

David Copperfield, an Abortive Bildungsroman

Koichi MIYAZAKI

I

It may be said that there lurks in the back of one's mind the question of whether the physical and mental being called oneself is actually one's real self. In other words, one may feel that oneself is a mere substitute for another being who has the intrinsic right to live and act in this world. In *David Copperfield*, the episode about Miss Betsey Trotwood's chagrin at the birth of the male baby in spite of her foreboding is interesting in itself as an instance of her peculiarity. But it also suggests that the born baby is destined to be an unauthorized and transient being. In Chapter I, "I Am Born," David himself tells about the circumstances as follows:

I lay in my basket, and my mother lay in her bed; but Betsey Trotwood Copperfield was for ever in the land of dreams and shadows, the tremendous region whence I had so lately travelled.

The name Betsey Trotwood Copperfield is the one Aunt Betsey had intended to give the expected female baby as her godmother. David, at that time, was of course unaware of this incident, but later, when he heard about that, he must have had an odd feeling as to his identity or his right to existence.

Even ten years after his birth, when David flees from

the severe warehouse to live with her, Aunt Betsey often makes remarks about the girl for whom David is supposed to be a vicarious being. For instance, "[Your] sister, Betsey Trotwood, never would have run away. . . . She would have lived with her godmother, and we should have been devoted to one another," "...after your sister Betsey Trotwood disappointed me, . . ." or "Be as like your sister as you can, and speak out!" These observations of hers indicate that she is still thinking of the supposedly intrinsic female child to have been born instead of David.

David goes through similar kinds of misgivings as to his identity when he enters Salem House. Steerforth, a head boy there, asks him if he has a sister. When David answers in the negative, Steerforth says, "That's a pity. . . . If you had one, I should think she would have been a pretty, timid, little, bright-eyed sort of girl. I should have liked to know her." Here again, David is regarded as a substitute for the girl Steerforth would have been interested in. Steerforth's attitude to David is also clear when he later calls David by the female name of "Daisy". Steerforth is picturing and cherishing an imaginary girl through David. Thus David is no more than a makeshift means of Steerforth's gratifying his gallant longing, and that makes David's own *raison d'être* a very slight one. Seen in this light, a peculiar significance may be attached to the opening sentence of the novel: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show." David seems to be conscious of the precariousness of his own position. It is true that most incidents in this novel naturally take place around David, but the reader will find that he rarely acts on his own initiative even after he attains adolescence. We shall discuss this matter in detail later.

Together with the misgivings about his identity, there exists in young David's heart a loathing against growing up.

When he is taken to Yarmouth where Peggotty's family lives, he feels attached to the pretty little girl Emily. Both David and Emily are about six years old.

And how I loved her! What happiness (I thought) if we were married, and were going away anywhere to live among the trees and in the fields, *never growing older, never growing wiser, children ever*, rambling hand in hand through sunshine and among flowery meadows, laying down our heads on moss at night, in a sweet sleep of purity and peace, and buried by the birds when we were dead! (Chapter X; Italics mine)

Here David's wish for staying a little boy is clearly declared though it may sound rather strange coming from an infant, for children are generally believed to be intent on growing up.

Emily, too, when she is leaving for Australia after the unhappy love affair with Steerforth, writes to David as follows:

"Good-bye for ever. Now, my dear, my friend, good-bye for ever in this world. In another world, if I am forgiven, I may wake a child and come to you. All thanks and blessings. Farewell, evermore." (Chapter LV)

She yearns for the innocence of a child the more earnestly because she had experienced the hardship of a deserted woman.

In connection with this, we notice that David treasures the freshness of childhood preserved by adults as the source of a happy life.

... I think the memory of most of us can go farther back... than many of us suppose; just as I believe the power of observation in numbers of very young children to be quite wonderful for its closeness and accuracy. Indeed, I think that most grown

men who are remarkable in this respect, may with greater propriety be said not to have lost the faculty, than to have acquired it; the rather, as I generally observe such men to retain a certain freshness, and gentleness, and capacity of being pleased, which are also an inheritance they have preserved from their childhood. (Chapter II)

It may also be called remarkable that David as a boy often mentions a longing for death. When David comes home from Salem House for vacation, he finds his mother giving the breast to the baby born between her and Murdstone. The mother, seeing him, kisses David fervently and lays his head down on her bosom near the baby, putting its hand to David's lips. David is greatly moved and describes his emotion as follows:

I wish I had died. I wish I had died then, with that feeling in my heart! I should have been more fit for Heaven than I ever have been since. (Chapter VIII)

Two months after this, David at school hears from home that his mother is dead and goes back for the funeral. The baby also dies just one day after the mother, and it is put into her arms to be buried together. David writes about that time as follows:

The mother who lay in the grave, was the mother of my infancy; the little creature in her arms, was myself, as I had once been, hushed for ever on her bosom. (Chapter IX)

Here again, David's wish for infantile death or antipathy to growing up is to be seen.

A similar kind of remark is made about his juvenile girl friend Emily, too. The little Emily is walking on the seashore

with David, when she gazes at the horizon abstractedly.

There has been a time since—I do not say it lasted long, but it has been—when I have asked myself the question, would it have been better for little Emily to have had the waters close above her head that morning in my sight; and when I have answered Yes, it would have been. (Chapter III)

The passage above shows that David longs for an early death not only for himself but for his beloved, which way of feeling may be rather out of the common for youth to entertain.

II

After his mother's death, David is sent by Murdstone, his step-father, to London to earn his living by working in Murdstone and Grinby's, a wine warehouse. He is ten years old then and too young to put his small wages of six shillings a week to a systematic use. He writes:

I was so young and childish, and so little qualified—how could I be otherwise?—to undertake the whole charge of my own existence, that often, in going to Murdstone and Grinby's, of a morning, I could not resist the stale pastry put out for sale at half-price at the pastrycook's doors, and spent in that, the money I should have kept for my dinner. Then, I went without my dinner, or bought a roll or a slice of pudding. (Chapter XI)

And again:

I know that I worked, from morning until night, with common men and boys, a shabby child. I know that I lounged about the streets, insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed. I know that, but

for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond.
(Chapter XI)

At this stage of his life, David does not mention his former longing for death, probably because, though it may sound paradoxical, his daily practical hardship is too much for him to indulge in that kind of mood even if it might be lurking deep in his mind.

The Micawbers, at whose home David has lodged while working in the warehouse, determine to leave London for Plymouth to seek a better fortune. The Micawbers have been David's only friends in the vast London, and he cannot stand the thought of continuing his hard, solitary life lodging with strangers. He is so disheartened and finally makes a desperate resolve to travel down to Dover where, he hears, Miss Betsey Trotwood, his great-aunt, lives. On his way, he is cheated by cunning and rough people because of his crudity. The man with a donkey-cart robs David of his half-guinea and runs away with his box on the cart leaving him behind, the old-clothes dealer gets his waistcoat dogcheap for ninepence, and the "Goroo-man" pays him the pittance of one shilling and four pence for his coat after the prolonged negotiation of more than two hours. David is scared by many trampers on the road, too. A tinker, one of them, requires him to give him the drink-money for a pint of wine, and when he refuses, the tinker seizes the handkerchief out of his hand and knocks down the woman who has been travelling in his company. It is because he has sensed that she has dissuaded David from producing the money by the sign of shaking her head slightly. These experiences in his journey, however, do not serve to make David wiser or more shrewd.

During his long travelling on foot in the daytime and lying on hay at night, David is always supported by the image of his

mother.

But under this difficulty, . . . I seemed to be sustained and led on by my fanciful picture of *my mother in her youth, before I came into the world*. It always kept me company. It was there, among the hops, when I lay down to sleep; it was with me on my waking in the morning; it went before me all day. (Chapter XIII; Italics mine)

Is it not remarkably significant that David pictures the image of his young mother before his birth? Here again is seen his antipathy to maturity and a peculiar way of feeling about his own existence. Probably David's sense of innocence is so strong as to make him yearn for prenatal state of purity for himself and untainted youth for his mother.

David, after days of hard journey, presents himself, ragged, dirty and tired, to his great-aunt. When he tells her about his parentage and present circumstances, she tells the maid to call Mr Dick who is the occupant of her house. He is an eccentric man, but Miss Trotwood puts an absolute faith in his judgement. Following his advice, she bathes, feeds and clothes David. Thus he is accepted to her home, the great-aunt and Mr Dick constituting themselves his guardians.

David is sent to Canterbury by and by to live with Mr Wickfield, a lawyer, and to go to Dr Strong's school. After studying there for five years, David goes up to London and becomes an articled clerk to Messrs Spenlow and Jorkins, Proctors. Miss Trotwood has arranged all these procedures conferring with Mr Dick and David has had no initiative in the choice.

As mentioned above, Mr Dick is an eccentric gentleman, almost lunatic. He has been occupied for ten years in drawing up a memorial to be presented to the Lord Chancellor, but never

gets far with his writing because he cannot keep out of the record some reference to Charles the First losing his head. He often flies a great kite covered all over with his writing. This he deems to be a way of spreading the fact of the injustice he has suffered. It may be called a natural or clever development for the story that Miss Trotwood, who has had little interest in David because of his masculinity, comes to commit herself to supporting him because of the advice of Mr Dick, who is mentally immature and innocent in spite of his grey-haired middle age. Mr Dick later succeeds in making peace between Dr Strong and his wife. These circumstances show the influence a childish, guileless man can exert in the complicated world, and may corroborate David's youthful wish of "never growing older, never growing wiser, children ever."

In relation to this, we are reminded of Micawber's unmasking Uriah Heep. Some critics point out that it is unnatural for the artless Micawber to detect Heep's elaborate fraud. But this feat also may be an example of the victory of the naive over the tortuous.

III

James Steerforth is, as often pointed out, a sort of Byronic hero. He is disposed to swaggering, vainglory, amorousness and so on, but he has his peculiar attraction. David admires him from the first time that he meets him, and this admiration does not dwindle in spite of his witnessing various examples of Steerforth's viciousness. As to the first night at Salem House, David writes:

I thought of him very much after I went to bed, and raised myself, I recollect, to look at him where he lay in the moonlight, *with his handsome face turned up, and his head reclining easily*

on his arm. He was a person of great power in my eyes; that was, of course, the reason of my mind running on him. (Chapter VII; Italics mine)

When Steerforth knows that the mother of Mr Mell, one of the masters at Salem House, is living in an almshouse, he spreads the information in the school and finally procures the master's dismissal from his position. This is really a heartless and cruel act of a vain, proud boy. But other boys, including David, are only impressed with his daring audacity.

Rosa Dartle, a companion to Mrs Steerforth, is one of the sacrifices of Steerforth's whimsical love. He loved her once, but was soon tired of her. And what is worse, he sometimes tries to encourage her adoration even after his own interest in her has become cold. Whenever she is excited, the scar on her lips shows up conspicuously. This scar has been caused by Steerforth, who threw a hammer at her in his fit of agitation. It is a pity that she cannot cease to love him in spite of his egocentricity.

Little Emily is another sacrifice of Steerforth's licentious affection. Going down to Yarmouth accompanied by David, he finds Emily, Daniel Peggotty's niece, very charming. She is already engaged to Ham, but being seduced by Steerforth, she elopes with him on the eve of her intended wedding. He takes her abroad, travels here and there, and, tired of her in a while, comes to treat her harshly. She escapes from the detention with great difficulty and comes back to England as a futureless woman. Steerforth is later drowned in his yacht in a storm off Yarmouth.

David's admiration for Steerforth sometimes undergoes decrease for some reasons, Agnes's advice against their companionship being one of them. But his critical attitude to Steerforth never lasts long.

I was never unmindful of Agnes... But when he [Steerforth] entered, and stood before me with his hand out, the darkness that had fallen on him changed to light, and I felt confounded and ashamed of having doubted one I loved so heartily. (Chapter XXVIII)

Thus David is under the complete sway of Steerforth.

Even when David knows that Steerforth has seduced Emily and has brought ruin to Daniel Peggotty's household, his estimation of Steerforth does not undergo much change.

I am not afraid to write that I never had loved Steerforth better than when the ties that bound me to him were broken. In the keen distress of the discovery of his unworthiness, I thought more of all that was brilliant in him, I softened more towards all that was good in him, I did more justice to the qualities that might have made him a man of a noble nature and a great name, than ever I had done in the height of my devotion to him.

(Chapter XXXII)

We have seen above Steerforth's posture of "lying with his head reclining easily on his arm" in the bedroom at Salem House. This position of his sleeping is later referred to several times on various occasions. For instance, when David is leaving Steerforth's home where he has stayed overnight:

I was up with the dull dawn, and having dressed as quietly as I could, looked into his room. He was fast asleep; *lying, easily, with his head upon his arm*, as I had often seen him lie at school. (Chapter XXIX; Italics mine)

What is remarkable is that the description of his sleeping position is always attended with ominous comments. After the

passage describing his sleep at Salem House, the following lines are added.

No veiled future dimly glanced upon him in the moonbeams. There was no shadowy picture of his footsteps, in the garden that I dreamed of walking in all night.

And after the passage in Chapter XXIX:

The time came in its season, and that was very soon, when I almost wondered that nothing troubled his repose, as I looked at him.

This comment refers to his seduction of Emily and ultimately to his death. The scene of his being drowned is described as follows:

...on that part of it [the shore] where she [Emily] and I had looked for shells, two children—on that part of it where some lighter fragments of the old boat, blown down last night, had been scattered by the wind—among the ruins of the home he had wronged—I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school. (Chapter LV; Italics mine)

Reading this passage, we know that the repeated references to his sleeping position has been the foreshadowing of this fate. It is suggested that his position of reclining easily hides the tragedy awaiting him. His gaudy life has been directed to the disastrous death from the first. Steerforth, David's idol, is thus not spared from mortality, and it adds to the negative introversion of the novel. And it is to be noted that the repeated description of Steerforth's sleeping posture serves to suggest David's yearning lamentation for his really despicable hero's death.

IV

The momentous event in David's adolescence is his falling in love with Dora. He is invited by Mr Spenlow to spend a Sunday at his country house and sees his only daughter, Dora. She is lately returned from Paris, where she has been at school. Introduced to her by Mr Spenlow, he falls crazily in love with her at first sight.

All was over in a moment. I had fulfilled my destiny. I was a captive and a slave. I loved Dora Spenlow to distraction!

She was more than human to me. She was a Fairy, a Sylph, I don't know what she was—anything that no one ever saw, and everything that everybody ever wanted. I was swallowed up in an abyss of love in an instant. (Chapter CXXVI)

David goes on loving Dora and Mr Spenlow invites him to a little picnic in honour of his daughter's birthday. He is overjoyed, carries an enormous bouquet and passes an enchanted day with her, and they come to tender understanding towards the end of the picnic. But shortly after this occurrence, David is told by Miss Trotwood that she has lost all her property and is a ruined woman. The result is that David is compelled to earn what money he can and he is hired by his old Canterbury school-teacher, Dr Strong, to assist in the production of his dictionary. But it sounds rather ridiculous that David should help Dr Strong's work, for the dictionary is destined never to be finished because of the doctor's too deliberate way of compilation. The boys in the school have calculated, at the doctor's rate of going, it will take one thousand six hundred and forty-nine years to finish the work. It is doubtful if David can be

of even slight help in accelerating the editing and also the pay of seventy pounds a year will not answer David's need much.

Mr Spenlow, probably because of David's changed circumstances, sternly forbids his visiting the house. But very soon after that, Mr Spenlow dies in a fit. This incident is suggestive of the vanity of human obduracy. Dora is taken in charge by her two maiden aunts. They are rather sympathetic to David's love affair and consent to receive him as an acknowledged suitor. David is determined to become a stenographer at Parliament and begins to practise shorthand. He also sets himself to write stories. This phase of his life reflects Dickens's own career faithfully. And as we shall see later, this has much to do with the unconvincing abruptness of the development of his personality.

By his various jobs, David acquires an income sufficient to be married upon. And in due course, he and Dora are installed as husband and wife in a tiny house. Dora is a pleasant and fascinating being, but extremely puerile in her way of feeling and thinking. Probably this puerility is the quality that had enchanted David at first. We have seen above that he had, as a child, a characteristic antipathy against maturity and Dora is just the sort of girl he may feel bewitched by. And also we remember that Clara, David's mother, was a sweet, tender, but rather childish woman. It is generally said that a male youth is attracted to a girl who is his mother's counterpart. This might also elucidate David's falling in love with Dora.

But Dora's puerility makes a different impression on other people. When David reveals to Miss Trotwood his intention of marrying Dora, she conveys her uneasiness to him:

"Dora, indeed!" returned my aunt. "And you mean to say the little thing is very fascinating, I suppose?"

"My dear aunt," I replied, "no one can form the least idea

what she is!"

"Ah! And not silly?" said my aunt.

I seriously believe it had never once entered my head for a single moment, to consider whether she was or not. I resented the idea of course....

"Not light-hearted?" said my aunt. (Chapter XXXV)

Miss Trotwood's anxiety proves to have been well founded. David, after living with her a while, finds Dora's way of house-keeping unbearable. She does not know how to make both ends meet, nor can she check the servants who are trying to cheat her. Jip, her pet dog, is allowed to walk about the table during the dinner and puts his foot in the salt or in the butter as if he were the symbol of the disorderly home management. Dora wants to occupy all David's time and attention and does not understand the mental exertion required by his profession of writing. David tries to improve her ways by indicating her faults, but it only drives her into despair. Miss Trotwood knows how to deal with this kind of problem and says to him, "You have chosen for yourself... and you have chosen a very pretty and a very affectionate creature. It will be your duty, and it will be your pleasure too—of course I know that; I am not delivering a lecture—to estimate her (as you chose her) by the qualities she has, and not by the qualities she may not have. The latter you must develop in her, if you can. And if you cannot, child,... you must just accustom yourself to do without 'em. But remember, my dear, your future is between you two. No one can assist you; you are to work it out for yourselves. This is marriage, Trot; and Heaven bless you both, in it, for a pair of babes in the world as you are!" (Chapter XLIV)

This advice of the great-aunt's is founded on her own past experience of unsuccessful marriage and it may also be a reflection of Dickens's intention of mending his own unsatisfactory

married life. If David's wedlock had developed along Miss Betsey's advice, the novel would have become quite different from what it actually is. By the way, Dickens makes Miss Betsey use the words "a pair of babes" for the couple, and that reminds the reader of David's former wish for "never growing older, . . ." Her words suggest that David is not yet rid of his original puerility and is not qualified to mend his wife's frivolity.

In spite of his great-aunt's advice, David's feeling of "a vague unhappy loss or want of something" grows stronger and he hears "some whisper . . . of something never to be realised . . . like a strain of sorrowful music faintly heard in the night." This dissatisfaction of David's is objectified by his witnessing the scene where Annie, Dr Strong's wife, expresses her idea of conjugal love. Dr Strong is a learned and kindly man, but of nearly sixty years of age. Annie is very young and lovely and people have suspected that Annie is in clandestine love with Jack Maldon, her handsome young cousin. In addition, Uriah Heep maliciously tries to increase the psychological awkwardness between the couple, but, as seen above, through Mr Dick's amiable intercession, the couple come to genuine understanding. Annie says on this occasion that certainly she loved Maldon when a girl but now that she has seen through his fake personality, she has got rid of her misdirected affection. She declares that her love of Maldon was "the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart" and that "there can be no disparity in marriage like unsuitability of mind and purpose" (Chapter XLX). She continues to say that her love of Dr Strong "was founded on a rock, and it endures."

On his way home, and again and again after that evening, Mrs Strong's words haunt David's mind and he comes to regard his having fallen in love with Dora as "the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart." But to the present writer, Annie's words sound too rhetorical, formal, and perfunctory. It is un-

satisfactory, too, that her process of emotional discipline is not concretely or minutely described. This episode of the Strong's seems to have been introduced just to intensify David's sense of dissatisfaction with Dora and again, it may be the expression of Dickens's own sense of the "disparity" in his marriage.

In the second year of the marriage, Dora gradually loses her strength and finally becomes ill. It is just as if she were following in the footsteps of Clara, David's mother, who had suffered because of her excessive tenderness, declined and prematurely died. But while Dora is lying seriously ill in bed, David is often absent from home, what with searching for Emily, what with attending the scene of Micawber's exposing Uriah Heep's plot and what with visiting Yarmouth to see Ham. Even at Dora's deathbed, though because of her request, David is not present, only Agnes attending her and listening to her last will. David seems to be getting colder towards Dora and it will be a casuistry to say that he is undergoing the "discipline of heart" in this way.

In her lifetime, Dora was aware of her childishness herself and asked David to call her his "child-wife."

I laughingly asked my child-wife what her fancy was in desiring to be so called. She answered, . . .

"I don't mean, you silly fellow, that you should use the name instead of Dora: I only mean that you should think of me that way. When you are going to be angry with me, say to yourself, 'it's only my child-wife!' When I am very disappointing, say 'I knew, a long time ago, that she would make but a child-wife!' When you miss what I should like to be, and I think can never be, say 'still my foolish child-wife loves me!' For indeed I do." (Chapter XLIV)

And a short time before she dies, Dora says to her husband:

"I am afraid, dear, I was too young. I don't mean in years only, but in experience, and thoughts, and everything. I was such a silly little creature! I am afraid it would have been better, if we had only loved each other as a boy and girl, and forgotten it. I have begun to think I was not fit to be a wife."

I try to stay my tears, and to reply, "Oh, Dora, love, as fit as I to be a husband!"

"I don't know," with the old shake of her curls. "Perhaps! But, if I had been more fit to be married, I might have made you more so, too. Besides you are very clever, and I never was."

(Chapter LIII)

These two passages sound pathetic enough, but at the same time they may be the preparation for the second stage of David's married life. The present writer cannot help feeling that Dickens is here hard put to stress Dora's sweet charm and at the same time to make David awake to the shortcomings of her being too young.

In this relation, it may be deemed a clumsy makeshift that David comes to be clearly conscious of his love for Agnes only after Dora's death. Agnes's fine character and tenderness is often described ever since David as a boy comes to stay with the Wickfields, but somehow he does not regard her as an object of romantic attachment. And also it is often suggested that Agnes loves him at heart but she is strangely reticent about the subject and even rejoices in his marriage to Dora. There does not seem to exist any feeling of jealousy in her. And it may also be called too comfortable a contrivance that Dora, before she dies, asks Agnes, as her last request, to occupy the vacant place left by her.

When Agnes comes downstairs from Dora's sickroom, her expression conveys to David that Dora is dead.

That face, so full of pity, and of grief, that rain of tears, that awful mute appeal to me, that solemn hand upraised towards Heaven. (Chapter LIII)

Agnes's posture certainly indicates Dora's death upstairs, but later it comes to have another significance for David. He stays abroad several years after Dora's death, and then coming back he says to Agnes:

"You remember, when you came down to me in our little room—pointing upward, Agnes?... As you were then, my sister, I have often thought since, you have ever been to me. Ever pointing upward, Agnes; ever leading me to something better; ever directing me to higher things!" (Chapter LX)

Agnes is thus admired by David as a guiding star of his soul. But it is not described in what way or in what direction she guided him. In consequence, the reader cannot help receiving the impression that David is still puerile and blindly following Agnes just as a child runs after its mother.

The same can be said about David's jobs of a stenographer and a story writer. He gives his specious reasons for his success as follows:

... I never could have done what I have done, without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one subject at a time, no matter how quickly its successor should come upon its heels, which I then formed. ... My meaning simply is, that whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well; that whatever I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely; that in great aims and in small, I have always been thoroughly in earnest. I have never believed it possible that

any natural or improved ability can claim immunity from the companionship of the steady, plain, hard-working qualities, and hope to gain its end. (Chapter XLIII)

The principle manifested here is admirable, but David's actual activity based on this morale is not fully described. Especially that can be said of his profession as a writer. He only makes some brief excuse for the paucity of description of this kind as follows:

In pursuance of my intention of referring to my own fictions only when their course should incidentally connect itself with the progress of my story, I do not enter on the aspirations, the delights, anxieties, and triumphs, of my art. (Chapter LXI)

As mentioned above, David's professions of stenography and writing are just those Dickens himself has been engaged in. In the case of David's working as a boy labourer in the wine warehouse, general readers did not know that Dickens was copying his own experience of working in Warren's Blacking Manufactory. So he did not feel restricted in describing David's misery and suffering at Murdstone and Grinby's. But most readers knew that Dickens was once a stenographer and everyone knew, of course, that he was a writer now. This situation might have made Dickens assume a prudent attitude in representing the actualities of those professions. Anyway, the scarcity of substantiation of the principle in David's daily life decreases the reality of the latter part of the novel, and the reader is tempted to sense that Dickens, in recording David's principle, is stating his own attitude to life instead of David's. We know that Dickens was really a hard worker and that his lifelong motto was, "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well." And also the virtues of "earnestness," "enthusiasm" and "in-

dustry" were those in vogue around 1850. Dickens might have tried to ingratiate himself with his contemporaries by extolling those qualities in the novel. Another cause of the reader's feeling uncomfortable is that David's change of attitude is too abrupt, lacking any gradual development from his early frailty. Therefore, all in all, David's growth cannot be admitted as natural in the matter of his career as well as in that of mind and emotion.

John Forster, Dickens's close friend and biographer, summarizes the precept contained in this novel as follows:

By the course of the events we learn the value of self-denial and patience, quiet endurance of unavoidable ills, strenuous effort against ills remediable; and everything in the fortunes of the actors warns us, to strengthen our generous emotions and to guard the purities of home. (*The Life of Charles Dickens*, VI, vii)

This represents a typical Victorian ideal and Dickens's life itself was supposed to be an embodiment of these virtues. But David's life, if judged open-heartedly, cannot be said to possess so many of these ingredients.

Among modern critics, Gwendolyn Needham is one of those who regard this novel as a Bildungsroman. She says that this novel traces the process of David's emotional development (*vide* "The Undisciplined Heart of David Copperfield" in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Sept., 1954). There are many others who try to find a Bildungsroman in this novel. And, of course, if one picks out apparently appropriate points, it is not hard to interpret it that way. But after all, there remains the problem as to the intrinsic, basic elements of this novel.

As seen above, this novel suggests misgivings as to one's identity and prototypal wishes for death. These feelings may

be said to be peculiar not only to David and his friends alone, but common to human beings of almost all times. This novel also hints at the unreliability of human endeavours. These ingredients may be some of the reasons why this novel appeals to us moderns. But on the other hand, Dickens was a popular writer and wanted to satisfy and ingratiate himself with Victorian readers. This consideration made him refrain from stating these tendencies too obsessively and emphasize the so-called sound attitude to life. One of the examples may be seen in arranging a harmonious understanding between the Stronges after suggesting several indications of their discord. Another is Dora's dying just when her shallow mind is coming to encumber David's life. Otherwise, the Stronges and the Copperfields would have had to be divorced or separated. Dickens, as a champion of the fireside felicity, could not introduce such a consequence. And, of course, David's growing up into a successful writer through perseverance is the distinct evidence of Dickens's sensitiveness to the contemporary aspiration. Nevertheless, I say, *David Copperfield* is far from being a satisfactory Bildungsroman. It should rather be interpreted as an expression of the author's secret psychological layers—misgivings about human existence and dissatisfaction with the waywardness of mundane affairs.