THE NATURE OF EVIL IN CHARLES DICKENS:
LITTLE DORRIT, GREAT EXPECTATIONS AND OUR MUTUAL FRIEND:
SOCIETY AND THE ROLE OF PERSONAL VIRTUE

A Thesis

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by

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The following essays examine the nature of evil in three of the last four novels completed by Charles Dickens: *Little Dorrit*, *Great Expectations*, and *Our Mutual Friend*. My conclusions are, first, that these mature representations of Dickens' art envision a common pattern in which all evil is finally expressed by an abstraction that is best termed "society"; and, second, that there is a clear progression from the somber tones of *Little Dorrit* to the modified and conditional optimism of *Great Expectations*, and finally, to the decidedly buoyant conclusion of *Our Mutual Friend*.

The "society" at fault in these novels is an abstract force which is beyond both human beings and institutions. As a collective system composed of the traditions, activities, and interests of human beings, society is greater than the sum of individuals who form it. As it grows, it simultaneously generates certain conventions, such as wealth, power, and privilege, which are not necessary to support human life in the state of nature. In the three novels under discussion, society places more value upon these customs than upon human beings, who presumably originated the development of culture.

Individual members of the community are inexorably influenced by and encouraged to adopt the values promulgated by those parties whose interests are best served by
a blind acceptance of society. Everyone agrees to adopt the illusion that money, power, and privilege will bring happiness. Placing greater importance upon worldly matters than upon the feelings of people gradually results in the crime of dehumanization. This may take a variety of forms, including ignoring the feelings of others, manipulating them for personal advantage, and physically abusing them. The process of treating people like things occurs because of the diseased values society establishes; however, dehumanization also functions as a purveyor of those values. As a result of being dehumanized, individuals ascertain that the community cares more about worldly things than it does about them. Consequently, having learned the ways of the world, they begin to degrade others in order to acquire more of those things for themselves.

While the manifestations of evil are the same in all three novels, society itself is more oppressive in *Little Dorrit* and gradually becomes less so by *Our Mutual Friend*. The dominant qualities of *Little Dorrit* are its darkness and despondency; and both of these characteristics can be attributed to the all-encompassing power of society. No character avoids the imprisoning illusion that happiness can be achieved through worldly goods. Likewise, no one escapes responsibility for the transgressions of the community; financial giants like Mr. Merdle carry the greatest burden of guilt, but even the victims in *Bleeding Heart*
Yard are blamed for accepting the warped, materialistic values of their culture. If everyone is guilty, then no one is guilty, and society's wrongs are Nobody's Fault—which is the title Dickens originally planned for this novel. The ubiquitous but amorphous guilt is best illustrated by the Circumlocution Office, where any attempt to find a culprit results in an endless journey through bureaucratic jungles. As J. Hillis Miller rightly observes, the world's corruption has reached cosmic, "metaphysical" proportions.¹ It affects, at least psychologically, even those who appear to be kind and loving, like Mr. Meagles, in whose breast there grew a "microscopic portion of the mustard-seed that had sprung up into the great tree of the Circumlocution Office."²

The omnipotence of illusion and dehumanization in Little Dorrit is further expressed by the impossibility of innocence and the remote opportunity for redemption. Only Amy Dorrit and Arthur Clennam are capable of achieving redemption because they have rejected all desire for worldly goods and accepted full responsibility for the condition of the world, although they have committed no crimes. They are prevented from being innocent by the very terms of their redemption. Aside from these two, no other character fully realizes that moral offenses have been committed. Mrs. Clennam and Mr. Dorrit are partially reformed, but neither comprehends the full implications of his own acts. The completely personal virtue of Amy and Arthur is the only way to avoid
the aggregate evils of society; yet it is by no means a victory. Their virtue is powerless and the world's corruption is unmitigated.

*Great Expectations* provides a qualified release from the gloom of *Little Dorrit*. The effects of illusion and dehumanization, though far-reaching, are less cosmic and more localized. The state of psychological imprisonment is no longer pervasive, but seems to be situated in distinct areas of the community, such as the law and the gentlemanly class. Furthermore, Joe Gargery is a positive, though largely inaccessible, standard of virtue in this novel. He provides a model for those who desire to be virtuous not only by his refusal to participate in any acts of dehumanization and his unwillingness to believe in false values, but also by his warmth, affections, and love. There is a greater opportunity for redemption here than there is in *Little Dorrit*. Characters need not have lived guiltless lives in order to qualify for repentance; and those who do reform do so completely, with full comprehension of the errors of their ways. Despite the totality of their conversions and the intensity of the pain they suffer, however, characters are not permitted to return to innocence. Mrs. Joe, Miss Havisham, and Magwitch die as a result of understanding the gravity of their sins. Pip goes on living, but cannot go back to the forge and Joe; rather he spends his life in solemn meditation upon the innocence he has lost and the
harm he has caused. In its increased opportunities for personal virtue and redemption, *Great Expectations* provides a transition between *Little Dorrit*’s pessimism and the optimism of *Our Mutual Friend*.

In this last novel, society’s evils continue to have a wide influence on individuals, but their source has become even more localized. Dickens has made the source of evil a character in the novel, which he calls variously "Society" and "Podsnappery". The Podsnaps and Veneerings, members of the wealthy middle class which makes up Society, are mere caricatures of human beings. As the object of Dickens’ satire, Society is much less oppressive than it has been in either *Little Dorrit* or *Great Expectations*, suggesting that evil is now under control and that Dickens himself has mastered the object of his fear. By placing increasing importance upon the conventions of society, these characters refuse to accept the conditions of human existence. They deny not only the unpleasant aspects of life, such as death, poverty, and starvation, but the positive aspects as well, such as love and friendship. In order to break away from this state of wooden existence, characters must come face to face with the conditions of life which are denied by Podsnappery. Lizzie Hexam's experience rowing her father's boat as he fishes for corpses in the Thames qualifies her to be the novel's exemplar of human values. Eugene Wrayburn must confront his own death before he can accept the values Lizzie
offers to him. Once a character receives these values, he can do what Pip could not do--achieve innocence and happiness.

At the end of Our Mutual Friend, a large group of virtuous characters emerges. The vitality and joy of these individuals is so compelling that the reader scoffs at Society and all of its members. The buoyancy of the final scenes is augmented by the acceptance of worldly things by the group of virtuous characters. This acceptance is part of their overall approval of the world and human life; it sharpens the realization that it is the perverted importance attached to worldly matters rather than those matters themselves that is the real evil.

A persistent theme in these three novels is the importance of personal virtue. Beginning with Amy Dorrit's limited ability to extricate herself from the evils of society, personal virtue gradually increases in power until it triumphs in Our Mutual Friend. Recognition of this growing optimism has not been common in recent criticism, but it is absolutely essential to understanding the patterns at work in Dickens' late novels. Critics have insisted upon the inherent darkness of these works in order to establish both that Dickens was a writer of great profundity and that he was closely related to the twentieth century. However, Dickens' solution to the evil in the world need not be ignored to maintain his reputation as a writer of deep
insight. He is relentless in his aversion to the evils of society, but that aversion is assuaged by his radical faith in the intrinsic virtue of the individual.
CHAPTER TWO: LITTLE DORRIT

It was a Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close, and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick-and-mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets, in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows, in dire despondency. In every alley, and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was throbbing, jerking, tolling, as if the Plague were in the city and the dead-carts were going round. Everything was bolted and barred that could by possibility furnish relief to an overworked people. (I.iii)

The gloom and hopelessness of London, indeed of the entire world of Little Dorrit, is a consequence of the pervasive illusion and dehumanization brought about by society's distorted values. People everywhere are imprisoned, literally and psychologically, by the belief that wealth, power, and privilege will bring happiness. Responsibility for this situation falls on the shoulders of every member of society, although those whose interests are best served by the acceptance of illusion bear the largest share of guilt. To be disentangled from this widely diffused evil, a character must throw off illusion, accept responsibility for his participation in society's crimes, and embrace the human value of love.

Throughout the novel, Amy Dorrit is the exemplar of virtue. Her child's form and woman's face are indicative of the unique kind of goodness she represents: on the one hand
she is guiltless, for she has devoted her life to the principle of human love and has participated in none of society's crimes; but on the other hand she is experienced in and accepts the harsh realities of the world. Her tiny victory over society clarifies a major theme of the novel, which is that only personal virtue is feasible in this world where evil has seeped into every aspect of public and private life.

The impact of Amy's virtue is limited by the minor influence she has on other characters. Complete reformation is virtually impossible in the novel, as the changes in William Dorrit and Mrs. Clennam indicate. Both are forced to reject illusion, and both come to accept the genuine harshness of the world; but neither assumes responsibility for the evil he has done. Moreover, their restricted transformations prove to be so difficult and painful, that they die immediately afterward, as if rejecting society is tantamount to giving life up altogether.

Only Arthur Clennam is completely reformed, and even for him the process entails much suffering. He unites with Amy, and together they go into the still gloomy, untransformed streets. Despite their redemption, they have no innocence and no power to affect the rest of the world. The picture is pessimistic, but their limited victory paves the way for the expanding optimism that is to take place in Great Expectations and Our Mutual Friend.

Despite the difficulty of finding someone to blame for
the evil in *Little Dorrit*, it is clear that the Circumlocution Office is most responsible for the condition of the country. Essentially, this Office establishes an atmosphere which encourages the growth of illusion and the belief in society's warped values. The Office depends for its existence on illusion—the illusion that it is doing important work. As "the most important Department under Government" (I.x) and as the processor of all public business, the Circumlocution Office is in a position to influence every individual in the country for the good. Rather than doing so, however, it does nothing at all, and consequently the country had deteriorated. As the narrator clearly states, "the Circumlocution Office had risen to overtop all the public departments; and the public condition had risen to be—what it was" (I.x). When a person comes to the Office with a complaint or a suggestion for a way to improve things, he is dehumanized and treated as an offender by scores of functionaries who refuse to help him by saying, "Can't inform you... Never heard of it. Nothing at all to do with it" (I.x). Meanwhile, unsolved problems get worse and proposed solutions lay idle. The people, who would benefit from action, grow poorer and their homes grow more dilapidated. They have been told that the Circumlocution Office is the department which will help them, but they only find it a maze of evasion and frustration. Men from Bleeding Heart Yard, like Mr. Plornish, often make complaints about the shortage of labor, but, as
the narrator tells us, "Bleeding Heart Yard, though as willing a Yard as any in Britain, was never the better for the demand. That high old family, the Barnacles, had long been too busy with their great principles to look into the matter" (I.xii).

The Circumlocution Office is the locus of power and is, in effect, what the government has become. It "extinguished" (I.x) any public servant who was about "to do it" and moved along mechanically leading the way to perceiving "How not to do it" (I.x). In such a state of affairs one can clearly hope for no public redress, because the government, under the control of the Circumlocution Office, will take no responsibility for any of the wrongs which occur in society. Even public servants who begin by intending to make changes are quickly corrupted by this lack of responsibility or are blocked by it and have to give up their original plans. The people suffer as a result, and are left with no hope of any improvements in their lives. In Bleeding Heart Yard, the people resort to fantasy to escape their grim existence. Dickens firmly insists that the Circumlocution Office's effect on the country is no joke: "Britannia herself might come to look for lodgings in the Bleeding Heart Yard some ugly day or other, if she over-did the Circumlocution Office" (I.x). The Office is the great gaoler of the nation, imprisoning it in hopelessness and poverty.

The Barnacles, who administer the Circumlocution Office,
not only depend upon the delusion of the public, and encourage it, but also participate in it. Mr. Tite Barnacle, a definite social climber, has married into the Stiltstalking family, and tries to appear as well-to-do as he can by living in a house that is "very near" (I.x) the fashionable section of Grosvenor Square. His neighborhood, with its "dead wall, stables, and dunghills" (I.x) and his "squeezed" (I.x) house, is reminiscent of the prison imagery elsewhere in the novel. The description of Mr. Tite Barnacle is the best evidence of all that he, too, is locked into the illusions perpetuated by society: "He wound and wound folds of white cravat round his neck, as he wound and wound folds of tape and paper round the neck of the country. His wrist-bands and collar were oppressive; his voice and manner were oppressive" (I.x). His major concerns are wealth and status, and he dehumanizes himself in order to give the appearance of having both.

The belief that money and prestige bring happiness, which is encouraged by the Circumlocution Office, is exposed as a lie by Mr. and Mrs. Merdle, who respectively personify wealth and status. In order to function as the Money used by high society, Mr. Merdle has completely dehumanized himself, and has locked himself in an inescapable prison. He does not talk much, is often found "against walls and behind doors" (I.xxi) at social gatherings, and considers his Chief Butler to be his warden. In this prison he has lost all spiritual and human life, is unable to talk to the many dinner
guests who come to his house, and is incapable of enjoying anything.

In addition to his non-human role as pure Money, his defrauding the public contributes to his unhappiness. He has enormous power over the people because he is very rich, and they are not. The people of Bleeding Heart Yard, who haven't an extra penny to spend on investments, talk about nothing but Merdle. To be in Merdle's shoes, for them, would be heavenly. "If I was Mr. Merdle" (II.xiii), they say, full of greed and envy. According to the narrator, "All people knew (or thought they knew) that he had made himself immensely rich; and, for that reason alone, prostrated themselves before him, more degradedly and less excusably than the darkest savage creeps out of his hole in the ground to propitiate, in some log or reptile, the Deity of his benighted soul" (I.xii). They fantasize in this way to escape from their wretched existence. But the public's adoration of Mr. Merdle is entirely undeserved; both he and his shares are empty and worthless. And by selling worthless shares to the people he is negating their humanity, treating them as objects, in order to advance his own financial empire.

Merdle, like everyone else in the community who participates in evil, cannot admit his guilt. Yet it is so powerful that it seeps out in the form of his "complaint," that vague illness which attacks his digestion and keeps him from con-
suming more than an eighteenpennyworth of food and a two-pennyworth of tea at each meal. Finally, this psychological illness leads to his suicide and the exposure of his swindle. Then it is clear that the people have put their faith in an absolute zero. Furthermore, his death shows that he is less brilliant than the average man, rather than more so; he is "a heavily-made man, with an obtuse head, and coarse, mean, common features" (II.xxv). The man who was thought to be a god turns out to be only too mortal. The people's passion for investing in Merdle's shares, a passion which Dickens describes as a "moral infection" (II.xiii) which had reached epidemic proportions, is thus one and the same with Merdle's illness, for both are the result of the exaggerated importance that is placed upon money and status, and the all too small value that is placed upon human beings. "Society and he had so much to do with one another in all things else, that it is hard to imagine his complaint, if he had one, being solely his own affair" (I.xxii). He is ultimately brought down by his guilt, which demonstrates that complicity in the evils of society can only lead to death.

Mr. Merdle's relationship to society is one of mutual reliance, as he himself states to his wife: "If you were not an ornament to Society, and if I was not a benefactor to Society, you and I would never have come together ... You supply manner, and I supply money" (I.xxxiii). Mrs. Merdle, too, has no identity other than her role as Society's ornament.
Mr. Merdle bought her for the purpose of hanging jewels upon her bosom, and had been as successful in this speculation as he had been in all others. Their relationship is loveless, betraying the lack of any human values in their lives. In her interview with Fanny and Amy Dorrit, her parody of nature obviates the fact that she has dehumanized herself in order to rise to Society's heights. She is "not young and fresh from the hand of Nature, but . . . from the hand of her maid" (I.xx), and she seems to carry out all her actions to please some abstraction called Society. At her assertion that she would be "a child of nature if [she] could but show it" (I.xx), her parrot, himself the image of distortion, breaks into shrieks of laughter as a comment upon her game of appearances. From her character, it is clear that all of Society is nothing but appearance and surface; and from her husband's character it is evident that Society is based upon worthless money that is gotten by dehumanizing the poor. Thus, the people are being sacrificed for nothing.

Merdle and his wife operate on so grand a scale that they almost never come into direct contact with their victims—the poor who are deluded and dehumanized for the sake of the hollow principles of wealth and status. One character whose deceptions are more obvious and who operates in closer proximity to his victims is Casby, the Patriarch of Bleeding Heart Yard. In his deception, artificiality, and greed, Casby defines the evil which pervades the novel, and is the
center of it. He mercilessly collects from the poor of Bleeding Heart Yard higher rents than they can afford to pay; and he does this through deception. By polishing the bald part of his head and letting his hair grow he appears to be a venerable old Patriarch, who could only be a "benefactor to his species" (I.xiii). Moreover, he uses Pancks to badger and oppress his tenants so that he, Casby, will not have to suffer their hatred. Behind the facade, Casby is a greedy hypocrite. He badgers Pancks in the same way Pancks badgers the tenants, constantly harping, "A very bad day's work, Pancks ... you ought to have got much more money, much more money" (I.xxxiii).

The tenants of Bleeding Heart Yard are all too easily duped by the venerable Patriarch. As far as they are concerned, Casby is innocent of the ordeal Pancks puts them through. When Arthur asks Mr. Plornish who the landlord of Bleeding Heart Yard is, the plasterer replies, "He is Mr. Casby, by name ... and Pancks, he collects the rents" (I.xii). It is unanimously agreed upon in Bleeding Heart Yard that "Mr. Pancks was a hard man to have to do with; and that it was much to be regretted ... that a gentleman like Mr. Casby should put his rents in his hands, and never know him in his true light" (I.xxiii).

The Bleeding Heart Yarders adulate Casby for the same reasons they envy Merdle: they have no escape from their downtrodden state, and consequently fantasize to ease their
suffering. In the process, however, they have accepted the values of their oppressors, and thus unconsciously contribute to their own dehumanization. They, too, believe that money will bring happiness. Without the veneration of his tenants Casby could not continue his deception; and without their idolizing him, Merville could not have risen to the top of the financial empire. Bleeding Heart Yard, too, is a prison; the inhabitants are physically imprisoned by the diseased values of the powerful members of society; but they are psychologically imprisoned by their own involvement in the values which lead to their own unhappy condition.

The fact that every humble tenant of Bleeding Heart Yard is permeated by society's diseased values contributes to the overall pessimism of this novel. When Pancks finally accepts his guilt and responsibility in Casby's dehumanization of his tenants, he decides to expose the Patriarch as the "bare-polled, goggle-eyed, big-headed, lumbering personage" (II.xxxii) he is by cutting his shining silver locks. While it is true that since Casby's strength is located in his Patriarchal facade, stripping that cover off is the best way to render him powerless, the humor of the scene and the fact that nothing pursues Pancks out of the Yard but the laughter of its inhabitants leaves the reader feeling that not much has been accomplished by Pancks' deed. The citizens of the Yard ought to be capable of a greater revenge than mere amusement after years of repression. Pancks' victory is
therefore incomplete, for there is no doubt that the people of Bleeding Heart Yard will fall for the next phoney who can attract their imagination and trust. Similarly, Mr. Merdle's self-destruction has no extended benefits for the community. As Ferdinand Barnacle says to Arthur, "the next man who has as large a capacity and as genuine a taste for swindling, will succeed as well" (II.xxviii). Complete victory over society's evil, therefore, cannot take place until a revolution takes place in the mind of every inhabitant of every Bleeding Heart Yard.

William Dorrit, the Father of the Marshalsea, like the citizens of the Yard, begins as a victim, then takes on the values of those who oppress him. He extends this pattern, however, in that unlike the Bleeding Heart Yarders, he puts these new values into action. He is first imprisoned because he cannot pay his debts; he is thus a victim of society's great concern for money and small concern for human life. Dorrit's utter incapability of explaining his debts to anyone results in the loss of his case inside the bureaucratic maze of the Circumlocution Office, and a very long prison term for him.

The longer he remains in the Marshalsea, the lower his estimation of himself becomes, and the less hope he has of ever being released. Consequently, like the victims of the Patriarch, Mr. Dorrit begins to cling to the only thing he has--his position as the Father of the Marshalsea. In holding fast to
his gentility he did not perceive that he was taking the side
of the people who persecuted him—of the Circumlocution Office.
While in prison he began to tyrannize over his children, most
especially, his daughter Amy. His position as Father of the
Marshalsea required that Amy work long hours in order to
provide him with food and clothing suitable to his rank. He
constantly insisted that they preserve "the genteel fiction
that they were all idle beggars together" (I.vii). The
Marshalsea became, finally, not only his physical prison and
the symbol of his victimization, but also the symbol of his
psychological imprisonment in society's warped values.

When he is freed from his physical prison, he therefore
takes his psychological prison with him. Moreover, since he
has achieved a genuine aristocratic standing, he intensifies
his dehumanization of others. His principle action in this
area is the buying of Mrs. General, whose mind consisted of "a
little circular set of mental grooves or rails on which she
started little trains of other people's opinions, which never
overtook one another, and never got anywhere" (II,ii). This
description of her is reminiscent of the Circumlocution Office,
as Richard Stang points out.6 When one has contact with that
Office one is caught in a complicated and endless maze; and
just as one never gets an answer from the Circumlocution Office,
one can never get an opinion out of Mrs. General. Both are
operating on the principles of evasion and deception. Mr. Dor-
rit's relationship with Mrs. General further cements his alliance
with those who have victimized him.

There are many similarities between Mrs. General and Mrs. Merdle, indicating further that Mr. Dorrit is associating himself with his former enemies. Like Mrs. Merdle, Mrs. General attempts to create elaborate exteriors which conform to the dictates of Social propriety. Simultaneously, she eliminates all traces of any inner life, such as affection, friendship, and joy. Just as Mr. Merdle wanted to marry Mrs. Merdle for her Bosom, Mr. Dorrit wants to marry Mrs. General for her varnished surface. Marriage to Mrs. General would mean, for Mr. Dorrit, a connection with all that is proper in Society, and would help him remove any outward traces of the Marshalsea still left on him. In reality, however, she is merely making his psychological prison more secure.

The reality of Mr. Dorrit's inner prison finally overtakes him, and he is forced to accept it as a true aspect of his life. When he exclaims to Merdle's dinner guests that his daughter Amy was "Born here!" (II.xix), he is declaring not only that he himself has not been able to leave the psychological jail of society's evil values, but also that all of his fellow guests are imprisoned as well. When the realization of his perpetual inner imprisonment strikes Mr. Dorrit, he goes mad, and shortly dies. The pain of his understanding is clearly too great for him. Significantly, as he approaches death his face "subsided into a far younger likeness of [Little
Dorrit's own than she had ever seen" (II.xix), and the implication here is that he is coming to his daughter's understanding of the world. Nevertheless, his is only a partial reformation. In his madness, Mr. Dorrit does not understand the horror of his own crimes of dehumanization and illusion; he merely returns to the false gentility of his Marshalsea days, as evidenced by his mad proclamation that though he is poor, he is "always a gentleman" (II.xix), and that "offerings are--hum--highly acceptable" (II.xix). In effect, he does not assume responsibility for his acts, or admit that they were morally wrong. There is clearly no optimism in William Dorrit's transformation, for only when one sees that one has done wrong can the wrong be corrected.

Mrs. Clennam is another character who achieves a partial reformation; but she comes closer to a complete redemption than Mr. Dorrit, in that she affirms the positive value of human love in her final acceptance of her true situation. Like other characters in the novel, Mrs. Clennam believes that money will bring happiness; however, the happiness she hopes for is religious rather than worldly. She is a follower of the religious doctrine that the amount of one's worldly goods indicates one's standing with God, and that hard work is the only occupation that will bring man to everlasting happiness. Consequently, money is very important to her. Moreover, her upbringing was one of "wholesome repression, punishment, and fear" (II.xxx), and she took from it the means
of punishing herself and Arthur. She learned to quench
every emotion—both good and evil—and to apply herself to
her religious principles with rigor. This kind of religion
is the antithesis of that practiced by Amy Dorrit, and should
be taken as false, dehumanizing, and therefore evil. Rather
than expressing love, it teaches fear, anger, and cruelty,
all feelings which are associated with the evil in the world.

When she discovers that her husband has taken another
woman in her place, and that the woman has borne him a son,
she feels that an unforgiveable sin has been committed and
must be punished. Taking upon herself the responsibility
for enacting God’s will, she punishes her husband, the woman,
and Arthur in the name of religion. Furthermore, she contrib-
utes to the dehumanization of Little Dorrit by keeping the
money that belongs to her and could possibly provide for her
father’s release from prison. Unconsciously, however, Mrs.
Clennam is nursing a volatile hatred and jealousy against
these people, and is dehumanizing them to satisfy herself.
This is an emotion which, according to her upbringing
should have been eliminated long ago; but the small trace of
it that remained had flared up and taken the form of vengeance.

Despite her conviction that her actions are correct,
Mrs. Clennam feels a deep sense of guilt for her treatment of
Arthur, his parents, and Amy Dorrit. She cannot openly admit,
even to herself, that she is sacrificing these individuals to
an empty abstraction called religion, and her guilt leaks through
her wall of repression in the form of physical illness—as did Mr. Merdle's guilt. For a dozen years she has confined herself to her room as an invalid, and her surroundings are suggestive of death. She sits in widow's dress "on a black bier-like sofa . . . propped up behind with a great angular black bolster like the block at a state execution" (I.iii). This morbid atmosphere is indicative of Mrs. Clennam’s moral state, which, through her cruel dehumanization of herself and others, and through her rejection of the human values of love and kindness, has come close to a condition of death.

Mrs. Clennam's confinement is filled with rituals, from the eternal light in her window, to her patterned, exactly timed meals, at which she is assisted by her acolytes Affery and Flintwinch. These meals further betray the trace of emotion—even of sensuality—that has survived her harsh upbringing. At her nine o'clock meal, she is served with her dinner, "a precise pat of butter, cool symmetrical, white, and plump" (I.iii); and for lunch she has eight oysters "circularly set out on a white plate on a tray covered with a white napkin, flanked by a slice of buttered French roll, and a little compact glass of cool wine and water" (I.v). These repasts are ritualistic and precise, but Dickens' language discloses their succulence and richness, and Mrs. Clennam's enjoyment of them. The quality of the meals is directly opposite to her dry and "glassy" (I.iii) person and her morbid behavior. The description of her food is a
hint to the reader that there is life left in Mrs. Clennam before she actually rises and walks.

It is this trace of feeling which finally results in Mrs. Clennam's reformation. Her change is initiated by Rigaud's insistence that she face the truth of her past life and admit to it. He accuses her of suppressing the codicil so that she could keep the money to support her faltering business, and this is probably partially true. But simply having to think and talk about what she has done, forces her to bring her lies out into the open. She has to admit publicly that she was deceived by her husband, that Arthur is not her son, and that she has cruelly tortured his real mother to madness and death. But before she will take any action to correct these wrongs, Rigaud has to threaten to tell Arthur, through Little Dorrit, the truth about his birth. Because she loves Arthur dearly, she does not want him to know the truth about her and cease to respect her. As she tells Amy, "He never loved me, as I once half-hoped he might ... I would not, for any worldly recompense I can imagine, have him in a moment, however blindly, throw me down from the station I have held before him all his life, and change me altogether into something he would cast out of his respect, and think detected and exposed" (II.xxxi). It is this love—the human value which Little Dorrit exemplifies—which brings Mrs. Clennam to life again and impels her to seek out Amy Dorrit; and it is the affirmation of love which brings her
sagging house—the symbol of her corruption—to the ground in a heap of rubble.

Like William Dorrit, Mrs. Clennam collapses and dies shortly after her transformation; and also like Mr. Dorrit, she does not achieve a total redemption. In spite of having to confront the reality of her past, and in spite of going a step further than Mr. Dorrit and embracing the principle of love, she still does not accept responsibility for doing wrong. She does not repent for the vengeance she took upon Arthur's parents, nor does she cease believing in her divine purpose as God's policewoman. She asserts, "I have done... what it was given me to do. I have set myself against evil; not against good. I have been an instrument of severity against sin" (II.xxxi). Mrs. Clennam's partial transformation unites with that of Mr. Dorrit to further contribute to the novel's pessimism, for without assuming responsibility for wrong, one cannot fully extricate oneself from evil.

Arthur Clennam is the only character in the novel who actually becomes involved in the evil of society to be completely reformed; and he succeeds through the influence of Little Dorrit's love. Arthur is basically a guiltless man, although he has committed a few small crimes. He has allowed his will to be broken by his mother and by the atmosphere of London, and has become unable to love, thereby negating the positive values Little Dorrit represents. Moreover, he has
invested money in Merdle's enterprises, despite his mistrust of such investments, hoping to make his partner Daniel Doyce wealthy. He also does battle with the Circumlocution Office, although he should know better than to have contact with that public bastion of irresponsibility. These two sins indicate that he has become a believer in illusion. When Arthur finds himself thrown into jail for debt, however, he realizes that he has become a part of society's evil, and he accepts responsibility for his actions. He can thus unite with Amy in achieving personal virtue.

The personal quality of Amy Dorrit's victory over evil is best understood by analysing her defeat of Rigaud. Throughout the novel, Amy has dedicated herself to the human values of love and kindness, and has rejected all false doctrines. She continues to love her father, in spite of his cruel treatment of her; and when her family has money, she refuses to think of it as necessary and abhors the things it can buy for her. Her acceptance of life's harsh realities and belief in higher moral principles qualify her to be the novel's model of virtue, and as such, she is directly opposite to Rigaud.

Rigaud's violent death is gratifying because, through his actions in the novel and the imagery associated with him, he has become the representative of the kind of evil manifested in the novel and of the absolute principle of evil in the universe. He has committed many crimes for money—he murders
his wife and her former husband before the story even begins, he spies on Henry Gowan for Miss Wade, and he tries to blackmail Mrs. Clennam. His facial features are diabolical—his hooked nose, thick black moustache, and reddish hair—all give him a pernicious appearance. He has no country, and he appears almost mysteriously in various places in the novel, and with various characters. He is described in animal terms, yet is hated by all animals, from Lion to the cats who prowl around Mrs. Clennam's house. He is disliked, too, by all virtuous characters in the novel, from the tiny daughter of the Marseilles jailkeeper to Amy Dorrit and Minnie Meagles. In all these qualities, and in his very speech patterns he is symbolic of the devil. "Death of my soul," "What the Devil," and "Death" are some of the exclamations he makes which show that he is "Mr. Beelzebub" (II.xxx), as Flintwinch calls him.

Rigaud demonstrates many similarities to other characters in the novel who have committed social crimes. Like Mrs. General and Mrs. Merdle he possesses a shining, genteel exterior; and he proclaims his good breeding with the words, "A gentleman I am! And a gentleman I'll live, and a gentleman I'll die! It's my intent to be a gentleman. It's my game. Death of my soul, I play it out wherever I go!" (I.i). Unlike the spokeswomen of society, however, Rigaud knows that he is playing a game, and his surface hides not a void, but cunning and wickedness.

Significantly, Rigaud perishes in Mrs. Clennam's house
only after Mrs. Clennam has returned with Amy Dorrit. It is Mrs. Clennam's acceptance of some of Amy's virtue—the Amy Dorrit in her, so to speak—which renders her house, the symbol of her corruption, irrelevant to her, and removes Rigaud's ability to harm her. But Rigaud also constitutes a threat to Amy Dorrit, in that he had the power to inflict further unhappiness upon the man she loves. Thus, her presence at his violent death constitutes her personal defeat of the principles of absolute evil in her own life.

But Rigaud's death is significant only to Amy and Arthur. His death, no matter how evil he is, cannot cure all of society of the moral disease which infects it. Rigaud's game is the same game played by other members of society; as he says, "If you try to prejudice me by making out that I have lived by my wits—how do your lawyers live—your politicians—your intrigueurs—your men of the exchange?" (I,i). Rigaud is permitted to exist because society is based upon false values, and turns its back upon acts of dehumanization. The villain himself explains his relationship to society best when he says, "Society sells itself and sells me; and I sell Society" (II.xxviii). Rigaud leaves Society behind him when he dies, and he therefore leaves behind all the evil he represents.

Thus, while Amy has the power to banish society's moral evil from her own life, her virtue has no effect on the rest of the community. Hers is an entirely personal
victory, and that, Dickens suggests, is the only kind of virtue that is possible in this corrupt, decaying world. There is no compelling joy or triumph in the limited redemption of Amy and Arthur; but their personal virtue predicts the mode of redemption that will be expanded in Great Expectations and Our Mutual Friend.
CHAPTER THREE: GREAT EXPECTATIONS

I thought long after I laid me down, how common Estella would consider Joe, a mere blacksmith; how thick his boots, and how coarse his hands. I thought how Joe and my sister were then sitting in the kitchen, and how I had come up to bed from the kitchen, and how Miss Havisham and Estella never sat in a kitchen, but were far above the level of such common doings. (IX)

Pip's thoughts confirm that the diseased values of society which generated evil in Little Dorrit are present in Great Expectations. The characters in this novel persist in venerating false principles and in dehumanizing others for the sake of those principles. There is, however, a limited increase in optimism. Society's corruption is less widespread, in that evil seems to be concentrated in the law and the gentlemanly class. Moreover, there are characters who are never touched by social corruption: Joe and Biddy remain innocent by adhering to the higher principles of love and kindness. They also establish positive moral standards, making the distinction between good and evil a clear one, as it is not in Little Dorrit. A further indication of increased optimism is that the means by which Amy Dorrit and Arthur Clennam achieved redemption is continued here and extended: more characters are able to accept responsibility for their transgressions, and a few are even able to adopt as their guiding belief the human love which Joe and Biddy exemplify. Despite these greater opportunities for redemption,
it still remains impossible for characters to return to innocence. Accepting society's distorted values produces an indelible stain of guilt; and repenting of that sin results in the painful realization that one's innocence is gone forever.

Bowing down to those who are well-dressed, mannered, and educated is the moral error committed by the characters of *Great Expectations*. Individuals cannot be held singularly responsible for this, for all society believes the illusion that gentlemen are superior to paupers. Each person who accepts this illusion must take full responsibility for his complicity in society's immorality, however, before he can be redeemed. In his status as a second class person, the poor man is a victim of degradation and dehumanization. Society's abuse of Magwitch shows how such treatment effects an individual man and exposes a pervasive prejudice in favor of gentility.

Both Pip and Herbert are repelled by Magwitch's appearance and by the knowledge that Magwitch is Pip's patron. As Pip observes, it was "Enough that I saw my own feelings reflected in Herbert's face, and, not least among them, my repugnance towards the man who had done so much for me" (XLI). Their reaction is similar to society's reaction toward the convict: when he was a child everyone ignored his humanity and treated him as a mere object. Wherever he went he was "carted here and carted there, and put out of this town and put out of that
town, and stuck in the stocks, and whipped and worried and drove" (XLII). As far as society was concerned, he was a "terrible hardened one" (XLII), and therefore did not deserve to be cared for or loved.

Prejudice toward Magwitch was not only condoned by society—it was also institutionalized by the judicial system. Supposedly society's instrument of justice, the legal system was in a position to save Magwitch from a terrible life he did not deserve. It could have helped him to be useful so that he could earn a living for himself; but instead it left him to steal turnips for his food. The only education Magwitch ever received from the law was about the Devil, which certainly did him no good. Essentially, rather than administering justice, the courts administered the prejudices of society. As an inferior being, Magwitch did not deserve to live; but since he was alive, the law punished him for it, as Magwitch himself observes by saying, "If it had been in my constitution to be a lighter grubber, I might ha' got into lighter trouble" (XL).

The law executes society's prejudices not only by persecuting the poor, but also by adulating the wealthy. When Magwitch and Compeyson were tried together, Compeyson was favored because he was able to take advantage of the bias toward gentility. Compeyson was the very opposite of a gentleman underneath his elegant facade. His business was
"swindling, handwriting forging, stolen bank-note passing, and such-like" (XLII), and he had so little regard for other people that he manipulated them for his own financial gain. In short, "he'd no more heart than a iron file, he was as cold as death, and he had the head of the Devil" (XLII). Nevertheless, his elegant manner, handsome clothes, apparently well-established character, and affected emotions, as compared to Magwitch's shabby, dirty, and coarse appearance, were enough to convince the court to give him preferential treatment. Consequently, Magwitch was sentenced harshly, and Compeyson was recommended for mercy. When the law supports the false gentility of Compeyson it is supporting an illusion. By placing excessive importance upon appearances, the law allows a scoundrel to escape punishment, and further contributes to the degradation of Magwitch, who is merely a victim of society's prejudices. Dickens questions the ability of any public body to enforce goodness and execute justice here, for the court has no alternative but to base its decisions upon appearances. Only by knowing Compeyson intimately would it be possible to see behind his mask; but since the courts so readily accept the appearance of gentility as an indicator of virtue, they will never exert the effort necessary to see the truth. Public justice is therefore not possible; only justice administered personally is feasible in this world of illusion. As Monroe Engel notes, Magwitch's private and illegal imposition of punishment upon Compeyson
is more just than the law's condemnation of society's victims.⁹

The law attacks the disadvantaged, but it also contaminates others. Jaggers is a character who originally set out to combat the evil done by the law but is poisoned in the process. The overwhelming demand for his services indicates his ability to win acquittals for the innocent and the guilty alike. He makes no distinction between the two, consenting to defend almost anyone. For example, Jaggers accepts Molly as a client with full knowledge of her guilt, and works for her acquittal with the same zeal he would apply to the cases of innocent clients. One interpretation of his indifference to guilt and innocence is that he is amoral and out only for money or power. But he can also be viewed as a man aware of the systematic dehumanization his clients are subjected to, and determined to spare them. His desire to fight for the disadvantaged prompted him to save the child Estella. His belief that society was pervasively evil demonstrates his fear that Estella would grow up "to be hanged" (II) if left to the devices of the law as Magwitch and countless others had been.

Although Jaggers' primary motivation for taking up the legal profession was honorable, by the time Pip becomes acquainted with him he has been completely transformed. Contact with the law has taught Jaggers not to allow his feelings to get the better of him. Emotion, besides being painful, would get in his way, since he has to confront the law on its own
cold, cruel terms. If he permitted himself to empathize with his clients, his success in going "at it" (XXIV) would be impaired. When Mike, one of Jaggers' clients, happens to shed a tear in the office, the lawyer flies into a fit of anger: "Now look here, my man ... Get out of this office. I'll have no feelings here. Get out" (LI). Since Jaggers knows that the law is impersonal and snaps up offenders without mercy, he protects himself by assuming a posture of rectitude and by refusing to entertain any indiscretions from his clients. "I want to know no more than I know" (XX), he says. He adopts the opinion that his clients are low and repulsive, but he continues to help them. They are merely money to him, as his constant question "Have you paid Wemmick?" (XX) betrays, and his ritualistic washing of his hands with scented soap gives the reader the strong impression that he sees his clients as dirt.

The imagery describing Jaggers confirms the suspicion that however noble his motives might once have been and might still be, he has become polluted by the system, and is now participating in the wrongs of society. His darkness, his large hand, the "strong black dots where his beard and whiskers would have been if he had let them" (XI), give him an evil air. His murky rooms, the garlands on his walls which look to Pip like hangman's nooses, his law books, and stacks of papers from the office, convince Pip that Jaggers has even come to treat himself like an object. It is Pip's
belief that if Jaggers had an Aged Parent or a Castle, as Wemmick does, he would be less depressing and accusing.

Jaggers' behavior when he first meets Pip in Miss Havisham's house is authoritarian, and falls into the same category as the behavior of those who lectured Magwitch about the Devil. "Behave yourself. I have a pretty large experience of boys, and you're a bad set of fellows. Now mind! . . . You behave yourself!" (XI). Later, when Pip comes to London as Jaggers' legal charge, the lawyer similarly admonishes him: "Of course you'll go wrong somehow, but that's no fault of mine" (XXI). In consistently telling Magwitch that he was evil, the law was persecuting him because of his low social status, and thus contributing to society's dehumanization of him. In essence, Jaggers has become like the law he had set out to oppose. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that he cannot help his clients without hurting them in the process. Even his attempt to save Estella is thwarted: while saving her from the law's dehumanization, he unwittingly condemns her to Miss Havisham's perversity.

Jaggers' subordinate, Wemmick, has also become infected by the diseased values of society through his professional contact with the law. In order to compensate for the emotional desert in which he works, Wemmick has split himself into two personalities, the Walworth half and the Official half. At the office he appears as a "dry man, rather short in stature,
with a square wooden face . . . and such a post office of a mouth that he had a mechanical appearance of smiling" (XXI); at home, however, he becomes the attentive son of his deaf Aged Parent and the admirer of Miss Skiffins. In his official capacity, Wemmick is much like Jaggers. In the instance, mentioned above, when the client Mike shows his feelings in the office, Wemmick is even more savage than Jaggers in insisting that he leave. And his belief in the value of portable property is akin to the importance Jaggers places on his clients' money. In short, as Pip notices, "something of the state of Mr. Jaggers hung about [Wemmick] . . . forbidding approach beyond certain limits" (XXXII).

As Mark Spilka demonstrates, however, Wemmick's Walworth personality is not as free from the dust of Newgate as he thinks. He is no more able to admit feeling in his private life than he is at the office, as his humorous, but pathetic, attempt to hide his intention to get married suggests. And the portable property he so avidly collects from the clients Jaggers loses to the gallows is very similar to the moat, drawbridge, bower, cannon, ornamental lake and fountain at Walworth—and even to the Aged Parent himself. Despite the happiness Pip feels at Walworth, the gadgets and rituals expose Wemmick's preoccupation with the material. Wemmick even goes so far as to admit to Pip that "though we are strictly in our private and personal capacity, still it may be mentioned that there are Newgate cobwebs about" (XXXCII).
Although Jagers and Wemmick have not been so corrupted by the law that they place high importance upon gentility, their professions have affected their values. Jagers has come to treat his clients as things, becoming like the law he is trying to oppose. Wemmick has had to split himself in two in order to compensate for the strain on his emotions; yet materialism has crept into the half of his personality which he had been protecting from the poison of false values. The warped doctrines of society are thus very easily transmitted between individuals by the law. Compeyson, who is the symbol for false gentility in the novel, also spreads society's evils by his contact with other characters. Contact with Compeyson is different from the kind of contact Jagers and Wemmick have with the law, however, in that Compeyson victimizes everyone he touches.

It is Compeyson's influence on Magwitch which finally corrupts him into believing that gentility brings happiness. There are striking similarities between the law's treatment of Magwitch and Compeyson's treatment of him. In fact, after Magwitch enters into partnership with Compeyson, his moral situation is the same as it was when he was on his own. He is still committing crimes in order to survive, but is doing it on a larger scale. Like the law, Compeyson maintains a facade of uninvolvedness in the crimes he originates. The law gives Magwitch no choice but to steal, admitting no responsibility for his situation, and them punishes him for it;
Compeyson operates behind the scenes, with Magwitch as his front man. As Magwitch tells Pip, "All sorts of traps as Compeyson could set with his head, and keep his own legs out of and get the profits from and let another man in for, was Compeyson's business" (XLII).

It is evident, from the outcome of their joint trial, that Compeyson used Magwitch to insure that the court's decision would be in his own favor. As mentioned above, Compeyson played upon the law's prejudice in favor of gentility, and this resulted in further dehumanization of Magwitch by the law. Clearly, Compeyson and the law are working in concert to oppress Magwitch and to punish him for his lower class status.

When Magwitch realizes that the law is easily impressed by Compeyson's elegance, he understands that justice will not be executed in his case. He, who had to work for Compeyson in order to eat, was being considered the real criminal, while Compeyson was being treated as a victim. It is this sense of public injustice which incites Magwitch to take the law into his own hands. He vows that he will "smash" Compeyson's face once they are out of court and feels compelled to give up his own freedom on the marshes to see that Compeyson does not escape his deserved sentence.

In his attempts to punish the man he knows is the real villain, Magwitch is striking out against society's preference for gentility. He is correct to do this and is performing
justice in the only way it can be performed—personally. However, Magwitch makes the grave error of accepting the false principle of gentility, and begins to believe that being a gentleman is the only way to escape being victimized by society.

When Magwitch witnesses Compeyson's manipulation of the court, he accepts society's doctrines, feeling unconsciously that, if he is beyond becoming a gentleman himself, he need only make a gentleman out of Pip. When his fellow colonists criticized Magwitch for being a convict, and for being ignorant and common, he says, "it was a recompense to me, look'ee here, to know in secret that I was making a gentleman" (XXXIX). He fails to understand that by believing so strongly in gentility he is accepting the perverted values of society which had dehumanized him throughout his life; and he does not see that in making Pip a gentleman he is using and manipulating him so that he can vicariously raise his own social status.

It is his adoption of the false doctrines of society which finally brings about Magwitch's downfall. His return to England out of a selfish desire to see the gentleman he had made is symbolically a return to Compeyson, and he is unaware that Compeyson has been tracking him during his period of exile. When he is back in England, Pip and Herbert hide him so well that it would have been virtually impossible for the law to find him without Compeyson's help. It is Compeyson
who finally apprehends him and makes it possible for the
law to sentence him to death. Symbolically, it is the
principle of illusory gentility, represented by Compeyson,
that finally leads Magwitch to his death.

Compeyson's deception of the law by appearing elegant
is the key to his ultimate corruption of Magwitch; and his
manipulation of Miss Havisham is accomplished by similar
means. His false gentility allowed Compeyson to work his
way into Miss Havisham's heart, and into her fortune.

If Miss Havisham was deceived by Compeyson, however,
Herbert's father was not, and he tried to discourage her
from marrying the villain. As Herbert relates the story
to Pip, "[Compeyson] was not to be, without ignorance or
prejudice, mistaken for a gentleman, my father most strongly
asseverates; because it is a principle of his that no man
who was not a true gentleman at heart, ever was, since the
world began, a true gentleman in manner. He says no varnish
can hide the grain of the wood; and that the more varnish you
put on, the more the grain will express itself" (XXII). Miss
Havisham was evidently prejudiced in Compeyson's favor, as
the law had been; and this betrays her participation in
society's warped values. When she later defines love for Pip
as "blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter
submission, trust and belief against yourself and against
the whole world" (XXIX), she understands that trusting in
Compeyson was equivalent to humiliating herself. In terms
of Compeyson's manipulation of Magwitch, Miss Havisham was both the law and the victim in her own case. She believed in Compeyson and she gave him her money; and at the same time she permitted herself to be used and to be cruelly hurt.

When Pip and Herbert discuss Compeyson's usage of Miss Havisham, they wonder why, if he was motivated by money, Compeyson did not marry her and take control of her whole fortune. Technically, Compeyson was already married; but it is difficult to believe that he would let something so small stand in his way. In fact, in breaking Miss Havisham's heart, Compeyson was committing an act of pure malice at the instigation of her brother Arthur. It is in this act of crushing Miss Havisham that Compeyson epitomizes the evil in the world: he cares nothing for human beings or their feelings, but cares only for money and for other material goods.

Miss Havisham's first reaction to being used by Compeyson differs slightly from Magwitch's. Whereas he strikes out at the villain and tries to administer a personal justice, she strikes out at herself. She closes herself inside Satis House, with her rotting cake and her decaying wedding gown, and punishes herself for acquiescing to Compeyson's crimes against her. Satis House is a symbol for the falseness of gentility in that it is the site of the aristocracy's former glory. But now, its windows are barred and rusted, and its garden is overgrown with rank weeds. Inside its gates "the
cold wind seemed to blow colder" (VII) than anywhere else, and inside its doors everything is "faded and yellow" (VII). By condemning herself to this decaying prison, Miss Havisham is punishing herself with a lifetime of the false, rotting gentility with which Compeyson deceived her in the first place.

Her second reaction to Compeyson's treatment is the same as Magwitch's: she adopts the values of her tormentor. By molding Estella into a cold, cruel beauty who will afflict the male world, Miss Havisham is negating the feelings of others, just as Compeyson negated her feelings. In short, she is trying to make Estella into a female Compeyson. She encourages Pip to love Estella and thereby tries vicariously to subject him to the same agony Compeyson exerted upon her. Moreover, by encouraging Estella to belittle Pip and to insult his coarse hands and thick boots, she is making Pip aware that his status as a "common labouring-boy" (VII) puts him in a socially inferior position and makes him subject to society's prejudices. He will never be good enough for Estella as long as he is not a gentleman. This is essentially the same thing Compeyson did to Magwitch, by making him aware that gentlemen are above the law.

Pip is clearly being used by both Miss Havisham and Magwitch; they are passing on to him the effects of their own victimization by Compeyson. But when Pip has his first contacts with Miss Havisham and Magwitch he has been exposed
to a lifetime of oppression at the hands of Mrs. Joe and Pumblechook. As a result of all these pressures being put upon him, Pip follows the same course taken by Magwitch and Miss Havisham—he adopts the false values which have led to his own unhappiness.

Pip's unhappiness at the hands of his sister and Pumblechook is traceable to the inflated importance society gives to gentility, and the low concern it has for human beings. Pip is constantly berated for being "naturally vicious" (IV) and is considered such a lowly creature that he is not permitted to address Pumblechook as uncle "under the severest penalties" (IV). Furthermore, Mrs. Joe punishes Pip for being alive at all. As Pip recalls, during the Christmas dinner she "entered on a fearful catalogue of all the illnesses I had been guilty of, and all the acts of sleeplessness I had committed, and all the high places I had tumbled from, and all the low places I had tumbled into, and all the injuries I had done myself, and and all the times she had wished me in my grave, and I had contumaciously refused to go there" (IV). Pip's childhood experience is thus very close to Magwitch's; both the law and Mrs. Joe are eager to convince them of their moral worthlessness, and both resent their being alive.

Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe encourage Pip to believe in the importance of money at a very early age. Everything Pip earned was put into a box on the kitchen mantle, where the
amount was always on public display. Pip never received a
cent of this money. Herein might lie the beginning of Pip's
desire to appear wealthy. Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe also
contributed to Pip's fantasies about his expectations, agreeing
that Miss Havisham would help him out somehow, but undecided
about whether she would give him "property" or a "premium" (IX).
Joe's suggestion that Pip "might only be presented with one
of the dogs who had fought for the veal-cutlets" (IX) is
probably closest to the truth.

Pip's first reaction to the oppression he is subjected
to is a desire to strike back. As a child he wished to
pull Mr. Wopsle's Roman nose "until he howled" (IV). Julian
Moynihan has pointed out that Orlick's attack on Mrs. Joe
and robbery of Pumblechook--complete with stuffing his mouth
"full of flowering annuals to perwent his crying out" (LVII)
--are enactments of Pip's desires to punish his tormentors.11
He also notes that Pip's fantasies about Miss Havisham
hanging by the neck reflect his desire to punish her for
treating him cruelly.12 Pip's discovery that he has expec-
tations is his greatest triumph over his enemies. It means
that he can no longer be considered inferior by Pumblechook
and Mrs. Joe, and that he is good enough for Estella.

Pip follows Miss Havisham and Magwitch, however, in
finally believing in the values of his tormentors. When he
is leaving for London to take up his residence as a gentleman,
he makes a last visit to Pumblechook and is virtually bowled
over by Pumblechook's deference for his new station in society. Pip forgets all his former antipathy for the "windy donkey" (IV), and even begins to like him: "I remember feeling convinced that I had been much mistaken in him, and that he was a sensible practical good-hearted prime fellow" (XIX).

The greatest indication that Pip has joined his tormentors is his treatment of Joe. Pip begins to worry about how coarse Estella and Miss Havisham would consider Joe, and then begins to consider Joe embarrassing. When Joe comes to visit him in London, Pip is conscious of his old friend's clumsiness, coarse clothing, and poor manners. Pip had even gone so far as asking Biddy to help Joe improve his learning and manners so that when Pip raised his social standing he would be more elegant. Pip has forgotten all the warmth and kindness Joe contributed to his childhood, in his own concern for gentlemanly appearances.

When he learns that Magwitch is his benefactor, Pip discovers the falsity of these appearances. Not only do his expectations originate in a convict, but Estella is that convict's daughter. All of the things he had placed his faith in are exposed as lies. With this realization, Pip comes to understand that in placing more value upon money and reputation than upon his old friend Joe, he has been guilty of society's crimes.

Joe has been, throughout the novel, a model for virtue and a force of goodness in Pip's life. He refuses to partici-
pate in any acts of dehumanization, as his feeling for Magwitch suggest. That night on the marshes when Magwitch confesses that he stole the food from Mrs. Joe's pantry, Joe's response is, "We don't know what you have done, but we wouldn't have you starved to death for it, poor miserable fellow-creature.---Would us, Pip?" (V). Moreover, he cannot permit himself to participate in society's warped values. When Jaggers tries to make certain that Joe does not want any money in compensation for the loss of Pip's services, Joe says, "If you think as Money can make compensation to me for the loss of the little child--what come to the forge--and ever the best of friends!--" (XVIII). And when Jaggers presses him on the subject, he nearly provokes Joe into fighting to defend his principles.

It was Joe's love which influenced Pip to respond kindly to Magwitch when he first met him on the marshes. Pip is certainly terrified into bringing Magwitch the food and the file by the convict's threat that his liver would be roasted and eaten. Nevertheless he does forget his terror and acts with true tenderness for the convict: noticing Magwitch's violent shivering Pip expresses concern that he might have the "ague"(III); and out of pity for Magwitch's desolation, Pip says, as the convict begins to devour the pie, "I am glad you enjoy it" (III).

Magwitch's response to Pip's affection is an indication that love's power is equal to the power of society's corruption.
Magwitch, who has never known kindness in his life, reciprocates with affection for Pip. Magwitch's decision to make Pip a gentleman was based upon feelings of pity and tenderness as well as upon a desire to vicariously raise himself through Pip. When Pip points out the gravestones of his mother and father to Magwitch, the convict sees something of himself in the little orphaned boy, and acts to spare Pip the prejudicial treatment he himself had experienced as a child.

What Magwitch does not comprehend is that by making Pip a gentleman he is making it impossible for Pip to love him, for Pip has followed the teachings of society and considers Magwitch a social inferior. But when Pip realizes that gentility is a meaningless principle which only creates evil, he creates an opportunity for love to begin. What takes place at the end of the novel between Magwitch and Pip is a repeat of their first meeting on the marshes when they reacted to each other with tenderness. It is also an acceptance of the worth and reality of the love Joe represents. Pip finally understands that Joe's ideal of love is what will give his life meaning, and he attempts to return to the innocence of the forge.

Pip's inability to resurrect his innocence qualifies the novel's optimism. When he returns to the forge, full of good intentions to marry Biddy and tell Joe of his repentance, he finds that Joe and Biddy have found happiness in each other,
and that he can never regain his old place with them. The implication of Pip's permanent loss of innocence is that he has committed unforgiveable crimes. He is banished to a life of solemnity, hard work, and sorrow for his lost purity.

Other characters besides Pip come to realize the full moral implications of their social crimes, but cannot be fully redeemed. Miss Havisham sees that her influence on Estella has prevented Estella's loving her and has subjected Pip to the same pains of a broken heart that she experienced herself. These realizations are followed immediately by her bursting into flames and her death, as symbolic punishment for her crimes. Likewise, Mrs. Joe and Magwitch do not live long after seeing the error of their ways. Estella, like Pip, faces a chastened future, and a life of regretting her errors. The fact that Great Expectations has a larger number of characters who achieve thorough reformations, makes it a slightly more optimistic novel than Little Dorrit; but the banishment of those characters from the innocence of Joe and Biddy, and in some cases from life itself, indicates that there is yet another step to be taken before Dickens' solution to the evil of society can be termed truly optimistic.

Moreover, the power of society's evil continues to be considerably greater than the power of individuals to defeat that evil. Despite the personal redemptions of Pip and the other characters, society remains cold and cruel. The scene
of Magwitch's final trial and sentencing establishes the power of society's corruption by contrasting the humanity of the doomed citizens with the cruelty of the agents of the law and the audience which attends the court for entertainment. Magwitch's position as the "foremost" (LVI) among the group indicates that his life is representative of the lives of all of the two and thirty condemned souls. The reality of the law's power is established by the absolute authority with which the Judge condemns society's victims and by his conviction that they should be held responsible for their crimes. Individuals have not yet found the means to triumph over society, but remain its subordinates and its victims.
CHAPTER FOUR: OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

Mr. Podsnap was well to do, and stood very high in Mr. Podsnap's opinion. Beginning with a good inheritance, he had married a good inheritance, and had thriven exceedingly in the Marine Insurance way, and was quite satisfied. He never could make out why everybody was not quite satisfied, and he felt conscious that he set a brilliant social example in being particularly well satisfied with most things, and, above all other things, with himself. (I.xi)

When the reader encounters Dickens' description of Mr. Podsnap's feelings of self-importance, he immediately recognizes a note of satire that has been missing from both *Little Dorrit* and *Great Expectations*. Wealthy middle class Society, with a capital S, is the object of this satire, as is Society's official doctrine, "Podsnappery," the unwritten manifesto which requires all of Society's members to place more value upon wealth, power, and privilege than upon the feelings of human beings. By concentrating these values in the Society of the Podsnaps and the Veneerings, and by satirizing that Society, Dickens has succeeded in lessening, and to a certain extent controlling the oppressive power of evil.

This is not to deny that Society's influence on individuals continues to be wide and strong. Characters in all areas of the community, from the waterside to Portman Square, follow the laws of Podsnappery. And Dickens' satire points out that accepting the diseased values of Society is extremely
dangerous: to do so is to become, like Mr. Podsnap, a mere cartoon-person, and to deny the very conditions of human existence. Mr. Podsnap dismisses both agreeable and disagreeable aspects of life with a flourish of his right arm and the words "I don't want to know about it; I don't choose to discuss it; I don't admit it!" (I.xi). The followers of Podsnappery exist in an emotionless vacuum—a state of living death—which is clearly horrible and threatening. Bradley Headstone has fallen into step behind the Podsnaps and Veneerings, and their influence clearly destroys him.

To avoid or escape the evils of Podsnappery, characters must come into contact with the realities of human life denied by Society. For some, this is merely a matter of witnessing the corruption of Society's value system and rejecting it in favor of higher moral principles; but for others, initiation into the realm of virtue consists of violent contact with physical death.\textsuperscript{13} Characters who are initiated in this way are completely reborn into a life of innocence and happiness, the kind of existence that was permanently denied to Pip.

Those who are redeemed do not repudiate wealth, property, or any other object of Society's excessive adoration. Instead, they embrace all of life's aspects, including money, convincing the reader that a solution to the problem of worldly evil need not be a reactionary or an ascetic one. By the end of the novel the satirical treatment of Society and the
compelling virtue of those who have been redeemed establish that individuals can defeat evil in the world.

Lizzie Hexam is the novel's standard of virtue, and she qualifies for this position because of her lifelong contact with death. She despises her father's fishing expeditions, and makes every attempt to shield herself from the horror of his catches; but she does not desert her father because she values his affection and her good influence on him above everything else. Unlike the members of Society, she accepts the realities of her life--her low social standing, lack of education, and love for Eugene Wrayburn--and considers them enrichments of her experience. Dickens' descriptions of her "rich brown" (I.iii) beauty and her "unselfish passion" (III.ix) strongly assert that her life is the opposite of the death in life of the Podsnaps and Veneerings.

The force opposing virtue in the novel is Society. Part of Dickens' satirical treatment of Society consists of reducing it to the status of an actual character. When Mortimer pretends to search for "the Voice of Society" (IV. Chapter the Last) at the end of the novel, the power of Podsnappery truly seems to have decreased. Through the language and imagery he uses to describe the followers of Podsnappery, Dickens creates the impression that they are not genuine people, but either illusions or perversions of humanity; their possessions and their social roles are more interesting and real than they are themselves. The final
feeling the reader has is that these people take their identities from the things they own, and consequently have no more inner vitality than their chairs, tables, and silver have. The Veneerings bear a great resemblance, for example, to their spanking-new furniture in that the surfaces of both "smelt a little too much of the workshop and [were] a trifle sticky" (I.ii); and the Podsnaps and most of their dinner guests exude the same quality of "hideous solidity" (I.xi) as does the plate. The activity taking place at the Veneerings' banquet seems to be being performed by the plate, the coat of arms, and the furniture, while the human beings exist only in the looking-glass above the sideboard. And the absurdity of the Podsnaps' party for Georgiana, with all its propriety and style, is evoked by surreal descriptions of the guests taking walks among the furniture and taking "a haunch of mutton vapour-bath at half-past nine" (I.xi).

Society's illusory quality is best demonstrated by Lady Tippins. Her list of lovers is a grotesque parody of real human affection, and her being consists solely of external characteristics. As the narrator describes her, "you could easily buy all you see of her, in Bond Street: or you might scalp her, and peel her, and scrape her, and make two Lady Tippinses out of her, and yet not penetrate to the genuine article" (I.x). The only part of her body which is visible to the world is her face, and even it is unreal, fantastically described as a face reflected in a tablespoon.
Society's members thus do not exist as people, but as things, and as such are not alive.

The Veneerings and the Podsnaps promulgate the doctrine of Podsnappery by replacing love and warmth with respectability. Thus, one's baby grows up to be an "institution" (I.xi), and one makes friends to improve the quality of one's acquaintance and to repay social obligations. For example, in inviting guests to Georgiana's birthday party, the Podsnaps choose an original group of seventeen "friends of their souls" (I.xi). When certain of the original set cannot attend, they substitute "other friends of their souls for such of the seventeen original friends of their souls as deeply regretted that a prior engagement prevented" (I.xi) their attendance. Their feeling for those who cannot attend the gathering is that they have been "Asked, at any rate, and got rid of" (I.xi).

The Veneerings display a similar lack of concern for people in the way they treat Twemlow. Since he is first cousin to Lord Snigsworth, Twemlow is impressive to members of Society, who highly prize nobility. Thus, the Veneerings use him as "a piece of dinner-furniture" (I.ii), and build their invitation lists around him. Actually, the Veneerings treat all their "friends" in this way--as rungs in the ladder of prestige. As a result they have many, many old and dear friends. Poor Twemlow continually ponders the complexity of this situation, unable to understand that the abundance of Veneering's hollow friendships is meaningless. Near the
end of the novel, the narrator elaborates on the lack of loyalty and warmth among the followers of Podsnappery by forecasting the way in which Society will treat the Veneerings after they are ruined by living above their means: "Society will discover that it always did despise Veneering, and distrust Veneering, and that when it went to Veneering's to dinner it always had misgivings--though very secretly at the time" (IV. Chapter the Last). This lack of love indicates that Society denies its own humanity. The only responses that can be elicited from Podsnap and Veneering are acceptance and rejection, and those evaluations are made solely according to the dictates of Society.

A second precept of Podsnappery is that the narrow, sterile existences of the members of Society are tantamount to perfection, and that any person whose life deviates from this pattern is in an unreal or inferior state. Podsnap and his guests demonstrate their chauvinistic contempt for anything that is not English by treating a foreign visitor "as if he were a child who was hard of hearing" (I.xi). And Podsnap is so self-centered that his notion of everything from art to politics is that it should be representative of his own mechanical daily schedule. Anything offensive to Mr. Podsnap's sensibilities--which can be characterized as anything not representative of "getting up at eight, shaving close at a quarter-past" (I.xi), etc.--is ceremoniously dismissed on the grounds that it might "bring a blush to the
cheek of the young person" (I.xi).

In short, Mr. Podsnap is a prude. He denies the existence of life's joys—love, friendship, and sex—as well as life's sorrows. With himself as a primary example of success, Podsnap can assert that the "half-dozen people [who] had lately died in the streets of starvation" (I.xi) had only themselves to blame, implying that if they had gotten "up at eight, shaved close at a quarter-past" (I.xi), etc., they would not have to go hungry. His statements that "Providence has declared that you shall have the poor always with you" (I.xi) and that trying to eliminate poverty is to "fly in the face" (I.xi) of God show that he uses God as a front for his denial of the humanity of the poor.

It is Podsnap's attitude that the poor are not human beings but unfeeling objects, which leads to the repression of the lower classes. Men like Mr. Podsnap are still only the solid middle class and they must go to the city everyday and work in their insurance firms and shareholding companies. It is necessary for them to repress the lower classes because any person can belong to Society with enough money in the bank and a firm belief in the laws of Podsnappery. When Podsnap's attitudes are enforced, they insure the security of Society by preventing the lower classes from becoming members of the wealthy class.

The character who thus protects Society's position is Fledgeby, the invisible operator of Pubsey and Company, who
is at the exact center of Podsnappery. He makes his money by goading, torturing and driving the poor, and enjoys seeing debtors further demoralized by demands that their debts be paid. As the instrument of Society, he exposes the true horror of Podsnap's attitudes. He is a miserable corrupt schemer who denies humanity not only to the poor but also to himself; he is friendless and will exploit anyone, and he is incapable of feeling affection, as his failure with Georgiana Podsnap indicates. Moreover, he is a total hypocrite, who, like Society, hides his true self behind a highly polished exterior. Where Podsnap uses the laws of Providence to justify his cruelty, Fledgeby uses Riah. Fledgeby's corruption exposes the malignancy of Society.

Old Betty Higden is a victim of Podsnap's corrupt attitude toward the poor, and a living example of the damage Society's diseased values have done to the world. Podsnap angrily asserts that "there is not a country in the world . . . where so noble a provision is made for the poor as in this country" (I.xi); but Betty Higden's assessment of those provisions is entirely different. She tells how the people who end up in the poor house "get driven from post to pillar, and pillar to post, a-purpose to tire them out . . . [and] are grudged, grudged, grudged the shelter, or the doctor, or the drop of physic, or the bit of bread" (I.xvi). The superior provisions supplied by Podsnappery turn out to be death traps. Betty is not against the poor house because she feels that
going there indicates one's moral inferiority. Rather she fears the debasement, pain, and even death that she will experience in such an institution. Consequently, she mistrusts every public agency—even the hospital which could have saved little Johnny's life. This fear prevents her from depending upon those who can help her, like the Boffins, and makes her a prey to scoundrels like Riderhood. Moreover, Betty Higden's life directly contradicts Podsnap's belief that the poor are responsible for their own situation. Fearing the poor house, Betty worked until she was nearly eighty years old, never pitying herself, and never resorting to charity. It is a gross injustice that an honest woman like Betty Higden should be forced to spend her entire life struggling against Podsnappery and all of its self-righteous cruelty. Betty is a true believer in love, as her feelings for Sloppy, Johnny, and the Minders suggests.

Podsnap's dehumanizing attitude toward the poor not only prevents them from making improvements in their actual living conditions, but also tempts them to strive for artificial middle class values. They begin to accept Podsnap's inflated evaluation of money and status because they themselves have so little of both and because they do not want to be considered inferior.

Members of Society differ in one crucial respect from those who are struggling to become members: the former are incapable of feeling any emotion, while the latter are
incapable of controlling emotion. The emotions of those who are trying to break into Society are not balanced and constructive, like those of characters, such as Lizzie Hexam, who are satisfied with their lowly stations in life. Rather, they are perverted and destructive, taking the form of greed, anger, and hatred. Bella Wilfer's account of the development of her own greed explains the various stages emotion passes through in relation to social position. Says Bella, "When I was at home, and only knew what it was to be poor, I grumbled, but didn't so much mind. When I was at home expecting to be rich, I thought vaguely of all the great things I would do. But when I had been disappointed of my splendid fortune, and came to see it from day to day in other hands, and to have before my eyes what it could really do, then I became the mercenary little wretch I am" (II.viii).

Ability to feel emotion is inimical to the doctrines of Podsnappery because it indicates vulnerability. Society's members have nothing to strive for and nothing to worry about since the protective institutions like the poor house work so well; therefore emotions are irrelevant to them. It follows that anyone with any emotion at all will be barred from membership in Society. It is precisely Sophronia Lammle's ability to feel that prevents her and Alfred from working their say back into Society's fold. Sophronia responded to the humanity in Georgiana Podsnap and could not bring herself to sacrifice her. But the greed and anger of the Lammles
does not come into being until after they have been thwarted in their attempts to gain wealth and status through marrying each other. Only when they realize that money is out of their grasp do they turn to anger and bitterness.

The discovery that the Lammles have no money but have been moving successfully in Society merely by seeming to be wealthy suggests that Society does not depend upon money at all but upon the appearance of it. This suggestion is made more solidly at the end of the novel by the prediction that the Veneerings, too, will fall from the heights of Society when they are no longer able to live beyond their means. Both Sophronia and Alfred understood this reality of life in Society before they themselves were duped by it. Each of them pretended to be rich but was in reality a pauper. By asking Veneering about each other's fortunes they were continuing to protect themselves from being deceived by appearances. But Veneering will not admit that Society is established upon illusion. When they decide to punish him for his deceit, they are correct, for he is part of the elaborate conspiracy to raise certain members of the community above others by artificial means. The Lammles' attempted punishment of Podsnap and their successful punishment of Fledgeby are similarly correct, for all of these followers of Podsnappery are tempting people to struggle after a meaningless goal by refusing to admit that they are all living a lie.
Silas Wegg has been so victimized by Society's conspiracy, that his entire being has been perverted. As Richard J. Dunn observes, Wegg's very appearance is symbolic of his participation in the artificial values of a dead society. He looks petrified, and his wooden leg makes it appear that "he might be expected . . . to be completely set up with a pair of wooden legs in about six months" (I.v). As Boffin's literary man his job is to read The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire aloud in the midst of the Harmon Dust Mounds—a scene which suggests that London Society is also in the process of declining and falling.

Before being hired by Mr. Boffin, Wegg, like Betty Higden, is completely the victim of Podsnappery's attitudes towards the poor. He is forced, because of his handicap, to earn the little money he has by selling fruit, sweets, and half-penny ballads in a stall on a street corner. But whereas Betty Higden escapes from the harsh realities of her existence through pride, Wegg protects himself by accepting the values of Podsnappery and fantasizing that he is a member of Society. He truly believes that he is of some importance to "'Miss Elizabeth,' 'Master George,' 'Aunt Jane,' [and] 'Uncle Parker'"; the wealthy family of his imagination. As long as he lives in this fantasy world, Wegg is harmless; but when he smells the chance to become rich, he becomes greedy and cruel, and a threat to Mr. Boffin. Not content with kindness, he resents his secondary position
to Rokesmith and his job of declining and falling, and he begins to scheme and plot after Mr. Boffin's money. His reaction to the possibility of being rich is the same as that of the Lammles: he seeks to punish the person he thinks is responsible for his poverty. The only differences between the two situations are that Mr. Boffin does not deserve to be punished and that Wegg is so ludicrously incompetent in his posturing.

The perversion of Wegg is humorous, and that saves it from being frightening; but the perversion of Bradley Headstone is serious and dangerous. Like Mr. Boffin's literary man, Headstone has accepted the values of Podsnappery, even though it is Podsnappery which has oppressed and dehumanized him. He is struggling to achieve respectability and in the process has come to value his newly acquired middle class status above everything else in life. This is the source of his concern for Charley Hexam's continued contact with Lizzie. His suggestion that Charley's new social position is more important than the loving relationship he has with his sister is indicative of the way he has managed his own life. In order to become respectable and middle class, he has had to banish all good emotions from his life and has replaced them with decency and dullness. According to the narrator, "he always seemed to be uneasy lest anything should be missing from his mental warehouse" (II.i), and he had a face "belonging to a naturally slow or inattentive
intellect that had toiled hard to get what it had won" (II.i).

Headstone has been moderately successful in achieving his desired goal of respectability. There is a suggestion, however, that just as he has not reached the pinnacle of middle class Society, he has not succeeded in completely banishing emotion from his life: "there was enough of what was animal, and of what was fiery (though smouldering), still visible in him" (II.i). Moreover, Headstone is extremely insecure in his middle class respectability, and has to struggle to "hold it now that it was gotten" (II.i). His lowly origins continually surface to haunt him, and he makes every possible attempt to conceal them from others, because, like Podsnap, he considers the poor to be dirty, inferior creatures.

When the Schoolmaster meets Lizzie, the last, smouldering vestiges of emotion, which he has been unable to quench, erupt violently in the form of sexual passion. Lizzie's warmth and fundamental humanity awaken in the Schoolmaster all the emotions he has repressed in himself since he accepted the laws of Podsnappery and began struggling to gain respectability. The intensity with which this sexual passion erupts, however, is destructive and violent from being pent up so long in him. He has, like Podsnap, tried to deny sex, along with every other joy in life. Moreover, Lizzie's low social status and lack of education bring to his mind the poor origins he has been trying to deny. Headstone takes sufficient pride in his own achievements, however,
to feel that he will be capable of raising Lizzie from the
pit of ignorance to the glory of respectability. Essentially,
he thinks he is doing her a great favor by offering to teach
her how to deny all the values she most cherishes.

From Lizzie's viewpoint, Headstone's values are the
antithesis of her morality. She perceives that he values
decency over human relationships and that he has perverted
his life by toiling to attain a middle class status. His
violent passion is also abhorrent to her, for she realizes
that in raising her poor station, Headstone hopes to destroy
all of her life and humanity. Paradoxically, Headstone is
so perverted by his desire for respectability that he can
only use the new emergence of his emotions to promulgate the
hollow values of Podsnappery.

When Lizzie rejects the Schoolmaster she is rejecting
his perverted morality; but to Headstone she is denying
all the success he had worked to attain. In his eyes,
Lizzie is not a morally superior human being, but a socially
inferior one, and her rejection of him is tantamount to
denying that he is respectable. Headstone consequently
reverts to the perversions of the Lammles and of Silas Wegg,
becoming enraged with jealousy.

Lizzie's obvious preference for Eugene Wrayburn only
augments Headstone's jealousy. Headstone has toiled and
slaved to become respectable, and he therefore feels that
he deserves his status in society. Eugene, on the other hand
was given a status which he subsequently did not live up to, and this is perceived by Headstone as an enormous injustice. Furthermore, Eugene torments Headstone by reminding him of his origins, calling him "Schoolmaster," and leading him on nocturnal chases through London. Such irritants to his sensitivity about his originally inferior social position increase Headstone's shame at being turned down by Lizzie in the first place.

The entrance of Rogue Riderhood into Headstone's life is, as Lauriat Lane makes clear, equivalent to Headstone meeting his second self.\(^{15}\) Essentially, Rogue is a parody of Podsnappery. He is devoid of moral responsibility, even by the standards of such waterside characters as Gaffer Hexam. And he hypocritically asserts that he is respectable by claiming to be a man "as gets my living, and as seeks to get my living, by the sweat of my brow" (I.xii). Acquiring money is his chief desire. Consequently, he frames his old partner for murder to get the reward, he takes money from old Betty Higden under false pretences, and blackmails and finally drives to death Bradley Headstone. Like Podsnap, Rogue is motivated only by selfishness; as he states to Headstone, "I don't care a curse for the T'other governor, alive or dead, but I care a many curses for my own self" (IV.xv). Every scheme which Rogue undertakes in order to make money includes the necessity of being cruel. Like the Veneerings, and Podsnaps, Rogue is indifferent to others and passionless.
Rogue's icy selfishness, his scorn for his daughter, Pleasant, and his inability to reform, even after a brush with death, suggest that inside Rogue Riderhood all humanity is dead and only cunning is left. There is no sense of emotion perverted, only an emotionless vacuum. He symbolically transmits this blank indifference from the center of Society to its outside: to Bradley Headstone. In the act of striking out against those who affront him, then, Headstone is achieving the ultimate heights of Podsnappery. The similarities between Rogue and Society cement the evil connection between wealth and status and the "slime and ooze" (I.i) of the river Thames.

Headstone's attack on Eugene finally makes Eugene realize that the values represented by Lizzie are the true ones, and that those of Society are false. All along, though, Eugene has seemed to sense this. His bored reaction to Society is a correct one in that it reflects his unconscious realization that Society represents a living death. On the other hand, the world of M.R.F. represents a secure life and it is what he knows best. Eugene has no way of being certain that the emptiness of Society will not seep into his relationship with Lizzie, too, rendering her as boring as Lady Tippins. Because Podsnappery empties the world of all genuine human experience, Eugene must be violently reinitiated into life. Society denies the existence of death and of the filth of the river, so Eugene must confront
those things in order to be reborn.

Eugene's scorn for Bradley Headstone is exactly what prevents him from marrying Lizzie in the first place. Such a match would alienate him from his family and cut him off from Society. The frustration he feels as he hangs between good and evil, between Lizzie and Society, is a torture to him, and he goads Headstone into attacking him, as Taylor Stoehr observes, so that he will be moved to a decision. In being assaulted by Headstone, Eugene is confronting the ultimate limits of Podsnappery—the tendency in himself which is preventing him from making a correct decision. Through the near death which results from such a meeting, Eugene comes to understand fully that to follow Society's dictates is to die. By coming precipitously close to physical death, Eugene realizes the value and richness of the spiritual life embodied by Lizzie Hexam.

When Eugene is redeemed, he joins with Lizzie and a large group of other characters who have become virtuous through contact with the realities of life. They believe in placing more importance upon genuine humanity than upon the artificial trappings of Podsnappery. Furthermore, the initiation they undergo allows them to achieve a state of innocence, which Pip could not reach. Herein lies the novel's optimism. The innocence which is achieved embraces all facets of life, and is so firm that even contact with the Harmon fortune will not taint it. Eugene and Lizzie, and their
friends, have individually reaffirmed the values of human life against a rigid Society which has the power to dehumanize and pervert that life, and they have demonstrated the strength and feasibility of personal virtue in the world.

The power of this virtue and innocence is so compelling that it virtually overshadows the world of Society at the end of the novel. When Podsnap says of Eugene's marriage to Lizzie, "My gorge rises against such a marriage . . . it offends and disgusts me . . . it makes me sick--and . . . I desire to know no more about it" (IV. Chapter the Last), he exposes the hollowness of his world and renders it completely irrelevant. Although Podsnappery continues to exist in the world, Dickens has provided us a way to escape from it in the human warmth and personal virtue of Lizzie, Eugene, and their friends.
FOOTNOTES


2Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit, ed. Walter Dexter, et al. (Bloomsbury: Nonesuch Press, 1937-38), bk. I, ch. xvi. The Nonesuch edition will be used throughout for Little Dorrit (vol. 13), Great Expectations (vol. 9), and Our Mutual Friend (vol. 19). Further references will be cited in the text.


4See Lionel Trilling's article "Little Dorrit" in Discussions of Charles Dickens, ed. W. R. Clark (Boston: Heath, 1961), pp. 93-100, for a discussion of the extensive prison imagery and its meaning in the novel.

5This point is made by Harvey Peter Sucksmith in his book The Narrative Art of Charles Dickens: The Rhetoric of Sympathy and Irony in His Novels (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 323.


particularly for the term "dehumanization," which she uses to
describe the condition of the world in this novel.


10. "Dickens' Great Expectations: A Kafkan Reading," *Twelve
    Original Essays in Great English Novels*, ed. Charles Shapiro

    *EIC* 10(1960), 72.


13. J. Hillis Miller, pp. 314-322, discusses death as a
    means of contact with something transcending the human. He
    contends that only through contact with death can the characters
    realize that they are surrounded by nothingness, and thereby
    infuse their humanity with the forces which transcend humanity.

    151-152.


16. *Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell
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