here. All these descriptions somehow paint a picture of a demonically motivated world, a world in which 'dark' forces not only operate in and on people but also in things, objects.

This animation of inanimate objects could very well be interpreted - if the Marxist view, that Dickens shows himself here as the explorer of the chasm between the object, the produced, and the human agency, the producer, is not fully accepted - as the author's expression of his vision that this modern society is based on an aggressiveness that has got out of control. The modern times have set alive 'dark' forces, demons - seen by Dickens as forces that are inherent parts of the modern developments and their irresponsibility toward mankind, native elements, glossed and disguised by the undeniable 'glitter' that this development brings. Industrialization and utilitarianism have - according to Dickens - reduced and dehumanized people, have transformed them

into things, have robbed them of their human souls.

This criticism of the effects of the modern times on the members of this society is furthermore illustrated by the fact that 'love' in Great Expectations is not any more - as in the earlier Dickensian novels - a true, selfless and mature one, but 'love' proves here to be a rather sick and insane obsession - mostly a physically motivated one. There is no more the Agnes of David Copperfield, who finally allows for a true and satisfying happy-ending, there is no final full recovery of the hero's original feelings - at least they do not receive an adequate response - instead there is the depiction of a world, which simply lacks those values and qualities. The sole example of true love - characteristically - is the one between Joe and Biddy, a couple who lives far away from the influences of the modern times in a cut-off little village, deep in the marshes, or Wemmick's affair - and he, as well, lives away from the society in his medieval castle, walled-in and protected against any negative influences of those modern times.

Dickens's criticism of the contemporary class-system and the theme of class-consciousness extends - contrary to any of his former novels - deeply into Great Expectations. The kind of morality, given in this novel, is undoubtedly directed against the existing values of the ruling middle-class. Bearing in mind, that by the 1860's Dickens found the bulk of his reading audience in this very middle-class and, furthermore, that Dickens himself was a member of it, Great Expectations, perhaps paradoxically, has to be understood as a novel which attempts to be self-critical, self-reflecting.

The most graspable aims of the middle-class in the 1850's, 60's and 70's, being based on the prevailing utilitarian philosophy that this class had created for its own ends, were mainly economic ones. This period of time, in general terms, could be called the time of 'great achievements' of and for the middle-class, and, connected with an increasing economic strength, the middle-class found itself from the 1850's onwards, in a more and more politically important position. Against this 'progressive' part of the middle-class - many of its members were those 'newly-rich' industrialists - stood, on the other side, that part of the middle-class that still defended - often with fervour - the traditional, the 'aristocratic' values, that this class had entertained during the already long-passed times of Regency. Thus the 'modern' middle-class of the 1850's and onwards has to be seen as a social class that was deeply split into two groups: that is the 'rising', labourious and 'newly-rich' industrialists on the one hand, and on the other those members that still upheld this class's 'aristocratic' flair. And it is this latter group that, still in those late years, fancied the old image of the 'true' gentleman, who, if he had the chance to, should and could, due to his position given to him by birth, live on an 'unearned' income. Dickens, himself not being a member of either of those two groups, contradicts both - that is as well the aims of the 'rising' as those of the 'traditional' class. He values 'sensible' achievements - not exaggerated, almost limitless ones - , he advertises economic restraint, cautions economic humility and, attacking the second group, advises - like Carlyle - to seek satisfaction from work. And, furthermore, he speaks out against the whole entity of the middle-class, its prevailing high self-esteem and its sentiments of superiority in comparison with the

lower social classes by demonstrating in Great Expectations that a decent but low-born individual - like Joe - is more worthy than any foppish young gentleman, illustrated in Pip.

At almost the same time as George Eliot in Adam Bede (1859), Dickens thus - though carefully - redefines the 'true' gentleman, painting him as any decent, generous, selfless and considerate member of society - no matter which his social status is, no matter where birth had placed him in the social spectrum. Dickens actually passes in this novel - even more than Richardson in Pamela - beyond the middle-class into the lower ones to find his 'pure' heroes and heroines, and, due to this fact, he has to be seen in respect to Great Expectations as a truly 'revolutionary' writer, as far as his placing of the 'noble' characters into the existing class-system is concerned.

But, softening this rather radical standpoint, Dickens is anxious to show in Great Expectations that the middle-class itself - naturally - has a fair number of those 'true' gentleman as well. Herbert, Dickens's 'proto-type' of a true middle-class gentleman, is of relatively high birth, he is born a kind and generous person, he is fairly hard-working and thus in many ways the kind of gentleman Pip ought to have been. Symptomatically, Dickens illustrates that Herbert advocates this class's 'modern' attitudes, lacking himself any exaggerated self-esteem. Reflecting his humane impulses, Herbert defies his own rather snobbish milieu by engaging himself to a penniless girl, daughter of an invalid ship's owner. He is being tempted by snobbery as well - through Pip's influence - but he owns an inner strength which is strong enough to make him realize this temptation and step

backwards, rejecting thus obviously the snobbery of the aristocratic elements inside his class.

As mentioned above, Great Expectations, like any of its fore-runners, elucidates the author's criticism of industrialism and utilitarianism - ideas proclaimed by the 'modern' middle-class. Going by far deeper into the criticism of this class now, he expands strongly into the direction of dismantling the middle-class's traditional, aristocratic part and its 'snobbism'. In Great Expectations Dickens now - for the first time - takes a firm position against the idea that a gentleman should, if he has the chance to, live on an unearned income - as Oliver and Nicholas finally did themselves. Pip is thus the author's first hero who actually ends up earning his own living, the first protagonist who does not finally find himself in just this traditional and aristocratic part of the middle-class. Pip, living his life of snobbery, very soon comes to realize that this 'aristocratic' form of life is a basically empty and hollow one, transforming the affected person into a mere social parasite. His transformation into a gentleman, as Miller puts it, "only plunges him into deeper disquietude and weariness of spirits - deeper because he is even further than ever away from the discovery of some externally imposed duty which will tell him what to do and who he is." ⁴¹⁾ But Pip, growing toward maturity, realizes this falseness and the fact that he had been transplanted out of a modest but honest calling into a set of false hopes in a hollow society and that, consequently, he is finally fit for nothing.

But Dickens, presenting his character Pip, does not speak out

against the middle-classes in general and in an indiscriminate way. He limits his criticism of this class in Great Expectations mainly to its 'snobbish' element. Pip, positively, has gained through his contact with this middle-class a wider and deeper knowledge of life, he is finally less rough, better spoken and better read, he shows improved manners, has various friends, has finally earned in his modest business enough to pay his debts. And who is to say that these are not advantages? Certainly not Dickens. Pip's trial and his, at least, partial success to enter the 'middle-class', also reflects rather clearly the author's political point of view. As Pip's achieved social rise demonstrates, Dickens somehow and at least to a certain extent shares Magwitch's belief, that money and education can transform anyone into a 'gentleman', that birth and tradition count actually little in the formation of style. And thus Great Expectations undoubtedly is - partially at least - a clear artistic triumph of the Victorian bourgeoisie, and it is thus the very sincere - though at times rather uncritical - expression of a time when the whole drift inside the existing class-system was an upward one. During that time many people, who were born as members of the lower classes, entered, due to their achieved economic successes, into the 'sacred' middle-class, breaking down those formerly very rigid and finely-knit barriers between the lower and the upper classes. Though Dickens does not contradict this movement inside the social spectrum in general ways, he is all the same rather anxious to show that the social ascent from the lower into the middle-class is not only a 'hard' but also a 'limited' one. Presenting his hero, Pip, the way Dickens does, the author seems to be warning his readers not to put too much trust

and hope into the surface illusions of class and caste. Pip's basic personality has been shaped in his youth and it can never more fundamentally change. All he can do in his later life is to learn through and from his made experiences how best to deploy such talents and weaknesses that he is born with. Every hope of altering his - mainly social - condition that Pip ever entertained turns out to be in vain. He certainly enters into the middle-class, being successful at least in this respect, but, contrary to his 'great expectations' and his snobbish interval, he only finds himself finally at this class's 'lower end'. The upper part of the middle-class, the realm of the aristocracy, turns out to be an anxiously aspired but absolutely unreachable height for him.

Generally seen, Great Expectations is a rather exact portrait of the contemporary English society. It is a statement, as well as a criticism, of what money can do within the social structure, based on the new economic system. This novel is an illustration of how money can change and make new class-distinctions, bringing the old class-definitions, based on birth-rights, to their at least partial collapse.

But besides the fact of stating and illustrating the 'rising' into a higher social class due to money and economic power, the general 'mood' of Great Expectations stands clearly against the contemporary and widespread assumption - mostly unquestioned as by Pip - that a person, no matter where he comes from, can easily and deeply be 'transformed' into a member of a higher social class simply by money and the 'minor graces' it can buy. This rather generally accepted assumption reflects the situation of

the contemporary English economy, brilliantly secure, its expanding markets abroad, its almost limitless perspectives. Corresponding to the fact that a great deal of this economic stability and splendour is based on the achievements of people who find themselves, due to their birth, frequently located in the upper parts of the lower classes, and resulting from the endeavours of those people to gain a more respectable social position in society, a 'class-drift' began, an opening in particular of the class-barriers between the upper lower-classes and the middle-class. Dickens quite openly criticizes in Great Expectations the often overexaggerated social aspirations of those social 'risers', commonly called the 'newly-rich', but he surely does not deny them the right to enter into the middle-class. It is their attempt to settle down in the upper reaches of this class, among the traditional aristocratic members, that he opposes. Like many of his contemporaries Dickens thus - reflecting a rather conservative political point of view - favours a division of the middle-class into two separate, disconnected units, that is the lower and the upper middle-class. And it is the lower one that should be opened for the successful 'newly-rich' to gain a more elevated social position - whereas the upper one should be restricted entirely on the old aristocratic clique. The author expresses this standpoint through Pip's more than 'high' aspirations, through his 'great expectations', disqualifying his hero's newly acquired 'culture' as a mere bourgeois and not aristocratic one: "it came to little more than accent, table-manners, and clothes." 42)

^ Thus Dickens is mocking this 'new' gentleman, seeing and illustrating Pip's social rise as an example of an artificially 'lif-

ted' person who enters into the higher social class entirely due to the money he is provided with - but who lacks completely the qualities of a 'true' gentleman, qualities that can not be bought by money and that can not even be achieved by education. Pip can, finally, not beat the class-system and is put into his more modest, socially accepted, position in the lower sphere of the middle-class, the place reserved for the social newcomer.

Dickens's rather conservative political point of view is furthermore reflected in Great Expectations in the character of Orlick. Orlick stands for all those fearful things, that somehow remain outside society's control. He is the potential revolutionary, the marginal, the discontented element and the troublemaker. Typically connected with his presentation as the criminal, Orlick is the man in the underground, who derives his power from his emotions and who acts mainly in a manner that is incomprehensible to reason. In political terms he is the 'spirit of anarchy', which - as Dickens feared - bubbles beneath the seemingly placid Victorian surface, threatening constantly its stability. Through this character Dickens clearly expressed his opinion that social unrest, even revolution - like those on the Continent - is no productive act inside English society. Thus he shows himself, deep-down, as a rather self-satisfied mid-Victorian, as a man who basically accepts the structure of this social architect, criticizing only certain inhumane and/or exaggerated parts of this social reality. He is a conservative member who shows - perhaps even rather unpolitically - in his novel a deep 'humane' responsibility toward those who suffer too much and undeservedly. He is, if a political classification is attempted, a conservative with certain liberal streaks. And due

to those 'humane' feelings and due to his - somewhat vague - political 'liberalism' he speaks out in Great Expectations in favour of the 'labouring man', makes him gain respectability and allows for the social rise of the 'newly-rich' into the lower spheres of the middle-class.

Conclusions

As the discussion above demonstrated, Great Expectations shows in its form as well as in its content a at times very close and perceptible connection with David Copperfield, and a fair number of items encountered in the later novels are - though perhaps only unconsciously - repetitions of the earlier one. But though these similarities are obvious and frequent ones, Great Expectations has to be seen as a novel that elucidates very basic differences in comparison with any of its forerunners, differences, which make this novel stand fairly disconnectedly - in certain respects - from the earlier ones in a new 'field' of English literature.

Great Expectations, often estimated and qualified as the 'grimmiest' of Dickens's novels, a book which lacks almost entirely humour and which certainly offers no comic elements - frequently encountered in Dickens's earlier 'child-novels' - surely has to be seen as the most mature work of the four novels dealt with here, having an unprecedented structure, theme, coherence and a unity foreign even to David Copperfield. It is, whereas David Copperfield is closer to the facts of Dickens's life, a novel that reflects, very graspably, the author's spirits and thus is could - in a very general way - be termed a kind of the author's 'symbolic autobiography'.

Great Expectations offers - contrary to David Copperfield and similar to Oliver Twist as well as to Nicholas Nickleby - a well perceivable atmosphere of a 'fairy-tale. Terror, the 'evil', a 'dark' atmosphere pervades the entire novel, the nightmarish anxieties of Pip, the permanent danger of the disclosure of a mysterious secret is ever-present, temptation is lurking everywhere. The two contrastive poles - Joe, the 'good' character, the embodiment of honest labour, the 'gentleman by nature' and, opposing him, Orlick, the undefined evil, the lawlessness, the instinct of aggression and destruction, the demon, the unmotivated hate - lend a further 'fairy-tale' item to the atmosphere of this novel. And, finally, it is Pip's realization of his 'great expectations' that only can occur in a tale. But, though these elements somehow allow a degree of 'fairy-tale' atmosphere in this novel, Dickens did obviously not try to create a true and traditional 'fairy-tale' world. For as soon as possible, the reality of the social world - which is by no means a 'fairy-tale' - destroys this image. Pip, as well as the reader, are brought back into reality due to the author's employment of disillusioning devices. Furthermore standing against the pattern of a 'true' and conventional tale is the depiction of the hero himself. Pip - deliberately - is not at all painted in those brilliant and shiny colours as usually encountered in the presentation of a 'real' 'fairy-tale' hero. He does not resemble the commonly-known popular and romantic suitor - and Estella surely does not remind the reader of those well-known lovely princesses of the tales. Dickens quite obviously refused to write such a story. Thus he allows - in the novel's original version - for an ending, which is not a happy and romantic one since the hero stands utterly

on his own in the world, a serious, responsible and penitent man now - but a physical wreck. This tragic ending contradicts decisively all the common 'fairy-tale' endings.

As far as the autobiographical material is concerned, it can be stated that, contrary to David Copperfield and similar to the novel's earlier forerunners, Great Expectations only reflects a very weak use of this kind of material. The only clear connection between his own life and the novel's fictitious world can be seen in Estella, who stands obviously for the Irish actress Ellen Lawless Ternan, Dickens's mistress. But though this novel does not incorporate much of the author's detectable 'real-life' facts, it deals, all the same, in a fairly extensive way with Dickens's own past, revealing mainly his - otherwise unpublished - shames and guilts of his former life. Thus Pip's snobbery, the protagonist's only very brief reflections on his own 'labouring' youth as a blacksmith's apprentice, is quite surely based on the fact that Dickens, even as an adult, was very anxious to conceal - and 'forget' - through the means of a rather extroverted personality and appearance, the 'traumatic' events he had experienced when he was a young boy. Dickens, like Pip, managed finally to be a member of the middle-class, and like his hero he himself preferred to forget the lowly antecedents of his family. As well similar to Pip, Dickens has to be understood as a person who felt in polite society a deep unrest, never being quite part of this glittering social milieu of the middle-class. And, seen in retrospect, it appears that Dickens attacked in his hero exactly that which he doubted often in himself. Pip thus is - like Dickens himself to a certain extent was - hypocritical and double-faced, re-

treating from and denying his own past. As P. Neusbaum argues in this sense: "All these traits are found, not in a middle-aged monster, but in the figure of a personable young man, with, moreover, the dominant strain of a social snobbery... Self-flagellation could not go farther." ⁴³⁾ All those arguments allow us to maintain that Great Expectations, although obviously less explicit in presenting exact details from Dickens's personal life than was the case in David Copperfield, carries over anxieties and fears which are very firmly embedded in the author's mind and memory, that it can be called a 'symbolic autobiography', a self-reflecting and self-critical presentation and analysis, put into the framework of a fiction.

Pip's character, contrary to the respective ones found in any of his forerunners, receives in Great Expectations a very detailed and convincing, a very 'rounded' presentation. At least as long as the hero's childhood and his early adolescence is concerned, he appears to be a 'normal', a 'living' person. The hero's presentation shows an authorial sympathy, unmatched by any of his earlier character-presentations. Pip's early experiences, his inner feelings, his inner structure and his inner self, his inner conflicts and personal crises, his illusionary aspirations and fantasies, his ignorance and child-like innocence, his early steps of development, his growing discontent and later disgust are presented in a way that very clearly reflects the author's immense capacity to look deeply 'inside' his hero's personality and his character. Pip's presentation, undoubtedly, has to be seen as Dickens's first basically 'realistic' one, the illustration and description bearing many and relative-

ly close similarities to the more modern psycho-analytic approaches found in literature only toward the ending of the nineteenth and, increasingly, in the beginning of the twentieth century. In this respect the author has to be seen in and through Great Expectations as a 'pioneer', as the very early forerunner of a tradition in literature that much later became very important and successful.

The presentation of the older Pip, now the gentleman in London, somehow lacks to a certain degree the preceding freshness and nearness of the author. Though the given reflections on the protagonist's inner conflicts and his personal transformations are still superior to any presentations found in the earlier novels, they are decisively less convincingly analytic now. And Pip's presentation surely loses almost entirely its 'realistic flair', when it comes to the author's use of his illness as the device which allows the hero's final personal development. This basically unnecessary break in the hero's presentation - since he, before his illness, showed already sufficiently deep and forceful insights to manage the final step entirely on his own, without the disturbing interference of this unrealistic and 'fairy-tale' device - somehow takes the tension and the impact out of this novel. And though the hero's presentation is - after the illness - again a 'realistic' one, the whole appearance and analysis of the grown-up Pip is no longer as convincing and realistic as the presentation of the young hero was.

The question of whether Great Expectations offers for the first time a hero whose character is subjected to deep changes has to be - in a general view - answered negatively. Pip surely

as illustrated above - 'develops' in his character, but Dickens, though allowing for the character's limited development, seems to be quite anxious to express his opinion that a personality is given through inheritance, is predetermined and shaped, almost completely, in the person's youth. All Pip can actually do is to learn from and through his made experiences - different to Oliver or Nicholas - how best to deploy and use the 'talents' and 'weaknesses' that he is born with.

Pip merely rediscovers and regains - through his own efforts as well as through 'outer' help - his almost lost inner reality. Due to this process, Great Expectations differs basically from Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby, and, to only a lesser degree from David Copperfield, where the main theme seemed to have been the mere conservation and preservation of those 'noble' and 'good' character-qualities that the protagonist was born with and that were never endangered, in spite of all the adversities encountered. Compared to these earlier novels, Pip's development is much more a process of inner maturation.

Another basic difference between Pip and his forerunners - as far as the character-conception is concerned - is the fact that in Great Expectations, for the first time, the hero bears inside himself, right from his birth onwards and implanted in him through the hereditary process, a certain 'guilt'. He is, in other words, Dickens's first 'criminal child'. Contrary to Oliver, Nicholas and as well fairly different from David, Pip's inner reality does not only reflect 'pure' goodness, but also quite formidable weaknesses, which only wait for their chance to be called into life.

Compared with and contrary to his forerunners - less different from David and more from Oliver and Nicholas - Pip is not any more the inflexibly helpless and mainly inactive child-hero. Experiences, which have in Great Expectations now no longer a merely cumulative function, provide the hero here with the capacity to come to a better understanding of his own personality and, thus, allow him to take his own decisions. Furthermore, since Pip is like David a very clear-eyed observer, the hero shows in this late novel at times very strong reactions against his environment, reactions which not only take a physical but also a moral, an 'inner' form. Pip's feelings in themselves are now of a much more active kind. His unhappiness, for example, is sensitively and imaginatively more felt, more actively perceived by the hero than it was the case with David, and his moments of happiness - few they are - demonstrate Pip's activity and their intensity in a much more graspable way than David's only rather vague happiness provided.

Great Expectations, mainly seen in comparison with David Copperfield, now avoids the mixing of the perspectives of the grown-up author and the one of the young hero. Pip thus does not - as David frequently did - lose his realistic, childish characteristics, and does not, in other words, become a grown-up in his child-persona any more. In Great Expectations the reader now finds those two perspectives very sharply divided and the author's own reflections clearly separated from his hero's, allowing thus for the protagonist's much more natural and convincingly personalized and individualized presentation.

Pip, contrary mainly to Oliver and Nicholas and to a lesser degree to David, has no longer a representative function, he is no longer the embodiment or the personification of a virtue. And, being presented as a rather 'realistic' character, Pip now actually has to find himself in an equally 'realistic' ending of the story as well. Contrary to all his forerunners, Pip does not manage to return finally to his 'place of birth' - though he actually tries the 'pilgrimage' back. He ends up - very realistically and logically - as a fully grown-up man, who has to pay for the errors that he committed. He stands - in the novel's original ending - finally on his own, and can not, like all the former heroes could, enjoy a relaxed and 'cosy' life in the quiet and 'ideal' countryside. Pip loses, as none of the predecessors did to this degree, his social and personal innocence and - still enlarging the difference between him and his forerunners - he even realizes finally that his former innocence, which had been a protective shield for the heroes in the earlier novels, had indeed been a false guide for his life.

It is mainly the realistic and analytic view and presentation of Pip's character that produces Great Expectations' 'realistic flair'. Similar to David Copperfield and very different from Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby, this novel demonstrates no references to the author's time's current historical reality, and, furthermore, does not reflect any single, generally known place. Thus this novel has no explicit temporal and/or local setting. Great Expectations thus signifies, more than David Copperfield did, the author's step away from his earlier often employed technique to give a rather unrealistic fictitious novel a realistic frame - as it was the case as well in Oliver Twist

as in Nicholas Nickleby - in order to allow his personal view and criticism to be of a somehow generally graspable and understandable - as well as applicable - form. Now, unlike in his earlier novels, Dickens bases 'realism' on the presentation of his characters and on the language chosen. Thus the almost psycho-analytic depiction of Pip and the simple and natural way of expressing feelings or describing events is the technique which allows the novel to be understood as a rather 'realistic' one.

It must be mentioned however that this 'realism' is at times destroyed by 'fairy-tale' elements and, mainly, by the changed ending. The 'happy' instead of the 'tragic' one speaks, like the illness suffered, strongly against the story's 'realistic flair'. In particular this second ending has to be seen as a falsification of all that has taken place in this book. It has to be realized as a deformation of Dickens's original intentions and as a change and a diminution of the novel's original 'moral' impact.

The social criticism encountered in Great Expectations is of a basically different kind and quality from the one seen in the earlier 'child-novels'. One of the most important of those differences has to be noticed in the changed function that the 'situation of misery' encountered by the hero has now. In Great Expectations this 'situation of misery' no longer serves the purpose to channel the author's attacks against the inhumane contemporary public institutions - Pip never found himself in any - but, instead, this 'situation of misery' now turns out to be the means of the author's attack against the 'crime' committed, frequently, by parents against children. Dickens utters thus in this

novel his conviction that the child - parent (foster-parent) situation is - like society itself - a basically disnatured and corrupted one. Children, like Pip or Estella, are 'used' as dehumanized instruments to fulfil functions. Thus the author expresses in Great Expectations his view, that the 'modern society' has lost its touch with the natural and human life, that society has gone thoroughly wrong. And this dehumanization of the society's members is seen here - contrary to the former novels - by the author as the main source for the creation of the calculated social crime. This crime is evidently understood by Dickens now as a permutation and an interconnection of multiple motivations and acts - both private and public ones - and it always shows the tendency to convert a person into a thing. 'Crime', now, is thus seen mainly as the act of a depersonalized and dehumanized member of society.

Though there is the 'white' character, the 'pure' goodness also to be encountered in Great Expectations - in the person of Joe - the reader does no longer find Dickens's formerly so typical division of his novels's characters in clearly 'good' and correspondingly clearly 'bad' ones. Those qualities are here now more interwoven and interconnected in each single presented character.

Since all here encountered characters - except Joe - are somehow affected by the dehumanizing and depersonalizing effects that 'modern society' has on them, the nature, as well as the accusation of 'crime' is a decisively subtler one now. Dickens is - contrary to his earlier presentations of 'criminals' and/or 'villains' - in this fourth novel anxious to point out the rea-

sons why characters like Magwitch or Orlick actually became such negative persons - and Dickens's blame rests in each case on the negative influence that society had on them.

Giving his social criticism still another dimension, Dickens - for the first time - expresses in Great Expectations his understanding that the child inherits not only 'good' but also certain 'bad' qualities. Thus the child is here seen by the author as a - at least potentially - 'criminal' one. Society, seen as the sole 'creator' of crimes and criminals in the earlier novels, now is understood merely as the 'promotor' of qualities - mainly the negative ones - that are already existent inside the individual's personal structure. Due to the reality of their inner structures people show reactions to the stimuli and impulses offered, reactions that are in a certain way predetermined and almost 'automatic' ones.

But in Great Expectations Dickens does not only criticize 'modern society' as having those negative effects on its individual members, but now the author actually goes so far that he lets inanimate objects come alive. This projection of human impulses and qualities upon the non-human is not simply a stylistic embellishment but it serves to paint a picture of a demonically motivated world. The animation of inanimate objects symbolizes thus the author's vision that 'modern society' is based on an aggressiveness that has got out of control. Industrialism and utilitarianism have set alive 'dark' forces, demons - forces that endanger the entire mankind.

Dickens's criticism of the contemporary English class-system

and, furthermore, the theme of class-consciousness, extends deeply into Great Expectations. Contrary to any of his former novels, Dickens speaks out in this book against the 'great expectations' of the ruling middle-class, against its overexaggerated economic aspirations and, on the other hand, its often still prevailing 'aristocratic sentiments'.

Redefining the 'true' gentleman as any decent, generous, selfless and considerate member of society, he passes more deeply than either George Eliot or Richardson far beyond the middle-class into the lower ones to find his pure heroes and heroines. This makes him now to a truly 'revolutionary' writer; allows us to see him as one of the very early English artists in literature who broke down the rigid class-barriers and who took the freedom to select his principal characters in a social spectrum that had not been touched, not been found 'worthy' before.

And, opening the class-barriers and going 'down' into the lower social spheres, the author attacks in this novel the 'snobbism' of the upper one. Thus, for the first time in any of his 'child-novels', the hero does not live finally on an 'unearned income' - as all his predecessors did - but he actually works to earn his living. Pip, having been tempted by 'snobbism' and having given in to those temptations, ends up taking a clear stand against it. He realizes that 'snobbism' is hollow, transforming the respective person into a victim, a social parasite, who is and learns very little or even nothing. Pip finds the way back to 'honest' work and rejects - though he actually had no chance whatsoever to gain - this relaxed life in the remote countryside, rejects 'snobbism'.

But, though the kind of morality given in Great Expectations is undoubtedly directed against the middle-class, though this novel is thus a self-critical and self-reflecting one, Dickens is far away from uttering a radical point of view. The presentation of Herbert, the 'natural' gentleman, and the fact that Pip gets many advantages out of his contact with the middle-class quite obviously takes the thorn out of Dickens's attacks. He is not at all prepared to deny those by Pip gained advantages, he does not intend to disqualify the values and the 'successes' of this middle-class in its basic elements.

Dickens even allows to let Magwitch's assumption come true that money and education allow for the rising of a member of a lower social class into the middle-class, he admits that birth and tradition actually count only little in the formation of style. But he does not do so in an unrestrained way. Expressing thus his deeply conservative point of view, he does not allow that the rising element, the 'newly rich', reaches the higher and 'sacred' levels of this class. The 'riser' often manages - and surely has the right to do so, if he has successes in his life - to establish himself somewhere in the lower ends of the middle-class - but the upper ones are and have to remain being - untouched - the realm of the aristocratic elements. Thus, like many of his contemporaries, Dickens quite probably intends to express here his support for the 'conservative' solution of the existing class-problem, which is the splitting up of the old and traditional middle-class into two separate new classes, namely the lower and the upper middle class.

For this assumption speaks the fact that Dickens demonstrates Pip, the social newcomer, as mainly a person who can hardly offer

more than a 'learned' bourgeois appearance, which does not reach far beyond things like tablemanners, phrases and clothes. These people certainly lack - in Dickens's opinion - all those qualities that make the difference between a 'new' and a 'true' gentleman.

The author's rather conservative political point of view is furthermore reflected in the novel's character 'Orlick'. Orlick stands outside society's control, he is the marginal, the discontented element, the troublemaker and criminal and the political revolutionary. Orlick derives his power from his emotions and acts in a manner that is incomprehensible to reason, giving this character a rather sinister appearance. He is the 'spirit of anarchy' - much feared by Dickens - which bubbles beneath the seemingly placid Victorian surface, constantly threatening its stability.

Through this character the author obviously intends to express his opinion that a social and/or political unrest or even revolution - like on the Continent - is not a productive way of changing the English system.

Thus Dickens shows himself in this late novel - just as in the earlier ones - as a rather self-satisfied mid-Victorian, as a man who basically accepts the existing social structure, criticizing only - and undoubtedly with honest and burning fervour - certain inhumane exaggerations or shortcomings of this system. He is here to be seen as a mainly conservative member of the English society, who shows - perhaps even in a rather unpolitical way - a deep and honest 'humane responsibility', a philanthropic attitude, toward those who suffer too much and undeservedly. If this attitude is attempted to be expressed in politi-

cal terms it seems to be adequate to call Dickens a conservative with certain liberal streaks.

As often maintained by his critics, Great Expectations signifies Dickens's further movement away from direct social criticism, such as we found in his earlier 'child-novels'. Generally speaking this novel indeed reflects a shift of the author's argument away from the ridicule of contemporary public institutions, away from the parody of law and away from a very vague political program towards the view that it is the individual human being that has to be understood as the active element in the process of the decision whether it opts for the 'good' or the 'evil' deeds. Although Dickens still states his opinion that, if a system's or a nation's laws are themselves unjust, if those laws have a dehumanizing and depersonalizing effect on its members, then those members can not be expected to have any deep sense of a 'personal justice' ⁴⁴⁾, it is very evident in Great Expectations that the characters now can and even have to choose whether to become instruments of confusion, evil and crime, or whether to obey their 'benevolent' instincts. The characters are here, in other words, for the first time found in situations which ask for individual, personal choices - choices between the two and contradicting character-qualities - 'good' and 'bad' - that all of them are born with.

Dickens expresses in this novel his view that moral issues - though obviously more complex than in the earlier books - are not very complicated. He is aware that circumstances, temptations, can help to make villains (Magwitch) or can divert the character from the path of righteousness (Pip), but at the same time he believes that every person - whatever his background - is given

a clear choice between 'good' and 'evil' - a choice that is symbolized through the inner conflicts that Pip goes through. Thus Dickens states in Great Expectations that, generally, this choice is, if clearly perceived, an obvious and a simple one and that the person is thus fully responsible for his/her actions. This personal responsibility of the individual - and Pip's failure to act in a responsible way - is illustrated by the fact that the hero, throughout the novel, perceives that he has to take this choice himself. That, even through his mental turmoil, Pip retains enough sense and enough moral conscience to at least perceive the wrong decisions made by others (Drumle) and, even within the ambience of his false values he remains considerate - and it is this residual quality which provides the author with a 'jumping-off' place for his protagonist's conversion. Pip's conflict then is obvious and far-reaching: he must recognize that he took the wrong decision, that he was tempted and that he followed willingly, that he now has to assume final responsibility for his former acts. And, in this respect, Great Expectations becomes a distinct forerunner of the later, mainly twentieth century 'life novels', in which the protagonist must resolve what he himself wants, regardless of outside pressures or temptations.

Thus, reflecting certainly the author's 'growth' of his literary importance, Dickens transformed in Great Expectations the world of comfort and cosiness' - encountered to different degrees in the earlier novels - into one in which the individual's own moral choice becomes the matter of main importance, the matter of personal survival. 45)

Finally, stressing the late Dickens's rather obvious attractiveness to the twentieth-century reader, it can be maintained that Great Expectations brings to fruition the social themes that began in a very rudimentary form almost thirty years before in Oliver Twist, advancing steadily through Nicholas Nickleby and David Copperfield. The emphasis on crime, violence and disorientation signifies the author's view that the 'social nightmare' has evidently overwhelmed any comic vision. And in this increasing emphasis on violence, on the dark motives of his characters, on the 'criminal mind' and on very complex psychological phenomena, Dickens was clearly pointing forward, away from his eighteenth-century predecessors - who had influenced his earlier novels deeply - toward the major twentieth-century writers, particularly writers like Conrad and Lawrence. Arguing persuasively for the good man and the loving woman (Joe and Biddy) who try to live a 'normal life' in the midst of an adverse environment, within a world that has obviously gone entirely wrong,⁴⁶⁾ Great Expectations thus expresses the author's view that, in spite of all his personal adversity against the 'modern times' and his obviously steadily deepening gloom, Dickens had retained a fundamental belief in 'people'.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this last chapter is to attempt a brief comparison of the four novels in respect to the topics analyzed in the above chapters, and, furthermore, to try to answer the question of whether there can be found a certain 'development' in the author's writings, a matter discussed by a number of Dickens's critics. Besides that, this final chapter tries to point out where Dickens's importance in the field of English literature mainly lies, which his literary innovations are, and how he could and possibly should be 'understood' as a writer of social and political criticism.

Melodramatic Quality

Starting, in a chronological order, with the reading of Liver Twist, the reader finds himself confronted with the moral values of a traditional melodrama, the world of this novel being one which is clearly and almost entirely divided into two groups of human beings: the noble, 'light' characters and the evildoers, the 'dark' ones. The novel, illustrating the permanent conflict between the hero and the villains, is replete with melodramatic situations, scenes and speeches - touching at times the dimension of grimness - and, furthermore, flooded with pathos and sentimentality.

Looking at Nicholas Nickleby, the basic situation encountered is even of a more tangibly melodramatic quality than that found in its forerunner. Nicholas Nickleby, the 'very crudest melodrama that Dickens ever wrote' ¹⁾ uses at times a language that reminds us clearly of Shakespearian melodrama and, evident-

ly, Dickens was trying in this novel for melodramatic 'Elizabethan' effects. The whole novel, somehow generally seen, is reminiscent of the Elizabethan stage-melodramas and it is drenched deeply in a literally 'theatrical' atmosphere - quite unlike Oliver Twist.

The 'big change' in the melodramatic quality of Dickens's novels becomes very obvious when we read his third 'child-novel', David Copperfield. Here Dickens distanced himself from the simple moral polarities - encountered as well in Oliver Twist as in Nicholas Nickleby - and the formerly frequently used strong melodramatic devices 'lose' a certain amount of their force and impact. Of course, strong feelings can still be found in this later novel, and Dickens's characters are still of expressing themselves 'in a language of great power' ²⁾, but, contrary to his former novels, those displayed passions or deep feelings don't have any more an obvious melodramatic quality. Though, as it has to be stressed, Dickens has not totally abandoned melodrama in David Copperfield, the novel's tone in general, created mainly by the author's handling of the first-person point of view, does not easily allow for the use of strong melodramatic devices. The existing melodramatic scenes in David Copperfield - not very numerous - are now usually, if not generally, uttered and employed within such scenes that do not allow themselves to rise to the degree of emotion required to make them genuinely melodramatic.

And though the novel's material in itself is rather rich in potential melodramatic or pathetic scenes - probably as rich as either Oliver Twist or Nicholas Nickleby - the purely melodramatic devices are used in David Copperfield most sparingly

since there is no really appropriate use for them within the emotional climate of this novel, in which the villains are so remarkably 'mute' and the hero himself so much less a personification of virtues. Avoiding obviously to give stress to any melodrama or pathos, the handling of narration in David Copperfield becomes considerably subtler and much less uncompromisingly assertive of moral values and states. This third novel is thus not - as Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby were - written in a truly declamatory style and thus the here existing melodramatic speeches and melodramatic scenes are almost only used for rather special purposes of exposition. David Copperfield, it can be maintained, marks a very clear step in the author's style of writing, leading obviously away from the former often employed melodramatic situations to a more 'realistic' way of narrating.

Considering Great Expectations the reader finds that, like in David Copperfield, Dickens has not abandoned melodrama completely either. Actually - and perhaps rather astonishingly - the mere number of melodramatic speeches realized in Great Expectations is by far larger than that of the novel's direct forerunner. But this fact does not - as it could be assumed - signify that Dickens now 'moved back' to the conception of his earlier novels, but, instead, this use of rather frequent melodramatic speeches is the result of the fact that now the adult Pip - contrary to the adult David - sees his own situation as the boy and adolescent in retrospect and, mainly, in melodramatic terms, reflecting his own and deep self-pity. On the other hand, the 'real' child-scenes are almost completely free of any melodramatic devices. And though the novel

has a fair number of potential melodramatic scenes in the context of the hero's 'real' childhood, those scenes don't reach even a faint melodramatic dimension any more, mainly because none of the characters found in this late novel has in him- or herself the potential to rise up to a melodramatic speech. In the crucial, potentially melodramatic scenes, the characters are generally unable to put their respective feelings and thoughts forward in a fluent and coherent, a dramatic, dramatized and elaborate language. Obviously those characters can make use of this kind of language in non-melodramatic scenes, but in melodramatic ones they simply can't. They seem here to be 'blocked', stunned, impaired. And due to this very fact it can be maintained that Dickens keeps the potential melodramatic scenes encountered under a very close and strict control. He leads his character to the threshold of a melodramatic scene, making the reader expect an elaborate melodramatic speech and gives only a 'disillusionment'. The reader's confrontation with the respective character's verbal inability, somehow breaks the novel's 'normal' and expected development, provoking a certain 'deception' on the reader's part. This technique of 'disillusionment' certainly stresses the author's decision not to employ melodramatic devices any more.

Much more clearly than in David Copperfield it is thus in Great Expectations that the author manifests his distancing from melodrama. Though the number of potential melodramatic scenes and speeches is large, the constantly used device of 'disillusionment' lends to the novel a basically unmelodramatic flair. And those actually realized melodramatic speeches are now very delicately 'tailored' and very artistically in-

serted into the novel's basic unmelodramatic run and atmosphere, avoiding thus successfully that they produce a rather ostensive and at times disturbing effect, as seen mainly in Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby. Due to this fact the narration encountered in Great Expectations has a much more 'realistic' flair and is of a decisively more convincing kind than any found in its forerunners.

'Fairy-Tale'

Considering the novels's 'fairy-tale' elements and their respective 'fairy-tale' character, it can be said that - somehow rather closely linked to the novels's melodramatic qualities - Oliver Twist is a novel that is obviously and very deeply embedded within the framework and the atmosphere - in its form as well as in its content - of a crude and traditional fairy-tale. Again it is mainly the novel's characteristic division into 'good' and 'bad', its demonstration of 'moral polarities' that gives this novel its particular and unrealistic flair.

The characters found in Oliver Twist are very artificially manufactured, reflecting no 'normal', but only a highly 'synthetic' form and quality - and not even the contemporary Victorian reader will have 'believed' in them.

Furthermore producing this 'fairy-tale' atmosphere, the reader encounters in this early novel a plot which is unrealistically elaborate, highly invented and at times - if not almost always - of varying degrees of absurdity. It is - among many other 'fairy-tale' elements - mainly the recurring periods of grave illness, that pass Oliver 'unconsciously' from his pre-

sent to his next future environment, his 'rebirths' or 'resurrections', that produce this novel's so perceptible tale-atmosphere.

In Nicholas Nickleby the reader encounters - like in Oliver Twist - a 'fairy-tale' world, which is typically divided into 'good' and 'evil'. And since the contest between those two groups goes on relentlessly, a 'new' force has to be invented - like seen already in Oliver Twist and like in any traditional tale - to give further strength to the 'good' characters and their 'noble' cause. Whereas this force was Mr. Brownlow in Oliver Twist, the tale's 'fairy-goodfathers', the 'dei-ex-machina' now, in Nicholas Nickleby, turn out to be the Cheeryble brothers. These forces - like the earlier encountered ones - are very artificially manufactured, not demonstrating any internal coherence with the novel's actions and processes. It is thus stated here, that Nicholas Nickleby is - like its forerunner - deeply embedded within the framework of a crude and traditional 'fairy-tale'.

David Copperfield, contrary to its two predecessors, is a novel which is almost completely free of any 'fairy-tale' elements. There is no 'deus-ex-machina' encountered in this later novel, no 'fairy-goodfather' finally is invented to come to the help of the hero, but, instead, the events evolve now in a much more natural or 'realistic' way. Though David - similar to Oliver - still goes through 'rebirths', this novel surely reflects in its basic conception a rather logical and comprehensible construction, in which the still existing 'fairy-tale' elements are of only a minor importance.

Thus, corresponding to this novel's melodramatic quality, David Copperfield marks as well in respect to the applicance of 'fairy-tale' elements the author's obvious step away from the conception employed in his former two 'child-novels', a development toward a more 'realistic' way of seeing and writing.

Great Expectations, viewed in respect to 'fairy-tale' character, seems to reflect Dickens's 'step backwards' - like in its melodramatic quality - into the direction of the conception found in either Oliver Twist or Nicholas Nickleby. This fourth 'child-novel' offers a very well-perceivable, though finely lucid, atmosphere of a traditional 'fairy-story'. Re-the reader of this conception, the terror, the 'evil' atmosphere, pervades the entire novel, and throughout the story there is a mystery whichs diclosure is near and menacing, and, furthermore, the temptations offered are of an unrealistic, unbelievable and - consequently - irresistible kind. And it is only within a tale that Pip's expectations can - at least for a certain amount of time - be materialized, that Magwitch - like Mr. Brownlow or the Cheeryble brothers - appears and turns the hero's pumkin into a coach.

But, like the melodramatic conception of this novel was only a 'pseudo-melodramatic' one, the novel's apparent 'fairy-tale' character turns out to be as well of only a 'pseudo' quality. Soon the reader is 'disillusioned', the 'fairy-world' breaks into pieces. Though the form of Great Expectations is so similar to that encountered in Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby, the content turns out to be of a basically different

kind now. Dickens, though obviously allowing for many 'fairy-tale' elements in Great Expectations, does not create here a true and long-lasting, consistent 'fairy-tale' world. For as soon as it seems possible, the author destroys this 'illusory' world and the reality of the social world wipes out any of those unrealistic images. The unknown benefactor turns out to be the novel's main criminal, a person - though perhaps with good intentions - who is using the hero mainly as a means to gain respectability for himself.

Furthermore this late novel does not match the patterns found in the traditional tale insofar as Pip is not at all - as a common 'fairy-tale' hero ought to be - painted in those shiny and brilliant colours. He does not even faintly resemble the popular, 'romantic' suitor of the tales, who is finally joined by the story's heroine in an ever-lasting and happy love-union. Contrary to this image, Pip ends up as a mature, repentant, 'reduced' man, utterly on his own - at least when the original ending is considered - and, furthermore, as a physical wreck. It is mainly this tragic ending - the first found in Dickens's here examined novels - that can in no way be counterbalanced by the existing 'fairy-tale' elements. Thus Great Expectations quite probably has to be understood as the author's 'anti-tale', as a rather realistic and coherent story which is merely in respect to its form implanted into the 'fairy-tale' framework. Thus, in other words, this novel has an 'unrealistic' form but a rather 'realistic' content.

It is maintained here that Great Expectations, due to its unprecedented and rather realistically motivated structure, - by far even unmatched by David Copperfield - has to be seen

and valued as the author's most realistically written 'child novel', as the most comprehensible and the most 'natural' one and, furthermore, that this fourth novel - like seen already in respect to its melodramatic property - signifies Dickens' step away from his original way of conceiving, seeing and writing most clearly.

Autobiographical Influence

In respect to the use of the author's autobiographical material it can be stated that neither Oliver Twist nor Nicholas Nickleby employ a significant, a clearly perceivable amount of it. It is only the 'blacking factory', Dickens's most negative childhood experience, that finds reference in both of those early novels.

Contrary to them, David Copperfield shows a very obvious and extensive amount of the author's autobiographical facts, and, if the 'real' life-facts are considered, it surely has to be seen as the most autobiographical novel that Dickens ever wrote. This novel produces in its entire run a fine mixture of fiction and the author's own lived reality and the real facts of his life are neatly inserted into an otherwise invented world.

Great Expectations seems to be almost completely free of the author's autobiographical material and appears - here as well - to signal Dickens's step backwards, in this case the one back to the almost entirely fictitious conception of the earlier novels. But soon the reader perceives that Dickens wrote in Great Expectations as well about his own life - and perhaps in an even 'deeper' way than seen in David Copperfield. Here the author uses now a mainly 'non-factual' form for the re-

flections on his own past, giving only a very small amount of savely detectable autobiographical 'facts'.

Thus Great Expectations turns out to be a much closer account to the author's very personal life than David Copperfield managed and/or intended to be. This fourth novel reveals much more deeply than its forerunner Dickens's personal 'shames and guilts', carries over his own deeply-rooted anxieties. Due to this fact it seems to be adequate to call Great Expectations the author's 'symbolic autobiography', a book that summons up the most anguished memories of his youth, that reflects much more clearly than David Copperfield on the author's traumatic childhood experiences.

Comparing the four here examined novels in respect to their melodramatic, 'fairy-tale' and their autobiographical qualities it can be maintained that a certain 'development' is obvious. Whereas Dickens's early novels, Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby, are full of melodramatic and 'fairy-tale' elements but lack almost completely any autobiographical influences, David Copperfield marks the author's clear step away from melodrama and the tale and, installing a huge amount of autobiographical facts, the one towards a more 'realistic' way of seeing and writing. Great Expectations seems to signal Dickens's step backwards to the kind of conception found in his earlier novels, if only its mere form is looked at. But the content of this last novel undoubtedly signifies Dickens's further development into the direction that leads toward 'realism'. Great Expectations, splitting up 'form' and 'content' has actually to be understood as an 'anti-melodrama' as well as an 'anti-tale'. The reve-

lations of Dickens's 'inner reality', the portraying of those 'psychological' facts, are achieved in an extremely convincing and 'natural' way, a way that allows us to see this novel as culminating point of his development, inside his 'child-novels', toward 'realism'.

Character-Presentation

Considering the protagonist's character-depiction in Oliver Twist, it can be said that the hero's main characteristics are his passivity, his muteness and his basic incomprehension of the situations or the environments he finds himself in. Oliver, in many ways the 'poor dummy', the utterly stunned, bewildered, frightened and totally inactive 'victim', never reaches in his presentation the dimension of one which allows him to appear as a 'normal' child. He is, in the entire novel, depicted as a 'type', acting as an emblem, as the embodiment and the personification of a virtue, which is 'goodness'. His 'character' is never endangered and never shows any sign of a change. Thus the hero's depiction is in no ways a 'realistic' one and does not reflect any deep insight into a normal child's inner reality. No psychologically convincing approach is applied by the author. Oliver is presented as a highly idealized child, painted without contours, guided only by his inherited, unchallenged and unreflected 'good sturdy spirit' - and reminds thus of a truly 'Wordsworthian' child-image. This allegorical and symbolical figure, that Oliver is, does not go through any experiences, inner conflicts or situations of inner crises. He never takes any mental and/or personal decision and preserves his 'original innocence' in a highly

unconvincing and unrealistic way. He does not even - contradicting Gold's interpretation 3) - encounter himself in the steady search for his origins and his identity or in the one for a world in which he can be without fear and in which his 'mother-image' is realized, but is, throughout the novel, the unchangingly passive child.

The protagonist in Nicholas Nickleby finds a presentation that differs in many respects from the one encountered in Oliver Twist. Unlike Oliver, the young Nicholas is in his inexperience full of visionary ideas and he is, at times, depicted as a quite foolish, even rather ridiculous child, which can not be taken altogether seriously. Furthermore differing from his forerunner, Nicholas turns out to be a child that makes certain experiences. Due to those experiences he shows - if only faint - signs of a personal development. Though his basic character is - like Oliver's - static and inherited and can not be changed in its depth, the experiences made by the protagonist lead him to 'see' himself more clearly and objectively, to realize his 'true' character. Thus he encounters himself - as Oliver did not - in a certain, though very limited, 'process of self-recognition', which augments while his initial illusions diminish.

Contrary to Oliver, Nicholas now is a fairly perceptive and 'clear-eyed' child and, due to this quality, he stands much more actively, even at times aggressively, on the side of virtue, than Oliver did. He frequently and quite resolutely seeks out confrontations with the 'evil' and shows a fair amount of strength, agility and skill in his actions.

Thus, compared with Oliver, the young Nicholas obviously is a

rather individualized and personalized, a more 'normal' child than Oliver. But despite of all the differences illustrated, Nicholas is still as representative as his predecessor was - he is still designed as mainly a 'type', the personification of 'humanity' and 'kindheartedness'.

David Copperfield does not present the protagonist as a real 'victim' any more, breaking thus, decisively more clearly than it was the case in Nicholas Nickleby, with the child-image presented in Oliver Twist. Much more obviously than Nicholas, David is now a 'rebellious' child, showing brave efforts in his fights against his adverse environment. He does not provoke anymore - as Oliver and Nicholas surely did - the reader's pity with the young hero's plight but does, instead, provoke a certain admiration.

David, completely free of any self-pity, turns out - much more than Nicholas - to be a child that already in its earliest youth has a very impressive capacity to perceive and record concrete details in a rather unimpaired way. He is, in other words, the author's first child-figure, which is a really 'clear-eyed' observer - though still a fallible child.

The author's more 'realistic' depiction of David - compared with the one given to his predecessors - is well exemplified when Dickens's way of presenting the protagonist's growing consciousness, his discoveries and perceptions of his environment is considered. Nicholas's collection of all newly made impressions with the help of his sense-organs and the description of his 'child-like world of imaginations' - in which he, for example, remembers his unknown and dead father as a white grave-stone in the churchyard - surely are unmatched

in their depth and 'realism' by any description of the respective protagonists found in the earlier two novels.

Unlike Oliver and/or Nicholas, David is now depicted as a child that reflects such 'natural' and 'realistic' child-reactions as jealousy and defiance. Contrary to his forerunners, the hero goes through 'identity crises', losing for a while his direction and his orientation. He makes experiences - more clearly illustrated ones than found either in Oliver Twist or in Nicholas Nickleby - and due to them the protagonist's character becomes obviously richer in shades and nuances.

David - unlike his predecessors - is now led by those made experiences to processes of honest doubting, serious reasoning and, finally, clear seeing. Though those processes are still not really self-initiated ones, but mainly the result of his education which he receives during his staying at Aunt Betsey's, they all the same demonstrate his willingness - one that Oliver never showed - to accept the fact of being educated.

But it is mainly the fact that David is - unlike Oliver or Nicholas - no longer this 'unfallibly' and 'inflexibly' good character, but a child that is tempted from the 'single path of righteousness', a child whose devotion to truth and goodness at times wavers that actually makes the protagonist seem to be a rather 'real' and fairly 'individualized' person. David's character now - and quite naturally - is pervaded by his own child-like blindness and, at times, even plain 'inadequacy'. The protagonist in David Copperfield is thus conceived very differently from his forerunners. He is in no way any more a 'personification' of a virtue, he has no longer a true 'representative function' - but he 'functions' and is depicted as a

quite normal child.

Though David is undoubtedly much more active than mainly Oliver and also more than Nicholas, Dickens here still does not allow his hero to be a truly and freely active person. David is able to realize and correct certain of his committed mistakes by his own power - but he does not manage to build up, inside himself, a really lasting, strong, activating force. He is not 'firm' enough - despite of all his education - to take finally his life into his own hands. He depends, till the novel's ending, on the 'outer' help. Thus David remains - though to a much lesser degree than either Oliver or Nicholas - a somewhat 'blocked' person, able to react but certainly without creative energy.

The question of whether this protagonist's character changes has to find a negative answer. Like Oliver or Nicholas, David is conceived as a child with a static, fixed, with an entirely inherited character-structure. The hero, being undoubtedly more personalized and individualized in his presentation than any of his forerunners, still does not show a at least partial new composition of his character. He surely grows into a relative 'maturity' - but he remains, inside, basically what he has always been - only the scope of nuances in his presentation widens.

Considering the presentation that Pip, the protagonist in Great Expectations, receives, it can be maintained that he, contrary mainly to Oliver and Nicholas and to a lesser degree different from David, is clearly no longer an inflexibly helpless child-victim but, instead, a basically active person. Though

he still needs the initiating stimulus from the outside world, he then shows very strong reactions, that develop into long processes of his own activity. His 'snobbery', his inner conflicts and crises and his final self-recognition are the most obvious examples for this of his qualities.

Basically different from Oliver and Nicholas - and also more expressedly clear than in the case of David - Pip bears, right from the very beginning, not only 'pure goodness' inside himself, but 'weakness' as well. Thus Pip is to be seen as Dickens's first child-hero to be born with a certain amount of 'guilt', he is - in often used words - born as a 'criminal child'. And it is this quality that allows him to respond in a much more 'natural' and 'realistic' way - than any of his forerunners actually could - to his encountered environment. Thus Pip - similar to David, but in a much more obvious way - does not stand throughout the novel on the ground of virtue and goodness.

Due to this fact - and very obviously - Pip is not to be understood any more as a character that carries an emblematic function, as the personification of a virtue. Contrary to Oliver and Nicholas and similar to David - though more clearly still - Pip moves beyond moral allegory.

Pointing further toward the direction of a 'realistic' presentation of the novel's hero, Pip does not appear any more as a 'romantic hero'. Instead he is the first of those four protagonists who is treated by the author - in an obvious way - as an 'anti-hero', a chastened, frustrated person, who is, at times in almost a 'cruel' way, reduced by the author.

to his 'normal' size. Unlike the former child-heroes, he finally stands on his own, without any 'brilliant' hope, physically broken, almost provoking the reader's pity. Contrary to all his forerunners he does not manage - though he tries to do so - to his 'place of childhood' but, instead, he matures 'fully', he loses - as neither Oliver nor Nicholas, nor even David did - his social and personal innocence and has to realize that his former innocence - a protective shield for all the earlier protagonists - had indeed been a false guide for his life.

Considering the question of whether Pip's character changes, it can be said that it obviously does not do so. The hero is undoubtedly born with a character-structure that has - by inheritance - a much wider scope of nuances and shades than found in any of those that his forerunners possessed. Pip makes - like David - experiences and learns through them how to deploy and use his inherited 'talents' and 'weaknesses' best, he 'develops' in the sense that he gains a clear view of his inner reality - but his original and inborn structure itself is never affected. Thus Dickens does not allow here - as seen already in the former novels as well - for a partially new composition or a new formation of the hero's basic character-structure.

Thus, looking at Pip's presentation in a rather general way, it can be maintained that this hero is, compared with all his forerunners, depicted in a much more detailed, rounded, convincing and 'realistic' manner. At least as long as Pip's childhood and his early adolescence is concerned, he is painted in

very natural and fresh colours, letting this fictitious character appear as an almost 'living' or 'real' person. The protagonist's presentation reflects a nearness of the author to his hero's inner self that was - though to different degrees - obviously lacking in the depictions of his former child-heroes. The author's here finally achieved ability to look deeply 'inside' his protagonist's inner structure and to present this structure in an almost 'objective' and very realistic way reminds the present reader at times of the more modern 'psycho-analytic' approaches found in literature toward the ending of the nineteenth and in the beginning of the twentieth century. This 'psychological realism' (H. James) - though it is not encountered throughout the novel in a consistently clear form - produces the basic and characteristic, the 'realistic' flair of this late novel.

Having presented in the above paragraphs a rather detailed analysis, interpretation and comparison of the respective heroes's character-conceptions and character-depictions, the following one deals with three statements - somewhat of a basic kind and quality - , made by R. Williams, A. E. Dyson and by Davis, in a fairly brief way.

R. Williams maintains that Dickens's characters are not rounded and developing - but, instead, flat and emphatic. They are not slowly revealed, but directly presented. This critic states, that Dickens is using instead of a controlled language of analysis and comprehension, very directly, a language of persuasion and display, offering not the details of a psychological process but presenting only the 'finished articles',

the social and psychological products.⁴⁾

A. E. Dyson, on the other hand, states that Dickens's characters are portrayed in an individualized way, that they are slowly revealed and that the respective protagonists are 'free' personalities, able to choose for themselves to become either instruments of confusion or evil, allowing their own inner anarchic passions free reign or to obey their benevolent instincts. Whatever the hero's background is - Dyson maintains - he is given a clear choice between good and evil, a choice that is an obvious and a simple one. The hero is thus fully responsible for his actions.⁵⁾

Davis, finally, utters that 'Dickens, like the early Wordsworth, believed that children are noble in their innocence before they mature and learn evil from their surroundings.'⁶⁾

Comparing those three given statements with the results gained in the discussions above it becomes obvious that none of them can be accepted as an interpretation that covers fully the complete range of the respective protagonist's character depictions - though each of them, limited only on a certain 'type' of the Dickensian child-heroes, is undoubtedly of an adequate quality.

The claim of R. Williams is clearly limited to the novels Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby. Here - without doubt - the respective heroes are depicted as 'types', not rounded in their presentation and without any - or any significant - personal development. Oliver, as well as Nicholas, is presented as a flat and emphatic personification of a virtue. Both of them are not slowly revealed and are - and remain being - for many readers in certain ways 'incomprehensible', since they show no 'norma-

lity' in their actions and in their behaviour. David Copperfield and Great Expectations, on the other hand, don't present their heroes any more in this direct way. Whereas their forerunners were not - or at least not in any significant way - analyzed, being and remaining without shapes and nuances, the reader encounters now - more in Great Expectations than in David Copperfield still - rather rounded and in certain ways even 'developing' characters. Those two heroes are much more slowly revealed than their forerunners and, being illustrated in a clear way, they are not presented so directly. Having lost their representative functions they are now - particularly Pip - fairly deeply analyzed, an analysis which reaches in the last novel an almost modern 'psycho-analytic' dimension.

A. E. Dyson's statement, being in certain respects the contra-opinion to R. Williams's, can thus not be upheld when Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby is considered, since in those early two novels the heroes surely are not illustrated in an individualizing way. Oliver, as well as Nicholas, can not be understood as a 'free' person who has the chance and the ability choose. He is conceived as a personification of a virtue, born with only one quality. Considering David's and - even more - Pip's presentation, A. E. Dyson's statement is obviously matched. Both of those protagonists are very much individualized characters that actually can - and even have to - choose, and they are fully responsible for their respective choices. This has mainly to be seen as the fact resulting from the here encountered character-conception, which illustrates that those two heroes are conceived as persons who bear inside themselves not only the quality 'goodness' but also the one that is

commonly called 'weakness'.

Davis's interpretation matches - if at all - only David Copperfield's presentation. Oliver, as well as Nicholas, obviously do not grow into maturity and their 'innocence' is - consequently - never challenged. On the other hand this statement surely does not cover Pip's depiction, because this late protagonist is obviously born already with a certain 'weakness' or 'guilt', thus not equalling the picture of the typical innocent Wordsworthian child any more. In certain respects - at least - this given statement can be upheld if David's character is considered, since David is the only one of the Dickensian child-heroes who is born as an 'almost' innocent child - though less innocent than either Oliver or Nicholas but obviously more than Pip - that is later negatively influenced by his environment. But even in respect to David Copperfield Davis's statement can only be accepted under certain conditions - as the above given discussion demonstrated - and it is questionable whether it is not better to actually reject this given interpretation as inadequate.

Realism

Considering the 'realism' encountered in those four here examined novels, it can safely be maintained - in accordance with the opinion held by the vast majority of the author's critics - that Dickens moved away from the early, basically unrealistic novels toward the decisively more realistic later ones, a development that found its culminating point in Great Expectations. Seeing, as it is generally done, Dickens's

progress in that way, 'realism' - as it has to be clarified - is understood as being synonymous with 'psychological realism' that means, his development is seen as one from the presentation of 'types' toward that of rather deeply analyzed 'characters'. The following discussion - not trying seriously to claim that the author's early novels should be termed as his 'realistic' and his later as his 'unrealistic' ones - intends to show that this specification of the term 'realism' is necessary.

Oliver Twist, undoubtedly lacking any 'psychological realism', depends mostly in respect to its plot on arbitrary coincidences. From my point of view, this child-novel certainly has to be seen as the author's most 'unrealistic' one. But, on the other hand, it is exactly this novel which shows the author's most tangible use of the 'factual' realism, which is the 'historical' and the 'local' type. More than in any later novel the reader encounters here a 'realistic' temporal and local setting, which - in certain ways - allows this early novel to be perceived as Dickens's most realistic 'child-novel', if realism is seen as a merely factual one.

This technique of producing a 'realistic flair' through references to actual political events or notorious places is as well - though to a clearly diminished extent - employed in Nicholas Nickleby, and even David Copperfield still reflects a fair amount of those 'factually' realistic elements. In Great Expectations the reader finds a novel in which those elements are virtually absent. This last of Dickens's 'child-novels' brings to full fruition - more than its direct forerunner managed to do - the author's technique to create the novel's

'realistic flair' by employing an exact, detailed and convincing depiction of the protagonist's character.

Though the later two novels are undoubtedly superior to the earlier ones insofar as they reflect also a logical construction and a comprehensible development of the plot, it is mainly due to the here encountered very tangible and consistent 'psychological realism' that P.Hobsbaum's statement can be accepted: "It is a mistake to think of *Oliver Twist* or *Nicholas Nickleby* as a realistic story... Only late in his career, writing *Great Expectations*, did Dickens learn to write in a 'realistic' way." 7)

Dickens - the Historian

Having discussed the 'realism' encountered in Dickens's 'child-novels' and having stated that - mainly in the early ones - there is, within the novels's 'fairy-tale' frameworks, a fair amount of 'historical' and 'local' realism to be found, a realism that is at times presented in an almost documentary way, the question rises whether the author can or has to be understood as a 'historian', as a novelist who tries seriously to transmit in an unimpaired, in an objective way historical facts for future readers.

Undoubtedly the reader encounters in Dickens's first two novels certain passages, which, taken out of their contexts and examined on their own, allow the author to be judged as a historian. In those cases P.Hobsbaum's valuation is adequate, saying: "Much of the description of slum and workhouse could have come with very little alteration out of the pages of the

sociologist, Mayhew, and the political economist, Engels." 8)
 But do those 'historical-factual' passages actually allow for a statement such as given by H. House, maintaining that Dickens has to be seen as one of the very few English novelists who have to be treated with great respect even by professional historians themselves? 9)

Contrary to this opinion it is assumed here that - though 'historical' passages undoubtedly are to be found in Dickens's early novels, the author did not allow them to expand sufficiently enough to produce a 'historical flair' or to gain genuine historical importance. Not trying to deny that Dickens, like Carlyle, had - among others - the concern to describe the 'conditions of England', the author certainly did not try to do this as mainly a historian, but, instead, as a social critic, as a person who, frequently, modifies those 'facts' to provide them with a special, contextual function, exaggerating or hiding certain of their objective qualities in order to make them communicable and/or adequate for his own intention. Thus he turns objective facts into subjective ones and the facts lose their original objectivity by the particular working of the author's eye when seeing and interpreting it in the very moment of seeing - a way of writing and dealing with 'facts' that unquestionably is an utterly unscientific and unhistorical one.

Thus, instead of trying to interpret the author as a serious historian it is here maintained that - without trying to diminish Dickens's 'importance' - it is more adequate to see him as a 'journalist', as a person who works with and on historical facts, as a person who uses objective facts in and for

creative acts, who dramatizes, deforms them, inserts or converts them into 'action', thus not allowing the 'fact' to keep its original and objective appearance, meaning or importance inside the fictitious world of the novel.

Social Criticism

Considering Dickens's first 'child-novel', Oliver Twist, it can be said that the author's 'social criticism' becomes very graspable in his presentation of certain contemporary public institutions. But it is not only - though mainly - the new workhouse that receives Dickens's at times 'fiery' attacks. His 'social criticism' also becomes very open when businesses as for example the chimney-sweep's are looked at (see Appendix II).

Authority is, almost generally, presented as blockish, bumbling, half-blind, brutal or as powerless and Dickens even treats the official world of 'Parish and Charity' openly as an almost 'criminal' one.

Another element of his 'social criticism' encountered in Oliver Twist quite surely has to be seen in his presentation of the 'Fagin-world'. Thus, whereas the 'upper-world' had treated Oliver very harshly, had exploited him and had taught him absolutely nothing, it is the 'under-world' - a mirror-image of the 'upper' one - that takes the hero in, feeds him and soon begins with his 'education'. Only here Oliver encounters 'professionals' and a person who shows certain characteristics of a benevolent employer.

The author's 'social criticism' found in Nicholas Nickleby is, compared with the criticism encountered in Oliver Twist, of a quite different quality, pointing partially into a new direction. Though many of his social attacks are still directed against certain contemporary public institutions - now the 'cheap' Yorkshire-Schools - Dickens is here obviously much more engaged in expressing his opinion that a negative environment encountered by a young child can have - and probably has - a lasting correspondingly negative influence on its further development. And since those effects are not suffered any more - as it was the case in Oliver Twist with Little Dick - by a rather colourless and 'minor' character, but since the suffering is now attributed to a figure of major importance within the novel, namely Smike, this criticism gains a much more tangible dimension and impact now. Though Nicholas himself, like Oliver, remains still unaffected by his negative environment, the harming consequences of 'child-mistreatment' are now very realistically presented insofar as - over a long stretch of the novel - Smike actually suffers, being, due to the encountered cruelties physically as well as mentally and psychologically 'damaged', finding his early death as the direct result of his inhumane upbringing.

Like in Oliver Twist, the author's criticism is in Nicholas Nickleby also not directed against the mere existence of such public institutions - which Dickens understood as necessary ones - but it is mainly directed against the 'situations' encountered inside them, that is the there employed methods of organisation, control, occupation and education of the inmates. Much more than in its forerunner, Dickens is now con-

cerned with this latter topic - education - and thus the social criticism found in Nicholas Nickleby has to be seen as one that mainly attacks 'contemporary education' in quite general terms.

Speaking out against the educational methods of the 'cheap schools', the Murdstones and those encountered in the theatre-group, Dickens postulates - like the early modern pedagogues on the Continent - that the main thing, that young children need in their early years, is 'love' and 'tenderness' and not - like for example Smike - hard physical work or - like Nicholas - hours and hours of scholastic studying. In this probably first English novel that dealt in a rather extensive and realistic way with the consequences of 'child-mistreatment', the author attacks openly many of the contemporary puritanic-utilitarian educational ideas. Thus he speaks out against the common attitude of starting the scholastic teaching process at the earliest age possible and advocates to give children an education, instead, that helps them to develop their fantasies and that satisfies their momentary - and natural - desires and their child-like expectations. The scholastic teaching, the 'education of earnestness', as often applied by utilitarians already in the infants' schools, the exaggerated endeavour to develop the child's intellectuality at the earliest age possible, is seen by Dickens as of only secondary importance for the child's development and actually of a 'hindering' quality when exercised too early.

Reflecting on the well-intended but wrong education found in the theatre-group, Dickens furthermore attacks in this novel the 'depersonalizing' education, the one that transforms children into 'marionettes', function-fulfilling and almost lifeless

'things'.

He stands up in this novel against the 'education of self-denial' and expresses strongly his belief that the 'school of learning' and the 'school of life' must somehow contrive to keep the child protected, enabling and allowing it to grow up in the most natural way.

But though the author attacks - at times very energetically - 'education', its methods and its aims, he does not end up giving in Nicholas Nickleby any concrete 'educational advice' - but he only and simply demonstrates what he personally thinks is 'wrong' with the contemporary education.

David Copperfield, basically different from Oliver Twist and in certain respects similar to Nicholas Nickleby, does not put any significant emphasis on the criticism of contemporary public institutions. Instead, though more explicit now, this novel serves to express the author's opinion that the 'situation of misery', encountered by young children, is mainly due to the acts of individual people - in this case the Murdstones. Condemning, like in Nicholas Nickleby, the utilitarian or scholastic education of young children, Dickens now offers an alternative educational method that finds his full support. Aunt Betsey's method - the 'good' one - though having the same aim as the 'bad' one exercised by the Murdstones, is the hero's guidance toward 'firmness'. Differing basically in the ways applied to reach this aim, Aunt Betsey's method, though strict and at times even severe, is all the same based entirely on 'love', 'understanding' and 'warm-heartedness', qualities that are entirely lacking in the one applied by Mr. Murdstone. David's Aunt 'knows' how to direct the 'learner' in a rather

subtle and indirect way, allowing David to develop at his own chosen speed, allowing him, furthermore, to commit mistakes and to find out solutions by himself - never withdrawing her leading and helping hand. She combines Dickens's ideal of contriving the 'school of learning' and the 'school of life' and she manages to keep, in spite of all education, David's character protected, allowing thus for his personal development.

Besides the author's social criticism which is directed against the contemporary educational ideas and methods, David Copperfield expresses - more clearly than any of its fore-runners - Dickens's opposition to child-labour. Letting young David appear as Mr. Micawber's 'junior', he presents a child that has no opportunity to enjoy a 'free' and 'normal' childhood and he accuses the utilitarian-economic reality of being an 'inhumane' one, since it is partially based on the (forced) work and the exploitation of young children.

The social criticism encountered in Great Expectations is of a different kind and quality when compared with the one found in any of the former 'child-novels'. The ridicule of contemporary public institutions is now completely absent - Pip does not find himself in any - and 'education' in its normal sense is no longer a topic of great interest. The 'situation of misery' here is not produced by any institution, but, entirely, it is now the direct result of personal acts, which are mainly committed by the novel's respective parents or foster-parents. Thus the author's social criticism has to be seen and becomes tangible in his depiction of the existing child-parent (foster-parent) relationships. These relationships

are - like Society itself - disnatured and corrupted ones. Children - like the other members of this utilitarian society - are 'used' by their (foster) parents. They are transformed, dehumanized and finally turn out to be - after their education - depersonalized and function-fulfilling instruments, whose spirits are converted into matters. With this presentation of his child-characters Dickens illustrates his opinion and his criticism, that this 'modern society' - seen in general terms - has lost its touch with the natural and human life, accusing thus the utilitarian way as one that has gone thoroughly wrong. The author paints in Great Expectations a picture of the 'modern times' as demonically motivated ones, a world in which inanimate objects come alive, symbolizing his vision that this society is based on an aggressiveness that has got out of control and that is utterly irresponsible toward mankind.

The second of the most important topics of the author's social criticism found in Great Expectations is the one of the contemporary English class-system. This topic - not existing in any of his former 'child-novels' - extends now deeply into this last novel. Dickens speaks out very openly against the 'great expectations' of the ruling middle-class, against its very often overexaggerated economic aspirations and against its still prevailing 'aristocratic sentiments'. He himself values - contradicting those aims and aspirations of the middle-class - 'sensible' economic achievements and advertizes economic restraint, cautioning economic humility and - clearly directed against this class's 'aristocratic' elements - he proposes, like Carlyle, to seek satisfaction mainly from work. Attacking the 'consciousness' of this middle-class, Dickens

speaks out against its very high self-esteem and its 'arrogance', which is not only of a mere economic quality. Breaking down the rigid class-barriers, Dickens here demonstrates that a decent but low-born individual - like Joe - is much more 'worthy' than any 'foppish' young gentleman - such as Pip is. He 'redefines' the 'true' gentleman in this novel as any decent, generous, selfless and considerate member of society - no matter which his social status, given by birth, is - and he passes far beyond the limits of the middle-class to find his 'pure' heroes and heroines.

But, since this criticism is a rather self-critical and self-reflecting one, shedding light upon the author himself as well as on the bulk of his reading-audience, Dickens is far from uttering any radical point of view. He attacks only certain and rather obvious exaggerations of the middle-class's aspirations and performances. And thus, though he is fiercely attacking here the often found 'snobbism' of this class, he allows - on the other hand - for the 'true' gentleman Herbert, who is one of the 'traditional' members and who proclaims all the advantages and achievements that the middle-class undoubtedly offers and gained.

But the author's criticism is not only directed against the middle-class. Also the social 'rising', the 'class-drift' finds his criticism. Though allowing Magwitch's assumption come true - at least for a certain amount of time - that money and education provide for the rising out of the lower into the middle-class, admitting that birth and tradition count actually little in the 'formation of style', Dickens obviously does not support the assumption that this 'social rising' is a limitless one. Pip, the 'newly-rich', thus can not secure a safe po-

sition in the higher, the 'sacred' spheres of the middle-class, which is - also in Dickens's opinion - the exclusive 'realm' of the traditional aristocracy.

Attempting to make a connection of those above-made statements with the earlier gained results from the comparison of the respective novels's melodramatic, 'fairy-tale', autobiographical and 'realistic' elements, it can be stated that Dickens's novels show in those two respects a certain - rather closely - interconnected and interrelated development. Moving away from his early melodramatic, 'tale-like' and almost completely 'unrealistic' novels toward his later, increasingly 'realistic' ones, Dickens also abandons his early 'crude' social criticism, this rather 'unreflected' and almost purely factual and directly presented one, acquiring later a 'new' form of criticism, which is marked by its detailed, far-reaching, indirect and 'realistic' qualities, a development that culminates finally in the truly superb mixture of a 'factual' and a 'non-factual' social criticism in Great Expectations.

The following paragraph tries to extract from the material 'social criticism' the author's 'general' social/political view and, furthermore, attempts to answer the question of whether Dickens, due to his 'child-novels', can be understood as a serious social reformer.

The author's main aims of his social/political attacks are - as illustrated above - certain contemporary public institutions, education, the class-system and, in quite general terms, the 'utilitarian society'.

In respect to his criticism of these public institutions it can be maintained that Dickens did not demonstrate any radical attitudes. Though the author complains about the often inhumane reality found inside many of those institutions, Dickens does not question in any way the right and the necessity of those institutions to exist. Showing thus a rather 'realistic' and surely fairly conservative stand-point, the author only attacks and denounces those people who are in charge of the institutions, turning a basically 'good', an 'ameliorating' and 'helping' institution into a 'negative', a 'bad' one. Institutions, whether social, political or economic ones are thus acceptable, as long as they are 'benevolent', perpetuated by kind and humane people.¹⁰⁾

The author's opposition against the contemporary educational ideas and methods is by far of a more radical quality than the one against the public institutions. Dickens, very clearly, speaks out against the influence that utilitarianism has on education, pronouncing his firm stand against 'scholastic teaching', the teaching of 'earnestness', 'self-denial' and 'intellectuality'. Postulating his own ideas, Dickens refuses an education that threatens the naturalness and the fantasy of a child. Accusing the utilitarian education of being a basically inadequate one, of being actually directed against children, uttering ideas that run directly against the prevailing Victorian understanding of the function of 'school' and 'education', Dickens suggests that the 'school of learning' should become - contrary to the existing one - an institution that teaches a moralized version of the world. The aim of teaching is seen by Dickens as the teaching of things 'close to heart',

things like naturalness, civility of conduct, warmth of feeling and expression. II)

In other words, the function of 'school' and 'education', as Dickens sees it, should be the preservation of the original and inherited human goodness - a quality vehemently denied by the utilitarians - and 'education' should be the main means directed against the steadily growing influence that utilitarianism has on society. It is seen by the author as a wall against the de- and transformation of human beings into de-personalized and dehumanized things, because - as Dickens maintains - only if one is rightly educated then one can preserve innocence and individuality in a world full of temptations and depersonalizing effects. I2)

Still stronger than Dickens's opposition against the contemporary puritanic-utilitarian educational ideas and methods is the attack on 'modern urban society'. Those attacks - though at times of only a rather subtle and indirect quality - are by many of the author's critics, such as R. Williams, H. House and A. E. Dyson, understood as the main ones of his social criticism.

Dickens saw this utilitarian society - and accused it openly of being - as a basically indifferent and 'unnatural' one, a society of an almost haunting isolation of its individual members. This here created and encountered isolation, dehumanization and alienation of human beings the author saw as the most harming effect that this philosophy and its realizations had on 'life' in general, producing 'people' that are almost entirely subjected to certain social roles, exploited as 'things' and used merely to produce profit. But though the author surely

has the vision that the 'City' is the place where this 'new' society appears in its clearest form, is the main 'villain', a world in which people are uprooted and deprived of any customary identity, a device that determines socially, ¹³⁾ Dickens does not proclaim here a truly radical point of view either. He does not disqualify this modern urban society totally, since his rescuers - though living somewhat 'outside' and 'detached' from it - all the same still make part of this organisation.

Going far beyond the matters of utilitarian economy - which Dickens probably accepted - he strikes at the ruling philosophical ideas. Not regarding utilitarianism - at least in this respect - as an 'advance' in civilisation, the author's attack on institutions, education and the 'modern society' in general suggest certain more 'humanitarian' alternatives to those ruling doctrines. In this work he had the assistance of all those, who were influenced by the aspirations of the early Romantics, especially of Coleridge. ¹⁴⁾ But, in spite of all those ameliorating proposals found in his 'child-novels', Dickens presents himself rather obviously and consistently as a person whose 'social/political view' - in its essence - is that of a member of the middle-class. Actually, as H. House observes, Dickens was too far removed from the 'real world' of the lower class to assimilate it fully - but, on the other hand, not removed enough to treat it with detachment. ¹⁵⁾ Dickens's social position and understanding finds furthermore the adequate illustration - given by F.R. Karl - that he, the son of a clerk and a servant, being foreign to nearly all social groups, being somewhat alienated from organized society, did not know

very well the contemporary, the 'real' conditions encountered by the lower social classes. ¹⁶⁾ Those two statements are most clearly supported by the fact that the Dickensian child-heroes - except Pip - find themselves finally in the romantic 'idyl' of the landed middle-class, that they gain, very unconvincingly, in a 'happy' ending a 'bourgeois happiness' - an ending that does not reflect in any realistic way the actually encountered conditions of the lower classes.

Dickens also presents himself in his 'child-novels' as a 'proud' Victorian. It might be realized by the reader as a curious fact that Dickens, who is so scornful of the moral and social abuses of his times, does not 'praise' the times before his. But there is no idealization of the past to be found and, instead, the author shows himself - though being a critic - as a person conscious of living in a progressive age. This attitude, best illustrated in Nicholas Nickleby, is expressed in his own words as follows:

"Whether I look at home or abroad, whether I behold the peaceful industrious communities of our island home - her rivers covered with steamboats, her roads with locomotives, her streets with cabs, her skies with balloons of a power and magnitude hitherto unknown in the history of aeronautics in this or any other nation - I say, whether I look merely at home, or, stretching my eyes further, contemplate the boundless prospect of conquest and possession - achieved by British perseverance and British valour - which is outspread before me, I clasp my hands, and turning my eyes to the broad expanse above my head, exclaim, 'Thank Heaven, I am ¹⁷⁾ a Briton' ".

Having stated above that Dickens advocated in his 'child-novels' rather consistently certain 'middle-class values' and that he presented himself as a 'proud' Victorian, it is worth

mentioning that, furthermore, he demonstrated himself in those novels as a person who was curiously blind to the real forces in the nineteenth century English society. This 'modern' and 'utilitarian' society was actually already then beginning to reform certain of the abuses against which he protested so vehemently - Parliament giving educational reforms and public protective legislation of many kinds. ¹⁸⁾ But Dickens, perhaps mainly due to his personal deep opposition against the utilitarian philosophy, did not see - or did not want to see - that his social criticism was already somehow 'obsolete', 'outdated' by the contemporary utilitarian social reality. His attacks against the theory seemed to have closed his eyes, not allowing him to perceive in an objective way the actually realized social implications of this opposed philosophy, making him reject its social reformism - one which should have applied to him.

Thus Dickens's here examined social, political and as well economic ideas end up in the rather 'unrealistic' and 'old-fashioned' vision, that 'goodness' is mere philanthropy and kindness. His world, then, is one in which cosiness and comfort figure large, a world, as F.R. Karl puts it, in which charity comes from the heart, amiability is the norm of conduct, and the joys of innocence predominate. ¹⁹⁾ In this world personal help is the solution of and the humane response to a 'negative' environment and suffered hardship. Thus Dickens, being a little behind his times, not perceiving fully the changed 'rules' of the 'new' society, can not really be understood - as George Orwell perceived among many others of his critics - as a radical, nor even as a very serious social reformer. Undoubtedly Dickens attacks rather directly certain

social abuses in his novels and denounces openly certain negative social conditions encountered. He proclaims thus, for example in Oliver Twist, that even education and religion are no good till people have more light, air, room, clean streets and decent water. ²⁰⁾ He offers - in a non-precise way - humanitarian alternatives to the ruling and opposed utilitarian doctrines and he attempts, like Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold, among others, to mitigate, by description and irony, the complacencies and the self-righteousness of the Victorian age. He accuses it - despite its abundance of sects and chapels - of becoming hard, gross and impervious to criticism. He refuses to join unreservedly in the celebration of things as they are and does not surrender to the typical. He is concerned with keeping the sympathies of men open, encouraging self-critical attitudes. He tries to prevent that mere surrender to commercial success and mechanical processes happen - but in spite of all that, he does certainly not acquire the dimension of a true, modern and serious social critic. - mainly since he does not offer any concrete and applicable alternatives in his criticism.

Thus it is maintained here that Dickens, more than a serious social/political commentator and/or reformer actually has to be understood mainly as a moral critic, as an author who tried - like the early Romantics - to reform man's Christian beliefs into practical norms of behaviour, as an author who, in many respects, resembles a 'Don Quixote'.

Only when the phrase 'social criticism' is given a fuller value, only when it is seen not only as a set of opinions, not only as a series of reforms, but as a vision of the nature of

man and the means of his liberation in a close and particular place and time the Dickens's 'social criticism' - despite of all its above illustrated 'shortcomings' - achieves in the end certain lasting and most probably far-reaching results. Through his 'child-novels' the author undoubtedly helped to make people be more aware of 'reality', affecting them through and with his personal opposition against the 'inhumane' utilitarian system and, as well, through and with his humaneness and profound Christian belief in mankind. And only when it is understood that a writer of popular novels can not be only a sociologist - describing most accurately merely certain factual social conditions - , that he can not be only a politically oriented person - offering simply a clear political programme - but that - particularly in the Victorian times and, furthermore, leading most of his attacks against his own reading audience - he can only attempt to follow those modes with a certain and somewhat 'limited' force, trying to make the elements of his criticism communicable to his readers, dramatizing them and allowing them to become 'actions', only then he can and has to be valued as a determined and an important social critic.

Dickens's political point of view is of an even more conservative quality than his social one. This standpoint is probably most clearly and convincingly illustrated when the 'underworld' in Great Expectations is looked at. This world - represented by Dolge Orlick - signals, at least for Dickens, 'anarchy' and 'revolution'. The essence of Dickens's political point of view - as demonstrated in his 'child-novels' - can be summarized as the following one:

Dickens, fearing 'anarchy', 'revolution', social and political 'disorder', realized that 'order' and 'progress' can only be achieved and/or maintained through the discipline and continuity of 'institutions' - mainly the one of 'law'. Indeed, it is those institutions - small as well as big ones - that enable the society to survive adversities and to remain an 'orderly' one. Thus the foundation, on which a successful and well-developing social organization is built, is that of 'institutions', those that work for the society's members and not against them, institutions that exist solely for man's benefit. Taking into account the fact that Dickens obviously had a deep fear of social and political disorder and that he had a very strong desire for security and stability, the corruption of society's institutions - encountered to different degrees in all of his 'child-novels' - becomes doubly meaningful. Those corrupted institutions mean that man is no longer 'innocent' and that neither he nor the institution can be trusted any more. 'Chaos' and 'anarchy' - according to Dickens - is thus ready to be set free.

Dickens, believing in an 'ordered' social and political progress, in a social and political 'evolution', sees mainly 'education' as the one sphere where political, as well as social, 'rejuvenation' of the system, where progressive forces can and have to come from. Thus Dickens made 'education' an essential element of his political vision.

As already illustrated in the discussion on Dickens's social point of view, his political one as well does not offer any radical elements. It is surely not based on the political

programmes offered by the - rather active - contemporary English 'left-wing' political groups. Instead, Dickens's affiliation with the political - and conservative - ideas and values of the middle-class is consistently and unchangingly obvious. Dickens, not being a radical and perhaps not even a truly serious social reformer, lacks as well the quality of being a political one - and surely he never intended or tried to be. He does not offer in any of his 'child-novels' a clear political programme for the amelioration of the political situation encountered - and certainly he saw no real necessity to do so. He did not perceive this situation as a seriously endangered or 'bad' one, demonstrating himself thus as a rather satisfied mid-Victorian, relying on 'evolution' and the functioning of the social/political institutions.

The author's 'moral view' is a very clear and an almost simple one. Dickens sustains in all his here examined novels his fundamental conviction that 'moral issues' are not complicated ones and that 'moral choices' are basically of an obvious quality. Though the characters encountered in his later novels are more 'psychologically analyzed' than their forerunners, making thus 'moral decisions' more complex and somehow more 'complicated', though the choice between 'good' and 'bad' becomes an increasingly realistic, convincing and personal one and though the author admits in his later novels that circumstances can contribute to produce 'villains' - though it is not primarily the environment that determines - the essence of his conviction remains unchanged. Thus the author expresses a 'moral view' which implies that any person, whatever his social background or his actual situation is,

is always given a clear moral choice, making the individual fully responsible for its actions.

Having illustrated in the above paragraph the qualities of Dickens's social, political and moral view, we may attempt to shed some light on its possible origins.

It seems to be adequate to assume - as F.R. Karl and P. Hobsbaum actually do - that Dickens's 'vision of the world' is fairly closely connected with the author's own childhood experiences - in particular with the 'traumatic' one that springs from the humiliation which the young Dickens had to suffer when he had to work in the public window of a blacking factory - experiences, which the author probably 'relived' in his 'child-novels'. In favour of this assumption speaks the fact that the heroes encountered in his fictions have to suffer from hardships that are of an obviously similar kind and quality to those endured by the author himself.

Thus it is here maintained that the author's autobiographical influence is most probably of a more forceful and basic importance for the conception of those 'child-novels' than the encountered 'social criticism'. This 'social criticism' is so deeply mixed with the author's entirely personal emotions and experiences that it lost - or never gained - any 'objective' dimension. In other words, the 'social criticism' found can not - at least mostly - be understood as an originally and truly social, political and/or moral one, as a criticism that is as much as possible detached from its author's personality in order to gain the maximum of 'generality' and 'objectivity' possible, but as one that is a very subjective criticism, a 'pseudo-criticism', basically based on the

outflow of Dickens's profound self-pity.

As illustrated above those four novels demonstrate a certain development, one that, in fact, not only can be seen as an 'artistic' but also - and perhaps even mainly - as a 'personal' one. Dickens's early novels, revealing very flat and highly idealized characters and very direct attacks against certain contemporary public institutions in which the respective heroes have to suffer from conditions which are very similar to those encountered by Dickens in his own childhood - though enlarged in their presentation - reflect a rather 'unqualified' social criticism and are penetrated deeply with the author's own equally unreflected and 'unqualified' self-pity. They show the author as a person who is extremely sentimental, defiant and rather 'full of hate', deeply subjective and as a writer who is obviously not willing or even not able to reflect on the world - as on himself - in an objective way.

His later novels present increasingly 'convincing' character-depictions, heroes, who are illustrated in a very detailed manner - and don't reflect any more the earlier encountered quality in the author's social attacks. Dickens's social criticism becomes one of a decisively more 'realistic' and 'objective' quality, one that has to be understood quite surely as a more 'qualified' one. This change and progress has - in my opinion - to be linked with Dickens's own 'personal' progress, his own development toward a realistic and objective 'self-understanding', 'self-analysis' and, finally, 'self-acceptance'. Thus Dickens's social criticism encoun-

tered in his later novels becomes - like the author's view of his own self - an increasingly objective, realistic and by far less sentimental one.

Examples which demonstrate this two-fold development are - among numerous other ones - those, that Dickens allows now in David Copperfield for the fact that the hero's own foster-parents, and not any more a public institution, create the 'situation of misery' encountered by David - signifying the author's acceptance of his own 'life-reality' - and that Pip, in Great Expectations, finally assumes himself - like the 'mature' Dickens - the responsibility for his actions and his earlier committed mistakes. This argument allows us to maintain that the author's social criticism and his character-presentations are very closely linked with each other and that they both together are directly depending on and symbolizing the author's progressive 'self-understanding'. Thus Dickens's social criticism as well as his character-presentations reach by far their best quality when the author - having become a 'mature' person - allows for an objective, realistic and non-sentimental reflection, when - having been able to resolve his own personal problems - he allows his characters to grow to their fullest possible size.

Dickens - the 'innovator' and the 'reformer' of the English literary tradition

Having illustrated in the above paragraphs that Dickens can not be understood in and through his 'child-novels' as a serious social/political and/or pedagogical reformer, the question rises of whether the author can or has to be seen as an 'innovator' and/or 'reformer' of the English literary tradition. This question is a very manifold one, making it necessary to distinguish between its 'form' and its 'content'.

Considering the 'form' of Dickens's early novels, namely Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby, it can be maintained that it was very directly influenced by the traditional 'form' of the English literature, which is that of the picaresque 'adventure-novel'. The most obvious elements found in the respective novels that allow for this statement are - in Oliver Twist - mainly the one of the mysterious secrets of the hero's past and his origins, his illegitimate birth and the final 'clarifications' and - in Nicholas Nickleby - the motive of the theatre-group and the adventures Nicholas makes there, furthermore the here installed 'love-motive' - the hero can free the heroine out of a net of intrigues - and the protagonist's very temperamental performances - reminding the reader particularly of Tom Jones.

Also the 'style' encountered in those early novels sustains the made assumption. Like in the earlier popular English novels the Dickensian reader finds in Oliver Twist as well as in Nicholas Nickleby the typical and traditional melodramatic style, rich in pathos and extremely sentimental.

In David Copperfield this influence of the English literary tradition on Dickens is already of a much weaker kind and the only truly traditional scene encountered in this novel is the one of the mail coach.

In Dickens's last novel, Great Expectations, as good as nothing of this influence is left. Only one element in the entire novel can be found, which could faintly remind of the earlier literary tradition, namely Pip's journey to London. But this journey quite surely has lost any of its potential 'adventure-character' and thus can not be seen as an element that still signals the author's dependence on the tradition.

Also the 'style' in those two later novels is now of an obviously different kind and quality. Lacking any of its traditionally melodramatic, pathetic or sentimental form, it now turns out to be a 'modern' one, a style that employs a 'normal' and 'realistic' expression.

Thus, as far as the 'form' of Dickens's 'child-novels' is considered, it can be stated that his early ones still stand firmly in the tradition of the English literature, whereas his later novels, particularly Great Expectations, obviously break with this influence, allowing Dickens to be seen as an 'innovator' of this tradition, as a 'reformer', who opts for new elements and a new style, unprecedented by any other English writer of popular novels.

In respect to the 'content' of Dickens's here examined novels, the author unquestionably has to be understood as an 'innovator' of the English literary tradition - actually as one of a very great importance. None of his forerunners, as well as none of his contemporary writers, allowed, as he did, for a 'child-character' to be the principal character of a novel - a conception which is a genuinely Dickensian innovation in the field of the English popular novel.

The theme of 'child' and 'childhood' had hardly found any influence in the novels of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, and the - very few - there appearing children were found only in very minor and almost completely unimportant roles. Only when those children had grown up, they finally moved into the focus and merit of a detailed illustration and consideration. Looking at Dickens's contemporary wri-

ters, it as well becomes obvious that the 'feelings' and the 'life' of young children were not considered yet as ones worthy to be reflected on in any great detail. Among his contemporaries it was mainly Charlotte Bronte who -after the publication of Nicholas Nickleby - gave in her novels consideration to children. But here, like in the literary tradition, the child-character never stood in the novel's centre of interest. In Jane Eyre - the one of her novels that deals most extensively with the theme 'child' and 'childhood' - the young heroine is described only in a very brief and superficial way, and the reflections on the heroine's childhood clearly have the function to stimulate the reader's 'sympathy' for the grown-up heroine, a 'sympathy' that was necessary to accept Jane Eyre's rather 'unconventional' point of view and way of life.

Thackeray - the only other writer of Dickens's contemporaries who actually spent some consideration on this theme - shows even less interest than Charlotte Bronte in a detailed and realistic presentation of children. Vanity Fair allows the children, Rawdon Crawley and George Osborne, only to appear in rather minor roles. Here, still standing in this respect in the English literary tradition, Thackeray waits until the children are grown-up before he reflects in a deeper way on their respective personalities.

But is Dickens's literary innovation, his turning away from the ideas and values of the 'Age of Enlightenment' - a time in which due to the reign of 'reason' over 'feeling' children did not find any significant value, an era that created a coherent 'grown-up' literature, - a creation which has

to be understood as a genuinely 'Dickensian' one or can similar tendencies be already found in other 'areas', those, which are linked with the writing of novels?

Before the publication of Oliver Twist the dominating influence of the 'Age of Enlightenment' had already been broken in the field of the English lyrics. Here the break with the traditional view held on children occurred already in the end of the eighteenth century, provoked by Rousseau's novel Emile. Rousseau's view, a reaction against the strong influence of 'reason' on life, was adopted by the English poets Blake and Wordsworth. Those two poets - consequently - dedicated much of their poetry to children, reflecting rather deeply on the 'childish world'. Like Rousseau they directed their interest toward 'childhood', valuing it as 'the' period of life when man most closely approximates to the state of 'nature' and 'innocence'.²¹⁾ Blake and Wordsworth opposed very strongly the 'puritanic' view held on children, a view which - in very general terms - qualified the state of childhood as one during which - since being too weak to resist - the child is the 'easy prey of Satan'.²²⁾ This stage, due to the 'puritanic' view, therefore had to be shortened - mainly through 'education' - as much as only possible, trying to transform the child at the earliest time possible already into a young adult. Contradicting this view, Blake and Wordsworth maintained that the childhood is an eminently important period in life, that it has to be a 'free' and 'normal' one to allow for a 'natural' development of the child toward its maturity.

Quite probably those 'romantic poets' influenced Dickens's attitude toward 'child' and 'childhood' and it can be assumed

that his theme of the 'original innocence' - encountered mainly in Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby - originated, at least partially, from the romantic English lyrics. Thus, if mainly the first two 'child-novels' are considered and if Great Expectations is excluded, Davis's statement can be supported, saying: "Dickens, like the early Wordsworth, believed that children are noble in their innocence before they mature and learn evil from their surroundings." 23)

Dickens, having thus innovated the English literary tradition in a way that he can be called the 'Rousseau of the English literature', allowing 'Romanticism' to find its realization also in the popular English novels, signals with his fourth 'child-novel', Great Expectations, still another - and an at least equally important - innovation. Having turned out in his earlier novels to be a 'romantic' novelist he shows himself when writing Great Expectations as an almost calvinistic one. This novel, dealing in an utterly unromantic way with the frustration of childhood hopes and expectations, presenting the child as a 'criminal' one, going deeply into a detailed character-depiction - one which reaches an almost 'psycho-analytic' dimension - breaks clearly with the romantic influence and tradition and points forward into the twentieth century, indicating a major theme that culminates finally in such novels as written, for example by Conrad. And here, in his last 'child-novel' - without denying Dickens's importance as the innovator who allowed the romantic movement to find its realization in the English novels - his real and lasting importance as a literary innovator must ultimately rest. It is in particular his 'psycho-

logical realism', the way of presenting the child - here for the first time in English literature as a really and completely 'valid' member of the human society and, furthermore, as an equally 'valid' theme in literature, through which he became an utmost important and distinct forerunner of the later, twentieth-century 'life-novels', novels in which the protagonist himself must resolve what he wants, regardless of outside pressures and temptations.²⁴⁾

Thus, summing up the argument, it is here maintained that Dickens - in and through Great Expectations - through his increasing emphasis on violence, on the 'dark motives' of his characters, on the 'criminal' mind and on complex psychological phenomena finally liberated himself from the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century predecessors, who had still influenced his earlier novels, and that it is only here that he reached a truly and genuinely individual and 'new' way of writing, unprecedented in its 'form' as well as in its 'content'.

A further 'innovation' of the English literary tradition - probably of an equal importance to the one illustrated above - has to be seen in Dickens's step to let rather tangible political elements find a clear realization inside a popular novel. This step is, though, only undertaken in Great Expectations. Not only does the author here 'redefine' the 'true' gentleman - similar to Eliot and Richardson - but he actually brings now the theme of 'revolution' and 'anarchy' into the English novel. This step has to be understood as a truly pioneering one, since this topic had been a sacred 'taboo' for all English popular novelists so far. This theme,

so alien to a mid-Victorian writer, points - similar to Dickens's very deep-reaching psychological analysis encountered in Great Expectations - forward into the twentieth century, being a theme that is usually associated with the late nineteenth-century Russian or the twentieth-century English and European 'political' novel. His view of 'disorientation', of the 'social nightmare', reminding the modern reader of Dostoyevsky, Kafka, Mann, Joyce, Conrad and Lawrence, does not make Dickens only an 'attractive' writer for the twentieth-century reading audience, but also an important 'innovator' and 'reformer' - not only of the English literary tradition, but, actually, of the European one.

Dickens's motivations to write his 'child-novels'

It can safely be maintained that Dickens did not write his 'child-novels' for children - though writing on them - but, obviously, for an adult audience.

One of his motives to write on children probably sprang from the fact that Dickens felt very deeply for children in general. Seeing - in particular - the misery of innumerable ones in his contemporary world, the author - as it can be assumed - felt morally obliged to illustrate their plight, to make their hope- and helplessness more 'understandable' and 'accessible' to his - mostly - middle-class audience, hoping to be able to initiate thus an 'ameliorating response'.

The second of his motives - quite certainly - was the author's intention to express himself socially as well as politically in and through his 'child-novels'. Thus he takes in those four novels a firm stand against the contemporary puritanic-utili-

tarian order of society and the predominance of 'reason' over 'feeling'. Writing on children Dickens wanted to turn away from the 'direct' way of proposing his social and/or political ideas to an 'indirect' one, not trying to reform his contemporary 'adult' society in a direct way but hoping to participate - through his focusing on 'education' - in the process of the amelioration of society by pointing into the direction of the 'evolutionary' process.

Furthermore - being influenced by Blake and Wordsworth - Dickens wanted to illustrate in those novels the 'inner life' of children in more details, wanted to allow for rather deep-reaching psychological reflections on their 'inner realities' - topics that had been neglected in the preceding English tradition of popular novels.

But it is maintained in this dissertation that it is most probably not mainly Dickens's 'pity for children', the 'romantic' influence that he enjoyed through the contact with Blake and Wordsworth or the intention to express himself socially and/or politically that motivated the author to introduce the 'child-hero' into the English popular novel. Instead it seems to be mainly the fact that Dickens, even as an adult, suffered quite severely from his unresolved traumatic childhood-experiences that has to be interpreted as the author's main motivation to write those four novels. Thus it is assumed here that Dickens intended - quite consciously - to relive in and through his 'child-novels' his own past, to express himself at length and in depth to a silent and interested audience - which can be understood as having the

function of a 'psychiatrist'. Here - and only here - he was willing to reveal all his hurting experiences and his frustrations, being sure that he would encounter warmth and understanding on the part of his audience for his - like his heroes's - plight.

Accepting the fact that this final conclusion is a very hypothetical one, the initially posed question of why Dickens actually wrote his 'child-novels' does not find a simple and clear answer. It can not be safely maintained which of his possible motivations has to be understood as the one which had the real, the driving influence on the author's decision to write on children. Thus my discussion has to restrict itself mainly to the presentations of those motives, hoping that future analyses will be able to answer this basic and interesting question by exploring the matter in a more technical depth.

7. APPENDIXI) 'UTILITARIANISM' - DICKENS'S 'TIMES'

In very general terms it can be said that Dickens lived in a time and in an environment in which a fundamental 'demolition' of traditional values was going on. This process, mainly brought about by the 'Industrial Revolution' and English colonial imperialism, somehow broke and disintegrated the traditional culture, a change that F.R. Karl describes: "What then emerged was, on the one hand, a debased commercial and urban culture, and, on the other, an increasingly threatened minority culture, an educated tradition." I)

Politically the Victorian period was a comparatively 'peaceful' reign, the era when Englishmen, secure of their island base, could complete the transformation of all aspects of their industrial, commercial, and social life without any risk of a violent interruption - a situation of quite a different quality when compared to the one found at the same time in many Continental nations.

The 'governing' idea of life of that time - in general - was that of 'utilitarianism'. 'Utilitarianism' has to be understood as a basically philosophical, mainly English, movement, concerning almost the entire 'life'; from the nature of man to the grounds of morality, from the scope of government to the meaning of freedom, advocating - basically - the idea of 'laissez-faire' in many more than only a purely economical respect. Utilitarianism was somehow a set of values that reflected many - and at times basic - paradoxes. Though based

- like so many eighteenth-century theories - "upon a minimal view of human nature, seeing man mainly as the 'economic man' " 2), it was nevertheless the inspiration of many of the most important reforms of the day in parliamentary and local government, in the working of the law, in standards of sanitation and in education. Though utilitarianism theoretically favoured 'laissez-faire' it, nevertheless, came to stand energetically for efficient and centralized administration and, furthermore, for a strong civil service.

Though in some matters, such as the agitation for cheap bread, the utilitarians were obviously 'friends' of the working men, in others, such as the regulation of conditions in factories, they were their 'enemies', standing firmly against any kind of a reform.

Considering the moral aspect of utilitarianism, it can be said that it claimed to be scientific and to have superseded the old-fashioned 'moral casuistry'. Utilitarians dismissed - in their desire for simplification - as a simply superfluous 'fiction' such terms as 'conscience', 'moral sense', 'love', 'right', etc - in fact all those terms, "which formed the moral vocabulary of the rest of mankind". 3) They, mainly David Hartley, redefined the terms 'good' and 'bad', proclaiming: "Some sensations are pleasurable and therefore the objects of desire, others are painful and therefore the objects of aversion. Men are so constituted as to seek to increase their pleasures which become synonymous with 'good' or 'happiness', and to avoid what is painful and 'bad'. The self-interest determines 'good' and 'bad' ". 4)

Thus the utilitarians saw 'society' as an aggregation of individuals, held together only by its members' selfishness. "Love, altruism, piety is not any more a common force - but only an individual one." 5)

In respect to 'education' the utilitarians were strongly committed to its mere 'extension', though, as Forster puts it, "their educational aims were minimal and seemed designed to create a population entirely submissive to factories and machines." 6) The main function of 'education' was seen as being the one which - as soon as only possibly applied - brings the young child to a clear - namely utilitarian - understanding of 'duty' and 'work' and which forces the child to an early self-denial and a fight against all its 'human weaknesses'.

'Utilitarianism' was primarily the creed of the rising middle-class which had little to offer to the traditional and landed gentry. It created a system of values that - besides an economical one - clearly had a spiritual, an intellectual and a moral impact on Dickens's 'times'. Preaching 'self-discipline' and 'self-control' - as mainly Thomas Carlyle and Thomas Arnold did - , looking for a higher aim in life and refusing the traditional way of 'thinking' - which they interpreted as only a thinking for the mere purpose of thinking - living in a state of permanent 'self-examination', teaching a philosophy that saw work as a 'mission', "the service of God on his secular calling" 7), aiming to carry forward the battle against social evil and suffering, utilitarianism - very contradictory to all those values-

simply excluded the 'child' from all the benefits that this philosophy promised to offer. The child, as well under the reigning utilitarian values as under the formerly encountered 'traditional' system, keeps on being - mainly - exploited. Gissing describes this situation well, saying: "That some part, at all events of modern English prosperity, results from the toil of children, among them babies of five and six, whose lives were spent in the black depths of coalpits and amid the hot roar of machinery, did not seem to affect the validity of the new philosophical system." 8)

And it is perhaps - among many other things - mainly the prevailing misery of a large number of children, that most clearly reflects the existing discrepancy between the utilitarian philosophy and the 'reality of life' which it created. The 'moral earnestness' it proclaims - with seemingly much fervour - turns here out to be a 'false' pretention, signalling clearly this new philosophy's basically hypocritical character. The true utilitarian 'aim' of the Nation, instead, - at least that of the now powerful middle-class - is mainly orientated toward sheer material winnings, whereas the moral implications of the philosophy turn out to be of only a rather negligible importance. This new utilitarian system is, in Gissing's words, "...a well-fed multitude, remarkable for a dogged practicality which, as often as not, meant ferocious • egoism. With all this, a prevalence of such ignoble vices as religious hypocrisy and servile snobbishness." 9)

II) CHIMNEY-SWEEPING

The author refers here to a notorious practice - against which there had been intermittent propaganda since the later part of the eighteenth century. Small boys, being forced to crawl down the chimney, were literally 'used' for its clearing - often suffering at an early age from thus caused illnesses and, frequently, even dying during their work. Since there had never been reached a solution - only some ineffective and 'half-hearted' legislation to put the chimney-sweeping business under some sort of public control ¹⁰⁾ - Dickens takes here in his novel a firm stand in favour of the children, accusing directly Parliament of failing to resolve this 'inhumane' problem. Though Dickens lets Oliver be saved from the hands of the chimney-sweep by the interference of the magistrates, he allows this salvation only to be based on pure luck - thus not diminishing the impact of his accusation.

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