

Growing Up Through the Ages: Autonomy and Socialization in *Tom Jones*, *Great Expectations*, and *I Am Charlotte Simmons*

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This paper examines three novels over a two and a half century period—Tom Jones, Great Expectations, and I Am Charlotte Simmons—from the time when the Bildungsroman was just being explored to the present when some are arguing that the form is dead. We shall argue rather that the genre necessarily changes as concomitant ideas change, in particular, the evolving ideas of what an adolescent is and what freedom and maturity mean. Furthermore, we shall claim that the Bildungsroman genre presents us with a tension in the modern (and postmodern) world that may be intractable.

The works we examine in this paper are, in some way, related to the *Bildungsroman* genre. Simply (if not simplistically) put, a *Bildungsroman* is a coming of age tale that describes the process by which one passes from child into adulthood. At the core of this process, however, lies a fundamental tension. On the one hand, becoming an adult is perceived, in the post-enlightenment West at least, as a process whereby one asserts her autonomy and becomes her own individual person. On the other hand, however, becoming an adult is taken to be a maturing process of normalization whereby one becomes socialized into the norms and traditions of the society into which one is to live. That is to say, coming of age engages two processes—autonomy and socialization—that may, and often do, pull in opposite directions. It is this tension that we propose to explore as we examine the *Bildungsroman* over a two and a half century period, from the time when its form was just being explored to the present when some are arguing that the form is dead.¹ We shall argue rather that the genre necessarily changes as concomitant ideas change, in particular, the evolving ideas of what an adolescent is and what freedom and socialization mean. Furthermore, we shall claim that the *Bildungsroman* genre represents a tension in the modern (and postmodern) world that may be intractable.

I: The Bildungsroman: Childhood, Adolescence and Radical Freedom

Literally, a *Bildungsroman* is a novel (*roman*) that speaks of character formation (*Bildung*). Since *Bildung* also translates as “acquirements,”

“concept,” or “picture,” the process of character formation, therefore, can be seen to entail development in a way that is consistent with an image of what an adult is, either the individual’s own, sometimes eccentric picture, or society’s. The term itself was coined by Karl Morgenstern in 1819-20, but more fully developed by Wilhelm Dilthey in 1870, to refer initially to Goethe’s novel, *Wilhelm Meister’s Lehrjahre* published in 1795-96 (but begun as early as the late 1770s) and translated by Thomas Carlyle into English as *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* in 1824. As Sarah Maier has expressed it recently, in a *Bildungsroman*,

The literary protagonist must leave his home environment to experience the world; in the protagonist’s varied encounters with people and his new surroundings, the reader sees the multiple influences of these experiences on his developing character and his ‘becoming’ as an individual in society with a secure, self-formulated identity (Maier 2)

Franco Moretti has argued that the *Bildungsroman* is tied inherently to modernity; indeed, he says that the genre is the “symbolic form of modernity” because it displays “the youthful attributes of mobility and inner restlessness.” This is a radical change from the pre-modern period where ‘growing up’ was conceived as a sort of ‘apprenticeship’ which was a “slow and predictable progress towards one’s father’s work.” In contrast, growing up began to be seen as “an uncertain exploration of social space” (Moretti 15, 4).² Flowing from what Moretti observes are two related and in some ways competing assumptions that typified that genre for several hundred years and that reflect the rise of modernism with its emphasis on the development of individuality and autonomy but that have now become problematic: one, the individual’s development towards maturity and integration into society is progressive, and two, the maturing process interacts with the development of society such that they influence each other to move towards a teleological ideal to which we add the qualifier, even if that telos remains an unfulfilled or partially fulfilled ideal. Even when that is the case, however, society is seen to be progressing because it becomes open to the inclusion of those who would otherwise remain marginalized. As Joseph Slaughter remarks: “socialization, self-determination, and social determinism unfold and enfold in the development of the protagonist’s (*Bildungsheld’s*) human personality” (1410).

The development of the individual and society, thus, came to be seen as taking place within a framework wherein each influenced the other's progressive arc. We might well dispute the illusory quality of that view. Nevertheless, it seems that the genre assumed until relatively recently that marginalized individuals could become accepted as fully franchised members of their societies. The relationship between the individual and society, then, is one of mutual influence with each exerting a force on the other as they develop teleologically. Yet there is a potential for tension between autonomy or individualism and socialization.

In order to comprehend this change, and to come to an understanding of the *Bildungsroman* and how it has altered over time, we have to understand at least two other changes that began in the Enlightenment. One had to do with a changing conception of 'childhood' and the construction of a new concept, which came to be called 'adolescence'; the other fundamentally important change for our purposes was the advent of a radical notion of freedom as it was advanced by Kant in the late 18th century, which, significantly, was the time when the genre was initially being developed.

According to Philippe Aries in his influential *Centuries of Childhood*, there was no such thing as adolescence before the 19th century. On one widely held view, he tells us, once a child, particularly one from the lower classes, "had passed the age of five or seven, the child was immediately absorbed into the world of adults" (Aries 329). Moreover, as Eric Hopkins has noted, the child was "often regarded as a miniature adult, without characteristics distinctive of particular stages of physical and psychological development (Hopkins 1). This began to change, however, in the nineteenth century in part because of the idea, as Wordsworth expressed it, that "the child is father of the man" ("My Heart Leaps Up" 7). Hence, more attention was paid, even in the lower and working classes, to how the treatment of the child might present itself in attitudes and behaviour of the adult. In particular, more attention was directed to the education of children (Hopkins 1994).

By this point in time, however, there was still no firm and comprehensive idea of an age *in between* childhood and adulthood. Seminally important here was the publication of G. Stanley Hall's influential *Adolescence, Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* in 1904 although the ideas that Hall presents can be traced back decades earlier. Influenced by Darwin, Hall came to see human development in evolutionary terms with childhood and adolescence representing ages before full humanity was reached in adulthood. The

consequence of this is that childhood and adolescence began to be seen as distinct and discrete times in one's life where the norms of adulthood could not be applied. Later in the 20th century, the influential psychologist Erik Erikson added that adolescence necessarily involved an 'identity crisis' as the individual went through what he thought (and as we continue to think) of as the painful and troubled process of changing from childhood to adulthood (see Hine 1999).

It is important to note that conceiving of adolescence as necessarily involving an identity crisis could not have occurred without a change in the perception of freedom nor an alteration in the very horizon of possibility for one's future that came with this new conception of freedom. Recall Moretti's line that in the pre-modern period a young man did not think of himself as having many, if any, choices (depending on wealth and social status) in terms of his career. He simply did what his father had done. Modernity, and particularly the Enlightenment, changed this because a pre-set plan for one's life—its *telos*, in other words—was beginning to be questioned as the influence of teleology itself was being diminished. This diminution began first in the natural sciences, as evidenced in Galileo's work, specifically in his attempt to rid the study of the external world of Aristotelian final causes, but was extended over time to cover other facets of life and inquiry, including ethics.

Kant in particular began to see enlightenment as the emergence of humanity out of a self-imposed dependency, or what Kant himself called "self-incurred tutelage," which he defined as follows:

Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is the tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere aude!* "Have courage to use your own reason!"—that is the motto of the enlightenment (Kant 85).

Here we see the beginnings of a new and radical notion of freedom. In the pre-modern world, there was a sense that we as humans had a shared idea of community out of which arose an ethic of virtue integrally bound up with a notion of the 'good for man.' Kant rejected this conception of ethics in favour of one wherein we are truly autonomous in the sense that we decide our course of action outside of any physical or social constraints. Indeed, over time, we have come to think that a life chosen *outside* of us by some external force or influence is an *inauthentic* life.

Since this notion of radical freedom was developed after the publication of *Tom Jones*, we do not see quite the same sort of struggle in Tom that we see in the cases of Pip and Charlotte. For it is only in the nineteenth century and beyond that we begin to see the tension that the *Bildungsroman* presents to us: a tension between a notion of freedom where, as individuals, we are supposed to be absolutely independent of others and what we may regard as the social reality that we are in fact, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by. Significantly, it is during this period that we have begun to think of adolescence as the time during which this tension or contradiction gets worked out.

Many recent critics, such as postmodernists, feminists, and communitarians, have argued that the modernist ideal, which maintains that radically free individuals can live unproblematically within a secure society, is impossible to achieve. Our paper is at least consistent with this view since the two novels we examine that work within a paradigm of radical freedom—*Great Expectations* and *I Am Charlotte Simmons*—end with the protagonist unable to resolve the tension between freedom and maturity. We come back to this point at the end of the paper. At this point, however, we begin by examining *Tom Jones*.

II: *Tom Jones: Prologue to the Genre*

Discussion of Henry Fielding almost invariably involves some discussion of Samuel Richardson as well. Not only are they two of the most prominent novelists from the period during which the novel form itself was first being constructed, they also represent two opposing, and dominant strands of the English novel written by two men who represent “two kinds of physical and psychological constitution, and between two social, moral and philosophical outlooks on life” (Watt 7). Whereas Richardson wrote epistolary novels that attempt to understand character through a description of their subjective inner thoughts, Fielding sought to display character through outward action. Dr. Johnson, perhaps Fielding’s most severe critic, describes this difference as that between Richardson’s “characters of nature,” and Fielding’s “characters of manners.” That is to say, as Johnson caustically added, it’s the “difference between a man who knew how a watch was made, and a man who could tell the hour by looking on the dial plate” (cited in Watt 8). Leaving aside the negative evaluative judgment expressed by these two critics, Fielding is more than willing to agree with the *descriptive* point:

“I declare once and for all,” he tells us in the Preface to Book 3 of *Joseph Andrews*, “I describe not men but manners; not an individual but a species” (cited in Harrison 18). This puts Fielding’s novel squarely within the neoclassical tradition, which sought to follow Aristotle’s *Poetics* by emphasizing plot over character and describing characters in universal rather than particular terms. Ironically, however, Johnson was a staunch neoclassicist and in terms of form, therefore, he ought to have preferred Fielding over Richardson who sought to describe unique individuals such as Pamela and Clarissa.

To understand Johnson’s criticism of Fielding, then, we must get beyond mere form to substance. Johnson’s dislike of Fielding was based, above all, on what he considered to be Fielding’s immorality: “I scarcely know a more corrupt work,” he said. (cited in Mutter 11). And what made it corrupt was not simply that *Tom Jones* speaks of ‘low life,’ and ‘low people,’ including discussions of their sexual dalliances, but that Fielding lets Tom ‘get away’ with his bawdy behaviour unpunished. Indeed, Fielding seems to revel in doing so. It is this alleged feature of *Tom Jones* that incensed Ford Maddox Ford as well: “[F]ellows like Fielding,” he says, “... pretend that if you are a gay drunkard, lecher, squanderer of your goods and fumbler in placket holes you will eventually find a benevolent uncle, concealed father or benefactor who will shower on you bags of ten thousands of guineas, estates, and the hands of adorable mistresses—these fellows are dangers to the body politic and horribly bad constructors of plots” (cited in Watt 27). Adding to this problem is the fact that Fielding has made Tom such a likeable scoundrel that “we lose abhorrence of [his] faults.” In contrast, Johnson maintains, Richardson has “the power ... to teach us at once esteem and detestation; to make virtuous resentment overpower all the benevolence which wit, elegance, and courage naturally excite, and to lose at last the hero in the villain” (cited in Watt 26).

Bernard Harrison succinctly sums up all these complaints against Fielding—both formal and substantive—in the following:

Moral evasiveness; the naiveté of the supposedly Shaftesburian moral pieties from which [Fielding’s moral] evasiveness is alleged to spring; and the allegorist’s predilection for wooden characters each defined once and for all in terms of a few static traits of character, incapable of development because devoid of any properly realized inner-life, and so incapable of *generating* the events of the novel, which must in consequence be stage-managed by the author through the agency of clockwork intricacies of plot (Harrison 17-18).

For our purposes, the central charge here is that Fielding's characters are "wooden" and "static," and that, therefore, Tom undergoes no moral development. If this is correct, then *Tom Jones* cannot be a true *Bildungsroman* since in such novels the protagonist must undergo exactly this sort of moral development. In ways we shall see in a moment, these charges are related to the one regarding Fielding's alleged moral naiveté, and that he presents us with nothing more than a vulgarized version of Lord Shaftesbury's moral theory.

Shaftesbury is typically characterized as a moral sentimentalist since, in brief, he argued that reason cannot operate as a motivating force, or, as Hume later put it, "reason is a slave of the passions." In addition, Shaftesbury argued that humans are (typically) naturally good by having the capacity for fellow feeling. However, we also have the ability to be what he called virtuous, which required that we reflect upon our initial feelings. As he put it: "the affections of pity, kindness, gratitude, and their contraries, being brought into a state of reflection, become objects. So that, by means of this reflected sense, there arises another kind of affection towards those very affections themselves, which have been already felt, and are now become the subject of a new liking or dislike" (Shaftesbury 172). Shaftesbury referred to these 'second-order' affections as "moral sense" (thus beginning a trend of moral sense theorists in English philosophy that included Hutcheson and Hume). Crucially, it was this moral sense that made "virtue" possible since without it we could only be good. Hence, virtue, unlike goodness, requires reason and reflection upon our initial feelings or affections.

In claiming that Fielding offers a vulgarized or simplistic version of Shaftesbury, critics have typically meant that he offers us a theory of morality that requires only goodness rather than virtue. That is, not only is reason unimportant, but one is moral (or not) naturally in the sense that it is *unlearned*. If this is so, then once again, we are implicitly faced with the fact that Fielding's "wooden", "static" characters are by nature either good, like Tom, or bad, like Blifil: since one does not *become* morally good (or bad) no moral development can occur.

In response to this, we should first acknowledge that for Fielding, as for Shaftesbury, goodness (of heart) is indeed a *necessary* condition of morality. He expresses this clearly and repeatedly in *Tom Jones* in one way or another (e.g., that morality was, for Blifil, not possible given his character) but perhaps most clearly in the following passage:

Examine your heart, my good reader, and resolve whether you do believe these matters [that there is such a thing as a good heart and disinterested love] with me. If you do, you may now proceed to their exemplification in the following pages: if you do not, you have, I assure you, already read more than you have understood; and it would be wise to pursue your business or your pleasures (such as they are) than to throw away any more of your time reading what you can neither taste nor comprehend. To treat the effects of love on you, must be as absurd as to discourse on colours to a man born blind, since possibly your idea of love may be as absurd as that which we are told such blind man once entertained of the colour scarlet: that colour seemed to him to be very much like the sound of a trumpet, and love probably may, in your opinion, very greatly resemble a dish of soup, or a surloin of roast beef (253; bk. 6; ch. 1).

Given this, the question is whether Fielding thought natural goodness was not only necessary for morality but *sufficient* as well. Harrison, for one, rejects this claim and suggests instead that Fielding does in effect differentiate between goodness and virtue and that, even though Tom has from the start a good heart, he has to, and indeed does, *learn* to be moral and hence does develop morally through the novel.

Fielding offers us plenty of evidence of Tom's good heart, whether it be his genuine love for Allworthy, his attempt to rescue Sophia's bird after Blifil has let it go, or his guilty feelings and attempts at restitution to Black George for having (unintentionally) lost him his job as Allworthy's game warden. But there is just as ample evidence that this is insufficient for true virtue. Early in the novel, Tom does *not* reflect on his emotions and Fielding clearly means us to interpret this as a fault of Tom's (even if it is not as severe as the faults of someone like Blifil). Consider once again the loss of Black George's job. It was Tom's impulsiveness to chase the game unto Squire Western's estate that led to the dismissal. Or consider his sexual relationship with Molly: despite the fact that she was at least complicitous in the affair, Tom is surely guilty of not thinking the matter through clearly for her reputation and indeed her entire future was much more imperiled by their behaviour than his.

As Harrison points out, young Tom typically deals with his wrongdoing and the guilt he feels over the pain he has caused others by providing them with money. Clearly this doesn't amount to moral behaviour: if anything it

amounts to no more than buying indulgences. This mode of recompense is closed to Tom, however, when he is cast off by Allworthy and quickly “looses” the 500 pounds (which Black George has actually stolen). Harrison argues that this is the beginning of Tom’s journey not only to London but to moral maturity. For example, he now realizes that though he continues to love Sophia, he must not pursue her because, as a penniless man with no trade or profession, pursuing her would prove economically disastrous for her. And so he displays a “disinterested” love for her by disavowing his pursuit and opting instead to join the army to go off to fight. It is only by chance, of which we shall say more shortly, that he comes across Sophia’s muff and her money, and changes his course of action. His pursuit of her now, however, is motivated by his desire to return her possessions and not by his desire to possess her, which he now sees as selfish.

Harrison sees the episode with the highwayman (614; bk. 12; ch. 14) as a further example of Tom’s growth. The episode occurs just outside of London when Tom and Partridge are joined on the road by a man who attempts to rob them. Though Tom is willing to hand over *his* money, he refuses to relinquish Sophia’s. Fortunately, Tom is able to overpower the highwayman and to take possession of his pistol. Despite Partridge’s insistence that he “kill the villain,” Tom refuses because he recognizes that he too has been guilty of past indiscretions. (605-06; bk. 12; ch. 14). That is, Tom has come to think, and not just to feel, the meaning of some variation of the Christian golden rule in combination with an appreciation for the vicissitudes of life.³ In all of these episodes, according to Harrison, Tom has learned what Fielding called other directed “prudence,” which is “the art of *intelligently* satisfying one’s desires for the happiness of others, so that such satisfactions multiply and harmonize with one another. Doing this requires hard thought and ingenuity of a rather concrete and detailed kind” (Harrison 108: his emphasis). It is this reasoning ability, in combination with an experiential knowledge of the world that Tom has learned in his journey towards becoming a moral person. He no longer merely responds spontaneously to events like Western, nor indeed is he blind to the facts of the matter and hence incapable at times of making a good judgment, like Allworthy. This journey reaches its culmination, according to Harrison, at the end of the novel when Tom hands over almost his last 50 pounds to Mrs. Miller to give to the highwayman and his desperate family.

Let us, at least for the sake of argument, agree with Harrison that Tom does indeed change over the novel and that he develops into a virtuous man

as well as a good one. We suggest that even given this, Tom's growth is actually quite limited and quite different than the sort of growth beginning to be thought of by enlightenment thinkers like Kant and by *Bildungsroman* writers who envisage a *radical change in kind* by the novel's protagonist, and this, we argue, is absent in Fielding's novel. For Kant—who thought humans spanned two realms, the determined and the free—thought of true morality as emanating not from one's determined nature as Tom's actions do from his good heart. This represents only what Kant referred to as heteronomy and not true autonomy; that is, acting in accordance with the dictates of reason from a sense of one's duty only.

Part of the reason that Tom does not undergo this sort of radical change is that Fielding was politically quite conservative and he felt that any sort of radical change, in individuals as well as the state, posed at least a symbolic threat to England since it could cast it back into the religious wars of the previous centuries. That is why, though he was a staunch opponent of the Catholic Jacobites and a supporter of the Hanoverian regime, he had no interest in a renewal of Puritanism in England. To see the extent of Fielding's conservatism, consider the importance of birth in the novel. Remember that the full title of the book is *A History of Tom Jones; A Foundling*, and therefore Tom's parentage, and whether he is of genteel or common ancestry is essentially important to both the plot and the politics of the novel. Of course, the fact that Tom is raised by the gentleman Allworthy opens up opportunities for him not available to a commoner. Had Tom been of low birth, he would have had little if any education, and instead, if he were fortunate, would have been apprenticed at twelve or so to some trade. Clearly, such a life, predestined as it was, could not be the subject of a *Bildungsroman* at this period in time. Only the wealthy 'grew up' in a sense similar to the way in which we use that expression today. Thus, for all the attacks he makes upon education in the novel through the characters of Twackum and Square, education—even bad education—was clearly a sign of class, and while Fielding implies that he would like to see changes in how and what youngsters are taught, he takes it as given that there will be tremendous differences between what the wealthy and the poor will get through education. (Recall in this context, that Jenny Jones' difficulties began when she took an uncommon interest in Latin, which led Partridge's wife to think that Jenny was having an affair with him.)

Moreover, it is never seriously considered that the poor foundling Tom would be a suitable husband for Sophia who is, after all, the daughter

of a relatively wealthy country squire, whatever one might want to say of his personal qualities. Hence, it was required that Fielding construct an intricate plot device that reveals Tom's genteel birth only at the very end of the novel. This fact seems at least as important with respect to his eligibility for marriage into the aristocratic classes as is the fact that he had not in fact committed incest with Jenny Jones.

In short, then, we ought not to be misled by Fielding's latitudinarianism that he is calling for anything like a radical transformation in society by making it more egalitarian. Hence, there is nothing in Tom Jones to suggest that the tension between autonomy and maturation ought to be resolved by having society change to make its citizens genuinely free in the Kantian sense. Rather, as Watt puts it, the novel displays that there has to be a "successful adaptation of the individual to society" (Watt 17).

III: Great Expectations: *Inversion Within the Genre*

Turning to *Great Expectations*, we encounter in Dickens a more complex response to the possibility that the individual's growth ultimately leads to his integration into his society and that the individual and society grow in a mutually influential way towards a teleological ideal, which is, as Marianne Hirsch puts it, an "idealized utopian reality to which the individual can conform without compromising private values" (Hirsch 304). She maintains that in the English manifestation of the "novel of formation" in general and *Great Expectations* in particular, "the teleological sense of development . . . is undermine[d]" and that "the only learning that occurs is negative, involving a denial of either self . . . or society . . ." (Hirsch 305). While this conclusion seems somewhat oversimplified when applied to *Great Expectations*, her assessment does point to a significant modification of the genre in Dickens' hands with which we partially agree, although, as we shall argue, the double ending of the novel points to a genuine ambivalence in Dickens regarding whether the tension between individual freedom and societal norms could be resolved in 19th century England.

The complexity of the novel's treatment of the genre, we wish to argue, is in no small measure the consequence of Dickens' own problematic relationship to his society. As we know, his own childhood forced him to confront his father's imprisonment for debt, and Charles having to work at a blacking factory which he was later to describe as an agonizing experience. Those circumstances had a lasting impact on Dickens, as we can well

understand. Pip's desire to escape his childhood and become a gentleman is driven primarily by desire for Estella's approval, in no small part a powerful erotic attraction, and one that may very well reflect the humiliation Dickens' experienced in his own childhood. As David Hennessee ably shows, by mid-century to be a gentleman entailed more than the traditional categories of birth and social status. While not erasing those, it engaged one's moral capacity for "imaginative sympathy" as the basis of a connection with others, an ideal that became increasingly important and that, therefore, signals an increasing openness in society hitherto not available to middle-class individuals. Of course, that reflected the growing influence of liberal humanism on the social fabric. Yet, as Hennessee points out, "efforts to egalitarianize the ideal fell short, often lapsing back into elitist associations with rank, blood, or class—associations that threatened the gentlemanly ideal's capacity to produce real social fellowship" (Hennessee 303-304).⁴ Dickens, therefore, was contending with conflicting motivations. On one hand, he was driven by a desire to be integrated into society as a gentleman as a way of escaping the nightmare of his childhood. Yet he also realized that the very society into which he sought acceptance was itself predicated on an ideology of acquisition and accumulation of wealth and power that increasingly subtended the humanistic values embodied by Joe and Biddy. Dickens embraced those values as an alternative that he hoped might eventually rescue his society.

It should not be surprising, then, that Pip, too, seeks to reconcile his private interior values with society's, and, as Hennessee notes, the novel "thoroughly examines the degree of success in doing so" (Hennessee 308). In that sense at least, *Great Expectations* conforms to the *Bildungsroman* tradition that depicts a protagonist seeking what for Dickens is an ideal state that cannot be achieved at the present time. He appears to recognize that any attempt to deploy the genre at mid-century as a means of establishing remedies for social defects will fail, and this drives the novel in an ironic direction. Instead of a mutualism wherein the individual and society each influence the other's spiritual or moral evolution through the power of a sympathetic imagination, the novel illustrates Dickens's ambivalence regarding the dual successes of writing his social critique and his aspiration to insert himself into society as a gentleman. We would argue that Dickens's desire to become a gentleman refuses him the radical social transformation necessary to satisfy the alienation he felt from the society because of its ideology and practices. Nor does there seem to be a satisfactory way of reconciling these competing desires.

Jerome Hamilton Buckley's important study of the *Bildungsroman* discusses Pip's life in the village as a time of "innocence and naiveté" at the end of which Pip is "driven at length from Eden" (Buckley 46). Yet, that time in Pip's life seems far from Edenic, Joe's love and protection and Biddy's concern for Pip's welfare notwithstanding. Rather, life at the forge foreshadows life in the city. His earliest memories are those of violence, from his experience in the graveyard when Magwitch assaults him, to his being "raised by hand."⁵ And there is also the psychological violence at the Christmas dinner when Mr. Hubble indicts Pip, claiming that all young people are "Naterally wicious," and Mr. Wopsle implies that Pip is akin to a pig: "'Swine,' pursued Mr. Wopsle, in his deepest voice, pointing his fork at my blushes, as if he were mentioning my Christian name . . . What is detestable in a pig, is more detestable in a boy" (Dickens 26-7). The violence Pip experiences initiates a pattern of degradation and guilt that Pip feels most strongly because of his material circumstances, which trigger Estella's disdain whenever he visits Satis House. Dickens's treatment of Pip's early life, then, creates an ironic turn on the innocence that the nineteenth century often associated with childhood, as Buckley's study suggests: "To the authors of the *Bildungsroman*, as to Wordsworth, the child was an entity in himself responsive to the experiences that might alter the entire direction of his growing mind and eventually influence for better or worse his whole maturity" (Buckley 19).⁶

Buckley's study begins by pointing us back from the Victorian era to Wordsworth, in particular *The Prelude*. There is good reason for doing so, as we indicated above. However, we employ Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and in particular his treatment of the inevitable and necessary fall into Experience that makes a Higher Innocence possible (as well as the omnipresent ironic shadow of Experience in Innocence) as a heuristic device in understanding Pip's development since it is closer to what Dickens depicts.⁷

From the outset, Dickens's ironic vision shapes the novel's structure and its dominant figurative pattern of the novel that carries both Dickens's social critique and, thus, the variance from the genre's tradition, even as the novel inscribes onto Pip's development the difficulty Dickens had trying to reconcile his critique with his quest to become a gentleman. We are introduced to Pip as he recollects that his "first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to have been gained from the churchyard" (Dickens 9). Looking at his parents' tombstones, Pip comes to

the childish conclusion that his parents must have looked like the shape of the lettering on the stones. This scene establishes the link between one's sense of identity and the ability to read society and one's experiences accurately. Pip's childish reading of the tombstones points to the force of the external world in shaping identity, perhaps never as strong as it is in adolescence. What Pip is not yet able to do, indeed what he doesn't learn to do until it is almost too late, is to read the signs around him for what they signify—the materialism and violence that maintain the socio-economic fabric of imperialistic England.

Immediately upon trying to decipher the lettering on the tombstones, Pip is grabbed by the convict Magwitch and turned upside down. That incident establishes the pattern of inversion in the novel that provides the ironies that control the plot and the motif of light and dark that contributes to the Blakean character of the three stages of Pip's expectations. If he is to be set right-side up again, to move out of experience and develop the perspective of informed or higher innocence, Pip must reinstate the values he learns from his surrogate father, Joe. For once he encounters Estella, an unquenchable desire for her is awakened. He, therefore, assumes that Miss Havisham has provided him with the money to become a gentleman. So begins the period of Pip's misreading in which he sees his life as a fairy-tale. "Miss Havisham reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks agoing and the cold hearths 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" (Dickens 221). Certainly, this misreading is driven by Pip's desire; it is also the stuff of adolescent fantasy. The difficulty of Pip's life is offset because of the warmth and love that Joe provides. But the dominant and ironic note that Dickens sounds in this early stage is, nonetheless, established by the mists and gloom of life in the marsh country to reveal the delusion of innocence, to invert the light of innocence so as to reveal its dark underbelly. And as he leaves home for London where he is to be schooled as a gentleman, he notes that "the mists had all solemnly risen now, and the world lay all before me" (Dickens 125). While saddened by leaving Joe, Pip does not grasp what he is giving up. In another context, the light might indicate that Pip is about to enter a stage of enlightenment in his life that will allow him to see more clearly what he has turned away from. But the inversion that dominates Pip's perspective signifies a loss of the values associated with innocence. London is a world so removed from the forge as to all but obliterate it. The world in which Pip

now lives is supported by values that are, like Pip's perspective, topsy-turvy. While Pip may have read the inscriptions on his parents' tombstones inaccurately because he was naïve, falling into Experience that is life in London indicates that he has acquired a solid grasp of the sign system of an England whose economy survives because it submerges the values that are part of both Innocence and Higher Innocence. In contrast with the tradition of the genre, then, in going to London, Pip is, in fact, moving into society but increasingly away from the values Dickens advances. The second stage, therefore, ends in darkness as Magwitch returns and announces that he is, in fact, the source of Pip's expectations.

For Pip, Magwitch's return is a nightmare as was his first appearance. But it is no dream. Dickens encloses Pip's other "father" in darkness at this point because Pip's dyslexia prevents him from reading Magwitch's announcement as anything other than the death of his desire for Estella: "But didn't you never think it might be me?" Magwitch asks. "O no no no . . . never, Never!" Pip replies and then thinks: "O Estella, Estella" (Dickens 298-9).

Magwitch's return points to Dickens's circular structure that results from his belief in personal redemption, at least in principle. Whether that redemption extends to his society is, we think, another question the answer to which must be seen in the complex context of his desire for inclusion as a gentleman and the Blakean pattern in the novel.

The third stage of the novel, then, tracks the re-emergence of Pip's capacity for imaginative sympathy that can become possible only when he learns to read from within the sign system he inhabited at the forge with Joe. When he does, Dickens dispels the irony in the light-dark motif that has signified Pip's perspective and values and the inversion is set right as Pip determines to save Magwitch from the gallows. Though he is unsuccessful because of the hegemony of the dominant ideology, the final chapters of the novel move towards the light. At the end, the evening mists are rising "as the morning mists had risen long ago" when Pip left the forge (Dickens 358). The values that lead him to embrace Magwitch are the values of Higher Innocence that one comes to consciously and thoughtfully rather than as an innate, childish interaction with the world as in Innocence. We are now able to see Dickens's *apparent* belief in the modernist view of identity as integrated and unified, as something that is developed in concert with rather than in opposition to the dominant values and practices of one's society.

Pip's restoration is initiated with a symbolic purification by fire when he rescues Miss Havisham from what would be a hideous death and forgives her

for the suffering she caused him. That is followed by a pattern of symbolic death, baptism and rebirth in the third stage of the novel when Pip's attempt to save Magwitch by taking him down the Thames ends when their boat capsizes. The result of the immersion causes Pip to develop a serious fever from which he emerges to discover that Joe has come to protect and care for him. In response, Pip re-establishes the old relationship with Joe, and he returns for a visit to his childhood home which is now bathed in light and warmth and where he discovers that Joe and Bidley have just married: "The June weather was delicious. The sky was blue, the larks were soaring high over the green corn, I thought that country-side more beautiful and peaceful by far than I had ever known it to be yet" (Dickens 353). Dickens's use of the pastoral and marriage, the ritual of unification, suggest that he seemingly conceives of an integrated personality as one that develops by learning to situate oneself within his own society, fulfilling the reader's expectations of the British *Bildungsroman*. However, things are not that uncomplicated.

We suggest that, in fact, the novel points us to Pip's identity as somewhat fissured because of Dickens's difficulty of reconciling his society with the restored values he now ascribes to Pip. Pip's involvement in capitalism and imperialism, working in Egypt for Clariker's, is indicative of the complexity. There are others.⁸ As a symbol, the forge highlights the fissures. Joe does not experience the conflicts that Pip must deal with, and the forge signifies the firmness with which Joe confronts society. At the end of the novel, when Pip meets Estella again after eleven years, she tells him that she has been "bent and broken, but—I hope—into a better shape," using imagery of blacksmithing to indicate to Pip that she now understands "what your heart used to be" (Dickens 358). She, too, has developed the sympathetic imagination that is the basis of dispelling the darkness of Experience. Dickens signals the change within her with light imagery: "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" (Dickens 358). As we know, Dickens wrote two endings to the novel. Regardless of which ending we believe is best, it is clear that neither Pip nor Estella will be alienated by society since each of them has become well-established among the gentry. The two endings illustrate the conflict within Dickens's personality. The original version shows that Pip has resolved his desire for Estella. He tells us that he is "very glad" to learn that, as a result of the difficulties in her life, her "suffering had been stronger than Miss Havisham's teaching . . . [a]nd had given her a heart to understand what my heart used to be" (Dickens 359).

That ending seems to us to be consistent with the novel's emphasis on the values that Dickens uses as the basis of his critique of society. On the other hand, while the second ending ties everything together in a tidy package, it reveals that Dickens apparently cannot resolve his dilemma. The emphasis on sympathy is still present in Estella's comment to Pip about her suffering, but as the two leave the ruined Brewery at Satis House, there is nothing to indicate they are disengaged from their society.

Dickens's *Bildungsroman* reflects the division within himself and his two major characters as it suggests that, like Blake, the most he can hope for is a possibility of a renewed society. But overriding that hope is a skepticism that his society will abandon its oppressive socio-economic ideology. At best, he seems to show us that individuals like Pip, Estella and Joe can embody values that set them apart from their society, and while it may be possible for them to co-exist with a stable capitalism and imperialism, they are powerless to initiate the fundamental social change that marks the genre in which the individual and society influence each other. His novel seems to be a departure from the traditional *Bildungsroman*, but it looks towards what seems to become more common as the genre develops in the 20th and early 21st centuries. Tom Wolfe's *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, will serve as an example.

Section IV: I Am Charlotte Simmons: Beyond Bildungsroman?

As Wolfe makes clear in his literary manifesto, "Stalking the Billion Footed Beast," he sees himself as falling within, and indeed defending and reviving, the tradition of the "social novel" represented historically by such writers as Zola, Thackeray, Dickens, and, we would add, Fielding as well (Wolfe 1989). They were all 'realists' in some sense of the term, and realism, Wolfe argues, has always been the mainstay of the novel form, despite the fact that the intellectual elite has typically seen it as vulgar and contemptuous. This has been particularly true since the late 1940s when it began to be replaced by the 'psychological novel,' the absurdist movement, and others. As he puts it, writers such as Trilling and Steiner have always thought that

[t]he realistic novel ... was the literary child of the nineteenth-century industrial bourgeoisie. It was a slice of life, a cross section, that provided a true and powerful picture of individuals and society —as long as the bourgeois order and the old class system were firmly

in place. But now that the bourgeoisie was in a state of ‘crisis and partial rout’ (Steiner’s phrase) and the old class system was crumbling, the realistic novel was pointless. What could be more pointless than a cross section of disintegrating fragments (Wolfe 1989 47).

However, Wolfe has always argued against this tide beginning in 1973 with his introductory essay for *The New Journalism* where he predicted that “the future of the fictional novel would be a highly detailed realism based on reporting, a realism more thorough than any currently being attempted, *a realism that would portray the individual in intimate and inextricable relation to the society around him*” (Wolfe, 1989 50: our emphasis; also see Wolfe 1973). What better way, then, to explore this subject than in a *Bildungsroman* set in a university which represents the very heart of contemporary adolescent culture and where individuals are supposed to resolve somehow the tension between themselves as free individuals and their role within a social order? Wolfe’s most recent novel, *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, explores exactly this as it follows the adolescent life of an innocent, but incredibly intelligent, young woman from the small town of Sparta, North Carolina (located on the ‘wrong side’ of the Appalachian Mountains) who goes off to one of America’s finest ‘ivy league’ schools, the fictional Dupont University.⁹ In this, Charlotte is like both Tom and Pip since they too left their country settings for the ‘city’. This similarity ought not blind us, however, to the different ways the three authors conceive both of the places from which their protagonists have come and the places to which they will journey, and what lessons they learn *en route*.

Critics with intellectual/academic credentials (or pretensions) have never been especially kind to Wolfe’s fiction, although they tended to be more positive about his first novel, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987), than they were of the second, *A Man in Full* (1998), about which John Updike said: it “amounts to Entertainment, not literature, even literature in a modest aspirant form” (*The New Yorker*). These bad reviews multiplied with *I Am Charlotte Simmons* (2004). Elaine Showalter’s, “Peeping Tom’s Juvenile Jaunt,” has perhaps been the most caustic. She calls the book “puerile rubbish” and “a leering expose of the sexual shenanigans of undergraduates” written by a “snobbish, superficial, and insecure” man. “But what can be expected,” she says, “when a novelist in his 70s (Wolfe is 73) takes up the subject of undergraduate life? Mainly voyeurism” (Showalter B14). In his *Guardian* review, Blake Morrison adds: “Wolfe has always been more surface

than depth... With *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, though, he tells us little or nothing that we didn't already know" (Morrison 4), which is, as Michiko Kakutani puts it in her *New York Times* review, "Yikes ... that students crave sex and beer, love to party, wear casual clothes, and use four-letter words" (Kakutani 1). To add insult to injury, the book also won *The Literary Review's* annual Bad Sex Award for 2004.

There is much in these reviews of an *ad hominem* nature and hence outside of our purview. But there is something else in the negative reviews that is worthy of comment. Most importantly, there's the charge that while previously Wolfe had at least reported to us things we didn't know, whether about Wall Street or real estate, there is nothing in *I Am Charlotte Simmons* that wasn't common knowledge already. Hence, his claim to be writing in the tradition of a sweeping nineteenth century novel, a social commentary on modern America based upon his reporting, rings a bit hollow.

In response to this charge, we need first to note the deep cynicism lying behind these depressingly world weary reviews with their attitude that *of course* college life is about booze and sex: only a naïve outsider (like Wolfe) would be shocked or indeed interested in that. But this response from the reviewers misses something vitally important about the concern Wolfe expresses in the novel about the state of American universities (and hence of American society more generally). And this is that these institutions are coming to be *defined* by these behaviours—as if America, and not just its universities were turning into an endless spring break or a loop of 'Girls Gone Wild'. In this respect, consider the episode in the prologue to the novel where the (fictional) Governor of California is fellated by a young female student in a public square at the university. His behaviour here displays Wolfe's concern with the state of American life in part because, on the one hand, universities seemed to have lost either their capacity or their will to educate citizens who can enrich their society, and on the other hand, that those who lead in our society have devolved into unthinking frat boys. Moreover, the universities themselves don't seem to care about this state of affairs—in part because they don't see their role any longer to act *in loco parentis*, but also because the faculty are too immersed in their own political agendas and (at times) pursuing narrowly focused research interests at the expense of teaching; the Presidents are simply trying to keep the peace amongst the various warring factions and consumed by fund raising; and the institutions themselves are too obsessed with their multi-million dollar sports teams. All of these, in their ways, come down to dollars in imitation of the wider corporate society that envelops and sustains them.

Consider, for example, Wolfe's description of language use in the novel, especially his exploration of "Fuck Patois" (Wolfe 2004 35). He isn't simply trying to be shocking or lurid here. Rather, in an Orwellian vein, he is warning us that in a world where language has been reduced to a single word or a few phrases—vulgar or not—our ability to think has become excruciatingly truncated. And this is particularly troubling when our best and brightest young people speak this way as a matter of course. Or consider his description of Charlotte's 'seduction' by the heartless frat boy, Hoyt Thorpe, the scene specifically pointed to by *The Literary Review* for the Bad Sex Award. As Wolfe later argued, the scene wasn't supposed to be erotic; indeed, quite the reverse. It was meant to depict sex entirely devoid of eroticism since the point of sex for someone like Thorpe is not eroticism and certainly not love; it is success, that is, acquisition, a point made by a basketball groupie in the novel when she explains why she has sex with the players whom she doesn't know: "Every girl wants to... fuck... a star... Any girl who says she doesn't is lying" (Wolfe 2004 647). Indeed, sex doesn't even appear in the novel as something the participants enjoy: like getting drunk or high, it's simply something one is expected to do. While this might not be anything radically new, surely the depth and the breadth of it is; as such, despite the comments by Showalter et al., it is genuinely troubling. It isn't completely surprising, then, that we have events like the recent ones reported on regarding the lacrosse team at Duke, the university upon which Dupont is at least partially based. Even if the players were not guilty of rape, they did have sex workers at their party, and this didn't seem to be out of the norm.

This 'devolution' of behaviour is clearly the central theme of *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, as is indicated at the very beginning of the novel as a fictional entry in *The Dictionary of Nobel Laureates* about a young psychology professor and neuroscientist at Dupont, Victor Starling. Starling has won the prize for an experiment where he removed the amygdala from a number of cats, which sent them into a state of "sexual arousal hypermanic in the extreme." Unexpectedly, however, the group of control cats, who were unaltered, began to act as sexually aroused as the experimental cats. The experiment thus established the existence of "cultural para-stimuli" that can, within certain environments, even abnormal ones, "overwhelm the genetically determined responses of perfectly normal, healthy animals" (Wolfe 2004 2).

This particular deterministic view—a curious mishmash of Wilsonian sociobiology and Skinnerian behaviorism—conceives the individual as the

product of biology and/or environment and as such has no place for what it takes to be the outmoded humanistic view of consciousness, let alone the archaic Christian view of a soul. Whereas Galileo had seen a place for religion as well as for science, this new view is relentlessly reductionist, materialistic, and deterministic and posits consciousness, morality (whether religiously based or not), and a teleological view of nature as nothing more than fictitious creations of our superstitious imagination. But if we can no more control our behaviour than the cats in Starling's experiment, then we can't be held accountable for our actions. Morality is, hence, impossible. And this would appear to end the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* since its main function is to trace the moral development of its protagonists as they seek to resolve the tension between individual freedom and socialization.

The novel pits this scientific view against a much different and older world-view that is steeped in religion, personal responsibility, and conscience, and represented in general by Sparta and in particular by Charlotte's 'mamma', who is a Church-going, God-fearing woman. Significantly, it is her voice that always acts as Charlotte's conscience, and it is to her that Charlotte feels she ultimately must answer. Indeed, her mother also gives substance to Charlotte's sense of personal identity. When Charlotte is about to depart Sparta for Dupont, her mother warns her that she may be pressured into actions that would be considered unacceptable from Mamma's perspective. "All you got to say", she tells Charlotte, "is, 'I'm Charlotte Simmons and I don't hold with things like 'at.' And they'll respect you for that" (Wolfe 2004 231). As an attempt to assert her identity, throughout the novel Charlotte herself repeats this phrase: 'I Am Charlotte Simmons.' Indeed, she often expresses it at those times when her identity is most in question as if the phrase could, like a sacred incantation, make what was uttered real and concrete.

Charlotte finds that instead of respect for her views, she is more likely to elicit contempt or disdain from her peers—when, that is, they are not simply ignoring her completely. Charlotte's identity while in Sparta had been defined by her intelligence, and she hoped—indeed assumed—that such intelligence would make her popular at Dupont. But it doesn't. On the contrary, it seems rather to alienate her. For the most part, Dupont is filled with people who are either unintelligent, like some of the athletes and frat boys, or people who are indeed intelligent but actively *hide* it from their peers. The reason for this is somewhat opaque but seems to have to do with being cool. In order for the basketball players to be accepted by

their teammates, they have to show a disdain for knowledge even if (like Charles) they are smart and actually study. Hence, one of the basketball players, the intellectually challenged Jojo Johanson, is treated mercilessly both by his coach and teammates when he decides to enroll in a philosophy class where he will actually have to study. Similarly, no matter where the black kids on the team come from, they must act and speak like they come from the ghetto in order to garner respect within their peer group. Much the same holds true for the frat boys, who sneak off late at night to do their studying, a fact that has missed Hoyt Thorpe, the heartless frat boy, until his last year when it is too late.

In this context, Charlotte searches for a boyfriend to end her sense of isolation, loneliness, and social exclusion. Her choices are between Hoyt, Jojo, and the intellectual (but nerdy) Adam Gellin. Given Charlotte's aspirations to "a life of the mind," Adam would seem to be the obvious choice for her, but she is unable, despite her efforts, to be sexually attracted to him. Why this should be is an interesting question and no doubt has something to do with Wolfe's and society's proclivity for defining manhood in terms of strength and/or power, neither of which Adam has. Part too, however, has to do with what amounts to hypocrisy on Adam's part for appearances to the contrary, Adam (and the rest of his crowd) are no more interested in a life of the mind than Hoyt is. This is displayed most clearly when he attempts to impress Charlotte by explaining his aspirations to become a "Bad-Ass Rhodie." Not only does this require being a "rogue intellectual" (who isn't willing to settle for anything as "boring and low paid and ... codified" as a professorship) who is able to develop his own distinct ideas, or "matrix" as Adam puts it. In the current political climate, it also requires that you study something that has global implications, which in turn requires that you actually spend time in some remote and impoverished part of the world, such as one of the poorer countries of Africa. In fact, Adam regrets having chosen to go to Kenya for it is too developed for his purposes. Clearly, winning a Rhodes scholarship in this context is no different in kind than Hoyt managing to land an investment banking job or Jojo making it to the NBA. All three are about money, status and power and have nothing to do with a disinterested love of ideas for their own sake: thus we get Charlotte's incredulous and baffled response to Adam: "You went—People go all the way to Africa to look good" (Wolfe 2004 278)?

While Hoyt would appear to be too obviously sinister to have any appeal for Charlotte, we must remember that though she is intelligent she is

completely unsophisticated. Moreover, when she was back in Sparta, when boys got out of line, as some did at her graduation party, there were always men around to protect her, like her father and relatives. Hence, when Hoyt saves her from the advances of a brutish lacrosse player (and gets injured in the process) it is not hard to see his appeal for her, especially when we also remember that much of what we desire is mimetic, especially for adolescents, and Hoyt is an incredibly handsome and popular boy and, in addition, he is quite relentless in his pursuit of her. But of course the expected happens and he abandons her quickly after he has seduced her.

Thus, we are left with Jojo, an unlikely suitor for her given his lack of intelligence. Having Charlotte choose him appears initially as an odd choice and Wolfe displays this at the end of the novel in an interchange between Charlotte and her neuroscience professor, the award winning Mr. Starling. He passes Charlotte as he makes his way towards his seat at a basketball game where a rejuvenated Jojo is the star and on his way to a big payday as a professional, something which has been in large part due to her positive influence on him. In passing, he smiles at her “*in that way*” as if to say: “*Don't worry, I hold nothing against you for squandering your gifts.*” “Charlotte twisted in her seat—*No! I need to tell you everything that happened!*—but she didn't leap up from her seat, and she didn't call out after him ... for what was there left to tell him that he couldn't have already easily surmised?” (Wolfe 2004 733).

How are we to interpret this passage? In settling for Jojo, has Charlotte chosen poorly? Has she simply acquiesced by accepting the traditional role of women as someone behind the man in power (even though she clearly has the power *within* the relationship)? Has she indeed squandered her intellectual gifts for a life of the nouveau riche? In answering this, we should first note that of the three boys Charlotte considers, Jojo actually has the most redeeming features. Though he clearly isn't her intellectual equal and never will be, only Jojo seems genuinely interested in ideas for their intrinsic value. Indeed, he has actually been willing to pursue his education in a way that has jeopardized his future as a professional basketball player and has also brought upon him the wrath of his coach and the disdain of his teammates.

But, we would suggest, this is only part of the explanation for having Charlotte make this choice. Remember that the novel pits two diametrically opposed views against one another—a scientific deterministic view against a view of moral responsibility and individual freedom. The first view, Wolfe seems to argue, ignores things like the lingering presence of a ‘ghost in the

machine' not fully explicable in scientific terms. The second view, however, fails to recognize the pull of social forces in our lives. We would suggest, then, that Wolfe refuses to accept this dichotomy as stated in such bald form since it actually presents us with a false dichotomy. In the past number of years, the Kantian and liberal notion of a radically free self has come under attack from a wide variety of sources. It is simply not possible, many have argued, that 'free choices' emanate from an unencumbered, abstract, perfectly rational, self creating being; i.e., as Gerald Dworkin has expressed it, there is no "unchosen chooser, no uninfluenced influencer" (Dworkin 12).

Communitarian critics have tended to stress that choice must take place within a teleological order: "Identity," says Charles Taylor, "is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I ought to endorse or oppose" (Taylor 1989 27). But it is difficult to see how this perspective or insight helps Charlotte make her choice for, as an adolescent, she is, in a sense, *between identities*, because she is uncertain to what she is committed. She comes from a certain tradition but that tradition has been eroded as she has moved from Sparta to the university. Yet, the life of the mind has proved to be an illusion in part because most of the people in the novel are disingenuous, and those that are not, like Starling, present a picture where there is no 'mind', only a brain, which is being pushed forward relentlessly by a combination of our genes and our environment.

Feminists, alternatively, have seen autonomy as "relational." How to interpret that term depends of course on what type of feminist one is, but the idea stems originally from work done by Carol Gilligan who argued that while boys may aspire to develop morally by becoming increasingly attached to abstract, impersonal rules—a rather Kantian view, as Gilligan's initial mentor, Lawrence Kohlberg, had it (1981— girls tend instead to be far more committed to context and personal relationships (Gilligan 1982). But this raises similar questions to the ones we posed with respect to communitarianism. For to who is Charlotte committed: her family? Starling? Jojo? More importantly, what is the context of her choice?

This last question, we would argue, actually moves us towards an answer regarding how to interpret the ending of *I Am Charlotte Simmons*. While Wolfe has been critical of many aspects of modern America in both his non-fiction and his fiction, this criticism is perhaps most acute in this,

his most recent work. For there is not a single aspect of university life (or the society that it exemplifies) that is held up for emulation in it. The university, it seems, is rotten to the core. In this context, what choice can one make except a prudential, self-interested one, which is exactly what Charlotte does. In this sense, then, the tension between autonomy and maturity that is the essence of the traditional *Bildungsroman* gets resolved here by the realization not only that radically free choice is impossible but also that the choices we end up making for our lives are compromises and when the culture within which we live is problematic then our choices may not be particularly pleasant.

We are left, then, with a genre that, if not dead, has undergone a radical shift. No longer can we say that it depicts an individual and a society mutually influencing each other in moving forward teleologically. Rather, as society has moved increasingly away from a telos that is inviting to all its members, at least in theory, the *Bildungsroman* has responded by focussing on individuals who either reject a mutually influential relationship with society, or who, like Pip, carve out a space that is comfortable by existing on the outlands while not abandoning society. Or, like Charlotte, who appears to accept society but who has not quite shut the door on her escape route, which would allow her an existence that is at least somewhat independent of society.

Notes

¹ See, for example, Castle 6, 11, n.13.

² In this context, it is significant that Pip's world is initially, in Moretti's phrase, "pre-modern" since he is apprenticed at an early age to his surrogate father Joe. But once he leaves the forge for London, his formal ties to his apprenticeship are broken as he is introduced to and becomes immersed in capitalist practices and enterprises. That shift embodies the development of the genre from the mid-18th to the mid-19th century.

³ Another example of Tom's thoughtful good heartedness, or virtue, is his going to Nightingale to persuade him to marry Mrs. Miller's daughter.

⁴ Hennessee details how contemporary writers such as Ruskin and Arnold, while urging the gentlemanly ideal on society, do not entirely abandon the traditional code of class and blood.

⁵ At the time the novel was written, the phrase was used to indicate that a child was not breastfed. Pip uses it to mean that he was beaten by his sister.

⁶ Other instances of the violence exist when Pip is exposed to the prisoners in chains and the prison ship. Later, Orlick's treatment of Pip and the likelihood that Orlick murdered Mrs. Joe all point to the similarities between the village, particularly the forge, and London. The chains on Magwitch and the other prisoners are echoed by the marks on Molly's wrists, and the boxing match between Pip and Herbert at Satis House in the interests of impressing Estella, is a mock version of the reality of violence in Pip's life that becomes quite serious and powerful once he moves to London.

James Kincaid's claims for childhood in Dickens's time, while more inflected than Buckley's, also seems to be an overstatement, particularly his claim that the child became "demonic" in Dickens's time. See James Kincaid (2000, 30).

⁷ For example, Blake's etching for the title page to *Innocence* depicts a fruit tree protecting the children but that also evokes the tree in Eden that points to their unavoidable fall into Experience. So, too, with "The Chimney Sweeper" in *Innocence* in which the speaker tells us about the death of his mother and that his father sold him. The child seems unaware of the social conditions that drove him into the potentially lethal dangers of sweeping; we, however, fully understand that Experience has overtaken the child. Unlike the Sweeper in *Experience*, whose parents "think they have done me no injury" (9), the sweep in *Innocence* remains oblivious to that nightmare and provides his friend Tom with a nostrum that will allow him to withstand the nightmare: "So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm" (24). The appeal to duty is clearly something the speaker has had thrust upon him by official society as a way of re-enforcing its ideology. These examples illustrate the similarity between Blake's view that innocence is necessarily temporary and experience is always already present in innocence, and Dickens's use of irony throughout the novel, in particular in his treatment of Pip's childhood.

⁸ Like Magwitch, Pip is criminalized both at the beginning when he steals food and at the end when he tries to help Magwitch escape. Miss Havisham and Pip are both victimized by Estella; Herbert's generosity of spirit is returned by Pip; the self-absorbed and violent Bentley Drummle marries Estella and fulfills Pip's fairytale. Most importantly, Joe's childlike capacity for sympathy, love and protection become an integral part of Pip's identity by the end of the novel.

⁹ The age range within which one is considered an adolescent is not exact. Interestingly, there has recently been a new category created within the psychological literature called the "emerging adult," which was coined in 2000 by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, and which covers roughly the ages between 18-25. Interestingly, however, many of the characteristics of this age group are similar to those of adolescents, such as "identity explorations," "instability," and "feeling in-between" (Arnett, 2006). Hence, we shall continue to refer to Charlotte as an adolescent, though recognizing that she is on the cusp of being an emerging adult.

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