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CHARLES DICKENS IN CINEMA
AND THE LOSS OF HIS MESSEGE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of English

Literature

by

Elliot Staatz

June 2016

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

CHARLES DICKENS IN CINEMA
AND THE LOSS OF HIS MESSAGE

by

Elliot Staatz

June 2016

The collected works of Charles Dickens have garnered countless critiques, not the least of which involve their social and political meaning, but what about the films based on these works? There are few nineteenth century authors who have been adapted to film more than Dickens. However, these cinematic works are often left under-analyzed; there is much to be said about Dickensian adaptations. Adaptations can be critically compared with the original, possibly showing changing societal values. So, by focusing on Dickens and his adaptations, we can expose societal values which have changed. Specifically, I will focus on the increased societal acceptance of an economic ruling class; Dickens critiqued the economic ruling class in a manner which later adaptations of his work were unwilling to portray.

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Introduction

The collected works of Charles Dickens have garnered countless critiques, not the least of which involve their social and political meaning, but what about the films based on these works? There are few nineteenth century authors who have been adapted to film more than Dickens. However, these cinematic works are often left under-analyzed; there is much to be said about Dickensian adaptations. Adaptations can be critically compared with the original, possibly showing changing societal values. So, by focusing on Dickens and his adaptations, we can expose societal values which have changed.

Specifically, I will focus on the increased societal acceptance of an economic ruling class; Dickens critiqued the economic ruling class in a manner which later adaptations of his work were unwilling to portray. These fall short of Dickens's critical view of class privilege, reflecting a complacency in society. After all, films are to a certain extent a reflection of society and its values. They go with the flow more often than not and aim for mass appeal. Dickens wrote for mass appeal as well, but his audience was more skeptical of the economic ruling powers, and the author had more agency without a large industry to interfere. Publishers in his day had little power over the author, and in fact Dickens had started to self-publish by the time he wrote *A Tale of Two Cities*.

I intend show that not only is the film industry invested in making money more than conveying Dickens's message, but also that society (represented by the filmic audiences) has become complacently accepting of the economic ruling class in comparison to the critically-minded society represented by Dickens' novels. Exposing this complacency is important to anybody who does not want to wake up one day to a steaming cup of oligarchy.

I have chosen to work with two of Dickens's most socially critical novels: *Great Expectations* (*GEx*) and *A Tale of Two Cities* (*ToTC*). These both offer plenty of room for

complex analysis. They also offer biting social commentary. Said commentary can be found in the author's stark depictions of the suffering working class, and the often corrupt, morally deficient, and opulent depictions of the very wealthy. These books turn a critical eye on the economic ruling class of England and the economic system as a whole. This social commentary will provide a telling juxtaposition for the adaptations.

There have been several prominent film adaptations of each book, and I have chosen four (two for each novel) based on notoriety and nationality (two from the US and two from Britain). Starting with *ToTC*. Jack Conway's 1935 adaptation of that novel was nominated for best picture (Oscars) the year of its release, and, given the time of recent economic depression in America, it should be an interesting film to analyze because of its commentary on the economic ruling class and its American origin. Ralph Thomas released a version in 1958 which met with radiant reviews, and it will serve as both an English version and a representative of a different time period. The prominent British director David Lean adapted *GEx* in 1946, winning 2 Oscars and garnering five total nominations. A 1998 depiction by Alfonso Cuarón will be an interesting representation of a "modernization" of the story, and again serve as an American version. Analyzing all these movies will give me a wide scope of time and directorial dispositions to investigate.

Argument

Dickens wrote some of the most powerful social commentary of his time. It was even-handed, well-detailed, and heart-felt. He brought everyday characters like Pip and Sydney Carton to life on the page. He did not hold back from critiquing society at any point. His characters stand out as bold and well-detailed icons of the people's suffering.

Dickens has frank and unforgiving depictions of the economic ruling class, but the adaptations are not nearly as powerful in this regard. Dickens' audience was clearly receptive

to this critique, and both of the works discussed here were self-published. Whereas Dickens seemed to have a strong motive for dissent, the film industry is a capitalistic venture designed to make money. This conception of the film industry as an entrepreneurial venture reveals two important factors involving the social critique of the economic ruling class. First, many of the financiers of these films are members of the economic ruling class themselves, so they might be less likely to critique themselves. Second (and more important for my purposes), they are trying to sell tickets, and if popular opinion is more forgiving towards the economic ruling class than it used to be, then the film makers will pander to that popular opinion, dulling down the once stark depictions of greed and economic hierarchy. While some people focus on issues like plausibility in the medium and aesthetics in film making, Dickens's biting commentary on the economic ruling class is being dulled.

I don't think that film lacks the ability to depict the fullness of fiction. The economic influence is a far more viable reason that a film "didn't get it right" than any technical aspect or filmic limitation. I also realize that, in the film industry, censorship and "properness" have something to do with this lack of gritty realism. But this excuse only goes so far; Dickens himself was not "improper" and still managed to get his message across. A more viable explanation is that society has backed away from critiquing the economic ruling class.

Although my primary focus in establishing societal context will be the films themselves, I will also need to provide some historical context. I use historical context to reinforce assertions that the capitalist driving force affects these films, and support the notion that this force effectively undermines the original novels' critique. About half of each chapter will be dedicated to context.

Part of context will be establishing the social importance of the novels. There are critics of Dickens who don't see him as a socially important writer, and these critics need to

be addressed. I will use textual evidence to counter the notion that Dickens was politically unimportant. He was a shrewd man of business, but I will show that his texts speak for themselves, and they speak quite loudly in opposition to the economic ruling class even though Dickens himself did achieve great wealth. Using a close read and historical context, I will show that Dickens's work contains bold critiques on society.

Methodology

I am using a new historicist approach along with film theory. I will cite evidence from the texts that conveys the struggle and discontent of the working class. I will also explain how Dickens discredits the economic ruling classes in both novels. A close reading of the texts will provide my argument with ample evidence of the critique. Not only will the evidence come from the more obvious and pervasive themes in the books, but also from subtle textual cues.

I will then compare them to their film versions, showing how the film versions fall short on social commentary. Again, I will not only cite large-scale deviations from Dickens's critique in the films, but also rely on a "close watching," identifying nuances of cinematic strategy that imply a favored view of the ruling class. I will analyze the films' characters as well as the historical context of the film, comparing both to the novels. I will focus on the working class characters and heroes and investigate the extent to which money influences their happiness or suffering, and I will focus on the wealthy and investigate how they are favorably depicted. Overall, I intend to demonstrate that the cinematic adaptations of Dickens's key novels have considerably dulled his scathing social criticism.

Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*

A Tale of Two Cities (1859) is Charles Dickens's classic novel set during the French revolution. It follows the miserable young professional Sydney Carton as he is faced with the man he will never be, Charles Darnay, who ends up marrying the woman Carton proclaims he could never deserve (Lucy Manette). However, Carton is more than just a "disappointed drudge" and miserable dandy. After the heroic upheaval in France, the terror follows, and these events provide the catalyst and context for Carton to be a hero. He revolts against his own fated place in British society as well as the hierarchical tyranny that the terror comes to ironically represent in France (the revolution has become the very thing they revolted against). The novel is short for a Dickens novel, but very complex, and requires a broad, open-ended examination.

Catherine Gallagher, Stephen Greenblatt, and their colleagues are "intensely interested in tracking the social energies that circulate very broadly through a culture..." (13) "Social energies" refer to anything that can affect a text from the social sphere or any societal nuances that can be gleaned from the text. These critics break down the barriers between culture and text; neither is quite definitive to the other, but both culture and text are important. Specifically, "tracking" "social energies" becomes an important way to engage and understand *ToTC*. *ToTC* reflects Dickens's views, and by focusing on the original text, we can explore Dickens' social critique. "Focus" is used loosely here because analyzing *ToTC* will require an understanding of "social energies that circulate... broadly." The implication is that we will need to explore Charles Dickens' life, society, and texts to really understand his ideas.

Context

Dickens was highly critical of the society in which he lived, and *ToTC* is the perfect

work to demonstrate his viewpoint; the subject matter of the French Revolution makes it an obvious choice to explore social commentary, but the context of its publication is also important. Robert I. Patten points out how the format was split at the time of publication; the book was not only published as a full novel in parts, but also as a monthly serial (38). Dickens's simultaneous breaking away from and adhering to publishing conventions reflects his own contradictory position in society as both a successful man of business and an advocate of social change. The duality of adherence to and critique of society is reflected in *ToTC* as well. Like Carton and Darnay in the novel, Dickens had a strong impulse to break away from the economic ruling class and its place for him; "He hated writing in what Carlyle called 'teaspoons'" (Patten 38), or the serialized segments that Carlyle mocked with this nickname. Dickens's use of the "teaspoons" while also publishing in a preferred format shows his continued desire to reach readers while simultaneously challenging the system and buying his independence from the economic ruling class. This novel was the first that Dickens published without a publishing house. As such, he was free to express himself as he chose with only his own moral, political, and economic sense to restrain him. Dickens had no one to answer to but society.

Society was always more important than politics to Dickens, but because the two are intertwined, Dickens was an important political figure. The distinction is important because Dickens is often accused of not being politically active. As Catherine Waters points out, Dickens' critics accuse him of falling short of a direct political impact, but Dickens makes a deeper impact by stirring social forces of change in England (171-72). In other words, Dickens did not have to be a politician to be important politically. Nonetheless, Schlicke mentions his lack of political involvement while explaining his stance as a reformist and someone who was sick of "aristocratic control" (463). His political opposition to a stagnant,

hierarchical economic ruling class was clear in his life and in his works, and critics who would make a total disconnect between societal influence and political influence are not acknowledging the new historicist interconnectedness of the broadly circulating social energies which are so important in understanding *ToTC* in context.

So how might the context of Dickens' politics affect *ToTC*? Put simply, he was a man of the people. Joseph Childers points to his journalism to describe the political importance of Dickens' works. Again, Dickens is emphasized as "placing the social before the political," and the advantage this priority gains him is a sort of moral high ground— he can affect politics indirectly through people without specified "class or party interests" (203). Dickens presents political issues indirectly through individuals and society as a whole, as we will see in *ToTC*. His journalism may be somewhat more direct in its political messages (though still not overtly political) than his novels as Childers explains, but Childers concludes that Dickens' social impact in generating discussion was effective in part because of his popularity and business savvy and "in part because he *was* moved by sentiment and the simultaneous distrust of and desire for the institutions and discourses that were the object of his commentaries" (213). In other words, his lack of *direct* political statements and actions make his political and social messages even more effective. Dickens uses "sentiment" in *ToTC* in a manner which shows his progressive advocacy for social change, including his attack on the economic ruling class.

His "simultaneous distrust of and desire" for political and social institutions is actually an important part of his message. Nora Gilbert explains this contradiction by citing that his interest in popular and commercial success can be partially "seen as a reflection of his lifelong efforts to increase the status of the literary profession in terms of its social respectability" (83). Gilbert qualifies the assertion by emphasizing Dickens's thoughts on

societal conformity—he was concerned with a sort of "horrid respectability" in his colleagues and English society in general (83-84). So we see a harsh view of society coupled with an interest in succeeding and fitting into that same society. He strove to be a kind of respectable gentleman within the very establishments he would often condemn.

This conflict can be seen in his central character in *ToTC*, Carton. Making a dandy the hero of a novel certainly seems to endorse 19th century societal norms: he is the height of fashion and entirely unconcerned with the world around him, but Carton is a different kind of dandy. He is miserable with his occupation and seeks redemption and escape from the meaningless drive of his class.

His doppelganger in the novel, Charles Darnay, might be a stronger kind of endorsement for social norms, but Darnay's rejection of the aristocracy is strong evidence against this reading. Darnay fits into English society, but only as a teacher, which was not an occupation associated with upper class status and drive. Additionally, Darnay's happiness could be said to emanate from his rejection of at least one form of economic drive (the French aristocracy). Darnay gave up his aristocratic title and family name in France, condemning his own fortune in favor of a simple life as a teacher, with no great aspirations except in love. He also rejects any notion of joining the British upper class with his choice, implying that both countries have a corrupted and misery-inducing economic ruling class—one that he must reject completely to find happiness. So Darnay is not an endorsement of class hierarchy just because he fits in in society: in the context of Dickens's conflicted personal life, Darnay merely becomes a viable ideal of a "gentleman" who Dickens does not want to refute completely because of his own conflicted views on the class status of "gentleman."

Dickens seems to have been caught between classes in a class system for which he

generally held disdain but still had to function within. He was a rising "gentleman" of sorts: not far enough away from poverty to forget what overworked hunger felt like but far enough to be in reach of middle class status. Robin Gilmour relates Dickens' unique gentleman status to his works; he particularly focuses on *Great Expectations*, but *ToTC* is also included. Gilmour explains that "Dickens is concerned with the lower reaches of the middle class in its most anxious phase of self-definition, struggling out of trade and domestic service and clerical work into the sunshine of respectability" (106). The implication is that Dickens writes stories that parallel his own life and experience; the drive to achieve the status of "gentleman" is quite personal to him, and although this attachment makes for sympathetic, realistic characters, his portrayal does not always favor the societal drive towards higher class status. Gilmour uses the example of Sydney Carton to explain how Dickens' "growing revulsion from the stuffy, Podsnap side of Victorian middle-class life in the 1850s and 1860s inclined him to a more sympathetic portrayal of the dandy-type" (108). Carton is indeed a new type of dandy, and he exemplifies Dickens' own sympathetic commentary on the middle class; his success in society is coupled with a constant self-deprecating bitterness that his dandyism becomes a cover for. Dickens's sympathy with such a character is not a sign of conservative ideology. In fact, his position between classes in society gives his critique more weight from personal experience.

However, Dickens was not relying purely on his own personal social experience; he was actively engaged with some of the most prevalent writers of his day, particularly in writing *ToTC*. Gareth Stedman Jones puts Dickens in the company of Thomas Carlyle and Karl Marx, calling them "three of the most powerful writers and historical observers of the nineteenth century" (18). The comment and comparison both reinforce Dickens' political importance through his status as a writer and "historical observer."

The parallel between Carlyle and Dickens is particularly important because “Dickens was a fervent admirer of Carlyle’s [1837] *French Revolution*, and used it as the basis for his historical narrative” (Jones 14). Carlyle presents a progressive, heroic view of the revolution, and his work sets a historically important benchmark for Dickens. *French Revolution* was “a new type of history in which a collective entity” was the protagonist (Jones 2), and the perspective was “distinct from anything to be found in Britain at the time” (Jones 3). This unique approach contributed to Dickens’ own original presentation of the social as political, and the “collective entity” can certainly be seen in *ToTC* as both the revolutionaries and the masses of English working class. The closeness to the masses that Carlyle achieved is only magnified by Dickens in *ToTC*. The “warning tale of revolution” in *French Revolution* (Jones 4) is repeated by Dickens on a more intimate level, so the critique of the economic ruling class is often missed because *ToTC* focuses more on individuals (without the direct political statements made by Carlyle). Both works did offer a critique of the economic ruling class though, and the influence of Carlyle can be seen in Dickens’ depiction of the revolution as heroic.

The fact that Carlyle and Dickens are different is important too; their works highlight the changing form of social critique and show Dickens to be unique. Jones does postulate that “Dickens’ debt to Carlyle was shallower than might at first appear” (15). Jones sums up his reading of *ToTC* by claiming that Dickens’ depiction of the revolution was more in line with “the radicals of the 1790s, Paine and Wollstonecraft, or advanced Whigs like Fox and Makintosh” rather than being more like Carlyle (16). The statement supports the notion that Dickens offers a “radical” critique of the economic ruling class.

The text is distinct from Carlyle because of differences in Dickens’ philosophies regarding society and setting. In regard to society, Patten places Dickens between the notions

of the individualist as a catalyst for change put forth by Carlyle and the sweeping, hopeless corruptibility of society put forth by William Thackeray (28). This analysis is particularly apt in explaining *ToTC*. Dickens presents Sydney Carton in two different corrupt societies (London and Paris), and each society is reflected in the general hopelessness of his character; this notion would place Dickens closer to Thackeray. However, Carton's dual role as dandy *and* hero makes Carton a social catalyst; his change in character from hopeless dandy to heroic dandy represents the need for a great change in society and the potential for one man to instigate that change; this notion would place Dickens closer to Carlyle. However, Carton's impact is marginal on a literal level; Carton himself does not bring about any major change in society that might suggest Carlyle's influence. Similarly, Carton's heroism undermines Thackeray's influence which involves hopelessness. Carton's confusion can be seen as a reflection of these influences on Dickens, yet Carton remains a unique character. Dickens therefore differentiates himself from his contemporaries while reflecting their iconic critical stances on society and economic hierarchies.

Another difference between Carlyle and Dickens that is particularly important in regard to his adaptations is Dickens's treatment of the picturesque English countryside. Catherine Robson brings up Dickens's departure from Carlyle and other popular English authors on this subject (236). In both *GEx* and *ToTC*, Dickens depicts bleak and hopeless landscapes. The icy swamps and prison ship in *GEx* are part of his societal critique in that novel, and similarly, the destitute landscape in France and the dangerous carriage rides in England are strong evocations from *ToTC*. These landscapes evoke feelings of unease and represent a state of corruption and restlessness, often associated with the ugliness of industrialization. The depiction of a picturesque English or French landscape is, of course, a tempting prospect for any filmmaker, but it is important to remember that these landscapes

served as a strong critique of the establishment in Dickens's original works.

Text

ToTC features strong social criticism which becomes apparent with a close reading. The characters and story reveal a flawed system, and, like Dickens himself did, advocate some kind of change. This progressiveness is apparent in his depiction of the class-driven characters; Dickens does not hold back with his negative depiction of these characters.

The French aristocrats are depicted in the most blatantly negative light. Their pompous, uncaring attitudes are repulsive, and the dehumanizing way in which they treat "peasants" is even more so. Their lack of humanity is shown directly by their heinous actions towards the working or "lower" class such as running them over and raping them, and also by the "echoing" repercussions of those actions. There is an iconic scene in which a peasant child is heartlessly run down by an aristocrat in his carriage, and the imprisonment of Dr. Manette is due to him having witnessed the death of a peasant girl who had been raped by an aristocrat. The plot hinges largely on the good Dr. Manette's imprisonment which pervades the text. "Echoing" refers to consequences occurring later in the revolution rather than the initial revolution itself.

The initial revolution is depicted in a positive light, showing that at least the early bloodshed was in the interest of justice and thwarting the aristocrats. The start of the revolution has a meticulous build up which adds to the sense of the inevitability of the conflict. Madame Defarge's knitting is often associated with this sense of fate, and two of the chapters that are dedicated to the meticulous buildup of the revolution are entitled "Knitting" and "Still Knitting." She knits as time passes and important events come to fruition. Her knitting is constant and steady, often signaling events with stoic certainty that might otherwise be met with anxiety or worry. In "Still Knitting," the Defarges receive intelligence of Darnay's

marriage (170). The effect is noticeable despite only being vaguely linked to revolutionary activity. Defarge's concern and the elaborate spy network made apparent by the scene show a careful attention to detail which reinforces the implacability of the revolution. Fate is drawn on again by Madame Defarge as she knits, answering concerns that Darnay might ever return to France: "Her husband's destiny... will take him where he needs to go" (170). It is implied that it might be dangerous for Darnay to return to France because of a revolution that has not yet taken place. This prediction further reinforces the inevitability of the revolution, and the reference to "fate" makes the whole thing seem more fated as Madame Defarge knits the threads of the future. The fated nature of the revolution makes the ensuing bloodshed a matter of course rather than something to be viewed pejoratively.

In fact, the start of the battle is as glorious as it is harrowing. The revolutionaries "roar" with "all the breath in France," and are likened to a rising tide as they encounter "[d]eep ditches, double drawbridge, massive stone walls, eight great towers, cannon, muskets, fire and smoke." The leader, Defarge, becomes whoever is needed and works "like a manful soldier Two fierce hours" (199). The obstacles are repeated in the text as the revolutionaries continue their assault of the bastille; the hardships are emphasized as an oppressive and ominous list to accomplish. The bastille is a significant objective not only because of its strategic importance in France, but also because of its status as a prison (which Dickens was known to be critical of). The revolutionaries are therefore depicted as liberators in the initial battle, and they are freeing kindly, innocent people such as Dr. Manette. Defarge himself is "manly" and "fierce" in battle, and the language and actions all lend to the feeling of a heroic and just undertaking.

The sense of a justice being done continues during the early stages of Dickens's portrait of revolution. After the successful taking of Paris, the revolutionaries discover a

remaining aristocrat who had been hiding in the countryside under the pretense of a faked death. The "ugly and wicked" old man is guilty of telling peasants that they may eat grass and that a baby might suck grass as they starved to death. As he himself is dragged to his death, he is forced to carry grass and has grass shoved in his face. He is "killed with grass in his mouth" (206-08), just as he would have the peasants die. The unforgiving depiction of the aristocrat seems to call for some retribution which the revolution gladly provides, catching the reader up in the simple, fitting punishment. Indeed, the revolution seems to be an instrument of fate at this point, and the sense of fate is reinforced by comparing the aristocrat to "a log of dead wood" (208), which references "the woodman, fate" cutting logs in the opening chapter (2). The fate of the aristocrats seems quite justified; their heinous deeds are exposed to the reader in no uncertain language, and the fated punishment seems both necessary and fitting.

As John Reed explains, "the French aristocracy of *A Tale of Two Cities* has, as a class, institutionalized injustice and will have a heavy debt of guilt to pay" (262), but the critique goes beyond the French aristocracy. Reed agrees with the concept that the aristocracy is "narrated in a manner calculated to excite common human sympathies, the narrator's method of weighting his plot towards retribution. But the accumulating burden of guilt is historical, not merely national." Reed goes on to point out England's own guilt in perpetuating a hierarchical social structure similar to that of France's (262). The critique presented in *ToTC* is more than a stab at France; it is a critique of all such behavior engaged in by the economic ruling class at any level. Especially Dickens's home country, and the location of the other city in *ToTC*, England. Reed claims that the novel is "overwhelmingly occupied with illustrating the consequences of unwise, unjust, and inhuman behavior" (257). The "narration... to excite... human sympathies" is a clear mark of this call on society for

improvement. Dickens writes passages dealing with the fated punishment of the aristocracy to instill a sense of revolutionary justice in his text. He is hinting at the need for it in his own country. The "institutionalized injustice" practiced by the ruling class of France serves as a powerful example to England and the rest of the world of the fate of such a corrupt and flawed system.

The flaws in England's social structure are also shown on a more personal level through characters like Sydney Carton. Reed makes an important point about the link between Carton and the novel as a whole:

both Carton's story and Dickens' novel count on the instructive redundancy of frequent repetition to make memorable the errors of the past and the virtues of those who struggled against them. In letting Carton tell his own story of the beneficent future, the narrator endorses his own task, for his novel is the calling to life of a communal memory, and its account of individuals who suffered intensely is designed to touch the heart and make it alive to injustice in its own day. (167)

In other words, Carton functions as a strong critique on the society of Dickens's time.

"Redundancy" and "repetition" are apparent in Carton's miserable attitude and in his duality with other characters (Darnay in particular but also Stryver, Lorry, and Dr. Manette). It's Dickens's way of reinforcing that upper class drive leaves no room for happiness. A broad examination of Carton's misery with himself and interactions with other characters helps prove Reed's point. Carton proclaims himself a "dissappointed drudge" (76) in a drunken conversation with his better half, Darnay. Carton explains how he "was always—nowhere" (81) to the pompous, greedy version of himself, Stryver. The terse conversation Carton has with Lorry when they meet reveals Carton's lack of seriousness in regard to business when he jauntily says "[b]less you, *I* have no business" (73), but a later more heartfelt conversation

reveals the similarities of the two professionals: they both embraced the system and languished within it (289). The tale of Dr. Manette's imprisonment and subsequent regression to a trance-like state (engaging his invented profession of shoe-maker) resembles Carton's own trance-like law work and intense misery which seems to accompany it. Both Dr. Manette and Carton are likewise only rescued from their respective states by the attentions of Lucy Manette. However, Manette marries Carton's better half, Darnay. Nothing Carton does in following society's path for him pays off. Carton admits to himself "that [Darnay] shows you what you have fallen away from" (76) during the drunken rant, but later apologizes in a manner uncharacteristic of his typical dandy nature (190-91), showing the two characters to be more alike than different. The parallelism between Carton and Darnay is important to the societal critique—Carton represents a good man torn down by society, hiding behind his dandyism, and Darnay represents a rejection of the economic ruling class, functioning below his previous status for the sake of happiness.

The depiction of these characters is an important part of the “social energies” circulating in *ToTC*. Dickens comments on society through his character's interaction with nineteenth century society as well as more broad depictions of settings and groups of people within society. His depictions offer a strong condemnation of the ruling class and his own society. His personal experience of being stuck between two classes adds validity to this critique; despite his place in popular society, he never lost track of his working class origins, and his novel shows his strong disapprobation of the very society in which he was thriving. Later adaptations, such as Conway's 1935 version and Thomas's 1958 version, were not as critical.

Chapter 2- Conway's *ToTC*

Topic

As argued, Dickens's *ToTC* critiques the economic ruling class of nineteenth century England. Despite the personal conflict Dickens had between his politically progressive views and his need for class status in his career, Dickens condemns social privilege and hierarchies. However, cinematic adaptations blunt his strong critique because cinema, particularly large productions in Britain and Hollywood, is a capitalistic, conservative medium that validates the economic power structures that they themselves typically represent. When Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities (ToTC)* was adapted 75 years later by director Jack Conway in 1935, the film naturally became a reflection of its own society to a certain extent, redirecting Dickens's original message. New social energies involved with the film's production and public reception are crucial in understanding this subtle change in meaning. To put the film in context, the film industry in general and this film specifically will be explored to understand their impact on the original work's message. However, context is not singularly important, as Gallagher and Greenblatt have previously asserted. Conway's filmmaking speaks for itself on a certain level, and his use of narrative structures and character depictions needs to be explored. This close reading of the film along with its historical context will expose its weaker critique of the economic ruling class compared with Dickens's work.

Context

The 1935 film of *ToTC* met with critical acclaim and success. It is a Hollywood production by the studio MGM, and a review by Andre Sennwald that was published that same year it was released states that the film was "[p]roduced in the studio's most lavish and careful mood, the film errs, if at all, on the side of plenty. It impresses me as rather too long for comfortable cinema going." This praise and critical reception is typical of the film. As favorable as he is, Sennwald offers up an interesting point about length. A two-hour film is fairly standard today, and it's important to give Conway's adaptation credit for condensing. Any objection to elements of the novel being left out of the film would have to be qualified by the change in medium which calls for condensed material.

Fortunately, Conway does indeed create a “careful” adaptation in regard to the literal content of the original work, and this adherence to the very surface of the plot will make it easier to spot the deeper thematic shortcomings.

As the glowing review might suggest, he was also “careful” to create a film that palced entertainment before politics by doing things like inserting comedic elements in a manner which blunts Dickens’s message. Sennwald points out the comedic English judge (E.E. Clive) in his praise of the actor’s performances. He also points out the slapstick antics of Walter Catlett (Barsad) in his other films as a contrast to the serious role he plays in *ToTC*. In the novel, the English judge is an intimidating figure, responsible for the execution of scores of people. Similarly, Barsad is an agent of the aristocrats, responsible for bringing Darnay in front of the English judge on a fallacious charge of treason (punishable by death). Both characters represent the established ruling class in some way, and both characters pose a serious threat to our protagonist. In the film, the English judge and Barsad are depicted quite differently; both the parts of E.E. Clive and Walter Catlett bring outside sources of comedy to serious roles in the film. Although the praise of the acting is well-justified, the context of the film in this case could easily alter the force of the original critique. The mass popularity of the film also brings into question its ability to examine society, and Sennwald’s choice of words like “lavish” and “plenty” provide an interesting juxtaposition to the starving revolutionaries of France, hinting at a film caught up in capitalist Hollywood. The project clearly prioritizes making money from irrelevant comedy more than conveying Dickens’s message.

The production was certainly elaborate, indicating a large investment from MGM which increases their motive to make profit. According to the AFI, the budget was around a million dollars, and this figure increased before the start of shooting. The film was an important investment for MGM. The marketing of the film included an essay contest with prizes of free trips to London and Paris, capitalizing on the foreign appeal of the story. Despite effective marketing and budget, the film was not without issues.

Conway was ill during production, and the MGM's response exposes their monetary driving force. Although the direction is aesthetically pleasing throughout, the studio hired many other directors to take over when Conway was out sick (AFI). The unified vision that Dickens had of his work provides a stark contrast to this Hollywood mindset where people seem to be interchangeable in the endeavor to produce something that makes money. In fact, key scenes, such as the storming of the Bastille, were said to have been arranged by entirely different people (AFI), which severely impedes the expression of certain themes and critical attitudes. Dickens's critique of the economic ruling class was therefore blunted by the driving force to make a monetarily successful film.

Conway's *ToTC* is what many would consider a heritage film, and this archetype helps position it in society as a tool to make money more than a vessel for Dickens's original message. Paul Dave defines one type of heritage film as "canonical literary texts," giving the example of Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (27). *ToTC* is inescapably heritage because it is likewise a "canonical literary" novel.

Heritage films are designed to evoke nostalgic sentiment around cultural traditions which clashes strongly with the progressive objective of a Dickens novel. Higson explains several important features of heritage film: they infer a nationalistic sense of pride, they share aesthetic qualities and thematic qualities often dealing with class, and they are important in marketing nostalgic commodities (Dave 27-28), thus softening any disparagement of conventional social arrangements. These features of heritage film help establish a meaningful critical structure for discussing the context of the film.

"Marketing nostalgic commodities" is obviously linked to the capitalist drive of the film industry. Nostalgia in this case operates by transporting the viewer to an idealized past; the positive depiction of the past is a key conservative selling point. The film industry understands this selling point and creates films accordingly. Conway's *ToTC* was also released during a time of social instability. The Great Depression in the US caused much social turmoil, and the potential for a safe and secure remembrance of "better days" (the idealized past does not factor in the reality of social

unrest in England during the French revolution) was a clear motivation for MGM.

Of course, the subject matter of a revolution seems somewhat contradictory to the motive of creating an idealized past. A disillusioned working class might favor the gritty, fated depiction of the revolution as presented by Dickens. Unfortunately, the film industry in this case did not seem to want to risk making viewers uncomfortable, which might explain the more sterile, unheroic revolution depicted in Conway's film. The revolutionaries seem harmless and incompetent: nothing that would offend viewers or threaten the upper class. Nora Gilbert explains the importance the film industry placed on retaining viewers in the early 1930s; she points out the economic ramifications of the stock market collapse and explains that this unstable market may have been what led Hollywood to adopt the Production Code in 1930 (99). Hollywood's capitalistic drive and need for social stability undermines the depiction of a gritty, fated revolution; the industry wants to capitalize on the concept of revolution which may be appealing to a disillusioned populous, so MGM waters down the heroic, brutal revolution. They maintain the commodity of positive nostalgia even at the heart of a bloody revolution, and the economic ruling class is protected at the expense of Dickens's message.

Being critical towards any kind of establishment seemed to be difficult for film makers in the 1930s, as it proves to be throughout Hollywood's history. Again we have the Code of the 1930s being so "market-driven in nature, it is no surprise that classical Hollywood filmmakers consistently found themselves being 'encouraged' by Code administrators to create works that would defend and uphold the capitalist status quo" (Gilbert 99). This code, along with the economic implications it carries, is important in bridging the gap between the British society depicted in *ToTC* and the American society that Conway's *ToTC* represents. Dickens's *ToTC* is written in England and takes place in England and France while Conway's *ToTC* is produced in Hollywood for American audiences. In order to fit within the structure of a heritage film, the national pride mentioned by Dave has to apply to both the US and England. The natural appeal that England is supposed to have is reinforced by the essay contest prize of a trip to London mentioned earlier, but there are greater economic

issues that make the positive portrayal of England important. The “capitalist status quo” (Gilbert 99) was endangered in the depression-era US, so the US would naturally be reluctant to attack the British establishment as a representative of Western capitalism. Therefore, any lack of negative commentary towards British society in the film equates to a similar attitude towards the establishment in the US: an unwillingness to critique the economic ruling class due to the nationalistic pride mentioned earlier by Dave.

Like any heritage film, Conway's *ToTC* valorizes society rather than questioning it.

Film

Conway's adaptation did include some of Dickens's judgement of the economic ruling class throughout the film, but this commentary is often stifled by subtle contradictions imbedded into the film. However, the more thematically apt scenes are still worth analyzing not only to show their minor thematic flaws, but also to maintain an ambivalent stance towards the film. Certain aspects of characters such as Evremonde and Dr. Manette reflect parts of Dickens's critique, and certain settings do as well, but even these instances are ultimately questionable.

The film seems to do well portraying both England and France without romanticizing them. In England, the countryside is portrayed much as it was in the novel, reflecting the country's unrest. The Dover mail carriage scene is a good example. Dickens's depiction is wrought with the hardships and dangers of the road, echoing the earlier mention of the perils involved in everyday travel. Conway expresses this tension and unrest aptly. The paranoia of the guards is apparent in both their performance and dialogue, and the threat of their weapons is amplified by the camera. The guards don't let the messenger dismount even after he has been vouched for by Lorry, and the direction seems to have been for them to act jittery. They are knee deep in mud, and shrouded in eerie mist, which, rather than an adherence to period stereotypes, is accurate to the novel. The temptation of film would be to include a sumptuous moonlight landscape, but Conway does not idealize the scene. These are the roads of England, and represent an attack on the poor state of the country itself.

However, even this commentary is stifled. Although the guards are jittery, they are comical in their jitteriness; the lines they deliver are spoken in an expectantly relational tone rather than in a tone of fear or paranoia. The critique of England is therefore dampened.

The same could be said of the French countryside. In such an elaborate production, one might expect rolling vineyards and romantic sunsets in France. However, when Darnay rides to the rescue of his tutor in France, the simple dirt road is not lined with tangles of flowering ivy or lush vineyards. It is lined with scraggly trees and grass. The countryside seems little more than practical, and the camera's wide shot encompasses almost as much of the dusty road as the sky. Darnay is met by appropriately tattered-looking civilians with plenty of Dickensian dirt on their faces. The rickety gate is lifted after an important interchange, and Darnay moves on. The film is on message with its lack of scenic countryside and general grittiness in France as with in England. However, the critique is again blunted in the interchange at the gate. The revolutionaries smile knowingly at Darnay because they know he has been tricked into returning to France. The revolutionaries do not display that level of trickery and calculated maliciousness in the novel, and the theme of fate that is so important to the critique of the economic ruling class in Dickens's novel is suppressed in the film. The revolution was fated because of the way the aristocrats treated the peasants for so long, but this element is absent in the film.

The disheveled and traumatized Dr. Manette and the tyrannical Evremonde are two more elements which the film almost gets right, but both characters ultimately still end up softening the critique on the economic ruling class. Henry B. Walthall, who plays Dr. Manette, gives a tremulous performance; the harsh reality of his mental illness is not glossed over for the 1935 audience as one might expect. His insanity and imprisonment are an important critique not only of the French aristocracy, but also on the prison system of Dickens's time (which he was well known for condemning). The abuse of power that the economic ruling class engaged in to put Manette in prison echoes throughout both novel and film in Manette's sad story and his debilitating mental

illness. However, the critique is also impeded in a subtle manner. When Dr. Manette returns to Paris, he is not treated with the same reverence that he is in the novel. His unquestioned authority as a former prisoner of the Bastille is met with less fervent support from the revolutionaries, and his influence seems to fade more quickly. If Dr. Manette, a representative of the middle class, can't be seen as a powerful and important figure within the context of a revolution which promotes the middle class over the aristocracy, then the revolution seems pointless rather than necessary and fated. It's true that his power fades in the book as well, but Dickens makes it clear that Manette is a hero of the revolution. Conversely, the film depicts Dr. Manette as relatively powerless immediately, indicating that the revolution didn't ever support anything so meaningful as an empowered middle class and wasn't intent on overthrowing the economic ruling class.

The overthrow is somewhat justified by the film's depiction of Evremonde, but there are some issues there as well. Evremonde shows the same cold callousness in the film as he does in the novel; the trademark scene of his carriage running down a child in the street is both vivid and harsh. The speed-up footage of the carriage rampaging through the poor district in Paris makes Evremonde seem all the more reckless and the child all the more helpless, and he does not even throw the bereaved father a coin. However, the coin can actually be seen as a symbol of the economic ruling class's commodification of peasants, so it is unclear if this exclusion adds to or takes away from the critique of the ruling class. However, the real dulling of the critique of the economic ruling class in regard to Evremonde comes with his death. The shadowy bedchamber and foreboding music represent the scene as an unjust murder perpetrated by a specific peasant. The novel depicts the mansion and countryside of France as the only characters in the scene; there seems to be no perpetrator but that of the country and the lavish surroundings of the aristocrat. The novel makes his death seem quiet and fated, whereas the film depicts his death with dramatic music and a shadowy plot. In the film, Evremonde is more sympathetic because of his death. The critique of class privilege is defused because Evremonde's death is treated like a murder mystery rather than the

fated demise of a tyrant.

A more blatant example of avoiding criticism of the economic ruling class is the portrayal of The Vengeance. The Vengeance is Madame Defarge's right-hand woman, and, as the name implies, a symbol of the ferocious retribution of the revolution. In the novel, she functions as a constant reminder of the atrocities of the aristocracy, and just how profoundly those atrocities affected the peasants. Her insatiable need for retribution into the later stages of the revolution helps explain how the revolution went wrong. However, the initial uprising was no mistake; Dickens shows that vengeance for the great injustices taking place in France is an important motivator for the fated uprising. As the right hand of Defarge, she is also the right hand of fate. Her role in helping readers understand and sympathize with the initial revolutionary mindset is just as important as her role in displaying where the later revolutionary mindset went wrong.

By contrast, in the film, The Vengeance is portrayed as a cackling fool. In fact, Lucille LaVerne's performance later influences her portrayal of the evil stepmother in a Snow White cartoon (AFI). In *ToTC*, she mimics occasional phrases spoken by Madame Defarge then gives her trademark cackle. Her inane, awkward laughter conveys absurdity rather than serious denouncement. The Vengeance is thus turned into a crazy cat lady rather than a symbol of revolutionary ferocity and justice gone too far. The grim intimidating visage of the revolution is replaced with the mindless babbling of a parrot. The strong and terrifying perpetrator of dissent and violence towards the economic ruling class has been erased by the portrait of a crazy woman, comic and unthreatening compared with Dickens's version.

LaVerne's special brand of comedy is displayed in an important scene that undermines the critique on the economic ruling class. The planning of the revolution is interrupted in the wine shop by a spy at one point. Dickens's depiction of the intricacies of the revolutionary planning, the attention to detail and coded conversations, represent the well-organized and fated onset of the revolution. The Vengeance's appearance in the wine shop scene of the film signals how this

depiction of a fated revolution is being dulled; the scene begins with more light-hearted parroting from *The Vengeance*. Then, a quick and overt warning is given to Madame Defarge about the spy, Barsad (played by the comic Walter Catlett), who is about to enter. In the novel, Defarge herself recognizes Barsad, and she gives a coded signal to the other occupants of the wine shop without missing a beat. Barsad is likewise level-headed and intimidating in the novel, but bumbling and comically excessive in the film. The effort by the upper class to repress the people is significantly downplayed here, which diminishes the power of the revolution and makes the economic ruling class seem like less of a threat to the people. The people themselves are also shown to be inept; one pops into the wine shop during the tense exchange and nearly blows the Defarges' cover.

Further undermining the idea of a fated revolution, Defarge and *Vengeance* share a sinister hope for the return of Darnay, which was a notion brought about by the spy. In the novel, fate is emphasized strongly rather than any sort of sinister plots on Darnay. These plots distract the audience from the true issues of the revolution and make the revolutionary leaders themselves seem distractible and unfocused in regard to the fate of France. Fate and implacable vengeance are by slapstick in the film, and the scene ends with more parroting and cackling from *The Vengeance*.

This depiction of the randomness of the revolution continues in the actual battle scenes; perhaps Conway's largest deviation from Dickens's novel is the portrayal of the battles leading to the taking of the Bastille. The well-organized and just heroes of the novel are replaced by a muddle of disorganized peasants in the film. This stifled critique takes place primarily during the taking of the Bastille itself (which represents control of France in both film and book), but the riot scene leading up to the taking of the Bastille also offers evidence of a thwarted critique.

The preliminary riot shows Madame Defarge shouting "why" dramatically as rioters are trampled and killed for stealing dog food. This depiction of Madame Defarge is contrary to Dickens; in the novel, Madame Defarge is the coldly calculating hand of fate. She betrays no emotion and merely stitches away, knitting the future it would seem. When she does act, she is powerful and

violent; she appears instantly with weapons and leads columns of her fellow revolutionaries into glorious battle. There is no helpless calling out of "why," and there is no hesitation when it comes time to fight. The filmmaker's choice to depict a riot over dog food severely belittles the cause of the revolution. Although it is terrible that the aristocrats were feeding their dogs meat while the peasants starved, audiences are going to naturally sympathize with the dogs caught in the middle. Furthermore, the target of the riot seems completely random and not organized at all to yield a decent reward for the amount of risk. There is little sense in peasants fight armed soldiers for dog food instead of people food; the scene undermines the strong Dickensian revolution and makes it seem foolhardy and meaningless.

The final battle scene in the film is depicted with more randomness and far more uncertainty than the decisive and fated battle presented by Dickens, and this time the revolution's target is actually important. The importance of the heroic battle for the Bastille was discussed in the previous chapter. The film portrays a mob with more pitchforks than guns grouping up with several other mobs as if by accident. The heroic march is recast as a mob scene with people hanging off the draw bridge for no apparent reason. Nobody seems to have thought ahead, and the people suffer for it, overcoming obstacles in a haphazard manner often at great cost. We all know how the revolution ends, but rather than depicting it as the sweeping tides of fate, the film depicts it as a flopping cephalopod washing up on the rocks. After eventually working their way around the drawbridge with the use of large hammers, the revolutionaries troop into a line of cannons which blast them back at almost point blank range. They then seem uncertain about how to proceed in confused reaction shots of the mob which include the Defarges. At this point, the film revokes what little agency the revolution has with the "unheralded, unexpected" (seen on screen as a caption) appearance of the French military. The military marches forward in neatly pressed uniforms to the waiting wonderment of the mob; the mob is not sure which side the military is even on. As soon as the military turns against the Bastille, it is assumed to be taken. Without the military, the revolution

seems as though it would have failed; the message seems to be that only the military can take successful action against the economic ruling class rather than a well-organized, gritty revolution. The people hold no power over the aristocrats without the military. Moreover, the tense moment when the military could have intervened on either side, reinforces the helplessness of the revolutionaries. No power, no glory, no fated revolution to call into question the control which the economic ruling class has over society. With a beautifully done but thematically hollow depiction of the storming of the Bastille, Conway's film falls short of a meaningful critique on the upper class. Rather than condemn the economic hierarchies in society as Dickens does, Hollywood revalidates the economic ruling class.

Chapter 3- Thomas's *ToTC*

Context

For an author who is comparable to the likes of Carlyle and Marx, one of the more interesting contexts for a Dickens adaptation is the Cold War. The Cold War started the decade before Ralph Thomas directed an adaptation of *ToTC* in 1958. Robert Giddings focuses on this context in his article "*A Tale of Two Cities* and the Cold War," claiming that the film "was released in the tense atmosphere of the cold war. And it shows." Giddings provides evidence of the tense atmosphere with examples such as Joseph McCarthy's investigations, communist identity cover-ups, and the Korean War (171). This atmosphere invites nostalgia: the idealized depiction of the past is more valuable during a time of political turbulence and anxiety about communism. So, despite being a story of revolution, Thomas's *ToTC* is under capitalistic pressure to depict a stable and appealing past.

This idealized past can be seen as representing the desire to conform to conservative ideologies for monetary gain. Film makers stand to make more money and to promote their own position as part of the economic ruling class if they stifle any radical critiques apparent in Dickens's *ToTC*. Giddings also explains how the cold war era encouraged conformity on a global scale: "[t]he division of our world into two opposing power blocs produced a pressure for social and political conformity" (171). The power blocs that Giddings refers to are loosely based around the USSR and Western nations such as the US and UK. The UK then becomes a symbol for Western capitalism and a conformity to that ideal, including a general adherence to a sort of nationalistic patriotism. This atmosphere is hardly ideal for any kind of critique of England, particularly one that comes from a heritage film like *ToTC*. This kind of film is expected to be both patriotic and comforting, which matches the inclination towards conformity and the expected western nationalism of the time. This atmosphere is unlikely to support a critique of the economic ruling class.

In fact, Thomas is more interested in conforming to a patriotic conservative mindset than

expressing any particular themes from the original work. Roy Armes cites Thomas as an example of filmmaking that sticks to a more traditional formula for comedy. Aside from *ToTC*, the director was well known for his comedic series starting with *Doctor in the House* in 1954 and spanning six more films up to 1970 (240). His background in conservative, inoffensive comedy might give audiences the expectation of laughing and not really challenging social structures as Dickens did. Dickens did also write comedy, but it was steeped in irony and often involved a challenge to society. For example, the pompous character Stryver in the novel was both good for a laugh and good for a critique of what embracing the conservative drive towards the upper class meant in terms of poor character. Stryver is not even slightly likable in the novel, and he is the archetype of the person who constantly strives for the upper class. It is clear that Dickens was criticizing the upper class.

Thomas, on the other hand, was probably chosen for his ability to make an audience laugh, and his adherence to conservative ideologies. Giddings explains that Thomas said he was “mainly interested in making films which expressed contemporary sentiments and ideas whatever their subject. ‘Generally speaking, I look for a story that is a reflection of the modes and manners of the times’” (173). If this conformity to “contemporary sentiments” is what Thomas is attempting to achieve, and those sentiments include nationalistic inoffensiveness, then Thomas is not likely to deliver the same critical depiction of England that Dickens does. The subject of the revolution itself becomes irrelevant with the glib desire to express contemporary ideas “whatever their subject.” It does not matter that Dickens was writing in and about times of social unrest. What matters is the way that the film industry, and Thomas in particular, want to express contemporary sentiments of nationalism and adhere to as inoffensively conservative depiction of England as possible.

There is one curious area in which conformity did not seem to matter although this issue may have had to do with budget. Dirk Bogarde, who plays Carton, explains that the decision to film in black and white was made in order to save money. He also explains that the decision decreased the appeal of the film to a modern audience even though the film did well (Giddings 173). On a more

subtle level, the decision to film in black and white might be seen as a further attempt (and a failed one) at commodification of the nostalgic classic. If indeed the decision was made to save money, the production must have had some justification; saving money at the cost of popularity would not make sense. But, if the production cost could be cut and popularity could be maintained, it becomes easy to justify the decision to film in black and white. If Bogarde was incorrect in his assertion, then the decision takes on potentially interesting dimensions. The film could hypothetically be seen as making a statement against cinematic technological advancement at the expense of content, or the film could be seen as adhering to the constant duality of the original work with the visual dichotomy of black and white. However, these ideas have little supporting evidence, and they seem particularly empty in the face of Thomas's desire to make a contemporary film and Bogarde's description of the lavish production. The need to increase profit is a more plausible reason for the decision to film in black and white.

Profits were particularly important to the film industry of the late 1950s. According to Armes, the film industry suffered a huge loss of appeal during that decade (this loss correlated with the rise in popularity of the television). Between 1950 and 1959, the cinema-going audience fell from 1,396m to 600m and over a thousand cinemas shut down of the original 4,483. In 1955, just a few years before the release of Conway's *ToTC*, the decline was particularly acute (239). Such a decline would naturally put pressure on the film industry. When an industry which is already primarily concerned with profit over thematic integrity is under duress, the pressure to conform to conservative ideology in order to increase profits increases. Furthermore, potential sources of funding are likely to be flattered rather than critiqued as Dickens critiqued the economic ruling class.

But even without the financial pressure, Britain was not an ideal political climate for filmmakers to express anything but pro-capitalist nationalism. Giddings specifically mentions the atmosphere of conformity and its effect on Dickens's works, stating that the style of Tomas's *ToTC* is "vigorously eschewing the characteristically Dickensian grotesque and opting for rather humdrum

cinematic historical realism" (173). The distortion of Dickensian grotesque can be seen as indirect opposition to his critique of British society because the incongruities and problems of that society are no longer being scrutinized. Historic realism can be loosely equated with heritage nostalgia, and that appeal would naturally become priority in a nationalistic pro-capitalist society. Such a society is more likely to depict Styrver and even Carton to a certain extent as less pompous and less miserable respectively; these characters represent a certain kind of conformist, successful young man: patriotic visions of nostalgic "historical realism." Armes describes the characteristic hero of the time as "the young man on the make," saying that film makers typically stuck to that mindset (239). Carton is, without a doubt, the antithesis of this character, and Styrver is certainly no hero at all in Dickens's work. In Dickens's original work, these characters represented a strong critique of British society and the upwards capitalistic drive. In Thomas's *ToTC*, both Styrver and Carton might have to be molded into more socially acceptable representations of "the young man on the make." Even someone like Jarvis Lorry might have to be skewed to fit with the pro-capitalist nationalism of the late 1950's.

While it may be true that the film skewed the depiction of Lorry with a certain heroic air as a representative of Britain and capitalism (his primary interest and background is as a man of business, working for a bank all his life), the film had perhaps more cause to manipulate the depiction of the French aristocracy. However, rather than present the French aristocracy as a general critique on the economic ruling class, Thomas treats it as a foreign evil in the film to be counterbalanced by the virtues of British society. Initially, the vilification of the French aristocracy seems like it would be on point with Dickens's harsh depiction, but Dickens sets up the French as comparable to the British. He draws parallels between the chaos and oppression of both the French and the British. Thomas seems to be more interested in depicting the French aristocracy harshly to make the British establishment look better by contrast. As Giddings mentions, Thomas revels "in 'us versus them' structures" (173). Whereas Dickens compared the two cities of London and Paris to show the flaws in both, Thomas contrasts the two cities to reinforce patriotic British nationalism. This context of nationalism, which

at first seems to align with Dickens's critique, actually dulls the critique of the economic ruling class, particularly as that critique relates to England.

The potential for British nationalistic ideology influencing the film can further be seen by contrasting the casting of the aristocrat Evremonde (Christopher Lee) and the banker Lorry (Cecil Parker). Giddings has a view of Lorry that supports this us versus them structure and reinforces the contrast of Britain and France in the film: Lorry is depicted as a representative of "British stability" (174). Giddings provides the evidence of a list of films starring Parker in the 1950's, including *I believe in you* (1952) and *Isn't life wonderful* (1954). The films have him type-cast as "warm-hearted" but managerial (174). The potential for an icon of British cinema to be seen as anything but heroic is low. The novel does not depict him in a negative light, but he is no hero. He is a neutral character in the novel and an example of an ultimately wasted life as a drone in the British economic hierarchy. With Parker's background, it would be difficult to place him as anything but a self-fulfilled hero.

The casting of Lee as Evremonde has reverse implications. Giddings points to his "sinister presence" in films such as *Moby Dick* (1956), *The Traitor* (1957), and *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) (as the monster) (174). With such an immediate and nefarious background, it is unlikely that audiences would be able to compare him with Parker. Audiences at the time are likely to be familiar with both, and encouraged to view the British economic ruling class all the more favorably because of Lee's chilling depiction of the *French* aristocrat. Rather than adhere to the novel's critique of the economic ruling class by offering an unforgiving depiction of an aristocrat who is relatable to British society, the film uses that unfavorable depiction to make the British ruling class look better by contrast.

The nationalist dichotomy that Thomas uses fits well into formulas for film at the time. Armes mentions adaptations as an unchanging form of cinema in that era (242), but goes on to mention a "'quality' tradition" film formula (244) that can also be applied to *ToTC*. The tradition in the latter is influenced by social realism (244) which ignores Dickens's surreal, sometimes outlandish

narrative (as touched on earlier). In fact, Armes explains one example of formulas being applied in a manner which minimizes moral ambiguity: people are made to look conformist rather than outlandish with little symbolism or expressionism (252). This style runs opposite to Dickens's, and dulls any critique or questioning of society, especially as it pertains to the outlandish Carton.

The atmosphere of the British cinema was not ideal for expressing any critique. The film-making formulas and pressure to conform to nationalist capitalist ideals seem even less conducive to Dickens's challenging of society and money-based class structures. The economic pressure of the time only increased the pressure to adhere to mass appeal and generate inoffensive content, even in a film depicting the revolution. These contexts doubtlessly had an impact on the film's expression (or lack of expression) of Dickens's themes, and the depiction of specific characters.

Film

The depiction of key characters in Thomas's *ToTC*, such as Carton and Stryver, stifle Dickens's original critique of the economic ruling class, and the critique is further undermined by the film's dealing with important thematic events such as the killing of Evremonde and the wine shop scene. The need for and inevitability of the revolution are an important part of the critique that Thomas's fails to achieve. Similarly, the assassination of Evremonde falls short as it did in Conway's adaptation. Both Stryver and Carton, who represent major criticisms of British society and the Economic Ruling Class, are depicted in a way which avoids or undermines these criticisms in some way.

Sydney Carton is not quite the same disappointed drudge in the film as he is in the novel. The filmic depiction is more positive and likable. This positive appeal is clear in not only how he is presented onscreen, but also in his dialogue and general characterization. His character is charming and affable. That's not to say that the sarcastic dandy side of Carton is entirely absent, but he is generally far more agreeable than he is in the novel. This likeability goes beyond the star power of

Dirk Bogarde although that is worth addressing.

Bogarde was a well-known actor, and his presence was definitely a selling point for the film. His previous roles are perhaps too diverse to say that he was type-cast. Some examples include *Night Ambush* (1957), *Doctor at Large* (1957), and *Cast a Dark Shadow* (1955). Although he plays a military hero, a dandy love interest, and an unscrupulous murderer in these films respectively, he always plays a gentleman of sorts. His previous work is not without influence on *ToTC*, and examining his performance in *ToTC* reveals some of the dark, light, and dandy that has comprised his career. However, the dark seems to be largely downplayed, the dandy errs on the side of charming, and the light is left to steal the show, signaling Carton as a positive example of England's "young man on the make" which deviates from Dickens's depiction of Carton and the corresponding social critique.

Thomas starts the film with a somewhat light introduction of Carton and some implications of his dandy nature. The trademark Dover mail scene is not as foreboding as Conway's film, but it opens the film with a passable Dickensian atmosphere, and it is here that Carton is introduced. Such an early introduction implies a greater importance placed on Carton. In contrast, the novel introduces him in part two and barely indicates that he is a major character; only as more focus is placed on him, does the reader realize Carton's importance. Conversely, in the film, Carton is instantly recognized as significant, and would probably be recognized as such even without the star power of Bogarde. The emphasis on Carton is clear because of the composition and direction of his opening shot. This shot is centered on his face as he dozes drunkenly in the Dover Mail carriage. Despite the dark scene, his face is lit to the point of glowing. It would have been plausible to put some shadows on his face or a dimmer light. Instead, the audience is treated to a soft, bright glow, highlighting well-composed and peaceful features: this alcoholic does not have the scruffy whiskers, the painfully furrowed brow, or the slack jaw that one might expect.

Instead, the notion that he is drunk is inserted mechanically into the opening scene with

dialogue, but in film, the audience is likely to trust what they see just as much, if not more, than what they hear. Even then, the dialogue does not play to Carton's supposed rudeness and sarcastic dandyism. He seems quite polite even as he says (in a dandy manner) that helping the horses compliments his distaste for work by saving the horses work. He is exhibiting the selflessness of a true gentlemen while paying homage to the lazy sarcasm of the dandy. This kind of double-sided characterization ultimately places emphasis on his kindness rather than his rude, abrasive nature.

The scene continues to with this lip-service dandyism that portrays Carton as more of a humorous gentleman than a miserable wretch. Lorry mentions that Carton may have trouble getting up, but Carton doesn't seem to, showing little of the difficulty implied by his fellow passenger, Lorry. Lorry only implies that Carton may have difficulty getting up while he is asleep, stopping any tension between the two. Once he is up, this lack of tension continues. They are on friendly terms in their first interaction and seem to be on friendly terms in general. This lack of conflict is a direct contradiction of the novel and can be explained by the fact that Carton is being portrayed as more of a gentleman than a dandy in the film, countering Dickens's critique on society. The idea that he is drunk is implied but not effectively shown; his manner of disembarking the carriage is smooth and polite rather than uncoordinated and abrasive.

After disembarking from the carriage, Carton makes one of his trademark dandy comments, but the context for the dialogue stifles his dandyism. In the film, Lorry asks Carton if he works, and Carton replies "lord bless me, no." It was said in casual conversation, and Lorry could only decipher it as ironic once he learned that Carton did have an occupation. Only slight sarcasm and a completely unacknowledged amount of rudeness was involved: Lorry was not offended in the first place nor was he offended after the comment. In the novel, the context for the comment is more directly sarcastic and more abrasive. At that point, the reader knows that Carton does work, and Carton is using the comment as a sassy rebuke to a reprimand from the already-irritated Lorry. The film excludes this irritation and makes Carton seem much more likable, badly skewing the critique

represented by his dandy persona.

Other points throughout the film show this skewed characterization as well as the opening; Carton seems to be consistently charming more than he is offensive. Even the uptight Miss Pross does not inspire rudeness. Upon being woken by Pross and Lucy, Carton greets Lucy as a “charming woman,” and after receiving a reprimand in regard to his drunkenness from Pross, he immediately makes it “*two* such charming women.” The emphasis on “two” and the close up of Bogarde as he says it with all the charm of a leading man makes him quite the irresistible gentleman. The sarcasm that defines him is still there because Pross herself was being anything but charming, but Bogarde delivers the line with a sort of stubborn charm and sincerity that makes him more gentleman than dandy. Another line that depicts him as more charming than dandy is delivered outside the courthouse. The ever uncouth Jerry Cruncher mentions that the ladies that day (Lucy and Pross) are under his charge, and Carton replies “heaven help them” in a witty irreverent fashion. He says it in parting with a turn and a smirk that invites the inevitable laugh. His wit is more charming than rude, and this comment of course garners no negative response from Cruncher who is a bit of a boot heel throughout. Carton’s continuous charm leads to a rather awkward scene near the end of the film when he is making peace with Lorry. The dandy side of Carton, which is so important to Dickens’s original critique on society, is only given passing consideration in the film, and Carton is primarily depicted as a classic hero and man on the rise.

Carton’s business partner, Stryver, is just as skewed in the film. The pompous, rude, and condescending Stryver of the novel could not be maintained for a film supporting capitalism and conformity. Stryver is meant to represent everything that is wrong with success; the only person who is succeeding in the upper-middle class world, striving to be one of the ERC, is a complete jackass. The film, on the other hand, presents Stryver as a somewhat tactful, industrious, upstanding gentleman. He is another sort of man on the rise, but perhaps with less flaws than Carton instead of more. A good example of the improved character of Stryver is the scene that depicts Stryver and

Carton working together. Rather than harassing Carton unreasonably, Stryver seems to be offering genuine advice in a polite manner. When Carton does take issue with something, Stryver is polite and moves on. He moves on to a brief discussion of Lucy at the end of the scene, as he observes her arriving outside. His calling of attention to her with a “well hello” is somewhat rude, but he otherwise maintains an air of polite civil conversation, even countering Carton trademark dismissal of Lucy as a “pretty little doll.” Carton himself counters the statement just before making it with a close-up of a wistful stare, but Stryver is left to counter it directly, assuming the mantle of gentleman to the audience. Carton’s wistful stare makes him more appealing as a hero than he would be in the novel, but less appealing than Stryver who is more direct in his affections. Unlike the novel, he does not seem misdirected in his affections either.

Stryver’s entire awkward and pretentious courting of Lucy is cut out. In the novel, it is a strong point of distaste that Stryver would think to marry Lucy and consider the matter as not only settled, but also settled to Lucy’s advantage, as if he will be doing her a favor in offering his hand and that hand will be readily accepted. Nothing could be further from the truth, and Stryver is only saved embarrassment in his pursuit by consulting Lorry first. Lorry assures Stryver in no uncertain terms of Lucy’s disinterest, and he is upset that Stryver would even think of it. This conflict is not in the film; Stryver and Lorry get along okay throughout. Their unity symbolizes cooperation among those who strive for success in capitalist Britain, and the positive depiction of Lorry makes Stryver appear all the more credible by association. A further inconsistency in Stryver’s character is his brushing off the matter as never happening and as being a bad idea in any case which he was glad he did not go through with (as if he could have). The lying, the pretensions, and the attempted commodification of another person (Lucy who he assumed would be thrilled with the match based on her economic status) are not represented in the film. The commodification especially is important in thematically comparing France and Britain, implying that there is something wrong with the ERC in both countries. The film seems to favor a contrast between the two countries, implying that all is right in England,

and the lack of Stryver's pretentious courtship reinforces this nationalistic, capitalist conformity. Sometimes films need to cut for content, but the lack of Stryver's negative depiction throughout signals something more intentional.

Similarly, the film seems set on a less fated and heroic depiction of the revolution. The film downplays the importance of the revolution by undermining the revolution and contrasting the nations of France and Britain. The nationalist mentality is meant to soften any warning of a revolution in Britain and soften the critique of Britain and its own ERC. The revolution is downplayed as foreign and inane.

The iconic wine cask scene is a clear example. When wine is spilled on the cobblestones of a poor Paris neighborhood, it not only reinforces how starving the people are, but also symbolizes the impending bloodshed in a rather obvious manner. Both of these functions are dulled in the film. The most obvious undermining of the people's starvation is that the trademark baby (who appears in both Conway's adaptation and the novel) is conspicuously absent. A desperate mother feeds her baby wine because it is the only thing that might sustain the baby. This simple act takes the mob far past any notion that they just like wine; the feeding of a baby indicates that it is truly starvation which leads the mob to its frenzy. The exclusion of this scene has no excuse of time because there are plenty of shots of crazed happy peasants. In fact, they roll in it and dump and squeeze it from rags over themselves which hardly denotes serious starvation at all. This frolicking direction is paired with high shots and shots with the peasants positioned at the bottom of the frame, indicating their lowliness and encouraging the audience to look down on them in disgust. Even Madame Defarge remarks that they are "poor crazed cattle" in a condescending tone rather than "tigers" as her husband mentions. Indeed, the brief interchange of the Defarges is all that implies there might be bloodshed. The classic writing of the word "blood" on the wall has been cut, and the starving peasants have been reduced to crazy French people.

The division between France and Britain is continued in this scene and throughout the film.

When Lucy and Lorry come upon the scene of spilt wine, they are disturbed by the mob, and they must be escorted by Lafarge the rest of the way into the wine shop. The aristocrat Evremonde signals perhaps the most obvious attempt to other France. The exterior shots that establish his home are good examples of this othering. These shots depict a lush estate populated primarily by peacocks who make their peculiar and unnerving call as he approaches in his carriage. The sound the birds make is important, and the camera even gives the birds a few close-ups to indulge the audience with their beauty while emphasizing their strange exoticness with the unnerving noise. The distinct and jarring call is meant to signal something foreign and strange to British ears even though the countries are right across the channel. The birds signal aristocratic excess, but they are even more of an intentional effort to establish France as foreign and different from Britain. Inside Evremonde's estate, emphasis is again placed on France being different from England. Evremonde makes reference to "our own good French system" which is a negative endorsement given his character. From this dialogue, the scene changes to England where Lorry is helping Darnay handle legal affairs, and the difference between the two societies is clearly emphasized by the cut between the wicked French aristocrat and the heroic British businessmen. Darnay himself had foreshadowed this when he explains that "in England, I have another life." Similarly, Dr. Manette is taken "away from France to peace and rest." All of this dialogue in the film is loaded with nationalistic othering, and the characters and settings take on a similar agenda. This kind of contrast between the nations is unique to the film, and serves to take all focus off the potential problems in England and the attack on the economic ruling class in Britain as presented by Dickens originally.

Perhaps the post-war atmosphere of patriotism and early cold war sentiments were too strong to adhere to Dickens's original work when it came to themes like the undermining of the Economic Ruling Class. Key characters in the critique are clearly skewed, and important scenes play out in a manner which clearly undermines the stance against established capitalistic power structures. The French peasants are happy fools, the aristocracy is only evil in France, and Carton

and Styrver are clearly young men on the rise more than a miserable, heroic jackal and a pompous, self-absorbed lion respectively. The viewer is left with a nationalistic depiction of Britain and little if any real critique on the Economic Ruling Class which was so prevalent in Dickens's novel.

Ch 4 Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*

As with *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations* (*GEx* 1861) is best analyzed using new historicism and Gallagher and Greenblatt's concept of "tracking social energies that circulate very broadly through a culture" (13). These social energies are of course distinct as they relate to each novel, but the method of combining text and context in order to understand each novel will be the same. The reason for the similarity is that this new historicist approach both allows for a broad understanding of the novel and works well with the comparison to the medium of film. The context and, of course, the texts themselves are different in terms of how they both express and reflect society; Dickens wrote *GEx* under different circumstances even though it came directly after *ToTC*, and Dickens wrote about a less directly political series of events. Additionally, *ToTC* is set earlier (1790s) than *GEx* (mid 1800s), so the characters in *GEx* are closer to Dickens's time. The characters become stronger focal points as reflections of Dickens's opinions about society. The stance Dickens takes against the economic ruling class is less direct in this novel than in *ToTC*, and the nuances, relationships, and eccentricities of characters will need a close investigation. Likewise, Dickens's personal views become more relevant because he is writing about his story takes entirely in his home country and closer to the time during which he lived; one example is his distaste for the prison system that is projected into a story. Another example is his views on the family's place in society. After all, *GEx* is a story of a boy growing up: his life as both a poor working child and a young gentleman of upper-class expectations. His interaction with society is a statement about that society, particularly because Pip, the central character of the novel, is so mutable and overtly influenced by those around him.

Context

Dickens himself was undergoing quite a few changes when he wrote *GEx*. With *ToTC* as his only self-published novel successfully complete, he was still in the early stages of being his own

publisher and running his own weekly magazine. Issues with his social and economic place in society were important to him during this time. He was also undergoing significant shifts in his family life which might represent an even more relevant influence on the depiction of the impressionable young Pip and family life in general in *GEx*.

Family was particularly important to Dickens; his promotion of filial values was a core part of his image in society. Robin Gilmour touches on this importance when explaining the awkward context of *GEx*: “The novelist of domestic harmony... identified with celebrating the values of hearth and home, had broken up his own fireside circle, separating from his wife after twenty-two years” (110). This separation came just before *GEx* was written and published, so having to write a story that focuses on domestic life is awkward. Gilmour implies that Dickens was changed by the experience, though not publicly (110). However, it is difficult to imagine the marriage ending not having an impact on his writing. In fact, an easy parallel can be seen between his own wife and Pip's cruel mother figure, Mrs. Joe. This connection has implications that Dickens could have been undermining filial happiness since Mrs. Joe is such a tyrannical and cruel figure. However, Dickens is not attacking the family sphere. Dickens's reputation as being concerned with family is well-earned, and *GEx* doesn't disappoint with its emphasis on filial values as a cornerstone of happiness and virtue within a society beset with convicts and the distinctly money-driven notion of great expectations.

Mrs. Joe is, in a way, an example of unhappiness in a family circle, but there is more to her character than that: she is actually harming filial values through her focus on money and status. Her character may indeed be cruel and disdainful as only Dickens can write, and this characterization may be a reflection of Dickens's ex-wife, but Dickens is not condemning family life at all. He is too deeply invested in filial harmony, and he is mature enough as a writer (with a dozen other novels successfully completed at this time) to be able to project a vilified ex-wife (if that was motivating the depiction of Mrs. Joe) and hold true to his ideals. In fact, Mrs. Joe can be read as having a very

different contextual influence; she was likely influenced by Dickens's denunciation of the people's fixation on the upper class which is the central theme in *GEx*. This critique of the idealization of the economic ruling class not only explains Mrs. Joe's disruption of a family circle, but also sets up the drive for class status as a direct threat to leading a fulfilled domestic life. Mrs. Joe is punished for her class worship, showing how the push for economic and class advancement can destroy family life.

The novel demonstrates Dickens's adherence to the importance of family over economic class status. Domestic happiness is the reward for his most virtuous characters. Both Herbert and Joe end up in situations of domestic felicity without the benefit of substantial material success. Herbert does run a successful business, but the business does not make him rich; instead, it is his new wife and family that seems to be the source of his happiness. Likewise, Joe never changes his humble occupation as a blacksmith, but his marriage to Biddy brings them both to the happy fulfillment that Dickens envisions for those who are more invested in building family than building status. Dickens's own recent family issues actually seemed to encourage some kind of familial reaffirmation. This validation holds up even though there are hints of his own failed domestic life within Joe and Biddy's relationship: Biddy is the new love who is much younger than Joe, much like the young actor Ellen Ternman was Dickens's new love interest. The new love that Herbert gains may also reflect Dickens's new interest in Ternman. However, he turns both stories into reinforcements of the happiness to be found in domestic partnership. Whether he was projecting his hope for the future or protecting his public image after the divorce, the context Dickens's investment in familial values is clear.

Additional context involving Dickens's political progressiveness suggests why he chose to contrast those who invested in family with those who invested in wealth and class status. Dickens was highly critical of the established economic ruling class and British society's fixation on the aristocracy in general. In chapter one, Joseph Childers and Nora Gilbert explain Dickens's social and political progressiveness and his attack on established norms of money-worshipping economic drive. His revolutionary pro working class views overtly shaped his depiction of the French Revolution in

ToTC, but his anti-status mindset was more subtly conveyed in *GEx*. Catherine Waters writes about his “reformist social vision,” explaining that Dickens was widely known for a variety of endeavors to reshape society, some of which involved an attack on class-driven subjugation such as prisons as well as the repression of urban reforms that placed importance on the working-class (157).

Dickens's cynicism towards the economic ruling class is clear; the top-down hierarchy imposed in Britain at the time concerned Dickens as well as the rest of society. The importance of filial happiness is not undermined by characters such as Mrs. Joe and Miss Havisham, but rather emphasized by these characters. The central character, Pip, also reinforces the importance of family and seems to be influenced by many other contexts of Dickens's life. Dickens, like Pip, grew up dealing with shifting class spheres, grew up living in a rural area not unlike the swamps depicted in *GEx*, and grew up knowing various degrees of financial struggle throughout his life.

Dickens had experience with shifting class spheres; he grew up on the cusp where middle class met working class. Gilmour implies that this background caused the writer to be “concerned with the lower reaches of the middle class in its most anxious phase of self-definition, struggling out of trade and domestic service and clerical work into the sunshine of respectability” (106). Gilmour explains that Dickens grew up with a family of clerks and former servants, and he is known to have worked in a factory when he was young when his family had gone into severe debt (106). Young Pip has the same preoccupations with being stuck between classes and being ashamed of where he came from. Pip also went into debt, and his parentage represents him as distinctly un-classed: being an orphan isolates him from any notion of family-imbued class status. His actual family, Joe and Mrs. Joe, likewise do not place him in a position of middle class respectability. This is the same issue that Dickens struggled with.

We see this struggle reflected in Dickens's physical home during his life which seems to have impacted the locations in *GEx*. Both Pip and Dickens come from the English countryside. Dickens would take long walks with his father, admiring a large estate he would one day buy

(Gilmour 110). This admiration of the pastoral seems to have continued to adulthood, and Dickens may have come to associate the location with a sense of guilt for the shame in his father figure just as Pip does. Despite any internal conflict, the countryside is an important place in building identity for both Pip and Dickens and is contrasted with the impersonal, busy proving grounds of the streets of London.

For Dickens, London was certainly a proving ground later in his life and a source of boyhood shame. It was in London that Dickens was forced to work as a child laborer in a factory because of his family's debts which would have caused him significant insecurities over class status. It also likely fostered his later rapport with the working class seen in his writing. Perhaps the more important thing that living in London enabled was the juxtaposition between city and country. Pip seems to be miserable most of the time whether he is in London or in the rural world, but it is London that brings up the most legitimately self-deprecating introspections. In the country, Pip's misery is caused by class issues: his shame at being poor after meeting Estella, his upper-class-worshipping abusive sister, and his general restlessness. Dickens does use the atmosphere of the foggy marshes to impact some form of unhappiness, but the unhappiness is driven by money and class issues which are more prevalent in London. The poor beggars and snooty establishments fill the streets side by side. This greater prevalence of class issues are perhaps why Pip's true disdain is for London. In London, the guilt brought on by his own behavior is acute, and his foolish spending leaves him with nothing but debt and guilt. London hardly seems as ideal as Pip's initial expectations seem to paint it.

In contrast, the countryside remains the home of his most idealized character and the symbol of familial happiness. Joe ends up living in Pip's old home which is nostalgically idealized by the end of the novel. Biddy, Pip's closest boyhood friend besides Joe, ends up marrying Joe and living happily in the country with him. It's important to note that, though Dickens favored the rural world, he did not idealize the aesthetic of the countryside. The marshes are as cold and miserable at the end of the novel as at the beginning. These harsh surroundings again symbolize something being

amiss with England. However, the personal affiliation of the countryside with people like Joe and Biddy holds more weight. There, people who don't endorse the societal upper-class drive that caused Pip so much misery are positively depicted. The country doesn't represent a literal aesthetic idealization, but a personal, social one. It is little wonder that Dickens bought a house in the countryside of his childhood just prior to writing *GEx*.

Dickens disliked the interpersonally cold streets of London. His recent domestic failures perhaps led him to seek compensation in the form of warm domestic felicity. Aside from his youth in the factory, he had spent time in London as a struggling author trying to prove his status as a gentleman just as Pip did. Pip, with his conflicted, guilty view of himself, seems to reflect Dickens. Both shared some form of financial stress living the London life. Dickens not only struggled to prove himself as a gentleman, but he also strove to be successful in business, and even property was sometimes a concern. Patten points out that one of the reasons that Dickens started writing and publishing *GEx* was that he was trying to keep a valuable property threatened by poor sales of The All Year Round (39).

It then becomes crucial to address the monetary driving force behind *GEx*. Dickens had become a successful businessman, and he had recently launched the weekly magazine The All Year Round, so he would naturally be interested in keeping this business venture profitable. Patten explains that a story running in the current issue of the magazine, one by Charles Lever, was tanking badly (39). In part, in order to rescue his magazine, he began to write and publish *GEx*. The implication is that under such circumstances, he might be prone to pandering to the public even if he did own the publication because he needed sales. Though he was self-published and free to make decisions for himself, the public did need to be won over. It is therefore important to know who Dickens's reading public was. Waters explains that "[i]t was readily accepted that Dickens had with immense speed reached far beyond the elite group" who could afford an expensive novel (188). She also claims that Dickens had a six figure direct readership, reaching many other people indirectly

(readings and second-hand copies) (188). The working and middle class of England who could afford small weekly or monthly installments were Dickens's audience. Dickens didn't need to hold back his critique of the economic ruling class because he'd already proved that he could make money with this audience with novels like *ToTC*. Waters also points out that Dickens maintained his moral bearings while attacking institutions and authority (188). This kind of "polite" writing might bear resemblance to a PG-13 rating in a modern rating system, but does not hamper Dickens's ability to attack economic social hierarchies. His critical attitude towards the economic ruling class was not dulled by his need to make money for himself. Dickens was independently minded and stayed on point with his message, and his message was well-received by his readership.

Text

Dickens makes the story of a young man growing up in England, striving to succeed, compelling with the depth of character presented in Pip, our young hero. Naturally, his interactions with society make for great humor at times, and the narrative centering intimately on the young man makes for a complex, engaging central character. More importantly, the telling of Pip's story creates a strong platform for social criticism.

Pip, a largely open-minded and innocent young man, represents a center point in the novel through which society can be called out for its fixation on wealth and class. The nuanced depiction of Pip is integral because the audience needs to identify with him to understand what is giving him trouble: the drive for money. Vincent Newey explains that "the spirit of humanism is set over against the indifference and the lure of material wealth" (177). This statement is an apt guide for analyzing the critique of money-driven society throughout the novel. Pip is the minutely detailed human whom readers can identify with, and the "indifference" of the capitalistic drive seems to be constantly at odds with him. As Walter Allen says in the introduction to *GEx*, the novel "deals with an individual instance of... the corrupting influence of money" (xiii). We see the drive for money affecting Pip in several ways. On the personal level, money is the cause of guilt and subsequent

misery. On a social level, money is the cause of familial estrangement and foolishness, making the characters around Pip suffer or look foolish and/or greedy and leading to the disruption of family.

Pip's mother figure, Mrs. Joe, represents an early disruption of domestic felicity who leads Pip to frequent misery. In fact, Waters explains Mrs. Joe's role as "very clearly defined by her lack of maternal qualities and her perversion of domestic values in Pip's narrative" (153). The reference to "Pip's narrative" is important because it reinforces the idea of Pip as the primary focus of audience identification. Waters goes on to explain these perversions and to set up Mrs. Joe as a clear counterpoint to audience expectations of a woman who would exemplify domestic happiness. She is consistently portrayed as a tyrant who gets things done "by hand" (8) as she frequently puts it; our narrator Pip interprets the phrase in a humorous manner: she always strikes himself and Joe, the antithesis of domestic felicity. The caring, loving image of a family matriarch is conspicuously missing. In her first interaction with Pip, she strikes him several times for being away at their parents' grave for too long, and tells him that "[i]t's bad enough to be a blacksmith's wife (and him a Gargery) without being your mother" (10). The comically exaggerated portrait of a cruel and tyrannical housewife is typical Dickens grotesque, but there is more going on with this dialogue. The reader can immediately recognize that, beneath her bluster, Mrs. Joe is ashamed of her position in life. She identifies with her station in life as it pertains to class and money rather than any more humanistic traits. Joe has already been described as a good-looking, "good-natured" man (8), but Mrs. Joe's fixation on money and class status diminishes Joe's positive traits. Her obsession with status and family name is emphasized by her parenthesized aside referring to Joe's last name. The convention is rare for dialogue and serves to draw attention to her way of thinking: his profession and family name are both more important than the man himself. Her negativity is entirely based on economic circumstance. The end of her tirade is strikingly cruel, instilling in Pip a sense of guilt and robbing him of domestic happiness. His loving mother, who we can tell he misses by his visit to her grave, has been replaced by an abusive woman made miserable by her own economic drive.

Mrs. Joe's oppressive nature and Pip's corresponding guilt are emphasized further when Pip asks Mrs. Joe just a few too many questions. The questions are as innocent as any child's could be, and of course, Mrs. Joe seems to be going off irrationally for no reason. Nevertheless, the questions are important because they are about the Hulks. These prison ships fire loud guns to signal missing prisoners, one of which Pip had recently encountered in the marshes. Mrs. Joe's impatient explanation of why people are sent to the Hulks ends with the notion that they "do all sorts of bad; and they always begin by asking questions" (15). The humor of her reasoning is not only to be found in the inane logic itself, but also in the relatability to anyone who has known the annoyance of a child who is always asking questions. Humorous or not, the statement and discussion leading up to it implies that Pip can do no right. Mrs. Joe will constantly find fault with all he says and oppress his desire to learn new things. It is no coincidence that this attitude mirrors his own self-reproach when he becomes concerned with money and class. Mrs. Joe's fixation on the upper-class is pervasive throughout the novel, and her imposition of guilt causes Pip to experience even more.

Naturally, between Mrs. Joe and the Hulks, Pip hardly needs a reason to feel guilty about and be "in mortal terror" of everything around him. His abundance of "terror" is apparent in the frequent use of the word following his reprimand: "I was in mortal terror of the young man... I was in mortal terror of my interlocutor... I was in mortal terror of myself... I had no promise of deliverance through my all-powerful sister" (15). All this "terror" in one short paragraph shows the level of distress our young hero undergoes as a result of his terrifying sister Mrs. Joe and her talk of the Hulks. The reference to terror underscores the lack of familial closeness and the negative impact it has on Pip. We also see an overwhelming and altogether irrational fear of prison. Pip taking food to feed a starving man and "asking questions" would certainly not land him in one of the Hulks. Though he is not in actual danger of being incarcerated, prisons causing this much "terror" to a young innocent boy is a clear indictment of the system by Dickens.

Dickens saw British prisons as a system of oppression; Mrs. Joe's rant shows how people

fixated on money and class status might use the Hulks as a means to oppress those who ask too many questions in society. Whether or not Pip could be sent to a ship is irrelevant because the Hulks have the same effect on him either way; he is scarred into “secrecy” (15) and silence just as he is when dealing with his sister.

This idea is also advanced by the imprisonment of Dr. Manette in *ToTC*, but the critique on prisons is more subtle in *GEx*; as we’ve seen, it takes place primarily within the emotive narration of the main character, but *GEx* does provide a few examples of more direct connections between social class and prison: prisons are depicted as a form of entertainment to some. During the hunt for Magwitch, Pip remarks “[a]s I watched them while they all stood clustering about the forge, enjoying themselves so much, I thought what terrible good sauce for a dinner my fugitive friend on the marshes was” (34). The convict has become a spectacle. Rather than a manhunt where people’s lives are at stake and some kind of justice is to be done, we have enjoyment and carrying on. The casual use of “friend” not only links Pip with Magwitch in a way that reinforces his feelings of guilt, but “friend” also implies a certain innocence; he is innocent because he relates to our young innocent narrator in some way, and he is innocent in wanting to eat and survive. Conversely, the motives of those hunting for him appear to be having fun and getting drunk. The sergeant’s shallow flattery certainly gets Pumblechook to share his wine liberally (33), and there is a jovial, excited atmosphere brought on by the “good sauce” of the fugitive.

A convict seems to be a naturally good person to vilify and look down on. Even when Magwitch has come forward as Pip’s benefactor, Pip has problems accepting the convict. The attempt to disguise Magwitch seems impossible because “there was convict in the very grain of the man” (342). “Grain” is a term used to describe wood and often used to describe wooden furniture; Pip gives a materialistic assessment of a man who has given him large sums of money, simply because that man is a convict. The social status of a convict is one to be looked down upon, and Pip is so caught up in being the noble upper-class gentleman that he would compare his own benefactor

to furniture. He considers himself “wrecked” (330) for the acquaintance despite the fact that this convict is the very person who made Pip a gentleman. Dickens is of course questioning the gentility from such a source, but he is also questioning prisons. Magwitch is acting in a similar way to Miss Havisham except that he is benevolent while she is malevolent, yet he is the outlaw while she is free to raise Estella in a vindictive manner. The convict seems to be a meaningless title, but seems to make all the difference to Pip and others. Estella, for example, has been raised to treat prisoners in accordance with class standing. This attitude naturally drives Pip to greater guilt for his connection; because of his adherence to upper-class social pressure, he feels guilt and humiliation instead of gratitude towards Magwitch. We see Estella driving these emotions when she whispers “[w]retches” to him on learning that they had just passed a prison which Pip had recently visited (274). Prisons cause almost as much shame and guilt for our young hero as Estella herself does.

Estella is perhaps the most prominent source of Pip’s misery throughout the novel. Pip fixates on her despite her being out of reach both emotionally and economically. Emotionally, she has no heart and warns Pip of this notion several times, culminating in her direct dismissal of him as a pursuer (368). Pip pursues her regardless of her warnings and his own knowledge of her upbringing, creating a constant source of rejection and feeling of inadequacy. Economically, she represents money and the upper class. He mentions “how poor I may be” in his acquiescence of her rejection (367). Still, Pip chases her like he chases the title of gentleman, and his misery caused by this upper-class drive is apparent.

Pip’s class consciousness and misery over Estella starts early in the novel. In their first encounter, Pip and Estella play cards for Miss Havisham. Estella shows great disdain towards Pip, ridiculing him for his “course hands” and “think boots,” and “denouncing” him as a “stupid, clumsy, labouring-boy (62). Pip “had never thought of being ashamed of [his] hands before,” and Estella’s contempt “was so strong that it became infectious, and [he] caught it” (62). The immediate, physical details provide a tangible focus which foreshadows how pervasive and consuming Pip’s misery will

be. His “think boots” will of course be worn until he buys new clothes to go to London with; they serve as a constant reminder of his inferiority. It is the same with his “course hands” which he had not even thought to be ashamed of. The introduction and reinforcement of shame and guilt over his inferiority has been caused by the monetarily-driven upper class. Pip seems to be instantly “infected” by the beautiful Estella’s arbitrary standards. She, like Mrs. Joe, is anything but an affectionate, familial picture of a woman. Estella seems to corrupt that noble image of a humanistic woman through her fixation on class much in the same way as Mrs. Joe does. Mrs. Joe is even mentioned as the source of Pip’s sensitivity as he cries over Estella (64) after being belittled for his status as a “labouring boy.” Money becomes not only the source of misery, but also a corruption of female affection.

Even in showing affection, Estella seems to display the corrupting influence of money on human relationships. The one kiss that Estella and Pip share is flawed: “I felt that the kiss was given to the coarse common boy as a piece of money might have been, and that it was worth nothing” (95). The kiss is given as a commodity rather than a sign of affection, and even the love-struck Pip, who would doubtlessly like it to be otherwise, acknowledges the shallowness of the gesture under these circumstances. Money has robbed the gesture of human love and affection, making it worthless to Pip. Pip is once again made the example of how class-drive and money are corrupting familial values and destroying happiness.

Pip remains fixated and miserable about Estella throughout his life, remaining in denial even past the point of being personally rejected by her. For a time, he lived an “unhappy life,” avoiding newspapers and all mention of Estella with his intimate friend Herbert because he was afraid of hearing the news of her marriage (388). We see not only unhappiness in his behavior, but also a sort of isolation from his close friend. Herbert comes to represent family and domestic felicity once he is married, and his match with an affectionate woman is the cause of some jealousy in Pip. It is no wonder that Pip’s irrational behavior, ultimately triggered by a fixation on class, would distance

his closest friend and relation in London. Indeed, the two seem to form a sort of family of their own at times, sharing all secrets and burdens and concerning themselves with each other's affairs in an intimate, trustful manner. It is Herbert's happy family who Pip ends up attaching himself to in the end, yet denial over Estella would interfere with this relationship and source of happiness. When he does finally ask Miss Havisham if Estella is married, he already knows the answer because of a pervading "desolation" in her chambers (405). It is this desolation that follows Pip throughout the novel, and shows how thoroughly the simple, innocent love of Pip can be desolated by class issues and money.

There are more light-hearted critiques of class/monetary drive apparent in Mrs. Pocket (Herbert's mother) and the toadies. Pip is introduced to the toadies when visiting Miss. Havisham on her birthday: "they somehow conveyed to me that they were all toadies and humbugs, but that each of them pretended not to know that the others were toadies and humbugs, because the admission that they did know it would have made him or her out to be a toady and humbug" (82). The repetition not only adds to the humor, but also drives home the fact that these people are all toadies and humbugs, even to our somewhat naïveté protagonist. They wait around for Miss Havisham and convey their ridiculous respects while trying to undermine each other. They are transparent, laughable, and entirely concerned with money and status above anything else. Dickens is actually using the humor of repetition and the absurdity of characters for a light-hearted, effective critique of monetary drive.

Mrs. Pocket shows a similarly humorous fixation on class. She is introduced with children tumbling all about her because she has hidden a footstool under her skirt, but she does not realize what the source of the tumbling is until one of her nurses finds it for her (189). She is quite foolish and a somewhat careless mother and seems more concerned with titles as Pip observes during a breakfast conversation. Herbert is embarrassed by the conversation, Mrs. Coiler, a local "toady," is engaged, and Drummle is quietly respectful for once (195). This last reaction indicates a clear indictment as

Drummler is a “sulky kind of fellow” (195) who later becomes one of Pip’s greatest foils. Mrs. Pocket’s emphasis on titles seems to appeal only to the sulky Drummler and the toady while embarrassing the kind and noble Herbert. Mrs. Pocket also ignores a danger to her baby while discussing “baronetcies,” and reprimands another child for rescuing the baby (197). Her focus is skewed; the easy dismissal of the safety of her own baby in favor of a discussion of titles shows a warped prioritization of family. She is also comically inept at caring for anyone or understanding what is going on around her in not only the real world in general, but also her family sphere. Money is again the cause of these problems, and filial values are again disrupted.

Thesis Chapter 5- Lean's *GEx*

Context

Even a harsh critic of David Lean's *Great Expectations* will admit that it is among the best, if not the best, Dickens adaptation ever made. Important critics in the field of filmic adaptations such as Julian Moynahan and Roy Armes pay homage to it through scholarly work, mentioning the film multiple times or even making it the core of their discussion. Robert Giddings, Keith Shelby and Chris Wensley use the adaptation as a primary case study in their book; the justification for its inclusion that Giddings et al. uses is that Lean's *GEx* "always receives the accolade not only as the best version of this particular novel, but as being universally recognized as the best film version of a Dickens novel ever" (82). Giddings et al. go on to qualify that Christine Edzard's *Little Dorrit* (1987) may actually be the best, but they still focus on *GEx* as the most iconic and important film of a Dickens novel. Indeed, it can be said that Lean hit his directorial stride with this early film; his pacing of his shots and transitions, the sweeping cinematography, and the intricately detailed mise-en-scene all prove that Lean is a master of his craft. All its accolade becomes important for two reasons: first, any stance that claims a short-coming of the film (such as a lack of critical attention to the Economic Ruling Class) must truly separate that short-coming from an aesthetic critique, and second, the subtleties of the film must be addressed carefully because they doubtlessly represent the intent of the film maker. In the case of Lean, his intent did seem to be making a faithful representation of the Dickens classic, but the few changes that were made by Lean, and the few subtle shifts in the emphasis of certain characters or themes, do hamper Dickens's more pervasive and direct social commentary against the Economic Ruling Class.

Lean was certainly under economic pressure not unlike other directors of Dickens adaptations. Giddings et al. mentions the need for films to have "popular appeal so as to attract good advertising revenue" (92). The point is valid, but Giddings compares it with Dickens's own

need to sell stories, and this comparison is oversimplified: Dickens was not selling to advertisers but to people. There was a certain financial pressure for Dickens but it was not as institutionalized as it was for Lean; his funding was effected not only by the need for "advertising revenue," but also by a studio's drive to stay profitable (rather than his own which might adhere to more modest expectations). The studio represents the exact kind of monetarily-driven institution that Dickens's work speaks out against, so the potential conflict is clear. The industry had even commodified the "classic serial" (as Giddings et al. calls it) by that time, and anything having to do with "[q]uaint Dickensianism" was considered "good for trade" (92). This blatant focus on money sets the nostalgic atmosphere of the movie above any notion of message or theme. The impetus for mass appeal and marketability causes certain films to adhere more to conventions involving period costumes and atmosphere than to any theme that might break with conservative ideology. Giddings et al. agrees that "[w]hat impresses viewers as 'Dickensian' accuracy is really just a prissy and fussy romantic historicism which is irrelevant to Dickens's intentions" (88). Giddings et al goes on to explain how the "costume dramas of the 1940s" created an "unfortunate influence" on film makers. 'Dickensian' becomes a mere term of marketability as it relates to a period drama rather than a deeper reference to the author's work. Lean was at the start of his career and doubtlessly influenced and pressured by those around him, so he could not ignore the importance of these monetarily driven cinematic conventions.

Giddings et al. furthers the assertion, stating that "Lean could have mustered the courage to say what Dickens wanted to say, but his courage failed him" (89). Giddings et al. is a little harsh here, but the message is somewhat accurate. Lean did fall short of expressing "what Dickens

wanted to say," and he clearly had the ability and opportunity to do so; therefore, part of the shortcoming could be said to be Lean's. To Lean's credit, the social pressure of the interwar and postwar 1940s were clearly strong, and a young filmmaker would be risking an awful lot to speak out, particularly at the start of his career.

Lean had been making a name for himself in the early 1940s, but *GEx* still represented a major opportunity for him to achieve significantly heightened status in the film industry, and this pressure to conform doubtlessly impeded the expression of Dickens's attack on the establishment. Just before directing *GEx*, Lean completed his fourth film with Noël Coward, ending the "long apprenticeship" with him (Armes 210). At this point, Lean is striking out on his own with everything to prove; he has promising prospects based on his performance with Coward, but now studios are going to want to see Lean get results with his own project. Perhaps more importantly, they want him to make money. Naturally, Lean does too at this crux in his career; his success in making a popular and profitable film has more to do with his future in the film industry than with any specific message that that film might have to convey. When coupled with the notion that a popular and successful form at the time was the generic costume dramas that "all come out very much the same" (Giddings et al. 89-90), it becomes clear that Lean's interests were likely invested in a conservative, generic depiction of *GEx*.

His persona and development as a director also influenced his lack of negative portrayal of the English upper-class gentleman. Giddings et al. claims that "there is a very strong strain of the English-genteel in David Lean," and a list of patriotic films he was involved with just before *GEx* provides evidence of Lean's attraction towards gentility (88). Obviously if Lean dons the persona of a gentleman and regularly depicts them in a positive light, it is unlikely that he will have the impetus to

adhere to the scathing critique of gentleman that Dickens did. Dickens primarily depicts the upper-class genteel-types as pompous fools or corrupt criminals of varying archetypes as discussed earlier. Lean regularly gives them heroic depictions, so despite their similar positions in society, Lean embraces that social archetype rather than dismantling it. Lean's embrace of the gentleman is apparent in the films listed by Giddings et al. These films were made with Coward just before Lean struck out on his own, and Giddings et al. notes that "[t]he influence of Coward is strongly marked in *Great Expectations* and needless to say, is wholly inappropriate" (88). This influence not only propagates the depiction of a heroic genteel class, but also draws on Coward's experience making interwar documentaries.

The influence of documentaries helps explain Lean's development as a director and how that may have skewed Dickens's critique on class. Armes explains that the documentary had an influence on fictional British Cinema which showed in the works of people such as Coward and Lean. Armes also explains how these documentaries often ended up being dramatized propaganda (148). One would not expect a documentary released during wartime to convey the gritty truth in the first place; it could be bad for moral and potentially display weakness to the enemy. The weakness I refer to is one of dissent; national unity implies strength, and one way to show national unity is through reinforcing conservative ideologies such as monetarily-based class status and people's general satisfaction with this hierarchical class status. If the objective with these propaganda-driven, dramatized documentaries was to win the war, then one can hardly blame English cinema for making them during WW2. However, if these films influenced a work such as *GEx*, which was originally intended to undermine British society and its class systems, then one can hardly expect that social critique to go unimpeded. Between the influence of nationalistic propaganda in British film and the Lean's embrace of the genteel, it is hardly surprising that his mid-1940's adaptation of

GEx falls short in its critique of British social structures revolving around the upper class drive towards gentility. Lean would not likely challenge the status quo if he could.

So, how much direct control over a film would Lean have in the 1940s? As a director, he would have quite a bit, but as a writer, not as much. As a director in the 1940s, Lean earned his fame, and his level of skill, as discussed previously, serves as proof of his ability to express himself. In other words, he would not be such a prodigiously talented director unless he had the consistent ability to make decisions in regard to the films he directed. It is not a lack of control from a directorial standpoint that interferes with his depiction of Dicken's work, but rather the outside monetary influence explained previously.

Direct control over his film does seem as though it would be more of an issue for Lean as a writer in the 1940s than as a director. Writers were limited in their ability to express any particular message, especially one that involved a social critique on the upper class as Dickens expressed. Lean did also work on the script for *GEx*, but given the status of writers during this time, the position didn't mean much. Armes explains the problem with scripting in the 1940s: the level of control a novelist has over his or her novel is absolute, but a screenwriter has his work looked over and potentially changed by many people before it is even seen by an audience (199). Armes quotes a prominent screenwriter of the time, saying that "the film industry was, as Ambler puts it, 'a kind of occupational hazard for writers'" (199). Armes' point is that writers had so little control over the finished product that they never knew if what they wrote would turn out successful or not (199-200). Lean did have a slight advantage here because he was directing as well as writing, but it shows how little his influence on the script would have been. In fact, Armes also points out the flaw in assuming that a writer/director has a significant amount of control: "The economic structure of the industry allowed [the writer] no control over his work unless he adopted the role of producer or director but, as [Ambler] points out, 'most writer-directors end by employing other writers to work

with them on the script" (199). Having other writers, as Lean did, would limit direct control over the production. It is also a way to ensure a sort of conformity that might lead away from making any strong statements against any kind of establishment. So despite being both a writer and director, Lean would not have had a lot of control over the agenda of the film even if he had wanted to take a bold stance as Giddings et al. implied that he could have. His ability to express Dickens's message with his screenwriting would have been clearly limited by the film industry.

To really understand how the monetary drive of the film industry in the 1940s disrupted Dickens's message, one must understand J. Arthur Rank. In an introduction to Rank, Armes explains the economic climate of Britain from the 1930s to the 1950s: "a small proportion of the population continued to live with the affluence enjoyed by a ruling class" (160). Rank could certainly be considered part of this economic ruling class: his father was a millionaire and he began financing movies with the help of another millionaire in the 1930s (Armes 161-62). By the early 1940s, he "had control of assets worth about £50,000,000, a striking example of how capitalism was able to flourish even in the midst of war" (162). His background is nothing like that of Dickens's: his use of monetary affluence rather than creative output to make money and his life of privilege imply that he was the very type of person that Dickens was criticizing in *GEx*. His manipulation of the capitalistic money-driven society is as prominent as his detachment from any sort of labor or trade. In fact, he was known to have a "total lack of film experience" (Armes 162). Despite his lack of knowledge, he controlled most of that industry in the 1940s, including Lean's productions. Lean's early films with Coward were funded by Rank (Armes 164), and Lean's subsequent production company (Cineguild) was funded by Rank (Armes 209). It is also worth noting that several prominent producers ended their careers in quarrels over money with Rank (Armes 164). One can easily see how the economic

pressure on Lean to produce profitable, formulaic films would have been increased under Rank's monopoly; Rank was interested primarily in making money, and he didn't seem to keep people around who didn't. Of course, such a figurehead himself would likely cause film makers to avoid depicting the economic ruling class in a negative light. Being a member of the economic ruling class himself, it would not be in Rank's interest to sponsor these Dickensian depictions of the flaws of his own class.

The unwillingness of the economic ruling class to sponsor critique against itself has been expanded on previously, but it is important to reiterate it in light of Lean's achievements. His status could be said to override any sort of timidity, but it does not. For reasons of investment in his career, his genteel status, and the overwhelming monopoly on British film held by Rank, Lean conforms to the patronage of the upper class and their desire to promote their own position rather than critique it as Dickens did. The monetary drive in film is too strong.

This drive effected other areas of production as well, such as casting; based on their previous roles, the stars of the film are likely to be seen as reinforcing conservative nationalistic ideologies rather than questioning them. John Mills, who plays Pip in the film, was a household name who built and maintained a patriotic, conservative image. In fact, Armes uses Mills as an example of a 1950s actor who appealed to "a nostalgia for the fixed hierarchical society of the armed services" (179). This kind of stable identity clashes sharply with the confused and questioning Pip as Dickens constructs him. Audiences are going to see a patriotic war hero on screen instead of a disillusioned young man who is questioning British society rather than fighting for it. Mills gives a fine performance, but with his last four films being war movies, audiences are more likely to associate him with patriotic heroics than with class disenfranchisement. The "fixed hierarchical society" is meant to be destabilized in the novel, but the film is clearly appealing to nostalgia with its

casting. Valerie Hobson, who plays Estella in the film, has a similar background. Her previous three films include "The Adventures of Tartu" (1943), "The Years Between" (1946), and "Unpublished Story" (1942). All three are war films. Estella is an example of privilege and the corruption of the familial caused by the upper class. She is not meant to be sympathetic or a positive example for society to follow. Hobson's filmic background contrasts with this image sharply; she is the example of a patriotic woman during the war. The war documentary that held so much influence for Lean and 1940s cinema in general clearly had an influence on casting. The audience would be familiar with both of these stars and doubtlessly associate them with propagandistic heroics rather than the misery and corruption caused by economic and social classes in Britain.

Bosley Crowther sums the film up nicely in his review from the time of its release without mentioning Dickens's critique on society whatsoever. Crowther calls it a "tale of humble virtue elevated above snobbery and hate." In other words, the focus is on the virtue of the central characters rather than their mistakes and struggle within a society corrupted by a money-driven class system. The aesthetics of the film are duly praised in the review, but any notion of Dickens's themes is lost, which seems to be the result of society's unwillingness to question the economic ruling class in the 1940s.

Film

Perhaps the best way to summarize the context is given by Regina Barreca as the start of her short but insightful analysis of the film: "David Lean didn't film Dickens's novel. He remade the novel into David Lean's film" (39). This statement is an apt place to begin filmic analysis for two reasons: first, it positions the film on equal footing with the novel as a form of expression which is a crux of my own discussion; second, it establishes that Lean's intentions varied from Dickens's in

some way. This latter idea has been established contextually, but it not been established by filmic analysis. Lean's film itself will show just how much the message is changed from book to film although it might not be quite the change that Barreca implies when she states that "Lean completely reversed the thrust of Dickens's story" (39). Lean did change a lot, and Dickens's harsh critique of the economic ruling class was certainly dulled, but not all themes were "completely reversed."

A good example of a theme that isn't "completely reversed" is filial happiness; Lean actually fulfills his conservative agenda while adhering to Dickens's emphasis on family in some ways. However, there are key points in which the director's portrayal of filial happiness fails to encompass the social criticism that Dickens accomplishes when addressing the same theme. Lean typically falls short of this criticism because he obfuscates the intentional juxtaposition between filial happiness and misery caused by economic class drive. The disruption, or reversal, of Dickens's message does not come from a failure to promote filial happiness, but rather a failure to show how that happiness is often disrupted by money. Pip, Pocket, and Estella all offer examples of the disruption caused by money.

Pip's filial happiness is disrupted early on by Mrs. Joe's fixation on status, but is this disruption is not as apparent in Lean's version. Mrs. Joe is certainly depicted as nasty, unloving mother figure, but she lacks clear reference to money as a driving force for her irrational "rampages." The classic reference to her "rampages" remains in the film from her earliest introduction by Joe, and if her persona is lacking in detail, it is not for a lack of screen time. Lean crowds in the details of her dialog quite deftly, condensing the more memorable bits from longer portions of the novel into neat little tirades. Like anything else in this carefully crafted film, if

something is left out, it is left out intentionally; Lean had time restrictions on the film, but Mrs. Joe got enough screen time for the skilled director to emphasize anything that he wanted to.

One of the most telling parts which was downplayed was her aberration of being the wife of a blacksmith. Lean leaves in the original dialogue, but the delivery effectively buries the emphasis on "blacksmith." This deemphasizing is accomplished in two ways. First, the shot changes just before she says it. In the early part of her tirade, the audience is intimidated with a close shot covering only Mrs. Joe; it is framed by the hard-lit Mrs. Joe on one side of the screen and her looming shadow on the other. Intimidating and engrossing, the shot is meant to pull the audience into the intense rant. The shot then transitions just before she derides being a blacksmith's wife. Lean transitions into a wider shot here, encompassing the interior of the lodgings as well as Pip and Joe. The scene is now softly lit, and the audience is allowed a release from the tension that the former shot built. Attention is drawn into the larger scene and away from whatever Mrs. Joe is ranting about, and this transition happens just before Mrs. Joe brings up being a blacksmith's wife.

The second way that "blacksmith" is deemphasized is the delivery itself. The rant is done in the typical rapid-fire rampage that Freda Jackson (the actor who plays Mrs. Joe) does so well; this method of delivery fits with her character and adheres to the filmic need to condense dialogue. However, Jackson's rapid delivery also happens to deemphasize anything that comes near the middle of any longer rants. Mrs. Joe's reference to being a blacksmith's wife just happens to blur into the middle of one of her lengthy, abridged tirades. The original put more emphasis on the class-driven derision of being the wife of a blacksmith; it was interspersed with other characters' dialogue and came near the end of one of her shorter tirades. Length and textual positioning could not have been more different in the film.

It seems like an ignorable difference until we recall that the material is in the hands of a master of his craft; Lean does not miss details or accidentally depict something as different without

some agenda. This agenda seems rather obvious: the shift away from the occupation signals that Mrs. Joe is just a hateful bitter woman in general rather than a hateful bitter woman driven by her inherit place in society and the social derision that comes with it. She is suitably hateful though; her performance as a tyrannical matriarch is enough to make an audience cringe at the thought of having to live with such a matriarch. However, without proper drive, this performance becomes one that actually does question the domestic sphere rather than show how money is disrupting that same sphere as Dickens does. Lean ends up providing a somewhat sexist condemnation of marriage; the sweet and amiable Joe is stuck in a marriage with a tyrannical female. Her tirade being shifted away from a fixation on monetarily-driven class status supports this notion because the attack seems to be directed more irrationally towards Joe. The misery caused by monetary drive no longer makes an appearance with regard to Mrs. Joe.

The dissociation between class status and filial misery continues in the film: Lean downplays Uncle Pumblechook as a character, and Lean leaves out the party when the soldiers come looking for Magwitch. In the novel, the soldiers come to look for Magwitch during a dinner hosted by Mrs. Joe and end up stopping in the house for some wine and merriment while Joe fixes a pair of shackles for them. This passage in the novel not only exemplifies Dickens's critique on prisons, but also depicts the whole system as a meaningless distraction to the working class. The guests at Mrs. Joes are all given someone to look down on; they are entertained and merry with the prospect of chasing down a criminal. It gives them something to do and distracts them from any real problems that they may have been having, such as the stolen pork pie which was only taken to feed the same starving convict. They can also look down on the convict, perpetuating a hierarchical social order with the economic ruling class at the top. The merriment is skipped in the film with no reference to it or even hint of the problem with the prisons.

In one sense, Lean's portrayal of the scene is accurate but again ends up undermining Dickens's message; the sergeant is as charming if not more charming than he is in the book. This

charm may have to do with the medium more than anything else. Giddings et al. mentions this problem in the context of a first person narrative losing its subtlety in a film which relies on an essentially third-person narrative (79). I don't agree that this inconsistent point of view impacts Lean's ability to convey anything within his agenda, but it has an interesting impact on this scene and how the Sergeant is viewed by the audience. In the novel, we have Pip as a narrator: his point of view carries weight with the audience more than the camera might. The only reaction from Pip in the film is a high shot of him looking cautiously optimistic and awed by the sergeant's appearance. As a narrator, he is powerless in the scene. In the film, we have only the camera to show the soldier's polite, charismatic performance. The soldier's politeness in the novel is presented as a way to swindle wine out of Pumblechook, but in the film, the soldier seems genuine, never drinks anything, and does not even talk to Pumblechook. Far from a dandy swindler, he appears heroic. He enters into a somewhat cramped shot of the interior of Mrs. Joe's house which makes him appear larger than life, and he delivers his pleasantries without ever disrupting the little house with his soldiers. The cut to the exterior places the soldiers neatly lined up on a hill outside, silhouetted against the waning sun. This gorgeous cinematography continues on their march through the swamps and exemplifies a 1940s patriotic depiction of Britain and its valiant soldiers but does little to call attention to the flaws in the prison system as Dickens does. Dickens's dandy sergeant has been replaced with a hero of the time, undermining his attack on the economic ruling class and society in general.

Another important part of Dickens's commentary who is absent from this scene (and several others) is Pumblechook. He represents the pompous, idiotic endorsement of class drive and provides the reader with a direct example of how this class drive makes Pip miserable. (Moyahan here?) Pumblechook constantly reminds Pip to be grateful to those who "brought him up by hand."

Pumblechook also constantly acts as if he knows everything and has known it all along, and he is always instilling Pip with meaningless information for no apparent reason.

An example of the latter is the math problems he randomly and mortifyingly brings up for Pip to solve which are conspicuously absent in the movie. The time constraints of film are partially responsible, but even the scenes that are left in to indicate Pumblechook's conveyance of meaningless information seem to be intentionally downplayed. In the film, there are not math problems, but there is a pretentious-looking inspections of Pip's hands as Pip and Pumblechook are headed to Miss Havisham's in a carriage. The scene certainly makes Pumblechook look pretentious but Pip does not seem mortified at the behavior as he always is in the novel. The scene is also lacking sound: Pumblechook moves his lips as if speaking, but whatever pompous command he gives Pip is not heard by the audience. Perhaps Lean wanted to build tension or cut extraneous dialogue, but it seems more likely that he was cutting the one-on-one dialogue with Pip to move Pumblechook further into the background. The carriage scene was an easy opportunity to show the audience the pompous, irritating side of those driven by class status, but this opportunity was intentionally forgone. Many such cuts of the pompous Pumblechook could be argued as necessary for filmic time constraints, but not the silent carriage scene because the time was already invested. Furthermore, Lean proves himself to be such an efficient filmmaker (by condensing so much of the original novel into the film) that it is difficult to imagine him cutting the pompous side of Pumblechook by accident. Pumblechook represents a crucial undermining of Briton's wanton class drive, and he simply was not depicted properly in a film that endorses conservative social hierarchies. This endorsement of the economic ruling class is why Pumblechook does not irritate Pip with a know-it-all attitude and hollow sense of superiority throughout the film, and the phrase "brought up by hand" is never even spoken.

Similar important characters or groups of characters who are left out or backgrounded (but perhaps forgivably so) include the toadies at Miss Havisham's, Mrs. Pocket (Herbert's mother), and Bentley Drummle. The toadies were a comical group of relations who showed up on Miss Havisham's birthday, looking to gain the rich woman's favor. They exemplify the absurdity of trying to gain class status and the corruption of filial values for the sake of money. The time constraints involved with making adaptations make their absence understandable with the only addendum being that the scenes in Miss Havisham's lush, decaying garden could have been cut down to make room. Perhaps more excusable is the absence of Mrs. Pocket. The elaborate chapters involving the Pockets doubtlessly depict a harsh critique on the drive for class status and show how this drive impedes basic filial happiness; however, converting these chapters to film would take up considerable time, so I think their exclusion is ultimately justified even though it does hamper Dickens's attack on the upper class. A less justifiable example Dickens's message being dulled is the depiction of Drummle. He only makes two brief appearances in the film: Pip (as narrator) introduces Drummle at a social function, and Pip runs into Drummle while back in his home town visiting Miss Havisham. On both occasions, Drummle appears well dressed and dignified and is distained by Pip. This depiction is similar to the novel (although much abbreviated) with the notable difference that Drummle is not depicted as particularly mean in nature. His nickname of "spider" is forgone completely, and with it, the notion that he either "beats or cringes." These details are important in implying that Drummle is a bully of sorts which is reinforced by his attitude towards Pip and his friends. The negative persona is entirely absent in the film with the exception of Drummle appearing proud. The lack of general emphasis on his character can be explained by filmic time limitations, but the lack of negative personality traits can only be explained by pandering to the economic ruling class. Drummle represents the upper class, so Lean does not want to make his brief depiction too harsh in any way. This instance is subtle and almost excusable because of time limitations, but ultimately it remains

notable since the character does have screen time with no attempt to depict his evil and bullying ways which would reflect negatively on his upper class social sphere.

Two of the more central characters are also shown in a manner that avoids a negative depiction of the upper class; the depictions of Miss Havisham and Estella dull Dickens's original message by making Estella a more conventional female and by emphasizing Miss Havisham's corruption as a female over her corruption as a rich person. Barreca expands on this latter concept by explaining that Miss Havisham is "replete with both conventional and subversive images of women" (39). Barreca cites examples from the film: Miss Havisham is juxtaposed with candles and flame, making her seem already damned to her fiery fate (40); she is imprisoning Estella by "usurping the masculine privilege" of placing collar-like jewels around her neck and appearing in the "boxed in" Satis house (41); finally, Estella rejects Miss Havisham in the end for the sake of Pip (44). Using Barreca's careful analysis, we can see a power based in feminine mystique rather than money. Lean is taking the emphasis off the corrupting influence that money has on family and placing it on an irrational female figure as he did to a certain extent with Mrs. Joe. Miss Havisham's juxtaposition with fire throughout the film reinforces this concept; the wild, out-of-control element is easily associated with her dark, mysterious, and dangerous image.

Estella, leading Pip down dark corridors by candlelight, can likewise be associated with fire, showing her similarity to Miss Havisham. However, as Barreca mentions, Estella breaks away from Miss Havisham in the end. Barreca points out this ending because it breaks up the most important female to female relationship in the story through Pip's bold manly action of tearing down the curtains and rescuing Estella. The novel of course ends with Miss Havisham dead, but there is not such a clear disowning of her; the film severs the tie between the two women in ways the novel doesn't. Barreca points out the camera angles and editing in the scene of their separation help

associate Estella with the deceased Miss Havisham through shots of Estella from behind and long shots of the room(44)- making her ambiguous as a character and placing her in a position similar to that of Miss Havisham. The lighting makes Estella even more of a shadowy representation of Miss Havisham. Then, as Pip tears down the drapes and boards over the windows in a manly fashion, we see the light increasing gradually on Estella's face, separating her from the gloomy image of Miss Havisham. Estella seems to be coming awake as it happens, and the scene conveys the complete separation of the two females. After this scene, Pip and Estella run out through the garden of Satis House.

This ending does not seem far off from the novel, but on closer investigation, we can see less agency in women and less of a negative impact from the misery caused by money. The ending is much less ambiguous than the novel; in the novel, Pip takes Estella's hand with no sign of them parting soon. Pip's passionate rescue followed by Pip and Estella running through the gates together certainly provides a more substantial picture of happiness. The scene makes Estella weaker and takes away her agency, and it all happens just after Pip has his expectations ruined, making it seem like there was a quick fix for his misery caused by economic drive the whole time. Moynahan points out a chronological inconsistency tied to the scene (152-53); in the novel, there is a gap of several years, adding to the lonely misery that Pip suffers (caused by society's expectations), but in the film, we have no gap, indicating that Pip can solve his problems and end the misery caused by society in a manner of minutes by rescuing a powerful female in a manly fashion. This ending both subverts women and ignores/diverts Dickens's critique on the economic ruling class; the upper class drive is no longer hurting Pip significantly, and he can end his unhappiness by taking control of a female. The Estella of the film is not just any female either- she is unwed, an implied virgin when she runs away with Pip. In the novel, Estella had been married, divorced, and had had a child. Barreca points this

inconsistency out, concluding that "[t]wentieth-century film audiences were even more conservative and demanding than nineteenth-century novel readers" (44).

Moynahan comes to a similar conclusion, showing that Lean misses Dickens's message about the futility of the economic class drive. After a careful analysis of the text, Moynahan points out an important theme in *GEX*: on the surface "people are sharply segregated by class, fortune, degrees of respectability, privilege, and power; whereas beneath the surface... these same people are linked by numerous invisible ties of blood, guilt, and creaturely need" (145). The implication is that these segregations are shown as ultimately meaningless because of the "invisible ties."

Moynahan's assessment reinforces the notion that Dickens was critiquing the economic ruling class, and Moynahan uses his assessment of the novel to analyze the shortcomings of Lean's film.

Even allowing for the fact that "there isn't time" in a film to express everything in a novel (145),

Moynahan targets several important omissions that dull Dickens's message. He notes the absence of Orlick, Trabb, and Trabb's boy as "shocking omissions" (148). Trabb is mentioned in passing, and his omission is not unlike the cutting of Pumblechook: he exposes the pompous side of a class-driven society. Orlick seems to be a more important cut: "Orlick is a psychopathic version of Pip" who deepens Pip's character (Moynahan 153). This kind of comparison not only complicates Pip and his guilt, but also shows that the veneer of money brings Pip closer to the criminality represented by Orlick rather than further away because the source of that money is a criminal (Magwitch). Of course, Magwitch is the morally sound criminal who is trying to improve by making Pip his son and achieving filial happiness while Orlick is the rotten criminal who disrupts Pip's home. By losing Orlick, we lose a sense of who Pip is when he lets money and class dictate his priorities; if Pip lost his

benefactor and his family, he would likely become the miserable, class-obsessed loner, Orlick. Trabb's boy (called by this title in the novel) represents perhaps an even more important mirroring of Pip: Trabb's boy is "normalcy and irreducible integrity. He is the boy who does not rise in the world... and probably would not if he could" (Moynahan 153-54). Yet he is satisfied with life and guilt-free in a way that Pip never manages, and he is even heroic since he goes on to save Pip's life later in novel. He also satirizes Pip's high-class manners at one point, reminding audiences how ridiculous Pip is acting. Indeed, Trabb's boy represents a missed opportunity to show the "sheer abnormality and craziness of Pip's – and his century's – dream of a huge, unearned, undeserved success in the spheres of wealth, social status, power, and love to which Dickens gave the wonderfully cutting, ironic name of *Great Expectations*" (Moynahan 154).

Chapter 6 Alfonso Cuarón's *Great Expectations*

Context

The 1998 *Great Expectations* is unique for several reasons. First, it is not only made in America (as Conway's *ToTC* was), but it also takes place in America. The marshes are replaced with the Florida coast and London is replaced with New York. Second, it takes place in modern America (1998); it is Dickens's classic reimaged for a modern world (Estella is still Estella but Pip is called Finn). However, the story is still the same, and these first two elements have little direct impact on its conveyance of themes and characters. The last reason why it is unique is that it is directed someone who was not only progressive, but also somewhat of an outsider to Hollywood and American cinema in general at the time. Unfortunately, his outsider and progressive status were not enough to preserve Dickens's own progressive message about the economic ruling class.

Alfonso Cuarón is noteworthy for both his directorial talent and his investment in thematic integrity, but Twentieth Century Fox had more interest in producing a profitable film when they approached Cuarón about the 1998 *GEx*, and this Hollywood capitalistic drive ends up dulling Dickens's message considerably. As the director, Cuarón did have some say in the content of the film, but his career was in its early stages at the time, so his influence would have been limited. Since directing *GEx* in 1998, Cuarón has only grown in notoriety and talent. He had done few films previously which were as widely known, and he is often known best for the film he directed right after *GEx*. Pamela Katz provides an interview with the man himself which will be covered later, but the important thing is that this moment may have been somewhat career-defining. The notion of the adaptation being a crux in a rising filmmaker's career likens him somewhat to David Lean although Cuarón never went for the commercial success quite like Lean did. Cuarón made less films while receiving nearly just

as much acclaim (more than half of his full length films after 1998 have been nominated for Oscars), and he seems to be more concerned with challenging social boundaries in his body of work. Of course, pushing the borders of allowable on-screen sexuality was popular in the late 1990s, but Cuarón was not just interested in making movies sexy (although he is good with that as well). Cuarón was interested in social and class issues too as we can see in films such as *Children of Men* and the interview by Katz. This social consciousness coupled with his impressive directorial talent makes him a particularly apt choice to direct the 1998 *GEx*. However, the same issues that plagued Lean were still prominent in the film industry; namely, Cuarón was under constant pressure not only from the notion that this film helped launch his career, but also from the notion that the film industry in general was still far more interested in making money than conveying Dickens's message.

One immediate issue was that the late 1990s film industry adhered to a style which was counter to Dickens's own: the trend of realism in film naturally stifles some of Dickens's more outlandish settings and characters. Iris Kleinecke-Bates asserts that the heritage film of the early 1990s was more about an idealized past as explained in previous chapters, but there was a shift in the late 1990s when adaptations tended to "focus more heavily on period authenticity, than even on faithfulness to the literary source" (118). Cuarón's *GEx* might not seem concerned with "period authenticity," but part of "period authenticity" in Bates's context involves creating authentic characters that modern audiences will relate to and like.

This late 1990s trend distorts Dickens's surreal and over-the-top characters: people like Miss Havisham and Mrs. Joe who both help express the corruption that money and class inflicts upon the family sphere. Bates gives the example of *Our Mutual Friend* (1998), and she explains that the realism takes precedence over the "carnavalesque aspects of Dickens's prose" (118). Characters like Miss Havisham, Mrs. Joe, and even Estella are not meant to be

realistic; they are meant to be “carnavalesque.” In fact, when Bates goes on to explain the overarching trend of realism in the late 1990s, she uses *GEx* as an example. Although she is partly mistaken in calling the film “bleaker” for its move from Dickensian grotesque to modern realism, she is correct in asserting that it is more “naturalistic” (118). It is more naturalistic because the characters are more believable as people, but this more mundane status does not always make them bleaker. For example, Pip’s sister loses her over-the-top, wanton anger and abusiveness, but her character becomes less bleak because she is more humanistic and sympathetic. However, whether or not a character is bleak or not is less important than assessing a character for how much they reinforce Dickens’s themes. Going back to the example of Pip’s sister, we see the issue of the family sphere being disrupted by the drive for economic class status, but in the film, this drive in Pip’s sister is less apparent because she is a realistic, complex character rather than the somewhat caricatured class-driven tyrant that Dickens intended her to be.

Cuaron actually cared a great deal about Dickens’s intentions despite this realist trend in cinema and his own penchant for making believable characters, but as Katz explains in her essay covering an interview with Cuaron, Hollywood was carefully controlling of what went into the film, edging away from Dickens’s attack on the upper class. Katz’s interview brings to light several important factors that help understand how the film industry was more responsible for dulling Dickens’s message than the director in this case. First, Cuaron was a fan of *Great Expectations*, and had previous personal experience with the both the novel and Lean’s adaptation; he knew and appreciated Dickens’s fixation on class status. Second, Fox very clearly only cared about making money; the studio issued numerous outrageous demands that blunted Dickens’s message.

Katz starts out her essay by explaining why Cuaron would undertake such a perilous

task. She points out that this kind of adaptation is a “no-win game” for a director because the “non-literary public” won’t care while the film, and critics will “lie in wait” to attack Cuarón (95). Katz overstates these points slightly; the “non-literary public” may not pay attention to the nuances of thematic integrity, but Dickens adaptations have always been popular at the box office so the public does care, and perhaps the critics did “lie in wait,” but the reviews were far from being uniformly bad. As Michael Johnson points out, the film did receive some harsh criticism but also a fair amount of praise (63). Either way, Cuarón explains that part of his courage to take on the project was his cultural background: Dickens was not imbued with the same “incredible solemnity” in Mexico as he was in the US, Cuarón “just liked him” (Katz 95). In fact, Cuarón had read the novel many times just for fun (rather than for school), and knew Lean’s film “by heart” because he watched it multiple times before making *A Little Princess*. These “two mighty predecessors” gave him pause before accepting the project (Katz 95), but ultimately this kind of reverence is ideal for an adaptation; Cuarón shows the kind of mental and emotional investment in the material that could build into the strong critique of the economic ruling class that Dickens envisioned. And Cuarón did want to adhere to Dickens’s themes. Katz quotes him saying “I didn’t obsess about being faithful. It was more important for me to find a way to use film images to portray the themes and atmosphere of the book” (96). In other words, he did not care for the heritage appeal or the potential nit-picky critics, but he did want to make something that was true to what Dickens himself wanted to express. It makes sense that an artist with such respect and admiration for Dickens would accept the task of adapting *GEx*, but “[w]hat he had yet to learn was that his [*A Little Princess*] would be far more Dickensian than his *Great Expectations* ever had the chance to become” (Katz 95).

The trouble Cuarón would have expressing Dickensian themes became apparent to

him when he received the script. Mitch Glazer's screenplay was solely concerned with romance and "the theme of unrequited love" which Cuarón had expected because he understood that Hollywood's money-making prerogative would require a "steamy romance" (96). This romantic agenda imposes obvious thematic limitations. Pip is meant to be miserable in his relationship with Estella, and this misery conveys how fixation on economic classes and class boundaries makes people miserable. Sound romantic? It's not, but Glazer's script still emphasizes the romantic over all else, so Pip's misery over inane social structures is not likely to be apparent. Cuarón appreciated the hierarchy of the rich Estella and the poor Pip and was concerned that "there was absolutely no attempt to incorporate the social and cultural backdrop of this hierarchy. Cuarón had hoped for more, even in the context of a full-blown romantic drama" (Katz 97). Cuarón had a direct and immediate problem with a script that dulled Dickens's theme as it pertained to a critique on the class and money-based social hierarchy. The studio used its control of the script to remove Dickens's original message.

Despite the script, Cuarón felt there was room for him to include some focus on class, "[b]ut there was opposition to this element from all sides. Cuarón was amazed to learn how fervently 'most Americans will deny the problems of class in their own country'" (97). It is clear from his statement that the studio wanted nothing to do with Dickens's critique on the economic ruling class. Cuarón had the ability and the drive to make an adaptation with thematic integrity, but the studio was against it from the start.

Fox studios had several influential demands in regard to the leading lady, Estella, played by Gwyneth Paltrow, that dulled Cuarón's ability to convey Dickens's message. First, Estella was written with the modern update of a career, but this was lost on the cutting room floor because "the studio felt her profession was 'not necessary'" (98). A career would have reinforced the class status difference between Finn and Estella, especially with the modern

audience's expectations for an upper-class woman to have an upper-class career. Her original profession as an art restorer would have sounded downright snooty in relation to Finn's career as a fisherman. Despite not wanting her career depicted, the studio did call for more Paltrow. They placed this request with Cuarón after shooting had begun because "Paltrow's career had exploded near the beginning of the shoot. Her box office appeal was soaring to unprecedented heights." Cuarón loved the idea of working with Paltrow more, but this request added a lot of complications and last-minute rewrites (Katz 99) (though not enough to include Estella's career). Pandering to this request left Cuarón even less opportunity to slip in class issues. He mentions wanting to add a sequence where poor fishermen were going broke and working at McDonald's, but once more screen time was ordered for Paltrow, "...that was it.' every spare moment had to be handed over to the assured box-office draw of Paltrow" (Katz 99). This issue is a direct example of Cuarón trying to incorporate Dickens's themes in the already sparse script and being denied by the "box-office" drive of capitalist Hollywood. Despite her added screen further interfering with the themes that Cuarón wanted to express, Paltrow added a lot to the movie. Her sophisticated bearing and elegance made for a believable modern vision of Estella even if this vision was hampered by studio demands and script issues.

However, the worst demand from the studio was perhaps the one that "Estella had to be nice" (Katz 100) which drastically distorts the Dickensian version of Estella and corresponding critique on the upper class. This decree came after shooting had been completed, and as Katz explains, it was "a curve ball that Dickens himself, no stranger to commercial concerns, would have had trouble catching" (99). Estella's cruelty is intrinsically tied to the negative depiction of the upper class; her cold callousness is key in understanding that it is Pip's fixation on a twisted schema of social class hierarchy that makes him so

miserable. Estella is supposed to represent the corruption and pain that this fixation on money causes, but the film industry would not make this theme a priority when it is so counter intuitive to their capitalistic agenda and even seems to offer a critique of their own social standing. Katz gives an example of the kind of changes Cuaron had to make in order for Estella to be nice: the taxi cab scene, where Estella is riding away from Finn coldly, was originally shot in silence, but was reshot with Estella's voice explaining her behavior. I'd likewise imagine that her expression may not have been so conflicted since she was supposed to be acting coldly. Her final rejection of Pip in the novel was certainly anything but caring or considerate.

The final issue regarding Estella wound up being a battle that Cuaron, unlike Lean, won, but the fact that it was a struggle shows how opposed to conveying Dickens's original message the studio was. This issue was, as it has been since the original release of the novel, the ending. Even Dickens changed his original ending to be somewhat happier: his initial draft had Pip and Estella run into each other on a busy London Street once, and she was remarried after having divorced Drummle. They then part ways with no sign of further interaction. His revised draft has them join hands after years apart; she is unwed after divorcing Drummle but does have a child. It is still ambiguous but quite a bit more hopeful. Of course, both Pip and Estella have learned about life and the pains and futility of pursuing money and class status. Lean, as mentioned, has Pip rescue Estella (as a virgin bride) in a manly fashion with no time elapsed and little if any lesson learned. So how does Cuaron end things? Closer to Dickens. In fact, more humanistically since Estella's daughter is actually there. Finn revisits the mansion of Miss Dinsmoor (the renamed Miss Havisham) to find Estella there with her daughter. The two happily reunite and we see a hint of the idealized familial happiness that Dickens put so much emphasis on.

However, Cuarón had to fight for this beautifully done ending. Katz explains:

The fight was all about Estella's golden child. What's with the kid? I mean, how romantic is that? Now we *Know* she had sex with someone besides Finn. And besides, stepchildren are messy. Mothers are messy. Cuarón was pressured to lose the little girl, and to film Finn and Estella running into each other's arms, kissing romantically without a care in the world, and in close-up please! (100)

Katz poses the questions and oppositions that the studio had for Cuarón: it's "messy," not romantic, and depicts Estella as she should be: *not* a virgin bride. The patriarchal, conservative ideology in this feedback is thick; it has nothing to do with Dickens's original theme or even the realism that was popular at the time. These notes simply seek to give an idealized, romantic ending designed to sell tickets. The cliché end with a (pretentiously) suggested close up (as if the studio didn't hire someone to direct for them that could choose how to shoot things) is further proof of this wanton abuse of source material to create something that will sell. Fortunately, "with his instinctive and fierce attachment to the real ending of the book, Cuarón fought for his version, and, for once, prevailed" (100).

This beautiful ending shines as a beacon of Dickens's original work where most of the rest of the film falls short. The director was obviously not responsible for this failing; the film industry was too interested in reinforcing the economic ruling class as beyond reproach rather than taking them down a few notches as Dickens does. This context of the film holds true with a closer examination of the film itself.

Text focus on realism, Paltrow, Finn being happy.

Despite the director's best efforts, the film departs from Dickens's critique on the economic ruling class. First, the realistic style that was popular in 1990s cinema dampens the Dickensian grotesque which is needed to show how absurd and sometimes cruel people

invested in the upper class can be. Cuarón embraces this realism throughout his film with little exception, and characters such as the outlandish Mrs. Joe turn into the emotional and relatable Maggie. Second, Pip, who suffers under the yoke of upper class expectations throughout the novel, has become relatively happy and imbued with purpose beyond the arbitrary social expectation of becoming a gentleman. Finn (Pip's filmic name in this adaptation) shows more agency and achieves greater success and happiness through his actions than Pip ever dreamed of. Third, Estella loses her heartlessness for a more down to Earth character. Instead of being a symbol of the upper classes' disruption of the family sphere, she is a sympathetic and romantic love interest for the protagonist.

The film opens on Finn exploring his native waters on the beautiful gulf coast, and the scene breaks away from Dickens's critique by changing the whole outlook of the protagonist. Finn is still an orphan like Pip, with few expectations in life, but Finn lives in a tropical paradise rather than a cold and barren swamp. Cuarón works in plenty of wide shots in the opening scene, exhibiting the natural beauty of the gulf with its wide-open skies and crystal clear water. The scene is a far stretch from a foggy graveyard on the marshes. The marshes not only depict an undesirable countryside, hinting at the novel's critical tone towards England, but the marshes also reflect Pip's misery and lack of capability to take charge of his own life. Pip starts out trapped in his station in life as he is trapped in the foggy marshes of his home. In the film, Finn seems anything but trapped. He is wading in open water in a place most people would dream of vacationing. Cuarón even gives Finn a few close ups and low angle shots in the scene; the low angle shots indicate power and make it seem as though Finn is on top of the world while the close-ups emphasize his individuality and agency. To further the joyful spirit, Finn is smiling and happy most of the time.

This attitude, expressed by the camera work and child actor (Jeremy Kissner), is quite

different from the orphan child visiting his parents' grave. The bleak sadness of the surroundings and powerlessness of Pip in the novel indicate the poor state of England's class hierarchy and Pip's helplessness and misery within that system. The beautiful waters of the gulf merely indicate the studio's market-driven impetus; Fox wants to appeal to the desire of a modern audience for a strong leading protagonist and avoid depicting a child as poorly situated. Furthermore, it never hurts to include picturesque seascapes to impress an audience. The modernization of setting to the gulf coast was not a bad idea, but the romanticizing of the setting works contrary to Dickens's theme of misery and entrapment in an economically driven society.

Another major source of misery for Pip, is Pip's sister (Maggie in Cuarón's reimagining) who is changed to meet the realism standard of the times, blunting the critique provided by the grotesque depiction of Mrs. Joe in the novel. While she is not depicted as completely sympathetic, Maggie is given realistic and understandable depth which is a far cry from the tyrannically overblown Mrs. Joe.

We are introduced to Maggie by a warning from Joe to Finn that she is in a bit of a mood. This warning is a smoothly executed, subtle reference to the warning of "rampages" in the novel, but that is where the similarities end. Finn comes home to find a man leaving the house with her sister inside naked. The implication that she cheats on Joe makes her very unsympathetic, but the realism of the scene and her interaction with Finn makes her more sympathetic. She doesn't yell at or tyrannize Finn in any way when he pauses at her doorway; she is sitting with her back towards the camera, hunched over and acting sadly morose. Having a character's back to the camera often signals that that character is hiding something but also that that character is conflicted in some way. Her hunched posture certainly doesn't signal pride, and her sadness indicates regret. The camera is directed down at her as if from

Finn's view, disempowering her morally by placing Finn in a place of judgement and aesthetically by the camera's downward angle. The audience looks down into the world of a modern woman who has perhaps become trapped. The smoke in the scene further softens the light and creates a grey haze that perhaps reflects her own life: confused and drifting in the sunlight. The soft lighting furthers her humanistic appeal, making her appear still more delicate and vulnerable. Her nakedness only adds to her vulnerability, and one can't help but see a realistic, dynamic character despite her indiscretion. Her depth of characterization is astonishing for her limited screen time, but this realism does nothing for Dickens's message. She is more sympathetic and dynamic in this one scene than the raging Mrs. Joe is in the entirety of the book; however, unlike Mrs. Joe, it is unclear that Maggie has an overwhelming fixation on money and class; her mysterious but humanistic depiction fails to deliver the blunt critique given by Dickens through his grotesque depiction of Mrs. Joe.

Between his sister Maggie's kindness and his life on the tropical beach, Finn has a fairly happy life for an orphan. He does still have a horrifying encounter with a convict who comes out of the water to attack him (perfectly played and smartly cast as Robert Deniro, the modern criminal Magwitch), but gets over it relatively quick. In fact, he experiences little guilt at all. The guilt felt from helping the convict is not apparent, and his sister is the guilty one rather than him in the film. His sister is actually kind when she sends him off to Ms. Dinsmoor's (the reimagined Miss Havisham) rather than fixated on money or interested in making him feel guilty about his upbringing. The film deliberately avoids the class system and the misery it causes.

So how does the film depict Pip's greatest source of misery in life who just happens to signify an unreachable class status? As a sweet, smiling love interest. Estella is not the cruel corruption of class over family that she was in the novel, causing Pip misery every moment;

instead, she is the somewhat sweet and very passionate romantic interest, causing Pip some well-tempered, temporary heartache. Just the kind that sells tickets.

From the first kiss, Estella and Finn embody more elements of Hollywood romance than Dickensian class separation. In the novel, Estella gives Pip a somewhat meaningless kiss after he wins a fight with another boy. The kiss feels like a hollow materialistic gesture to him; she bestows it on him as she would bestow a pittance on a beggar. Conversely, their first kiss in the film is directed to be sweet and romantic as per the demands of Hollywood. Estella sneaks up on the young Finn drinking water out of one of Ms. Dinsmoor's opulent indoor fountains. The scene is glowing from a bright sky light refracting on the water and glowing all around the two characters. Estella slips in while he is drinking and kisses him in an extreme close-up. Cuarón backs out subtly to a regular close up as the kiss continues. A non-diegetic Spanish guitar plays romantic music in the background, and Finn leaves feeling enchanted. Cuarón directs the scene as he would any romantic kiss: the extreme close ups, romantic music, and even some tongue touching in an awkward twelve year old sort of way. The glowing light and exploratory young love is about as sweet as anyone in Hollywood could make it. Only mild signs of Finn's lack of confidence in his class status are shown, and he seems perfectly content as their love progresses.

Cuarón uses an efficient but memorable fade to indicate a time lapse that brings Estella and Finn to the end of high school. The fade happens during a dance which implies they have been dancing a lot throughout the years, strengthening their romance and Finn's potential sense of security. Again no pain is expressed from Finn in the intervening years. It's at this stage that Finn tries to attend Estella at a dance. He goes in his sister's old dinner jacket and a beat up pickup truck, but the snooty guard won't let him onto the premises. Here we see some class issues and potential for insecurity, but Estella shows up and hops in his

pickup, telling him to take her away from the place anyway. Instead of inciting rejection and inferiority, his poorness signals a sort of bad-boy rebelliousness, and he is validated by Estella rather than made insecure and miserable. The hint of class issues that Cuarón slips in here is overridden by the romantic agenda of Hollywood. A romantic scene at Finn's house follows with just the right amount of teasing from Paltrow and just the right amount of bashful longing from Ethan Hawke. The camera tilts heavily as it does when Cuarón shoots scenes with high tensions, and the audience is taken away with steamy teenage romance. In a way, this scene validates Dickens's critique by keeping the upper-crust Estella tantalizingly out of reach; they don't really get past touching through the clothes as far as the audience can tell and Hawke conveys Finn's pining quite well. However, the romance and passion come through stronger, especially since their teenage lust is eventually validated.

The next gap in time is perhaps the most disruptive to the concept of the upper class causing misery in Pip. Finn, as narrator and character during the transition between the ages of 17 and 24, "put aside" wealth for 7 years; he was happy, "in control," and claimed that "everything I wanted, I had" (*GEx* 1998). Unlike the suffering caused by Estella in the novel, the upper class drive seems to have no impact on Finn whatsoever. He has gone about his life without any turmoil that would condemn the social class structures that caused him to be separated from Estella as she went abroad to study.

Unfortunately for him, she crosses paths with him after his move to New York (equivalent to London from the novel), and she does cause him some misery than, but it is more of a Hollywood heartache than anything attributable to problems with the economic hierarchy in society. Cuarón does try and slip in the notion that a class gap has caused Finn misery, but it comes across as somewhat shallow against the backdrop of clichéd romance. Finn goes drunkenly to Estella's apartment, shouting about how his new art career

(modernizing the concept of a completely random benefactor) was all for her and how he was successful just for her. What Finn is trying to (or should be trying to) convey is that his suffering has been all for her and the notion of impressing her upper class sensibilities, but he has suffered so little that the cries ring hollow. Moreover, the jilted man standing in the rain shouting to a woman is such a Hollywood archetype that it is difficult to imagine anyone putting it in a film to convey a message; Finn shouts in the rain to sell more tickets. Estella is not even there to give him a definitive rejection, although she does earlier in the taxi scene as mentioned. Another rejection might make her character look bad. In fact, she is all smiles and kisses him again in New York when they first meet, ambushing him at a water fountain, harkening back to their first kiss. They even have passionate fling in New York, and she shows no signs of the cruelty of class corruption throughout their romance (except possibly to her fiancé).

When she finally does leave with her husband, and Finn's benefactor dies, stabbed on a subway by old mob connections (again, well cast as Deniro, with a touching death scene), Finn still doesn't seem to suffer much. In fact, instead of being broke and having to work his way out of the debt he accumulated, he continues selling the art that was originally all bought by his benefactor. He never goes into debt, never suffers for his fantasies and fixation on the upper class, and never really gets hurt by the class system imposed by the economic ruling class. Estella hurts him somewhat, but even that doesn't have much of a long-term impact. As mentioned, Cuarón does win a victory in the ending, but even this ending has minor issues based on the rest of the film. Specifically, Finn does not suffer during the transitions, so the payoff in the end is not as well earned. Have they learned their lessons about the pain caused by chasing money as society expects them to? It's hard to say. Nothing is said about Estella's ex-husband when they meet again. He certainly didn't seem to be the abusive lout that the

novel depicts. And Finn seems perfectly happy and successful waiting for Estella for a few years; he is guilt free and rich which is a stark contrast to the novel. Class and money seemed to have caused few problems, and the economic ruling class has been saved from any scathing critique with this film. Still, it could have been worse. Cuarón's ending does not involve the ridiculous cliché of running into each other's arms. They meet quietly in Ms. Dinsmoor's house and grasp hands as in the novel. The ending is more accurate than Lean's and I think a lot more powerful. The beauty of the gulf coast may be a little over romantic, but the original ending was supposed to be hopeful. And perhaps Cuarón's realism added power to the original ending here because Estella's golden-haired little girl frolics in ruins of Ms. Dinsmoor's house rather than remaining an abstraction. Despite the lack of Dickens's message Cuarón stuck the landing; his heartfelt ending goes beyond Lean's masculine hero tearing down curtains and even adds something powerful and beautiful to Dickens's.

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