Observing the Solitary Observer: A Study of *David Copperfield*

Mio Hatada

Introduction

Although *David Copperfield* (1849-50) is certainly the author's "most personal and autobiographical book"[1] that reveals, here and there, his most intimate experiences, including his disgraceful and traumatic experience at a blacking factory, the novel has been regarded as something more than about "a favorite child" of Dickens.[2] In the form of a "personal history and experience" of a writer David Copperfield, employing the first-person narrative for the first time in his novels, the author's "consciousness of living in the world of change" is reflected as in his other novels.[3] "On the whole, the earlier decades of Dickens's working life were a period of penal reform and idealism," says Philip Collins.[4] Foucault, too, in *Discipline and Punishment* fixes the year of "completion of the carceral system" to be 1840, the year Dickens starts writing *The Old Curiosity Shop.*[5] It is well known that Dickens was deeply interested in crime and criminals in general. He, moreover, showed an interest in the prison system, and visited not only the prisons in his own country but even the one in Philadelphia, of which he writes in *American Notes.*[6]

The prison reform concerning the prison building began in England at the end of the eighteenth century and was carried on into the

nineteenth century. Among the reformers, Bentham is one of the most well-known for his idea of Panopticon, though it was never put into practice. In Panopticon designs, "Bentham fused...reformative confinement with the principle of supervision."[7] As penal reform is an object of interest for the novelist "in the world of change," it is significant to read his novel in this light, especially when he visited and wrote articles on the Model Prison of Pentonville during the period of serial publication of *David Copperfield*. Although the prison in this novel, the most straightforward insance of which is the one Mr Micawber is put into for his debt, does not seem to be so dominating as the Marshalsea in *Little Dorrit*, we become aware that it plays a significant role in various stages. The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to scrutinize the world of *David Copperfield* in terms of the penal system under change. In the course of discussion, the notions of "confinement" and "supervision" will be employed as representative features of the new prison system.

The first part of the essay will focus on the issue of "supervision" or surveillance portrayed throughout the novel. We will, first, deal with the art of narrative in relation to this matter. And then a variety of observers and ways of observation will be traced, including those of non-human entities. The latter part, on the other hand, will discuss the problem of "confinement," beginning with the idea of "Solitary Confinement System." As a means of clarifying the point, we will, then, shift our attention to the "Silent Associated System," which is the opponent of the said "Separate System." By utilizing these two ideas of prison system, our analysis will develop into the issue of communication. We will discuss the natural impulse to communicate with the outside world and how the impulse is prohibited

by manifold factors. It seems that various notions related to penal reform shed some significant interpretive light upon the world of the novel.

I

As we are made to notice merely by the title of the second chapter, "I Observe," it is David that plays the part of a chief observer in the novel. There is even a clear statement that David is "a child of close observation,"(p.61) and the incidents are seen from his point of view. On the other hand, David is not allowed to be a one-way observer; he, in return, has to go through the role of the observed. While he looks at the people and the things to give detailed descriptions about them, he is observed by those around him. This part of the essay will focus on the issue of "observation" or "surveillance," which coincides with one of the important notions in developing new type of prisons. We will, to begin with, treat the issue of narration in terms of "observation," and then move on to the analysis of the observers and observed of diverse kinds in this novel as a whole.

It should be remembered, in dealing with the problem of narration, that grown-up David, who is now a successful writer, and David in the narrative, who is under progress, are separate beings to some extent. To use a critic's words, "T[t]here exists a gap between the narrating adult subject and the youth who is the subject of narration."[8] Their distance is not so clear as that between Mr Pirrip and little Pip in *Great Expectations*. Two Davids become blurred and at times totally inseparable, especially when the narrator uses the

present tense in the scenes under the chapter titles of "Retrospect" or in the scenes depicting his earliest memories, his mother's funeral, and so on. But at other times, the grown-up narrator frequently asserts his existence by using the phrases such as "I am glad to recollect"(p.76) or "I know I do not exaggerate."(p.216) At some points the narrator tries to analize his experience saying: "I have no distinct remembrance whether it pleased or frightened me. My impression is, that I was in a state of confusion about it..."(p.208) At other points, however, the narrator David avoids making comments, just writing, "I could not understand why" or "I couldn't, to my satisfaction, make out how it was."(p.70) In the latter cases, the narrator seems to be completely overlapped with the narrated. Thus, even the narrative technique itself represents the complicated relation between the narrator David and the narrated David, and raises the problem of the reversal of the observer and the observed.

It is quite interesting to see that this novel is permeated with various observers whose means or ways of observation differ from one to another. There are, for instance, those who oppress the observed by watching them. When David's mother marries for the second time, the husband Mr Murdstone brings his sister to live with them. The house is virtually under the control, from then on, of the Murdstones, the brother and the sister. The scenes of David's education at home are representative of the state of the newly formed family; the lessons, David says, "were presided over nominally by my mother, but really by Mr Murdstone and his sister, who were always present."(p.102) The course of the study is strictly watched, and when David makes mistakes, "Mr Murdstone looks up" and "Miss Murdstone looks up."(p.103) David is sensitive of "Mr Murdstone's eye... lighted on"

his, and of "Miss Murdstone being firmly watchful" of them all the time.(p.107) The same kind of oppressive surveillance is maintained at Salem House, where the boy is sent after offending his new father.

Mr Creakle, the schoolmaster, is also described with references to his eyes. When David tries to speak to him, the schoolmaster seems to bend "his eyes upon me[him]" as if he would burn him up with them.(p.135) At the beginning of the new school term, Mr Creakle stands "in the doorway looking upon us[the boys] like a giant in a story-book surveying his captives."(p.140) This fierce man with small and deep-set eyes is later found out to be a Middlesex Magistrate; this time, interested in the operation of "the only true system of prison discipline."(p.921) The association of the oppressive watcher with the prison reminds us of David's depiction of Miss Murdstone about her embellishing herself with "numerous steel fetters and rivets."(p.98)

It it not only some overpowering and oppressive surveillers that are shown in the novel. There are some other types of surveillers who are watchful just out of curiosity. "Oh, but, really?... I want to know so much," repeats Miss Dartle who feels "such a delight to know."(p.352) This lady full of curiosity is another most representative instance of "watchful" characters. We find, again, frequent references to her "eyes," which attract David's attention together with the scar upon her lip. Her "black eyes" are "eager," "gaunt," "sparkling" with "hungry luster."(pp.350, 352 & 491) The inquisitive nature of this lady somehow disturbs David so that he even sees, in his dream, himself asking if it is real or not. The annoying curiosity of others has been experienced, just before David meets Miss Dartle, at the house of Uriah Heep, a clerk at Mr Wickfield's office. Uriah

and his mother worms things he has no desire to tell out of him so skillfully as to make the boy feel uncomfortable. On the next occasion to see Mrs Heep, David is conscious of "the evil eye" and of "her watch, with the same unwinking eyes."(p.635) The Heeps hide their ambition under pretence of "humility" and almost succeed in taking advantage of the employer's weakness with their evilness.

The uncomfortableness David feels by being watched by others can be traced again in his relationship with Littimer, a servant at Steerforth's. This man with marked respectability is "observant" (p.356) and, "from the corner," he keeps "watch," (p.385) throughout dinner. His presence and watch annoy the boy because David is made to feel himself "the greenest and most inexperienced of mortals." (p.358) David has, incidentally, experienced another uncomfortable meal on his way to Salam House. When he stops at a coffee-house while waiting for a coach, "a twinkling-eyed" waiter stands opposite to him, "staring so hard," and makes him blush.(pp.166&7) Moreover, during his days at Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse, he goes into the bar of a public-house, where the landlord looks at him "from head to foot," and the landlord's wife joins "in surveying."(p.216) They curiously ask him many questions, to which the boy invents answers so that he might not commit anybody. The observers and watchers, however, are not limited to those who scare, oppress or disturb the observed.

"The quick eye of affection is not easily blinded, when of the female sex," writes Mrs Micawber in her letter to Traddles.(p.772) She has worried about the air of secrecy that surrounds her husband, and her "eagle-glance" succeeds in locating the place Mr Micawber intends to visit. As Mr Chillip, a doctor, mentions, "the ladies are"

presented in this novel as "great observers."(p.906) There are some other instances of the intuitive female eye, especially of an "affectionate eye."

Even though we have seen Uriah Heep's mother has an eye which is an "evil eye to the rest of the world," the "mother's eye" is described as "affectionate"(p.635) to her son Uriah. Betsey Trotwood, David's aunt, does not betray her feelings so easily, but she is watchful enough of her nephew to point out that David is "blind" to be in love with Dora.(p.565) When David comes back from abroad after Dora's death, she again is "steadily observant" of him and looks "so attentively and anxiously" at him.(pp.909-10) Although she does not clearly express her concern for his relationship with Agnes, Betsey seems to have fully expected what would happen between them. Yet another lady with "sparkling eyes,"(p.524) Miss Mowcher, detects "boy's passion" of David towards Emily, though it conforms only partly to truth; for, it is Steerforth who runs away with the girl. Among the eyes of the females, which are affectionate themselves or quick at sensing the feelings of the others, should not be forgotten "those beautiful soft eyes," with "penetration," "looking pensively" at David(p.428)—the eyes of Agnes. David has never been unaware of her presence, but is slow in admitting its true meaning and significance, until it is really almost too late.

Thus, people, including even David, "a child of close observation," are surrounded by a lot of observers and are exposed to the eyes of others. The eyes that watch them are sometimes severe and oppressive, sometimes curious and inquisitive and at other times affectionate and concerned. Whether the watchers annoy the watched or not, the fact remains that people cannot escape from being surveyed. It happens, in

addition, that a close observer like David can be "blind," as his aunt says, in relation to the crucial matter in his own life.

In relation to the issue of surveillance, Dickens is characteristic of his descriptions not only of observing people but of things that have watchful eyes. One kind of those, and the closest to living people, are portraits. In *David Copperfield*, too, we find portraits in Streerforth's house. When David visits his friend's house, he sees, in Steerforth's room, a portrait of Mrs Steerforth which "*looked*[*s*] down on her darling... as if it were even something to her that her likeness should watch him while he slept[sleeps]"(p.355). Mrs Steerforth's portrait is, for one thing, the incarnation of the mother's dotage on her son. The following scene, however, suggests another role that portraits can play. In this scene, David is watched by the picture of Miss Dartle, who is most often accompanied by the references to her "eyes":

> ...I found a likeness of Miss Dartle *looking eagerly at me* from above the chimney-piece.... But as I fell asleep, I could not forget that she was still there *looking*, "is it really, though? I want to know"...(p.356; my emphasis)

This passage, on the one hand, emphasizes how the lady seems to "pervade the whole house"(p491). It reminds us, at the same time, of the position of human beings as the entities always watched. Just as the portrait of Mrs Steerforth observes the boy even when the mother herself is not on the spot, here again is an instance of non-human (or quasi-human) watcher, which disturbs the observed to the extent that he wishes to get rid of it.

The problem of people in the position of being watched by lifeless or non-human entities is one of the obsessions in Dickens's novels. There are, indeed, countless depictions of the objects that observe and watch as if they had eyes of their own. In *Bleak House,* we are introduced to a baronet's town house which "*stares at* the other houses in the street of dismal grandeur."(p.817; my emphasis)[9] The train in *Dombey and Son* is presented as a monster or giant with "two red eyes,"(p.873) which crushes a treacherous manager to pieces. Although it is not a rare device to personify Time, we notice, in the same novel "the watching and attentive eyes of Time" (p.149) beneath which a feeble little boy, Paul Dombey, slumbers. *Little Dorrit,* moreover, starts with a forcible description of the extreme heat in August in which people are "*stared* out of countenance by *staring* white houses, *staring* white walls, *staring* white streets, *staring* tracts of arid road, *staring* hills...."(pp.39-40; my emphasis) It is not futile to remember here that "imprisonment" is "a profound symbol of the universal condition of life" in *Little Dorrit.*[10] To be observed is, in a sense, to be under control or some kind of restriction. If we return to the issue of the narration mentioned at the beginning, we notice, as a critic suggests, that even "David, the successful author, who watches the hurt little child grow up is watched in turn by Dickens and the reader."[11] The grown-up narrator, to some extent, seems to represent Bentham's ideally transparent prison, where "I[i]nside and outside became a single conceptual entity," and "O[o]ne is either watched or watcher, and the two reflexively become one."[12]

II

The idea of "solitary confinement" is the other significant characteristic of the new penitentiary structures pointed out by John Bender. The new system, however, was not accepted without controversy after the Penitentiary Act in 1779. The Separate or the Solitary System called the Philadelphia System had a forceful counterpart, the Auburn System—also known as the Silent Associated System. It is said that the "merits of these two systems were hotly, often angrily, debated, with the devotees of each generally claiming every kind of incompatible virtue for his particular nostrum."[13] Dickens, as an opponent to the former system, openly attacks the Separate System, for instance, in his article in *Household Words*.[14] These two notions, the Separate and the Silent Associated, will be chiefly employed in this part of the essay.

The issue of "solitary confinement," which Mr Creacle calls "the only true system of prison discipline,"(p.921) is foregrounded towards the end of the novel; in chapter 61, "I am shown Two Interesting Penitents," David visits a prison, and sees Uriah Heep and Littimer confined there as prisoners. We may trace out, in this scene, one of the reasons why the author is against the Separate System, for a failure of the separate confinement is clearly represented in the two penitents, Uriah Heep and Mr Littimer. Although the System is intended to lead the prisoners "to sincere contrition and repentance," what actually is prevalent is "a fashion in the form of the penitence."(p.923) Uriah, "the Favorite" and "Model Prisoner" in the prison, is "perfectly consistent and unchanged," though he claims himself to have been changed; both Uriah Heep and Mr Littimer are

called "the hypocritical knaves."(p.930)

While "solitary confinement" is dealt with in this chapter in the most apparent manner, it has been significantly related with David's whole life both physically and mentally. The first physical "imprisonment" he undergoes lasts for five days which "occupy the place of years" in his memory(p.109). The boy has to be confined in his room as a punishment for offending his new father, and he even has Miss Murdstone as "my[his] jailer". This experience of confinement not only deprives him of his freedom but afflicts him with a "guilt" as if he were "a most atrocious criminal."(p.108) The guilty conscience a child can feel at some misdemeanour is elaborately developed again in *Great Expectations* when the hero Pip steals a file from his brother-in-law to hand it to a threatening escaped convict. David's "guilt" is accompanied with "solitude and disgrace," "gloom, and fear, and remorse." (pp.109 & 110) This five days' experience is virtually the only literal solitary confinement David goes through. Yet it is not too much to say that his life is filled with a series of deprivation and feelings of solitude.

David, for one thing, is a child of deprivation from the start because his father has been dead long before his birth. The next earliest experience of this kind is his parting with little Emily at the time of going home from Mr Peggotty's: "if ever, in my life, I have had a void made in my heart, I had one made that day,"(p.91) reflects the grown-up hero. This "void" is accompanied by his feeling that he has "been torn away from her"(p.94) because of the desolation he suffers when he returns to his house. For, he finds his house totally altered as a result of his mother's marriage during his absense. The appearance of a new father brings about his "sense of

being daily more and more shut out and alienated from" his mother.(p.105) He is physically separated from his mother because of her second marriage. Their alienation is foreshadowed by the fact that his mother does not meet him at the door when he returns and is looking for her. During the five days of his confinement, she never comes to his room. Even at the time of evening prayers in the parlor, which is the only occasion for the little prisoner to see his mother, she is "as far off from" him and keeps "her face another way."(p.109) The alienation from his mother makes "a vacancy"(p.111) in his heart. David, moreover, notices "the gulf" and "the parting"(p.174) when he returns home from school on his holidays. David's isolation from mother is completed on the occasion of the announcement of his mother's death, when he feels "an orphan in the wide world."(p.176)

The servant Peggotty, who has acted as a surrogate mother for David, comes into the "vacancy" in his heart to some extent, though she cannot fill it thoroughly. David's loss, however, does not come to an end here; on the contrary, Peggotty's marriage, which takes place after David's mother's death, makes the boy feel that he has "lost" her.(p.202) Now that she is fired by the Murdstones and is married to Barkis, they have to live separately. Back at his own house, which is now occupied by the Murdstones, David falls into "a state of neglect" and into "a solitary condition."(p.204)

Yet another severe deprivation for David is that of Steerforth. This senior friend at school is the person David admires and is attracted by from the bottom of his heart. Steerforth shows "protection"(p.144) and "patronage"(p.348) both during and after school days, calling the younger boy "Daisy," and acting, as it were, a surrogate father. David's separation from Steerforth is twofold,

just as he has lost his mother twice—first by her second marriage and then by her death. Steerforth, for one thing, betrays his admirer and the honest Peggotties by eloping with Emily, and later treating her ill. He, in the end, is drowned to death in the storm, and is lost to David forever. Steerforth's decease is precedented by another bereavement for the hero: the death of his first wife Dora. David has had a lot of trouble in getting married to her: first, her father Mr Spenlow tries to persuade the boy out of their engagement; second, Dora is sent away to her aunts' because of the unexpected death of her father. In spite of overcoming these difficulties and attaining the desired end finally, their matrimonial life is very short, and Dora leaves David alone again.

Thus, we have witnessed how David has undergone a series of experiences characterized by physical separation and isolation, sometimes by death and sometimes for some other sundry reasons. He, at one time, depicts his own condition as "More solitary than Robinson Crusoe"(p.123), when there is no one to meet and claim him at an inn on the way to school. The orphan has to live with a "void" and "vacancy" in his heart.

Although, as we have seen earlier, five days' punitive confinement for the offence against his step-father is the only and most representative experience of physical isolation, accompanied by confinement, David suffers from a sense of separation throughout his life. The interesting point here is that while he is forced to keep away from the others, he describes the way he "listened[s] to all the incidents of the house" and "to any laughing, whistling, or singing, outside." He also watches the boys in the churchyard, although he is too ashamed of being a prisoner to show himself at the window. David even succeeds

in talking with Peggotty through a key-hole, "the medium of communicating."(p.111) The impulse of getting in touch with the outside world has something in common with the problem Dickens points out concerning the Separate System: "all the precautions of masks and strict cellular custody did not prevent prisoners from talking with and identifying one another."[15] This deficiency in the system is briefly suggested again in the depiction of "The Two Interesting Penitents" chapter, mentioned above. When one of the "penitents" retires from the visitors, David notices "a glance between him [Mr Littimer] and Uriah; as if they were not altogether unknown to each other, through some medium of communication."(p.927)

In addition to the above-mentioned chapter in *David Copperfield,* Dickens writes an article in *Household Words* about his visit to the Model Prison at Pentonville. In that article, too, the author discloses that "such communication within the Model Prison is not only probable, but indisputably proved to be possible by its actual discovery," and he attributes this phenomenon to "that constitution of human nature which impels mankind to communication with one another, and makes solitude a false condition against which nature strives."[16] Even in the ultimate separation from the others, people want a sense of connection with the outside world, and somehow seek some means of communication.

What we notice, on the other hand, throughout the course of *David Copperfield* is how people can be isolated or can fail in communication when they seem to be keeping in touch of the others and outside world. This seems to be somewhat connected with the notion of "the Silent Associated" system, under which the prisoners

are "allowed to work together, but...forbidden ever to speak, or otherwise communicate, with one another."[17] People can fail in communication or understanding, when they are fettered in their own worlds: their own past, ideal, belief or secret and so on. If we consider the solitary state of David's life in this light, we cannot but become aware that it is not always brought about by physical isolation or loss alone. The most conspicuous instance may be presented in his relationship with Dora Spenlow.

David's love for Dora is a love at first sight. Later, looking back on that instant, he admits his "own heart was undisciplined when it first loved Dora."(p.766) What has tormented him, especially in the presence of the respectable servant Littimer, is his own "youthfulness." (p.416) He has not overcome the defect, as it were, even after he begins to live on his own, and decides to propose marriage to Dora. When he confides to his aunt that he is in love with Dora, as a "rapturous lover," he somehow feels "a vague unhappy loss or want of something overshadow me[him] like a cloud."(p.565) This "loss or want of something" reminds us of the "vacancy" or "void" made in his heart by separation or isolation. The fact that a similar state of mind is traced out even in his moment of rapture is noteworthy, because it suggests that the "void" or "loss" is not a matter of mere physical condition. David's feeling of this sort, in addition, is not the one felt only before his marriage. Even soon after their married life starts, he mentions the "old unhappy loss or want of something" has "some place in my[his] heart," and wants his wife to "fill up the void" which somewhere seems to be about him.(p.713) As his life with his "child-wife" goes on, "the old unhappy feeling" is deepened and pervades his life, still making him feel that there is "always

something wanting."(p.765)

David first tries to educate his wife, who is not at all a practical creature. As his efforts turn out to be useless, he gives up to change Dora, and decides to accept her as she is. He, in other words, decides to keep "the shadow...wholly on my[his] own heart" instead of sharing it with his partner.(p.765) Dora is not so silly as to be ignorant of her own impracticality. She tells at her own deathbed, that David would "be wearied of his child-wife" and would be "more and more sensible of what was[is] wanting in his house."(p.837) She is not aware, however, her husband has already felt that there is "always something wanting."

It is not Dora alone who fails to see through the partner's bottom of heart. For, David takes long in confiding his love towards Agnes, not knowing that Dora has left Agnes a last charge to "occupy this vacant place."(p.939) David's ralationship with Agnes may be, actually, the most important factor in his life, for his sense of "something wanting" is closely related to her presence. David has been somehow caught in the idea that the affection between them is that of a brother and sister, not of lovers. Agnes has been an inspirer and confessor for him. During the days of his first matrimony, he recollects "the contented days with Agnes" as "spectres of the dead" that cannot be reanimated in this world.(p.764) He, even after Dora's death, calls her "my sister... E[e]ver pointing upward, Agnes; ever leading me to something better; ever directing me to higher things."(p.916) His efforts to guard "with religious care" what he believes to be "sisterly affection," invite "a distressful shadow... over her face."(pp.915&917) David describes, at his meeting her again after returning from abroad, that there is "no utterence" for what he feels,

and that his joy and love are "dumb."(p.912) It is not the only occasion that he is dumb about his feelings. Although he, at last, marries her, it is his dumbness, as well as his self-complacent feelings towards Agnes, that has prohibited their true understanding and connection for so long a time.

As for the difficulty of communication between a couple, the Strongs show a significant case. It is not that there is a conflict or distance between the two as we can find between Mr Dombey and Edith in *Dombey and Son*. Dr Strong married his much younger wife Annie for love, and has a fatherly and benignant way of showing his love for her. Though he is really a kind and generous person, he has a "cogitating manner" "attributable to his being always engaged in looking out for Greek roots,"(p.294) in order to write a Dictionary, which seems never to be finished. His certain insensibility to the surroundings is, at one time, seen on the night of a farewell party for Jack Maldon, a cousin of Annie, who is leaving for India for a new job. Although everybody was "hardly so gay," Dr Strong has "no suspicion but that" they are "all at the utmost height of enjoyment."(pp.300-1) Later, when Maldon comes to ask Annie to an opera, Dr Strong recommends her to go, saying that she "must not allow herself to be made dull by a dull old fellow."(p.588) It is clear, however, that his wife is avoiding her cousin's company, so that David wonders "how even the Doctor... could be blind to what was[is] so obvious."(p.588) As Dr Strong is absorbed in his own Dictionary, so is he caught up in the idea that Annie should be entertained by a youthful company. He is aslo blind to Annie's queer attitude towards Jack Maldon. When Uriah Heep suggests the alleged intimacy between Annie and Maldon, Doctor becomes aware, for the first time, that he

has been "a poor dreamer,"(p.684) who has persuaded himself that the inequality in the ages can be somehow overcome.

While Dr Strong's fatherly love towards his wife prohibits him from seeing the things as they are, Annie has her "reservation"(p.727) about her marriage. When Doctor was presented as a lover, she was "agitated and distressed" at the sudden change, because she had looked up at him merely "as a father, as a guide."(p.728) She has consented to her mother's recommendation because of her inexperience and youth, and has hidden what she felt at his proposal. Moreover, as her mother, who is a mercenary parasite at the Doctors', freely mentioned it, Annie suddenly notices that she herself could be regarded as mercenary, though she has been too innocent to care about financial matters. She has "shrunk within" herself(p.731), feeling that she is unsuited to his wisdom. It becomes clear, in the end, that there has been nothing between Annie and Jack Maldon, in spite of some malicious rumour. For all the fidelity and affection between Doctor and Annie, however, there have lain mutual reservation and partial conviction, which have obstructed a true communication of the couple.

As has been shown above, some hidden truth or unuttered words, whether concerning the past or the present, can be a hindrance between those who physically stay close to each other. David, for instance, shrinks within himself on his first day at Dr Strong's school, because he is afraid of what his companions would think to find out his past life at Murdstone and Grimby's or his aquaintance with the King's Bench Prison and with the Micawbers. Mr Dick wonders that Miss Betsey looks "quite different from her usual self"(p.308) after the appearance of a strange man; the stranger is her husband, whose existance has been kept secret. The secret mission of revealing Heep's

evil deed makes Mr Micawber "morose" and "estranged" from his children.(p.691) Emily's secret relationship with Steerforth makes her employer feel that she is "unsettled" and "somehow wants her heart."(p.500) All of these cases show that secrecy is one of the factors that hem people in their own narrow worlds.

Moreover, persistance in one idea can also fetter people and interrupt their contact with others. The most conspicuous and rather comic instance is found in aunt Betsey's indignance against the trespass of donkeys on her yard. As she makes it a rule to rush out to struggle against them the moment she sees them come into her land, she stops short in the middle of the sentence when she is speaking to David:

> I thoroughly believe that but for those unfortunate donkeys, we should have come to a good understanding... But the interruption, and the disorder she was thrown into by the struggle outside, put an end to all softer ideas for the present...(p.254)

The mutual understanding between the aunt and the boy, who have been brought together after long separation, is prohibited by the queer habit of Miss Betsey.

Another person with a queer habit, Mrs Gummidge, whose mind is fixed on her late husband, keeps on complaining that she is "a lone lorn creetur" and that not only "everythink goes cotrairy with" her but she "go[es] contrairy with everybody."(p.89) As she has no apartment of her own to retire to, she stays with the others, but she is seized with her misery so much that, at one time, she keeps in her corner, never making "any other remark than a forlorn sigh."

People can fail in communication even when they do not seem to be avoiding it. For example, one of the most talkative characters, Mr Micawber delays the flow of his speech by his frequent use of the phrase "in short." As for his "lofty style of composition," David calls one of his long letters "a roundabout communication," and has to read it several times, still unable to find out what is hidden at the bottom of it.(p.771) Another writer in the novel, Mr Dick can never finish his Memorial because he is somehow haunted by the head of King Charles the First, which he cannot get out of his head by any means.

Miss Mowcher, who is none the less eloquent than Mr Micawber, breakes "into a torrent of words"(p.386) as soon as she appears, and keeps talking, even calling herself "a rattle."(p.393) The volatile loquacity seen on this occasion, however, turns out to be a mask she wears; she later reveals to David that she makes a jest of herself or of everything because people "make a plaything of" her, "use" her "for their amusement" and refuse "to see any natural feeling."(p.523) Her rattling away is a means of deception which hinders others from understanding her. "The garrulous... are ultimately silent," suggests a critic, and "garrulousness" is "more isolating" than silence.[18]

Thus people can be enclosed in their own small worlds and prevented from communicating with the others even when they are not physically separated from the outside world. The obstacles to spiritual intercourse are sometimes blind beliefs of one's own, sometimes secrets of the past or of the present, and at other times words themselves. These instances show how the world in general is, in a sense, similar to the condition in a prison under the "Silent Associated" system, where people can work together but are unable to

communicate with one another.

Conclusion

In *David Copperfield*, "the world of change," especially the penal system under change is reflected more than it appears to be at first sight. In the first part of this essay, the notion of "observation" was dealt with. We have tried to clarify the point by analyzing the nature of the narrator David, to begin with, and then shifting our viewpoints to the wider range of observers and the observed, including both human and non-human entities. The reversal which can take place between the observers and the observed has been found to correspond with the reversal of the role David plays; "a child of close observation" is not only observed by people or things around him but is watched by the grown-up David. The adult narrator, in addition, is watched by the author and the reader. This reversal of the roles suggests the fusion of the inside and the outside, which was one of the ultimate ideals of the prison under reform.

The latter half, on the other hand, centered around the issue of "solitary confinement," which is another characteristic notion of the new prison. We have first traced various factors that bring about solitude and alienation, focusing on "the loss" or "want" David keeps feeling from his early days. This has revealed how the physical separation from the others urge people to get in touch with and communicate with the outside world. And then, on the contrary, we have witnessed the way people can be isolated or can fail in communication even when they are not physically secluded. Here we have referred to the concept of "Associated Silent" System of prison, under

which prisoners are prohibited to communicate even when they work together.

All the possibilities of the reversal or the fusion shown above have been made clear through the author's interest in crime and prison as a clue to go upon. The issue of the mergence of two apparently contradictory notions is actually a prevalent theme in Dickens's novels; the prison is one of the most appropriate stages to unfold the interplay between the inside and outside. It seems that Dickens's wide range of intererest in social problems and energetic vistits to various places prove, for themselves, his refusal, as a writer "living in the world of change," to be confined in a narrow world of the novel. David's way of narration, too, might be suggesting the narrator's getting across the boundary between the past and the present, between "a mist of fancy" and "well-remembered facts."(p.225) The theme is developed further in the author's next novel *Bleak House* which dwells on "the romantic side of familiar things,"[19] and intensifies the possibility of multiple aspects hidden in one entity.

Notes

1 Harold Bloom, Introduction to *Charles Dikens's David Copperfield: Modern Critical Interpretations* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), P.5.

2 Charles Dickens, Preface to 1869 Edition, cited in *Personal History of David Copperfield*, ed. Trevor Blount. (1966; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin books Ltd., 1986), p.47. Further references to this work appear in the text.

3 Humphry House, *The Dickens World* (1941; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.137.

4 Philip Collins, *Dickens and Crime*, 3rd ed. (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1994), p.18.

5 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), p.293.

6 Charles Dickens, *American Notes* in *The Oxford Illustrated Dickens* (1957; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.97-111.

7 John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p.23.

8 Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.82.

9 Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* ed. Norman Page (1971 rpt., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986). Citation from *Dombey and Son* and *Little Dorrit* is also based on the Penguin edition.

10 J. Hillis Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p.449.

11 Badri Raina, *Dickens and the Dialectic of Growth* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p.79.

12 Bender, p.216.

13 Collins, pp.58-9.

14 Charles Dickens, "Pet Prisoners," *Household Words*, 27 April, 1850, rpt. in *Charles Dickens: A December Vision and Other Thoughtful Writings*, eds. Neil Philip and Victor Neuburg (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1987), pp.72-84.

15 Collins, p.147.

16 "Pet Prisoners," p.76.

17 Collins, p.58.

18 Natalie McKnight, *Idiots, Madmen & Other Prisoners in Dickens* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp.60 & 65.

19 It is well known that Dickens has "purposely dwelt on the romantic side of familiar things" in *Bleak House,* as he mentions in the preface to the first edition.