

# SOCAL DF GREETINGS



May 2024 Volume 15, Issue 3

## NEXT MEETING

Date: Saturday, May 11, 2024  
Time: 11:00 am PST

Place: ZOOM  
Meeting ID: 927 9838 2102  
Passcode: 823750

Discussion: *Great Expectations*, Ch. 30-44  
(pt. II, Ch. 11-20, pt. III, Ch. 1-5)

Presenter: **Karen Kleeman**



On the Stairs



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## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Welcome to the third of our four *Great Expectations* issues; the chosen novel for the theme of this year's 44<sup>th</sup> annual Dickens Universe at U.C. Santa Cruz July 21-27.

*Great Expectations* is the most rare and scarce of any of Dickens' major works. It first ran in the author's own periodical, *All the Year Round*, for 18 months (1860-1861).

Aside from being published in three volumes in book form; nearly the entire first edition, first issue volumes were bought up by the British libraries. Today, the Chapman and Hall triple-decker goes for \$50,000 and upwards.

Please check out our back page 5 for upcoming May-June Zoom Dickensian-related events. We look forward to seeing you Zoom friends this coming Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup> as our **Karen Kleeman** leads us and moderates our third study of *Great Expectations*. Look for her Thought Questions on page 4.

Featured is part 2 of a 1913 essay from *The Dickensian*, 'The Strange Case of *Great Expectations*' (pgs. 2 & 4).

Please enjoy our (pg. 3) informative and educational GRAD GRIND (did you notice that Magwitch liked to wear shorts?)

We are Celebrating the Life our dear friend **Arlene Rees** this Friday May 10; Arlene was a very active and integral member of The Greater Los Angeles Dickens Fellowship for over 30 years. We have lost another beloved friend.

Please see our Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/groups/1405191869718211/> and become a Friend. Your Zoom join info is in the box opposite, or you may contact Tim directly for the link. There will be an email blast later in the week that will remind you of the meeting on Saturday.

## THE STRANGE CASE OF "GREAT EXPECTATIONS" (part 2)

By Willoughby Matchett

As to those first seven chapters it is in the main true that they are specially remarkable. For not only do they deal with a boy's childhood, always a strong card with Dickens, they throw that boy into a set of circumstances forming an outstanding episode perhaps unmatched in fiction for its combination of drollery with drama of the most vivid kind. You may look for and find drollery later on in the book, you may look for and find drama later on in the book, but scarce again the two mingled.

On the whole, perhaps, the tale is a trifle somber for Dickens, and it is therefore not a little odd to find him at the first inception of his main idea harping to Forster on its comic and grotesque qualities, almost as if he had another *Pickwick* in view; however, very soon after that he refers to it more fittingly as "tragi-comic conception." That this same tragi-comic conception was the finest notion that ever struck Dickens in the way of plot, who can doubt, and that, simply from the story point of view, it gives *Great Expectations* place at the head of the other novels - surely is the fact?

This same tragi-comic conception had the surpassing merit of doing for its hero what only oddity or peculiarity did for a man elsewhere in Dickens. It gripped him as in a vice, and held him fast for the author's inspection, Dickens did not shrink from the task. He brought all his powers to bear on him. He observed him narrowly. Nowhere before in his works had Dickens looked at the ordinary man. For in *David Copperfield* it is rather David the child that is looked at - perhaps too, David the amiable and spoony young fellow - but David the man, scarcely. David the man is a mere figure of convention, *Nickleby* redivivus. He exists mainly to tell us the stories of other people, Steerforth and Little Em'ly, the Peggotty's, the Micawbers, the Strong's, and so forth. He is Charles, His Friend, in excelsis. There never was such a Charles His Friend, as *David Copperfield*. But with Pip it is otherwise. Pip is a real hero. The interest of the story centers in him, and its whole action revolves around him.

It cannot be gainsaid that the book has a few - a very few - weak chapters. The relatives of Miss Havisham seem somewhat to fail in the effect they were meant to have, and the humours of the Pocket Family seem strangely to sound the note of a cruder Dickens. As for Miss Havisham herself it may be observed that Professor Copeland of Harvard, the only real adverse critic of has come across, says she is "of ghastly artificiality." As to that, Dickens borrowed the conception of her from that inveterate old fantastic - Life.

Professor Copeland further talks about the melodrama of the book being "plentiful, and dark and dour," appropriate enough terms for the uninspired drama of *Nickleby*, but a little out of place here, for the whole point of the story is its action on the character of Pip. But when the Professor goes on to say, "Joe Gargery and Trabb's boy save the book," why, in a measure, he is right. Certainly they save the book, so, also, do Mrs. Joe and Uncle Pumblechook save the book, so also, do Wemmick and Jaggers and Jagger's clients save the book, so also, does Old Bill Barley - one of Dickens's greatest small characters - save the book, so, also, the Jack at the riverside inn save the book, so also, do Magwitch and Dolge Orlick, and Mr. Waldengarver and his dresser, and Biddy, and Estella, and - Pip save the book. Bless the Professor, there never was such a book save as this is!



Here's old Bill Barley, bless your eyes

(continued, pg. 4)

## GRAD GRIND

By Tim Clark, Chairman



### Did You Know?

(Cool *Great Expectations* tid-bits to whet the Dickensian Whistle)

#### Funeral Execution

Joe's desire to have a simple funeral for Mrs. Joe – "I would in preference have carried her to the church myself, along with three or four friendly ones wot come to it with willing harts and arms, but it were considered wot the neighbors would down on such and would be of opinions as it were wanting in respect" (Ch. 35) – is, according to the *Dictionary of Daily Wants* (1858-59), perfectly respectful: "In walking funerals it is considered a mark of respect for friends to become pall-bearers."

#### Order for the Burial of the Dead

*Humanity...brought nothing into the world and can take nothing ,...it fleeth like a shadow and never continueth long in one stay:* When Pip refers to these "noble passages," he alludes to the "Order for the Burial of the Dead," read at funerals. The first few lines in the "Order" are taken from specific passages in the Bible (indicated here in brackets): "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out {1 Timothy 6:7}. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away {Job 1:21}. Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower, he fleeth as it were a shadow and never continueth long in one stay."

#### Sent for Life

*It's death to come back:* Returning from transportation before one had served one's time was prohibited on pain of death until 1834, though the last person actually hanged for returning died in 1810. Not all transported convicts were sent, like Magwitch, on a life sentence, and all convicts would, if they behaved well in the colonies, earn a kind of probation – a "ticket of leave" – after a set interval. If a convict was transported for seven years, a ticket of leave was obtainable after four; if transported for 14 years, after six; and if transported for life, after eight.

A ticket of leave allowed a convict, according to certain regulations, to work on his or her own account. Convicts could often become quite prosperous and respectable upon receiving a ticket of leave, as they were often preferred to other laborers for their experience, and were sometimes allowed to advance to positions of civic

responsibility. According to the British government's Select Committee on Transportation, in their report of 1838, convicts did occasionally become quite wealthy, typically, by exploiting the weaknesses and reduced means of other convicts – lending sums at interest, running public houses, accumulating property at interest and default, etc.

#### Hair Powder, and Spectacles, and Black Clothes – Shorts and Whatnot

The disguises that Magwitch suggests for himself are somewhat out of fashion. Hair powder, though extremely popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, became unfashionable after 1795, when a tax on its wearers was passed. Given the extreme popularity of hair powder at the time, it had been estimated that this tax would produce £210,000 a year (the tax for a year's use of hair being a guinea – slightly more than a pound). The tax, however, essentially killed the fashion. Shorts, or knee-breeches, were also somewhat old-fashioned by the time Magwitch thinks of adopting them. In the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, buckskin knee-breeches (close-fitting trousers that extended just below the knee) were considered "immense taste"; afterwards, however, knee-breeches became less popular, and more formal – F.W. Fairholt notes, in an 1860 history of costume in England, that they were still worn as court dress. It may be that the latter association, however – of knee-breeches with formality and nobility – explains Magwitch's "extraordinary belief in shorts and disguise" (Ch. 40). They imply gentility, and Magwitch – never before a gentleman, and with vague or overstated ideas of what one looks like – hopes to disguise himself as such.

#### The Horrors

Magwitch relates that "Arthur was dying...with the horrors upon him" (Ch. 42), hallucinating a woman in white. The horrors, according to *OED*, refer to a "fit of horror or extreme depression" especially associated with *delirium tremens* (a result of alcoholism).

#### Gout

Old Barley has a painful condition, aggravated by the diet (of which rum and pepper form prominent parts) on which he insists. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "gout" comes from words meaning "drop," because "{t}he name is derived from the notion of 'dropping'."

"A morbid material from the blood in and around the joints." Gout is a disease which, though primarily afflicting the joints, can spread to inner organs. The inflammation of gout results from the accumulation of sodium urate – salts of uric acid – around the joints, and often occurs in the big toe, making it difficult or impossible to walk. *The Dictionary of Daily Wants* (1858-59) suggests Victorian courses of treatment.



(Matchett, continued from page 2)

But then, you see, the good Professor is belittling all round in order to extol *Pickwick*, quite a foolish thing to do. There is only one sensible thing to do with *Pickwick*; place it in a class by itself. It is scarcely a novel; it is simply a prose epic of fun. Idle to pretend that any other book of Dickens can compete with in popularity; equally idle to pretend that Dickens powers did not mature after he wrote it. Of the later works we are all pretty well agreed that, on the whole, to *David Copperfield* must be assigned the first place, and to *Martin Chuzzlewit* the second. The question of third on the list, however, is a ticklish one. Three works, and three works alone, one thinks, have claims to be considered for the position, and it would be wisest perhaps, to bracket them together as equal. They are *Dombey and Son*, *Bleak House* and – *Great Expectations*.

However, let it be noted that Swinburne in a celebrated article boldly gave the third place to the last mentioned. Let it be noted again that the late Andrew Lang, writing as recently as February 9<sup>th</sup> last, in the *Morning Post* had the following, “surely the history of the fortunes of Pip attains unto the first three,” and he added, “yet in the astounding wealth of Dickens’s productions it seems to attract comparatively little attention.” Precisely, that is very much the point of this article.

Conclusion and End of Part 2. The Dickensian, February 1913

## Great Expectations Thought Questions

Hi fellow participants of the So-Cal Dickens Fellowship!

What follows are questions to be thought about.....reflected upon..... or ignored completely (at your peril) ..... in preparation for our discussion of *Great Expectations*, on May 11, covering **Chapters 30-44** or **Part II: Chapters 11-20; Part III: Chapters 1-5**. Looking forward to our time spent together. Ever the best of friends, Karen Kleeman

**#1** In this section of reading, we have the ending of Book II, the second stage of Pip's expectations. Contrast the ending of Book II with the ending of Book I, in terms of mood and "expectation."

**#2** *Great Expectations* could be called a book of "ruined loves and lost illusions" ( Michael Slater, 2009). How do we see lost illusions in this section particularly?

**#3** Places seem to become characters in this book. How does the idea of a "home" play out in this novel? How do homes reflect the character of the people who live there? Does Pip have a home? a place? a belonging?

**#4** How do we see variations on "confide, confiders, confidantes, confidentiality" in the text? (*Dickensian*, Autumn, 2023). How do characters confide in one another or do they? Who holds confidences for whom?

**#5** Of the 15 chapters in this section, 10 are set in London and 5 or portions of 5 are set in the Village. Do cities perform a function in this novel? Specifically, what about London in *Great Expectations*? What does Pip learn in London?

**#6** Several universal questions are posed as frameworks for *Great Expectations*. Some examples are: why or how do we come to love who we do? How do we come to disavow those we may really love? Can people ever really change? Can one's past ever truly be escaped?

Which characters in the text does Dickens use to help the reader reflect on these questions?

**#7** Dickens is always acutely sensitive to the "past in the present"--- how do we see evidence of this in the text?

**#8** Dickens's oldest son once said of his father, "the children of his brain were much more real to him at times than we were.....". How does Pip seem real to you? Where in his growth trajectory does he seem most real? How stable or unstable do you see his identity?

**#9** Dickens believed in the power of a benevolent spirit's ability "to make all of society one family"---how does his belief in the need for a "changed heart" recur through-out this novel?

**#10** Gesture imagery was prominent in 19<sup>th</sup> century literature and in *GE*, there is a prominence of "hand" gestures. How does Dickens use hand gestures in the various characters and what might they symbolize or reflect?

**#11** Discuss the moral complexities of both Jaggers and Wemmick.....and Magwitch, as we now know him to this point.

**#12** Is self-doubt a necessary prelude to self-knowledge? Is it the "child" Pip who has the finest moral sense, or the Pip we encounter in this section?

**#13** John Mullan in *The Artful Dickens*(2020) tells us that there are 266 uses of "as if's" in this novel. How is this literary device used by Dickens and to what purpose?

**#14** How are we as readers to understand the multiple names used for Pip (Pip, Handel, "Mr." Pip) and for Magwitch (Magwitch, Provis, Abel)? What might this reflect?

**#15.....and of most importance, questions generated of your own, which will always take precedence in discussion!!**

## SoCal Dickens Fellowship Officers

<b><u>Chairman</u></b> <a href="mailto:poohclark@earthlink.net">poohclark@earthlink.net</a>	Tim Clark (909) 225-2834
<b><u>Corresponding Secretary</u></b> <a href="mailto:vikky.pickett@twc.com">vikky.pickett@twc.com</a>	Vicky Pickett (951) 805-2621
<b><u>Corresponding Secretary Emerita</u></b> <a href="mailto:jeggen@ca.rr.com">jeggen@ca.rr.com</a>	Jean Eggen (310) 645-5554
<b><u>Recording Secretary</u></b> <a href="mailto:flybyfrye@gmail.com">flybyfrye@gmail.com</a>	Faye Russell (323) 630-3784
<b><u>Treasurer</u></b> <a href="mailto:davidjpickett@icloud.com">davidjpickett@icloud.com</a>	David Pickett (951) 805-6099

### **Future SoCal DF Meetings**

Here are our agreed upon scheduled dates for reading and discussing *Great Expectations*:

- May 11: *Great Expectations* (pt. II, Ch. 11-20, pt. III, Ch. 1-5) Penguin Ch. 30-44 (Karen)
- July 13: *Great Expectations* (pt. III, Ch. 6-20) Penguin Ch. 45-59 (Tom)

Until further notice and resumed interest, all meetings are Zoom only. We are hoping to attempt a social gathering in the spring.

This is our monthly request for you to consider our Annual Fellowship dues. Nothing has changed, \$20 for a single, \$30 for a duo. Memberships are rolling, so once you pay, your renewal is not due until a year has elapsed. And of course, we do not discourage any donation that exceeds the renewal! Aside from our annual International Fellowship dues, we donate the balance to local charities and sponsorships.

If you submit a check, please make it payable to GRAD (it's a Provident bank stipulation).

Any ideas for our fall novel? Tom suggests *Vanity Fair*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Adam Bede* or *North and South*; comparing Dickens with **Thackeray** or a **Bronte**. We welcome your suggestions! We want to begin the choice in September!

## Upcoming Dickens Fellowship May-June Zoom Events

- Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 pm BMT: Canterbury  
[canterburydf@gmail.com](mailto:canterburydf@gmail.com)  
Louis James presents '*The Afterlives of Mr. Pickwick*'  
(registration required)
- Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 pm BMT: Aberdeen  
[eadsummers@me.com](mailto:eadsummers@me.com)  
Eric Summers moderates "*Favourite Dickens Readings.*"
- Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm BMT: Rochester-Chatham  
[stevemartin54@hotmail.com](mailto:stevemartin54@hotmail.com)  
David Burton presents '*The Tales of the Riverbank*'
- Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 pm BMT: Charles Dickens Museum  
<https://dickensmuseum.com>  
Mary Kay Zuravleff presents '*A Tale of Two Authors.*'  
(registration required)
- Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 12:30 pm EST: Philadelphia  
[www.dickensphila.org](http://www.dickensphila.org)  
Ronnie Scutaro moderates '*Favorite Dickens novel*'; '*Dickens & Thackeray: Copperfield vs. Pendennis*'; '*Final vote-And the Hero is...?*'
- Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm EST: Dickens Fellowship of New York (DFNY)  
[www.dickensnewyork.com](http://www.dickensnewyork.com)  
Mark Halperin moderates the discussion of the new 2024 novel
- Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm PST: Santa Cruz Pickwick  
<https://dickens.ucsc.edu/resources/pickwick-club/index.html>  
John Jordan presents '*Great Expectations*, Book III Ch. 15- conclusion (registration required)
- Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1:00 pm EST: Friends of Dickens, NY (FDNY)  
[www.thefriendsofdickens.org](http://www.thefriendsofdickens.org)  
Tom Willshire presents '*Little Dorrit*, Book 2, Ch.30-34 (Hybrid)
- Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm EST Montreal  
[www.dickensmontreal.ca](http://www.dickensmontreal.ca)  
Judith Elson presents '*Madame Guillotine/The Natural Razor*'; 1938 Norma Shear *Marie Antoinette*
- Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 am PST: Southern California Dickens Fellowship (SoCalDF) and Santa Cruz Pickwick book club  
[www.facebook.com/groups/1405191869718211/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/1405191869718211/)  
<https://dickens.ucsc.edu/resources/pickwick-club/index.html>  
Dr. Clive Johnson presents '*Dickens and Satire*'

