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1. Introduction

Charles Dickens, who is generally regarded as one of the greatest novelists of the Victorian period, produced some of the most memorable and extravagant fictional characters of all time. His novels and tales secured him unprecedented fame, and they continue to be read even today. Dickens's relationship with his readers made him even more popular since he always did his best to provide his audience with the writings which will satisfy their ever-lasting need for quality reading. Looking at this from our present perspective, he was considered a celebrity by the Victorians who were eager to know as much as possible about their favourite writer. Although appearing as constantly available to his audience and obviously always in touch with their needs, Dickens was one of the most private writers of his time. Paradoxically, while enjoying talking about himself, he never provided his admirers with any deeper insight into his real character.

Ambivalent as such, Dickens struggled with his inner desires to represent himself to his reading public as the man he really is. However, his struggle was frequently met by limitations of his own ability to reveal his true self to the whole world.

This thesis elaborates on Dickens's desires for self-revelation, but at the same time, his self-concealment contained in the process of that same revelation. The thesis strives at illustrating the methodology Dickens used to 'give himself away' to the public through his fictional characters and to conceal himself simultaneously, to re-construct himself as a private man and as a novelist through his novels *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* without laying his real self open to the public.

In the thesis, the writing in the form of autobiographical fiction represents the main point of demonstrating the process of Dickens's representation of himself. Many studies have been made on the topic of Dickens's autobiographical involvement in his novels, especially in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*. Although many scholars consider these novels as autobiographical, this thesis elaborates on the subject of Dickens's fictionalisation of events from his personal life as means of concealing himself behind his characters.

Dickens's use of autobiographical elements in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* cannot constitute enough evidence for the novels to be regarded as purely autobiographical. Hence, the thesis demonstrates Dickens's use of some of the elements of his own life and his process of veiling them under the mask of fiction. The use of such elements is triggered by Dickens's memory which had a lasting effect on his writing. Thus, the concept of memory introduces the hypothesis of the thesis, namely Dickens's self-construction through the characters in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*. Dickens's memory is of great importance since it triggers feelings of trauma. Since the process of self-invention includes dealing with past traumas, one of the purposes of the thesis is to demonstrate Dickens's urge to overcome these traumas by writing about them. In terms of autobiography, the thesis elaborates on Dickens's attempt at writing autobiography and thus freeing himself from past traumatic events. In the thesis, Dickens's autobiographical engagement is predominantly illustrated through the characters of David and Pip, and, to a lesser but not unimportant degree, through the characters of Dora, Clara, Mr. Murdstone, Mr. Dick, Betsey Trotwood, Mr. Micawber, Magwitch, Joe and Estella.

Since the hypothesis of the thesis is that Dickens used the genre of autobiographical fiction to narratively reconstruct himself both personally and professionally, the analysis of Dickens's possible development through the improvement of 'his' David represents one of the most important points in analysing the subject of Dickens's self-construction. By analysing episodes from the lives of Dickens's fictional characters, the thesis's main goal is to show Dickens's improvement in terms of his attitude toward past, life choices, love, morality, professional ambitions, etc. Thus, the main aim of the thesis is to demonstrate to which extent Dickens's attempt at self-construction and self-improvement, as a man as well as a writer, through the characters of David and Pip, was successful.

2. Memory and Trauma

A growing interest in studies on memory by different academic disciplines is noticeable nowadays. Various scholars coming from different academic fields examine the concept of memory in order to understand its impact on politics, identity issues, culture, etc. The most popular source of examining memories in terms of the past is fiction, fictional biography, documentary, historical novels, etc. Many scholarly theories discuss the concept of memory as recollection of past events. According to these studies, memory is widely and most dominantly regarded as an approach toward the past. Such approaches, according to modern theories, can be divided into two primary ones, namely Hegelian and Proustian. In Reed's essay "Homo lepidopterist: Nabokov and the Pursuit of Memory", the Hegelian view toward the past illustrates "historical consciousness [as] an "active" vocation, wherein the philosopher (or historian, or individual) re-collects, pursues, elements of the past and integrates them into a coherent narrative of meaning" (Reed 271). The second approach, Proustian, views the past where historical reflection is "understood as reverie, as a more "passive" process whereby one opens oneself up to the past, turns oneself in such a way so that one might be open to receive it" (ibid.). Apart from having a general knowledge about the past, one recollects and remembers personal past events. In Fennell's essay "Unquiet Ghosts: Memory and Determinism in Faulkner", it is argued that memory "is the subjective and selective construction of a private past" (Fennell 35-49). However, these remembered past events do not always reenter our mind in an order as they occurred; therefore they "create the impression of an internal chronological disorder" as "[i]mages overlay each other, yield, intermingle, and pile on one another".¹ In her essay, Fennell remarks that "memory follows patterns set by the heart rather than by the clock; the most important pieces of the past, rather than those that are merely most recent, are placed closest to the surface of consciousness".² In view of the above Fennell's quote, she furthermore illustrates her claim by quoting Sartre: "We must not believe that the present event, after it has gone, becomes the most immediate of our memories. The shift of time can submerge it at the bottom of memory or leave it on

¹ Ferrarotti 31, qtd. in Fennell 35-49.

² Fennell 35-49.

the surface. Only its own intrinsic value and its relevance to our lives can determine its level”.³

Memory as a personal reconstruction “is creative, continually interpreting, selecting, and transforming the past to make it serve one’s present needs; its content is subjective, fluid, fallible, and highly personal”.⁴

Apart from being personal and subjective, these historical events are remarkably connected to the present. As quoted above, memory is creative and serves one’s needs in the present. As such, Wright remarks that “a creative memory [that] shapes and reshapes the historic past in the image of the present, making that past as necessary to this present as this present is the inevitable outcome of that past” (Olney 243). We find a similar approach in Erikson’s view on past-present connectivity:

Memories and present reality bear a continuing reciprocal relationship, influencing and determining one another ceaselessly: memories are shaped by the present moment and by the specific psychic impress of the remembering individual, just as the present moment is shaped by memories. (Olney 244)

According to scholarly theories, memory and trauma play an important role in one’s narrative. There is an intimate relationship between memory and narrative which goes far back in history.⁵ Consequently, memory produces material for the narrative, but at the same time shapes it. Sapir’s work “Narrative, Memory and the Crisis of Mimesis” argues that:

Memory is, [then], the precondition of narrative, and when it is disturbed or malfunctioning narratological coherence and efficiency suffer as well. In fact, narration not only depends on memory. It is inherently constructed by it as well, as seen in the ubiquity of memory-based techniques like retroversion [...] (Sapir 84).⁶

Hence, we are able to narrate our past as we remember it. Thus, memory becomes our only source of information. Nevertheless, the process of remembering, as we grow older,

³ Sartre 228-229, qtd. in Fennell 35-49.

⁴ Qtd. in Fennell 35-49.

⁵ Sapir 84.

⁶ See Bal 1997, 80-98.

becomes a complicated one. Apart from memory, we use imagination as a resource since our memory is a mixture of both.

Therefore, apart from the above-mentioned two widely used views on memory, I consider it important to illustrate how memory actually operates in our brain. In order to understand how memory works on a psychological level, we have to address this topic from a psychological point of view. John Forster's biography of Charles Dickens provides us with some knowledge of Dickens's traumatic childhood memories. Forster indicated Dickens's trauma in his *The Life of Charles Dickens*, recalling Dickens's feelings about his childhood experience "how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age" (Forster 23-24).

Since Dickens and Freud shared similar views on experienced memory, especially "memory crisis"⁷, firstly, I would like to demonstrate the interrelationship between memory and trauma from a psychological point of view. Consequently, we can argue whether Dickens's trauma and memory affected his narrative, and if yes, in which manner.

2.1. Memory

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English defines memory as "[t]he faculty by which things are recalled to or kept in the mind; a recollection or remembrance" ("Memory", def. 1. and 3.a). Memory is the process by which information is encoded, stored and retrieved. This process allows the information to reach our senses from the outside world. In view of the above, Sigmund Freud claims that memory is used as a container in which we restore our thought, knowledge and experience. Furthermore, in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud explains why we need memory "[w]e find it difficult to believe that such lasting traces of excitation are formed also in the system W-

⁷ This idea is taken from Lougy 407.

Bw.⁸ itself. If they remained permanently in consciousness they would very soon limit the fitness of the system for registration of new excitations [...]” (Freud 27). In other words, we must save some space in the W-Bw. system in order to receive new information.

In order to understand the concept of memory we must distinguish different types of memory. Schauer offers division into two types, namely declarative, i.e. explicit, and non-declarative, i.e. implicit. The declarative or explicit type of memory stores personal events together with knowledge of the world that surrounds us, namely facts of life (Schauer 15-18). According to Schauer, this type of memory is verbally accessed, can be retrieved at any time and is also called “autobiographical context memory” or “cold memory” (Schauer 18).

Non-declarative or implicit type of memory stores emotional associations, skill, habits and conditioned responses. In contrast to declarative memory, non-declarative memory needs to be consciously recollected and is not deliberately accessible. Since this type of memory is not intentionally accessible, it is activated automatically when specific triggers emerge. Squire claims that these triggers are of an environmental nature, i.e. stimuli such as smells, sounds or sights; thereby a person unconsciously activates his/her implicit memory (qtd. in Schauer 15). Schauer gives this type of memory a specific name, namely “hot memory” and defines it as “situationally accessible” (Schauer 18).

In view of narrating memory, Pierre Janet in his statement remarked:

*Memory, like belief, like all psychological phenomena, is an action; essentially, it is the action of telling a story. [...] The teller must not only know how to [narrate the event], but must also know how to associate the happening with the other events of his life, how to put it in its place in that life-history which each one of us is perpetually building up and which for each one of us is an essential element of his personality.*⁹

Furthermore, Janet argued that this type of organizing past events, which he named “narrative memory”, can be disrupted by traumatic experience. Traumatic memories

⁸ W-Bw. – *Wahrnehmung* and *Bewußtsein* “the system of Perceptual-Consciousness”, in terms of Freudian theory “[...] psychic apparatus which must lie on the boundary between inner and outer, must face towards the outer world, and must envelop the other psychic elements” (Freud 26-27).

⁹ Janet 273, qtd. in van der Kolk & van der Hart 170-71 and Leys 111.

cannot find their way into the memory system since “the victim” is refusing to incorporate them into “narrative memory” (van der Kolk & van der Hart 1995; van der Kolk 1996).

Janet was first to differentiate between narrative memory, which “narrates the past as past”, and traumatic memory, which “unconsciously repeats the past” (qtd. in van der Kolk and van der Hart 159). Therefore, narrative memory is produced by non-traumatized persons who can respond to new information and incorporate it appropriately without being conscious about this process. Prager emphasizes the importance of narrative memory by stating that “[w]ithout memory to represent the past from which one came, it is impossible to represent one’s self as moving through time into the future” (Prager 82). On the other hand, traumatic memory is the opposite of narrative memory; it cannot be accessed and narrated since a traumatic event is not stored properly and in the same way as a non-traumatic experience.

In order to demonstrate how traumatic memory emerges, i.e. how trauma affects memory and narrative, we have to start with the definition of trauma.

2.2. Trauma

The word *trauma* originally referred to an injury inflicted on a body, but since then, many new definitions emerged. Numerous trauma theories derive from the Freudian concept of trauma which has shifted several times during his career. One of those theories was proposed by Jean Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis in their *The Language of Psychoanalysis* where they interpret trauma as “[a]n event in the subject’s life defined by its intensity, by the subject’s incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization” (Laplanche and Pontalis 465). Both Freud and Laplanche and Pontalis describe trauma in a similar manner, as “a wound of the mind”, “a violent shock”, “and “the consequences affecting the whole organization” (Laplanche and Pontalis 466). Since Freud made use of several concepts of trauma throughout his whole academic life, let us make use of the one from the “economic” point of view, i.e. “consideration of the attainment of pleasure” (Freud 11).

According to Freud, we experience the world by receiving the external excitation, however, “[f]or the living organism protection against stimuli is almost a more important task than reception of stimuli [...]” (Freud 31). In order to create balance in our psychic lives, Freud argues that “there is an attempt on the part of the psychic apparatus to keep the quantity of excitation present as low as possible, or at least constant” (Freud 3). Schauer argues that trauma is “the experience and psychological impact of events that are life-threatening or include a danger of injury so severe that the person is horrified, feels helpless, and experiences a psychological alarm response during and shortly following after the experience” (Schauer, Neuer and Elbert 5).

Traumatic events attack the matrix of our ego, thereby, shattering our basic assumptions of the world that surrounds us, our belief systems, sense of trust in others, etc.¹⁰ As a result, traumatized persons develop symptoms such as nightmares, depression, guilt, explosive violence, emotional numbing, just to name a few.¹¹ As Herman argues, these traumatic events “[...] shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others” (Herman 51). In order for a traumatized person to overcome these catastrophes, one must cope and confront one’s self with past traumas. However, as Herman argues, confronting those horrified experiences is not a simple task, because “the ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness” (Herman 1). This raises the question whether traumatized patients should tell their stories since they are so painful for them.

¹⁰ This idea is taken from Van der Merwe 2007.

¹¹ This idea is taken from Leys 2000.

2.3. Traumatic memory

As already mentioned above, traumatic memory is the opposite of narrative memory. In contrast to narrative memory, traumatic memory cannot be accessed and narrated. Here, events are stored differently as in “ordinary conditions”, namely in another part of the brain forming a separate network of memory. This network includes sensory elements, meaning that certain traumatic events can be triggered by environmental stimuli such as smells, sounds or sights. As follows, traumatic memory also stands for “hot memory”, explained above. These environmental stimuli cause involuntary reaction from the person who has been traumatized, and he/she feels like re-living the trauma. As a consequence, subconscious memories control a person’s behaviour. In an attempt to gain control over themselves, traumatized persons avoid speaking about their traumas because they are too painful.

Although already mentioned, we should once again revise the difference between narrative and traumatic memory from Caruth’s point of view, which is as follows: “[Thus], in contrast to narrative memory, which is a social act, traumatic memory has no social component: it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody; it is a solitary activity” (Caruth 163). Prior to Caruth, Freud already realized that traumatized patients had an urge not to think much about their traumas. However, as he further explains, their traumas cannot be entirely repressed and patients are “fixated to their trauma” (Freud 13).

All memories are stored according to a certain hierarchy and arranged into the one or the other period of life. In contrast to narrative memories, traumatic memories cannot find their place in one’s period of life since they are horrific, painful and leave a person disoriented. While integrating traumatic events into the system of all memories, a traumatized person may experience great difficulties since the patient cannot clearly remember what has happened in the event. As a consequence, the actual content of the trauma is easily inappropriately interpreted, confusing, fragmented and discontinuous. Since the content of traumatic memory is as such, the patient’s narrative of traumatic memory cannot be linear. Thus, as opposed to narrative memory which is linear, trauma

narrative only repeats the traumatic experience never fully comprehending the essence of it.¹²

This results in patients developing certain psychic disorders, predominantly Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, in short PTSD.

Following Freud's argument that traumatized patients are fixated to their traumas, Schauer further describes patients' fixation which often results in obsessions and phobias:

[p]atients who suffer from PTSD have difficulties with autobiographical memory; that is, they are unable to place the fear of the events appropriately in time and space to clearly position them in a lifetime period. This, and the avoidance of activating the fear structure, makes it difficult for PTSD patients to narrate traumatic experience. (Schauer 18).

One way to overcome trauma and re-gain control of one's life is to face the past and verbally position distorted memory in the existing memory network. If this is achieved, hot memory encompassing emotional and sensory elements can be reconnected to cold memory containing knowledge about periods of our lives and specific events.

In order for a patient to overcome painful events from the past, and re-establish connection cut by traumatic experience, it is necessary to tell his/her story. In psychology, healing trauma patients is based on the Narrative Exposure Theory.

¹² These ideas are taken from Leys 2000 and Janet 1998.

2.4. Narrative Exposure Theory - (NET)

Narrative Exposure Theory was developed for the treatment of patients suffering from PTSD. This theory is based on cognitive behavioural exposure and testimony. In order for patients to be healed, they have to repeatedly talk about traumas they have experienced. After a certain period of treatment, they should be able to talk freely about their traumatic events, face their past, deal with it and finally overcome it. What is crucial for a patient is the ability to verbalize his/her trauma and by doing so re-experience it. This is a deliberate action where a patient “actually triggers his or her own fear network in the telling by narrating the fragments throughout the course of therapy and he or she is able to reweave the events back into a *cool-system framework* controlling the triggers present with the hot memories” (Schauer 25).

As a result, hot memories are meaningfully positioned in appropriate location and time. The action of narrating is done in a safe environment thus eliminating previously present fear, desire to flee, continuous repression and avoidance of traumatic events. According to Schauer, the main goal of NET is to reconnect hot and cold memory. This is achieved by articulating all feelings and thoughts, namely all memory fragments, into declarative memory. Herman describes healing as a process of transformation and reconstruction which is accomplished by narrating, “this work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor’s life story” (Herman 175). The patient narrates his/her story in front of a witness (e.g. therapist, group) in order for a closure to actually begin. If a patient has experienced several traumatic events, therapy can encompass narrating about his/her whole life, starting from earliest childhood memories. Furthermore, the witness writes down the patient’s narration where the patient can later read it through and add or remove some parts.

As a result, the patient is exposing him/herself to the witness, namely verbalizing traumatic events. Nevertheless, as Schauer claims, we must not treat exposure the same as closure. Expressing most frightened feelings and thoughts by articulating them, does not automatically mean that the patient has faced his/her trauma. Actually, closure represents the patient’s end of narration and remembrance of the past. The desired outcome is the patient’s exposure, i.e. reliving of the traumatic events until all negative

feelings associated with them have subsided. Previously distorted memory has been recollected and positioned in appropriate time and location so that the patient can clearly see the whole picture. Thereby, traumatic memory has been transformed into narrative memory, namely, the connection between hot and cold memory has been established. The final outcome is that the patient's memory is embedded into his/her mind and can be accessed at any time. The patient is cured because he/she can finally come to terms with what had happened.¹³

2.5. Dickens's (un)affected narrative

“Memory is a great artist. For every man and for every woman it makes the recollection of his or her life a work of art and an unfaithful record.”

André Maurois

In her book *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction*, Matus inquires about the Victorian concept of memory, namely how persons react to shock and trauma. She argues that the Victorians did not have the same understanding of trauma as we do now, however, “[T]his does not mean that they had no conception of psychic distress, but rather that they conceived of emotional wounds in terms of physical disability”.¹⁴ In the nineteenth century, the word trauma meant a physical wound infected on the body, only to be later associated with a mental state.¹⁵ Furthermore, Matus argues “how the understanding of psychological injury changed during the mid-Victorian era and how this change was conveyed in the literature of the time”.¹⁶ As Matus remarks, it is not necessary to differentiate between sanity and madness, “but rather the way that the Victorians attempted to understand the effect of catastrophic events on memory and

¹³ Subchapter 2.4. is completely based on claims and descriptions from Schauer's *Narrative Exposure Theory*, however, direct quotations are clearly marked

¹⁴ Morgentaler 323.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

ordinary consciousness”.¹⁷ Matus stresses the importance of literature in understanding the psychic state caused by a traumatic event, “literary narratives helped to shape and influence cultural practices and narratives out of which the concept of trauma evolved”.¹⁸ Freud’s and Janet’s theories on trauma and traumatic memory emerged long after Dickensian era. Psychological treatment of patients who were victims of traumas was also developed long after Dickens’s novels had been written. Hence, a technique like NET was not at Dickens’s disposal and he could not make use of it in the process of healing. Emotions and thoughts that he experienced could not have been articulated and supervised by an expert in the field simply because the field of such a method did not exist. Thus, Dickens’s witnesses became a pen and a piece of paper; he was writing down his narrative.

As explained in the previous chapter, psychological theories suggest that for a traumatized person the most important thing is to express his/her memories and experience, stop avoiding unpleasant feelings and thoughts, position memory in its appropriate place and time, face the past as something that actually existed, and finally overcome it. In view of the above, Olney emphasizes the importance of the past in overcoming the present:

Though it is powerless in the past, [...] memory can and will create a subjective and vastly important truth about the present. Memory issues in and validates present being because it is simultaneously a tracing that leads to present consciousness and a product of that same present consciousness; it integrates all the old, half-remembered, or perhaps misremembered, selves, which were adequate to their own proper moments, into the pattern of the new self, which is born in the moment now out of this very exercise of consciousness and memory. (Olney 265)

Furthermore, Bluck and Habermas remark the importance of past events in developing one’s identity, “life narratives do not consist of single memories of important events, [they] are considered as [...] the description and explanation of how the individual

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Matus 12, qtd. in Morgentaler 323.

reached the desired and expected goals and developed his or her personal identity when faced by outer challenges”.¹⁹

David Copperfield is Dickens’s first novel written in the first person. Written entirely in such a fashion, this novel stands as the narrative of David’s personal accounts. As Ackroyd points out, “this is the first novel in which Dickens consistently uses the first-person singular, the first novel in which he *sees* himself as he breathes and moves” (Ackroyd 606). As such, we can argue that *David Copperfield* is the most memory-oriented of Dickens’s novels (Shelston 46).

In his essay “Dickens and the Wolf Man: Childhood Memories and Fantasy in *David Copperfield*”, Lougy discusses the ways in which Freud approached memory problems, “where is our past” and “where does the reality of memory stop” (qtd. in Lougy 407). As Freud was intrigued by the question of memory, so was Dickens confused in terms of its interpretation. According to Lougy, this is most vivid in *David Copperfield*:

Whatever form David’s recollection might take – whether fantasy, daydream, memory or some mysterious amalgamation of all three – its choreography as well as its language calls our attention to a disturbing and irresolvable tension between a strong movement toward an apparent self-annihilation at the limits of subjectivity, on the one hand, and a desperate gesturing toward the recovery of a past childhood that has been lost or perhaps never existed, on the other. (Lougy 407)

Already at the age of 36, Dickens felt pressured by his work, fear of failure, family problems and horrified events from his past. Memories of a repressed childhood and hard labour produced a state of mental crisis. His depression revived memories of passionate love he felt for Maria Beadnell and great disappointment in failing to win her love. After an early death of his beloved sister-in-law Mary Hogarth, daunting past memories burdened his mind climaxing in his remembrance of shameful and disastrous childhood labour at Warren’s Blackening Warehouse.

In 1847, he revealed some of his traumatic experiences to a dear friend John Forster in the unpublished autobiographical fragment: “My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and

¹⁹ Qtd. in Berntsen, Dorthé and Rubin, David C. 636-52.

happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; and wander desolately back to that time of my life” (Forster 23).

Apart from being a public persona, writer, speaker, entertainer, comedian, Dickens was an awfully private person regarding the facts about his life. He had his darker inner side, the one which he could not admit even to himself. Instead of that, he tried to illustrate that side of him through his writings, dragging the readers into his gloomy world by representing it as imagination rather than real life events. As Lougy remarks in his essay, Dickens intended to write about his dreadful past memories in *David Copperfield*, as Forster reminds us “that Dickens had taken this turn towards the past with all its inherent anxieties even before he began *David Copperfield*”²⁰:

[I]t had all been written, as a fact, before he thought of any other use of it; and it was not until several months later, when the fancy of *David Copperfield*, itself suggested by what he had so written of his early troubles, began to take shape in his mind, that he abandoned his first intention of writing it as his own life.²¹

David Copperfield was completed in 1850 and represents a personal account of David’s whole life story. As such, David narrates events from the very beginning of his life. In order for Dickens to make David a reliable narrator, he must provide him with a retentive memory. Since early childhood memories are commonly vague to all human beings, Dickens is left with the difficulty to make the readers believe in David’s story about his infancy. He solves this problem by providing David with a photographic memory which is common among small children:

This may be fancy, though I think that the memory of most of us can go farther back into such times than many of us suppose; just as I believe the power of observation in numbers of very young children to be quite wonderful for its closeness and accuracy. Indeed, I think that most grown men who are remarkable in this respect, may with greater propriety be said not to have lost the faculty, than to have acquired it; the rather, as I generally observe such men to retain a certain freshness, and gentleness, and capacity of being pleased, which are also an inheritance they have preserved from their childhood. (*DC* 13)

²⁰ Lougy 408.

²¹ Qtd. in Lougy 408.

This faculty is actually a vivid and persistent imaginative children's memory. Hence, David's childhood memory is to some extent based upon fancy. So, if David's memories are built up out of fantasy, where is Dickens in all this? Freud argues that we should not judge the validity of childhood memories, "we should equate phantasy and reality and not bother to begin with whether childhood experiences under examination are the one or the other".²² At times, memory actually presents a guarantee to people that their past experiences have happened to them in a manner they are acceptable to them. In view of this, Nietzsche remarked: "I have done that, 'says my memory. 'I cannot have done that', says my pride'" (Nietzsche 72). Nietzsche's remark is well founded in young children whose memories are often fabrications of their past experience. Furthermore, young children cannot easily distinguish between imagination and reality, their hallucinations (e.g. imaginary friend) and real life events. More important is that this kind of predominant subjective memory which does not always mirror reality is present even in Dickens as a grown man. However, Dickens tries to defend David's retentive memory by writing down things as they are in present and which evoke his past memories: "I do not recall it, but see it done, for it happens again before me" (DC 784). In other words, David relates past events to contemporary happenings. The principle of "seeing past before our eyes" dates from the Middle Ages. As Sapir describes:

[...] the art of memory consisted of the creation of an imaginary place, say a house. Within in several more specific locations were defined, and the items to be memorized, incarnated in visual images, were then allocated to these locations. To retrieve those items, one had to imagine a tour of the house, visiting each place in turn, finding in it just the right image placed there, so to speak, in advance (Sapir 85).

Furthermore, as Sapir states, "the art of memory rests on two principles; [...] the first is the perfect, transparent translatability of verbal concepts into visual images [...] the second principle is the absolute necessity of a "place" in order for something to happen" (Sapir 85).

²² Qtd. in Lougy 413, Freud's *Introductory Lectures* 38.

As already mentioned before, in order for new information to be received we must leave space in our memory system. Therefore, some events from our past memories find their place in our subcommittee. As Freud argues, the concept of memory is based upon the “pleasure principle”, meaning that all pleasant experiences find their appropriate place in our consciousness, and all events deprived of pleasure are discarded and left to exist merely as subconscious (Freud 289-97). In other words, we tend to forget things which we found disturbing. Therefore, if we argue that David, like Dickens, is overcoming his trauma experience by facing and writing it down as it really happened, we must take a look at how David “accidentally” forgets some of the unpleasant memories; they simply slip out of his mind. We find the example of the above in the chapter called “Another Retrospective”, where David describes the time of Dora’s death:

I sit down by the fire, thinking with a blind remorse of all those secret feelings I have nourished since my marriage. I think of every little trifle between me and Dora, and feel the truth, that trifles make the sum of life. Ever rising from the sea of my remembrance, is the image of the dear child as I knew her first, graced by my young love, and by her own, with every fascination wherein such love is rich. Would it, indeed, have been better if we had loved each other as a boy and a girl, and forgotten it? Undisciplined heart, reply! (*DC* 768)

David is erasing the real image of Dora as a spoiled child and faulty wife. He articulates only pleasant memories of her where he describes them as “the sea of remembrance”. David’s remembrance of his dear mother is described in a similar manner. Here, David is also narrating his mother’s positive qualities, as if he has forgotten her flaws. David beautifies his mother after her death and claims that he remembers her funeral perfectly: “All this, I say, is yesterday’s event. Events of later date have floated from me to the shore where all forgotten things will reappear, but this stands like a high rock in the ocean” (*DC* 131). As mentioned, his mother’s negative features are totally left out since David describes the event as “a high rock in the ocean”. Again, David is repeating the action of forgetting unpleasant memories, and his transformation of the past into fiction is clearly vivid. Dora and his mother acquire more quality features in his fiction as they had in reality. For, as Newcomb argues, “Memory sometimes plays a further trick with actuality: not only does it grant identical reality to past things actual and imagined, but it

also frequently assumes for “things that never were” an on-going and continuous life extending into the present” (Newcomb 173). His previously impractical and faulty Dora is shown in a brighter light; she has matured in David’s eyes as he finally realizes that the two of them were not suitable for each other. However, according to Maurois, David’s “unfaithful” record of the past extending into the present should not be judged as a flaw:

The record that memory reconstructs is no doubt [...] “unfaithful” to the past, but this infidelity seems at most a very minor sin if one considers memory not as an orderly summoning up of something dead – a sort of Final Judgment on past events – but as a creative figuration of the living present and a summary reconstruction of how the present came to be that which it is and that which it represents itself as being.²³

By omitting some of the ugly features, Dickens emphasizes the beautiful ones, and by doing so he is creating a new improved version of his life. It indicates the change in Dickens himself and his wish to reconstruct his self-identity by making it a better one. Therefore, it can be argued that we can notice some self-righteousness and self-reconstruction in David created by idealizing past events because later, he honestly deals with certain events from his past as they really happened.

By writing down the past sufferings, Dickens was able to chase away some of the past demons which haunted him. As he was finally able to face some of his traumatic memories, Dickens’s David succeeds in overcoming his traumas which he experienced working as a young boy at Old Blunderstone and the Murdstone and Grinby Warehouse:

The remembrance of that life is fraught with so much pain to me, with so much mental suffering and want of hope, that I had never had the courage even to examine how long I was doomed to lead it. Whether it lasted for a year, or more, or less, I do not know. I only know that it was, and ceased to be; and that I have written, and there I leave it. (DC 215)

This passage demonstrates a non-idealized version of the past events as David confesses the pain those events brought him.

²³ Qtd. in Olney 264, *Metaphors of Self*.

David, like Dickens, uses the technique of story-telling. Therewith, he transforms traumatic experience into a present written story making it a memory which then can be positioned in its proper place in the past. In other words, he makes the connection between hot and cold memory, i.e. re-establishes narrative memory previously cut by traumatic experiences. However, his newly formed narrative memory is created by semi-reality for some past events are stored as they really happened and some as David wanted them to be. Thus we can argue that even in dealing with his past traumatic events, Dickens is torn apart between his wish for self-revelation, necessary for the recovery, and self-concealment, means of masking his sufferings not only from the public, but also from himself. In view of the above, we can conclude that Dickens's narrative is affected by his memory and vice versa, for as Sapir remarks "[...] the memory-narrative relation is far from unidirectional: just as memory endangers narrative, so is narrative, at times, indispensable for the agility of the faculty of memory" (Sapir 84).

First published in a serial form in Dickens's weekly periodical *All the Year Round*, the novel *Great Expectations* was published in three volumes in 1861. It is the second Dickens's novel to be fully narrated in the first person. Briefly before writing *Great Expectations*, Dickens experienced private troubles. His marriage was facing an end since at the time he had separated from his wife. At the same time, his famous quarrels with Thackeray took place as well as his affair with Ellen Ternan. Thus, it could be argued that Dickens's tormenting emotions clouded his memory. Simultaneously, as his character Pip narrates through his memory, it can be also argued that Pip may not be a reliable narrator.²⁴

Unlike *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* is a novel where Dickens describes the characters' suppressing of memories in a world turned upside down. From the very beginning of the novel, Pip, as the narrator of his own story, draws us into this reverse world by saying that the church "go head over heels" before his eyes while realizing that the convict Magwitch had "turned [him] upside down" (*GE* 2). This reversed world represents the future life of Pip, as Stone remarks: "when outlawed Magwitch emerges from the graves and turns Pip's dawning consciousness topsy-turvy, the act epitomizes

²⁴ The idea for the whole paragraph is taken from Huang 1996.

the inverted fairy tale that Dickens is about to tell” (Stone 299). As Sipe in his essay “Memory and Confession in *Great Expectations*” argues, “the younger Pip of the first two sections of Dickens’s novel is a character whose life is oriented towards the future”.²⁵ Pip’s view on reality is turned upside down when he is suddenly made a gentleman by means of Magwitch’s money. The suddenness of his gentleman life style limits his view on reality in which he has to trust. He attempts to reconcile events from reality with his aspirations of becoming a gentleman, but it seems like they do not add up. In an attempt to fulfill his great expectations, Pip leaves the place where he felt imprisoned, the blacksmith household. However, Pip is haunted by his unpleasant memories of the imprisonment. Ironically, he is obsessed with a sense of guilt and not trauma. It is as if he is looking through a double glass mirror. On one side he sees his bright future, but always has one eye on the past events. Although already learning to become a gentleman, Pip is still unable to let go of the past which haunts him. This constant intrusion of the past into the present actually saves him from snobbery and self-deception. His relationship with Magwitch helps him understand the gravity of his abandonment of Joe. Here, Dickens again uses the topos of the world turned upside down where we see the reversed father-son relationship. Joe acts as a father to Pip only to be abandoned by him, whereas at the very end Pip holds Magwitch’s hand at court. The reappearance of Magwitch shocks Pip and brings back the memories of the troubled past. As Sipe remarks, seeing Magwitch again brings back the memories of the past into the present²⁶:

I knew him! Even yet I could not recall a single feature, but I knew him! If the wind and the rain had driven away the intervening years, had scattered all the intervening objects, had swept us to the churchyard where we first stood face to face on such different levels, I could not have known my convict more distinctly than I knew him now! ²⁷

Thus no matter how hard he tried to suppress his past memories it seems that they always find their way into the future events. Ironically, Pip’s past becomes his future. The future

²⁵ Sipe 57.

²⁶ This idea is taken from Sipe 57.

²⁷ *GE* 300-301, qtd. in Sipe 57.

events seem to trigger troublesome feelings from the past thereby making Pip constantly look back at and confront them all over again. In this sense, we can argue that Pip is making a circular journey from the past into the future and then back to the past; as his first job at the Satis House describes “to walk Miss Havisham round and round the room” (*GE* 79). It is a circle which evidently brings him to the same place where he began his journey of great expectations; going up the staircase of a social ladder only to find himself again in Satis House in front of Estella, now a beautiful young lady: “It was like pushing the chair back into the past, when we began the old slow circuit round the ashes of the bridal feast” (*GE* 226). Although Pip returns back to the place of his childhood where he felt confused and scared, he decides to help Magwitch, but this time he does it consciously. By experiencing childhood emotions and memories all over again as a grown man, he is able to recover his lost identity.

However, we can argue that the past memories can help one in the reconstruction of one’s lost or creation of a completely new identity, but what if the memory itself is not enough:

We know that Pip's perceptions are unreliable because all of his expectations turn out to be wrong. Another difficulty is that these memories are from Pip's childhood, not exactly the most ideal time for objective and clear observations. Pip's dominant emotions seem to be guilt arising from his misconceptions about his fault in the other's troubles and shame from his lower class status. The emotion/memory effect and Pip's errors in perception pose significant problems for Pip's fictional autobiography. We have to be careful — is Pip telling us his story as a way of absolving his guilty feelings?²⁸

What if in order for one to become a better man he actually has to act like one, and not just being able to recollect one’s lost or suppressed events. For, we must not forget Estella’s words: “You must know ... that I have no heart, if that has anything to do with my memory” (*GE* 224).

²⁸ Huang 1996.

3. Dickens's autobiographical fiction

Dickens's memory and trauma serve as engines that run the story of his narrative. His memories, distorted or clear, give him a fundamental base from which he draws out life stories of his characters. And his traumas, processed or not, transform events from his personal life into the fates of his fictionalized "children", David and Pip. One trauma in particular is widely acknowledged by many and that is the blackening warehouse episode. In view of the above, Mengel describes the importance of traumatized young Dickens's:

At the heart of Dickens's autobiographical fragment is the famous blackening warehouse episode, the importance of which has been widely acknowledged by Dickens's biographers, and which forms the pivotal point of their biographies. The importance of this early experience is also underlined by Dickens himself, who makes use of it in his autobiographical novel *David Copperfield*. The general tenor of opinion is that working in the blackening warehouse was a traumatic experience for Dickens that cast a shadow over the rest of his life, and that Dickens could not free himself from these sad memories of his childhood (Mengel 184).

Dickens attempted to write his autobiography in 1848, but gave up idea and only handed out fragments of his story to his friend John Forster.²⁹ Hence, this chapter discusses "Dickens's inability to write straightforward autobiography" and "the role [which] fiction played in his attempts to overcome this inability" (Mengel 185). However, firstly, I would like to address some views and approaches on what constitutes autobiographical writing and autobiographical fiction, i.e. to demonstrate the difference between the two from a theoretical point of view in order to apply it to Dickens's autobiographical fiction in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*.

²⁹ Mengel 184.

3.1. Authorizing the Autobiographical³⁰

I suggest that one could understand the life around which the autobiography forms itself in a number of other ways besides the perfectly legitimate one of individual history and narrative: we can understand it as a vital impulse – the impulse of life – that is transformed by being lived through the unique medium of the individual and the individual's special, peculiar psychic configuration; we can understand it as consciousness, pure and simple, consciousness referring to no objects outside itself, to no events, and no other lives; we can understand it as participation in an absolute existence far transcending than shifting, changing unrealities of mundane life; we can understand it as a moral tenor of the individual's being. Life in all these latter senses does not stretch back across time but extends down to the roots of individual being; it is atemporal, committed to a vertical thrust from consciousness down into the unconscious rather than to a horizontal thrust from the present into the past.

James Olney, *Some Versions of Memory*³¹

In Lacan's critical reinterpretation of the work of Freud, he discusses the idea of "the mirror stage". On his work on psychology and animal psychology, Lacan proposes that:

[...] human infants pass through a stage in which an external image of the body [...] produces a psychic response that gives rise to the mental representation of an "I". The infant identifies with the image, which serves as a gestalt of the infant's emerging perception of selfhood, but because the image of the unified body does not correspond with the underdeveloped infant's physical vulnerability and weakness, this imago is established as an Ideal-I toward which the subject will perpetually strive throughout his or her life.³²

Furthermore, as Lacan argues, the "mirror stage of psychic development that initiates the child into the social community and brings it under the law of Symbolic (the law of language as constituted through society) serves up a false image of the child's unified self".³³ As Ragland-Sullivan argues, this unity is "assymetrical, fictional, and artificial",

³⁰ Title from Benstock's *The Private Self: Theory and Practice from Women's Autobiographical Writings*, 1988.

³¹ Essay from Olney's *Autobiography*

³² Web page source, cited in bibliography (Lacan)

³³ Ibid.

therefore, as she continues, “the mirror stage must [...] be understood as a metaphor for the vision of harmony of a subject essentially in discord” (Ragland-Sullivan 26-27). As Benstock argues, this discord is “built up out of images, sounds, and sensory responses available to the child during the first six months or so of its life [and] is called unconscious, or that which derives from an experience of “self” as fragmented, partial, segmented, and different” (Benstock 12). Since the child’s “self” is distorted, he or she “drives toward fusion and homogeneity in the construction of a “self” [...] against the effects of division and dissolution” (Benstock 12).

In regard to Olney’s description stated above, Benstock gives another insight into the unconscious which derives from the “self”:

The unconscious is thus not the lower depths of the conscious, [...] but rather an inner seam, a space between “inside” and “outside” – it is the space of difference, the gap that the drive toward unity of self can never entirely close. It is also the space of writing, which bears the marks and registers the alienating effects of the false symmetry of the mirror stage. (Benstock 12)

However, homogeneous construction of the “I” is disrupted by alienating effects such as denial and distancing which are the results of the mirror stage (Benstock 15). According to Benstock, “[W]hat is reinforced in this effort is the ego; what is pushed aside (or driven into the darkened realms of the repressed) is the split in the subject (who both “is” and “is not” the reflected image) that language effects and cannot deny” (ibid.).

One of Gusdorf’s definitions of autobiography states that it “is the mirror in which the individual reflects his own image” (Gusdorf 33). As Benstock remarks, Gusdorf places “[...] random reflections on self and society, such as diaries, journals, and letters, in a category separate from (and prior to - the sources for) the *self-conscious* autobiography in which the writer “calls himself as witness for himself””.³⁴ However, Benstock clearly addresses limitations of Gusdorf’s definition stating that he overlooks the most important aspect of the autobiographical:

the measure to which self and self-image may not coincide, can never coincide in language – not because certain forms of self-writing are not self-conscious enough but because they have no investment in creating a cohesive self over time

³⁴ Gusdorf 29, qtd. in Benstock 15.

[...] writing follows the “seam” of the conscious/unconscious where boundaries between internal and external overlap (Benstock 15).

As Benstock argues, in terms of psychology, we can measure how much “self” differentiates itself from “other” (ibid.). In view of the above, she further illustrates this division arguing that “autobiography is a re-erecting of [these] psychic walls, the building of a linguistic fortress between the autobiographical subject and his interested readers” (ibid.). By building up a linguistic fortress, a writer is limited in terms of comprehensiveness of his work, for, as Gusdorf states, “[t]he autobiography that is [thus] devoted exclusively to the defense and glorification of a man, a career, a political cause, or a skillful strategy... is limited almost entirely to the public sector of existence” (Gusdorf 36). Although Gusdorf points out that “the question changes utterly when the private face of existence assumes more importance”, he also suggests that “the writer who recalls his earliest years is thus exploring an enchanted realm that belongs to him alone”.³⁵ However, although Gusdorf stresses that writer’s memories belong to him alone, in his essay on “Confessions and Autobiography”, Stephen Spencer illustrates how in literature individual aspects are transformed to everybody’s:

[...] It is no longer the writer’s own experience: it becomes everyone’s. He is no longer writing about himself: he is writing about life. He creates it, not as an object which is already familiar and observed by others, but as a new and revealing object, growing out of and beyond observation.³⁶

In regard to the quotation given above, we can further explain how individual aspects are transformed to anyone else by giving Olney's explanation why one should read autobiography, “[W]hat one seeks in reading autobiography is not a date, a name, or a place, but a characteristic way of perceiving, of organizing, and of understanding, an individual way of feeling and expressing that one can somehow relate to oneself” (Olney 37).

³⁵ Gusdorf 37, qtd. in Benstock 15-16.

³⁶ Qtd. in Olney 263, „Confessions and Autobiography,” *The Making of a Poem* (New York Norton Library, 1962).

Nevertheless, as Benstock finally observes, “[I]n either kind of autobiography, the writing subject is the one presumed to *know* (himself), and this process of knowing is a process of differentiating himself from other” (Benstock 16).

In his *Metaphors of Self*, Olney gives an excellent explanation of the term “becomingness” of the self, namely in W.K.C. Guthrie’s “I searched out myself”³⁷:

The verb ... has two main meanings: (1) to look for ... (2) to question, inquire of somebody, find out ... Thus by the words of [fr. 101] Heraclitus meant, I suggest first, “I turned my thoughts within and sought to discover my real self; secondly, “I asked questions to myself”; thirdly, “I treated the answers like Delphic responses hinting, in a riddling way, at the single truth behind them, and tried to discover the real meaning of my selfhood; for I knew that if I understood my self I would have grasped the *logos* which is the real constitution of everything else as well”.³⁸

However, some use other approaches in explaining “the mirror image”. For example, Tagore chooses to hold another aspect on the subject, “[W]e imagine that our mind is a mirror, that it is more or less accurately reflecting what is happening outside us. On the contrary, our mind itself is the principal element of creation. The world, while I am perceiving it, is being incessantly created for myself in time and space”.³⁹

³⁷ Qtd. in Olney 7, the translation is from Kirk and Raven, *Presocratic Philosophers* 212; Philip Wheelwright, in *Heraclitus* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959), p. 19, translates it „I have searched myself“.

³⁸ Qtd. in Olney 7.

³⁹ Qtd. in Olney 11.

3.2. Autobiographical/fictional novel

The previous chapter discusses how one can get to know himself and, by doing so, distinguish one's self from others. As stated earlier, one constructs a mirror in which he can see the reflection of one, thus creating one's autobiography. Many studies have dealt with the categorization of the autobiography as a genre, namely, which narrative structure stipulates the rules of autobiographical writing. These studies made a division between what is autobiography and fiction even more difficult. There is a thin line which separates fictionalized autobiography and autobiographical fiction. Both of the said genres include elements of the writer's personal life events. As Houston argues, "[F]ictionalized autobiographies are mostly a truthful telling of the author's experience with sections fictionalized to "protect the innocent", filling gaps where memory fails, and occasionally rearranging events for maximum narrative effect. Generally speaking, the reader is to believe the author's account and take it for truth".⁴⁰ Furthermore, Houston, on the other hand demonstrates basic features of autobiographical fiction, illustrating it as somewhat different:

[...] autobiographical fiction is primarily comprised of made up events and characters that may be based on the author's own experience and self. The protagonist might be modeled after the author and do at least some of the things the author has actually done in his or her life. However, the ratio of truth to fiction will be somewhat small.⁴¹

In his essay "Portrait of the Artist as a Grown Man: Dickens's *Great Expectations* as Autobiographical Fiction", Mengel neatly illustrates the complexity of truth and fiction in novels by summarizes most important studies on the topic in the last twenty years. In illustrating the „dichotomy between truth and fiction“ (Mengel 186), Mengel stresses the findings of Gusdorf in his study on autobiography by arguing that „[t]he written life of an author has no objectivity in the sense that it shows us what his self was really like, but should be understood as a narrative construction that creates a past self from the vantage

⁴⁰ Houston, web page source, cited in bibliography

⁴¹ Houston, web page source, cited in bibliography

point of the present“.⁴² As Mengel argues, the facts that have been created by an author „acquire meaning only in the context of a story“ and in that story „the autobiographer uses fictions – prefabricated plot structures, metaphors, myths, etc. – which give shape to his life“ (Mengel 186). On the other hand, Mengel gives causal connection between facts and fiction stating that „all fiction is, to a certain extent, also autobiographical, because every fiction writer makes use of his personal experiences and views“ (ibid.). Consequently, Mengel explains the difficulty in distinguishing between truth and fiction, i.e. drawing a clear-cut line between fictionalized autobiography and autobiographical fiction:

The fact/fiction dichotomy, therefore, is not very helpful in distinguishing autobiography proper from other forms of fiction, for it does not take account of the epistemological quality of fictions which allow us to „come to terms“ with a contingent reality. The word „life“ is semantically ambiguous and refers to the „real life“ of a person and to the „written life“, that is, the autobiographical text, at the same time. Without textualization, the „life“ of a person would remain an accidental conglomeration of contingent events that by themselves do not add up to something meaningful. (Ibid.)

The passages above strive at illustrating the difference between truth and fiction in autobiography. Let me now proceed with Mengel's views on dealing with the autobiographical structure, namely the difference between „the experiencing „I“ and the narrating „I“, past and present intertwined, autobiography as „future-oriented“, etc. As stated earlier, Benstock concludes that the ability to know one's self and differentiate that same one's self from the other constitutes an autobiography. In other words, apart from establishing one's self, the writer is capable of creating another self through his fictional writing, combining both parts of his two selves. In that sense, we can relate it to Mengel's remark on difference between the experiencing “I” and the narrating “I”, “[T]he temporal difference between the experiencing “I” and the narrating “I” provides the elbow-room which the autobiographer may use to connect his former and his later self by way of narration, thus redefining his identity and finding a way out of the personal and/or cultural dilemma” (Mengel 187).

⁴² Mengel 186, see Gusdorf, „Conditions and Limits of Autobiography“, 28-48.

As discussed in previous chapters, memory serves as an engine for recollecting one's past. However, in narrative, the interrelationship between past and present is extremely vivid. As seen in the memory of David and Pip, past events of their lives almost continuously find their path into the present. Since the intrusion of the past events into the present is frequent, it can be argued that these past events shape that same present. Examining Hornurg's observations on autobiographical writing, Mengel points out that "[a]lthough the autobiographer claims to be telling us something about his past, he tells us even more about his present".⁴³ Furthermore, Mengel observes Olney's claims on the direct causal relationship between autobiographer's past and present life:

The self-image he creates, the "meaning" of his life, is something that is ascribed to his past from the view-point of the present. This means that autobiographies do not reveal the truth about a certain person once and for ever, but may be rewritten in order to accommodate later experience. From the vantage point of the present, we may see our past life in a different light and, taking this into account, a writer may well realize that an earlier version of his life has ceased to be relevant, and that it has to be rewritten in order to do justice to the changing conception of himself.⁴⁴

As illustrated above, Benstock remarks that the main principle of creating autobiography is to construct the "self" in relation to others. This "self", on the other hand, is a false image of our identity, and lacks a crucial element for becoming "the unified self", namely writing. Mengel expresses the importance of writing in his statement that "[...] the meaning of his [the author's] life is not something that is already given and is merely to be described or reflected in the autobiography as in a mirror, but is established in the act of writing" (Mengel 187). Hence, in his views on self-writing, Mengel remarks that his claims oppose those of Deconstructionist critics.⁴⁵ In retrospection of de Man's "Autobiography as Defacement" and Sprinker's "Fictions of the Self: The End of Autobiography", Mengel argues that "For them [Deconstructionist critics], writing is a process of "self-alteration", *ego* becoming *alter* in the course of this process, so that every writer loses rather than finds himself in the act of writing, and the meaning of one's life is forever deferred" (Mengel 188). However, Mengel justifies his claims regarding

⁴³ Mengel 187 (see James Olney *The Ontology of Autobiography*, 236-267).

⁴⁴ Ibid. (see Paul John Eakin, "Malcolm X and the Limits of Autobiography", Olney 181-193).

⁴⁵ Mengel 188.

the relation between self and writing by illustrating Fleishman's views on the subject "he [Fleishman] holds that "self-alternation" implies not necessarily a loss of one's self, but rather the creation of what can be termed an extension or supplement of the *ego*, a sort of *persona* or mask".⁴⁶ In view of the above, Mengel clearly illustrates how through the act of writing, "one" can establish his/her identity in relation to "other":

Although this extension or supplement may be no truthful mirror image of a writer's self, it nevertheless partakes of the formation of his identity, for only by undergoing this process of "self-alternation" through writing and recognizing that he is at the same time identical with and different from the "other" can a writer develop the feeling of ego-identity. (Ibid.)

3.3. Dickens's attempt at autobiography

Even at the age of 20 while starting his career as a journalist, Charles Dickens presented himself to the public under the nickname of Boz. In his subsequent periodical sketches, he fully adopted the nickname Boz, deriving from a family nickname, and wrote under that pseudonym for some years. Dickens's 'mania' of presenting himself to the public disguised under the veil of fiction will stay with him throughout his writing career. In her essay "Dickens and Autobiography: A wild beast and his keeper", Carr discusses at length Dickens's inability to write straightforward autobiography. Furthermore, she illustrates the pattern of attempts at revelation and containment in Dickens's view on autobiography. Carr describes Dickens's representation of a life, i.e. self-knowledge and autobiography, by giving two examples from Dickens's writing:

The man whose vista is always stopped up by the image of Himself. Looks down a Long walk, and can't see round himself, or over himself, or beyond himself – Is always blocking up his own way. – Would be such a good thing for him, if he could knock himself down.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

This is the first time I ever set down even these particulars, and, glancing them over, I feel like a wild beast in a caravan describing himself in his keeper's absence.⁴⁷

With regard to the first excerpt, Carr remarks that “his fable about self-perception, about the man who must free himself of “the image of Himself” or, more urgently, must “knock himself down” to have a vista, presents the dilemma facing autobiographers” (Carr 447). Hence, a writer must have a certain image which stands as a substitute for the writer's “real-self” and can be presented to his audience. As Dickens indicates, his real-self is described as a beast within him, ready to reveal all his inner thoughts and feelings and thus must be caged by his keeper. The beast within the writer operates on the principle of revelation, “who must be caged to protect the public from the dangers of his “free” revelations, made when his “keeper” is away” (Carr 447). The concept of the beast and the keeper illustrates Dickens's fear of exposing himself to his audience. Mengel describes Dickens's lines quoted above in pre-Freudian terms, “the beast stands for the more hidden layers of his mind (the sub- or unconscious), whereas the image of the keeper seems to refer to a censoring or monitoring faculty (the super-ego)” (Mengel 185). Therefore, it is the beast who tells the secrets to the public when there is no keeper to block it. As Mengel remarks, this concept allows Dickens to juggle between self-revelation and concealment in a sense that “allows the public to catch a glimpse of the beast [...] [and] on the other hand [...] may be an act of self-liberation because it happens when the keeper is absent, that is, when the ego's tendency towards self-monitoring is low” (ibid.). However, as Carr remarks, Dickens was always on alert, “[...] afraid he might suddenly find himself revealing too much or might uncover aspects of himself that would permanently disrupt his self-image” (Carr 454).

Frustrated at his attempts to write an autobiography (he abandoned the idea in 1848), and unable to juggle between his two selves, the public and the private one, Dickens gives his close friend John Forster permission to write about his life. Nevertheless, he only gives him fragments of his manuscript, and constantly controls Forster's ideas on the writing by giving him strict guidelines. Hence, Dickens employs Forster as his surrogate autobiographer serving as the keeper of Dickens's thoughts and feelings. However, in

⁴⁷ Qtd. in Carr 447.

controlling and guiding Forster how to write on certain topics, Dickens is once again the director of his true life story, thus being the keeper himself.

After an unsuccessful attempt to write his autobiography, Dickens turns his attention on writing in the form of autobiographical fiction. This kind of writing provides him with a ticket into the world of simultaneous self-revelation and disguising:

Writing autobiographical fiction allowed Dickens to reconcile these conflicting tendencies. First, it enabled him to gratify his “pressing autobiographical urge”. Secondly, it allowed him to do so in a disguised, hidden form. The beast, so to speak, is describing himself with the permission of his keeper. (Mengel 186)

In contrast to his biography written by Forster, Dickens represents in his novels the beast and the keeper at the same time. By using fiction, Dickens is able to control and guide the writings of his beast and keeper. As Mengel argues, the fiction in Dickens’s novels has a double function: “first, that of self-concealment, of disguising and veiling the truth; second, that of self-revelation, for only in fictional form could Dickens reveal the secrets of his soul” (Mengel 186).

Although Dickens wished his narration to be a valid one, he also knew that it would be impossible for him to write accounts from his life without fictionalising them. As Carr remarks about Dickens’s letter to Maria Badnell, his habit of constantly transforming experienced events into little fictions stayed with him throughout his writing career:

His life was dedicated to writing and living “fictions”, and he saw it as made up of “stories” with a certain energy of their own that, like his “floating ideas,” would create their own order and meaning, “rearrange themselves in a long procession between me and the changeless Past.”⁴⁸

Besides being afraid that a certain self-introspection will “disrupt his self-image”⁴⁹, Dickens felt restless regarding the upcoming changes brought by the Victorian era. Many Victorian writings point at the need of writing about one’s identity struck by the rapid changes: “The preoccupation with the self in Victorian literature is an indication that a cultural crisis is at the bottom of the individual autobiographical enterprise. It is caused

⁴⁸ Qtd. in Carr 454.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

by the necessity of relating one's self to a rapidly changing society, and to redefine and adjust one's identity" (Mengel 188).

In regard to Dickens's autobiographical fiction, I have to emphasise two major factors that defined his writing, namely his dissatisfaction with Victorian society and his personal problems. Being a bread-winner to a household of many children, Dickens was obliged to write in a manner that suited his audience. Hence, any scandal from his private life could ruin his career as a successful novelist and make him unable to provide enough money for his family. Although an efficacious critic of the Victorian society, Dickens always had his mind on the reaction of the audience which conditioned him to write under the veil of fiction, as Mengel remarks, "Dickens's inability to write autobiography also had something to do with his reluctance to reveal his inner thoughts or secret self unreservedly to a public greedily reaching out for any piece of private information they could lay hold of" (Mengel 189). The second factor would represent Dickens's personal traumas as mentioned already in this thesis. His attempt at writing autobiographical segments from his personal experience operated as means of self-therapy, as Johnson points out "through committing his entire past and its sorrows to paper and as it were casting it out of himself".⁵⁰ However, as already mentioned, he abandoned the idea of writing things as they happened, because "he found it too painful and gave it up".⁵¹

⁵⁰ Johnson, *op. cit.*, 344., qtd. in Mengel 189.

⁵¹ Johnson, *op. cit.*, 345., qtd. in Mengel 189.

4. Dickens's, David's and Pip's journey to self-construction

David Copperfield, as many of other Dickens's novels, appeared in serial form under its full title *The Personal History, Adventures, Experience and Observation of David Copperfield the Younger of Blunderstone Rookery (Which He Never Meant to Publish on Any Account)*. In the preface to the 1867 edition, Dickens wrote, "[...] like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is David Copperfield".⁵²

Dickens's David has been widely interpreted as his portrait of a successful novelist. Although at this stage Dickens had already been acknowledged among the public as a successful novelist, his portrait of David indicates his desire to reinforce his position among the Victorian audience. Many discussions have been brought up on the question of the genre of Dickens's *David Copperfield*. The majority of these arguments conclude that the novel belongs to the genre of autobiographical fiction, although some critics regard it as one of the most autobiographical novels of Dickens. However, it is worth emphasising the structure of the novel's narrative. It is written in a complicated way, for our attention as readers must be directed to three separate segments: Charles Dickens as a writer of the novel, David Copperfield as the novelist himself, and young David the protagonist.⁵³

Although it is already widely acknowledged that the novel contains autobiographical elements, we must be careful while identifying Dickens with his protagonist David. Nevertheless, it is also appropriate to stress the fact that David is also a successful novelist like Dickens. These distinct features of the novel, elaborating on the subject of its writer and protagonist, make the narrative a complex one.

As Hornback observes, David's narrative is written by using his own technique of "blending of experience and imagination", which is predominantly used by Dickens too (Hornback 656). However, although *David Copperfield* is regarded as Dickens's most autobiographical novel, "Dickens does not always remain as true to his principles as David the novelist seems too, and the realism and moral integrity of his art are sometimes compromised by the romantic falsification of reality" (ibid.).

⁵² Preface to the 1867 Charles Dickens edition

⁵³ Hughes 90.

Although Dickens fictionalizes reality, *David Copperfield* can be regarded as “a study in psychological autobiography, in which Dickens has not spared himself [...] he has also imparted to his hero and representative many weaknesses painted equally from the living model” (Monod 325).

Hence, in analysing David’s narrative, in which ‘voices’ of Dickens the writer, David the novelist, and David the protagonist are embodied, we can differentiate several major episodes which played a crucial part in the career of both the writer (Dickens) and his ‘hero’ (David). These episodes include the description of David’s childhood, especially his loss of mother, home and family, the Micawbers and Aunt Betsey as newly found surrogate parents, Mr. Dick, a child-like man, Dickens’s early infatuation with Maria Beadnell, later reflected in David’s Dora, and David becoming a successful novelist just like Dickens himself.

4.1. Reconstruction of childhood in *David Copperfield*

In his article on *David Copperfield*, Spengemann claims that *David Copperfield* can only partially be regarded as autobiographical, referring to the first fourteen chapters of the novel describing David’s childhood (Spengemann 122). Taking into account Spengemann’s claim, this subchapter examines in detail the writing of David’s childhood memories and Dickens’s urge to relive those past memories already mentioned before. The aim of this subchapter is to further illustrate the manner in which Dickens reconstructed his childhood through the character of David. In view of the above, Spengemann explains Dickens’s need to write in autobiographical form, “[...] autobiography is evident throughout these fourteen chapters in Dickens’s apparent need to write about a period of his life that was so distasteful, even vaguely shameful, to him [...] the autobiographical impulse arose from a feeling that the connections between his past and present lives were not clear [...]” (Spengemann 123). Furthermore, Spengemann claims that in his writing, Dickens adopts Wordsworth’s point of view, namely re-living the past through imagination in order to connect it to the present events, “[...] Dickens elects Wordsworth’s autobiographical strategy and becomes a traveler amidst the scenes

of his youth. Instead of standing his ground in the present and looking back over past times, the narrator remarks repeatedly that he is reliving them” (Spengemann 125). The reconstruction of David’s childhood, and additionally his whole life, starts at the very beginning of the novel with the famous opening paragraph:

Whether I shall turn out to be hero of my life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o’clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously. (*DC* 1).

Referring to previously mentioned concept of the difference between “the experiencing I” and “the narrating I”, a writer can redefine his own identity by a constant interchanging between the two “Is”. According to Bodenheimer, this “I” can be established by comparing it to “an indefinite number of anybody elses” I.⁵⁴ Ohi illustrates Bodenheimer’s claim by explaining the manner in which one’s identity is established by comparing it to anybody else’s:

The question of whether “I” shall “be,” then, is given away at the outset as a question of holding a “station,” conceding, before it begins, the “I” that, even if it does prove to be the “hero,” will do so by becoming an “anybody else” holding that station. Even if they have to assume that David Copperfield will be the hero of *David Copperfield*, readers, in other words, arrive both too early and too late to witness the first person narrator coincide with the identity he narrates. (Ohi 437)

As David begins *his life with the beginning of his life*⁵⁵, he must differentiate between the narration of history and his personal experience. Ohi stresses the importance of the repetition of the phrase “my life” by claiming that:

The intervention of writing – the very fact that autobiography has to pass through writing – dictates, in this basic sense, that “my life” has to mean something different than “my life,” that the remembered self will be ineluctably alienated from the narrating self [...]. The effort to equate “my [empirical] life” with my [written] life” suspends the realization of the empirical life until can be later

⁵⁴ Bodenheimer 226-27, qtd. in Ohi 437.

⁵⁵ Italics mine

written, which means that, just as the narration of the life arrives too late to coincide with the life it narrates, so too, is the narrated life always belated in relation to itself, experienced only after itself in its retrospective narration. (Ohi 437-8)

With regard to the above, David can establish his identity in the present, because he first must relate to that of what he was, and only his writing can show whether he will become the “hero”. As David writes about his own birth, it is argued that he is regarded as a “posthumous child”⁵⁶, thus writing the story which “exceeds its context”⁵⁷ but in relation to himself. David records the day and hour of his birth, however, he stresses that he was informed of it by another party, “(as I have been informed and believe)”, thus he can narrate about his own birth, “one cannot truly be “present” at one’s own birth, one has to be informed of it by someone else – and one *must* believe one’s informant”.⁵⁸ As Ohi further argues, the importance of *must* is mirrored in the ability to narrate on one’s own birth, but merely on the information one is given by someone else.⁵⁹

The question of “anybody else” indicates David’s fear of not becoming the “hero” of his life. The notion of “anybody else” becomes the dead at the beginning of the novel, and David fears whether these “dead” will stay dead until the end or turn up again.⁶⁰

One Sunday night my mother reads to Pegotty and me in there, how Lazarus was raised up from the dead. And I am so frightened that they are afterwards obliged to take me out of bed, and show me the quiet churchyard out of the bedroom-window, with the dead all lying in their graves at rest, below the solemn moon. (DC 12)

David’s fear of reappearing dead signals his uncertainty regarding the past and present events. Although through his own memory, written in the form of “There is nothing half so green that I know anywhere, as the grass of that churchyard”, he can recover his past, it is indicative that he uses the present tense, “There is one cock who gets upon a post to crow... Here is a long passage – what an enormous perspective I make of it! ... there are two parlors... Here is our pew in the church... And now I see the outside of our house, ...

⁵⁶ Qtd. in Ohi 438.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ohi 440

Now I am in the garden at the back..." (DC 12). Here, Ohi emphasises Dickens's use of present temporal determinants, "The words *here* and *now* appear throughout *David Copperfield*, sometimes signalling a moment in the past, sometimes signalling the time of narration, and sometimes hovering uncertainly between the two" (Ohi 440).

In the novel, David provides us with a detailed description of his experiences and adventures up to his departure from the Continent and subsequent life in Europe. At this point, the narrative of David is coloured by feelings of depression and bewilderment.⁶¹ In contrast, his adventures outside the Continent are vaguely described, therefore readers are left with hardly any insight into the manner in which he manages to resolve all his problems and becomes a successful novelist, which in turn enables him to return to his homeland. Consequently, after his wanderings throughout Europe and resolution of his troubles, we are presented with an adult David who writes the book.⁶²

Apart from having fears concerning the outcome of his writing, namely whether *he* will turn up to be the hero or someone else, young David's other hardship is the feeling of loss, predominantly a secure and permanent home. Although he is left fatherless even before he was born, David at the very beginning of the novel experiences security and love in his life with beloved mother Clara and Pegotty. Nevertheless, not long after that, scenes of intrusion and instability emerge. David's harmonious life is disrupted with the intrusion of Mr. Murdstone, a new stepfather whom he dislikes from the very beginning. Hughes elaborates on the intrusion of Mr. Murdstone giving the examples of David's reaction to the sight of the new gentleman in his mother's life:

First there is the ringing of the doorbell and David finding there his mother with "a gentleman with beautiful black hair and whiskers." David repels Murdstone "on the threshold," pushing away his hand; so Murdstone gains no entry but, "I see him turn round in the garden, and give us a last look with his ill-omened black eyes, before the door was shut. Pegotty... secured the fastenings instantly, and we all went into the parlour" (DC 19). At the second meeting, "there he was, in church, and he walked home with us afterwards. He came in too..." (DC 21).⁶³

As Hughes argues, Mr. Murdstone intrudes into David's fortuitous home many times before David's fateful visit to Pegotty's: "It touches me nearly now, although I tell it

⁶¹ Hughes 89.

⁶² Hughes 90.

⁶³ Qtd. in Hughes 91, citations from the novel are taken from the *New Oxford Illustrated* edition

lightly, to recollect how eager I was to leave my happy home; to think how little I suspected what I did leave for ever” (DC 23).⁶⁴ During David’s visit to Yarmouth, he finds out that the home of Pegotty’s is actually a boat giving him the feeling of a shelter. Nevertheless, after his return to his home, he finds Mr. Murdstone still there, married to his mother. Feeling betrayed and a prisoner in his own house, he laments on how he was shut out from his own home and sent to school. His betrayal is pointed directly towards his mother, thinking that perhaps only Pegotty could save him from not being cast away, “if I started off at once, and tried to walk back home, how could I ever find my way back, how could I ever hope to walk so far, how could I make sure of any one but Pegotty, even if I got back?” (DC 73).⁶⁵ David’s betrayal by his mother is not intensified by the loss of her, for as Hughes remarks, “[...] when David’s mother dies, the calamity does not touch him because she had been lost to him in her important home-making aspect some time before” (Hughes 92). Hughes illustrates his claim by citing David’s thoughts on the matter: “... my thoughts were idle; not intent on the calamity... but idly loitering near it. I thought of our house shut up and hushed” (DC 123).⁶⁶

After being sent to the warehouse, David finds himself in another home, as a lodger in the house of the Micawbers. Again, although having a roof over his head, David does not gain the security of a warm home atmosphere. The Micawbers are a family of nomads, constantly changing the place of living due to Mr. Micawber’s misfortunes regarding his debt issues. David’s new home is often intruded by creditors who chase Mr. Micawber hoping to get their money back: “Mr. Micawber difficulties were an addition to the distressed state of my mind” (DC 162). However, although always under a threat of new invaders hoping to get a grip of Mr. Micawber, this family does not seem alienated from itself, its family members support each other, especially Mrs. Micawber in her devotion to her husband. Unfortunately, David is soon obliged to find a new home, and he begins his long journey to Aunt Betsey’s cottage in Dover. Regardless of the fact that many critics find the warehouse episode in David’s early childhood the most traumatic one, comparing it to Dickens’s own shameful and horrific experience at the blackening warehouse, it can be argued that David’s journey all the way to Dover is an even more

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Qtd. in Hughes 92, citations from the novel are taken from the *New Oxford Illustrated* edition

⁶⁶ Ibid.

horrific and troublesome one. Apart from having to walk all the way to Dover, sleep only under the shining moonlight, penniless, hungry, scared and exhausted, his first impression in front of Aunt Betsey's cottage is also a terrific one. After a frightful sight of seeing his aunt screaming and chasing away donkeys, David feels secure only after he has literally entered the cottage, "The aunt is strong enough to repel intruders and that means safety. As David goes off to sleep, he remembers all the solitary places under the night sky where he had slept" (Hughes 92): "I prayed that I never might be houseless any more, and never might forget the houseless" (*DC* 199).⁶⁷

In search of a secure home, David experiences two more homes, the Wickfields' and that of Dr. Strong. Again his luck runs out: immediately after arriving at Mr. Wickfields's home he is struck by a dreadful figure, that of Uriah Heep. "When the pony-chaise stopped at the door, and my eyes were intent upon the house, I saw a cadaverous face appear at the small window on the ground floor (in a little round tower that formed one side of the house), and quickly disappear" (*DC* 218).

Although most of David's fears regarding his home life come from the outside invaders, he also finds insecurity within the houses of his residence. Arriving at Dr. Strong's house, he becomes familiar with the threat Jack Maldon represents for the marriage of Dr. Strong and his wife Anne. The first emergence of the "inner" threat is surprisingly at Aunt Betsey's cottage, when a stranger appears: "who's that man that hides near our house and frightens her?"⁶⁸. As Hughes remarks, "An explicable sense of fear and exposure grows on David throughout his adolescent years until he leaves Canterbury disturbed and anxious" (Hughes 93): "I seemed to have left the Doctor's roof with a dark cloud lowering on it... It was as if tranquil sanctuary of my boyhood had been sacked before my face, and its peace and honour given to the winds" (*DC* 282).

Throughout his childhood years, David tries to understand the events that happened to him. But, instead of realising them as they happened, he manipulates the truth in his attempt to find security. These traumatic events happen one after another, which gives David no time to fully absorb them. After the marriage of his mother to Mr. Murdstone, he faces the event of being sent to school, which follows the loss of his mother. The death of his mother, consequently, throws him into the world of finding a new family and

⁶⁷ Qtd. in Hughes 92.

⁶⁸ Qtd. in Hughes 93.

home. These subsequent shocks leave David unprepared for any future traumatic events. Hence, he creates his own view of the world which is a subjective, imperfect and incoherent one. As a result, while growing up under these conditions, “[David] has never formulated a general theory to account for human behaviour but has instead tried to manipulate the world to fulfill his own driving need for a secure place in it” (Hughes 95). As seen from the illustrations given above, we can argue that there are two factors which determine David’s childhood, namely the loss of his mother and his secure home. As stated above, the intrusion of Mr. Murdstone is directly connected to David’s loss of his mother, even before she died. Thus, it can be argued that Dickens has constructed David’s early childhood memories based on the feeling of betrayal. As a result, we can draw a parallel between Dickens’s David and Dickens himself mirrored in the loss of his family and home. As Dickens was sent to work at the blackening warehouse, so was David, which, additionally meant the loss of security, provided by family and home. David’s betrayal is pointed directly to his mother Clara, who could not stand up and speak on his behalf, and is mirrored in Dickens’s own experience with his mother who suggested for Dickens to continue working at the warehouse although the family was out of debtors’ prison. Dickens’s perhaps most inner thoughts on the loss of family and security are presented in his portrayal of David’s childhood destiny, as Dickens’s wrote to Forster, remembering the ever-lasting traumatic effect of the warehouse episode, “I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back”.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, although these parallels can be argued to be autobiographical segments in the novel, Dickens writes the narrative of David in which he manages to diminish horrific childhood events by representing them as filled with mystic and surreal elements. Events such as the midwife predicting that David will be unhappy because he was born on a Friday, and with a caul, or David’s descriptions of Mr. and Mrs. Murdstone, comparing their character features with those of some frightening creatures, draws our attention to the narrative which illustrates escapism from reality:

Few children who experience cruelty and sadness can comprehend the tragic nature of their plight. Instead, they often escape to dream worlds, fairy lands that provide illusionary happiness. Dickens superbly catches this process by casting a

⁶⁹ Web page source, cited in bibliography.

fairy-tale atmosphere over his narrative. [...] This tyranny over the boy is indeed horrible, but by presenting it through exaggerated imagination of a frightened child and by later removing David to Yarmouth for a pleasant visit with the Peggotty family, Dickens migrates some of the horror of David's home life. (Dunn 790)

Thus, it can be argued that while narrating David's childhood memories, Dickens is reconstructing his and David's childhood in which elements of horror are diminished (but not substituted) by those of illusion. In this sense, Dickens is re-living his childhood traumas by allaying them in order to make them less painful.

As Dunn argues, "David [...] shifts the focus from himself and at times seems hardly to belong in the world he presents" (Dunn 791). In view of the above, Dunn reflects on Johnson's statement that "[...] Dickens having once transferred the painful events of his own experience to his hero, found it unbearable to return to the subject and show more fully the lasting effects of David's unhappy childhood".⁷⁰

4.2. David's reconstruction through Clara and Dora

When analysing Dickens's *David Copperfield*, we regard the novel as Dickens' pattern of life. However, it is worth emphasising that the novel is not simply a recollection of Dickens's childhood memories partly fictionalised through the character of David. Apart from being directly connected with Dickens's past experiences, the novel represents the reconstruction of his present identity. As Bell remarks, "[...] the fact that Dickens should deliberately compare himself at forty-three with David at around twenty suggests that the novel was concerned with a kind of personal mental life as well – with wishes and conflict that had not changed" (Bell 637). Furthermore, Bell argues that Dickens pushes the limits of the narrative to a point where David, the protagonist, becomes the extension of Dickens himself (ibid.). The pattern of *David Copperfield*'s narrative is to find 'the hero' while researching innocent childhood memories. David's development starts when he recognises that the events are not in the way he thought them to be. Conflicts which

⁷⁰ Qtd. in Dunn 791-2.

David is experiencing for himself are experienced by Dickens too. As Bell further observes, “[...] for both David and Dickens the experience of *David Copperfield* was an exercise in self-instruction” (Bell 638). At the end of the novel, lessons introduced in the novel are learned by David and Dickens the artist, but somehow Dickens the man does not profit from them. For, in *David Copperfield*, Dickens the artist becomes more realistic and less optimistic. However, Dickens, the man, does not achieve this kind of self-alternation:

David learns to mistrust “the first unmistakable impulse of an undisciplined heart”; Dickens pursues and cherishes such impulses until his death. David learns what Dickens is intellectually aware of but emotionally cannot accept: that there is no womb after birth itself, no faery [sic] realms untouched by time and the world, no innocence that remains uncorrupted. (Bell 638)

As David grows older and approaches maturity, he re-enacts his past experience by looking backward at it and identifies with people in his surroundings:

This working-through occurs in fragmented, flawed, or partial identification with surrogate father and mother figures and alter egos; his repeated involvement with men who are unsuccessfully attempting to find themselves vocationally; and his selective memory for and repetitive participation in triangular structures of sexual competition. (Carmichael 653)

David’s past recollections are predominantly related to his relationships with his mother, Clara, and Dora. His personal development is mirrored in his infatuations, love affairs, children, men and women around him which he gradually learns to understand and love. By observing David’s women, we can remark a pattern of David’s relationship towards them. First, his mother Clara acts childishly, Emily is his childhood love, and he marries Dora, ‘a child bride’. In David’s world, all three of them are victims of some sort of catastrophes; therefore David suffers with and for them. David’s narrative represents one of Dickens’s own fantasies. If we recall Dickens’s own life, striking parallels appear; his early love for Maria Beadnell, unhappy marriage to Kate, the death of Mary, and an affair with Ellen Ternan which ended an already shaky marriage.

To start off with his mother Clara, we see David whose childhood is merry and innocent since his mother is also child-like. There is no difference between them, since they do not need to do anything except enjoy one's company:

Now I am in the garden at the back, beyond the yard where the empty pigeon-house and dog-kennel are—a very preserve of butterflies, as I remember it, with a high fence, and a gate and padlock; where the fruit clusters on the trees, riper and richer than fruit has ever been since, in any other garden, and where my mother gathers some in a basket, while I stand by, bolting furtive gooseberries, and trying to look unmoved. A great wind rises, and the summer is gone in a moment. We are playing in the winter twilight, dancing about the parlour. When my mother is out of breath and rests herself in an elbow-chair, I watch her winding her bright curls round her fingers, and straitening her waist, and nobody knows better than I do that she likes to look so well, and is proud of being so pretty. (*DC* 15-16)

With the intrusion of the Murdstones, David's life changes radically, and instead of freely enjoying his childhood years, he, as well as his mother, has to control his feelings, "Now, Clara, my dear, recollect! Control yourself, always control yourself!" (*DC*, ch. III). The most appropriate way to reach maturity is discipline, as David calls it 'firmness', which means suppressing all emotions, including love. Mr. Murdstone, as he states, is there to form Clara's character and make her fit for the real world of adults. Consequently, under such a strict regimen, comprised of emotional abuse, Clara fades away and dies. With the death of Clara, a great portion of David's childhood years vanishes too. The cruel world of Murdstones has erased Clara even before she was dead, and it is this world that robbed David of his child mother and not her death itself. As Bell observes, "[t]he result of her death, in fact, is that the child Clara is resurrected to live as she was in David's imagination; in effect she must die so that the fact of what she has become, has been made into by the Murdstones, will not be there to contradict the recollection of what she was" (Bell 640).

When David is informed about her death, he laments over his earliest impressions of her as a young mother, "It may be curious, but it is true. In her death she winged her way back to her calm untroubled youth, and cancelled all the rest".⁷¹ As Gilmour observes,

⁷¹ *DC* 124, qtd. in Pettersson 66.

the feelings of sorrow caused by Murdstones 'are cancelled'.⁷² However, as Pettersson remarks, this kind of observation is child-like and not one of an adult narrator (Pettersson 66). David as an adult narrator is able "to stand back and evaluate them from a more level-headed point of view: 'it may be curious'" (ibid.). However, although David matures, his present feelings regarding the past ones are also complex, and he has to re-experience them in order to have a more objective point of view. Here is a passage where David recollects one of the Murdstone's visits and his mother kneeling by his bedside:

Can I say of her face – altered as I have reason to remember it, perished as I know it is – that it is gone, when here it comes before me at this instant, as distinct as any face that I may choose to look on in a crowded street? Can I say of her innocent and girlish beauty, that it faded, and was no more, when its breath falls on my cheek now, as it fell that night? Can I say she ever changed, when my remembrance brings her back to life, thus only; and, truer to its loving youth than I have been, or man ever is, still holds fast what it cherished then? (*DC* 23)

The passage above tells us that David is capable of recollecting the past images of his mother as they were at that time. However, this approach provides David with a larger context with different implications from which he can draw his conclusions. Since he states that her face has altered, he is able to recollect memories when his mother's face was different to that of a 'girlish beauty' and is able to trace back why it was altered and by whom:

The phrase foreshadows her dismal marriage to Murdstone, which rather than being partitioned off is also present to David's mind as he writes the passage. 'Perished as I know it is' then alludes to transience in a wider, philosophical sense, and the observation that his remembrance is 'truer to its loving youth than I have been, or man ever is' points up the impossibility to maintain that very stance of affective memory which David has now recaptured for a moment. (Pettersson 66)

As a result, we are witnessing inconsistency in David's feelings towards his mother. At the same time, he cherishes her and blames her for the loss of his family happiness. As Pettersson points out, this is understandable from a logical point of view (ibid.). However, when emotions are in question, one cannot stop loving someone just because of

⁷² Qtd. in Pettersson 66.

one's flaws. The feeling of love should enable one to love someone as long as it is possible. In case of David as an adult narrator, he is aware of his inconsistency and tries to balance between the elements of his ambivalence (ibid.).

David's personal development and his ambivalence are best shown through his relationship with Dora. His ambivalence is pointed at the time of the narrative when he loves Dora, but is also annoyed by her impracticability and childish behaviour at the same time. However, the problem does not only represent his tension between mixed emotional hardships in the present, but represents the main moral message of the novel. We, as readers, are expected to see "fulfilment and maturity of David's feelings for Agnes", and precisely this tension represents "the central ambiguity of the novel" (Gilmour 37).

The journey of David's moral development in regard to Dora starts with Emily who is eloping with Steerforth and David's feeling of guilt. However, David's feelings of grief for the lost Emily only stay for a short period of time with him since he never goes back to see her after she has come back home. For him it is as if she has ceased to exist. As Bell observes, "[t]he illusion and the dream, [...] must not be violated by the fact" (Bell 641). Instead of lamenting on Emily's misfortune, David turns his thoughts to another imaginative thought, namely that of Dora. After his present illusion turns its back on him, David is in search for another. As Bell argues, this is typical both for David the narrator and Dickens the author (ibid.). Since Dora is described as innocent and child-like, this kind of David's new illusion is remarkably similar to that of his childish mother from his past:

All this time, [refers to the time after Emily has gone with Steerforth] I had gone on loving Dora harder than ever. Her idea was my refuge in disappointment and distress, and made some amends to me, even for the loss of my friend ... The greater the accumulation of deceit and trouble in the world, the brighter and purer shone the star of Dora high above the world. (DC 474)

Dora's companionship is strikingly similar to the time of David's innocent childhood with his mother. His marriage with Dora is a desperate attempt to recover his dead mother. As described in David's narration, he is swallowed in "the abyss" of this love; he

could “drown” in it (*DC* 535); it is an “insubstantial, happy, foolish time” (*DC* 550); the “idea” – not the real experience – of Dora is his “refuge in disappointment and distress”; and her “image” is his “consolation” (*DC* 534).⁷³ The whole courtship episode carries certain magical elements. For example, the sudden reappearance of Mrs. Murdstone as Dora’s companion, as she was previously to the late Clara, and David’s mentioning of Dora’s curly hair, their walks in the garden and dances are all replicas of David’s experience with his ‘child-mother’, “[h]er childish way was the most delicious way in the world to me” (*DC* 603). As Carmichael remarks, David is struck by the feeling coming over him when Aunt Betsey asks him whether Dora is silly or light-headed: “Without knowing why, I felt a vague unhappy loss or want of something overshadow me like a cloud” (*DC* 565), and later that night he experiences dreams of deprivation and distress in which Dora unstoppably dances, “without taking the least notice of me” (*DC* 566).⁷⁴ As a result, David is blinded while attempting to re-experience his blissful childhood memories:

His inability to understand the connection between the feeling of loss and deprivation from his mother and his present experience with the childish Dora allows him to believe that in his courtship and marriage with Dora he will recover the relationship represented by the image, that he will achieve imaginary immediacy in his present world. (Carmichael 662)

In his narrative about Dora, David is not describing his relationship with another person, but he is constantly attempting to create an imaginary of an old relationship which was once original, direct and real, as Carmichael calls it “a dual relationship that was once ‘all in all’” (*ibid.*). In view of the above, Bell remarks that “marriage with Dora is as close as David comes to realizing in his maturity the “calm, untroubled” times of his childhood – “a party-supper-table kind of life,” Aunt Betsey calls it” (Bell 641).

Therefore, David’s marriage to Dora provokes feelings of insufficiency in him.

Nevertheless, it is Dora who invents the name ‘child-wife’; therefore, it is she who introduces the feeling of no expectations: “I don’t mean, you silly fellow, that you should use the name instead of Dora. I only mean that you should think of me that way. When

⁷³ Qtd. in Carmichael 662.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

you are going to be angry with me, say to yourself, "it's only my child-wife!" (DC 644). In the next passage, Dora reveals the truth behind her narrative, namely as Bell remarks, "that she is dying almost as an act of will": "I am afraid it would have been better, if we have only loved each other, as a boy and girl, and forgotten it".⁷⁵ David's thoughts on his feeling of loss and judgment of character are confusing and ambiguous to him; the realisation of his dreams, which are to be different from his past, has not been reached yet:

The old unhappy loss or want of something had, I am conscious, some place in my heart; but not to the embitterment of my life. When I walked alone in the fine weather, and thought of the summer days when all the air had been filled with my boyish enchantment, I did miss something of the realization of my dreams; but I thought it was a softened glory of the Past, which nothing could have thrown upon the present time. (DC 646)

Nevertheless, four chapters later, David realises that his wishes to have a better adulthood than his childhood years are not coming true. David is aware of the fact that the life he leads with Dora is insufficient, and filled with the feelings of missing and wanting:

What I missed, I still regarded—I always regarded—as something that had been a dream of my youthful fancy; that was incapable of realization; that I was now discovering to be so, with some natural pain, as all men did. But that it would have been better for me if my wife could have helped me more, and shared the many thoughts in which I had no partner; and that this might have been; I knew.

Between these two irreconcilable conclusions: the one, that what I felt was general and unavoidable; the other, that it was particular to me, and might have been different: I balanced curiously, with no distinct sense of their opposition to each other. When I thought of the airy dreams of youth that are incapable of realization, I thought of the better state preceding manhood that I had outgrown [...]. (DC 695).

As a result, David has finally discovered a conflict between his wishes and needs, in which Dora represents his desire and Agnes his necessity. Again, David's imaginary of Dora being a perfect wife for him results in the discovery of reality, in which, his fantasies and dreams are confronted with real-life situations.

⁷⁵ Qtd. in Bell 642.

As David discovers the conflict between reality and imagination, Dickens does this too. However, in order for Dickens to see things as they truly are he has to be shocked by some event. In the case of his first and almost fanatic love towards Maria Beadnell, we observe how Dickens stays in the world of imagination. After Maria has recognised herself in *David Copperfield*, and approached him in a letter, Dickens does not acknowledge the fact that she is almost twenty years older now, and writes her back in the following manner:

You are always the same in my remembrance. When you say you are “toothless, fat, old and ugly” (which I don’t believe), I fly away to the house in Lombard Street, which is pulled down, as if it were necessary that the very bricks and mortar should go the way of my fairy castles, and see you in a sort of raspberry coloured dress with a little black trimming at the top.
... And I have gone over that ground within these twelve months hoping it was not ungrateful to consider whether any reputation the world can bestow is repayment to a man for the loss of such a vision of his youth as mine.⁷⁶

It seems that it never occurred to Dickens that Maria probably looks a lot different after twenty years have passed, and her look is different from the one which lingered in Dickens’s remembrance. As Bell remarks, “[h]is mind was contemplating phantasy and has made a characteristic leap outside of time into a realm where things and people do not change. When the fat and silly Maria of the flesh actually appeared, the shock was severe” (Bell 637).

After David, Dickens’s narrator, suffers insufficiency in his marriage, and loss with the death of his wife, he turns his attention to a third person which will serve as compensation, namely Agnes. As soon as David met Agnes for the first time, she represented to him a natural home, his best friend and refuge. Although he met her before Dora, Agnes “has [always] provided an external completion for David’s lack of self-reliance” (Carmichael 663-64). As Carmichael further argues, David has always insisted on describing his feelings for Agnes in a non-sexual way; for him, she is his beloved sister who is responsible for all good and moral in him (ibid.): “I seem to want some faculty of mind that I ought to have. You were so much in the habit of thinking for me ... and I came so naturally to you for counsel and support, that I really think I have missed

⁷⁶ *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Walter Dexter (London, 1937-38), II, 634; qtd. in Bell 636-37.

acquiring it”.⁷⁷ Although David stubbornly claims that Agnes is like a sister to him, they form a marriage and stable family. Finally, as Carmichael argues, David has discovered in Agnes “the other half of the desired mother, the nurturing mother, the approving, sustaining mother [...]” (Carmichael 664). However, his marriage to Agnes illustrates David’s split image of an ideal-woman for him. At first, he was sexually attracted to Dora, and later, loved his second wife Agnes as a sister. According to Carmichael, this split image is characteristic of the Victorian ideal of a woman, in which non-sexual attributes are emphasised and sexual are degraded (ibid.).

David’s compensation on the insufficiency he experienced in his family life can be viewed as Dickens’s fictionalisation of his own troublesome marriage life. At the age of 37, Dickens was married and already father to eight children; and as he later in his life wrote: “Why is it, that as with poor David, a sense always come crushing down upon me now, when I fall into low spirits, as of one happiness I have missed in life, and one friend and companion I have never made?”⁷⁸ As we know from Dickens’s life, his marriage to Kate ended with divorce causing a huge scandal at the time, and his subsequent affair with Ellen brought him some negative publicity. Judging from what we know of them, Maria and Ellen were not like Agnes. And, after fourteen years of marriage to Kate, we could assume that at some point he wanted her to be his Agnes. Although Dickens never found that ‘perfect companion’, neither in Kate nor Ellen, nor in any other woman, David’s insufficient Dora is killed off and replaced with an adequate companion, Agnes. In view of the above, Carmichael concludes that Dickens “like David, attempts to give fictive expression to the recovery of the Imaginary; [however] both have produced a narrative text in which the Imaginary is radically bifurcated and transformed by telling” (Carmichael 666). As Carmichael continues with her conclusion, she observes that in the case of David’s/Dickens’s narrative

[t]he image of sexual love is first split into mutually exclusive images of sexuality and love, and then the image of sexuality is transmuted into death, and the image of love, deprived of its body, is abstracted into virtual transcendence. Through the work of this text, devoid of irony, and with no dimensions of the tragic, the desire for sexual love ends in death and abstraction. (ibid.)

⁷⁷ DC 630-31, qtd. in Carmichael 664.

⁷⁸ Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, revised and abridged (New York: The Viking Press, 1952), 415; qtd. in Carmichael 666.

4.3. Mr. Dick, Aunt Betsey and the Micawbers as surrogate parents

Besides David, it is important to stress the role of Mr. Dick in Dickens's description of dealing with past traumas. Furthermore, Dickens emphasizes the significance of Mr. Dick's efforts to overcome his past traumatic memories by putting them in the same chapter where David finishes with the telling of his childhood story. In the novel, the character of Mr. Dick does not completely resemble both young David and the adult narrator who is telling the story. However, in relation to autobiographical elements, there is a striking resemblance between Mr. Dick and Charles Dickens. Mr. Dick's realisation of the worldly disorder is one of the most complex metaphors and themes in the novel. If we analyse Mr. Dick not only as a character, but also as a prolific writer, we can better understand Dickens, the author. Upon the first time David visits Mr. Dick's room, he is introduced to Dick's Memorial and a large paper kite. Dick immediately asks David a question: "How does the world go? I'll tell you what," he added in a lower tone, "I shouldn't wish it to be mentioned, but it's a" – here he beckoned to me, and put his lips close to my ear – "it's a mad world. Mad as bedlam, boy!" (DC 160) Dick's main reason for calling the world mad is because of his own family situation. Mr. Dick experienced traumatic events when he was sent to a lunatic asylum. In an effort to deal with his trauma, Mr. Dick repeatedly starts with the writing of the Memorial. However, as a consequence of this terrible event, Mr. Dick is unable to finish his Memorial because of the constant intrusion of King Charles's head. As Hornback remarks, in the Memorial Dick complains about "the general state of man [...]" and the Memorial is the document which attempts to describe the "Mad as Bedlam" world which Dick sees" (Hornback 659). This Memorial represents an autobiography of Mr. Dick, and serves as means of dealing with trauma. However, he is constantly reminded of King Charles's beheading which brings his writing to a standstill making him start all over again, "the recollection of it is oppressive to him even now" (DC 204). Spengemann illustrates Dick's inability to finish his life story by stating that:

Whatever its subject, the work proceeds slowly, for the oppressive memory of the author's own youthful unhappiness keeps intruding itself in the form of allusions

to “Charles the First,” whose heedful of troubles have unaccountably found their way into Dick’s own muddled brain. (Spengemann 127)

As Miss Betsey remarks, Dick’s reference to King Charles is an “allegorical way of expressing” his “great disturbance and agitation” over the ill-treatment he received as a child.⁷⁹ Hence, as Spengemann further argues, instead of finishing and publishing the Memorial, Dick writes the facts on a kite “with plenty of string ... ; and when it flies high, it takes the facts a long way. That’s my manner of diffusing them”.⁸⁰

If we regard Dickens’s past memories through a semi-autobiographical illustration of David’s adventures, we can equally assume that Dickens’s “view of himself as the author of *David Copperfield* shines through the translucent fictive allegory of Mr. Dick” (Spengemann 128). Although both David and Dick carry autobiographical aspects of Dickens in themselves, the two of them relate to each other in the novel only in a fictive way. Nevertheless, through this fictive approach Dickens aims to solve the problem of autobiography in the novel itself. Since Mr. Dick is unable to write his narrative in the form of a novel, like David does, his narrative is inferior to David’s. As Woodfield remarks, “David’s suspicion of the reliability of Mr. Dick is the source of David’s authority, it is what makes him the reliable narrator” (Woodfield 84). Hence, these two characters are firmly related to each other by their childhood experiences. To emphasise the role of Mr. Dick even more, Spengemann claims that:

The stunted personality of Mr. Dick, the child-man, represents, far more persuasively than does either the Charles Dickens of public repute or the David Copperfield who appears in later chapters, the consequences of a childhood like David’s blighted by cruelty and devoid of any prospects for improvement. (Spengemann 128)

Nevertheless, Mr. Dick is not sufficient a character to fulfill the role of representing the mature Dickens. This process is achieved by other characters who possess psychological elements of the “author’s self” (Spengemann 129).

⁷⁹ Qtd. in Spengemann 127.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

The theme of the parents in *David Copperfield* is subtly transformed from Dickens's own life. Early in the book, David has no parents after the death of his mother Clara. Although Mr. and Mrs. Dickens do not become Mr. and Mrs. Copperfield in the novel, part of their traits are illustrated through other characters in the novel. For example, these traits are partially embodied in Mr. and Mrs. Micawber, and Aunt Betsey. Thus, these characters become surrogate parents to David the protagonist, at the same time they illustrate some of the features of Dickens's own parents.

In Dickens's autobiographical fiction, the role of the parents transformed from reality into fiction, is divided into several characters. Mrs. Copperfield stands for love, tenderness, a sentimental and uncritical mother; Mr. Murdstone illustrates cruelty by sending David to hard labour, Micawbers as "two picturesque and appealing personalities in spite of serious deficiencies", and Aunt Betsey, as David's advisor, educator, and protector, all that David always wished he had. (Monod 330).

The importance of Micawbers is not reflected in their moral choices and judgments, but in the manner in which their characters transpose autobiographical traits of their 'originals'. There are several devices used by Dickens, which illustrate the shift from autobiography to fiction in the case of Mr. Micawber. However, what can be argued as sufficiently original is the language of Mr. Micawber:

The few letters by John Dickens [Dickens's father] that have been preserved and his son's passing allusions – 'as my father would say' – show that Mr. Micawber's speech had its source in the living model. An inordinate fondness for Latin words of legal origin and for pedantic circumlocutions is the most obvious characteristic. (Monod 331)

Mr. Micawber's speech is odd and to some extent not understandable for an average listener. Here is Mr. Micawber's apology to a stranger whom he finds in Traddles' room, "I was not aware that there was an individual, alien to this tenement, in your sanctum".⁸¹ The second example is his answer after being asked for his and the health of his wife, "I am in *statu qou* ... Mrs. Micawber ... is also, thank God, in *statu qou* [The children] are

⁸¹ Qtd. in Monod 331.

likewise in the enjoyment of salubrity”.⁸² According to Monod, the last phrase of this excerpt is considered to be one of John Dickens’s favourite (ibid.). Mr. Micawber’s oddity in expression is illustrated by the complexities of his word phrases, which have to be translated into English in order to be understandable.⁸³

Mrs. Micawber is in a state of health which renders it not wholly improbable than an addition may be ultimately made to those pledges of affection which – in short, to the infantine group ...

I have been under the necessity of assuming a garb from which my natural instincts recoil – I allude to spectacles – and possessing myself of a cognomen to which I can establish no legitimate pretension.⁸⁴

As Monod argues, Mr. Micawber’s language provides comic relief which, in turn, illustrates the contrast between “his brilliant economic principles and his lamentable practice” (Monod 331). Mrs. Micawber is described as having little pity for the death of her own parents. It can be argued that this particular trait of hers is reflected in Dickens’s own mother who, according to Forster, had little pity for Dickens having to work hard as a young boy. Being a character which employs laughter in the novel, Mr. Micawber is only at one point made pathetic by Dickens, and that is when he questions the morality of his choice to be an accomplice to Heep: “‘It is my fate,’ said Mr. Micawber, unfeignedly, sobbing, but doing even that, with a shadow of the old expression of doing something genteel; ‘it is my fate, gentlemen, that the finer feeling of our nature have become reproaches to me ...’”⁸⁵

However, as Monod also remarks, we should not completely and utterly regard Wilkins Micawber as a copy of John Dickens. As mentioned earlier, Dickens gives David his surrogate parents which carry the traits of Mr. and Mrs. Dickens. Nevertheless, the traits of Dickens’s own parents are illustrated in many various ways and are comprised of fictional attributes, specifically the realistic features. There are many differences between Dickens’s parents, Dickens himself, and the Micawbers. Dickens wrote an epitaph for his

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Monod 331.

⁸⁴ Qtd. in Monod 331.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

father, in which he describes him as “a zealous, useful, cheerful spirit”.⁸⁶ This description certainly “shows that a purely Micawberish view of John Dickens would not be justified”.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, as Monod concludes, there is no doubt that the Micawbers are loved by his author. His love for the fictional characters of the Micawbers is rooted in the love he felt for their ‘originals’, namely Dickens’s parents (Monod 333).

The character of Betsey Trotwood is, according to Forster, not present in Dickens’s real life and illustrates quite a difference between David and his author, Dickens. However, as Monod argues, in David’s life, “Betsey Trotwood embodies the novelist’s notion of what a parent must be in order to be at the same time, and in the fullest acceptance of the term, an educator” (Monod 330). Betsey Trotwood is energetic, authoritative, although at times eccentric, but at the same time generous and helpful. These traits represent David’s personal aspirations which he was trying to achieve throughout the novel. Her authoritative personality is exposed at the very beginning of the novel where she almost instructs Clara to give birth to a girl, and does not expect anything different: “I have a presentiment that it must be a girl’ [...] ‘Perhaps boy,’ [Clara replies] ‘Don’t contradict. From the moment of this girl’s birth, child, I intend to be her friend’ [...]”.⁸⁸ Later in the novel we are presented with a helpful and caring Betsey, when she takes in Mr. Dick and David. The colourfulness of her character is illustrated by her brisk manner of speech and unexpected actions. After David spent some time at her cottage in Dover, one morning she suddenly asks him whether he would like to go to school: “Should you like to go to school at Canterbury?” I replied that I should like it very much [...] ‘Good,’ said my aunt. ‘Should you like to go to-morrow?’”.⁸⁹ Her firmness in thought and authority are illustrated through many examples in the course of the novel, for example when David goes to London and she is there as ‘an educator’ helping him to choose his future profession, but at the same time is dissatisfied with the food presented to her: “I hope the steak may be beef, but I don’t believe it. Nothing’s genuine in the place in my opinion, but the dirt [...] It would be no pleasure to a London tradesman to sell anything which

⁸⁶ Forster, *Life of Dickens*, II, 92; qtd. in Monod 333.

⁸⁷ Qtd. in Monod 333.

⁸⁸ Qtd. in Monod 335.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

was what he presented it was”.⁹⁰ One of the most powerful bursts of Betsey’s firmness is one of her confrontations with the vicious Uriah Heep, whom she naturally dislikes:

“Don’t be galvanic, sir.” “I ask your pardon, Miss Trotwood,” returned Uriah; “I am aware you’re nervous.” “Go along with you, sir!” said my aunt, anything but appeased. “Don’t presume to say so! I’m nothing of the sort. If you’re an eel, sir, conduct yourself like one. If you’re a man, control your limbs, sir! Good God!” said my aunt with great indignation, “I am not going to be serpentine and corkscrewed out of my senses!”⁹¹

To conclude, although Miss Betsey does not reflect any of the people in Dickens’s real life, and is a representative of his artistic fiction, she is illustrated as an important character in David’s life story. After losing her mother and a home, she takes him in and educates him, giving him financial support and guidance in his life choices. The importance of Aunt Betsey is stressed by Monod, who remarks that:

The presence of Betsey Trotwood in *David Copperfield* is the supreme achievement of Dickens’s art in his autobiographical novel. Miss Betsey is an entirely imaginary creation, yet she is fully as convincing, as lively, and as real as the characters painted from identifiable originals. [...] That superior truthfulness secures the unity and the permanence of the whole book. (Monod 335)

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

4.4. David the novelist – Dickens the author

In the novel, Dickens treats David's career, in all stages, as a higher one. In order to discover the actual significance of David's career, we must refer to the full title of the novel - *The Personal History, Experience and Observation of David Copperfield the Younger of Blunderstone Rookery*. As Hornback observes, if we call the novel by its shortened name *David Copperfield*, it resembles Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist*. Hence, *David Copperfield* could be regarded only as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Hornback 663). Nevertheless, one is certain – David Copperfield is a novelist. There is an evident difference between the two Davids in the novel, as Hornback remarks:

The character David writes novels of social criticism, and is at work on such during the course of the story which the narrator writes – which is, of course, the novel we are reading, *David Copperfield*. The David who writes the novels of social criticism is writing Charles Dickens's career; the David who writes *David Copperfield* seems to represent Dickens's ambition as a novelist, as an artist. (ibid.)

Although several characters in the novel emphasise the success of David's writing, David the narrator rarely addresses the subject of his success and work, "When I refer to them, incidentally, it is only as part of my progress".⁹² The story of David's progress is a complex one, but, at the same time has a straightforward structure. During his childhood years, innocent David experiences all the evil contained in the novel. As his story progresses, he is sent to school, loses his mother, is sent to work by Mr. Murdstone, and makes acquaintances with the Micawbers and prison. The most emotional part of his progress within his "Personal History" reaches its climax in his frightful journey to Dover. After he finishes school, David tries his luck in practicing law, but soon gives up and escapes into a childish and unhappy marriage to Dora, ending in his later marriage to Agnes. However, the part of the title "Personal History" does not encompass the whole story of the novel. Again, as Hornback argues, all parts of the novel's title must be analysed and referred to as parts of David's progress; the beginning of the novel is

⁹² Qtd. in Hornback 663.

pointed to David's "Adventures" as his own experience, while David the narrator describes himself as a young boy in this world (Hornback 664). As David grows, so does his view on the things that happened and affected him. At this point of the novel, we are, as Hornback remarks, directed to his "Observations" and "Experience", "which has made his point of view – which has made, indeed, his point of view as an artist" (ibid.). David's relationships with other characters in the novel, especially those with his mother, Mr. Murdstone, Peggotty, Micawbers, Aunt Betsey and Mr. Dick, are part of his comprehension of the world and play an important role in understanding David's own achievement. David's "Observations" are exactly those relationships with other characters through which David gains understanding of the world described in the novel. In view of the above, the novel illustrates David's destiny not as the fact that he should marry Dora or Agnes and live happily ever after, but to comprehend the reality of the world that surrounds him. Furthermore, the purpose of David's development is to understand the faiths of his fellow characters, being involved "dramatically, organically, personally, and psychologically in their lives" (ibid.). In view of the above, according to Hornback, David's main destiny is the writing of the novel itself; and finally, "he *is* his understanding of the response to all these characters – and in this he is an artist" (ibid.). Although David diminishes the importance of his novels, his occupation as a novelist is vividly stressed. At the end of the novel, the two Davids merge and become one person. Throughout the course of the story, David has re-created his past by listening to Aunt Betsey's advice "to recall the past" if "it works some influence in the present".⁹³ By recreating his past experience in order to understand the present, David is at this point the novel itself. As the two Davids merge into one, he creates and finishes his story, "in doing so, he fulfills the purpose of the artist, to form order out of chaos, by making the larger world of experience meaningful" (Hornback 665).

Although Dickens as the author often makes judgments on morality, his narrator David only comprehends the world as it is. It can be argued that Dickens is sometimes, like Mr. Dick, impatient, but David the novelist never loses his patience. The faiths of *David Copperfield's* characters are illustrated by David as true ones, and we as readers accept them as such. David is capable of achieving such a reality by placing people once lost

⁹³ Qtd. in Hornback 665.

into their appropriate habitats and personalities. For example, he makes people from his past like Aunt Betsey, Peggotty, and his wife Agnes his new family; Mr. Dick has probably overcome his trauma, and the villain Heep is given a suitable punishment. With regard to Dickens himself, David Copperfield is his “wish-fulfillment” (Hornback 667). Although there are some topics which Dickens stubbornly attacks in the novel, like the “lovelessness of man, and on man’s humanity to man”⁹⁴, his narrator David accepts the world as it is:

That it does this in the name of a novelist – David – who has a “power of doing good,” whose audience reads his works “with delight, with entertainment, with instruction” marks the seriousness of the novel’s claim for itself. In *David Copperfield* Dickens demonstrates the claim of fiction to be called the art of fiction. He demonstrates this art of fiction by dramatizing in David and in the novel which David writes, the function of the artist, as lover. (Ibid.)

As already mentioned in this thesis, there are numerous parallels between Dickens and David. However, in the course of the novel, we have seen how David has progressed and understood the world around him. Now, the question is to what extent Dickens himself could have identified with the David developed at the end of the novel. The parallels between the two are obvious, Dora-Maria, Agnes-Catherine, degrading childhood labor, and last but not least, the career of a successful novelist. Since David’s personal development has secured him a successful career as a novelist, I would like to address here the importance of *David Copperfield* for Dickens’s own development. The end of *David Copperfield* marked the first stage of Dickens’s career. After *David Copperfield*, he started to write his next novel *Bleak House*, in which the gloomy world of Dickens comes to surface. If we address Dickens’s life of this period, we will find that he underwent tremendous stress and loss. First, his wife Catherine suffered a nervous breakdown, his father died after a painful operation, and his infant daughter, only eight months old, also died. In spite of experiencing such catastrophes in his personal life, it seems as if Dickens kept strong and embarked on another project. In Forster’s *Dickens* we can find

⁹⁴ Qtd. in Hornback 667.

the following quote, written by Dickens only few days after his father's death: "I am quite happy again, but I have undergone a great deal".⁹⁵

Even after the sudden death of beloved Mary Hogarth, Dickens returned to his work by writing the comedy *Pickwick* and was able to finish it with a triumph. Hence, the horrific personal troubles Dickens experienced in a longer span of time were not the reason for his gloomy atmosphere in later novels. Many critics argue that something happened to Dickens while writing *David Copperfield*. These arguments state that in *David Copperfield*, he was finally able to write about his past, freeing himself from it. However, Pettersson questions the claim by Philip Hobsbaum that "Dickens was able to 'purge himself of autobiography' and so to 'move forward'".⁹⁶ Pettersson holds the opposite explanation of Dickens's need to introduce autobiographical elements in the novel in order to overcome his past traumas. As Pettersson remarks, with *David Copperfield*, Dickens did not succeed in freeing himself from demons of the past, which is the theory contradicting the common opinion on the subject of autobiography employed in *David Copperfield*:

If that were true, we should not again find the familiar figure of the shockingly neglected child in Jo of *Bleak House* nor the focus, in *Little Dorrit*, on the Marshalsea Prison, where Dickens's father was detained in the doleful spring of 1824 while he suffered from neglect at the blackening warehouse. These elements in later work indicate that Dickens had failed to achieve catharsis by writing *Copperfield*. (Pettersson 72)

As Pettersson further argues, Dickens did not achieve full identification with David since David "suffers from emotional turmoil rather than with the mature narrator" (ibid.). However, although Pettersson claims that Dickens was not able to become David, or vice versa, the self-construction of Dickens by means of David's development can hold ground since both of them become successful novelists at the end of their paths toward self-invention. In view of the Pettersson claim, I would like to come up with a counter-argument by stating that many autobiographical elements in *Copperfield* enabled Dickens to at least face his traumas and articulate them perhaps for the first time in his life.

⁹⁵ Forster, vol. 2, p. 197; qtd. in Pettersson 72.

⁹⁶ Hobsbaum 150.; qtd. in Pettersson 72.

Whether the writing about traumatic experiences freed him from them or not, his attempt at articulating them through his extraordinary autobiographical fiction is worth emphasising, because it constitutes the first step towards his own recovery. If David becomes a successful novelist only to reinforce Dickens's self-esteem and prove to him that he really is what the audience reckons, it is an attempt worth trying, in order to achieve the ability needed to truly investigate his own life and achievement through his later novel *Great Expectations*.

4.5. Reconstruction of Pip – ‘an orphan child’

Great Expectations belongs to the genre of *Bildungsroman* or a coming-of-age novel, in which a personal development of its protagonist is depicted. As in many nineteenth-century novels, the main protagonist in *Great Expectations* is an orphan, which in return gives an author the opportunity to begin the narration of the protagonist's life from the very beginning. Brooks elaborates on the use of an orphan child in nineteenth-century novel as means of creating a specific kind of narrative, namely the one which starts from the beginning of the protagonist's life:

While there may be sociological and sentimental reasons to account for the high incidence of orphans in nineteenth-century novel, clearly they present an author with the greatest possible opportunity to create all the determinants of plot within the text, to profit from what Gide called the “lawlessness” of the novel by starting with an undefined, rule-free character and then bringing the law to bear upon him – creating the rules – as the text proceeds. (Brooks 505)

Having a narrative as such and an orphan protagonist, Dickens is able to present us with a character in the need to construct his identity starting from the very infancy. As mentioned before, Lacan argues that human beings are not able to possess unified selves. Since they completely rely on their parents for food and warmth, they are predominately passive figures (Booker 36). However, as Lacan further argues, it is these abstract relationships that enable them to become “full social being”, but as a result “this full social being is founded on repression, the deferral of pleasure, and therefore the division

of the Self” (Rabaté 60). As Rabaté further remarks, Lacan’s thought is paradoxical since the becoming of a full social being is based on some fundamental lack or alienation (Rabaté 12).

The opening of the novel represents this kind of Lacanian thought, portrayed in the mirror stage. As Lacan believes, this stage roughly corresponds to the Freudian Oedipal stage, in which the child sees itself in the mirror and constructs its identity on the basis of an image. Since this kind of activity belongs to the imaginary phase, the child seeing an image constructs only an idea of the Self, and not the Self itself. Thus, the child has to have some other image to which he can relate to, and Lacan introduces the idea of the Other to be able to distinguish the concept of the Other from actual others. As Conner remarks, the concept of the Other roughly corresponds to culture and laws, “[o]bserving this mirror image permits human beings to perceive images that have discrete boundaries, allowing them to become aware of themselves as independent beings who are separate from their mothers” (Conner 113-14).

As from the very beginning of the novel, Pip is in search of an authority. Looking at the tombstones which bear the names of his deceased family members, Pip speaks with an “infant tongue”, and as such could only produce a short form of his real name, namely Pip:

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

I give Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister,—Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. (*GE* 3)

Pip has a spontaneous relationship to language. Thus, he ignores social laws and constructs his name from Others. Hence, Pip’s own name is a product of an act of self-naming. The novel starts with the name, therefore, we can assume that the narrator pronounces everything, since he is telling us his life story. However, Pip can barely pronounce his own name, and shortens it to simply Pip as he has remarked it from the

pronunciation of Others, too. Pip's process of constructing the identity is not a rational one, because he draws conclusions based on the letters written on the tombstone. Brooks remarks Pip's distorted self-image by arguing that "[t]he tracing of the name – which he has already distorted in its application to self – involves a misguided attempt to remotivate the graphic symbol, to make it directly mimetic, mimetic specifically of origin" (Brooks 505). Dickens uses the symbol of the tombstone as Pip's decipherment of his own identity (Brooks 505). At the very beginning of the narration, Pip conceives that his identity in relation to others is the one of an alien:

My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dikes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!" (*GE* 3-4)

In regards to the above abstract from the novel, Brooks illustrates Pip's realisation of his identity as something "other":

The repeated verbs of existence – "was" and "were" – perform an elementary phenomenology of Pip's world, locating its irreducible objects, and leading finally to the individual subject as other, as aware of its existence through the emotion of fear, fear which then appears as the origin of voice, or articulated sound [...] The scenario is richly suggestive of the problem of identity, self-consciousness, naming, and language which will accompany Pip throughout the novel, and points to the original decentering of the subject in regards to itself. (Brooks 506)

Unlike *David Copperfield*, in which David starts his story with his birth and description of his family tree, Pip's initial narrative is directed towards his own consciousness and language. Those to whom he can relate are only letters on the tombstone, and through the language of the letters he presumes their character features:

The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "Also Georgiana Wife of the Above," I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine,—who gave up trying to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle,—I am indebted for a belief I religiously entertained that they had all been born on their backs with their hands in their trousers-pockets, and had never taken them out in this state of existence. (*GE* 3)

Pip interprets the letters on the tombstone and by doing so he captures the nature of his parents and what he has lost. The very notion of capturing his parents' nature by reading it from the tombstones is an act of consciousness of the Self. Although he realises that he shares the name 'Philip Pirrip' with his father, it is he who is alive, and he is able to detach himself from those who are dead and buried. Nevertheless, after realising that he has lost his father, Magwitch appears and addresses Pip with a horrible voice "hold your noise" (*GE* 4). The world of Pip is harsh from the very beginning. Thus, as he laments on the earliest memories of his childhood, he begins to cry. From the state of emotional wreckage, Pip is almost immediately thrown into the world of other people, and a society filled with drama and fear. Nevertheless, besides Pip, Dickens, although indirectly, depicts other patterns of parents' absence through the fates of other characters. Thus, "the pattern of childhood deprivation" (Dessner 440) is present in Joe's father who "went off in a purple leptic fit"⁹⁷, Miss Havisham who "was a spoilt child. Her mother died when she was a baby"⁹⁸, Biddy who "was an orphan like myself, too, had been brought

⁹⁷ *GE* 42.; qtd. in Dessner 440.

⁹⁸ *GE* 169.; qtd. in Dessner 441.

up by hand”⁹⁹, Magwitch: “I’ve no more notion where I was born, than you have – if so much”¹⁰⁰, and Estella who was abandoned by her parents.

Dickens’s creation of an orphan child strives at constructing one’s identity in relation to the absence of parents. Since Pip’s quest for identity is comprised of the search for a father figure who will love and care for him, the whole attention of the quest is directed towards finding that love. In his essay “The Ghost of a Man’s Own Father”, Dessner neatly elaborates on the subject of finding a father who will redeem Pip’s childhood mistakes. Dessner illustrates Pip’s search for a father using psychological explanations for certain patterns in children’s behaviour. Since the father represents the greatest threat for the love of a mother, the child attempts to get him out of the way. But in Pip’s case, since the father is already gone, he tries to find him, and with the additional absence of the mother, the child, in this case Pip, blames the father for the mother’s non-existence. As a result, the child is in search for a father, not only to gain love, but, paradoxically, to punish him for the death of his mother.¹⁰¹

The end of Pip’s search will be the discovery of a father who will love and punish him, and whom the boy can love and punish. The intensity of these strivings pushes them to their logical, if grotesquely amoral and seemingly self-defeating limits: the logical extension, the ideal case, of love is self-sacrifice, suicide: the logical extension of punishment is murder. Through metaphor and analogy, Pip achieves both. (Dessner 439)

The Oedipal motif is present throughout the whole novel and illustrates the basis of Pip’s feeling of guilt. Pip’s guilt is mirrored in his struggle between the urge to be of assistance to Magwitch and the sense of moral responsibility that this action carries with itself.

Although Dickens himself was not an orphan, his father was frequently absent from his life, physically as well emotionally. The blackening warehouse, nowadays commonly considered as one the most traumatic episodes from Dickens’s life, is directly connected to his father’s imprisonment due to his debts. Sent to work to provide some money for the

⁹⁹ *GE* 40.; qtd. in Dessner 441.

¹⁰⁰ *GE* 328; qtd. in Dessner 441.

¹⁰¹ These ideas are taken from Dessner 439.

family, Dickens was left alone and deprived of the security of a home. However, although he blamed his father for much of his childhood misfortunes, Dickens still felt love for him. Nevertheless, the question of the absent father figure in *Great Expectations* was repeatedly denied by Dickens himself in a sense that it carries autobiographical elements. Dickens always argued that it is a work of art, but as Dessner remarks “the theme [Oedipal motifs] is pervasive, reduplicated in many contexts, unifying” (Dessner 441). In his defence of a personal resemblance of his past events to those of his characters, Dickens states that he could never dream of his characters, thus he could not write about the events as they happened to him, but as they happened to his protagonists, “it would be like a man dreaming of himself, which is clearly an impossibility. Things exterior to one’s self must always be the basis of dreams”.¹⁰² On the contrary, the Freudian conception of dreams provides us with a totally contrary assumption “It would be impossible to dream of anything *but* one’s self”.¹⁰³

These statements by Dickens are the result of the many psychological barriers he faced while attempting to write about his personal accounts. Passionate for telling the story fully, he was limited by a complex personal history.¹⁰⁴ As Carr remarks, “[h]is personality grew more diffuse and layered as the line between his own life and his involvement with his fictional characters blurred, and as he used his own experiences for material for his fiction” (Carr 453).

¹⁰² Qtd. in Dessner 441.

¹⁰³ Manheim 42.; qtd. in Dessner 441.

¹⁰⁴ Carr 453.

4.6. Pip's (re)construction through Magwitch and Joe

As already mentioned, in order for one to become 'an adult', one has to suffer some kind of loss and deprivation of an original unified Self, and merge with "Others". In this sub-chapter, the importance of Magwitch and Joe for the purpose of Pip's identification will be analysed.

In his book *The Realist Novel*, Walder provides elaboration on the subject of parents' and society's influence on one's identity, in this case Pip's:

In *Great Expectations* the private crime against the child is Mrs. Joe's and Pumblechook's and Wopsle's, all 'foster parents' either by necessity or Self-conceit: while the social crime is the public treatment of Magwitch. That the two kinds of crime are inherent in each other we are made aware of as we are led to identify Magwitch's childhood with Pip's; the brutality exercised toward both children was the same brutality, though 'the parents' in the one case were private persons, and in the other, society itself. (Walder 250)

Pip's identification with Magwitch as a lost and dead father is vivid in the scene where Magwitch rises from 'among the graves'. This striking and horrific scene in which Pip is forced to frightfully run and hide in the ditch of the marshes will leave him with a feeling of fear for the rest of his life; Pip's memories of horror will always be related to Magwitch. Dickens repeats the topos of 'rising dead' in *Great Expectations*, since in *David Copperfield*, David also suffers from the fear that his father will rise from the dead. House remarks Magwitch's need for Pip to recreate things which went wrong in his own life:

Pip was to be Magwitch's means of Self-expression, just as Estella was to be Miss Havisham's; they each wanted to use a child to redress the balance of a world gone wrong, to do vicariously what they have failed to do direct [sic]. In the Temple Magwitch is not really concerned much about the grateful return for Pip's help on the marshes; he is concerned to view, assess, appraise the 'dear boy' as his own creation.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Qtd. in Rosenberg 646.

In view of the above, Pip feels lost and helpless in relation to others. He cannot control events in his life since they happen out of his control. For Pip, it seems that everyone, except Joe and Biddy, want something from him. Since Lacan argues that the realm of identity, in Pip's case the Father, is comprised of Otherness and Lack, an attempt to achieve what lacks provokes the feeling of desire. In the case of Pip, it is his desire to be the centre of the symbolic order, the center of language (Rabaté 12). However, Pip's surrogate father Magwitch is almost invisible in the whole course of the novel, and causes Pip to lose his face. Nevertheless, he also provides Pip with an opportunity to construct a whole new identity by becoming a gentleman. Although Magwitch introduces violence and feelings of guilt, his role helps Pip to identify with his surrogate father and constructs his identity in relation to Otherness. More and more, Pip identifies himself with Magwitch, the convict, but only in order to justify to himself his past criminal deeds: "While Mrs. Joe sat with her head bending over her needlework, I put my mouth into the forms of saying to Joe, 'What's a convict?' Joe put his mouth into the forms of returning such a highly elaborate answer, that I could make out nothing of it but the single word 'Pip'" (*GE* 11). Joe's utterance of the word 'Pip' only intensifies an already strong feeling of Pip's identification with Magwitch and being a criminal who steals and murders. In this stage, it seems that Pip has already made a transformation of identity; he began his story as an orphan child with no identity, and now, while creating an identity with means of Others, in his own eyes, he has become a convict. Conner illustrates Pip's means of identification stating that "Pip's identification is affected through a fixation upon the most striking thing about convict's appearance" (Conner 119), and that it is the image of his legs put in iron chains. Although the memory of that horrific scene in the marshes lingers in Pip's mind, torturing his consciousness throughout the majority of the novel, at the end we encounter Pip whose feelings toward Magwitch have changed. Pip's transformation in character throughout the novel also alters his feelings about Magwitch and he ends up loving him. As Ricks in his article on the relationship between Pip and Magwitch argues, "Pip's refusal to take any more money from Magwitch is plainly right. One should not take money from someone whom one finds repugnant. [Ironically] And

by the time Pip loves Magwitch, the convict's fortune has been forfeited to the Crown".¹⁰⁶

Pip's moral responsibility is not directed only to society, but also towards the action of lying to Joe. Although the Pip-Magwitch relationship represents "the central axis of the novel" (Hara 593), it is Pip's feelings toward Joe that also make him feel bitter:

The fear of losing Joe's confidence, and of thenceforth sitting in the chimney-corner at night staring drearily at my for ever lost companion and friend, tied up my tongue. I morbidly represented to myself that if Joe knew it, I never afterwards could see him at the fireside feeling his fair whisker, without thinking that he was meditating on it. That, if Joe knew it, I never afterwards could see him glance, however casually, at yesterday's meat or pudding when it came on to-day's table, without thinking that he was debating whether I had been in the pantry. That, if Joe knew it, and at any subsequent period of our joint domestic life remarked that his beer was flat or thick, the conviction that he suspected Tar in it, would bring a rush of blood to my face. In a word, I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right, as I had been too cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong. I had no intercourse with the world at that time, and I imitated none of its many inhabitants who act in this manner. Quite an untaught genius, I made the discovery of the line of action for myself.¹⁰⁷

From this extract, the dichotomy of moral right and wrong is clearly vivid. Pip's explanation of his own actions carries a hostile tone, and thus represents a self-accusation, although he was forced to steal. Therefore, the morality of the act can be excluded; however, this does not change the fact that Pip experiences feelings of guilt. Leavis illustrates Pip's exaggerated feeling of betrayal towards Joe: "[At the same time] he sees natural fear of the effects of confessing to Joe as morbid. Looking back at telling his story, he in bitterness sarcastically calls himself an 'untaught genius' who doesn't even have the common excuse of finding evil examples before him to follow" (Leavis 240).

Although Pip is considered a sinner, but without gaining any pleasure out of his sins, his ingratitude towards Joe makes him in his eyes even more sinful. Since Pip cannot accept Joe as his surrogate father, predominantly because of his great expectations to become a gentleman and Joe being only a simple illiterate blacksmith, Pip denies himself

¹⁰⁶ Qtd. in Rosenberg 672.

¹⁰⁷ Qtd. in Leavis 240.

unconditionally Joe's love. In an attempt to fulfil his great expectations, Pip substitutes Joe with another guardian in the character of Mr. Jaggers who belongs to a higher social class and is educated. As Dickens illustrates, Joe is the man of love who honestly tells Pip the true nature of things and people and gives Pip clear guidance to what is morally right and wrong. On the other hand, as Rosenberg remarks "Jaggers, the man of facts, [...] is guided by the evidence, not feelings [...]".¹⁰⁸

Juggling between feelings of guilt, shame, ingratitude, repugnance and expecting to ascend the social ladder, Pip constructs his identity in relation to Otherness, namely Joe as one Other, the Law of social order as another Other, and the feeling of responsibility to his surrogate father, Magwitch. Hence, Pip is not able to construct a personal identity which is not affected by the law of social norms or any identity representable to the public because of his guilty conscience. To illustrate this in other words, Conner argues that "the coming to awareness of himself as a full being involves taking on a loss of Selfhood for Pip" (Conner 122). Pip is in need to disown or as Conner puts it "repudiate" Magwitch since he represents the source of his hardships; however, "it is precisely this repudiation which divides him from himself" (Conner 122).

Nevertheless, as Pip grows more mature and eases his consciousness by making good deeds, the final outcome of his relationship with Magwitch can be argued as his best deed. Pip's love and loyalty to Magwitch matters the most at the end, and represents his redemption for ungrateful behaviour towards Joe. Dickens emphasises the importance and gravity of Pip's love towards Magwitch by making Joe an innocent, naïve character remotely as significant as Magwitch. However, the comparison between the significance of Magwitch and Joe is needed to illustrate Pip's development through these two characters. In view of the above, Ricks stresses the importance of Magwitch by stating: "[t]he fact that, when Magwitch first returns, Pip feels nothing but repugnance for him, is not only the most powerful reason why his final love is so moving, but also the most powerful reason why it is so convincing. It is likely enough that Pip would shrink from Magwitch" (Ricks 672).

¹⁰⁸ Qtd. in Rosenberg 671.

4.7. Becoming a gentleman

The construction of Pip's identity can be interpreted by means of the Lacanian theory of Self and Other, as stated in previous chapters. In the symbolic order, the Other has a structure of its own and is positioned in the centre to which everything else relates. Therefore, the Other is desired by one in one's wish to achieve and merge with it. Hence, one has to reach it in order to comprehend the difference between the Self and Other. However, as Lacan claims, nothing can be merged with the Other, since it is the centre of the symbolic order, and no one can be at the same level as the Other. As a result, the structural position of the Other creates a constant deprivation of something which can not be achieved. This continuous lack of the Other creates a desire to be merged with that same Other. According to Lacan, this desire represents the desire to be the Other. Nevertheless, rephrasing Bressler, this kind of desire can never be achieved (Bressler 154). Continuing on Lacanian theory of Self and Other, the source of desire represents the difference between what one perceives and comprehends (a certain image) and what one wants it to be. People's realistic wishes are replaced by anything else if not fulfilled. Furthermore, when they fulfil their wishes in the course of time, their attention will automatically turn to another desire. Therefore, the act of desire fulfilment can not be finalised ever, since it represents a vicious circle of one desire after another. As Rabaté remarks, one can never achieve one's true Self, since everybody only has an interpretation of the Self (Rabaté 59).

In *Great Expectations*, as Ginsburg claims, Pip is confronted with his feelings of lacking and desire when he first visits Satis House and sees Mrs. Havisham and Estella; his own great expectations are born in him and he interprets them as his desires.¹⁰⁹ Seeing the image of Estella as perfect and full of pride, triggers Pip's own desire to be just the same and lays open what he is lacking. As a result, Estella's appearance and behaviour creates in Pip a self-image of imperfection, which, furthermore, in Pip's mind, constructs the image of Estella as a perfect human being. By entering the world of socially higher people, Pip encounters two desires of his own: that of Estella and her love, and gentility.

¹⁰⁹ These ideas are taken from Rosenberg 702.

These desires are born within him and he wishes to be merged with these objects of Otherness at some point in the future. Realising Pip's innocence and naiveté Mrs. Havisham instructs Estella to seduce the young boy and later play with his feelings just for fun. This is, of course, the consequence of Mrs. Havisham's terrible experience with men in her life, and it is her desire to take a revenge on all men of the world. Mrs. Havisham literally orders Pip to love Estella:

“Love her, love her, love her! How does she use you?” Before I could answer (if I could have answered so difficult a question at all), she repeated, “Love her, love her, love her! If she favours you, love her. If she wounds you, love her. If she tears your heart to pieces – and as it gets older and stronger, it will tear deeper – love her, love her, love her!” [...] “Hear me, Pip! I adopted her to be loved. I bred her and educated her, to be loved. I developed her into what she is, that she might be loved. Love her!” [...] “I’ll tell you,” said she, in the same hurried passionate whisper, “what real love is. It is blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission, trust and belief against yourself and against the whole world, giving up your whole heart and soul to the smiter – as I did!” (*GE* 194)

Although Pip senses revenge in Mrs. Havisham's ‘hurried passionate whisper’, he continues the dream of fulfilling his great expectation and win Estella's love. Regardless of the fact that Pip almost desperately desires to achieve his expectations, throughout the whole novel he behaves rather passively. However, his wishes tear him apart, as he waits for others to give him guidance on achieving set goals. He wants to upgrade his social status because of his poor background, but at the same time the wish itself makes him uneasy. In his quest of a new identity, he becomes alienated from himself. This alienation provides Pip with the insight into his own reality. He realises that his desires are not easily achievable; however, he also understands that such wishes are not the product of his own personality. Pip is illustrated as a marionette, a conductor or a medium through which wishes of Others can be attained. If we reflect on Magwitch's and Mrs. Havisham's desires, we can conclude that the mixture of those wishes is contained in what Pip considers his own expectations. Nevertheless, Magwitch and Mrs. Havisham are not the sole creators of their expectations. Magwitch's wishes are motivated by social acceptance, but which he can not achieve without the help of Pip. Mrs. Havisham's

expectations of Estella are born out of hurt, deceit and great suffering she has experienced by her fiancé.

In *Great Expectations*, apart from social ambitions, Dickens connects Pip's desire to become a gentleman with his love for Estella. In Estella Pip sees the wealth and social superiority. Being inferior to Estella in both of the above mentioned descriptions, his expectations grew higher in order to merge with the Other and become someone whom Estella might like. However, realising his inferiority towards Estella and the reality of his desires to become true, he suffers a lot. Despite that fact, Pip's wish for self-improvement is motivated by that very sense of inferiority. He admits to Biddy that he wishes to become a gentleman in order to win the love of a lovely young girl who he met at Satis House:

I established with myself on these occasions, the reputation of a first-rate man of business – prompt, decisive, energetic, clear, cool-headed. When I had got all my responsibilities down upon my list, I compared each with bill, and ticked it off. My self-approval when I ticked an entry was quite a luxurious sensation. When I had no more ticks to make, I folded all my bills up uniformly, docketed each on the back, and tied the whole into symmetrical bundle. (*GE* 224)

Evidently, Pip connects his newly obtained gentility with his business skills. However, his pride in being a business man is out of place. At this point, he is not a wealthy businessman, and for the Victorians of the time, he could never be considered a gentleman from the way he conducts his rather small business.

Nevertheless, at the end of the novel, Pip does become a gentleman and enters the society governed by those of higher social status. But, in addition to his formed gentility, Pip has finally realised that his own Self has been alienated from itself under the influence of society. And this society can not be detached from the law. On the other hand, the law is inseparable from crime, prison and banishment. In the novel, the society of Pip's great expectations is filled with cruelty, dishonesty, hypocrisy, a corrupted legal system, in other words, a society which is criminal itself. This is predominantly illustrated by Dickens's description of children who are raised in such a manner to become criminals and later be imprisoned or transported. However, we should not regard Dickens's illustration exclusively as an attack on the social system of the time, since Dickens

believes that social ambition is healthy when it does not involve crime, corruption, hypocrisy, etc.

As he finally becomes a gentleman, Pip is freed of unrealistic ideas about gentility which he harboured at the beginning of his story. His status of a gentleman is not earned by the help of his benefactor, but by means of patient labour. Pip's self-improvement is a reflection of what the audience of Dickens truly believed; a man of lower social status can improve himself by honest and hard labour. Dickens's characterisation of Pip is, of course, reflected in Dickens's image of himself, for we must not forget that Dickens also improved himself by hard labour. It can be argued that Dickens wants to prove himself and the audience again and again that he is a successful businessman/artist. Although Pip inherits some money from Magwitch, the amount of money is not sufficient to make him a gentleman, but only to help him start improving himself. This fact even more intensifies the importance of Pip's success by self-improvement.

4.8. The purpose of Dickens's Pip

As previous chapters have illustrated, the purpose of Dickens's *David Copperfield* is reliving past traumas and thus overcoming them. Although *Great Expectations* is regarded by some critics as lacking autobiographical elements from Dickens's own life, the concept of returning to past traumas and facing them is present in this novel, too. Again, in order to demonstrate the said concept, I would like to use Freudian theory on past trauma elaborated in his work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In regard to the necessity of returning to past traumatic experience, and by that overcoming them, I quote Brooks remarks on Freudian ideas:

In analytic work, the repetition compulsion becomes particularly sensible in the transference, where patients display the need to reenact, reproduce, and work through repressed material as if it were present, rather than simply recollecting it as belonging to the past. Past history, lost to conscious memory, reproduces itself as an unmastered force in the present. (Brooks 511)

Returning to past traumas occurs several times in the course of the novel, and such incidents are reflected in Pip's return from London to his home. All these returns have some kind of a goal for him, whether it is to repair his relationship with Joe, or find out who his secret benefactor is. However, as Brooks argues, all these returns push Pip even more into the abyss of dissatisfaction since he is aware that his great expectations can not be attained as easily as he thought, "[e]ach return suggests that Pip's official plots, which seem to speak of progress, ascent, and the satisfaction of desire, are in fact subject to a process of repetition of the yet unmastered past, the true determinant of his life's direction" (Brooks 513). Since the central point of the novel represents the Pip-Magwitch relationship, the scene of Magwitch's return serves as a climax of Pip's repetition of past traumas. As the novel draws to its very end, it is also high time for Pip to face, relive, recollect, reproduce his probably most traumatic life event and free himself from it:

No need to take a file from his pocket and show it to me; no need to take the handkerchief from his neck and twist it round his head; no need to hug himself with both his arms, and take a shivering turn across the room, looking back at me for recognition. I knew him before he gave me one of those aids, though, a moment before, I had not been conscious of remotely suspecting his identity.¹¹⁰

Brooks elaborates on the primal scene in the novel by claiming that:

The scene of Magwitch's return operates for Pip as a painful forcing through of layers of repression, an analogue of analytic work, compelling Pip to recognize that what he calls "that chance encounter of long ago" is no chance and cannot be assigned to the buried past, but must be repeated, reenacted, worked through in the present. [...] The passage offers the most striking example of the fact, [...], that key moments of Pip's life bring back the past not simply as recollection, but as reproduction: as a living through of the past as if it were present. (Brooks 515)

Referring to Brooks's claim of necessity for reproduction, it can be argued that Dickens's Pip is not only the reproduction of the character itself, but the reconstruction of Dickens too. As said earlier, according to some critics *Great Expectations* does not contain as

¹¹⁰ Qtd. in Brooks 515.

much biographical parallels between the main protagonist and the writer of the novel and is not meant to be an autobiographical novel. However, it can also validly be argued that it is precisely the lack of autobiographical elements that diverts our attention as readers to some other purposes of Dickens's Pip. As Mengel suggests, "[...] autobiographies can also be revealing when they leave things out, or take liberties with the known facts of an author's life. It is in this sense that Dickens establishes the autobiographical relevance of *Great Expectations*" (Mengel 192).

The purpose of Dickens's art while writing *Great Expectations* changed in comparison to the period of writing *David Copperfield*. In *David*, Dickens's social criticism was directed towards the Victorian society which, by the time of *Great Expectations*, did not change much. Dickens's dissatisfaction with the current situation within the society had broken his illusions of a brighter future. His domestic life, at the time, suffered a scandalous blow to his reputation since his affair had been made public and divorce from Kate had been made official. Tormented by his troubled private life and disappointed with what future events might bring, in *Great Expectations*, Dickens investigates the human side of his character, through the character of Pip. By doing so, he re-investigates his own humanity by re-living past life events. In comparison to David, Pip has also experienced a traumatic childhood, but as he matures he is aware of his inappropriate behaviour and learns how to become a better man. In view of this, I would like to use Mengel's view on understanding *Great Expectations*, in which he remarks that it [the novel] can be seen "[...] as a product of the crisis in Dickens's life, as an attempt to overcome it by investigating his relation to society in the *persona* of Pip, and redefining his identity" (Mengel 190).

In *Great Expectations*, Dickens repeats the topos of reliving past traumas as means of freeing himself from them. Nevertheless, the theme of Dickens's own reconstruction through his main protagonist is developed earlier in the novel, in comparison to *David Copperfield*. The themes of morality, humanity, shame and guilt are presented to us at an early stage of the novel. Thus, here, I would like to illustrate several observations on the topic of what can be regarded as autobiographical in the novel and what of its content can be related to Dickens himself. As many critics argue that *David Copperfield* is only partially autobiographical, the same argument must be emphasised when analysing *Great Expectations*. For the purpose of demonstrating the involvement of Charles Dickens, the

man, in *Great Expectations*, I will make use of Mengel's observations, which, as he claims, are not precisely recognisable parallels between Pip and Dickens, but rather the understanding of "[...] the formal conception and the structure of the novel as an indirect expression of autobiographical themes and motifs" (Mengel 191).

As stated earlier in this thesis, Dickens's audience made him a popular author. However, as this particular audience made him successful, it can also undo him. Hence, Dickens's writing depended largely on what he considered acceptable by the said audience. As can be observed from Forster's writing on Dickens, the art of Dickens was always within the boundaries of what Victorians could and wanted to accept as appropriate. The publication of his works in the form of installments provided Dickens with an opportunity to receive the feedback of the audience, and if such was a negative one, he would do his best to satisfy his readers, as Mengel calls them Dickens's "foster-father" (ibid.). Since the Victorians paid much attention to the morality of human behaviour, the events in Dickens's private life while writing *Great Expectations* did him certain damage regarding his popularity. Hence, we can argue that Pip's amoral behaviour, presented at the very beginning of the novel, is Dickens's attempt to demonstrate that morality once lost can be regained. As Mengel observes, Pip's aspirations of becoming a gentleman produce amoral behaviour of the main protagonist and subsequent feelings of shame and guilt. (Ibid.) However, as Mengel further remarks, in contrast to *David Copperfield*, Pip, earlier in the novel, becomes aware of his inappropriate behaviour, especially towards Joe:

The difference between the mature narrator and the young Pip also reflects the difference between the Dickens of *Great Expectations* and that of *David Copperfield*. The older Pip has learned that there are more important things in life than becoming a gentleman, and that gaining material values and social prestige is much less important than coming into one's own as a human being, and thereby, preserving one's moral integrity and identity. With regard to autobiography, living a life of "great expectations" with the money supplied by an alien agent can be understood as a metaphor of the relation of Dickens the writer to his reading public. (Ibid.)

Nevertheless, as the purpose of Dickens's art was becoming more and more a necessity to satisfy his readers, he, at the same time, was afraid that this kind of writing will leave his art with this purpose only, and prevent him from being completely honest regarding his

views and opinions on certain matters. Another of Mengel's observation regarding autobiography in the novel, is Pip's actions which lead him on a wrong track, as Dickens's writing pushed him further away from the things about which he wanted to write in an honest manner. (Ibid.) By altering some autobiographical elements, such as Pip's profession as a business man, in contrast to David's as a professional novelist, Dickens stresses the importance of the theme of humanity and morality in Pip's behaviour. As Mengel remarks, although Pip is not a professional writer in the novel, by writing in first person, Dickens "[...] underlines the moral purpose of his art. The self-effacing quality of Pip the writer is a reflection of the newly found modesty and moral seriousness of the writer Charles Dickens" (Mengel 192). Dickens's newly found morality can be vividly demonstrated through his killing of Magwitch. The attitude finally adopted by Pip towards his secret benefactor is that of ambivalence, which, according to Mengel, illustrates Dickens's own attitude towards his public. (Ibid.) In other words, by the killing of Magwitch, Dickens indirectly expresses his view on the influence of the reading public to his writing; Dickens "[...] has to reject projections and expectations [of his readers] that might compromise his novels" (ibid.). To conclude, the purpose of Dickens's Pip is two-sided: one direction follows his still present urge to relive some past traumatic experience in order to overcome it, and the other is directed towards the redemption in terms of the human morality of a writer. In comparison to *David Copperfield*, in *Great Expectations*, Dickens further develops self-reconstruction by redefining his identity where the emphasis largely lies on "[...] a newly found self-consciousness in Dickens the artist that had not been expressed [...] so clearly before" (Mengel 193). As Mengel concludes in his observations in regard to autobiographical parts in the novel, *Great Expectations* can be read as "Dickens's portrait of the artist as a grown man":

Reinventing himself in the figure of Pip, and redefining his identity as an artist by laying the emphasis on the humanitarian and moral qualities of a writer, may have helped Dickens to find a way out of his personal crisis towards the end of the fifties. [...] Although Pip has found himself in the end, there is the feeling that he has no "plot" for his future life, and that he is living on the "edge" of society rather than in the middle of it. The reason for this is Dickens's growing conviction that society provides less and less opportunity for self-realization. (Ibid.)

This lack of opportunities for self-establishment is more vivid in Dickens's later novels, in which the darker side of society is strongly emphasised underlining at the same time Dickens's determination to express moral criticism, regardless whether his audience would like it or not.

5. Conclusion

The main goal of the thesis was to analyse Dickens's writing in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, and his self-construction through the novel's characters. Although Dickens quickly abandoned the idea of writing an autobiography, his desire to reveal layers of his character stayed with him long enough to embark on the project of writing in the form of autobiographical fiction. Hence, the analysis of his self-revelation was done by analysing his fictional characters through which he managed, at least to some extent, to fulfill his urges.

In terms of *David Copperfield*, Dickens's powerful and almost photographic memory triggers past traumatic events. The blackening warehouse episode, generally acknowledged as the most traumatic one from Dickens's life, is replicated in David's hard labour in a wine-bottling factory. Although David presents a non-idealised version of his past traumas, his descriptions of his mother and Dora contain elements of beautification. In describing David's early childhood memories, Dickens uses the technique of story-telling. Thus, he uses the technique of re-living past traumas by articulating them. However, his attempt at self-recovery is based on semi-realities, thus representing Dickens's inability to deal with his past traumas as they really happened. Consequently, his narrative is affected by his fears of self-revelation, and does not have sufficient means to produce catharsis in Dickens.

David's marriage to Dora and later Agnes is Dickens's self-construction of his own marriage. Dissatisfied with his wife Kate, Dickens kills off David's first wife Dora and marries David to his perfect companion, Agnes. Although Dickens divorced his wife Kate, he never found such a perfect companion in any woman as Agnes was to David. Dickens's act of providing David with a perfect wife can be regarded as his wish for justification and understanding among his audience in terms of his divorce from Kate. The character of Mr. Dick serves as Dickens's demonstration of his inability to write straightforward autobiography reflected in Mr. Dick's unsuccessful writing of the Memorial. Once again, it seems as if Dickens looks for a justification for his inability to overcome certain past traumatic events. However, Dickens's David becomes a successful novelist like Dickens himself. Although we cannot argue that Dickens was completely

successful at identifying himself with David, it is worth stating that along with David's development in the course of the novel, Dickens manages to make some self-improvement. This self-improvement is largely reflected in Dickens's attempt at revealing his most traumatic events and inner feelings for the first time in his life, and not just to himself but to the whole world. Perhaps the greatest strength of Dickens's David, who at the end becomes a successful novelist, is a confirmation to Dickens himself of his success in the same field.

In *Great Expectations*, Pip's most traumatic past event, namely meeting Magwitch in the marshes, repeatedly intrudes his present life events. In that sense, Pip is trapped in a vicious circle of repetition, never fully able to free himself from past traumas. However, Pip's constant return to his most painful memories makes him a better man, aware of his past immoral deeds and behaviour. Dickens's orphan child can be regarded as his need to re-establish his identity in relation to his father. Although Dickens's description of Pip as an orphan child carries Oedipal motifs and shows the limitations he had in dealing with the psychological impact of his relationship with his father, Pip's demonstration of love towards Magwitch at the end of the novel represents Dickens's improvement in dealing with his fears and traumas. Pip's feeling of guilt and professional ambitions guide him towards the search of a new identity. Here, we can say that Dickens manages to re-invent himself by making his Pip a man aware of his moral duties. Additionally, Dickens's Pip achieves his aspirations of becoming a gentleman but only by hard labour and painful experiences. This represents Dickens's opinion that every man that works hard should not be judged for his high ambitions. Again, Dickens constructs an image of a successful man who should be respected for his devotion. This image serves as a confirmation to Dickens that he has indeed improved himself by his own work.

Last but not least, Dickens's *Great Expectations* represents a novel in which Dickens's newly found morality emerges. It is reflected in Magwitch's death, namely in Dickens's killing off of the character who helps Pip at the very beginning of the novel. Always trying to fulfill the expectations of his audience, Dickens is finally free to write in a manner which he finds appropriate not minding how the audience will react. In comparison to *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* represents Dickens development in self-construction in terms of 'writing for the sake of art'. If David was the start of Dickens's reconstruction by means of dealing with past traumas and inventing new

identity, Pip represents a pivotal point in Dickens's search for a new self-consciousness which is reflected in his criticism on morality, humanity, society, hypocrisy, etc. Finally, Dickens succeeded in writing what had to be said, not being afraid of what the audience's feedback would be.

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8. Abstract

Die vorliegende Arbeit analysiert die Art und Weise des Schreibens von Charles Dickens in seinen Romanen, *David Copperfield* und *Great Expectations*. Das Hauptziel der Arbeit ist es, Dickens Verwendung von Schrift in Form von autobiographischer Fiktion zu analysieren.

Während der viktorianischen Zeit wurde Dickens zum beliebtesten Schriftsteller. Sein Publikum war begierig darauf, alles, was es von ihrem Lieblings-Schriftsteller gibt zu lesen. Obwohl Dickens als ein offener Schriftsteller galt und sehr gerne über sich selbst sprach, war er in der gleichen Zeit auch eine sehr private Person. Es scheint als ob es er sehr vorsichtig war, was die Öffentlichkeit über seine innersten Gedanken und Gefühle erfahren könnte. Dennoch, hatte er einen Drang seine innersten Gedanken während der gesamten Karriere als Romanautor auf dem Papier niederzuschreiben. Daher formte sein Kampf zwischen der Selbst-Offenbarung und der Selbstverbergung die Art des Schreibens, vor allem in *David Copperfield* und *Great Expectations*.

Zwischen diesen beiden Trieben zerrissen, hat sich Dickens in Projekten wieder gefunden, wo er die fiktiven Ereignisse aus seinem Leben neu erfunden und in seine Romanfiguren eingebaut hat.

Die Hypothese der These ist, dass durch die fiktiven Charaktere von David und Pip, Dickens versucht seine Identität zu konstruieren, die persönliche wie die berufliche. In der Arbeit wird die Analyse der autobiographischen Elemente in *David Copperfield* verwendet, um Dickens Selbst-Erfindung durch die Entwicklung von David zu illustrieren. Zusätzlich werden die fiktiven Elemente herausgenommen um zu zeigen, inwieweit Dickens bereit war, von sich zu geben, mit anderen Worten, wie viel wirklich von der Öffentlichkeit verborgen blieb.

Obwohl erkennbar, dass die autobiographischen Elemente aus Dickens Leben fehlen, zeigt die Analyse der Charaktere in *Great Expectations*, insbesondere Pip, Dickens Verbesserung in Bezug auf Selbst-Konstruktion.

Die Analysen haben gezeigt, dass Dickens Wunsch, über persönliche Erfahrungen zu schreiben, vor allem traumatische, in *David Copperfield* geboren wurden und markieren den Beginn seiner Reise in Richtung der Selbst-Konstruktion.

In *David Copperfield*, hat es Dickens geschafft, seine innersten Gefühle und Traumata zu artikulieren, indem er diese verschönert hat. Infolgedessen, war das Verfassen von *David Copperfield* nicht genug für Dickens um eine Katharsis zu erleben, es war aber der erste Schritt in Richtung Selbst-Therapie. Auf der anderen Seite, obwohl identische autobiographische Episoden fehlten, stellt *Great Expectations* die Verbesserung von Dickens Bezug auf Selbst-Konstruktion dar. Seine moralische Kritik, welche in diesen Roman dargestellt wird, verdeutlicht, dass Dickens auf dem richtigen Weg in Richtung der Erholung von früheren traumatischen Erfahrungen war. Nicht zuletzt, diese präzise Kritik demonstriert anschaulich Dickens Wachstum im Hinblick auf die Beziehung zu seinem Publikum. In *David Copperfield* erstellt Dickens den Charakter David, einen erfolgreichen Schriftsteller, zustimmend dem Publikum und vor allem sich selbst auch einer geworden zu sein.

Während der Entstehungsphase von *Great Expectations*, findet sich Dickens in einer Weise wieder, wie er durch harte Arbeit ein erfolgreicher Schriftsteller wurde, genauso wie Pip zu einem Gentleman wurde. Darüber hinaus wird in *Great Expectations* die Selbst-Konstruktion von Dickens ein besserer Mann geworden zu sein, ebenso wie Pip, reflektiert.

Nachdem sein Bewusstsein von Narben des moralischen Recht und Unrecht befreit wurde, fühle sich Dickens schließlich frei, über alles zu schreiben, was geschrieben werden musste, unabhängig davon, ob es sein viktorianisches Publikum annimmt oder nicht. Dickens, *David Copperfield* dient als Ausgangspunkt seiner Genesung von vergangenen Traumata und markiert den Beginn vom Bau einer neuen Identität. Die neu erbaute Identität in *Great Expectations*, in dem Dickens nur für „die Kunst des Schreibens“ schreibt, befreit ihn von den Gefühlen der lästigen Vergangenheit. Sein Weg zur vollen Selbstheilung wird in den nächsten Romanen fortgesetzt, jedoch stellen diese beiden Romane einen Dreh- und Angelpunkt dar, von dem Dickens Weg zur Selbst-Konstruktion und Selbst-Akzeptanz beginnt und auch den Höhepunkt erreicht.

9. Curriculum Vitae

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