

## Disillusionment in *Great Expectations*

Yanhua DU

### Abstract

*Great Expectations* is a process of disillusion. The main characters such as Pip, Magwitch, Havisham and Estella experience that their dreams become bubbles. The orphan Pip's experience is central; other stories happen around his experience. The novel is not just a disillusion story, however, but a coming of age story as well. The theme is shown through the youth's spiritual and material development.

Pip goes through three stages. In the first stage, he is a blacksmith apprentice who by chance receives a big fortune. He loves Estella who is the symbol of upper class for him, so he decides to get educated. He wants to be "a gentleman."

In the second stage, Pip leaves for London, where he learns that a gentleman can get whatever he wants for money. He starts hating his old life, old friends and old family. He becomes vain and snobbish, losing his moral nature. This is his most shameful period.

In the third stage, Pip meets his benefactor, Magwitch, who comes back to see him from his place of banishment in Australia. Magwitch is arrested and all his fortune is confiscated.

Pip's dream to be a gentleman is broken, but he comes to realise that the upper class and gentleman life that he pursues are only empty decorations. His true nature is awakened, and he sees that faith and friendship are more important than wealth and rank.

*Great Expectations* makes readers understand the darkness, corruption and degeneration of Victorian Period through the Pip's growth. The unfair law system treats poor and wealthy people differently. Money encourages man's greed.

Victorian capitalism and Man's pursuit of money is the root of all the social crimes.

Dickens this criticizes corruption, and social degeneration. He thinks that people should appreciate inner qualities. Any person with such qualities should be called "a gentleman." In Dickens' opinion, "gentleman" is not only a matter of rank, but should be a national symbol. England should be a gentlemanly nation, full of humanity.