

## Pip and Estella: Expectations of Love

From the time he first sees her at Satis House, Estella is, for Pip, the source of his most intense feelings, the centre of the dreams and hopes that are to give his great expectations their deepest meaning. And yet, this "centre" is generally regarded as the weakest aspect of *Great Expectations*—Dickens being notoriously inadequate in his dealings with love between men and women, and Estella, it would seem, lacking not only a heart but also other flesh-and-blood characteristics that might establish her as a credible object of Pip's affections. Furthermore, there is some doubt that it is actually Estella who inspires Pip's feelings: "he doesn't love *her*, she is unlovable and unloving, he only loves what she represents for him".<sup>1</sup> At any rate, his feelings for her are decidedly curious—romantic, self-lacerating and impotent to a degree that Dickens, it is often argued, does not see. The novel is clearly interested in the variousness, the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of love, and especially in its power to challenge self-centred and materialistic interests. But in a context where Pip comes deeply to love his convict benefactor, and to reaffirm the strong bonds of affection for Joe, the dreamy, repetitive adoration of Estella looks, at face value, thin, and lacking in the intended seriousness. Robert Garis, while he does indeed question whether Pip's feeling for Estella is offered for our unqualified approval, is inclined to suggest that Dickens's criticism of it is barely conscious, and reaches its inevitable limits in the agreed, civilized values we must all share with Dickens. "We have known from the beginning of the novel that what is missing from Pip's life is any free expression of libido, and that it is missing because it is held in contempt and horror by the ideals of the civilization within which Pip tries to make a life for himself."<sup>2</sup>

Dickens's perception that Pip cannot experience any very full or adequate love for Estella (and therefore for Bidley, or for any other woman) is indicated in the vividly defining context he gives to the relationship between Pip and Estella. It is in the surrealistic atmosphere of Satis House that they meet; the development of their relationship into a full and free exchange of feeling is frustrated not by the inhibiting ideals of genteel society, but by the

1 Q. D. Leavis, "How we Must Read 'Great Expectations'", in *Dickens the Novelist* (London, 1970), p. 302.

2 *The Dickens Theatre* (London, 1965), p. 208.

much more active and potent passions that thrive in Miss Havisham's candlelit world. When, in reply to her injunction "love her, love her, love her!" Pip replies in his reveries, "I love her, I love her, I love her," we have seen enough already to know that he does indeed, and precisely in accord with the notion of love Miss Havisham herself holds:

"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!"<sup>3</sup>

A recognition that Dickens presents the flowering of such feelings as profoundly unnatural and uncreative is the necessary starting-point in relating Pip's feeling for Estella to his wider expectations, and in drawing attention to Dickens's interest in Estella. For she is so insistently the creature of Pip's imagination that it is easy to miss the fact that she has another and distinct existence as the creature of Dickens's.

The inviting of the blacksmith's boy to "play" at Satis House is interpreted at the forge and beyond as an extraordinarily promising opportunity for Pip to better himself, the practical Mrs Joe being the first to see where it might lead: "for anything we can tell, this boy's fortune may be made by his going to Miss Havisham's" (p. 82). It is also thought to promise the unveiling of hidden mysteries, for Miss Havisham's eccentricity and seclusion are legendary. Sent off at this turning-point of his life with a full Pumblechookian ceremony and speech, Pip is already preparing himself, in some measure, for the extraordinary, dream-like experience that begins when Estella locks the gates on the known world. In the darkened rooms with the stopped clocks and the grotesque, decaying trappings of the forestalled wedding, he is to find vista upon vista evoking the mind's capacity to actualize its needs and desires:

Certain wintry branches of candles on the high chimney-piece faintly lighted the chamber, or, it would be more expressive to say, faintly troubled its darkness. It was spacious, and I dare say had once been handsome, but every discernible thing in it was covered with dust and mould, and dropping to pieces. The most prominent object was a long table with a tablecloth spread on it, as if a feast had been in preparation when the house and the clocks all stopped together. An épergne or centrepiece of some kind was in the middle of this cloth; it was so heavily overhung with cobwebs that its form was quite undistinguishable; and, as I looked along the yellow expanse out of

3 *Great Expectations* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 261, 265. All subsequent page-references are to the Penguin edition.

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which I remember its seeming to grow, like a black fungus, I saw speckle-legged spiders with blotchy bodies running home to it, and running out from it, as if some circumstance of the greatest public importance had just transpired in the spider communities . . .

These crawling things had fascinated my attention and I was watching them from a distance, when Miss Havisham laid a hand upon my shoulder. In her other hand she had a crutch-headed stick on which she leaned, and she looked like the witch of the place.

"This", said she, pointing to the long table with her stick, "is where I will be laid when I am dead. They shall come and look at me here." (p. 112)

Miss Havisham's vision is almost accomplished. Force of will and inflexibility of purpose have made her world a place which perpetuates the decline of hope and comfort into stagnation and decay. We are conscious, through Pip's sharp impressions of her, of how completely Miss Havisham has thus revealed herself. But his own reactions are numb, detached, even whimsical: what is grotesque and distasteful is registered with no sense of immediate disturbance. The "witch of the place" is not a fearful figure for the child, who is already under her spell, so that normal, daytime reactions and valuations are kept at a remove and he can neither cry out nor articulate any feelings. Pip's account reaches out naturally enough for the language of fairy-tale, and Dickens's writing makes that language profoundly appropriate. This apparition of a woman so dedicated to the travesty of what is natural and beneficent, and to the enchantment of childish innocence, is a witch in anyone's terms, and Satis House is recognizably the experience of fairy-tale or dream, where quotidian expectations are put aside, and secret fears and desires become real. Satis House becomes Pip's dream, as it is Miss Havisham's, and all the sequences that happen there have the distinctive quality of dream experience, the quality evoked here by the fungus that seems weirdly to grow, the sharply detailed insect life, steadily encroaching and abnormally potent.

Satis House is to remain Pip's private world, kept apart from his workaday life at the forge. The privacy of the experience is for Pip as for Miss Havisham at once liberating to the imagination and the desires, and self-enclosed, self-deluding, at odds with what Pip himself feels to be the defining realities of his life as an apprentice. For it is in the nature of the dream that the feelings so intensely charged and recharged by his visits to Satis House are denied any fulfilment in the world of action. It is that world that Satis House parodies and is parodied by as its three figures gyrate to the thin echoes of Joe's robust working song, "Old Clem".

Pip's most intense, compelling feelings are driven inwards. There is no doubt that he has intense feelings, and that the two children bidden to "play" and "sing" on command bring to that artificial task spontaneous energies that challenge, from the start, Miss Havisham's attempt to control them. Satis House cannot shut out the ongoing processes of life itself, however weird and parasitic they become in that atmosphere: it is Miss Havisham's failure to control those processes in herself that so grotesquely mocks her attempts to stop the clocks: "the dress had been put on the rounded figure of a young woman, and . . . the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone" (p. 87). The girl who admits Pip to Satis House chatters to him easily and artlessly, before she is quickly taught to be more calculating. Her jibes to Pip are not the calculated insults he registers and which Miss Havisham's manipulation of class feeling make them, but much more spontaneous, childish, reactions to what is different—"why, he is a common labouring boy." "He calls all knaves Jacks, this boy." And the Pip so anxious to impress, and to better himself, is still capable of honest responses to the first of Miss Havisham's catechisms about his feelings for the beautiful young lady:

"I think she is very proud," I replied, in a whisper.

"Anything else?"

"I think she is very pretty."

"Anything else?"

"I think she is very insulting." (She was looking at me then with a look of supreme aversion.)

"Anything else?"

"I think I should like to go home." (p. 90)

And so keenly does he feel his humiliation (which amounts to an overturning of his sense of himself as superior and sensitive) that he cannot stop the tears springing to his eyes, whereupon "the girl looked at me with a quick delight in having been the cause of them" (p. 92). So that when she is gone, he leans his face up against the wall and cries, and as he cries, kicks the wall and twists at his hair. The self-control Pip quickly learns is felt not as something "civilization" enjoins on him, but as the only retaliation he can make to Estella's devastating power to wound and her unshakeable self-composure. "I'll never cry for you again" (p. 111) is his response to her taunting questions next time, and she is so enraged by her failure to rouse him that she violently slaps his face and abuses him. Later, Pip takes out his aggressive energies not on the wall, but on the pale young gentleman, and so appeases the secretly watching Estella who emerges with "a bright flush

upon her face, as though something had happened to delight her" (p. 121) that she allows Pip to kiss her. But Pip, by now, can only respond to Estella as a taunting and humiliating figure: "I felt that the kiss was given to the coarse common boy as a piece of money might have been, and that it was worth nothing" (p. 121). Whether Estella's bright flush takes its gratification from his bleeding mouth or from his successful display of force (as a delayed tribute to her taunts) there is no doubt that she *is* gratified, and that Pip doesn't feel gratified in turn. The parry and thrust of these childish responses sets the pattern for many later exchanges, where strong feelings are aroused only to be thwarted, or given negative, self-defeating expression. Miss Havisham takes what is fruitfully there in the spirited Estella and the sensitive Pip, and sets up a ritualized aggressive-defensive habit of behaviour that is formative for both of them. And she completes the pattern by making the bejewelled Estella and the newly-apprenticed Pip feel that their destiny, with all its vague intimations of material reward, is in her hands.

During Pip's apprenticeship, his feelings for Estella become more intense, more visionary, more confused. That confusion, so sensitively explored in the writing, reminds us that "selfless devotion" to the beloved inevitably accommodates feelings that are essentially self-concerned. The intensity the visionary Estella brings Pip is an intensity of humiliation, as well as yearning, and it answers directly to the early experiences of Satis House that continue to shape Pip's inner life, though he no longer goes there:

I was haunted by the fear that she would, sooner or later, find me out, with a black face and hands, doing the coarsest part of my work, and would exult over me and despise me. Often after dark, when I was pulling the bellows for Joe, and we were singing Old Clem, and when the thought how we used to sing it at Miss Havisham's would seem to show me Estella's face in the fire, with her pretty hair fluttering in the wind and her eyes scorning me,—often at such a time I would look towards those panels of black night in the wall which the wooden windows then were, and would fancy that I saw her just drawing her face away, and would believe that she had come at last. (p. 136)

Estella and Satis House, dream-like and secret, continue to pervade and challenge the quotidian life at the forge, and to do so in just the ways established in the early scenes. This passage catches a flux of feelings in the adolescent Pip that recalls his childish response to being allowed to kiss Estella. No longer at home in the forge, he remains most at home, imaginatively, to

feelings of humiliation and deprivation associated with Satis House. The warm relaxedness of the forge perversely evokes these contrasting, unsettling notions; the perspective Estella might cast over the scene evokes her presence, first as a humiliation, "haunted by the fear", then quickly, as a gratification: "would exult over me and despise me" contains a ring of triumph at the cruel power of the beloved. The delighted recreation of her beauty takes on the aspect of self-lacerating pleasure—"her pretty hair fluttering in the wind and her eyes scorning me". And then, deftly, precisely, the ebb and flow of feeling is confirmed in that final, vividly imaged action, "would fancy that I saw her just drawing her face away, and would believe that she had come at last". The sign of Estella's giving herself is that she draws her face away. It is a measure of Bidley's lack of compelling interest that in contrast "she would have derived only pain, and no pleasure, from giving me pain" (p. 157).

Pip's wild delight at the news that he is, indeed, a young gentleman with expectations comes not from the promised wealth (he has no power to envisage that, though he enjoys the figure he cuts in his new suit), nor the prospect of London and the status of gentleman, nor even, finally, from the increased likelihood of attaining Estella. It is quite simply, that his dream has come true: "my dream was out: my wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality" (p. 165). Pip's gratification depends absolutely on his belief that it is Miss Havisham's design for him that has now begun to take effect: "perhaps after all Miss Havisham was going to make my fortune when my time was out" (p. 160) has been the wistful, consoling fantasy of all his dreary apprenticeship. In the elation of finding his dream proved more real than the sober notions of reality he has tried to keep steadily before him, he feels justified in even more wildly romantic flights:

She had adopted Estella, she had as good as adopted me, and it could not fail to be her intention to bring us together. She reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks agoing and the cold hearth ablazing, tear down the cobwebs, destroy the vermin—in short do all the shining deeds of the young Knight of romance, and marry the Princess. I had stopped to look at the house as I passed; and its seared red brick walls, blocked windows and strong green ivy clasping even the stacks of chimneys with its twigs and tendons, as if with sinewy old arms, had made up a rich attractive mystery, of which I was the hero. Estella was the inspiration of it, and the head of it, of course. (p. 253)

The sinewy, self-regulating life of Satis House stands in more sharply ironic juxtaposition to Pip's romanticism precisely because, seeing it as it is, and always has been, he now sees it as something

against which his gentle, old-fashioned dreams can exert a decisive power. And the presence at the heart of this dream is still a visionary presence, for ever kept for him, but from him.

His response to his changed fortunes then, is not to strike out in a more independent and challenging way, but to be confirmed in the dream life of Satis House, in which Estella, however finally destined for him, remains always just beyond reach. Going to visit Satis House, after he has begun his new life in London, "I so shaped my walk as to arrive at the gate at my old time" (p. 254). And there, in a scene that is as carefully stage-managed by Pip as by Miss Havisham to recreate all the old feelings, he finds the grown-up Estella:

The lady whom I had never seen before, lifted up her eyes and looked archly at me, and then I saw that the eyes were Estella's eyes. But she was so much changed, was so much more beautiful, so much more womanly, in all things winning admiration had made such wonderful advance, that I seemed to have made none. I fancied, as I looked at her, that I slipped hopelessly back into the coarse and common boy again. O the sense of distance and disparity that came upon me, and the inaccessibility that came about her! (p. 256)

There is no mistaking the triumphant ring of that conclusion, nor the rising rhetoric that conveys Pip's discovery, which is anything but dejected, that if Pip himself has advanced in life Estella's advances have far outstripped his. As they walk about the old haunts, Pip "trembling in spirit and worshipping the very hem of her dress; she, quite composed and most decidedly not worshipping the hem of mine" (p. 257), Pip's sharpest moment comes when Estella declares that she cannot remember ever having made him cry. Faced with the alternative of her detached aloofness, Pip goes on preferring a taunting show of interest. But he is insistently aware of the need to explain and justify the strength of feelings that seem so perverse:

I did not, even that romantic morning, invest her with any attributes save those she possessed. I mention this in this place, of a fixed purpose, because it is the clue by which I am to be followed into my poor labyrinth. According to my experience, the conventional notion of a lover cannot be always true. The unqualified truth is, that when I loved Estella with the love of a man, I loved her simply because I found her irresistible. Once for all; I knew to my sorrow, often and often, if not always, that I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be. Once for all: I loved her none the less because I knew it, and it had no more influence in restraining me, than if I had devoutly believed her to be human perfection. (p. 253)

For all its air of candid, unillusioned maturity, Pip's confession merely substitutes one romantic stereotype for another. The pas-

sage makes us aware of that irony; and yet, not all of the parallels in the history of courtly love can belie the genuineness of this sharp pain. Pip loves because it is impossible, and the strength of his feelings finds its guarantee in all the negative experiences of which they are composed: "against reason, against promise, against peace . . ." "The love of a man" is more inexorable perhaps, but it often seems no different in kind from the wondering adoration of Pip the blacksmith's boy. Pip is at last to discover the significance of his expectations of love: nurtured by frustration, they can have no immediate outcome but the denial of the beloved. Being denied Estella is the sharpest register that his dream has been, after all, a delusion.

But the novel's purpose is more complex than that, and in changing the ending, as he did, to reunite Pip and Estella, Dickens was following out that purpose, rather than the demands of the reading public. The third part of the novel, while it shows Pip still caught up in the perversities of hopeless love, manages at the same time to present enough of compelling interest in Estella herself, and to suggest potentialities of feeling between Pip and Estella, that would make a freer and fuller relationship credible.

Estella's striking presence in the novel increasingly contrasts with Pip's soft, vague evocations of her. The contrast is sharpened because, unlike Pip, she offers very little account of herself. In so far as she is explicit about what she feels, it is to declare that she has no feelings at all: "I have no heart . . . , no softness there, no sympathy—sentiment—nonsense!" (p. 259). Estella's forceful attraction for Pip is felt to be less a matter of the details he emphasizes—her elegance, her composure, her delicate beauty in the furred travelling dress—than of qualities he doesn't point out, like her tough self-awareness and her challenges to the softness and diffidence in him. Though she speaks of herself with an unnatural degree of attachment, she is articulate and sharp in a way Pip can never be, about the conditions of life for each of them:

"You speak of yourself as if you were someone else."

"Where did you learn how I speak of others?"

"Come, come," said Estella, smiling delightfully, "you must not expect me to go to school to *you*; I must talk in my own way. How do you thrive with Mr Pocket?"

"I live quite pleasantly there: at least—" it appeared to me that I was losing a chance.

"At least?" repeated Estella.

"As pleasantly as I could anywhere, away from you."

"You silly boy," said Estella, quite composedly, "how can you talk such nonsense? Your friend Mr Matthew, I believe, is superior to the rest of his family?"

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"Very superior indeed. He is nobody's enemy—"

"Don't add but his own", interposed Estella, "for I hate that class of man. But he really is disinterested, and above small jealousy and spite, I have heard?"

"I am sure I have every reason to say so."

"You have not every reason to say so of the rest of his people," said Estella, nodding at me with an expression of face that was at once grave and rallying, "for they beset Miss Havisham with reports and insinuations to your disadvantage. They watch you, misrepresent you, write letters about you (anonymous sometimes), and you are the torment and the occupation of their lives. You can scarcely realize to yourself the hatred those people feel for you."

"They do me no harm, I hope?"

Instead of answering, Estella burst out laughing. (p. 286)

Appointed by Miss Havisham to convey Estella to Richmond, Pip is divided between delight at the prospect, and the suspicion, whenever Estella subsequently delights him, that she does so explicitly to fulfil Miss Havisham's plan that he be ensnared. Whereas, in this and all the conversations that follow in London, Estella talks to Pip with increasing intimacy and spontaneity of feeling. Her mood shifts rapidly from the playfulness here to the vehemence with which she recalls her childhood among the Pockets at Satis House. Her "grave but rallying" expression comes from deeper feelings: though she quite properly laughs at Pip's anxious self-concern and exposes the commonplace thoughts he has about Mr Pocket, she makes it clear that she, too, admires what Mr Pocket stands for—honesty, and the capacity to be above small jealousies and spite. In fact, she confides her darkest feelings to Pip, and though she "warns" him when he wants to kiss her, she does so lightly, affectionately, before reverting to the business-like tone that, she insists, is appropriate: "we are not free to follow our own devices, you and I" (p. 285). But paradoxically, Estella thus recognizes that the shared, unnatural childhood has made her akin to Pip; she speaks to him with a warmth and intimacy she can feel for no one else. Pip's reflections, given in the language of the spurned lover, are strikingly at odds with what we have just seen and felt in Estella: "She held my heart in her hand because she wilfully chose to do it, and not because it would have wrung any tenderness in her, to crush it and throw it away"; "of course she did so, purposely, and knew that I should treasure it up" (p. 290). In fact, Estella's only willed and artificial action in the exchange has been her reverting to the distanced tone "as if our association were forced upon us, and we were mere puppets" (p. 288).

And in the months that follow, as she is cynically following out Miss Havisham's plans for her to collect and betray numerous

admirers, Estella struggles hard to preserve a feeling for Pip that will distinguish him and preserve him from that fate: "Pip, Pip, . . . will you never take warning?" she says, not with the manipulative pity for which Pip takes it, but with the softer, more affectionate feelings that underlie the bitterness and detachment of her social conversation. But Pip, who suffers to see his idol "throw away her graces and attractions" on Bentley Drummle, "a mere bore", is only secure when he is included among the numerous admirers, consoled by the sense that he is suffering in the appointed way:

"I have seen you give him looks and smiles this very night, such as you never give to—me."

"Do you want me then," said Estella, turning suddenly with a fixed and serious, if not angry look, "to deceive and entrap you?"

"Do you deceive and entrap him Estella?"

"Yes, and many others—all of them but you." (p. 329)

Estella's integrity of feeling, defining itself against her prevailing cynicism, plainly does not console Pip. Nor can it foil Miss Havisham's plan that Pip should suffer. The unforeseen development in Estella of a genuine feeling for Pip simply tightens the emotional deadlock. Meeting her, as he does, only in the public situations provided by a busy social life, Pip desires above all to be distinguished from Estella's other admirers, yet when she does treat him with a distinguishing intimacy, he believes that she does so only to make the others jealous. Which is true, in some measure, and Estella's contempt for her suitors, for Miss Havisham, for herself, and her irritation at Pip's helpless, insistent presence make her behaviour understandable. But in struggling against the impulse to entrap Pip like all the others, she does so out of affection and concern, while Pip feels only that "in that habitual way of hers, she put me so entirely out of the question" (p. 329).

Pip, the young gentleman about town, is presented, through the eyes of the more mature narrator, as hopelessly floundering and ineffectual, unable to manage his fortunes and weak enough to lay the blame on Estella: "Estella was so inseparable from all my restlessness and disquiet of mind, that I really fell into confusion as to the limits of my own part in the production" (p. 292). The sensitivity and self-criticism that are his chief virtues frequently take on the aspect of self-indulgence and self-protection:

I always was restrained—and this was not the least of my miseries—by a feeling that it was ungenerous to press myself upon her, when she knew that she could not choose but obey Miss Havisham. My dread always was, that this knowledge on her part laid me under a heavy disadvantage with her pride, and made me the subject of a rebellious struggle in her bosom. (p. 319)

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Sensitive though he is to Estella's irritations, he is made to seem quite obtuse to her motivations and her complexity of feeling. It is difficult to admire the timorous Pip, whose only assertiveness is the perverse assertion of his fixed, uncomfoting ideas. Visiting Satis House again with Estella, he notes how Miss Havisham dwells on the names and conditions of the men whom she had fascinated "with the intensity of a mind mortally hurt and diseased", and finds in all the details of her withered clothes and decayed life, "the construction that my mind had come to, repeated and thrown back to me":

I saw in this, wretched though it made me, the bitter sense of dependance and even of degradation that it awakened—I saw in this, that Estella was set to wreak Miss Havisham's revenge on men, and that she was not to be given to me until she had gratified it for a term. I saw in this, a reason for her being beforehand assigned to me. Sending her out to attract and torment and do mischief, Miss Havisham sent her with the malicious assurance that she was beyond the reach of all admirers, and that all who staked upon that cast were secured to lose. I saw in this, that I, too, was tormented by a perversion of ingenuity, even while the prize was reserved for me. I saw in this the reason for my being staved off so long, and the reason for my late guardian's declining to commit himself to the formal knowledge of such a scheme. In a word, I saw in this, Miss Havisham as I had her then and there before my eyes, and always had her before my eyes; and I saw in this, the distinct shadow of the darkened and unhealthy house in which her life was hidden from the sun. (p. 321)

The narrator insists on the irony that the hopeful Pip, immersed in his dream world in an almost mesmerized way, still cannot see: the feelings that sustain themselves on rejection, humiliation, deprivation, decay and the duping of others, have in them no possibility of growth or fulfilment. But if the critical perspective cast over the dream by the older Pip sees the folly of a love so visibly founded in delusion, the steadiness and intensity of the feeling is nevertheless remarkable, and reaches its climactic statement when Pip learns from Estella of her intention to marry Bentley Drummle:

"You are part of my existence, part of myself. You have been in every line I have ever read, since I just came here, the rough common boy whose poor heart you wounded even then. You have been in every prospect I have ever seen since—on the river, on the sails of the ships, on the marshes, in the clouds, in the light, in the darkness, in the wind, in the woods, in the sea, in the streets. You have been the embodiment of every graceful fancy that my mind has ever become acquainted with. The stones of which the strongest London buildings are made, are not more real, or more impossible to be displaced by your hands, than your presence and influence have

been to me, there and everywhere, and will be. Estella, to the last hour of my life, you cannot choose but remain part of my character, part of the little good in me, part of the evil. But, in this separation I associate you only with the good, and I will faithfully hold you to that always, for you must have done me far more good than harm, let me feel now what sharp distress I may. O God bless you, God forgive you!" (p. 378)

This outburst, which Pip himself describes as an "ecstasy of unhappiness", a "rhapsody" welling up within him, has something of the adolescent intensity of Catherine's love for Heathcliff—the strength of the feelings coming out of an absoluteness of statement that is, by its very nature, limited and self-enclosed. It is the climax of Pip's dedication to the impossible dream: the recognition that Estella is, after all, finally out of reach comes as a veritable ecstasy. It is a passionate speech, hinting, in the forcefulness with which the pent-up feelings come out, at sexual energies denied any expression or development by the whole curious history of Pip and Estella's relationship.

The novel ends with a final scene at Satis House. The story of the intervening years of Pip's life abroad is one of restraint, and modest ambitions and rewards: "we were not in a grand way of business, but we had a good name, and worked for our profits, and did very well" (p. 489). And Estella remains only as "a poor dream . . . gone by" (p. 490). Nevertheless, once back in England, Pip cannot refrain from going again to Satis House, and among its ruins, in the moonlit garden, he finds the solitary figure of a woman.

It is a strong aspect of *Great Expectations* that Pip should confront a much more sober destiny than he had dreamed of, and the original ending of the novel, which kept Estella from Pip to the last, was clearly in keeping with that. But, equally strongly, Pip is brought to an understanding that the natural affections have the power to prevail against all the falsities and illusions represented in his great expectations. I have argued that, for all that it is warped and constrained by the prevailing ethos of Satis House, there is some element of genuine feeling between Pip and Estella that challenges Miss Havisham's power to corrupt it. It is appropriate that the figure walking in the garden is not another Miss Havisham, not another blighted and embittered life, but an older, warmer Estella:

The freshness of her beauty was indeed gone, but its indescribable majesty and its indescribable charm remained. Those attractions in it I had seen before; what I had never seen before, was the saddened softened light of the once proud eyes; what I had never felt before, was the friendly touch of the once insensible hand. (p. 491)

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It needs no protracted study of Estella's "moral development" to explain what has happened. The softness and warmth that Pip sees, as for the first time, have been there before, even in the proud and cynical Estella who gives herself to Bentley Drummle out of a strange kind of integrity. ("Should I fling myself away upon the man who would the soonest feel . . . that I took nothing to him?"—p. 377.) That experience has taught her the claims of a different integrity, which she can articulate with something of the old crispness and accuracy: "suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but—I hope—into a better shape" (p. 493). And Pip, faced again with the old ambiguities of feeling, is able to repudiate them, deprivation and loss bringing not hope and gratification, but an unequivocal pain: "Glad to part again, Estella? To me, parting is a painful thing. To me, the remembrance of our last parting has been ever mournful and painful" (p. 493). That is why the upward lift of the prose that concludes the novel evokes an expansiveness and clarity out of the ruins of Satis House, and promises no further parting:

I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her. (p. 493)

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