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**CRUSOE, CROCODILES, AND COOKERY BOOKS:
DAVID COPPERFIELD AND THE AFFECTIVE POWER
OF READING FICTION**

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I

In *The Uncommercial Traveler*, Charles Dickens describes how, as a child, he became intimately acquainted with a number of imaginary places. He affectionately remembers minute details of the settings of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gil Blas*, and *Don Quixote*:

I was never in Robinson Crusoe's Island, yet I frequently return there....

I was never in the robbers' cave, where Gil Blas lived, but I often go back there and find the trap-door just as heavy to raise as it used to be....

I was never in Don Quixote's study, where he read his books of chivalry until he rose and hacked at imaginary giants...yet you couldn't move a book in it without my knowledge or consent.¹

A similar description of Dickens's childhood reading appears in the autobiographical fragment which he eventually incorporated into *David Copperfield*. In it, he describes the comfort he received from reading and acting out books like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Tom Jones*, *Don Quixote*, and *The Arabian Nights*.²

Dickens's enthusiasm for fiction is also evident in his novels. In *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge is taken back by the Ghost of Christmas Past to a holiday he spent alone at school. While there, characters from the books he read as a child come to life. "Why it's Ali Baba!" he exclaims at the appearance of a man in foreign clothing. "It's dear old honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I know! One Christmas Time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, he *did* come, for the first time, just like that."³ Ali Baba is soon followed by other characters from *The Arabian Nights*, as well as Robinson Crusoe with his parrot. Like Dickens's discussions of his own reading, this one emphasizes the reality of fiction to the reader and the comfort it can provide.

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Scenes with characters enjoying books also occur in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Tom Pinch of *Martin Chuzzlewit* escapes from his dreary life with Mr. Pecksniff by frequenting book stores where the phantoms of Robinson Crusoe and characters from *The Arabian Nights* entertain him. He also becomes so caught up in reading books to Young Martin that he forgets about worldly concerns such as putting more wood on the fire. In *Bleak House*, Esther Summerson charms the otherwise uncontrollable Jellyby children by reading them stories such as "Little Red Riding Hood." Sissy Jupe of *Hard Times* believes her happiest hours have been spent reading about fairies and genies, while Rosa Bud of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* keeps her spirits up after Edwin's disappearance by accidentally "lighting on some books of voyages and sea adventure" (p. 263).⁴

Given Dickens's interest in the effects of reading fiction, it should not be surprising that many of his novels are about characters who are apparently changed by the books they read. Such characters are especially important in *David Copperfield*.⁵ Unfortunately, most discussions of these characters are used only to analyze Dickens's reading and its influence on his writing. Harry Stone, Christopher Mulvey, William J. Palmer, and Janet Larson have noted Dickens's allusions to fairy tales, *The Arabian Nights*, eighteenth-century novels, and the Bible, while missing their effect on his characters.⁶ While both Stanley Friedman and Max Byrd write more specifically about Dickens's use of reading as a motif, neither directly studies its affective power. Instead, they both define reading generally as any act of interpretation.

Certainly, the thematic importance of the reading in *David Copperfield* has never been fully realized. John Forster's early biography suggests that David's books are merely a gratuitous grafting of autobiographical material onto the novel. James Kincaid mistakenly sees David's reading as contaminating "his perception...." Rather than "building an expansive and healthy imaginative life," David's novels become "a narcotic, sustaining but dangerous."⁷ On the other hand, although James Marlow believes Dickens sees literature as a "spiritual reservoir," he only briefly touches on Dickens's attitudes towards fiction without exploring how it affects David.⁸

David Copperfield, however, is fundamentally concerned with the effects of reading fiction; it can be seen as a response to the charge that readers of fiction are wasting their time and that their books are dangerous. A close analysis of the readers presented in *David*

Copperfield reveals that they are not didactic demonstrations of the ill-effects of reading literature. While fiction is shown sometimes to foster false perceptions, it clearly contributes to its reader's "expansive and healthy imaginative life," something Kincaid and others fail to see. For most of the novel's characters, books are a saving force, a spark for kindling imagination and creativity, a way to order and interpret the world. At the same time, they are part of a complex *Ars Poetica* detailing Dickens's ideas about the novel as a genre and the proper relationship between his readers and his work.

II

The first sentence of *David Copperfield*, in which David ponders whether or not he will become the hero of his own life, suggests that he sees his life as a work of literature. It is not until Chapter Four, however, that he describes how, he began to devour books and imitate their heroes. Just when he thinks he can no longer bear the Murdstone's injustices, he discovers a treasure-trove of books in a room everyone else ignores. Soon he becomes so involved with their characters that he thinks of them as real people. Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphry Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe become "a glorious host to keep [him] company." David is captivated by them because, along with characters from *The Arabian Nights* and *Tales of the Genii*, they keep alive his "fancy" and "the hope of something beyond that time and place..."⁹ He would have been perfectly miserable after his mother's death, "but for the old books. They were my only comfort; and I was as true to them as they were to me, and read them over and over I don't know how many times more" (p. 205). David's books provide such comfort because they temporarily allow him to escape from his miserable existence, permitting him return to the edenic paradise where Clara and Peggotty protected him. It is appropriate, then, that David's initial description of his reading appears between two scenes of ill-abuse from Mr. Murdstone.

As if in response to those who might criticize his love of these books, David argues that "whatever harm was in them was not for me." He impersonates his favorite characters, putting "Mr. and Miss Murdstone into all the bad ones..." (p. 106). He is not unlike another "healthy" character, Tommy Traddles, who vents what Trevor Blount calls "inner sadness" by drawing skeletons (p. 27). At times, David takes the part of a "child's Tom Jones" and sustains his "own idea of

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Roderick Random for a month at a stretch.” Soon he begins to associate every barn and each stone in the church with his books:

I have seen Tom Pipes go up the church-steeple; I have watched Strap, with the knapsack on his back stopping to rest himself upon the wicket gate; and I *know* that Commodore Trunnion held that club with Mr. Pickle, in the parlour of our little village alehouse. (p. 106)

David's desire to act out the books he reads is further encouraged when he is sent away to school. When Steerforth hears him compare another student to a character from *Peregrine Pickle*, he becomes interested in David's reading, casting him in the role of the Sultana from *The Arabian Nights*, making him act out various novels in nightly installments for the amusement of the other boys. According to David, “the institution never flagged for want of a story” (p. 146).

As David grows up, he continues to see himself and others as characters from literature. When he eats dinner with Mr. Micawber, he feels like Roderick Random. He sees Mrs. Waterbrook as “a near relation of Hamlet's—say his aunt,” Jack Maldon as Sinbad the Sailor, Mr. Spenlow as Punch, and both Em'ly and Aunt Betsey as fairies (p. 431). When he gets his own set of rooms, he feels like Robinson Crusoe barricading himself against the world; after Aunt Betsey loses her fortune, she also becomes “a female Robinson Crusoe, drinking tea” (p. 557). These last examples are especially significant because David's frequent allusions to Crusoe express his sense of isolation.¹⁰

Despite David's claim that books have not harmed him, he acknowledges that his role-playing may not have been healthy, that relying heavily on novels is potentially confusing and dangerous. Discussing the books he shared with his schoolmates, he writes, “Whatever I had within me that was romantic and dreamy, was encouraged by so much story-telling in the dark; and in that respect the pursuit may not have been profitable to me” (p. 146). If David is correct, his fascination with Steerforth, Miss Larkins, Dora, and Little Em'ly comes from the books he has read. While David compares some of these people to literary characters, he is also attracted to their seemingly romantic exteriors.

When David meets Steerforth for the first time after leaving Salem House, he has just been to see a production of *Julius Caesar*. The play sweeps him away in a romantic whirl, “like a shining transparency,” a picture which becomes visible when illuminated from behind, through which he sees his “earlier life moving along...” (p. 345). He soon

connects Steerforth to the play's "poetry," "lights," and "music"—to its "smooth stupendous changes of glittering scenery" which open up "illimitable regions of delight..." (p. 344). That night he falls "asleep in a blissful condition," dreaming of "ancient Rome, Steerforth, and friendship" (p. 347). Unfortunately, he does not look closely at the play, which parallels Steerforth's betrayal and false friendship, but instead comes to admire him in "a thousand respects" (p. 358).

David is also attracted to women who seem to resemble the goddesses and fairies of myths and folktales. It only takes two waltzes with Miss Larkins for him to "go home in a state of unspeakable bliss," dancing "in imagination all night long" with his "dear divinity" (p. 329). When she ultimately rejects him, he repeats the process with Dora Spenlow. As with Steerforth and Miss Larkins, David does not look beyond Dora's appearance, but he seems determined to put her into an exotic fairy tale. When he first visits Mr. Spenlow's house, he makes it into an enchanted garden before he even sees Dora. When they do meet, he thinks of Dora as a fairy or a sylph who casts a spell on him. Of a walk he takes with Dora and Jip, he writes that "if we were not all three in Fairyland, certainly *I* was" (p. 456).

Later, Dickens shows that books are no substitute for reality. At the end of Chapter 35, David praises Dora to Agnes, who unwittingly sheds "some glimpses of her own pure light" onto "the little fairy figure" in a way that makes it "yet more precious and more innocent..." (p. 581). Nevertheless, the scene ends with David looking from the window and spotting a beggar who mutters, "Blind! Blind! Blind!" (p. 582). Obviously, David is blind to the fact that he really loves Agnes, and that he has himself imbued Dora with the very "fairy" quality that attracts him.

Likewise deceptive is the fantasy David creates by putting Em'ly and himself into a pastoral version of the ballad, "The Children in the Woods." It implies that they would marry, be happy, and

live among the trees and in the fields, never growing wiser,
children ever, rambling hand in hand through the 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! Some such picture
with no real world in it, bright with the light of innocence,
and vague as the stars afar off, was in my mind all the way.
(p. 202)

As the older David states, there is no "real world" in this picture. The young man has also conveniently forgotten that, in the ballad, the

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children are abandoned, dying from isolation and neglect.¹¹ David unfortunately locks Em'ly into this story and has difficulty understanding the dangers she later faces. Ironically, Em'ly herself is seduced by a story Steerforth tells. "Steerforth told a story of a dismal shipwreck...as if he saw it all before him—and little Em'ly's eyes were fastened on him all the time, as if she saw it too" (p. 375). Subconsciously, she is also attracted by a Cinderella tale in which Steerforth transforms her into a lady.

Each of these examples might be used to argue that the novel is primarily concerned with demonstrating the dangerous potential of fictional narratives. This would, however, seem to contradict David's early contention that such works sustained him, providing him with life. Certainly, David's reading never physically endangers him as it does the heroines mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Two. It should be clear, instead, that these examples are more an indictment of the way David sometimes reads than a criticism of specific literary works. There are dangers associated with reading fiction, but they arise from reading superficially. Ultimately, David discovers something universal in his books. He is no longer an isolated Robinson Crusoe, but is linked to other people with similar hopes and problems. Like the supplies Crusoe rescues from his boat, David's reading is the one possession he has to help him when he is shipwrecked in the outside world, and the novel clearly argues that it helps save him.

Literature, then, helps David bring order to a very chaotic world. It is not merely a means of escape and self-introspection, but a way to transcend life and understand its possibilities.¹² In the first edition of *Household Words*, Dickens writes that his books are meant to "teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination...."¹³ The books David reads have such an impact on him that they allow him to triumph, at least mentally, over his enemies.

Fiction lets David see the possibility, as far-fetched as it may seem, for a "happy ending." Perhaps the best illustration of this is the "crocodile book" which Peggotty saves from his childhood days. Significantly, it is first mentioned about the time Mr. Murdstone starts courting his mother. While reading it to Peggotty, David interrupts with a question about his mother's possible remarriage. Peggotty is evasive, however, so they continue reading. The description of the story (into which David projects himself and Peggotty) is very suggestive:

However, we returned to those monsters, with fresh wakefulness on my part, and we left their eggs in the sand for the sun to hatch; and we ran away from them, and baffled them by constantly turning, which they were unable to do quickly, on account of their unwieldy make; and we went into the water after them, as natives, and put pieces of timber down their throats; and in short we ran the whole crocodile gauntlet. (p. 67)

In writing about this scene, Bert Hornback argues that in “this storybook version of experience the conflict is falsified for the sake of sentimental innocence, and the natives all live happily ever after” (p. 70). Yet he misses the fact that it also shows David that he can potentially escape life’s crocodiles, providing him with the chance to practice the game of survival he will soon be forced to play.

The value of David’s role-playing and his belief in happy endings is nicely illustrated by his journey to Dover. Earlier in the novel, he has already acted out the part of a “child’s Tom Jones.” When he finally runs away from Murdstone and Grimby’s, he once again assumes the role of Fielding’s penniless foundling, forced to travel the countryside.¹⁴ David knows that Tom’s story ends with love, marriage, and forgiveness. *Tom Jones* and books like it, however, only initiate David’s resolve to run away; it is the supernatural, fairy godmother picture he creates of Aunt Betsey which sustains him through his journey. The determination and belief it engenders help David move forward and escape the “Murdstonian monsters.” After all, he knows that even lonely Robinson Crusoe is eventually rescued.

Through his reading, David develops imaginative faculties which prompt him to become a story-teller, an effect he recognizes:

I fitted my old books to my altered life, and made stories for myself, out of the streets, and out of men and women....some main points in the character I shall unconsciously develop, I suppose, in writing my life, were gradually forming all this while.“ (p. 244)

In this way, reading inspires him to create “new” stories. He has gained the ability to understand and order his life to the point where he can write it down. For him, writing an “autobiography” is another attempt to find meaning and structure in his life.

The fact that, in this novel, practical, factual reading can create more problems than fiction also supports the value of David’s books. The various “How to...” books he encounters demonstrate this nicely.

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Murdstone's speller, Dora's cookery book, and David's stenography handbook all present a practical system of knowledge which causes problems for its users. David abhors the "dead weight" of "that horrible old spelling book, with oval woodcuts, shaped to my useful fancy, like the glasses out of spectacles" because it embodies a Murdstonian firmness quite the opposite of the literature he reads (p. 617).

The stenography alphabet, which David has difficulty mastering, is even worse:

When I had groped my way, blindly...and had mastered the alphabet, which was an Egyptian Temple in itself, there then appeared a procession of new horrors called arbitrary characters; the most despotic characters I have ever known; who insisted, for instance, that a thing like the beginning of a cobweb, meant expectation, and that a pen-and-ink skyrocket stood for disadvantageous. When I had fixed these wretches in my mind, I found that they had driven everything else out of it; then, beginning again, I forgot them: while I was picking them up, I dropped the other fragments of systems; in short, it was almost heart-breaking. (p. 609)

All three of these books, though meant for self-improvement, are as unreal as any fairy tale because they do not include any representation of human feelings and are therefore extremely artificial. In each case, they nearly master the user.

By juxtaposing David's stories against practical writing, *David Copperfield* criticizes the placing of too much reliance on either fiction or facts. Either of these can help save its Robinson Crusoes, although they contain their own crocodiles. Most important, the opposition between practical writing and fiction provides a means for judging and interpreting many of the novel's characters. Generally, those who are most practical and rigid tend to be the aggressive villains, while those who are too absorbed in fanciful worlds become their victims. The novel very carefully sets up Heep, Maldon, and Steerforth as self-centered pragmatists who could benefit from the qualities novels have nourished in David. Heep, who spends his time reading law books, never understands that his unhappy situation is not unique. He has never been instilled with the possibility of a "happy ending," or the notion that he can transcend his situation in life. Maldon and Steerforth have never gained the ability to understand other people or empathize with them. David discusses Maldon's "indifference to all actions and passions of mankind" by stressing that he ignores newspapers.

"There's an account about the people being hungry and discontented down in the North, but they are always being hungry and discontented somewhere," Maldon remarks. "There's a long statement in the papers...about a murder....But somebody is always being murdered, and I didn't read it" (p. 587).

Of course, Steerforth's egotistic practicality is even more insidious. After all, he ruins more lives. Of Barkis's death he tells David, "It's a bad job...but the sun sets every day, and people die every minute, and we mustn't be scared by the common lot" (p. 487). Like David, Steerforth tells stories and goes to plays, but his interaction with these works is generally superficial. Even Steerforth, however, has a moment of introspection prompted by reading. He tells David that "odd dull times, nursery tales come up into the memory, unrecognized for what they are." He has been confounding himself "with the bad boy who 'didn't care' and became food for lions" (p. 381) He subsequently equates himself with Macbeth, who breaks up the feast when he sees Banquo's ghost (pp. 274-275). Sadly, this is the one time that Steerforth even comes close to understanding the potential effects of his affair and the only time he benefits from literature. As David explains, he "could not help observing how much Steerforth knew, on an infinite variety of subjects, and of how little account he seemed to make of his knowledge" (p. 349). Despite his knowledge, Steerforth remains heartless, self-centered, and unfeeling.

Conversely, many other characters are decidedly romantic and thus easily manipulated. As I have mentioned, Em'ly is ensnared by Steerforth's stories. Like David, Annie Strong seems to see Jack Maldon as a romantic Sinbad. Interestingly, the only character, other than David, who has great difficulties with both the real and practical world is Dora. She is inept at keeping a house and cannot sustain an intelligent conversation with anyone except Jip.¹⁵ Perhaps it is because she encourages David's uncontrolled fancy and yet cannot stimulate his creative impulses that Harry Stone calls her "profoundly destructive for David" (p. 246).

By the end of the novel, David has learned how to bridge the gap between the worlds of romance and reality, to read critically both fictional and factual works. He eventually tames his imaginative faculties and thereby becomes successful:

...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 object at a

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time, no matter how quickly its successor should come upon its heels, which I have formed. (p. 671)

David further contends that he has gained these qualities through Agnes and that they have made him happy.¹⁶

David Copperfield, then, presents two very divergent attitudes towards its protagonist's reading. Although books are consoling, encouraging and stimulating, they are also confusing and dangerous if not subjected to a careful reading. Apparently, in this novel's world appearances are easily equated with reality. While subduing crocodiles is difficult, it is next to impossible to recognize the true nature of those who, like Steerforth, seem to resemble the heroes of literature. This does not mean that David loses the imagination developed from his early reading and storytelling. The book he writes is a means of bringing reality and imagination into perspective, his literary technique "the blending of experience and imagination" (p. 734). Seemingly, he attempts to instill in his readers the comfort, pleasure, and hope that his reading gave him, and yet keep his writing grounded in experience and reality. Certainly, the act of doing this helps merge the distinct worlds he has encountered. Not surprisingly, this is what Dickens attempts to do in novels like *David Copperfield*. As he explains in the often quoted preface to *Bleak House*, "I have purposely dwelt upon the romantic side of familiar things" (p. 4).¹⁷ David's reading is at the center of the novel, providing a metaphor for the complexity of life, as well as his and Dickens's artistic theory, at the same time representing the novel's reader.

The reader might ask why, given the tragedy of Em'ly and Steerforth and the pain of David's early childhood, the novel should end with happy endings for almost everyone from Mr. Micawber to Mr. Mell. The tables seem cleared, like those at the dinner presided over by Mr. Micawber, "as if by the art-magic for dancing" (p. 945). By the end, however, Dickens's readers ought to understand they are being asked to respond to the story as David does his own books: they are invited to see the possibilities of a happy ending. Ultimately, David triumphs over his own crocodiles, just as he does the ones in Peggotty's book. Like Robinson Crusoe, he is rescued and returned to humanity. David's triumphs are, of course, tempered by the novel's insistence that the crocodiles he meets are dangerous. The deaths of Steerforth, Little Em'ly, and Ham help balance David's Cinderella-like happy ending. At the same time, David's readers are educated to look beyond the surfaces of romantic appearances, to desire the balance of fiction and fact which David develops in his own life.

Certainly, as Stone suggests, the way Dickens artfully includes in “the commonplace those dimensions, those secret consonances and existence” demonstrates this novel’s richness (p. 197). *David Copperfield* is deeply entertaining, yet resonates with great power, even in such small details as crocodiles, cookery books, and allusions to *Robinson Crusoe*.

NOTES

¹“Nurse’s Stories,” in *Selected Short Fiction* (Harmondsworth, 1976), pp. 220-221.

²John Forster quotes the description of David Copperfield’s reading as autobiographical fact. According to Forster, every word of it “had been written down...some years before it found its way into *David Copperfield*; the only change in the fiction being its omission of the name of a cheap series of novels then in the course of publication....” See John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (1874; rpt. London, 1927), 1: 8.

³*A Christmas Carol: The Original Manuscript* (New York, 1967), pp. 48-50.

⁴*Pickwick Papers* is also filled with characters who enjoy hearing stories. Mr. Pickwick spends Christmas Eve listening to “The Story of the Goblin Who Stole a Sexton,” though he later is less enthusiastic about “The True Legend of Prince Bladud” which produces a yawn and “a countenance expressive of the utmost weariness.” Toots, in *Dombey and Son*, is less fortunate with books. His mind has “left off having brains” as a result of too much reading and studying under Dr. Blimber. The works he reads, however, are lesson books and works by classical writers, not novels and fairy tales. See *Pickwick Papers*, ed. Stephen Marcus (New York, 1964) p. 559; and *Dombey and Son*, ed. Peter Fairclough (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 206.

⁵Dickens’s last completed novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, is also about the effects of reading. For much of the novel, Mr. Boffin appears to imitate the misers of the books read to him. Bradley Headstone and Miss Podsnap are also shaped by the books they have read. For a rather general study of reading in this novel, see Stanley Friedman, “The Motif of Reading in *Our Mutual Friend*,” *NCF* 28 (1973), 38-61.

⁶See Harry Stone, *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel Making* (Bloomington, 1979); Christopher Mulvey, “David Copperfield: The Folk Story Structure,” *DSA* 5

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(1976), 74-94; William J. Palmer, "Dickens and the Eighteenth Century," *DSA* 7 (1977), 15-39; and Janet Larson, *Dickens and the Broken Scripture* (Athens, Ga., 1985).

⁷James R. Kincaid, *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter* (Oxford, 1971), p. 259.

⁸James E. Marlow, "Dickens' Romance: The Novel as Other," *DSA* 5 (1976), 35.

⁹*David Copperfield*, ed. Trevor Blount. (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 105. All further references to this work appear in the text.

¹⁰Dickens's other works contain similar allusions to *Robinson Crusoe*. As already mentioned, Tom Pinch and Ebenezer Scrooge have read it. Defoe's novel is also used to describe Mr. Bob Sawyer, who "eschews gloves like a dissipated Robinson Crusoe," Mr. Quilp, who feels like Robinson Crusoe when he is sequestered in his summer house, and Captain Cuttles who "feels as lonely as Robinson Crusoe." See *Pickwick Papers*, p. 450; *The Old Curiosity Shop* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 465; and *Dombey and Son*, p. 636.

¹¹This ballad has become a nursery classic and is sometimes published as "The Babes in the Woods." A version of it may be found in Joseph Jacobs, *More English Fairy Tales* (New York, 1968).

¹²Bert Hornback believes that this novel is primarily concerned with the "finally unmanageable problem, both real and mythic, of ordering a disordered world." See Bert G. Hornback, "*Noah's Arkitecture*": *A Study of Dickens' Mythology* (Athens, Ohio, 1972), p. 63.

¹³As quoted in Robert Newsom, *Dickens on the Romantic Side of Familiar Things: Bleak House and the Novel Tradition* (New York, 1977), p. 3.

¹⁴Two of the characters in *David Copperfield*, Tommy Traddles and his wife Sophia, bear the same first names as Fielding's hero and heroine.

¹⁵In order to form her mind, David tries to read Shakespeare to Dora, "fatiguing her mind to the last degree" (p. 762).

¹⁶Perhaps David's marriage to Agnes could be viewed as the union of imagination and practicality. She seems to represent the "order and diligence" Dora lacks. In any case, Agnes is, unlike

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Dora, a reader; when they are married, she shares many books with David and tells stories to their children.

¹⁷*Bleak House*, ed. George Ford and Sylvère Monod (New York, 1967).