DICKENS' PRESENTATION OF MAJOR VILLAINS BETWEEN 1836-1850: A CONVENTION USED, DEVELOPED, AND TRANSCENDED

by

Mary Anne Savage York Andrade

Thesis

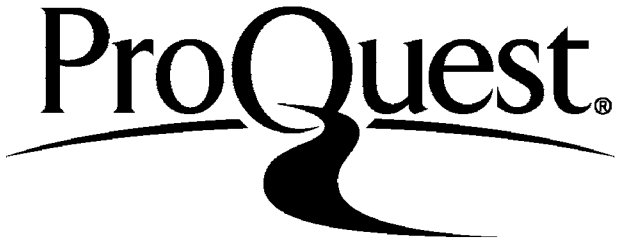
submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the

University of London,

May, 1982



ABSTRACT

This thesis explores Dickens' early use of the conventional melodramatic pattern of villain versus hero/heroine. Dickens increasingly focused on aspects of that pattern that he could alter and adapt to his own personal interests and experience. The traditional role of the villain, discrediting the hero and separating him from his family and friends, gave Dickens the opportunity to focus on isolation as an evil; he had particular reason to feel interest in this as a result of his own days in the blacking warehouse; and the traditional role of the villain in sexually threatening the heroine gave Dickens an opportunity to explore the ambivalent aspects of his own sexual attitude and that of his age. The major villains from The Pickwick Papers to David Copperfield dramatize these aspects of villainy made uniquely Dickensian, along with other personally felt evils such as the vindictive impulse and crimes against children.

Oliver Twist highlights the evil and fear of isolation as The Old Curiosity Shop highlights the inability to reconcile the sexual impulse with decency and duty. It is not surprising that in these two novels, Dickens creates his two most diabolical villains, Fagin and Quilp.

Dickens' imagination, free from restraint of the conscious mind, as it characteristically is in the early novels, providing the spontaneity and improvisation that so mark these books, is compared in this thesis to the way in which the imagination functions in dream. Giving support to this comparison are the fantastic atmospheres of these two novels as well as descriptions of Oliver and Nell constantly sleeping, dreaming, or in a state of unconsciousness, with Fagin and Quilp pursuing them like demons in a nightmare.

In David Copperfield Dickens utilizes the themes of isolation, vengeance, crime against the child, and sexual ambivalence to the best thematic advantage, and with Murdstone, Steerforth, and Heep, gives his most skillfully achieved realization of the childhood fear of the destruction of the home and the fear of growing up.

CONTENTS

I would like to express my thanks to Michael Slater for his years of patience, encouragement and critical judgement.

A NOTE ON QUOTATIONS

All my quotations, unless otherwise stated, are taken from first volume editions in the cases of The Pickwick Papers, Nicholas Nickleby, Barnaby Rudge, The Old Curiosity Shop, and in the cases of Oliver Twist, Dombey and Son, and David Copperfield, from the Clarendon Edition of those novels. Chapter references are given in parenthesis in the text.

PART ONE:

USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONVENTIONAL PATTERNS OF VILLAINY

CHAPTER ONE:

A Pattern of Contrast and Villainy in the Episodic Tales of Mr. Pickwick and in the Interpolated Tales

Dickens writes at the end of Pickwick Papers, "There are dark shadows on this earth, but its lights are stronger in contrast"(56); and again in his fifth novel, The Old Curiosity Shop, "Everything in our lives, whether of good or evil, affects us most by contrast" (53). Contrast, as theme and technical instrument, was an important concern in his early career, and perhaps the use of contrast as form reflects the character of Dickens's own imagination. General contrasts such as light and dark, good and evil, become particularized and integrated into the narrative as Dickens develops his technique. This particularization and integration can be seen evolving both within Pickwick itself and in Dickens's work as a whole. Contrast in the conflicting action of hero and villain is the most significant development. In the earliest novels, the villains spend their time trying to manipulate the heroes and heroines into positions increasingly vulnerable to the threat of evil. As fictive devices the villains carry a great responsibility. They are usually endowed with great energy and vitality, necessary for their aggressive roles. They need to be aggressive

if anything is to happen, for the heroes created after Mr. Pickwick are inclined to passivity, and seem to want nothing more than to live in a pastoral retirement; but the villains stir them up and agitate them, until they subside once again in the peaceful inactivity of the happy ending.

Dickens's main use of contrasting light and dark, good and evil, in Pickwick is found in the juxtaposition of the often dark interpolated tales with the humorous episodic adventures of Mr. Pickwick and his friends.[1] The villains that are developed within the framework of the episodic adventures, Jingle and Job, Dodson and Fogg, are unlike Dickens's villains in subsequent novels in that they do not bear the responsibility for providing the darkness and evil in the narrative. Jingle and Job are comic figures and easily forgiven when we find them at last in the Fleet; and as W. H. Auden points out, "Dodson and Fogg may be scoundrels but they are not wicked men; though they cause undeserved suffering in others, they have no malevolent intent--the suffering they cause gives them no pleasure."[2] Auden lets them off a bit too easily--they are motivated by a greed for money--but they are different from later villains in that they have no personal motivation in pursuing Mr. Pickwick specifically. But the

---

[1] For studies on the significance of the interpolated tales see: Robert L. Patten, "The Art of Pickwick's Interpolated Tales," E.L.H. XXXIV (1967), 349-66; Heinz Reinhold, "'The Stroller's Tale' in Pickwick," Dickensian, LXIV (1968), 141; Robert E. Lougy, "Pickwick and 'The Parish Clerk,' Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXV (1970), 100-104; Christopher Hubert, "Converging Worlds in Pickwick Papers," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXVII (1972), 1-20.

[2] W. H. Auden, "Dingley Dell and the Fleet," The Dyer's Hand; reprinted in Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. M. Price, p. 78.

use of these villains begins a pattern of plot-generation that Dickens develops in succeeding novels. Some of the interpolated tales are stories of villains who are of a very different nature from Jingle and Job, Dodson and Fogg, but the evil glimpsed in these brief stories is kept at a "safe distance" from Mr. Pickwick, as Garret Stewart puts it, by virtue of their inclusion in the narrative in the form of inset tales.[1] Steven Marcus points out that "Pickwick Papers is Dickens's one novel in which wickedness, though it exists, is not a threat."[2] It is not until the novels that follow Pickwick that evil escapes the boundaries of interpolation and is wedded to the pattern of activities evolved by the comic villains of Pickwick.

Generally, the villain threatens the great Dickensian values--community, and love-match marriages and family life--by attempting to isolate individuals from their communities and by attempting to obstruct the happy marriage that takes place at the end of all Dickens's novels. Obstruction is carried out by separating the lovers from each other, and attempting to force a mercenary marriage on the heroine; but even more threatening is the repulsive sexuality involved in the villains' pursuit of the heroine: Gride, Hugh, Quilp, Pecksniff, Heep, licking their chops over tantalizing innocent heroines. What is especially interesting is the way Dickens develops the sexual threat in the early novels from a joke in Pickwick to

---

[1] Garrett Stewart, Dickens and the Trials of Imagination, p. 31.

[2] Steven Marcus, Dickens: from Pickwick to Dombey, p. 51.

something implicit in the threat of a mercenary marriage thence, to overt, primary motivation of the villain's activities.

The pattern evolving is this: the villain aggressively threatens the "light" by isolating him from his friends, surrounding him by darkness. This is what Dodson and Fogg attempt to do with Mr. Pickwick in the Fleet. By contrast, the "light" gathers friends together, forms a community and resists the darkness. The hero is also engaged in the process of promoting happy marriages. Conversely Dickensian villains are engaged in forcing mercenary marriages and are increasingly involved in sexually threatening the female "lights," or, as Mr. Pickwick defines this, threatening the "'peace of mind and happiness of some confiding female'" (18). Thus, isolation and the mercenary marriage threat, with its accompanying unacceptable sexuality (direct and very appropriate contrasts to the positive values in Dickens's work) are the tools by which the plot is generated and the characteristic Dickens morality developed.

In Dickens at Work, Kathleen Tillotson discusses the development of Pickwick into a novel, pointing out that the recurrence of Jingle in the third number is the first instance of Dickens's "planning ahead," but that it is Bardell v. Pickwick ("the clearest instance of foresight and planning") and the relationship between Sam and Mr. Pickwick that become the foci of the novel.[1] It is significant in terms of Dickens's later use of villains that foresight and planning

---

[1] John E. Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, Dickens at Work, pp. 69-72.

in this first novel has to do with villainy: the villainy of Jingle and of Dodson and Fogg in the engineering of Bardell v. Pickwick. Even the relationship between Sam and Mr. Pickwick is developed through their adventures in tracking down Jingle and in their experience together in the Fleet where Mr. Pickwick goes in defiance of the machinations of Dodson and Fogg. The relationship between these two separate sources of villainy is, as Ross H. Dabney points out in Love and Property in the Novels of Dickens, the mercenary marriage. Dabney

> notices with some surprise that the novel derives most of what continuity it has from Pickwick's relations to the schemes of Mrs. Bardell and Jingle ... he resists the efforts of Mrs. Bardell to make money out of this alleged tampering with her affections, and he tries to protect women from Jingle's schemes to marry them for their money.[1]

But Bardell v. Pickwick is more the scheme of Dodson and Fogg and it is really more a matter of resisting the efforts of Dodson and Fogg to make money out of Mr. Pickwick's alleged tampering with Mrs. Bardell's affections. Though manipulated, Mrs. Bardell is nevertheless what I will call a mercenary or designing lover. After all, there is no evidence that she is in love with Mr. Pickwick; rather, she is, as Dabney puts it, the "first in a long series of women who exploit their emotions and deceive themselves to their own advantage." Jingle and Mrs. Bardell are similar in that they "intend to make their fortunes by being bought off from marriage or compensated for the loss they suffer in not marrying."[2]

---

[1] Ross H. Dabney, Love and Property in the Novels of Dickens, p. 7.

[2] Ibid., p. 9.

Another relationship between the two sets of villains, Jingle and Job, Dodson and Fogg, is that they are both engaged in making the innocent Mr. Pickwick appear to be a villain himself. Dickens stands the picaresque on its head, for the comedy underlying all Mr. Pickwick's adventures--once the novel begins to take shape, and Dickens begins to see where he is going--is that the novel, following the picaresque form, fills the central position of the picaro with Mr. Pickwick, who is clearly not a rogue, but only made to seem a rogue. In this way Dickens avoids the crude sexuality of his eighteenth century predecessors, but retains the sexual element in a way calculated not to offend the sensibilities of his Victorian audience. Although Dickens begins in the Jonsonian Comedy of Humours tradition, he seems to seize certain implications of Jingle's actions to develop the pattern for Mr. Pickwick's adventures. What Jingle begins to do with Mr. Pickwick and his friends determines what Dodson and Fogg do to Mr. Pickwick, and what circumstances alone will do to Mr. Pickwick: make the innocent and benevolent angel in gaiters appear to be what he is not, a sexual threat to the ladies. A threat to the ladies exists but it comes from the real villains, from Jingle as Rachael Wardle and Miss Nupkins find, and from Dodson and Fogg, as Mrs. Bardell finds.

Jingle begins his role as an obstructer of romantic relationships in the first number when he interrupts the grotesque "romance" between the pompous Dr. Slammer and the fat old widow: "'Lots of money--old girl--pompous Doctor--not a bad idea--good fun'"... (2) Since he does it as a joke and does not really attempt to engage the widow's affections, it is rather uncertain at this point what direc-

tion Jingle will take. The joke comes in when the innocent Mr. Winkle is mistaken for Jingle and challenged to a duel by the irate lover. Barbara Hardy points out that this ~~epidose~~ episode with Winkle as the traditional sportsman gloriosus lacks tension and climax, because Winkle is insufficiently vainglorious for the boast and exposure formula to be effective comedy. For Professor Hardy

> this lack of comic potential in the humours shows itself all the way through. Tupman and Snodgrass are indeed scarcely developed, and though Dickens gives us a few hyperbolic bursts from Snodgrass and allows Tupman to appear at the ball, their roles are those of spectators, their humours appreciative rather than even pretentiously creative. Compare Snodgrass with Dickens's sketch of the Poetical Young Gentleman in Sketches of Young Gentlemen and it should be plain that in Pickwick Papers Dickens was not interested in developing his humours in action.[1]

But what does seem to interest Dickens in the comic possibilities of this stock situation is not Mr. Winkle making a fool of himself in a duel--a joke already explored in Sketches by Boz--but the innocent man being mistaken through misleading appearances for a love-making villain. He was to use this mistake in developing Mr. Pickwick as a comic and therefore lovable character. The contrast between the innocently romantic Mr. Tupman and his crude name is the same sort of contrast developed in Mr. Pickwick between his innocence and his appearance as a sexual threat. Dickens drops Mr. Tupman from the

---

[1]Barbara Hardy, The Moral Art of Dickens, p. 88.

narrative once he shifts this ironic effect to Mr. Pickwick.

The second and third monthly numbers offer the first two interpolated macabre tales and a few comic but unrelated misadventures of Mr. Pickwick and his friends: "a field-day and bivouac"; the trouble with horses; Mr. Winkle's difficulty with shooting; the Dingley Dell Cricket Club; Mr. Tupman's romance with Rachael Wardle. With the exception of Jingle's repeated interference in a romance, there is not much indication of where the book will be going. But the introduction of Mr. Wardle and Dingley Dell is as rich in its implicit possibilities for development as the introduction of Jingle. If Jingle begins the threat-to-the-ladies motif then Mr. Pickwick's meeting with Mr. Wardle and his visit to Dingley Dell initiates the growing sense of convival community so largely responsible for the atmosphere of the novel. Perhaps Dickens stumbles across this possibility just as Mr. Pickwick stumbles across Mr. Wardle's carriage while chasing his hat. The illustration of Mr. Pickwick chasing his hat directs our attention to the comic appearance of a fat man in such "ludicrous distress," (4) rather than to Mr. Wardle's party in the carriage, which only forms the background of the illustration; and Seymour's illustration, "Mr. Winkle soothes the refractory steed," emphasizes the comic misadventure along the way to Dingley Dell rather than the arrival at Dingley Dell itself. A fat man in pursuit of his hat, the Cockney sportsman attempting to placate a recalcitrant horse, this was the sort of material Dickens was expected to set up for the sake of Seymour's comic illustrations, and Dickens seems to oblige here; after

all, Seymour's illustrations were the reason for Pickwick's beginning in the first place, but as Robert L. Patten argues

> the haste with which Pickwick was begun and the tension between Seymour and Dickens may have prevented much coherent advance planning, but nothing prevented Boz, consciously and unconsciously, from capitalizing on such hints as were contained in these initial incidents, and expanding, deepening, ramifying them in the scenes that were to follow.[1]

Dickens enraged Seymour by including "The Stroller's Tale" in the letter-press, thus, forcing Seymour to do an illustration far from the comic vein in which Seymour excelled. Not only that, Dickens presumed to dictate to Seymour exact specifications for the illustration after Seymour's first attempt was found wanting. Edgar Johnson writes that Dickens did attempt to mollify Seymour by keeping to the club idea and the invention of Mr. Winkle as the Cockney sportsman[2] and Dickens does oblige Seymour with some of the expected material, but the "Stroller's Tale" was clear evidence to Seymour that Dickens was increasingly going his own way. Seymour re-did the plate for "The Stroller's Tale" and then blew his brains out. Although Dickens was not responsible for such an irrational act, Seymour's death did give Dickens the opportunity for complete control over Pickwick; and if Dickens had come to feel more interested in the Wardles and Dingley Dell than in Mr. Pickwick chasing his hat or in Mr. Winkle as the Cockney sportsman, he was now in a position to develop that interest without

---

[1] Robert L. Patten, "Introduction" to The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club (Penguin English Library Edition), p. 21.

[2] Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph, p. 136.

reference to an illustrator. Edgar Johnson feels that "The Stroller's Tale" which made so much trouble between Dickens and Seymour was "probably inserted by way of working off 'copy' and lessening the demands upon his time in the days prior to his honeymoon."[1] Heinz Reinhold gives a succinct history of critical apprehension of the interpolated tales from the condemnation of Edmund Wilson, John Butt, and Kathleen Tillotson, to the charge of Walter Dexter and J.W.T. Ley that the tales were useful as padding. Reinhold points out that "there is no proof at all that Dickens had already written these stories before he began composing his novel." For Reinhold, "The Stroller's Tale," introduced into Pickwick,

> showing the catastrophic effects of alcoholism must, therefore, have counterbalanced the main trend of the novel; the other side of the coin is here presented to the reader in a dialectical manner. Dickens's outlook thereby appears not to be too one-sided as regards this theme.[2]

And indeed, this macabre tale of starvation, drunkenness and social isolation contrasts too neatly with the convivial dining and wining friendship of the Pickwickians already initiated in the first number to be merely "copy" indiscriminately thrown in. The clown in the tale visits the public house for the wrong reason--out of "fascination" rather than conviviality; as a result he dies friendless and alienated from his family. Robert L. Patten reports that Dickens wrote too much letter-press for the first number and that the publishers solved the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 136.

[2] Heinz Reinhold, "'The Stroller's Tale' in Pickwick," Dickensian, LXIV (Sept. 1968), 144.

problem by transferring "The Stroller's Tale" to the second number.[1] Seen as originally intended for the first number this tale provides a very general contrast with a very general Pickwickian conviviality. The second interpolated tale is a bit more particularized.

For whatever reason Dickens first introduces the Wardles in the second number--by accident, as an excuse for the Pickwickians to travel--Dickens, no longer compelled to mollify Seymour, recognizes in the conjunction of the Wardles with the Pickwickians the possibility of community; what particularly attracts him in this idea is the openness of a community, the willingness to draw people in. The wining and dining conviviality takes on a ritual quality as a celebration of new people added, protected, warmed by the community. There will be many communities after Pickwick among the most notable being the Wooden Midshipman in Dombey, Betsy Trotwood's in Copperfield, Bleak House in Bleak House. As he tells us in The Old Curiosity Shop, "everything in our lives, whether of good or evil, affects us most by contrast." (53). He certainly wanted to "affect" his readers, and so goodness necessarily needs a contrast, hence the darkness of the first interpolated tales. And if goodness is community, isolation and alienation from community, is an appropriately contrasting evil. At this point in Pickwick, Dickens is not yet writing a novel; he's still writing sketches, and so with no plot there is no villain to contrast with Mr. Pickwick's goodness, only the interpolated tales; but for the twenty-

---

[1] Robert L. Patten, "The Art of Pickwick's Interpolated Tales," E.L.H., XXXIV (Sept. 1967), 349-66.

four year old Dickens, well steeped in melodrama, where there is evil there are villains, hence the melodramatic villainy in the interpolated tales.[1] In the "Convict's Return," the husband is again a wife-battering villain like the clown of the "Stroller's Tale." Dickens says of him, "He was a morose, savage-hearted, bad man: idle and dissolute in his habits; cruel and ferocious in his disposition" (6). He leads a drunken, non-convivial life alienated from community life, both familial and social: "he had not a single friend or acquaintance; no one cared to speak to the man whom many feared, and everyone detested" (6). Patten describes the theme of this story in terms of isolation and Christian community: the mother,

> conceals the marks of her suffering, and takes her son to church every Sunday. In so doing she brings them both into the community from which her husband has isolated himself....But Edmunds does not profit from the lesson, and...opposes, rather than joins, society.[2]

Mr. Pickwick and his friends have just been taken into the community at Dingley Dell, or rather their conjunction with the group at Dingley Dell forms a community that will be important throughout the book.

---

[1] William Axton, in "Unity and Coherence in The Pickwick Papers," Studies in English Literature, V (1965), 663-76, points out that "Generally contrasting with the mood, tone, and point of view of the context in which they are placed, the interpolated tales are told in the first person, often by personages deeply involved in their action. They also invert the relationship between appearance and reality developed in the rest of the novel. Where the main plots expose the discrepancy between sight and insight, the tales rather examine the way in which states of mind form external reality according to the perspective of the viewer. They explore the themes of the novel from an internal, psychological angle rather than from the external social approach of the main narrative. Yet an important theme remains the injustice that results from viewing appearance as reality."

[2] Patten, "Introduction," The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club, p. 23.

Immediately prior to hearing this tale, they have been having "the right sort of merriment." And when "the substantial, though homely supper had been despatched, and the little party formed a social circle round the fire, Mr. Pickwick thought he had never felt so happy in his life"(6).

The next episode with Jingle, who opposes rather than joins the community at Dingley Dell, has him interrupting the romance between Rachael and Mr. Tupman, and worse, eloping with the fair Rachael himself. Hot on his trail in the fourth number Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Wardle find Jingle willing to withdraw the threat of an unhappy marriage for a sum of money just as Dodson and Fogg will be willing to withdraw the threat to Mr. Pickwick of imprisonment and isolation for a sum of money. Mr. Wardle is ready to "'suffer some pecuniary loss,'" rather than "'let her, fool as she is, be made miserable for life.'" (10) Mr. Tupman, Rachael and Jingle are engaged in a comedy but in the last chapter of this number we find the non-comic version of disrupted love and mercenary marriage, "The Madman's Manuscript." And like the two interpolated tales before it, this tale also points to isolation as something to be abhorred, something that leads to evil. The clown's unconvivial drunkenness leads him to beating his wife; the convict's father also spurns the community and beats his wife; the convict, opposing society rather than joining it, becomes a criminal who only narrowly escapes parricide. And in "the Madman's Manuscript" isolation leads to madness and thence to the near murdering of his wife and her brother. The madman writes from the isolated imprisonment of a madhouse, "'here in this gray cell where

the sun-light seldom comes, and the moon steals in, in rays which only serve to show the dark shadows about me'" (11). His incipient madness is described by the madman in terms of his growing preference for solitude:

> 'I remember days when I was afraid of being mad... when I rushed from the sight of merriment or happiness, to hide myself in some lonely place...and when I cowered in some obscure corner of a crowded room, and saw men whisper, and point, and turn their eyes towards me, I knew they were telling each other of the doomed madman; and I slunk away again to mope in solitude.'(11)

The wife in this story suffers physically like the wives of the villains in the two previous tales (she dies in madness after her husband's abortive attempt to kill her); but she also suffers through the villainy that has stood in the way of her natural affections and prevented her from marrying the boy she loves. The madman says that he

> 'should have known that her heart was with the dark-eyed boy whose name I once heard her breathe in her troubled sleep; and that she had been sacrificed to me, to relieve the poverty of the old white-headed man, and the haughty brothers.'(11)

Paralleled by the comic situation of Jingle, Mr. Tupman and Rachael Wardle, this is the first melodramatic situation that Dickens will use to better and better effect as he develops the pattern of conflict between villain and hero/heroine in the novels that follow Pickwick: the villain obstructing natural affections and attempting to force a mercenary marriage; thereby threatening the accomplishment of a happy marriage so important to the endings of Dickens' novels.

In a way, what actually happens to this sacrificed girl is what threatens heroines of other novels; this is the unhappy ending never

allowed in Dickens's novels. But what would have happened to Madeline Bray if Ralph Nickleby had been successful in obstructing the natural affections between Nicholas Nickleby and Madeline and if her parents and Ralph had been successful in sacrificing her to a mercenary marriage with old Gride? What if Uriah Heep had been successful in forcing Mr. Wickfield to sacrifice Agnes to his financial problems and dependence on Heep? What if Pecksniff had been successful in obstructing the romance between Mary and Martin Chuzzlewit and had succeeded in marrying her for himself? In the "Madman's Manuscript" the girl's family and the madman <u>are</u> successful.

The interpolated tales that follow, with one exception, "The Goblin Who Stole a Sexton," all offer variations on the situation of disrupted love and mercenary marriage; thus, in the fourth number, at the point in the narrative in which Dickens clears up "All Doubts (If Any Existed) Of The Disinterestedness Of Mr. Jingle's Character" (10), and establishes Jingle's particular villainy as that of the mercenary lover--from now on he will be an heiress hunter in earnest--the interpolated tales offer a corresponding particularization. Appearing where it does, chapter eleven, in which Mr. Tupman takes "his leave of the world" (11) after being "'deserted by a lovely and fascinating creature'" and falling "'victim to the artifices of a villain, who hid the grin of cunning, beneath the mask of friendship,'" (11) the "Madman's Manuscript" juxtaposes a serious experience of isolation and social alienation with Mr. Tupman's comic experience of isolation. Withdrawing from the Pickwickians but carefully leaving the means for Mr. Pickwick to pursue him ("'Any letter, addressed to me at the

Leather bottle, Cobham, Kent, will be forwarded--supposing I still exist'") (11), Mr. Tupman writes in his farewell letter that he hastens "'from the sight of that world, which has become odious to me.'" Fortunately, Mr. Pickwick is able to talk his friend around:

> Whether Mr. Tupman was already tired of retirement, or whether he was wholly unable to resist the eloquent appeal which was made to him, matters not; he did not resist it at last.
>
> 'It mattered little to him,' he said,' where he dragged out the miserable remainder of his days: and since his friend laid so much stress upon his humble companionship, he was willing to share his adventures.'
>
> Mr. Pickwick smiled; they shook hands; and walked back to re-join their companions. (11)

After the appearance of this fourth number, sales on Pickwick began to pick up; the appearance of Sam Weller caused a good bit of interest; and Edgar Johnson writes that "Mr. Pickwick's discovery of Sam in fact marked the crucial point in Mr. Pickwick's fortunes."[1] But Kathleen Tillotson feels that more than Sam, the sudden increase in sales reflects a growing direction and organization.[2] The juxtaposition in this number of the "Madman's Manuscript" with Jingle's attempt at a mercenary marriage and Mr. Tupman's retreat from the world, indicates that Dickens has at this point, a sense of theme as well as organization; but the organization is rather crude: a simple contrast between the comic side of what is Bad, mercenary marriage and

---

[1] Johnson, op. cit., p. 149.

[2] Butt and Tillotson, op. cit., pp. 69-72.

isolation, with the serious side. And as far as what is Good by contrast, there is just a hint of a love-match marriage between Snodgrass and Emily, but more strikingly there is an increasing sense of Pickwickian friendship and community. After Mr. Pickwick returns from London to Dingley Dell, Dickens writes that

> That illustrious man had been separated from his friends and followers, for two whole days; and it was with a degree of pleasure and delight, which no common imagination can adequately conceive, that he stepped forward to greet Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass. (11)

And leaving Dingley Dell in pursuit of Mr. Tupman, Mr. Pickwick finds, "It was a more difficult task to take leave of the inmates of Manor Farm, from whom they had received so much hospitality and kindness" (11). Also, Mr. Pickwick's trump card in persuading Mr. Tupman to rejoin the group is the emphasis Mr. Pickwick places on his "companionship"--a great feature in Dickens's conception of community.

Dickens's sense of morality is already making itself felt in the book; his particular concern with community, alienation, and mercenary marriage, emerges in the interpolated tales and in the narrative proper. Jingle is the villain who threatens mercenary marriage and Dodson and Fogg will threaten Mr. Pickwick with isolation. Rather, they will force Mr. Pickwick into a position where he must as an honourable man choose to experience the isolation and suffering which, until that point in the Fleet, he only reads about in the interpolated tales.

As Dabney points out, in the fifth number, Dickens establishes another designing (albeit manipulated) lover, Mrs. Bardell.[1] This number begins with the memorable conversation between Mr. Pickwick and Mrs. Bardell; Dickens is clearly making his way toward Bardell v. Pickwick. There is a small foretaste of misleading appearances and Mr. Pickwick's public humiliation as a purported sexual threat in the second chapter of this number at Eatanswill:

> And there sure enough, in the leaden gutter of a tiled roof, were Mr. Winkle and Mrs. Pott, comfortably seated in a couple of chairs, waving their handkerchiefs in token of recognition--a compliment which Mr. Pickwick returned by kissing his hand to the lady.
>
> The proceedings had not yet commenced; and as an inactive crowd is generally disposed to be jocose, this very innocent action was sufficient to awaken their facetiousness.
>
> 'Oh you wicked old rascal,' cried one voice, 'looking arter the girls, are you?'
>
> 'Oh you wenerable sinner,' cried another.
>
> 'Putting on his spectacles to look at a married 'ooman!' said a third.
>
> 'I see him a vinkin' at her, vith his vicked old eye,' shouted a fourth.
>
> 'Look arter your wife, Pott,' bellowed a fifth;--and then there was a roar of laughter.
>
> As these taunts were accompanied with invidious comparisons between Mr. Pickwick and an aged ram, and several witticisms of the like nature; and as they moreover rather tended to convey reflections upon the honour of an innocent lady, Mr. Pickwick's indignation was excessive. (13)

The interpolated tale in this fifth number as well as the tale in the

---

[1] Dabney, op. cit., p. 7.

sixth number present comic variations on the motif of the mercenary marriage. In a "Tale Told by a Bagman," both Tom Smart and the already married villain he exposes wish to make a mercenary marriage with the widow owning a successful pub (although Tom's motives are not purely mercenary). And in the "Parish Clerk," Nathaniel Pipkin dreams of "softening old Lobbs, opening the strong box, and marrying Maria." Also in this tale, Maria's father plays the villain who has separated Maria from the cousin who loves her; all is resolved in the end, the father withdraws his disapproval and the lovers are married.

On the trail of Jingle in the sixth number, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller locate Job Trotter, Jingle's servant, who spins a tale about a proposed elopement with a young lady at a neighborhood school. As he has trusted Jingle in the past, so Mr. Pickwick, moved by the appearance of tears, trusts again, and places "implicit reliance on the highminded Job" (16). What Jingle and Job have really engineered is not an elopement but a very compromising situation for Mr. Pickwick. Instructed to wait in the garden of the school so that he might catch Jingle in the act and save the young lady from ruin and scandal, Mr. Pickwick is discovered by the young ladies and finds that he is once again "deceived, and deluded" (16). According to Jingle's plan Mr. Pickwick is made to seem anything other than interested in protecting young ladies. Coming out from his concealment behind the door, Mr. Pickwick immediately attempts to explain his position and to placate the young ladies' fears:

> 'Ladies--dear ladies,' said Mr. Pickwick.
>
> 'Oh, he says we're dear,' cried the oldest and ugliest teacher. 'Oh the wretch!'

> 'Ladies,' roared Mr. Pickwick, rendered desperate by the danger of his situation. 'Hear me. I am no robber. I want the lady of the house.'
>
> 'Oh, what a ferocious monster!' screamed another teacher. 'He wants Miss Tomkins.'
>
> Here there was a general scream. (16)

Mr. Pickwick thinks he is mistaken for a robber, but the way he is misinterpreted when he calls the ladies, "dear ladies" and says he "wants Miss Tomkins," makes it apparent to the reader that he is mistaken for something worse than a robber. The ladies do not feel their persons are quiet safe until the dangerous physical presence of Mr. Pickwick is rendered powerless by being locked into a closet. Robert Lougy perceives the interpolated tale, "The Parish Clerk," signficantly told by Mr. Pickwick himself, to be

> a fictional parallel to what happens to Pickwick in the preceeding chapter....Just as Nathanial is taken in by Maria Lobbs and her two cousins, so Pickwick is successfully conned by Jingle and Job Trotter....Finally in both cases the denouement takes place when the 'hero' is discovered hiding in a place he should not be, having in his innocence been drawn there through trickery.

In terms of the relationship of the interpolated tale to the plot Lougy sees "The Parish Clerk" as evidence of the profound effect Jingle's deception has had on the innocent Mr. Pickwick. Also Mr. Pickwick's ability to laugh at himself through his comic alter-ego, Nathaniel, shows an important step in his evolving character.[1]

---

[1] Robert E. Lougy, "Pickwick and 'The Parish Clerk,'" Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXV (June 1970), 100-104.

Jingle's involvement in Mr. Winkle's being mistaken for a threat to Dr. Slammer and the widow is accidental. (Mr. Tupman innocently borrows Mr. Winkle's coat for the mischievous Jingle. Jingle does not deliberately set-up Mr. Winkle.) But his involvement in Mr. Pickwick's being mistaken for a threat to the young ladies at the school is entirely deliberate. That Jingle's part in this is deliberate and directed against Mr. Pickwick and not just against one of his followers suggests that Dickens's intention in this episode is to allow the villain to take an active role in generating the plot rather than allowing accident and circumstance to determine the happenings in the novel, and also to make some attempt further to involve Mr. Pickwick into the main line of a still very shaky plot. In three episodes Jingle has developed from someone who unintentionally makes trouble for one of Mr. Pickwick's followers--Jingle does not know that Mr. Winkle will be mistaken for him--to deliberately causing trouble for still other friends, Tupman and Mr. Wardle, to deliberately causing trouble for Mr. Pickwick himself. Dickens has begun to integrate a contrasting morality through the conflict between Mr. Pickwick and Jingle into a plot; it is not a conflict between good and evil, because the likeable Jingle is more aptly defined as mischievous rather than evil. And although on one side Jingle's mischief is particularly that of a mercenary lover, Mr. Pickwick's goodness is still somewhat general: it is not until almost the end of the novel that Dickens discovers that Mr. Pickwick is particularly dedicated to love-match marriages. But what conflict is developed at this point in the narrative between Jingle and Mr. Pickwick reflects

an attempt on Dickens's part to create more tension in the narrative than can be achieved through the juxtaposition of interpolated tales with the narrative. He is writing a novel now and has been doing since the development of Jingle as a mercenary lover suggested to him the plot of Bardell v. Pickwick, which threatens Mr. Pickwick himself with a manipulated mercenary lover, whose material interests motivate her acquiescence in the schemes of Dodson and Fogg.

In the seventh number we find that Winkle is once again in trouble with a jealous man. The unsuspecting Pickwickian finds he is accused of coming between another man and woman, this time a man and wife, not only by the lady's husband but by the press as well:

> 'LINES TO A BRASS POT.
>
> 'Oh Pott! if you'd known
> How false she'd have grown,
> When you heard the marriage bells tinkle;
> You'd have done then, I vow,
> What you cannot help now,
> And handed her over to W*****' (18)

The innocent Mr. Winkle is made to appear a sexual threat to the Potts' marriage; the suspected adulterer extricates himself from this compromising position by hurrying away to Mr. Pickwick. Referring to Jingle's and Winkle's escapades with the ladies, Mr. Pickwick asks

> 'Is it not a wonderful circumstance,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'that we seem destined to enter no man's house, without involving him in some degree of trouble? Does it not, I ask, bespeak the indiscretion, or, worse than that, the blackness of heart--that I should say so!--of my followers, that, beneath whatever roof they locate, they disturb the peace of mind and happiness of some confiding female? Is it not, I say--' (18)

Thinking of his followers' indiscretions, exempting himself from this "destiny," Mr. Pickwick is at this point interrupted by the arrival of

the letter from Dodson and Fogg, apprising him of the writ against him for breach of promise of marriage. "'Bardell and Pickwick,'" muses Mr. Snodgrass. "'Peace of mind and happiness of confiding females,' murmured Mr. Winkle, with an air of abstraction" (18). Mr. Pickwick fulfills the "destiny" of his group; he becomes the innocent villain, who appears to threaten the "'peace of mind and happiness of some confiding female.'" The ground work for this great joke has been laid with Mr. Pickwick appearing to threaten the young ladies at the school, but this time he cannot explain his way out of his predicament. This is the funniest sort of sexual or matrimonial threat, for it is really Mrs. Bardell who matrimonially threatens, as all widows do in Pickwick; and Dodson and Fogg and Buzfuz create the whole sleight-of-hand illusion. Mr. Pickwick's speech about this "destiny" is an announcement on Dickens' part of future episodes in which Mr. Pickwick will have more to do with ladies. Jingle has initiated this motif of the villain creating the appearance of Mr. Pickwick as a villainous threat to the ladies, but it is now entrusted to Dodson and Fogg. Mr. Pickwick will continue to pursue Jingle, which gives occasion for many episodic adventures, but the slender line of plot which provides the climax of Mr. Pickwick's appearance as a sexual threat and which inexorably moves Mr. Pickwick into the Fleet and into his suffering and isolation is now in the hands of Dodson and Fogg.

As Mr. Winkle's being publicly accused of adultery and Mr. Pickwick's ignominious experience at Eatanswill foreshadow the trial of Bardell v. Pickwick, so Mr. Pickwick's experience in the Pound in this number foreshadows his experience in the Fleet.

Sandwiched between the chapter in which Mr. Pickwick is served with the writ for Bardell v. Pickwick and the chapter in which he visits the office of Dodson and Fogg, where he is referred to as a "trifler with female hearts" (20), is the chapter in which Captain Boldwig comes upon Mr. Pickwick asleep in the wheelbarrow. "Administering several pokes to Mr. Pickwick's body," Boldwig asks his name:

> 'Cold punch,' murmured Mr. Pickwick, as he sunk to sleep again.
>
> 'What?' demanded Captain Boldwig.
>
> No reply.
>
> 'What did he say his name was?' asked the Captain.
>
> 'Punch, I think, Sir,' replied Wilkins.
>
> 'That's his impudence--that's his confounded impudence,' said Captain Boldwig. "He's only feigning to be asleep now,' said the Captain, in a high passion. 'He's drunk; he's a drunken plebeian. Wheel him away, Wilkins, wheel him away directly.'
>
> 'Where shall I wheel him to, Sir?' inquired Wilkins, with great timidity.
>
> 'Wheel him to the Devil,' replied Captain Boldwig.
>
> ...
>
> 'Wheel him,' said the Captain, 'wheel him to the pound; and let us see whether he calls himself Punch, when he comes to himself.' (19)

The circumstances of Mr. Pickwick's incarceration in the pound also have to do with misleading appearances of a particular sort; Punch has an ancient tradition of extreme concupiscence;[1] Mr. Pickwick as Punch

---

[1] Malcolm Andrews discusses this tradition in his doctoral thesis, The Composition and Design of THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP: A Study in the Working of Dickens's Imagination, University of London, pp. 171-178.

in the Pound is roughly analogous to Mr. Pickwick as a "trifler with female hearts" (20) in the Fleet. The illustration of Mr. Pickwick in the fenced-in pound adds to the effect of imprisoned isolation. The illustration is by Hablot K. Browne to whom Dickens often dictated his own specification for the illustrations. Upon awakening, Mr. Pickwick cries, "'Where's my servant? Where are my friends?'" The ominous reply comes, '"You an't got no friends. Hurrah!'" (19). Mr. Pickwick's separation from his friends, his community, is what frightens him most. Christopher Hubert writes that "the main story is a dream of freedom and the tales are nightmares of imprisonment." The way in which Mr. Pickwick gets wheeled into the pound during his sleep "seems calculated to underline the suggestion that these recurrent ordeals are rooted somehow in his own nightmares."[1] In the beginning of Mr. Pickwick's adventures, on the way to Dingley Dell for the first time, he responds to one of his first, if lesser, ordeals (the "'dreadful horse that he can't get rid of...'") with, "'It's like a dream...a hideous dream'"(5). Later, in the Fleet, Mr. Pickwick sees his fellow inmates as the "shadows in an uneasy dream" (45). As I shall demonstrate in my discussions of Oliver Twist and The Old Curiosity Shop, dreams, particularly "uneasy dreams" will have an importance to Dickens only hinted at here in Pickwick Papers.

The next time Mr. Pickwick meets Jingle is at Magistrate Nupkins' home (number 9). Jingle is found to be once again

---

[1]Christopher Hubert, "Converging Worlds in Pickwick Papers," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXVII (June 1972), 1-20.

threatening the "'peace of mind and happiness of some confiding female'"; this time the female in question is Mr. Nupkins' daughter. Jingle explains the Nupkins' embarrassing position when he is exposed by Mr. Pickwick: "'Wouldn't do--no go--caught a captain, eh?--ha! ha! very good--husband for daughter--biter bit--make it public--not for worlds--look ~~studid~~ stupid--very!'" (25) Mr. Pickwick has followed Jingle to Ipswich and while he is able to frustrate Jingle's latest villainy, Mr. Pickwick is once again involved in circumstances of misleading appearances. Peter Magnus, writhing in jealousy, because of what "certainly was, to all appearance, very unaccountable behaviour" (24), takes Mr. Pickwick to be guilty of the very sort of behaviour Mr. Pickwick has claimed to abhor in Jingle. Mr. Magnus uses Mr. Pickwick's words about Jingle against Mr. Pickwick himself: "'I recollect your words last night, Sir. You came down here, Sir, to expose the treachery and falsehood of an individual on whose truth and honour you had placed implicit reliance--eh?'" (24) Magnus clearly thinks he is deceived in Pickwick as Pickwick has been deceived in Jingle. Jingle does not engineer the episode of Mr. Pickwick and his nightcap being caught in a lady's bedroom, but this episode does follow the pattern of the comic appearance of Mr. Pickwick as a sexually threatening villain. Though moving towards plot interaction of the conflict between hero and villain, Dickens does not complete the technique in Pickwick. The value of this episode is its comedy. Even though it conforms to the unifying motif of the threat, this episode is more in the nature of a contrast with Jingle than it is in the

nature of a conflict. Both Mr. Pickwick and Jingle, through appearances, are mistaken for what they are not. To the Nupkins, Jingle appears to be a respectable captain, eligible, virtuous, but he is in fact a mercenary lover, a threat to the "peace of mind, etc." Conversely, Mr. Pickwick appears to be a threat to the lady in the four-poster bedroom, but it is in fact respectable and virtuous.

The irony essential to the comedy in Mr. Pickwick's adventures is that while Mr. Pickwick is made to appear as a lover, as the clerks say of him, the "trifler with female heart, and disturber of female happiness" (20), he is in reality totally asexual--the furthest thing from a lover possible. We could not laugh so heartily when Mr. Pickwick is called in court the "'ruthless destroyer of this domestic oasis in the desert of Goswell Street'" (33), or when Mr. Pickwick is found in a lady's bedroom in that compromising article of dress, the night-cap, if Mr. Pickwick were not only so innocent of design but so lacking in sexuality. The night-cap itself, hilarious because so unprovocative to the reader, is the very thing in the situation that both Mr. Pickwick and the lady fear to be sexually suggestive:

> The lady, as we have already stated, was near the door. She must pass it, to reach the staircase, and she would most undoubtedly have done so, by this time, had not the sudden apparition of Mr. Pickwick's night-cap driven her back, into the remotest corner of the apartment, where she stood, staring wildly at Mr. Pickwick, while Mr. Pickwick in his turn, stared wildly at her.
>
> 'Wretch,'--said the lady, covering her eyes with her hands, 'what do you want here?'
>
> 'Nothing, Ma'am--nothing whatever, Ma'am;' said Mr. Pickwick earnestly.

> 'Nothing!' said the lady, looking up.
>
> ...'I am almost ready to sink, Ma'am, beneath the confusion of addressing a lady in my night-cap (here the lady hastily snatched off her's), but I can't get it off....' (22).

It is not so much the appearance of a man in her bedroom, but the apparition of Mr. Pickwick's night-cap that convinces her of his evil intentions.

This number, in which Mr. Pickwick has his adventures in the four-poster, is begun with the tale of the "Queer Client." It deals with non-comic villainy, disruptive of the ties between man and wife. It contrasts with the comic episode in which Mr. Pickwick is the disrupter of the engagement between Peter Magnus and the Lady in Yellow Curl Papers. Like the fourth number, in which the "Madman's Manuscript" contrasts with Jingle's disruption of the romance between Mr. Tupman and Rachael Wardle, the contrast in the eighth number seems to indicate Dickens' desire to reassure his reader that, though he may treat this situation farcically, he nonetheless appreciates the seriousness of the ties of affection and marriage. Peter Magnus, his lady, and Rachael Wardle are not especially sympathetic characters, and we are not unduly anxious about their disrupted romances, but Dickens is a budding moralist and will become the supreme champion of marriage and ~~familly~~ family life (at least in his fictions).

As the "Queer Client" is embedded in the midst of Mr. Pickwick's difficulties with Dodson and Fogg, it comments on the serious and sometimes tragic machinations of the law: the debtor's law that allows Heyling's father-in-law to send him to the Marshalsea; and Heyling's

own use of the law to satisfy his vengeance. Appearing only one chapter after Mr. Pickwick's experience in the pound, it provides further foreshadowing of the Fleet, and perhaps it also contains a warning about the danger involved. Will Mr. Pickwick respond in the same manner as Heyling? Will he seek vengeance against the people responsible for his imprisonment? In the other four tales dealing with the evil effects of isolation, the "Stroller's Tale," the "Convict's Return," the "Madman's Manuscript," the "Goblin Who Stole a Sexton," the villains choose social alienation for themselves, but in the "Queer Client," isolation is imposed on Heyling first; only then does he choose "solitary lodgings" and solitary travels in pursuit of his schemes of revenge. This tale is in the nature of a prototype of a test Dickens imposes on characters in future novels through the manipulations of his villains, a test that Heyling fails absolutely; he allows evil to engender evil.

Steven Daniels sees in the contrast between Mr. Pickwick's adventures and the interpolated tales the choice of either recovering from life's mishaps while preserving one's better nature or seeking revenge. Mr. Pickwick's resiliency not only allows him to pick himself up from his spills on the ice at Dingley Dell and "resume his station in the rank" (29), but it also allows him to recover from his experience in the Fleet, preserving "his better nature and finer instincts." For Mr. Daniels,

> what Dickens dramatizes in his first novel remains a central issue in all of the novels that follow: not so much the matter of how an individual preserves his better nature and finer instincts in a largely hostile or indifferent environment as the

assertion that an individual can preserve his humanity under those circumstances.[1]

By contrast the interpolated tales dealing with vindictive impulses offer examples of people who are not able to recover from misfortune and not able to retain their humanity. Mr. Daniels suggests that perhaps Dickens felt in regards to his own childhood experiences that he had two choices--either to forget, recover, and love his parents or to be bitter and revengeful. Pickwick reflects a quarrel of the subconscious as it manifests itself in Mr. Pickwick's ability to recover from his adventures and in the tales of grim revenge and madness.[2] By subjecting the heroes and heroines of future novels to adversity, the villains provide a test for their heroes' ability to recover and preserve their better natures and finer instincts. Dodson and Fogg provide the test for Mr. Pickwick by isolating him in the Fleet. Heyling loses his wife and child, but what greater adversity is there for a "light" than darkness? And what greater adversity for the spirit of community, of which Mr. Pickwick becomes the embodiment in the course of the novel, than to be isolated from the community? With Heyling's story we see that isolation is evil in itself: it is evil to separate a man from society and from his family; Heyling imprisoned is unable to care for his wife and child; and so they die; but worse, and this is supported by the previous interpolated tales, isolation,

---

[1] Steven Daniels, "Pickwick and Dickens: Stages of Development," Dickens Studies Annual, IV (1975), 77.

[2] Steven Daniels, lecture on Dickens, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, 1975.

by virtue of its anti-social nature, breeds evil: breeds madness and violence and in the madman; breeds physical abuse in the case of the clown and the convict's father; breeds the desire for revenge in the convict and in Heyling. No matter their provocation, the convict's and Heyling's vengeance is seen against the background of their choice not to integrate themselves into society.[1]

A good example of this moral focus developed through the conflict between hero and villain is in David Copperfield. Compare the situation of Heyling and of David: a villain imprisons Heyling in the Marshalsea just as Murdstone imprisons David in the blacking warehouse: a villain is responsible for the death of Heyling's wife and child just as Murdstone is responsible for the death of David's mother; Heyling's response to this is to become a villain himself, a vindictive monster, while David Copperfield does not seek vengeance; rather he preserves his humanity.

The introduction of Dodson and Fogg, who make their first appearance in Pickwick in the chapter immediately before the tale of the "Queer Client," is significant for several reasons. By their very profession, they are totally manipulative villains (Jingle only manipulates Mr. Pickwick in the one episode of the young ladies at the

---

[1] Hubert, op. cit., pp. 1-20, notices a link between Heyling and Mr. Pickwick: "... Heyling in the Marshalsea, [is] committing moral suicide by his vow of unrelenting revenge upon his enemies. Heyling turns out to be Pickwick's dark counterpart, another ulterior identity, as it were, in which the serious moral implications of the main story are revealed. Ultimately, of course, Mr. Pickwick redeems himself as Heyling does not, giving up his grudge in favor of 'sympathy and charity' (47). His yielding marks the completion of a strenuous process of self-discovery, a process which has taken us far from the farcicalities of Pickwickian wonderland." p. 17.

boarding school), and in all the villains who appear in Dickens' later work manipulation will be not only a convenient plot generator, that is, simply a way of making things happen, but a particular characteristic of the villains. The only instances in which manipulation is viewed as a good thing is when "evil has begun to encroach too far" as George Kennedy puts it in his description of the "manipulators of righteousness," old Martin Chuzzlewit, Betsy Trotwood, and Boffin. These characters have

> a primary function of consciously and actively balancing good and evil when evil has begun to encroach too far. They usually act against tremendous odds, and significantly, to ensure the place of the good and the right, they must use some degree of stealth. They also have a greater awareness of themselves with reference to a strong and pernicious force of evil.[1]

Dodson and Fogg are one step away from Jingle towards the villains of future novels. Pickwick provides other indications of the characteristics of these future villains besides the ones already mentioned. The villainy of the interpolated tales points to certain moral preoccupations in Dickens that will influence the creation of his great villains in succeeding novels. Activities in isolating and mercenary marriage form a skeletal foundation for villainy in the early novels, upon which Dickens can hang other villainous activities. Steven Marcus sees the stories about cruel parents and crimes against the child found in "The Old Man's Tale About the Queer Client," "The Stroller's Tale," and "The Convict's return" as a contrast to the

---

[1]George E. Kennedy II, "Dickens' Manipulators of Righteousness," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VIII (Dec. 1977), 15-19.

ideal parental relationship between Sam Weller and his two fathers, Tony and Mr. Pickwick.[1] Marcus' contention that Tony Weller is an ideal father needs some qualification, for although Tony is attractively and sympathetically presented, the total neglect Sam experienced as a child is pointed up. Even though the neglect is comically presented it is a serious indictment that has escaped the boundaries of the interpolated tales. Considering the similar situation of a powerful and cruel father's influence on his child found in three other tales, "The Madman's Manuscript," "The Parish Clerk," and "The Legend of Prince Bladud," Marcus believes that

> the vindictive impulse of these stories is clearly antithetical to the emotional and moral climate of the novel as a whole, which is not only so preeminently benign but altogether Christian and affirmative of the greater Christian virtues--charity, forgiveness, repentance, and reconciliation.[2]

But "The Legend of Prince Bladud," is comically presented. Tony Weller and this comic interpolated tale demonstrate that Dickens can present the subject of cruel fatherhood comically as well as grimly, in the interpolated tales and out of them. As Marcus points out, the concern with father and son is obviously autobiographical in origin, but beyond biographical interest,

> what we are able to account for in Pickwick Papers, then, is the manner in which Dickens took his personal experience and its problems and rendered them

---

[1] Marcus, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

[2] Ibid., p. 42.

> into an imaginative representation of life which is autonomous and yet at the same time inseparable from its source in his own life.[1]

Crimes against the child will figure largely in the activities of Fagin against Oliver, Ralph Nickleby against Smike, Quilp against Nell, and Murdstone against David.

In the tenth number, exactly half way through the novel, Dickens defines and celebrates his ideal of community. The time is Christmas, a "season of hospitality, merriment, and open-heartedness...feasting and revelry" (28), the place is Dingley Dell, the citadel of Pickwickian community. Christmas is for Dickens as he has already portrayed it in "A Christmas Dinner" in Sketches by Boz, not so much the time to celebrate the birth of Christ, as a time to experience briefly a state of existence perhaps only capable of being realized, in this life, at Christmas time:

> How many families whose members have been dispersed and scattered far and wide, in the restless struggles of life, are then re-united, and meet once again in that happy state of companionship and mutual goodwill, which is a source of such pure and unalloyed delight, and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world, that the religious belief of the most civilised nations, and the rude traditions of the roughest savages, alike number it among the first joys of a future state of existence, provided for the blest and happy! (28)

Community, then, is a "happy state of companionship and mutual good-will," and it is among the "first joys of a future condition of existence" in heaven or a Dickensian Utopia. Steven Marcus writes that

---

[1] Ibid., p. 43.

> no novel could move further than Pickwick Papers toward asserting not only that the Kingdom of God on Earth is within each man but that it is possible to establish something that resembles the Kingdom of God on Earth--and this as much as anything, accounts for its enduring universal popularity.[1]

Marcus gives a footnote on William James who describes something very like Dickens' ideal:

> it is...quite possible to conceive an imaginary society in which there should be no aggressiveness, but only sympathy and fairness--any small community of true friends now realizes such a society. Abstractly considered, such a society on a large scale would be the millennium.[2]

Dickens writes of the reunion of dispersed families but it is also important that the community, in the expression of its ideal state at Christmas time, gather in friends as the Wardles gather in the Pickwickians. Poor relations are included as well as the servants. In view of the ending of Pickwick, it is significant that there is a wedding attached to this celebration, even if it is a marriage between two people we know or care little about, Bella Wardle and Mr. Trundle.

The interpolated tale in this Christmas number poses isolation as a contrast to the community celebration at Dingley Dell. "The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton," is about Gabriel Grub,

> a morose and lonely man, who consorted with nobody but himself, and an old wicker bottle which fitted into his large deep waistcoat pocket; and who eyed each merry face, as it passed him by, with such a deep scowl of malice and ill-humour, as it was difficult to meet without feeling something the worse for.(28)

---

[1] Ibid., p. 51.

[2] Ibid., p. 51.

He drinks alone, and he elects to associate himself with death (by digging a grave) rather than life. He despises the "loud laugh and the cheerful shouts of those who were assembled around" (28) the fires on Christmas Eve. In honour of the rejuvenating spirit of Christmas, Grub is the only one of the villains in the interpolated tales to repent of his evil anti-social ways. As every reader of Dickens must recognize, Grub is the prototype of Scrooge in "A Christmas Carol," another celebration of Christmas and community.

Dickens says that community, the "happy state of companionship and mutual good-will" is "incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world" (28). It is so incompatible that any indication of cares and sorrows in this novel celebrating community must be rigidly contained in the interpolated tales that is, until we get to the Fleet. Garrett Stewart sees the contrast between the interpolated tales and the Pickwickian narrative as between Good Spirits and the "knowledge of evil that can lead to melancholy and depression, even paranoia." In Stewart's analysis, the interpolated tales work structurally to make "a novel about the way a cheerful disposition and the joyous world it nourishes must be preserved by the disposition of other impulses into digressive stories."[1] The Pickwickian community is a "joyous world;" it is also W. H. Auden's Eden that he describes in "Dingley Dell and the Fleet." About the interpolated tales, Auden says that "intentionally or unintenionally, they contribute to our understanding of Mr. Pickwick," for whom "literature and life are

---

[1] Stewart, op. cit., pp. 31-33.

separate universes; evil and suffering do not exist in the world he perceives with his senses, only in the world of entertaining fiction." It is only after entering the Fleet, the end of Mr. Pickwick's innocence, that he realizes the world contains people who suffer.[1] From Dingley Dell to the Fleet, from Eden to the Fall, from innocence to knowledge of evil, and from community to isolation. In Auden's and Stewart's view Mr. Pickwick experiences in the Fleet what he has previously only read about in the gloomy interpolated tales. The suffering and evil in these tales, incompatible with the joyous Pickwickian community (just as a knowledge of evil is incompatible with existence in Eden) is seen against the background of social alienation. And Mr. Pickwick's experience of suffering is seen against the background of imprisoned isolation. It is as though Mr. Pickwick steps into one of the interpolated tales. Mr. Pickwick chooses isolation with his own free will just as the unfortunate men in the interpolated tales. From their choice comes evil, violence, madness, revenge. This is the test for Mr. Pickwick--isolation being the greatest adversity for the spirit of community--will isolation breed evil, will darkness extinguish the light? Unlike Heyling, Mr. Pickwick passes his test; he does not become a solitary drinker, go mad, or desire vengeance. Here is Mr. Pickwick avenging himself when given the opportunity in his confrontation with Jingle and Job:

> 'Come here, Sir,' said Mr. Pickwick, trying to look stern, with four large tears running down his waistcoat. 'Take that, Sir.'

---

[1] Auden, op. cit., pp. 73-74, 81.

> Take what? In the ordinary acceptation of such language, it should have been a blow. As the world runs, it ought to have been a sound, hearty cuff; for Mr. Pickwick had been duped, deceived, and wronged by the destitute outcast who was now wholly in his power. Must we tell the truth? It was something from Mr. Pickwick's waistcoat-pocket, which chinked as it was given into Job's hand: and the giving which, somehow or other imparted a sparkle to the eye, and a swelling to the heart of our excellent old friend, as he hurried away. (41)

Having jumped ahead to the Fleet as the climax of the theme of isolation and community, I want to go back to Bardell v. Pickwick and return to the Fleet via the motif of the sexual threat. It is said that sex is the basis of the origination of comedy in ancient theatre. Comedy in the eighteeenth century, with which Dickens was very familiar, was certainly sexual, whether in the theatre or in the novel. Comedy in Pickwick is also sexual in a rather asexual way. As I have said about Mr. Pickwick and the four-poster, we could not laugh so hard were Mr. Pickwick not only so innocent of design but so lacking in sexuality. As Barbara Hardy points out, the Victorians had a lower threshold of sexual suggestion.[1] Mr. Pickwick being portrayed as a sexual threat may be a little difficult for modern readers to grasp unless one remembers that much could be suggested by a four-poster and that Mr. Pickwick's trial for breach of promise was a parody of the Melbourne-Norton trial, a famous adultery case. The notes to Mrs. Bardell are parodies of supposedly incriminating letters between Mrs. Norton and her alleged lover, Lord Melbourne, found in court to be entirely lacking in implication: "'Dear Mrs. B.-- Chops and Tomata

---

[1] Hardy, op. cit., p. 94.

sauce. Yours, PICKWICK;'" and, "'I shall not be at home till tomorrow. Slow coach....Don't trouble yourself about the warming-pan'" (33). All sorts of lover-like appearances are reported against Mr. Pickwick at his trial. Mr. Winkle reports that Mrs. Bardell was in Mr. Pickwick's arm "'with his hands clasping her waist'" (33). Though we know, and Mr. Pickwick knows, that she has swooned and he had caught her, it appears even to his admirers as though they had been interrupted in a lovers' embrace. This is incriminating enough; but it gets worse when, in response to a question put by the barrister for the plaintiff, whether or not Mr. Pickwick has always treated females "'only as a father might his daughters'" (33), Mr. Winkle falters out the information of

> Mr. Pickwick's being found in a lady's sleeping apartment at midnight, which had terminated, he believed, in the breaking off of the projected marriage of the lady in question, and led, he knew, to the whole party being forcibly carried before George Nupkins, Esq., magistrate and justice of the peace, for the borough of Ipswich! (33)

Appearing to threaten females, that "wretch," Mr. Pickwick, is clearly the one threatened by sex and mercenary marriage. It is Mrs. Bardell's matrimonial designs on Mr. Pickwick's bachelorhood that causes him all the trouble. And at the end of the novel, fearing another Mrs. Bardell, Mr. Pickwick flees in terror from the coy smiles of Arabella's old aunt. Tony Weller, too, has to flee the kindliness of widows after the happy release of his wife's death. This marriage between Tony and Mrs. Weller (previously a widow of course) has been made disastrous by the minor villain, Mr. Stiggins (a sexual threat), who really has come between man and wife. Tony Weller and Mr. Pickwick

agree on a very important issue: watch out for widows! But there is an alternative to this rather negative point of view of the female sex: the romance between Sam Weller and Mary and between Mr. Winkle and Arabella. While the latter romance seems asexual, Sam's romance with Mary is enhanced by numerous kisses and amorous embraces. (But this relationship is entirely subjected to Sam's relationship with Mr. Pickwick.) If there is just the slightest feeling that Mr. Pickwick is somehow above sexuality and matrimony, he does in the end come out on the side of love-match marriages between young people when he becomes the promoter and chief guardian of these two marriages. This is the contrast with the threat of mercenary marriage by Jingle and the villains of the interpolated tales and with the comic threat of sexuality. Also at the end, the scene in which everyone is clustered around Mr. Pickwick in his retirement, is a contrast with the scene of isolation he experiences in the Fleet. But the theme of isolation and community has been integrated into the plot through the conflict between Mr. Pickwick and Dodson and Fogg. They engage Mr. Pickwick in conflict that threatens Pickwickian community, but neither Dodson and Fogg or Jingle--even though Jingle's particular threat is mercenary marriage, which in another of Dickens's novels would put him in the position to threaten a love-match marriage--threaten the love-match marriages between Sam and Mary, Winkle and Arabella. The marriages provide contrast with the comic motif of threat to the ladies, mercenary or seuxal, but it is never the young ladies involved in the happy-ending marriages who are threatened. Mr. Pickwick is threatened by Mrs. Bardell, but none of the partners

in the love-match marriages are in any way involved with the villains. This is a part of the organization between moral opposites--community versus isolation, love-match marriage versus mercenary marriage--which is not integrated into the plot through the action of conflict between hero and villain. Dickens will gradually bring romantic love into the conflict by allowing the villains to manipulate the "lights," who are to marry at the end of the novel, into positions vulnerable to the threat of isolation as well as the threat of mercenary marriage and unacceptable sexuality. These three threats work in the novel in very separate ways, because they are controlled by very separate characters: Jingle threatens mercenary marriage; Dodson and Fogg threaten isolation; and Mr. Pickwick appears to be a sexual threat. When the threats are united in one villain, as they are in later novels, villainy becomes more developed, more interesting. Indeed, the villains become more interesting than the "lights." Garrett Stewart makes an important point when he says that

> in Pickwick goodness managed to be bright and spirited, and evil was, by definition, the enemy of high spirits, an isolation from community, and alienation. Oliver Twist did tend to reorganize these lines of force somewhat, but it is not until Nell's narrative that goodness has become wholly joyless and alienated, and that evil has preempted an unhealthy share of life's ~~enery~~ energy and spirit.[1]

Although there are very real grounds for regretting that goodness in Dickens's novels is never again as interesting as it is in Mr. Pickwick, with perhaps the exception of Betsy Trotwood, there are understandable reasons for this development. As Dickens strives for

---

[1] Stewart, op. cit., p. 90.

narrative control and artistic unity, the villains are given more plot-generating and thematic responsibility. Because of their increased activity, it is perhaps natural that in endowing them with the necessary energy to persecute goodness with little motive, Dickens should invest so much of his own energy and vitality in their characterization; but Dickens was very interested in goodness, very interested in Oliver, David, and Nell; obviously he identified his own plight as a neglected child with their stories; but in the evolution of his narrative craftsmanship, and of thematic control, Dickens came to use his villains in very dominant ways.

There is another way of looking at the marriages that makes them seem less tacked on at the end as a useful contrast. Though not part of the overt conflict between hero and villain, they do function in Mr. Pickwick's conflict with the problem of appearance and reality. Jingle and Dodson and Fogg have contrived to make Mr. Pickwick appear a villain, a sexual threat. Mr. Pickwick is threatened by this specious appearance no less than he is threatened by isolation; indeed, it is in his appearance as a threat to the ladies that places him in a position to be threatened by isolation. Even though Mr. Pickwick would have people see him as he really is and not as he appears, he himself has difficulty in seeing through appearances in other people. Jingle once seemed a good chap; Job's tears appeared sincere; Mr. Pickwick, like the rest of the world has relied on superficial appearance in judging character. He suffers for it in his adventures with Jingle and Job; and in the hands of Dodson and Fogg, he suffers again because the jury rely on appearances in judging Mr. Pickwick's

character. Mr. Pickwick, beginning to be shocked out of his innocence of the world by the unscrupulousness of Dodson and Fogg, is no longer prepared to be duped and taken advantage of by such rascals. This is something of a change, for throughout the novel he has been easily gulled and manipulated by the villains. Dickens prepares further assaults on Mr. Pickwick's innocence in the Fleet. Dickens has declared Pickwickian community to be "incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world," and so Mr. Pickwick has experienced suffering and evil only in fiction, but in the Fleet Mr. Pickwick makes a "Tour Of The Diminutive World He Inhabits" (44) and sees real suffering: "The whole place seemed restless and troubled; and the people were crowding and flitting to and fro, like the shadows in an uneasy dream" (44). It is at this point that the light of Pickwickian community, truly shown to be "incompatible" with what Mr. Pickwick sees in the Fleet, threatens to fade into darkness. Before this point, Dickens has reported Mr. Pickwick wining and dining his friends in the Fleet--Pickwickian community has seemed to continue--but after the "tour" Mr. Pickwick says, "'I have seen enough....My head aches with these scenes, and my heart too. Henceforth I will be a prisoner in my own room'" (44). Nothing is said of his entertaining the community. He even isolates himself from the society of the prison. Just at this point in the Fleet when Mr. Pickwick is made to perceive his misapprehension about suffering existing in fiction but not in life, he is given the opportunity of rectifying another misapprehension that has existed in the novel, the misapprehension of Mr. Pickwick as a threat to the ladies. And these two corrections of misapprehension,

one following hard on the heels of the other, argue a cause and effect. Chapter 44 ends with Mr. Pickwick isolated in his room and Chapter 45 begins with Mrs. Bardell's being thrown in the Fleet by Dodson and Fogg in execution of her costs; thus, Mr. Pickwick is given his first opportunity to demonstrate that far from being a threat to Mrs. Bardell, he is her good-natured protector. The woman he has been proved guilty of threatening in a court of law, he chivalrously and magnanimously rescues. He pays the damages so that Mrs. Bardell can be released. Just as he is thinking about his course of action in regards to Mrs. Bardell, Mr. Pickwick is given his second opportunity of proving that instead of being a threat to ladies, he is in fact the champion of love-match marriage. Arabella, his favourite young lady, pleads with Mr. Pickwick to reconcile her brother and old Mr. Winkle to her marriage with young Mr. Winkle. Appearing a seducer in a night-cap, Mr. Pickwick has inadvertently broken off a marriage between Peter Magnus and Miss Witherfield, but now he is able to redeem himself in his new role, which Dickens reserves for the end, as the champion and promoter of the love-match marriage. Thus, in the Fleet fiction and appearance give way to reality. The fictitious suffering, evil, and isolation of the interpolated tales gives way to real suffering and isolation. As Dickens says, "This is no fiction" (41). And the fiction of Mr. Pickwick as a threat gives way to the reality of his benevolence. And finally in another occurrence of cause and efect, isolation gives way to community.

Throughout most of Pickwick, these two motifs of contrasting morality--isolation versus community, mercenary marriage and sexual

threat have seemed quite separate. Isolation is treated seriously, but mercenary marriage and the sexual threat are treated farcically. This difference in tone is reflected by the interpolated tales; with the exception of "The Goblin Who Stole a Sexton," the gloomy macabre ones have to do with the evil of isolation; while the comic or fanciful ones deal with mercenary marriages. And quite separate from all this is the farce of Mr. Pickwick as the sexual threat. But in the Fleet when these conflicts are resolved, the resolutions are shown to be interdependent. Mr. Pickwick only decides to break his vow to stay in the Fleet--a vow of isolation from his community--when he is given the opportunity of rectifying his appearance as a sexual threat. The plot is so constructed that the only way to prove his real self as a champion of ladies and promoter of love-match marriage (the exact opposite of a sexual threat) is by renouncing isolation and returning to community.

Arabella and Mr. Winkle have need of Mr. Pickwick's help because both, though not involved in Mr. Pickwick's conflict with a mercenary lover and with his appearance as a sexual threat, seem to have caught something of the prevailing mishaps in the novel. Mr. Winkle has on a minor scale paralleled Mr. Pickwick in being made to seem a sexual threat--through not made to seem so by a villain; and Arabella is threatened by a mercenary lover, the engaging Bob Sawyer--definitely not a villain. Perhaps trying to spotlight the love-match marriage that is to take place between them, Dickens juxtaposes with these difficulties encountered along the road towards their marriage, a fanciful interpolated tale dealing with mercenary marriage. In the thir-

teenth number, Mr. Winkle is caught outdoors in the middle of the night in his night clothes and dives unwittingly into Mrs. Dowler's coach in an effort to escape being seen undressed. Mr. Dowler, of course, sees him jumping into his wife's coach and thinks he is eloping with Mrs. Dowler. As in the episode with the Potts, Mr. Winkle is inadvertently seen to be making trouble between man and wife. Appearing in this number is the "Legend of Prince Bladud," which does not have anything to do with Mr. Winkle's antics, but it does mirror his future situation with his father over his marriage to Arabella. In the "Legend," the Prince's father tries to force his son into making a mercenary marriage and stands intractably against the love-match marriage the Prince wants to make. Likewise, old Mr. Winkle is against the marriage of his son to Arabella because she is not an heiress. This is the objection Mr. Pickwick must persuade old Mr. Winkle to withdraw if the couple are to be happy. In the seventeenth number, we find Arabella's brother, Ben Allen, reassuring Bob Sawyer, who wants Arabella's thousand pounds, that Ben will force Arabella to marry Bob: "'She <u>shall</u> have you, or I'll know the reason why--I'll exert my authority'" (47). In the next chapter of this number is the "Story of the Bagman's Uncle," in which appears a heroine being forced to marry against her will. She melodramatically exclaims: "'I have been torn from my home and friends by these villains....That wretch would have married me by violence in another hour'" (48).

The last chapter, an apotheosis of Pickwickian community, in which things are "Concluded To The Satisfaction Of Everybody" (56),

shows Mr. Pickwick gathering his friends around him in his country retirement and celebrating the marriages of his young friends. Having reconciled old Mr. Winkle to the marriage of Arabella and young Mr. Winkle in the next to last chapter, Mr. Pickwick retires to Dulwich with the prospect of being "'cheered through life by the society of my friends'" (56). He proposes "to consecrate this little retreat by having a ceremony, in which I take great interest, performed there'" (56)--the marriage of Mr. Snodgrass and Emily Wardle. Arabella and Mr. Winkle live "not half a mile from Mr. Pickwick's" (56) and after arranging for the marriage of Sam and Mary who remain with him, Mr. Pickwick indeed proves his claim that "'The happiness of young people...has ever been the chief pleasure of my life'" (56). Dickens is making a great point of marrying everyone he finds suitable and of gathering everyone together that he can (although Mr. Pickwick lives at Dulwich and the Wardle's at Dingley Dell), Dickens assures us that every year Mr. Pickwick "repairs to a large family merry-making at Mr. Wardle's " (56). The embodiment of the spirit of community, Mr. Pickwick, has throughout the novel drawn people together, celebrating their entrance into the Pickwickian community by eating, drinking, and making merry (the many instances at the Wardle's, the party at Bob Sawyer's.) And at the end, as the champion of the love-match marriage, no less than the embodiment of the spirit of community, he promotes loving marriages among the members of the community. The marriages take place within the community, and are sponsored and promoted by the head of the community; thus, community promotes marriage, but marriage ensures the continuation of the community

itself when all must settle down after the activities of drawing together, match-making, and celebrating.

In the Fleet, the resolution of the conflict between isolation and community is dependent on the resolution of the conflict between the appearance of Mr. Pickwick as a threat to the ladies and the reality of Mr. Pickwick as the champion of ladies and the promoter of love-match marriage. And at the end community is shown to be dependent on love-match marriage.

CHAPTER TWO:

Ralph Nickleby: Stereotype Villain and the Father Who Fails

Forsaking chronological order for the purpose of examining certain patterns in the activities of the villains in Dickens' earlier novels, I want to look at Nicholas Nickleby at this point because the villainy in this novel is notable for the combination of the villainous activities found in the narrative proper of Pickwick and the villainy found in the macabre interpolated tales. Perhaps the most intriguing thing about Ralph Nickleby is his creator's failure to make him a powerful figure, capable of seizing our imaginations the way so many of Dickens's earliest villains do. Indeed, Ralph and the plot he controls are so disappointing and melodramatic that they can obscure for us the brilliance of the incidental characters, who really have little to do with the main plot. But as Michael Slater has rightly pointed out,

> those who can find nothing to enjoy or admire in it are deceiving themselves if they believe they are otherwise Dickens enthusiasts for, with all its faults, it is a novel imprinted with the stamp of his 'inimitable' genius quite as plainly as any of his later, greater artistic triumphs.[1]

---

[1] Michael Slater, "Introduction," Nicholas Nickleby (Penguin English Library Edition), p. 31.

But why, in a novel which has so much of his genius imprinted on it, did Dickens create such a stereotype as Ralph--particularly as he excelled in the creation of villains--witness Fagin, Quilp, Pecksniff, Murdstone, Heep, and Steerforth.[1]

There are certain changes in Dickens's use of villainy in this novel that reflect his developing narrative control. Like Fagin, Ralph Nickleby is thoroughly evil. Unlike Dodson and Fogg he is not just the impersonal manipulator of a corrupt institution; rather, it is his personal evil upon which he is ready to act that generates the plot. Jingle initiates a few of Mr. Pickwick's adventures and Dodson and Fogg are responsible for Pickwick's Fleet imprisonment, but it cannot be said that these villains generate all the action of The Pickwick Papers. In Oliver Twist, Fagin takes over the plot only after Oliver flees from Sowerberry's. But from beginning to end, Ralph Nickleby, manipulating and generating the action, stands at the centre of the novel and extends his wickedness to almost all the characters involved in it. Irving Kreutz points out that in this

---

[1] Not everyone shares my disappointment in Ralph as a villain: George Wing in "A Part to Tear a Cat In," Dickensian, LXIV (Jan. 1968), 10-19, argues that Ralph's stereotypic villainy, "the evenness of his utter villainy is disturbed by human flaws." This view is seconded by John Noffsinger in "The Complexity of Nicholas Nickleby," Dickens Studies Newsletter, V (Dec. 1974), 112-114. Robert McLean in "Another Note on Nickleby," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VIII (Dec. 1977), 6-9, tries to "complement the views of Wing and Noffsinger by suggesting that Ralph has more significance than has previously been mentioned, since this early Dickens villain is a hybrid of a traditional literary type and a Victorian capitalist, and stands as an important transitional figure between Dickens' first and limited views of evil character and his later studies of villains." Of some interest in the discussion of Ralph is David Paroissien's brief article, "Dickens's Ralph Nickleby and Bulwer Lytton's William Brandon: A Note on the Antagonists," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VIII (Dec. 1977), 10-15, which traces the resemblance between William Brandon, the hero's antagonist of Lytton's Paul Clifford (1830) and Ralph Nickleby.

novel, the villain is "squarely in the center of the book. . . . While Nicholas the hero picaresquely drifts about the country, it is Ralph who stays home and minds the plot."[1] His central importance, unfortunately, does not make him a stronger and more interesting character, but Dickens' extensive use of him reflects a desire for a stronger narrative organization. (Dickens' change seems to anticipate modern criticism.) With Ralph Nickleby as the centre of all evil, the initiator of all conflict, Dickens seems to be trying in Nicholas Nickleby to avoid the episodic framework of Pickwick and the divided structure of Oliver Twist--the latter being almost two separate books, each with its own distinctive style and language.

Moral contrast is still very much an organizing principle. In Nicholas Nickleby, Dickens writes, "There are shades in all good pictures, but there are lights too, if we choose to contemplate them" (6). And "'the good in this state of existence preponderates over the bad, let miscalled philosophers tell us what they will'" (6). The contrast between good and evil is integrated into the plot through the conflict between hero and villain. It must be acknowledged that such a conflict in which the villain discredits the hero and separates him from his friends, and makes sexual advances to the heroine is a standard melodramatic pattern. Consider Tom Jones: the villain, Blifil, plots to discredit Tom, effects his estrangement and physical separation from his adopted family and proposes marriage (a mercenary

---

[1] Irving W. Kreutz, "Sly of Manner, Sharp of Tooth: A Study of Dickens's Villains," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXII (March 1968), 331.

marriage which her father attempts to force her to accept) to Tom's sweetheart, Sophia. Earle Davis in The Flint and the Flame discusses how Dickens

> derived and developed his plots from the example of traditional fiction and from stage plays.... He always showed two or more forces in conflict, and his stories were arranged to reveal the eventual triumph of one over the other.

Davis notes that for the hero a

> time-worn situation is the one in which a relative plots against the noble hero, as in Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby. A variation of this motif involves the hero in a situation in which he is wrongfully accused of crime and narrowly escapes punishment at the very last moment.

For the heroine, the plot

> most often seen in sentimental drama concerns the seduction of a girl by the villain. The situation is modified when the girl retains her virtue and saves herself to marry the hero. This is a staple intrigue for most of Dickens' novels, and it is treated traditionally in the early examples.[1]

Dickens' own variations on this conventional pattern emerge in the early novels and dominate their plots. But with this conventional pattern of villainy Dickens is often able to make it something uniquely Dickensian: the comic way in which he uses the sexual threat in Pickwick; and in this first novel, the isolation of the hero assumes a significance not found in Dickens' picaresque predecessors. Dickens beginning with the conventional and the stock in Pickwick and developing them into something uniquely his own is described by Steven Daniels as "the gradual recognition and exploration of possibilities

---

[1]Earle Davis, The Flint and the Flame, pp. 54-55, 69-70.

already implicit in the work...bringing his own values and experience to bear on stock characters and a conventional comic pattern."[1] This applies to a conventional melodramatic pattern of villainy as well as conventional comic patterns. This pattern, enriched by Dickens' own values and experience and altered from novel to novel, can incorporate other concerns with evil which also reflect Dickens' own experience. As has been suggested by Marcus and Daniels,[2] the motifs of crime against the child and the vindictive impulse that figure largely in the macabre interpolated tales of Pickwick may have had a special interest for Dickens. Most villains created after Pickwick, always evil, combine the conventional plot-generating activities either of isolation and/or mercenary marriage found in the activities of Jingle, Dodson and Fogg, with crimes against the child (and in the case of Ralph, vengeance as well as child-abuse) found in the macabre interpolated tales of Pickwick. This suggests, understandably, that Dickens' initial conception of evil stems from subjective prejudices rather than an objective analysis of the evil in his society. In Pickwick, the latter concerns with vengeance and crimes against the child, though treated as evils, are secluded in the interpolated tales, and because Jingle and Job bring mischievousness, and Dodson and Fogg bring an impersonal element to conventional villainy, they escape being evil. (Blifil is neither mischievous nor impersonally

---

[1] Steven Daniels, "Pickwick and Dickens: Stages of Development," Dickens Studies Annual, IV (1975), 56.

[2] See above, pp. 30-31, 33-34.

malign in his attack on the hero; thus, he is evil as Jingle, Job, Dodson and Fogg are not.)

One thing that is particularly Dickensian about the generally very conventional villainy in this novel has once again to do with Dickens' use of the sexual threat; but in contrast with Pickwick, the sexual threat is treated with great seriousness. Not only is there a threat to the heroine whom Nicholas is intended to marry, but to Nicholas' sister as well. When I first considered the use of the sexual threat in this novel I thought that Kate and Madeline were both threatened because Dickens was so pleased by the plot-generating possibilities of an overt villainous sexual threat directed at a heroine that when the threat of seduction fizzled out for Kate Nickleby, he introduced Madeline and tried it out on her; but a better answer is that Kate and Madeline are threatened in the same way because they figure as equal components in the romance. G. K. Chesterton sees Nicholas Nickleby as the turning point in Dickens' career as it is his first real romance, possessing the conventional three chracters: St. George, the Dragon, and the Princess.[1] Because this is a Victorian romance, or rather a Dickensian romance, there is a Sister was well as a Princess for St. George to champion: the family is celebrated as much as romantic love. And Nicholas, a peculiarly Victorian sort of St. George, must fight as a Brother before he fights as a Lover. The brilliant Utopian dream of the Pickwickian community is here traded for the more banal coziness of the family circle.

---

[1] G. K. Chesterton, Criticisms and Appreciations of the Works of Charles Dickens, pp. 27-28.

The reduction of community to family circle begins in Oliver Twist. Mr. Pickwick and Oliver are like stones rolling along gathering and forming around themselves a community of unrelated (in terms of kinship) but sympathetic people. Apparently not quite satisfied with this general community, Dickens at the end of Oliver Twist, like a conjurer, surprises us all with the information that Rose is really Oliver's aunt and Mr. Brownlow was almost Oliver's uncle. And in the third novel, Dickens presents us with a hero already firmly attached to his own family from which he can be detached by the villain. Why this reduction from community to family circle? As a boy, Dickens had experienced his own family's disruption, and he had been separated from his family and isolated in the blacking warehouse; how natural that in using a conventional melodramatic pattern of villainy he should increasingly focus on aspects of that pattern that he could alter and adapt to his personal interests and experience. As we have seen in Pickwick and as I shall demonstrate later in Oliver Twist, Dickens is particularly interested in the isolation of his heroes, certainly as aspects of the pattern that he had reason to feel interest in from his own experience in the blacking warehouse where he felt not only cut off from his family but from what he considered to be his true place in society and from his hopes of education and other manifestations of middle-class gentility. Beginning with Nickleby, the focus of evil and villainy is the isolation of the hero from his family and the consequent disruption of that family. This new adaptation of the pattern begins a tendency in succeeding early novels to focus on the disruption of the family, rather than isolation itself

and its ill effects, and consequently, to focus on the disruption of romantic relationships, for in order to have families to celebrate there must also be marriages.

Pickwick and Oliver Twist have had very little to do with romantic love--certainly the use of an old man and a young boy as heroes prevented their stories from being endowed with much romantic interest--Dickens has, nevertheless, ended the novels with love-match marriages. The sexual threat, though used in both novels has not, however, been used in the more conventional way, directed against the fruition of the love-matches into happy-ending marriages. It is not until the third novel that the love-match which is to end the novel is actually threatened by the villain. Arabella Wardle and Rose Maylie are totally sheltered from the villains of their respective novels. Not so Madeline and Kate. In making the point that "children and women were easier models for the unconditional virtue," Barbara Hardy comments that Dickens

> surrounds them with threats and attacks from the corrupting world. Kate Nickleby and Madeline, two saintly girls, are held up for sale by evil to evil, Quilp pursues Nell, Monks tries to engineer Oliver's corruption, Uriah Heep aspires to Agnes. It is as if Dickens is recognizing the need to face the corruption that these characters resist and puts it strongly into the action. It is also as if he realizes the attraction that the good holds for the evil, sexually and morally. Underlying his moral action are the more resonant myths, of the snake in Eden, Mephistopheles and Faust.[1]

Kate and Madeline, as well as their successors in future novels, are

---

[1]Barbara Hardy, "The Complexity of Dickens," in Dickens 1970 Centenary Essays, ed. Michael Slater, p. 40-41.

placed in situations vulnerable to the threat of evil. This is an interesting development in Dickens's work because in future novels Dickens will interest himself in increasing the vulnerability of his heroines as well as increasing the sexual motivation of his villains. With this new development, the chiaroscuro of the mercenary and sexual threat in contrast with the love-match marriages is integrated into the plot in the same way as isolation and community or family circle--by making it an integral part of the conflict with the villain. In a way this makes the villain rather too busy to be credible. Ralph has to be the source of so many evil actions. But Dickens is not only particularizing his lights and shadows, making explicit what he means by good and bad, but trying to integrate them into one unified conflict.

The very first thing Ralph does on being presented with the responsibility of his brother's orphaned family is to separate Nicholas, whom he hates, from the family circle. Ralph's reasons for hating Nicholas are rather vague:

> His figure was somewhat slight, but manly and well-formed; and apart from all the grace of youth and comeliness, there was an emanation from the warm young heart in his look and bearing which kept the old man down.
>
> However striking such a contrast as this, may be to lookers-on, none ever feel it with half the keeness or acuteness of perfection with which it strikes to the very soul of him whose inferiority it marks. It galled Ralph to the heart's core, and he hated Nicholas from that hour. (3)

But Ralph must hate the hero so there will be some rationale for

separating the hero from his family. Kate laments that they must "'be separated so soon'" (3). But Ralph tells Nicholas that those he leaves behind will not be aided unless Nicholas accepts the post at Dotheboys Hall: "'Your mother and sister, Sir,' replied Ralph, 'will be provided for, in that case (not otherwise), by me, and placed in some sphere of life in which they will be able to be independent'" (3). Nicholas is duped into accepting what is a virtual imprisonment at Dotheboys for the sake of his loved ones. Parallel in a sense to Mr. Pickwick in the Fleet, Nicholas is manipulated by the villain into a situation where his honour forces him to choose what turns out to be, (and unlike Mr. Pickwick, contrary to his expectations), an odious banishment from all those he loves. But Nicholas' isolation and loneliness at Dotheboys Hall has not the poignancy of Mr. Pickwick's isolation in the Fleet--even though Dotheboys is presented as evil an institution in its way as the Fleet. Physical isolation from one's fellow man; its relationship to social alienation and the consequent danger of isolation and alienation engendering other anti-social behaviour--this is a dramatic interest in the Fleet, echoed in the macabre interpolated tales, the "Dying Clown," the "Madman's Manuscript," the "Convict's Return," and Heyling's Story. But none of this is at work in Nicholas Nickleby. Nicholas' isolation functions as a way of getting Nicholas to Dotheboys and later as a way of getting him to the Crummles' acting troupe. Dickens is not interested in Nicholas' isolation as he is in Mr. Pickwick's and in Oliver's. Dickens' social motivation is as strong here as in the previous novels; in Nicholas Nickleby he is interested in attacking Yorkshire

schools, just as in Pickwick he attacks the Fleet, and in Oliver Twist, the workhouse; but isolation as an evil transcends the evil of the Fleet and the workhouse, whereas in Nickleby isolation remains tied to the evil of Dotheboys--isolation is just a part of Nicholas' wretched experience at Dotheboys. Nicholas escapes from Dotheboys, taking Smike with him, and returns to his family in London, but when Ralph says that he will not help Nicholas "'or those who help him'" (20), Nicholas departs, thinking once again that his presence would "greatly impair their future prospects" (20). Dickens describes Nicholas' predicament at this stage as being much the same as Oliver Twist's after Oliver is kidnapped from Mr. Brownlow: "To have committed no fault, and yet to be so entirely alone in the world; to be separated from the only persons he loved, and to be proscribed like a criminal." (20) Manipulating the hero so that he will appear in the eyes of the world a criminal, is an important part of the villain's function. Mr. Pickwick is made to seem a sexual threat and in Dickens's second and third novel, his heroes are made to seem thieves. But we do not care about Nicholas being made to seem a thief and a would-be murderer as we do about Oliver being made to seem a thief. The conflict between hero and villain, lacking emotional charge, is here presented as the creakiest of mechanical plots. Nicholas though vivacious and attractive, lacks the magic of Mr. Pickwick as a hero and Ralph lacks the demoniac nightmare quality of Fagin.

The second time Ralph sends Nicholas away from his family, Kate eulogizes the happiness of family life:

> 'but you will not leave us. Oh! think of all the happy days we have had together, before these terrible misfortunes came upon us; of all the comfort and happiness of home, and the trials we have to bear now; of our having no protector under all the slights and wrongs that poverty so much favours, and you cannot leave us to bear them alone, without one hand to help us' (20).

As I have pointed out, the brother-sister relationship, and the family circle, are part of the romance in the novel. Dickens wants the family circle with all its sentimental happiness to seem a worthwhile cause to fight for; in Dickens' fictional world the good must always come into conflict with evil, and that conflict is established by employing Ralph to threaten the sanctity and integrity of the family by separating and isolating the brother from the family and by exposing the innocent sister to a sexual threat of the grossest kind. There is no doubt in Kate's mind what is at stake in her struggle with Sir Mulberry Hawk. Were she to succumb to Hawk's "well laid plans" (28) she knows she would "'be the scorn of my own sex, and the toy of the other; justly condemned by all women of right feeling, and despised by all honest and honourable men'" (28). She would be ruined not just as a future wife but as a sister as well. At the end of the novel the triumphant hero and heroines are rewarded: Kate and Frank, Nicholas and Madeline, retire to the country and produce their own separate family circles, each with many children, while remaining in a larger interrelated family circle with each other. Thus, the family circle ends the novel with its sentimentalized triumph, the good preponderating over evil. But there is a snake in the garden: even though we are assured that Nicholas and Madeline, Kate and Frank are

wonderful parents, Dickens has all the way through the novel qualified the glory of the family by questioning the parent-child relationship. There have been no good parents in the novel. Mrs. Nickleby is seriously criticized (John K. Saunders notes that Mrs. Nickleby's "materialism and selfishness is a lesser form of Ralph's own rapacious nature"[1]); the imprudence of the departed Mr. Nickleby has ruined his family's fortune; Ralph we find is the uncaring, irresponsible father to Smike; Smike's mother deserted him in infancy; the good-natured Crummleses exploit the limited talents of their "Infant Phenomenon" whose diminutive stature has been the result of her parents feeding her gin in her childhood; every parent of every child at Dotheboys Hall (except Mr. and Mrs. Squeers, ironically), is grossly negligent; even the fond mother, Mrs. Kenwigs, exploits her children to entrap Uncle Lillyvick as the benefactor to her family; and then there is Mr. Bray and his diabolical exploitation of Madeline. So, Dickens is continually undercutting that which he praises so sentimentally.

Even though Dickens uses the sexual threat very lavishly in Nicholas Nickleby, sexuality as a primary motivation seems to be more than Dickens is prepared to handle at this stage in his career. What is immediately striking is that the chief villain, Ralph--unlike the standard conventional villain, such as Blifil--is not himself the sexual threat or the mercenary marriage threat. He neither wants to

---

[1]John K. Saunders, "The Case of Mrs. Nickleby: Humor and Negligent Parenthood," Dickens Studies Newsletter, X (June-Sept. 1979), 56-58.

seduce anyone nor to marry for money. (He's already made his mercenary marriage years ago.) But Ralph is the creator of the sexual threat against Kate and the manipulator of the sexual threat against Kate and the mainpulator of the mercenary marriage threat against Madeline. Richard Altick says that

> By the mere deed of enrolling Kate in the dressmaking trade, therefore, Dickens was able to arouse in his readers a concern which he did not need to make explicit. He was, in effect, laying the ground-work for the later development in which the danger of seduction was made explicit, Kate's becoming the prey of Lord Frederick Verisopht and Sir Mulberry Hawk.[1]

If the danger of seduction is implicit in the dressmaking trade, then implicit in Ralph's motivation for placing her here is the desire to expose her to this danger; rather as if Ralph wanted to accustom Kate to the licentious behaviour of men like Mantalini so that she would become malleable to his plans to use her as sexual bait in his business affairs. So from the very beginning, but not without fits of remorse, Ralph is manipulating his niece as sexual bait: first, by exposing her to the sexual danger implicit in working at the Mantalinis', perhaps in order to corrupt her sensibilities and make her acquiescent to the familiar attentions of men; and second, by using her "'as a decoy for the drunken boy'" (19), Lord Verisopht. Ralph tells Sir Mulberry Hawk that he brought Kate to his home

> 'because I thought she might make some impression on the silly youth you have taken in hand and are lending good help to ruin, I knew--knowing him--that it would be long before he outraged her girl's feelings, and that unless he offended by mere pup-

---

[1] Richard Altick, "Victorian Readers and the Sense of the Present," Midway, X (Spring 1970), 100.

> pyism and emptiness, he would, with a little management, respect the sex and conduct even of his usurer's niece. But if I thought to draw him on more gently by this device, I did not think of subjecting the girl to the licentiousness and brutality of so old a hand as you.' (19)

Ralph intends to "manage" Lord Frederick Verisopht, to manipulate the danger of seduction "'as a matter of business'" (19), but he has not counted on Mulberry Hawk becoming part of the danger.

Both Sir Mulberry and Arthur Gride are initially presented in the narrative as having straight-forward sexual motivation for their pursuit of Kate and Madeline. Hawk, intoxicated by wine, attracted to Kate, quickly "offends and disgusts" the incorruptible Kate. He familiarly calls her "'my sweet creature,'" pleads with her to be more "natural" and finally catches "her dress, and forcibly detained her" (19). Ralph, though not adverse to "'Selling a girl--throwing her in the way of temptation, and insult, and course speech'" (26) interrupts the seduction and shows Hawk the door, principally because there is no money to be made from Hawk's sexual attraction to Kate, but partly because Ralph is discovering a feeling for Kate, not found in his other relationships with people:

> To say that Ralph loved or cared for--in the most ordinary acceptation of those terms--any one of God's creatures, would be the wildest fiction. Still, there had somehow stolen upon him from time to time a thought of his niece which was tinged with compassion and pity; breaking through the dull cloud of dislike or indifference which darkened men and women in his eyes, there was, in her case, the faintest gleam of light--a most feeble and sickly ray at the best of times--but there it was, and it showed the poor girl in a better and purer aspect than any in which he had looked on human nature yet. (26)

This slight softening for his niece gives Ralph a certain complexity

as a villain he would otherwise lack. Gride presents himself to Ralph as a sexually intentioned lover when he tells Ralph he is to be married

> 'To a young and beautiful girl; fresh, lovely, bewitching, and not nineteen. Dark eyes--long eyelashes--ripe and ruddy lips that to look at is to long to kiss--beautiful clustering hair that one's fingers itch to play with--such a waist as might make a man clasp the air involuntarily, thinking of twining his arm about it--little feet that tread so lightly they hardly seem to walk upon the ground--to marry all this, sir,--this--hey, hey!' (47)

But this is an act. Gride's real motivation is mercenary rather than sexual. As Michael Slater points out, though Gride is not without lustful feelings, this "grotesque masquerade as an ardent young lover" is the way in which Gride fits into the general role-playing scheme of the novel.[1] Dickens deprives Hawk of his sexual motivation too. He certainly means to seduce Kate but his continued pursuit of her is primarily motivated by a desire for vengeance rather than sensual gratification: "the desire of encountering the usurer's niece again, and using his utmost arts to reduce her pride, and revenge himself for her contempt, was uppermost in his thoughts" (26).

Hawk is not the only one in the novel that desires revenge. Dickens even lets his hero, Nicholas, indulge in revenge. At

---

[1] Slater, op. cit., p. 18.

Dotheboys, Nicholas says, "'I have a long series of insults to avenge'" (13) and then beats the "ruffian till he roared for mercy" (13). We find that the character of Ralph's evil has always combined vengeance with greed. Brooker reveals that after his wife had left him, Ralph followed her "'Some said to make money of his wife's shame, but I believe to take some violent revenge, for that was as much his character as the other--perhaps more'" (60). As manipulation is another evil that particularly interests Dickens, Ralph seeks his own revenge on Nicholas through the manipulation of the desire for revenge in the auxiliary villains, Squeers and Hawk. Ralph pays a visit of condolence to Sir Mulbery after Nicholas' encounter with him. Ralph baits Hawk and fans his desire for vengeance against Nicholas. He even tries an oblique bribe: "'I'd give good money to have him stabbed to the heart and rolled into the kennel for the dogs to tear'" (38). But Hawk is willing without Ralph's enticements:

> 'When I am off this cursed bed,' said the invalid, actually sriking at his broken leg in the ecstasy of his passion, 'I'll have such revenge as never man had yet. By G-- I will! Accident favouring him, he has marked me for a week or two, but I'll put a mark on him that he shall carry to his grave. I'll slit his nose and ears--flog him--maim him for life. I'll do more than that; I'll drag that pattern of chastity, that pink of prudery, his delicate sister, through -----' (38)

But Hawk is willing to go further in his revenge than Ralph desires: the sexual threat Hawk poses to Kate, for whom Ralph has some buried

spark of sentiment, seems likely to get out of Ralph's control. And Dickens, apparently not willing to pursue this, more or less drops Hawk as Ralph's auxiliary. Immediately after this, Dickens introduces Madeline, the plot against her and a new auxiliary villain for Ralph to manipulate, Arthur Gride. That Dickens drops Hawk and his sexual threat in favour of Gride's mercenary marriage threat may indicate a certain lack of confidence in Dickens in handling such subject matter for a Victorian audience. Gride is safer material, for though the sexual threat is retained in so far as Gride tries to hide his mercenary intentions with an act of sexual ardour, Gride's decrepitude argues against sexuality being even an implicit unpleasantness in the proposed mercenary marriage.

Though the vindictive impulse is stronger than the sexual, Gordon Hirsch in his doctoral dissertation on villains sees Gride and Hawk as erotic splittings-off from the main villain, Ralph. Hirsch asserts that Ralph, like Fagin and Quilp, created respectively before and after him, is the "threatening yet also seductive image of the father."[1] In Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, and The Old Curiosity Shop, Hirsch attributes the villain versus hero/heroine conflict to a paranoid paternal (castrating and hostile) versus filial (passive) fantasy. While there is this Freudian aspect in the villain versus hero/heroine conflict Hirsch rather overstates his case when he insists that:

---

[1] Gordon Dan Hirsch, Hero and Villain in the Novels of Charles Dickens: A Psychoanalytic Study, doctoral dissertation for the University of California, Berkeley, p. 10.

> Nicholas Nickleby, then evidences the problems which result from the splitting of the paternal villain. The germ idea for the novel seems to have come, as I have shown, from Dickens' infantile castration fears and homosexual fantasies about Yorkshire schoolmasters like Wackford Squeers.[1]

I do think Hirsch has a valid point, however, in his contention that in the father-son conflict, played out between Ralph and Smike and Ralph and Nicholas, and in the related seducer versus heroine conflit, played out by Ralph's surrogates, Hawk and Gride, Dickens is presenting his

> fantasy material only by repetition, not by... representation or by analysis....The latent content of the fantasy is still too dangerous, it would seem, for Dickens to confront or represent the effects involved, and he avoids his problem by denying the presence of these emotions in certain characters like Ralph and by splitting his figures on a massive scale.

Hirsch points out that Sikes is Fagin's split, and that the same avoidance of the paternal and sexual fantasy material is at work in Oliver Twist.[2]

But to continue with the motif of vengeance, (with future villains, Quilp and Carker, the sexual and mercenary marriage threats will be associated with revenge) Ralph manipulates Squeers first in the aid of Ralph's plan to strike Nicholas through the persecution of Smike, and later to frustrate Nicholas' championship of Madeline. Ralph reminds Squeers that he, Ralph, has an "'old grudge to satisfy'"

---

[1] Ibid., p. 28.

[2] Ibid., p. 28-29.

(56) and that Squeers is "'at least as avaricious as you are revengeful--so am I'" (56). But Ralph is ready to spend money so that he "'can but win bare revenge at last'" (56). In turn, Squeers is able to manipulate another vengeful character, Peg Sliderskew. Peg, who hates Gride because he "'cozened [her] with cunning tricks and lying promises'" (57), has stolen old Gride's locked box of secrets, containing the document that will make Madeline and her future husband, Nicholas, a wealthy man. To prevent such good fortune falling in the way of Nicholas, Ralph, through Squeers, uses Peg's desire to get "'even with'" (57) Gride. Squeers' interest in Gride's lock box is specific, but Peg is interested in discovering any documents that "'we could get him into trouble by, and fret and waste away his heart to shreds, those we'll take particular care of, for that's what I want to do, and hoped to do when I left him'" (57).

With much the same vindictive motivation, coupled with greed--as it is in Ralph, Squeers and Peg--Brooker confesses he stole Smike as a child away from Ralph. And at the end, Brooker's confession is "'made the instrument of working out this dreadful retribution upon the head of a man who, in the hot pursuit of his bad ends, has persecuted and hunted down his own child to death'" (60). How differently vengeance is treated in this novel than in Pickwick Papers. In Pickwick, vindictive impulses found in the macabre interpolated tales are put into sharp relief by Mr. Pickwick's charitable benignity. And the testing of Mr. Pickwick's ability to forgive his enemies when faced with

Jingle and Mrs. Bardell in the Fleet provides a tension, a climax, and a rationale for that contrast. Nicholas Nickleby lacks this dynamic. Though vengeance, by its clear association with villainy, is ranged among the other particularly Dickensian evils, there is no real contrasting quality of reconciliation and forgiveness. Nicholas is given the opportunity not only to avenge himself on Squeers, but to avenge Kate on Hawk as well. And the Cheerybles' "mercy" is as fatuous as it is false. Charles Cheeryble comes to Ralph immediately prior to Ralph's downfall and "looking at him with more of pity than reproach" (LIX, 766) tells him

> 'there is one quality which all men have in common with the angels blessed opportunities of exercising if they will--mercy. It is an errand of mercy that brings me here.' (59)

The Cheerybles' "mercy" in offering Ralph an opportunity "'to retire from London, to take shelter in some place where you will be safe from the consequences of these wicked designs'" (59) seems a last-minute effort on Dickens' part to correct the over-balance of characters in search of vengeance. In Pickwick there is no question of retribution as there is in Nickleby. Of course, Mr. Pickwick's enemies, the mischievous Jingle and the manipulated Mrs. Bardell, are not evil; and no sort of retribution is possible against the institution of the Fleet; nor would any sort of retribution against Dodson and Fogg, do any concrete good. Does this mean that the Christian virtues of Pickwick are only possible when not faced with personal evil? When personal evil does enter Dickens' fictional world in Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby, the morality seems to change to something much

older and more primitive. Dickens indulges in retribution, something that Pickwick teaches us to abhor. Villains, from Oliver Twist to Dombey and Son with the exception of Pecksniff must die. There is no forgiveness or reconciliation. Dickens' Christianity lapses most quickly when faced with the particular evil of the crime against the child. It is not for the Nicklebys' sake and the evils done to them, that Dickens demands retribution from Ralph--it is Ralph's crime against Smike, his own son; this is the unforgiveable sin (unwitting though it may be), not the crimes of isolating his nephew, endangering the chastity of his niece, and disrupting their family circle. There is no Christian forgiveness even for Brooker in his part of the crime against Smike. Brooker knows that the Christian ethos that teaches it is never too late for a sinner to repent and find forgiveness in the next life, is not for him: "'my reparation comes too late, and neither in this world nor in the next can I have hope again!'" (60) None of his auditors contradict him. All the merciful Cheerybles can say is, "'Unhappy man'" (60), rather like a Greek Chorus. And though they call themselves merciful, and are clearly intended to represent in their philanthropy an ideal Christian charity,[1] who but the Cheerybles send for Ralph to hear Brooker's confession, who but the Cheerybles makes Brooker the "instrument" as he passively calls himself, of retribution? They are willing to let Ralph escape the legal consequences of his persecution of Smike, but this is nothing. Surely the most horrible punishment for Ralph, from which he is not allowed

---

[1]Steven Marcus, Dickens: from Pickwick to Dombey, p. 113.

to escape is the knowledge of Smike's true identity. Not that one feels total sympathy for Ralph (although I think the reader feels some sympathy), I am merely pointing out that though Dickens may have thought he was setting up a contrasting quality of mercy in the Cheerybles, there is no mercy at work here, only retributive justice.

Ralph's last speech rejects and curses Christianity and the comforts of its sacraments. As he is about to commit suicide, he hears the sound of a Church bell:

> 'Lie on!' cried the usurer, 'with your iron tongue; ring merrily for births that make expectants writhe, and marriages that are made in hell, and toll ruefully for the dead whose shoes are worn already. Call men to prayers who are godly because not found out, and ring chimes for the coming in of every year that brings this cursed world nearer to its end. No bell or book for me; throw me on a dunghill, and let me rot there to infect the air!' (62)

And one cannot help respecting Ralph's action if Christianity is considered as being truly embodied in the Cheerybles, with their self-conscious philanthropy and their sanctimonious mercy. What poor successors to Mr. Pickwick. Their reflection of self-satisfied middle-class Christianity is the only point in which we can find them to be believable. (Not quite the quality Dickens hoped to capture in drawing upon real models for the Cheerybles.)[1]

Steven Marcus points out something bizarre about Ralph's enactment of a father's crime against the son--that it reverses the Oedipal situation, with Brooker as a "grisly equivalent of the Sophoclean

---

[1] Dickens based the Cheerybles on the Grant Brothers of Manchester. See Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph, p. 289.

herdsman."[1] Marcus concludes that this version of the legend is "rearranged to constitute a denial of vengeful, parricidal impulses."[2] This effort in denying vengeful impulses against the father is behind, and makes sense of, the conscious effort in Dickens' narrative to insist on the Cheerybles' "mercy" as a way of denying that vengeance against Ralph is the impulse gratified at the end of the novel.

Marcus feels that "In Nicholas Nickleby Dickens seems to consolidate the most impressive qualities of the two novels that preceded it--the vitality and materiality of his first novel, and the seriousness and moral intention of his second."[3] But the combination of the two sits uneasily in Nicholas Nickleby because what is also combined is the need for reconcilation achieved in Pickwick with the conflicting desire for retribution found in Oliver Twist. The Oedipal inversion Marcus points to is an example of Dickens' imagination expressing itself in a "primitive and quasi-mythical conception."[4] But yet Ralph does not have mythic stature. Michael Slater provides an answer for this when he points out that Ralph is

> too much of a literary stereotype to grip the reader's interest strongly...his cunning devious plots, harsh demeanour and virulent malice are all drawn from the standard villain of the Elizabethan or Jacobean stage, as is much of his language.... Such power and vitality as Ralph has, then, derive mainly from literary sources; he cannot command our

---

[1] Marcus, op. cit., p. 125.

[2] Ibid., p. 125.

[3] Ibid., p. 92.

[4] Ibid., p. 125.

> imaginations or work upon our deepest fears in the way that the diabolic Fagin can, or the Dwarfish Quilp, by virtue of their more ancient folklore ancestry. And the case is similar with the novel's hero, Nicholas Nickleby himself. He is a brave and active, ingenuous jeune premier (very much in the Scott tradition) and cannot assume for us the qualities of a passive Blakean innocent like Oliver or Little Nell.[1]

Fathers failing their off-spring, and the consequent punishment of the father was certainly a theme that attracted Dickens' imagination in many of his novels, but yet he fails to endow this theme in Nicholas Nickleby with any interest, much less originality. With so much in the novel that is vital and imaginatively original the failure to give life to a theme that was an obsession with him is all the more striking. In a sense, as he suppresses the vindictive impulses or thinks he does in this novel, so he more or less suppresses the truth of Ralph's genesis as a character: the two are related as aspects of the same need to suppress his own feelings about his father. (Unlike Hirsch, I believe his father's failing him as a child is more to the point than the suppressed Oedipal complex.) Underneath the trappings of the Jacobean villain we see that Dickens is dealing fictively with his own preoccupations--the failure of the father (in Ralph's macabre relationship to Smike) and the disruption of the home (in Ralph's relationship to the Nicklebys). But it is as if Dickens is shying away from Ralph's source in his inner experience by disguising him, even from himself, as a conventional literary sterotype: perhaps this

---

[1] Slater, op. cit., p. 24-25.

is the reason for Dickens' failure to create a powerful villain. Significantly, Ralph is the only villain that Dickens presents in this heavy Jacobean manner.

More than Pickwick or Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby reflects Dickens as the young successful man he became after the fifth number of Pickwick appeared. As Chesterton points out, Nicholas' energy reflects Dickens' staggering vitality, and the love interest reflects his happiness and optimism as a newly married young man.[1] The comic genius present in Mantalini, Squeers, the Crummelses and the Kenwigs, reflects Dickens' gaiety and buoyancy of spirit. His love of and fascination with London as a never ending stimulus to his imagination manifests itself all through the novel. And yet, in the midst of all this gaiety and liveliness is an ugly dark shadow, Ralph Nickleby, reflecting a suppressed bitterness and unhappiness. The father-son relationship is too explicit; it is an obsession that he can neither escape nor face honestly; instead, he hides behind the maudlin in Smike and the stereotypic in Ralph. But Nicholas Nickleby conjures up for us Dickens at this stage in his life, bouncing along the London streets, tremendously exuberant, successful and confident. His good spirits and energy burst into expression through his comic characters, but his preoccupation with a sense of injury is at the centre of everything, harming his life as it harms this novel.

---

[1] G. K. Chesterton, op. cit., p. 26-37.

CHAPTER THREE:

The Major Villains of *Barnaby Rudge*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and *Dombey and Son*: The Pattern Maintained and Inverted

As plot generators and vehicles for moral contrast the villains of *Barnaby Rudge*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and *Dombey and Son*, are of central importance. Adhering to the melodramatic pattern I have focused on in my discussion of *Nicolas Nickleby*, the major villains of these three novels attempt to discredit the heroes in the eyes of the world; they isolate the heroes from their homes with consequent disruption of family ties; they sexually threaten heroines placed in vulnerable situations (and Dickens allows the villains in these three novels more sexual liberties than he does in previous novels); and both the isolation of the hero and the threatening of the heroine menaces the romantic relationships, the consummation of which in the love-match marriages celebrates all the Dickensian values.

Seth Pecksniff, in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, one of Dickens' greatest comic characters, is perhaps the most memorable villain of these three novels. Jonas Chuzzlewit is another remarkable villain in this same novel; and though technically a minor villain who is not involved in the pattern of the major villains, the pattern of isolating the hero and sexually threatening the heroine, Jonas is such a fine study of a

murderer's psychology that I want to make an exception to this study of major villains by including a brief discussion of this character.

Sir John Chester, who begins the novel, Barnaby Rudge, as plain Mr. Chester, distinguishes himself primarily because of his lack of the typical energy of Dickens' villains. Sir John is based on Lord Chesterfield, whom he invokes in chapter 23: "'My Lord Chesterfield!' he said, pressing his hand tenderly upon the book as he laid it down, 'if I could but have profited by your genius soon enough to have formed my son on the model you have left to all wise fathers, both he and I would have been rich men.'" Mr. Chester is alluding to Letters written by the late Right Honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to his Son, Philip Stanhope, Esq.; late Envoy Extraodinary at the Court of Dresden written in 1774. According to the Dictionary of National Biography, Chesterfield "incurred the dislike of three of the most influential writers of his day--Dr. Johnson, Horace Walpole, and Lord Hervey (Queen Caroline's friend). Their hostile estimates have injured his posthumous reputation, and inspired Dickens' ruthless caricature of him as Sir John Chester in 'Barnaby Rudge.'" Johnson is reported to have sneered that the Letters "'teach the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing-master.'" Chester's praise of hypocritical attitudes toward personal morality and religion reflects on his role not only as a father but on his role in the religious conflict in the Gordon Riots. Chester, only posturing as a devout Catholic, uses such a stance in power-seeking political manipulations. As Edgar Johnson points out,

> to Dickens he stands for all the freezing self-centeredness of the aristocracy at its worst, and

> all its merely specious standards of good manners.
>
> This symbolic aspect of Chester is profoundly related to Dickens's conviction that the riots were deeply rooted in mass bitterness, and that hatred of Catholics was only their proximate, not their fundamental, cause.[1]

Though indolent, Chester turns up in the midst of all political and familial problems, manipulating everyone: "'I fear I may be obliged to make great havoc among these worthy people. A troublesome necessity!'" (24). He causes the break-up of romances, and advocates mercenary marriage for his legitimate son. He discredits Edward to Edward's true love, Emma Haredale in chapter 29, and even to Mrs. Varden when he tells her that Edward is formally engaged to another young lady (27)--a lie, of course. Sir John is directly responsible for isolating young Edward from Emma and from his home (such as it is): "'Return to this roof no more, I beg you. Go, sir, since you have no moral sense remaining; and go to the Devil, at my express desire. Good day'" (32). Sir John is also indirectly responsible for the isolating of Joe Willet. Because Chester complains of Joe's involvement as go-between for Emma and Edward, John Willet shakes and collars his son, saying, "'You're the boy, sir . . . that wants to sneak into houses, and stir up differences between noble gentlemen and their sons. . . '" (30). For Joe this "was the crowning circumstance of his degradation" (30) and he resolves to "'part company'" with the community of the Maypole, and become a "'roving vagabond'" (30). (He in fact becomes a soldier and a war hero.) Indeed, both young men are

---

[1] Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph, p. 333.

separated from the novel altogether. Dickens does not bring them back until the end when Dolly and Emma need rescuing.

Contrasted to John Chester is the locksmith, Gabriel Varden, a good husband, a good father, and even a good master to the ridiculous and rebellious Sim Tappertit. Steven Marcus says that "Sim Tappertit is to Gabriel Varden what Sam Weller was to Pickwick. Yet Sim cannot acquiesce in the authority of his master's station."[1]

The vindictive impulse and the crime against the child found in Pickwick's interpolated tales and in Nicholas Nickleby (as well as Oliver Twist and The Old Curiosity Shop) are still to be found in Barnaby Rudge, but as in Nicholas Nickleby, the crime against the child predates the action of the novel. Like Smike, Barnaby and Hugh are sinned against by their fathers long before the story opens. Barnaby's mental deficiency and Hugh's brutality and moral deficiency are tacitly understood to have a connection with their fathers' evil actions. Murder, the ultimate anti-social, anti-community action, committed on the night of Barnaby's birth somehow forever blights his mind. Hugh's brutality can be understood in a more realistic cause and effect framework: Chester, Hugh's father, utterly lacking in humanity as well as parental concern, abandons mother and child. Although Hugh's gipsy mother believed on the gallows that one day"'the God of their tribe'" would bring together father and son and "'revenge her through her child'" (75), Sir John does not meet his doom through

---

[1] Steven Marcus, Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey, p. 185.

his son. As Marcus points out, "The sins of the fathers in Barnaby Rudge are brought to retribution, but none of the sons enjoys the luxury of revenge."[1]

Unlike Ralph Nickleby, Sir John is not driven to suicide or even regret by the knowledge that he is the instrument of his own son's death. Unlike Ralph, Sir John is told of his paternity before Hugh is executed; thus, he is afforded a chance to redeem himself and save or attempt to save his natural son. He fails to do so, and vengeance is left for Haredale reluctantly to execute. Sir John insists on the duel and Haredale kills him, not for Hugh's sake, but for his own. Haredale flees the country, redeeming himself by his acquiesence in the love-match marriage of Emma and Edward; and the book ends with the celebration of Dolly and Joe's marriage and Dickens' assurance of the appearance of "more small Joes and small Dollys than could be easily counted" (82).

Before the marriages can be celebrated, the heroines must be sexually threatened and rescued by their future husbands. Dolly and Emma come far closer to sexual violation then do their heroine predecessors, Madeline and Kate in Nicholas Nickleby and Nell in The Old Curiosity Shop. Even though Quilp is the most potent sexual evil in all of Dickens' novels, he never actually lays hands on Nell; but Dolly and Emma are actually abducted and held prisoner by the unprepossessing Sim Tappertit and the lustful Hugh, who has already frightened Dolly in the woods, and Dickens assures us that the girls

---

[1] Ibid., p. 190.

had "reasons for the worst alarm" (59). Dickens positively delights in the buxom Dolly's distress. Dolly, the most sexually fleshed-out heroine in Dickens' work is "beautiful, bewitching, captivating little Dolly--her hair dishevelled, her dress torn, her dark eyelashes wet with tears, her bosom heaving--her face, now pale with fear, now crimsoned with indignation--her whole self a hundred times more beautiful in this heightened aspect than ever she had been before" (59).

Sir John, of course, has a hand in the abduction. And in the character of Gashford, revenge has its place as a motivation for sexual violation. Just as Sir Mulberry Hawk has wanted to seduce Kate and avenge himself on Ralph as well as on the disdainful Kate, so Gashford attempts to steal off alone with Emma Haredale, not purely out of lust, but because of his hatred of her uncle. Sir John aids, manipulates, and encourages Hugh's lust for Dolly as well as Gashford's desire for vengeance. Haredale reveals his knowledge of Sir John's complicity when he accuses him of urging Gashford "'to gratify the deadly hate he owes me . . . by the abduction and dishonour of my niece'" (81). The hatred among the three men, Haredale, Gashford, and Chester seems to have come about as a result of personal and religious differences exacerbated by their years together as schoolboys in France. Gashford, once a Catholic like Haredale, is despised by Haredale for having been a "'sycophant . . . . who robbed his benefactor's daughter of her virtue, and married her to break her heart, and did it, with stripes and cruelty: this creature, who has whined at kitchen windows for the broken food, and begged for halfpence at our chapel doors: this apostle of the faith, whose tender

conscience cannot bear the altars where his vicious life was publicly denounced . . . '" (43). Gashford hates all members of the faith that publicly denounced him, hence his alliance with the anti-Catholic movement led by Lord George Gordon, and doubly hates Haredale for Haredale's exposure of Gashford's ignominious past life to a crowd of Protestant spectators in front of the Houses of Parliament. Haredale and Chester hate each other for a vaguer reason; some sort of past (perhaps romantic) rivalry is hinted at. Haredale claims that "'In every action of my life, from that first hope which you converted into grief and desolation, you have stood, like an adverse fate, between me and peace'" (81). Why Chester should have "'whispered calumnies'" that Haredale "'alone reaped any harvest from [his] brother's death'" is not very well explained. Chester merely says that he has "'always despised'" Haredale. As with Ralph Nickleby, Dickens is not overly concerned in making the hatred of his villains toward their victims psychologically plausible.

In spite of the celebration of marriage and the insistence of the triumph of Dickensian values of hearth and home, we must bear in mind Marcus' judgement that

> Essentially, Barnaby Rudge contemplates only one kind of personal relation--that of father and son. The novel presents five filial pairs. Each of them suffers from a profound disorder, and in each a father and son confront one another in a dispute over power and authority. The experience of each filial pair illuminates and modifies the others, rendering with surprising subtlety and complexity Dickens's idea of the relation as a nexus of irreconcilable conflict. Taken together these relations depict in an unusually relevant and concrete way Dickens's heightened consciousness that

> something has gone wrong with the values by which men live.[1]

In Dombey and Son, Dickens' preoccupation with the father-son relationship results in a new perspective on the theme of the failure of the father. In Nicholas Nickleby and Barnaby Rudge, it is the evil villains, Ralph Nickleby and John Chester who are the bad fathers, unconcerned with and unaware of Smike and Hugh in childhood. The villains' complete neglect causes life-long pathetic suffering in Smike and the brutalization of Hugh, and both villainous fathers are directly responsible for the deaths of their sons. Dombey, although a bad father, is not the villain of Dombey and Son, and his failure as a father does not arise out of physical neglect for his son in childhood--far from it. Little Paul has every care that money can buy. Dombey's failure, at least in regard to Paul, is much more subtle than neglect.

In spite of Carker's being the real villain of Dombey and Son, Dombey conforms essentially to the standard villainous pattern through much of the novel, for it is Dombey, not Carker, who is responsible for the isolation of the hero as well as the heroine, and it is Dombey who commits the crime against the child; but Dombey's motivation is very different from a villain's motivation. Dombey's relationship to Paul cannot even be compared to Chester's relationship to Edward; although Chester has not neglected Edward in childhood, he is indifferent to his son in every respect save his son's ability to make a monetarily

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 184-185.

advantageous marriage. Dombey is far from being indifferent to Paul; he sees his son as an extension of himself, an extension of what he considers to be his own greatness. His love for his son has more to do with pride than fatherly devotion and affection, and this unrelenting pride and egoism causes a jealousy so destructive that it blights Paul's emotional well-being which in turn blights his health in infancy and causes his early death. In his jealousy, Dombey begrudges his son even the affection of his wet-nurse: "'It is not at all in this bargain that you need become attached to my child, or that my child need become attached to you. I don't expect or desire anything of the kind. Quite the reverse'" (2). When Dombey's outraged pride causes him to discharge the nurse, Paul's health never fully recovers:

> Yet, in spite of his early promise, all this vigilance and care could not make little Paul a thriving boy. Naturally delicate, perhaps, he pined and wasted after the dismissal of his nurse, and, for a long time, seemed but to wait his opportunty of gliding through their hands, and seeking his lost mother. This dangerous ground in his steeple-chase towards manhood passed, he still found it very rough riding, and was grievously beset by all the obstacles in his course. (8)

This jealous love causes Dombey to dislike his own daughter. His indifference to her as a girl grows into aversion when he sees the natural and spontaneous affection between Paul and his sister that Mr. Dombey can never share with Paul. And if Paul's early death cannot be laid at Dombey's feet as a crime against his own child, Dombey's neglect and isolation of Florence can with justification be called a crime against a child. There are many references to her isolation and

Dickens uses emphatic imagery in presenting her dreadful aloneness: "Florence lived alone in the great dreary house, and day succeeded day, and still she lived alone; and the blank walls looked down upon her with a vacant stare, as if they had a Gorgon-like mind to stare her youth and beauty into stone" (23). Like John Chester and Ralph Nickleby, Dombey is cruel to his own child, and Dickens heaps on the reproach: "'not an orphan in the wide world can be so deserted as the child who is an outcast from a living parent's love'" (24). Dombey's aversion to Florence grows after the death of Paul instead of diminishing; indeed, he grows to hate her, and his cruelty to her culminates in chapter 47 when he strikes her, causing her to flee her home and join the community of the Wooden Midshipman.

It is also Dombey, not Carker, who decides to send Walter Gay to Barbados (13); and his selection for this far away post is certainly not preferment. His separation from the community of the Wooden Midshipman (the most engaging community since Mr. Pickwick's community of friends at Dingley Dell) brings pain to all the individuals the community shelters and befriends, Captain Cuttle, Florence, and poor old Uncle Sol, who leaves his home to search for the nephew he fears drowned. Dombey, disliking Walter for his friendship with Paul and Florence, does eventually regret his decision to send Walter (22), because on his death-bed Paul bids his father to "Remember Walter . . . I was fond of Walter!'" (16), but it is too late, Walter sails and his ship soon proves missing.

Mounted on his horse, with his flashing white teeth, Carker is perhaps the most sexually attractive villain in the novels written

before David Copperfield. As he is Dickens' first major villain to be attractive, he is the first villain who might be considered sexually tempting; thus, the potential for danger is increased. Though sold to him by her mother, Alice Marwood apparently found him irresistible, came to love him, and was ruined in consequence. For awhile it looks as if Carker will attempt to fascinate Florence. After Paul's death, Carker turns his eyes on the heiress:

> Was there any bird in a cage, that came in for a share of his regards?
>
> 'A very young lady!' thought Mr. Carker the Manager, through his song. 'Ay! when I saw her last, she was a little child. With dark eyes and hair, I recollect, and a good face; a very good face! I daresay she's pretty.' (22)

Aware of the attachment between Walter and Florence, Carker is satisfied to find that Walter's ship is missing. When Dombey regrets that Walter was sent out, Carker says that "'wherever Gay is, he is much better where he is, than at home here. If I were, or could be, in your place, I should be satisfied of that. I am quite satisfied of it myself. Miss Dombey is confiding and young . . . '" (26). Florence is "confiding and young;" she is also lonely and unprotected. Not demonic like Quilp (in spite of Mrs. Quilp's assertions of the charms of her lord, Quilp is bound to frighten any young girl), not lower class and brutal like Hugh, not plump, middle-aged, and pompous like Pecksniff, Carker is dashing, successful, and sexy, and might well have proved to be a dangerous temptation to a lonely and "confiding" young girl. But Mr. Carker, "sly of manner, sharp of tooth, soft of foot, watchful of eye, oily of tongue, cruel of heart,

nice of habit" (22), fortunately does not make a good impression on Florence. When she sees him, she is "sensible of a strange inclination to shiver, though the day was hot" (24). Confusing and frightening, Carker conveys to Florence that "'There is no news of the ship'" Walter has sailed on. Florence does not take this as kindly interest for the manner in which he transmits his words is alarming if not diabolical: "he seemed to have shown them to her in some extraordinary manner through his smile, instead of uttering them" (24). Thoroughly discomfited, "Florence was seized with such a shudder as he went, that Sir Barnet, adopting the popular superstition, supposed somebody was passing over her grave" (24).

But if Carker has any plan to mercenarily marry the boss' daughter, he soon forgets it when Edith Granger appears on the scene: "'Time was,' he said, 'when it was well to watch even your rising little star, and know in what quarter there were clouds, to shadow you if needful. But a plant has arisen, and you are lost in its light'" (46). Henceforth, Carker slowly begins to insinuate himself into what he presumes to be Edith's confidence. He believes he is manipulating her into a submissive and compromised position; but Edith has seen through it all and she, in fact, manipulates him, acquiescing to the elopement only up to the point where Carker tries to take possession of her; she then turns on him, revealing her true state of feeling, recalling his baseness in

> 'Proposing then, this flight--not this flight, but the flight you thought it--you told me that in the having given you that meeting, and leaving you to be discovered there, if you so thought fit; and in the

> having suffered you to be alone with me many times before . . . and in the having openly avowed to you that I had no feeling for my husband but aversion, and no care for myself--I was lost; I had given you the power to traduce my name; and I lived, in virtuous reputation, at the pleasure of your breath.' (54)

Edith will not be so manipulated. But Carker, true to the pattern of manipulating villains preceding him, is not entirely unsuccessful in his other manipulations, notably his manipulation of the House of Dombey. Carker's desire to seduce Edith Dombey is motivated not by her beauty, though this makes the task of seduction more pleasureable, but by the hatred he bears his employer. Carker's aim is to avenge himself on Dombey, to humiliate the pride that has humbled Carker in all his years of mortified subservience. That his hatred and ruinous manipulations are long-standing is seen in Morfin's revelation:

> 'That he has abused his trust in many ways . . . that he has oftener dealt and speculated to advantage for himself, than for the House he represented; that he has led the House on, to prodigious ventures, often resulting in enormous losses; that he has always pampered the vanity and ambition of his employer, when it was his duty to have held them in check . . . Undertakings have been entered on, to swell the reputation of the House for vast resources, and to exhibit it in magnificent contrast to other merchant's houses, of which it requires a steady head to contemplate the possibly--a few disastrous changes of affairs might render them the probably--ruinous consequences.' (53)

Gordon Hirsch makes an important observation about a change in the villains that occur in Barnaby Rudge, Martin Chuzzlewit, and Dombey and Son. Hirsch characterizes the villains, Fagin, Quilp, Ralph Nickleby, and John Chester as "threatening, oppressive,

paternal."[1] (I do not see anything particularly paternal about Quilp). When Dickens writes on revolution in Barnaby Rudge[2] a new type of villain springs into existence, the "filial, usurping villain."[3] These new villains rebelling against their masters or fathers are Sim Tappertit, Hugh, Gashford, Dennis, Jonas Chuzzlewit, and James Carker. Carker is the first major villain in one of the novels to be this new type of "filial, usurping villain." Dombey, the bad father, is not punished by the child he sins against, but he is punished by his filial subordinate, Carker; thus, the chilren are spared the odiousness of revenge, and can preserve their better natures. But vengeance is required and is satisfactorily accomplished by a filial type; and the bad father, punished by the son, repents, is forgiven, and restored to the loving daughter.

Seth Pecksniff, hypocrisy incarnate, is truly a comical villain. As James Kincaid says of him, "While is it true that the plot of the novel casts Pecksniff as a villain, the comic pattern knows better and places him at the centre of our instructional experience."[4] All the major villains preceding Pecksniff in earlier novels are manipulators: Jingle and Job, Dodson and Fogg, Fagin, Ralph Nickleby, Quilp, and Sir

---

[1] Gordon Dan Hirsch, Hero and Villain in the Novels of Charles Dickens: A Psychoanalytic Study, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkely, pp. 40-62.

[2] See Marcus, op. cit., pp. 169-212, for a discussion of the relationship of the filial rebellion to the political rebellion.

[3] Hirsch, op. cit., p. 48.

[4] James R. Kincaid, Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter, p. 151.

John Chester, are primarily involved in manipulating the innocent hero-heroine. With Pecksniff, Dickens reverses this pattern; although Pecksniff is involved in the usual activities through which his predecessors manipulate their victims--isolating the hero, sexually threatening the heroine--it is Mr. Pecksniff who is manipulated. Thinking he has everyone in control, Pecksniff is in fact manipulated by Montague Tigg into investing money in Tigg's fraudulent company, and is manipulated by Old Martin Chuzzlewit, the "manipulator of righteousness."[1] Pecksniff, thinking he is serving his own ends in furthering the rift between Old Martin and young Martin by unhesitatingly obeying Old Martin's request that he expel young Martin from the Pecksniffian hearth and home, once made so inviting to Martin, is actually condemning himself in Old Martin's eyes. At the end when Old Martin reveals all, he declares that if Pecksniff

> 'had offered me one word of remonstrance, in favour of the grandson whom he supposed I had disinherited; if he had pleaded with me, though never so faintly, against my appeal to him to abandon him to misery and cast him from his house; I think I could have borne with him for ever afterwards. But not a word, not a word. Pandering to the worst of human passions was the office of his nature; and faithfully he did his work!' (52)

Martin's isolation in America is a moral spring-board as was the Fleet for Mr. Pickwick; but the delineation of the possible moral danger of isolation and alienation that is explored in Pickwick is never really explored in Chuzzlewit. Dickens is far too taken up with

---

[1]George E. Kennedy II, "Dickens's Manipulators of Righteousness," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VIII (1977), 15-19.

his enthusiastic attack on America. In any case Martin is not a good character tested to see if he will preserve his better nature; rather, he is a character (not possessed of the saintliness of Mr. Pickwick) whose "better nature" must be forged by his isolation in the almost prison-like Eden of America. Separated from friends, family, and his romantic attachment, as so many young Dickensian heroes are, young Martin has a rather sudden moral reformation.[1]

While Martin is suffering in the wilds of America, Pecksniff is at home sexually threatening the heroine, Mary Graham, beloved of almost everyone except the reader. Colourless and underdeveloped as a character, Mary must endure Pecksniffian embraces so odious to her that Dickens tells us "she would have preferred the caresses of a toad, an adder, or a serpent: nay, the hug of a bear" (30). Though Pecksniff is interested in the mercenary aspect of his proposed marriage to Mary, he is not without his own lustful reasons for forcing himself on her. Living as she must in the same house as Pecksniff, she is placed in an extremely vulnerable position. Further, Pecksniff threatens to use his influence with Old Martin against young Martin or for young Martin depending on Mary's rejection or acceptance of Pecksniff:

> 'Martin, junior, might suffer severely. I'd have compassion on Martin, junior, do you know! . . . You will consent, my love; you will consent, I know. . . . When we are married . . . we'll see then, what we can do to put some trifling help in Martin junior's way. Have I any influence with our

---

[1] Barbara Hardy, The Moral Art of Dickens, p. 109-111, discusses Martin's moral reformation.

> venerable friend? Well! Perhaps I have. Perhaps I have.' (30)

The attempt to manipulate Mary through her honest affection for the hero is truly in the best Dickensian tradition of manipulative villains, which gives impact to the revelation at the end that Old Martin Chuzzlewit has out-manipulated Pecksniff.

Like Dolly Varden, Mary is placed in a more vulnerable situation than Nell, who escapes even if it is through death, and more vulnerable than Kate and Madeline in Nicholas Nickleby. Forcibly abducted, forced to live under the same roof with a villain, handled, squeezed, threatened, and kissed, Dolly and Mary are subjected to a sexual insolence Dickens shrank from allowing his villains in earlier novels--even Quilp.

Pecksniff is the first major villain since Pickwick not killed off by Dickens. Pecksniff does not participate in the evil father theme that unfailingly arouses Dickens' ire (significantly he does not have a son, which precludes indulgence in the father-son theme); nor does he persecute a small child as do Fagin and Quilp.[1] Another reason Dickens does not feel compelled to kill his villain is suggested by James Kincaid's defense of Pecksniff:

> But there is a deeper reason for ultimate incompleteness of the comic vision: it is never integrated or fully realized in a compact society. Though

---

[1] Barbara Hardy, op. cit., p. 107, suggests that an important reason for the relative failure of Chuzzlewit as a serial was that it lacked children and pathetic deaths. Also Barnaby Rudge, lacking children and pathetic deaths was a disappointment to Dickens' readers; pathetic deaths, children, and reproach for the father are reinstated in Dombey and Son.

> many characters find their way out of pure isolation, the result is still pictured as fragmented groups of two or three: Tom Pinch, Ruth, and John; Mr. Pecksniff and Charity; Martin and Mary; Mark and Mrs. Lupin; Bailey, Poll Sweedlepipe, Mrs Gamp, and Mrs. Harris. There is no sense in which all of these people are bound together, and the novel ultimately fails as a comedy because its socially realistic values are never socially realized. The comic society is never finally born.[1]

If the comic society is never born it may be because there is something lacking in the social assumptions and moral committment of the good characters; how then can Pecksniff convincingly be condemned, much less killed, for his lack of social virtue when the good characters have not succeeded in forming an alternative society? Kincaid notes that

> As well as giving himself a licence to practice hypocrisy, Mr. Pecksniff is offering us an alternative to the cold, death-like morality of old Martin or the profit-loss morality of Mark Tapley . . . Pecksniff is very much like Falstaff in allowing us to economize contempt, not so much by showing his own awareness of it or by staring us out of countenance as by simply rendering contempt a trivial or irrelevant response to his dazzling display of artistic resiliency.[2]

Jonas Chuzzlewit far surpasses Mr. Pecksniff as a sexual threat, but Jonas' sexual menace is not directed at the heroine but at Mercy Pecksniff. Jonas is attracted to Mercy's saucy ways and to her high handed disdain for her betrothed, but these qualities, enticing as they may be, also inspire sadism, and make Jonas long for the day when he can gratify his ugly sadistic yearnings:

---

[1]Kincaid, op. cit., p. 134.

[2]Ibid., p. 154.

> 'you'll catch it for this, when you <u>are</u> married! It's all very well now--it keeps one on, somehow, and you know it--but I'll pay you off scot and lot by and bye. . . . make the most of it while it lasts. Get in your hay while the sun shines. Take your own way as long as it's in your power, my lady!' (24)

After their marriage Jonas reveals to his wife the nature of his interest in her:

> 'There's not a pretty slight you ever put upon me, nor a pretty trick you ever played me, nor a pretty insolence you ever showed me, that I won't pay back a hundred-fold. What else did I marry you for? <u>You</u>, too! he said, with coarse contempt.' (28)

Mercy, no longer frivolous and gay, nevertheless tries to be a good and loving wife:

> She went up to him, as it seemed, and spoke lovingly: saying that she would defer to him in everything, and would consult his wishes and obey them, and they might be happy if he would be gentle with her. He answered with an imprecation, and--
> Not with a blow? Yes. Stern truth against the base-souled villain: with a blow. (28)

Surely Jonas exhibits the ugliest, most unacceptable sexuality of all Dickens' many sexually menacing villains.

For Gordon Hirsch, Jonas Chuzzlewit is a masterpiece in the "psychology of filial usurpation and paranoia."[1] Gashford, Dennis, and Hugh are filial usurpers in a political sense, for their revolt is against political authority, which may be taken as a symbol of paternal authority. Sim Tappertit (who also shares in this political rebellion) and James Carker may be classified as filial usurpers in their revolt against their masters, Gabriel Varden and Mr. Dombey.

---

[1]Hirsch, op. cit., p. 49.

Jonas exhibits the most explicit form of filial usurpation: he is the only son in direct revolt against his father. (Hugh, too, is a son but his rebellion is not directed against his natural father, John Chester.) Among all the villains in Dickens' early work, Jonas Chuzzlewit stands out as an anomaly, for he is the son who rises up against the father and murders him as opposed to the paternal-type villains who persecute children.

In terms of Dickens' portrayal of murderers, Jonas is something of an advance. Speaking of Dickens' early murderers, Philip Collins says that "Dickens never achieves anything with Rudge that he had not already done better in Oliver Twist. The interesting thing is, that he wanted to try. It is in Martin Chuzzlewit that he makes a further advance."[1] Collins applauds Dickens' description of Jonas' paranoia, guilt, and fear in chapter 47 after he has murdered Montague. Dickens shows real perception of the murderer's state of mind as he makes his way back to London and to the room his family and staff believe him to by occupying:

> Dread and fear were upon him. To an extent he had never counted on, and could not manage in the least degree. He was so horribly afraid of that infernal room at home. This made him, in a gloomy, murderous, mad way, not only fearful for himself but of himself; for being, as it were, a part of the room: a something supposed to be there, yet missing from it: he invested himself with its mysterious terrors; and when he pictured in his mind the ugly chamber, false and quiet, false and quiet, through the dark house of two nights; and the tumbled bed, and he not in it, though believed to be; he became in a manner his own ghost and

---

[1]Philip Collins, Dickens and Crime, p. 276.

> phantom, and was at once the haunting spirit and the haunted man.

Before now, Jonas' attempts to kill Montague on the way to Wiltshire for the purpose of duping Mr. Pecksniff is "typical melodrama,"[1] according to Collins (although it can be argued that Montague's dreams raise it to something more than "typical melodrama"); but the description of the murderer's mind after the act of violence is a

> much more elaborate rendering of fear and guilt than Sikes or Rudge had occasioned. Jonas is not a professional thug like Sikes, nor a petty murderer for gain like Rudge, but a vicious and terrified little man driven to rid himself of his blackmailer. By convention, blackmailers are fair game for murderers, so Dickens can afford to enter more sympathetically into Jonas's consciousness--which is, besides, more complicated, intelligent and sensitive than his predecessors.[2]

Jonas' psychology is complex and absorbing; the murder of Montague is the most exciting event in Martin Chuzzlewit; indeed, in all of Dickens' novels it is one of the most exciting crimes. Guilty of so much violence, attempted parricide (Anthony Chuzzlewit did not die of the poison Jonas administered but of a broken heart when he discovered how his son was seeking his death), wife-battering, and murder, Jonas remains a little man, cringing and cowardly. His abject fear and inability to take his own life at the end adds to his psychological realism, for Dickens knew and convinces the reader that it is not necessarily the strong that are capable of the most violence, but the weak, guilt-driven little person.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 276.

[2] Ibid., p. 279.

PART TWO:

TRANSCENDENCE OF THE CONVENTIONAL: THE GREAT VILLAINS

CHAPTER ONE:

The Dreamer and the Nightmare: Isolation in Oliver Twist

The most immediate difference between Fagin and Quilp on the one hand and the villains of Pickwick, Nicholas Nickleby, Barnaby Rudge, Martin Chuzzlewit, and Dombey and Son on the other is their rather special and intimate relationship to a child. Many readers have been powerfully struck by this fearful relationship. In "Charles Dickens: A Haunting," Angus Wilson describes his having "felt the pursuing breath of Quilp upon Nell's innocent neck and the awful eyes of Fagin intruding into Oliver's illusory rural safety, as too terrible to bear."[1] The greatest villains of the earlier novels, the villains of Oliver Twist, The Old Curiosity Shop, and David Copperfield, all have this very close intimately threatening relationship with the child hero or heroine. Even though Smike and Ralph are connected as father and son, they cannot be said to have an intimate relationship as they never communicate or have knowledge of their blood ties (until the end when Ralph finds out his paternity and commits suicide). The only other child protagonist in the earlier novels aside from Oliver, Nell,

---

[1] Angus Wilson, "Charles Dickens: A Haunting," Critical Quarterly, II; reprinted in Dickens: Modern Judgements, ed. A. E. Dyson, p. 30.

and David Copperfield, is Florence Dombey, but she has very little contact with the villain, Carker. In all three novels, Oliver Twist, Old Curiosity Shop, and David Copperfield, an examination of the intimate relationships, between villain and child, reveal something archetypal in human experience. It is not just that they use the motifs of fairy tales or allegory; these resonances are indeed there but they are "incorporated,"[1] almost superimposed, rather than basic to the stories, which have for their roots something more ancient than even fairy tales--impulses and fears of the human heart which give rise to fairy-tales, legend and myth in the first instance. It is in the relationship of villain to child that we can most easily see what Angus Wilson calls Dickens' "closeness to the primitive sources of story-telling, to legend and to myth."[2]

Fagin and Quilp do engage in the sorts of villainous activities found in Pickwick and Nickleby: they isolate Oliver and Nell, and Quilp is certainly a potent sexual threat (Fagin less so, but he is not exempt from this activity). But in charting how they conform to the conventional little melodramatic pattern of isolating the hero, separating him from his friends, and sexually threatening the heroine, we realize that Fagin and Quilp transcend the pattern to such a degree that we feel their evil is not established by what they do at all; rather, they are like some pre-historic sources of an almost radio-active evil, capable of contaminating anyone who comes within reach.

---

[1] See Richard Hannaford, "The Fairy World of Oliver Twist," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VIII (June, 1977), 33, for a discussion of folk material in Oliver Twist.

[2] Angus Wilson, The World of Charles Dickens, p. 11.

What Dickens claimed after completing the novels was his intention in writing Oliver Twist and The Old Curiosity Shop is quite similar in both cases. He wanted to "show in little Oliver the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance and triumphing at last."[1] With Nell he

> had it always in my fancy to surround the lonely figure of the child with grotesque and wild, but not impossible companions, and to gather about her innocent face and pure intentions, associates as strange and uncongenial as the grim objects that are about her bed when her history is first foreshadowed.[2]

Although the allegory involving Nell is rather more complicated, essentially both Nell and Oliver play an allegorical role of goodness and innocence surrounded by their opposites in purity and good intentions. Both consciously evoke Pilgrim's Progress[3] and the Christian myth: Oliver's coming into his inheritance, carrying out his Father's will, having resisted the temptation of the devil;[4] Nell's self-sacrifice and martyred suffering, her death for the sake of love, which is made a sort of nativity.[5] Behind this intention which he

---

[1]Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist, ed. Kathleen Tillotson (Clarendon Edition), p. lxii, Dickens' Preface to the Third Edition.

[2]Charles Dickens, Preface to the First Cheap Edition of The Old Curiosity Shop (Penguin English Library Edition), p. 42.

[3]For Pilgrim's Progress in Oliver Twist see Steven Marcus, Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey, pp. 54-91. For Pilgrim's Progress in The Old Curiosity Shop, see Rachel Bennett, "Punch versus Christian in The Old Curiosity Shop," Review of English Studies, XXII (1971), 423-434.

[4]See Marcus, op. cit., pp. 73-76.

[5]See Malcolm Andrews' introduction to The Old Curiosity Shop (Penguin English Library Edition), p. 29.

certainly carried out on a conscious level, Dickens' imagination, free from restraint as it characteristically is in the early novels, providing the spontaneity and improvisation that so mark these books, told another tale: in Oliver Twist, a tale of isolation and inescapable alienation and insecurity; and in The Old Curiosity Shop, a tale of a personality divided through the inability to reconcile with decency and duty a destructive sexual impulse.

All the events in a person's life that make up the pool of memory, all the great and small, objective and subjective perceptions are stored in either the conscious mind or the subconscious mind. In painting or in writing fiction an artist gives visual or verbal form to his perceptions through the faculty of the imagination. These perceptions may be conscious and objective in which case the imagination may be said to work for, or be controlled by, the conscious mind, or the perceptions may be subjective and stored in the subconscious mind and, if these perceptions are given visual or verbal form, then the imagination is in the service of the subconscious mind. The imagination can do double duty, switch back and forth, in one piece of fiction, and in this way tell the story of the conscious mind while it may also break away from the control of the conscious mind and tell the story of the subconscious mind. Dickens' imagination breaking away from the control of the conscious mind may be compared to the way the imagination functions in dream, for in some of the earlier novels the imagination has a randomness and lack of inhibition similar to the freedom of the imagination in dreams. As Taylor Stoehr points out in

his discussion of Dickens and Freudian dream theory, Dickens simultaneously reveals and conceals "his emotionally explosive subject matter, just as in Freudian theory the elements of the dreamwork both hide and display the dream content."[1] While there is much in Stoehr's discussion that illuminates this analogy in very suggestive ways, I believe that it is misapplied in his discussion of the later novels, in which the imagination is very much controlled, and spontaneity and randomness are demonstrably much diminished by a good deal of rewriting of the manuscripts. To G. H. Lewes, Dickens writes,

> With reference to that question of yours concerning Oliver Twist I scarcely know what answer I can give you. I suppose like most authors I look over what I write with exceeding pleasure and think (to use the words of the elder Mr. Weller) 'in my innocence that it's all wery capital'. I thought that passage a good one when I wrote it, certainly, and I felt it strongely (as I do almost every word I put on paper) while I wrote it, but how it came I can't tell. It came like all my other ideas, such as they are, ready made to the point of the pen--and down it went.[2]

Compare this statement of 1838 with one Dickens made five years before he died: "I work slowly and with great care, and never give way to my invention recklessly, but constantly restrain it."[3] Incomprehensibly, Stoehr ignored the early novels; for it seems to me that everything in his theory can be much more convincingly exemplified by them.

---

[1] Taylor Stoehr, Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance, p. 67.

[2] The Letters of Charles Dickens (The Pilgrim Edition), ed. M. House and G. Storey, I, 402.

[3] John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens, ed. J. W. T. Ley, p. 721.

Beyond this applicability of the dream as an analogy in Oliver Twist and The Old Curiosity Shop, there is another inducement to looking at these two novels in terms of dream and that is the fact that Dickens has his two main characters constantly sleeping and dreaming. Either he is conscious of a similarity in the freedom of the imagination in writing some of his fiction, or he unconsciously adapts the dreamer as a symbol or cipher for the state of mind in himself that allows the imagination freedom from restraint. By creating a dream atmosphere in these two novels, his subconscious mind is given a liberty to roam freely in a congenial atmosphere. The fantastic is at home here and the ambiguous needs less explanation than it does in a more realistic setting. The stories of Oliver and Nell conceal meaning by being outwardly dissimilar to the events of Dickens' own life, but the conflict the two children are involved in, beneath the superficial level of the conscious concern with good and evil, reveals the conflicts of Dickens' own mind, reveals his own fears and desires and how these fears and desires colour his perception of the world and shape his art. The pattern of villain threatening hero and heroine with isolation and unacceptable sexuality that occurs again and again in the early novels hides in the stock melodramatic situation--particularly in Oliver Twist, The Old Curiosity Shop, and David Copperfield--what Dickens does not openly reveal as he never chose to publish an autobiography. The villain who separates the hero from his friends and makes improper advances to the heroine is such a stock melodramatic situation that we take it as a conventional technique in generating plot; it hardly occurs to us that a situation so outwardly

conventional could be at the root of Dickens' sense of evil, but the conscious intellectual judgement of good and evil in Dickens has its source in the subconscious emotions of desire and fear; just as dreams have for their concerns fear and desire rather than good and evil, so these two dream novels give dramatic realization to the fear and desire that lie beneath the conscious concerns of moral good and evil.

"My Own Dreams ..."

Warrington Winters, in his discussion of Dickens' 1851 letter to a Dr. Stone,[1] calls our attention to the fact that Dickens himself was very interested in dream theory and in his own dreams--an aspect of Dickens Stoehr rather surprisingly ignores in his discussion of Dickens the Dreamer. That Dickens dreamt a good deal and theorized about dreams (anticipating Freud) suggests that his use of Oliver and Nell as dreamers is deliberate, not accidental, and not just a parroting of the Gothic convention of dreaming heroines. In addition to this intriguing letter, we have Dickens' own record of a childhood nightmare quoted in Angus Wilson's The World of Charles Dickens, from a vision of "The Christmas Tree" written for Household Words in 1850:

> When did that dreadful Mask first look at me? Who put it on, and why was I so frightened that the sight of it is an era in my life? It is not a hideous visage in itself....Was it the immovability of the Mask?....Perhaps that fixed and set change coming over a real face, infused into my quickened heart some remote suggestion and dread of the universal change that is to come on every face, and make it still?....The mere recollection of that fixed face, the mere knowledge of its existence

---

[1] Warrington Winters, "Dickens and the Psychology of Dreams," P.M.L.A., LXIII (1948), 984-1006.

> anywhere, was sufficient to awaken me in the night all perspiration and horrow, with, '0! I know it's coming! 0! the mask![1]

For Angus Wilson,

> the Mask above all, though it speaks for the theatre people, who were at the centre of much of Dickens's delight in life from his nursery years until his death, also speaks for the self-deception, the deception of others, the hypocrisy, the play-acting both hilarious and sinister that so often makes Dickens's imaginative world a place fraught with anxiety, since so many of those in it, those indeed, who dominate the scene, are not what they appear.[2]

But the significance of the Mask is analagous to the significance of dreamwork--both conceal. Why is the Mask so frightening and why are nightmares themselves frightening? Is it really the mere images in a nightmare, some of them ridiculous in the light of day, or what meaning lies behind the images?--meaning the conscious mind is afraid to explore? Also the Mask is not just a symbol of hypocrisy, but of the secret personality, or "the split personality" in the jargon of today. Such split personalities appear in Bradley Headstone and in John Jasper; and Dickens' own secret personality is explored in The Old Curiosity Shop, where he hides behind three different persons or Masks.

That Dickens had some knowledge of the "conceal and reveal" workings of dreams seems obvious from what he says in his letter of 2 February, 1851, to Dr. Stone:

> I should say the chances were a thousand to one against anybody's dreaming of the subject closely

---

[1]Wilson, op. cit., p. 9.

[2]Ibid., p. 10.

> occupying the waking mind--except--and this I wish particularly to suggest to you--in a sort of allegorical manner.[1]

So, for Dickens the meaning of dreams are concealed and revealed by means of allegory. Further, he even applies this conceal and reveal meaning behind the allegory of dreams to fiction. In explaining the "sort of allegorical manner of dreams" he gives some examples of his own dreams:

> If I have been perplexed during the day in bringing out the incidents of a story as I wish, I find that I dream at night, never by any chance of the story itself, but perhaps of trying to shut a door that will fly open, or to screw something tight that will be loose, or to drive a horse on some very important journey, who unaccountably becomes a dog and can't be urged along, or to find my way out of a series of chambers that appears to have no end. I sometimes think that the origin of all fable and allegory, the very first conception of such fictions may be referable to this class of dreams.[2]

Winters calls this statement a comment on the "psychology of the creative imagination,"[3] but does not make a connection between what Dickens says of the origin of allegory in fiction generally and the origin of Dickens' own allegories in Oliver Twist and The Old Curiosity Shop. Dickens explicitly calls our attention to the allegorical nature of these two works in the prefaces written after the completion of each novel, and before the volume publication of The Old Curiosity Shop, he inserts the idea of allegory when he adds that

---

[1] The Letters of Charles Dickens, ed. W. Dexter (The Nonesuch Dickens), I, 267-270. Hereafter cited as Nonesuch.

[2] Nonesuch, I, 268.

[3] Winters, op. cit., 987.

Master Humphrey says of Nell that "she seemed to exist in a kind of allegory."[1]

It certainly seems in the Stone letter that Dickens is commenting, as many critics have commented for him, on his own closeness to the sources of story-telling, myth, and fable; not only this, but he is giving his own theory on what that primitive source is--dream. For Dickens, dreams are a verbal experience, which would make them particularly "referable" to fiction. He writes that "language has a great part in dreams. I think, on waking, the head is usually full of words."[2]

Though Dickens insists here ~~in~~ on the verbal aspect of dreams, conversely, he wrote to Forster insisting on the visual aspect of writing. In discussing the "phenomena of hallucination" that G. ~~H~~. H. Lewes attributes to Dickens, Forster, who violently contests "what the vulgar may think to be 'hallucination,'" records a letter written to him:

> ...in the midst of this trouble and pain, I sit down to my book, some beneficent power shows it all to me, and tempts me to be interested, and I don't invent it--really do not but see it, and write it down....It is only when it all fades away and is gone, that I begin to suspect that its momentary relief has cost me something.[3]

Dickens's sense of the verbal in the visual and the visual in the verbal accounts for the extreme vividness in his work, and in his sense

---

[1]This passage, not found in the text in Master Humphrey's Clock, was added in the first separate volume edition (1841) of The Old Curiosity Shop.

[2]Nonesuch, I, 269.

[3]Forster, op. cit., p. 720.

that what is usually two quite distinct functions of the brain, is in him commingled, something is revealed about the nature of Dickens' imagination.

Dickens' ability to create myth, to render universality of experience, that has made him a great popular writer, is partially explained by his own belief in a universality of dream experience. "Are dreams so very various and different, as you suppose?" he asks Dr. Stone,

> or is there, taking into consideration our vast differences in point of mental and physical constitution, a remarkable sameness in them? Surely it is an extremely unusual circumstance to hear any narrative of a dream that does violence to our dreaming experience or enlarges it very much. And how many dreams are common to us all, from the Queen to the costermonger![1]

Certainly, the Queen as well as the costermonger enjoyed Dickens' works.

In addition to Dickens' knowledge of the workings of dreams, he was also interested in another manifestation of the subconscious--mesmerism. Fred Kaplan brings together a large body of information on Dickens'[*] friendship for and belief in the Victorian proponents of mesmerism. Dickens, himself, was trained as a mesmerist by the controversial Dr. Elliotson, whom Dickens met while writing Oliver Twist, and who often invited Dickens to public and private demonstrations of the trance or sleepwaking, as mesmeric sleep was often called, induced in the victims of epilepsy and what would now be diagnosed as

---

[1] Nonesuch, I, 269

schizophrenia. What Dickens saw in these sensational demonstrations was that

> In mesmeric trance the subject was often like an actor, playing a number of roles, the single conscious personality split into multiple, seemingly disharmonious parts. In instances in which the subject in trance in Elliotson's experiments did not disintegrate into fragments, the self that emerged was often radically different from the conscious self as if inhibitions and repressions had been lifted.[1]

Kaplan argues that these demonstrations influenced Dickens in the use of doubles, in the creation of characters with split personalities, and in his descriptions of the much discussed dreamy sleep-waking states Dickens induced in Oliver in chapter 9 and 34. Much later, his doctor-patient relationship with Madame de la Rue (and Kaplan establishes it as a very intense relationship of mutual need and self-discovery) involved him in an intimate experience of the dark side of a personality: as Oliver has his Fagin, and Nell her Quilp, so Madame de la Rue had her dark "Phantom." From detailed letters Dickens wrote to Emile de la Rue, Kaplan summarizes the images of the nightmare world Madame de la Rue described to Dickens during many sessions of "treatment:"

> He reported to Emile that Madame de la Rue spoke earnestly, as if the scene had been actually visible to her, in the special tone of voice naturally used by someone who is concentrating intensely on something that she can see and fears to miss any sight of. She wiped away the tears a number of times, as if to see her brother 'Charles'

---

[1]Fred Kaplan, Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction, p. 118.

> more clearly. But this mysterious brother 'Charles' was not the only male who inhabited this trance Landscape in which the pathetic figure of Madame de la Rue shed tears, standing on a hillside in the pleasant breeze under a blue sky. Despite its pastoral atmosphere, the landscape was threatening, with indifferent or hostile crowds, a lost brother who was like another self, 'unseen people' who were rolling 'stones down this hill, which she is much distressed in her endeavours to avoid, and which occasionally strike her,' and another man who was 'haunting this place.' She saw him mostly, but sometimes she could only hear him talking. She feared him and dared not look at him. Dickens connected this figure with the man Madame de la Rue called her 'bad spirit.'[1]

This scenario (and Dickens may have been partially responsible for its creation through suggestion) with the threatening atmosphere and the relentless persecution of a totally uncomprehending innocent by a "bad spirit" is not unlike the nightmare atmospheres created in Oliver Twist and The Old Curiosity Shop. Perhaps his obsession with his treatment of Madame de la Rue arose from an irresistible compulsion to explore in someone's mind the dramatic struggle between light and dark forces explored in his fiction. Inevitably, one must ask to what extent such fictional struggles were referable to Dickens' own inner being. Dickens' theorizing on dreams, playing amateur psychologist, suggests that he had an insight into the human mind that few men of his time had.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 79.

"I Often Forget In My Dreams...That I Am a Man; and Wander Desolately Back To That Time of My Life."

Graham Greene[1] and John Bayley[2] have written very convincingly on the nightmare quality of Fagin in Oliver Twist; their essays sent me searching for any evidence that Dickens himself experienced nightmares; I scarcely expected to find Dickens commenting on dreams, much less commenting on their relationship to fiction. The "emotionally explosive subject matter" allegorized by Oliver Twist (concealed and revealed) is, of course, Dickens' unhappy post-Chatham childhood. John Bayley makes the point that "The power of Oliver Twist depends more than any other of Dickens' novels on his personality and background--that is why one has to insist on them so much.[3] And Harry Stone in "Oliver Twist and Fairy Tales," notes that

> this haunted atmosphere, the dark fantasies and feeling, surely have their profound origins in Dickens's blacking-warehouse months in his own devastating experience of suffocation and entrapment. In part Oliver Twist is a metaphor of that experience.

For Stone those "months of drudging work" are translated "into such expressionistic enlargements of anguish and fear, into devils and monters thieves and murderers, entrapment and nightmare."[4] As Dickens

---

[1]Graham Greene, "The Young Dickens," from The Lost Childhood and Other Essays; reprinted in Dickens Modern Judgements, ed. A. E. Dyson, pp. 52-58.

[2]John Bayley, "Oliver Twist: 'Things As They Really Are,'" Dickens and the Twentieth Century, ed. J. Gross and G. Pearson; reprinted in Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. M. Price, pp. 83-96.

[3]Ibid., p. 87.

[4]Harry Stone, "Oliver Twist and Fairy Tales," Dickens Studies Newsletter, X (June-Sept., 1979), 34-39.

says in the Stone letter, his

> own dreams are usually of twenty years ago. I often blend my present position with them, but very confusedly, whereas my life of twenty years ago is very distinctly represented. I have been married fourteen years, and have nine children, but I do not remember that I ever, on any occasion, dreamed of myself as being invested with these responsibilities or surrounded by those relations.[1]

Warrington Winters notes, "twenty-seven years earlier, the Dickens family had moved to the Marshalsea prison and Charles was placed in a house in Little College Street, Camden Town. Soon he was employed at Warren's Blacking. "I often forget in my dreams," he said later, "that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of my life."[2] As Dickens can "blend" his past with his "present position" in his dreams so he can "blend" that past with his fictions, creating the immediacy of the past that anticipates Proust. Oliver Twist is such a wandering back, presented in the allegorical manner of dreams, a manner Dickens understood thoroughly.

We do not know if Dickens was having this particular dream at the time of writing Oliver Twist, but the letters he wrote at this

---

[1] Nonesuch, I, 268.

[2] Winters, op. cit., p. 986. See Forster, op. cit., p. 26. In Catherine Bernard's doctoral dissertation, Dickens and Dreams: A Study of the Dream Theories and Dream Fiction of Charles Dickens, p. 54-55, she points out in her discussion of the Stone Letter that "By suggesting that dreams stem not from recent events but from the past--particularly as in his own case, from past events which took on an obsessive nature and which the adult found difficult to confront in his waking life, Dickens begins to sense the distinction that Freud would later make between the dynamics of a dream and the latent dream content. Furthermore, by suggesting the notion that we all share common dreams, that virtuous girls may dream of murderous acts, he begins to realize that dreams might have a more hidden significance than that which his contemporaries had been willing to attribute to the subject."

time testify to the fact that he did dream and that he was extraordinarily close to his subject matter. Forster never knew him "work so frequently after dinner, or to such late hours."[1] And Dickens writes, "I have had great difficulty in keeping my hands off Fagin and the rest of them in the evening."[2] He even experienced headaches while working on Oliver; he writes to Bentley (and his complicated disagreements with his publisher increased the strain under which he was working) that he had been "labouring for two days past, under a violent attack of God knows what, in the head....I have thrown my whole heart and soul into Oliver Twist..."[3] He also experienced the same sort of pain from which he suffered as a child (most notably here is his experience of this side pain at Warren's when Bob Fagin nursed him all day long and insisted on seeing him home, causing Dickens to hide his real address and ring the bell at some unknown house and ask for Mr. Robert Fagin.)[4] He writes to Kate in November 1838,

> My side has been very bad since I left home, although I have been very careful not to drink much ....I suffered such an ecstacy of pain all night at Stratford that I was half dead yesterday, and was obliged last night to take a dose of henbane.... I suppose all this is the penalty for sticking so close to Oliver.[5]

---

[1] Forster, op. cit., p. 111.

[2] Ibid., p. 96.

[3] Letters, Pilgrim, I (24 Jan., 1837), 227.

[4] Forster, op. cit., p. 30.

[5] Letters, Pilgrim I (1 Nov., 1838), 447.

A month later, he wrote to Forster: "I dreamt odd dreams all night, but they were not funny by any means, and I suffered desperately from my side. Nevertheless I have been at work all day and hope to finish this chapter by bed-time."[1] We also know that he was dreaming of Mary Hogarth every night for a year after her death in May 1837;[2] this idealized dream vision of her inspired Little Nell. In October he had written to Forster, "I dreamt last night--strange to say--of the books you have sent home. I don't ride till tomorrow, not having yet disposed of the Jew who is such an out and outer that I don't know what to make of him."[3]

"The Several Parts and Shapes of Different Things Are Joined and Mixed by Chance."

What to make of Fagin? Many critics have written on him and his possible sources. John Bayley writes of Fagin's source in the real-life Bob Fagin, Dickens friend at Warren's:

> Dickens himself had been at Fagin's school--the blacking factory--and the boy who chiefly befriended him there was actually called Fagin. No wonder Fagin the criminal is such an ambivalent figure when the real Fagin's kindness had, so to speak threatened to inure Dickens to the hopeless routine of the wage-slave. So passionate was the young Dickens' desire for the station in life to which he felt entitled, and so terrifying his sense that it was being denied him, that he must have hated the real Fagin for the virtue which he could not bear to accept or recognize in that nightmare world, because it might help to subdue him into it.

---

[1] Letters, Pilgrim, I (20 Dec., 1938), 471.

[2] Letters, Pilgrim, I (1 Feb., 1838), 365.

[3] Letters, Pilgrim, I (6 or 13 Oct., 1838), 441.

> The real Fagin's kindness becomes the criminal Fagin's villainy.[1]

For Lauriat Lane, Fagin is the "Archetypal Jew," appealing to emotions and prejudices already firmly set by custom and tradition;"[2] Michael Slater notes that he is the "gleeful Devil of folklore," unlike Milton's Satan racked with inward thoughts;[3] Laurence Scenelick finds traces of Iago in Fagin;[4] Landa believes that the real-life Ikey Solomons passed into Fagin via a character in W. T. Moncrief's play, Van Diemen's Land;[5] for Joseph Gold, he is the "passive alien;"[6] Sally Vernon, in tracing similarities between Oliver Twist and a play performed in 1832, The Golden Farmer, notes that

> There is a final scene in the condemned cell, where the Golden Farmer himself is waiting to be hanged; he, unlike Fagin, is sane and deeply repentant, but the pathetic note struck when his wife and small

---

[1]Bayley, op. cit., p. 87.

[2]Lariat Lane, Jr., "Dickens' Archetypal Jew," P.M.L.A., LXXIII (1958), 94. Also see Harry Stone, Victorian Studies, II (Mar., 1959), 223-253, in which he takes issue with Lane. Also, Lane in "The Devil in Oliver Twist," Dickensian, LII (June, 1956), 132-36 points out that Dickens did not read De Foe's History of the Devil until he was writing Chapter 19 of Oliver Twist. This corrects Marie Law's "The Indebtedness of Oliver Twist to Defoe's History of the Devil," P.M.L.A., XL (Dec., 1925), 892-897.

[3]Michael Slater, "On Reading Oliver Twist," Dickensian, LXX (May, 1974), 79.

[4]Laurence Senelick, "Traces of Othello in Oliver Twist," Dickensian, LXX (May, 1974), 97-102.

[5]Meyer J. Landa, "The Original of Fagin," The Jew in Drama, p. 159-69. But J. J. Tobias, in "Ikey Solomons--a Real Life Fagin," Dickensian, LXV (Sept., 1969), 171-75, relates the story of the real Solomons who was not very much like Fagin, as he was married and had a family, and all of them were transported.

[6]Joseph Gold, "Dickens' Exemplary Aliens: Bumble the Beadle and Fagin the Fence," Mosaic, II (Fall, 1968), 77-89.

> daughter visit him is echoed in Oliver's visit to Fagin;[1]

Edgar Rosenberg notes that with Fagin as a Jew

> Dickens has de-historicized his man and come up with some prehistoric fiend, an aging Lucifer whose depravity explains him wholly...characters like Fagin who are without grace, who terrify the very young and murder the innocent, exist in two worlds and operate on two levels of reality. They can dance about on the Victorian stage, making the theatrical noises of their forefathers who danced around the cross; or they can be interpreted as distorted dream-figures, the grotesquely magnified bogeys out of a fairy tale. In either case their source is in a past other than the historical.... In a piece written for All the Year Around, Dickens asked: "Are not the sane and insane equal at night as the sane lie a dreaming?" and in "The Chimes" he wrote:
>
> > Black are the brooding waters, when the Sea of Thought, first heaving from a calm, gives up its Dead. Monsters uncouth and wild, arise in premature, imperfect ressurection; the several parts and shapes of different things are joined and mixed by chance....[2]

Fagin is such an uncouth monster from the Sea of Thought: "As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved: crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal" (19). Folk-lore bogey, socially alienated jew, stage Devil, Ikey Solomon, the Golden Farmer, Fagin is more or less all of these things: in Fagin,

---

[1]Sally Vernon, "Oliver Twist and The Golden-Farmer," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VIII (Sept., 1977), 67.

[2]Edgar Rosenberg, "The Jew as Bogey," From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction, p. 119. See "The Chimes," The Christmas Books (Penguin English Library Edition), I, 200-201.

"the several things are joined and mixed by chance," as are the creatures of nightmare.

"To Break Some Thraldom or Other, From Which We Can't Escape"

In recounting some of his dreams, Dickens describes being "perplexed during the day in bringing out the incidents of a story as I wish," and dreaming at night, among other incidents, "of a series of chambers that appears to have no end."[1] This suggests the dark labyrinthine streets of Fagin's London, so different from the London of Nicholas Nickleby. More specifically, it suggests Oliver "wandering from room to room" during his captivity in Fagin's den. But the comment that is most evocative of Oliver Twist is in Dickens' account of dream experiences: "to break some thraldom or other, from which we can't escape."[2] The universality of this sort of dream experience must be essentially why this story is now an English myth. And surely this is the essence of little Oliver's experience in Fagin's den; this is the nightmare at the core of Oliver's story that Graham Greene responds to in his certainty that the thraldom is inescapable:

> We read of the defeat of Monks, and of Fagin screaming in the condemned cell, and of Sikes dangling from his self-made noose, but we don't believe. We have witnessed Oliver's temporary escapes too often and his inevitable recapture: there is the truth and the creative experience ....The seasons may pass, but safety depends not on time but on daylight. As children we all knew

---

[1] Nonesuch, I, 268.

[2] Nonesuch, I, 269.

> that: how all day we could forget the dark and the journey to bed.[1]

In his essay, Greene raises a very suggestive question about the power of evil in Oliver Twist: how can we believe "that these inadequate ghosts of goodness [Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies] can triumph over Fagin, Monks and Sikes?"[2] Mr. Greene evokes the nightmare quality of Fagin's realm, and suggests that Dickens without any knowledge of early Christian heresies, creates in Oliver Twist a Manichean world. While a nightmare atmosphere may co-exist with a metaphysical point of view within the same novel, it is useful to distinguish one from the other, for they are rather separate. The latter involves Dickens's intellectual, conscious capacity for the apprehension of evil and good forces in the world, while the former refers to the mind on a subliminal level. Dreams are not hampered by notions of good and evil; their concerns are with desire and fear rather than good and evil. The separate examination of these functions of the mind as Dickens expresses them here, will reveal that the nightmare is basic to the judgement of good and evil. Our analysis on whether or not this novel expresses a deep sense of despair must take into consideration the differences between a metaphysical vision and the vision of personal nightmare. The conclusion that Dickens creates a Manichean world in Oliver Twist may be the result of confusing two different levels of the mind, the conscious and the sub-

---

[1] Greene, op. cit., p. 57-58.

[2] Ibid., p. 57.

conscious. As children, most of us have experienced nightmares in which we are forced out of our snug beds, robbed of the protection of our otherwise omnipresent parents, and made to run through dark streets or gloomy forests by some ferocious creature not entirely unlike Fagin. So visually distinct are these creatures, so uniquely frightening such a dream experience, that, as Graham Greene suggests, we cannot believe that when we wake we are safe; for we know that "safety depends not on time but on daylight."[1] Indeed, when Fagin and Monks pop up at Oliver's window, we recognize in this the surprise attack of the recurring nightmare.

From our safe and aloof positions as readers doesn't Fagin send pleasurable chills of fear down our spine rather than incense our feeling of moral rectitude? His habits of calling everyone "my dear," and brooding before a fire are calculated to make us feel uneasy and fearful rather than impress us with his moral wrong doing. These characteristic habits show us that no one in Fagin's clutches can ever know where they stand with him. When he calls Oliver "my dear" we know that he is thinking anything other than how dear Oliver is. And when he broods in front of the fire we rightly fear that he is thinking of some horrible plan that will endanger Oliver or Nancy. Just as in a nightmare we never know what will happen next, never know what atrocity our demons have in mind for us.

Oliver's meetings with Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies are like a child waking from a nightmare and finding himself in bed surrounded by the kind faces of those who take care of him. Indeed, Oliver begins

---

[1] Ibid., p. 58.

his acquaintance with the two protecting families while in bed, after waking from a dream. But in another sense, Oliver never really wakes because the Maylies and Mr. Brownlow have their existence in dream, albeit a sweet dream, just as Fagin has his existence in nightmare. Mr. Bayley makes the point that

> Even the apparent contrast between Fagin's world and that of Rose Maylie and Mr. Brownlow is not a real one, and this is not because the happy Brownlow world is rendered sentimentally and unconvincingly by Dickens, but because the two do in fact coexist in consciousness: they are twin sides of the same coin of fantasy, not two real places that exist separately in life. And there is no true activity in the two worlds, only the guilty or desperately innocent daydreams of our double nature.[1]

Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies do not offer us a definitive portrait of the power of Goodness but they do offer us a view of security from the point of view of a child, particularly of a child who has not known much of it in his life. They represent the soft laps and kind voices from which a child builds his earliest sense of security. The acti-

---

[1] Bayley, op. cit., p. 85. Arnold Kettle writing before Bayley asserts in his article first published in An Introduction to the English Novel, 1951, reprinted in The Dickens Critics, ed. Ford and Lane, 1961, p. 252-270, that "The first eleven chapters of Oliver Twist are an evocation of misery and horror . . . they have a haunting quality, but nothing of that unreality of a nightmare." Even though Kettle notes the "blurring of the line between reality and nightmare," he insists on the reality of Fagin and his world, but concedes the dream-like nature of the Brownlow-Maylie world: "The introduction of the plot, then, savors from the very first of a trick. It is only by reducing the whole of Olvier's experience up till now to the status of 'a long and troubled dream' that he can be saved for the plot. But we know perfectly well that these experiences are not a dream; they have a reality for us which the nice houses in Pentonville and Chertsey never achieve. Indeed, as far as the imaginative impact of the novel is concerned, it is the Brownlow-Maylie world that is a dream, a dream-world into which Oliver is lucky enough to be transported by the plot but which all the real and vital people of the book never glimpse."

vity of hovering about a bed, the bowls of broth, the loudly ticking gold watches, and angelic faces may be wholly inadequate as symbols of Goodness, but they are the sort of system of symbols that form in a child's mind representing a sense of happiness and security. Security is, after all, something vague, precarious, and difficult to define. This may be how Dickens remembers his earliest life, dimly, as if in a dream.

The evidence for the suggestion that Oliver Twist is played out on the level of dream, or some such subconscious state, is the many references to Oliver asleep and in other forms of unconsciousness. Chapter eight ends with Oliver's arrival at Fagin's den. Almost immediately Oliver "sunk into a deep sleep" (8), and as he does so Dickens concludes the heavily ironical part of the narrative, devoted to Oliver's institutional suffering.

In the next chapter--and a new number (July '37)--Oliver opens his eyes on a radically different environment and a new and subtle form of suffering, to which Dickens gives a different narrative treatment. Oliver "awoke, from a sound, long sleep" (9), but the nightmare is just beginning. Even though Oliver "awoke, from a sound, long sleep" he merely passes into a state of sleep-waking:

> Although Oliver had roused himself from sleep, he was not thoroughly awake. There is a drowsy state, between sleeping and waking, when you dream more in five minutes with your eyes half open, and yourself half conscious of everything that is passing around you, than you would in five nights with your eyes fast closed, and your senses wrapt in perfect unconsciousness. At such times, a mortal knows just enough of what his mind is doing, to form some glimmering conception of its mighty powers: its bounding from earth and spurning time and space:

> when freed from the restraint of its corporeal associate. (9)

"Oliver was precisely in this condition" (9), when he sees and hears Fagin in a dramatic monologue reveal himself: his greed, what he really thinks of his "dear" boys, and his indifference to their deaths. Dickens makes high claims for the mind's "mighty powers" in this state; its ability to throw off the "restraint of corporeal associate" and the restrictions of "time and space." After outlining the possibilities for Oliver's thoughts to bound from earth, he tells us that all Oliver accomplishes in this state is to see and hear Fagin clanking around the room handling his jewels, at the same time as Oliver's "self-same senses were mentally engaged, at the same time, in busy action with almost everybody he had ever known" (9). There are simultaneous scenes going on in Oliver's mind while he simultaneously wakes and dreams. And after Dickens has described the incredible powers of this state, how are we to know really whether Fagin belongs to Oliver's waking or dreaming? With this passage we enter an entirely different fictional world from the world we experience in the first eight chapters. In that first narrative we meet the sort of evil we can clearly understand as a moral and intellectual judgement. The events occur within the system of cause and effect; the poor laws, the poor-house, the baby farm, the ignorance and heartlessness of the gentlemen in charge of charity--all described with Dickens' irony--are social evils that arouse our moral indignation. Though this is satire, and is not "realistic" in a documentary sort of way, this is no dream: no one pops up to immediately recognize Oliver's goodness and offer protection; these evils are not suddenly and triumphantly

destroyed; they endure along with Dodson and Fogg and the Fleet in Pickwick. But Fagin's narrative must be understood on a level below the intellectual and moral. We understand it or we do not understand it just as we do or do not understand a dream. The subliminal logic of the nightmare, outside the laws of cause and effect in the physical world must be accepted.

In this passage at the beginning of the fifth number (July 1837), Dickens juxtaposes waking with dreaming, consciousness with unconsciousness, to suggest a state of mind somewhere in between: likewise, consciousness and unconsciousness are juxtaposed within the number itself, in the beginning and the end: the number begins "when Oliver awoke" (9); but it ends with Oliver being carried away by Mr. Brownlow in a "fainting fit" (11). Is Dickens hinting in this juxtaposition and in the striking passage on sleep-waking, that events happening between the time when Oliver is conscious and Oliver unconscious, take place themselves somewhere in between, in the unexplored, unnamed realm of the subconscious? Is Dickens himself--shocked by the death of his beloved Mary Hogarth, harassed by his publisher, writing at fantastic speed, with very little initial revision and planning ("I am quite satisfied that nobody can have heard what I mean to do with the different characters in the end, inasmuch as at present I don't quite know myself")[1] --somewhere in between, in a creative frenzy approaching an inspired dreamy sleep-waking state? The inspiration for Oliver Twist is Dickens' past, but yet the events of the story are dissimilar to the outward events of that past. How

---

[1] Letters, Pilgrim, I (Mid-March, 1838), 388.

does a writer relate the emotions of his past to fiction? What is the process of translation? Writing Oliver Twist as he did, under the conditions of mental stress, is he not able to form some "glimmering conception" of the mind's "mighty powers"--the power of the mind to put him in touch with his past as it is interpreted by the sub-conscious allegorically, as in a dream?

> I should say the chances were a thousand to one against anybody's dreaming of the subject closely occupying the waking mind--except--and this I wish particularly to suggest to you--in a sort of allegorical manner...I sometimes think that the origin of all fable and allegory, the very first conception of such fictions, may be referable to this class of dream.[1]

Suggestive too, is the end of his letter to G. H. Lewes, during the writing of Oliver Twist on how his ideas come "ready made to the point of the pen." The "Inimitable" writes that

> The truth is, that I am a very modest man, and furthermore that if readers cannot detect the point of a passage without having their attention called to it by the writer, I would much rather they lost it and looked out for something else.[2]

The Pilgrim editors believe that the passage Dickens is commenting upon is the second description of the sleep-waking state (24) which was definitely written after Dickens had witnessed many performances of the sleep-waking hypnotic trance. If the editors are right in their assumption, the sleep-waking passage would appear to have had a

---

[1] Nonesuch, I, 268.

[2] Letters, Pilgrim, I (?, 9 June, 1838), 402.

special significance to Dickens, though he is too "modest"!, to call special attention to them. And is it just a coincidence that the fifth number which initiates a sleep-waking pattern in Oliver, dividing the numbers or scenes, was written in June after Mary Hogarth's death, on May 7? Dickens dreamt of her every night after her death and these dreams had always a very special significance to Dickens. In the Stone letter he describes this dream experience:

> Recurring dreams which come back almost as certain as the night,--unhealthy and morbid species of these visions--should be particularly noticed. Secrecy on the part of the dreamer, as to these illusions, has a remarkable tendency to perpetuate them.
>
> I once underwent great affliction in the loss of a very dear young friend. For a year I dreamed of her every night, sometimes as living, sometimes as dead, never in any terrible or shocking aspect. As she had been my wife's sister and had died suddenly in our house, I forbore to allude to these dreams--kept them wholly to myself. At the end of the year, I lay down to sleep in an inn on a wild Yorkshire moor, covered with snow. As I looked out of the window on the bleak winter prospect before I undressed, I wondered within myself whether the subject would follow me here. It did. Writing home next morning, I mentioned the circumstance, cheerfully, as being curious. The subject immediately departed out of my dreams, and years passed before it returned. Then I was living in Italy, and it was All Souls' Night, and people were going about with Bells, calling on the Inhabitants to pray for the dead, which I have no doubt I had some sense of in my sleep; and so flew back to the Dead.[1]

This whole number has been devoted to Fagin's realm. When Oliver loses consciousness at the end of this fifth number, the scene changes with the beginning of a new number, and Oliver opens his eyes on the

---

[1] Nonesuch, I, 268-269.

Goodness of his first protectors. The narrative will not revert to the evil of Fagin's world until another loss of consciousness on Oliver's part will trigger, as it were, the change of scene.

There is an emphasis at the beginning of the sixth number on the two states, waking and dreaming, and as in the preceding number, it begins with Oliver waking from unconsciousness: Oliver "awoke at last from what seemed to have been a long and troubled dream" (12). Is Fagin part of this dream? His previous existence has certainly been "troubled." He tells Mrs. Bedwin, hovering around his bed, that he has felt his mother sitting beside him in his sleep. Mrs. Bedwin tells him that this is a dream induced by the fever. The kindly housekeeper finds that his only knowledge of his mother is through dreams, and that "'her face has always looked sweet and happy, when I have dreamed of her'" (12). He wakes again, only to relapse into "that deep tranquil sleep which ease from recent suffering alone imparts; that calm and peaceful rest which it is pain to wake from" (12). Gaining but little strength after the crisis of his illness passes, he soon loses consciousness again when a sudden exclamation from Mr. Brownlow over the similarity of a portrait to Oliver's face, causes Oliver to faint once again in Mr. Brownlow's presence. The narrative then changes to the scene of Fagin's world while Oliver is unconscious. Originally, in the 1837 Bentley's Miscellany, Dickens ended chapter 12 with Oliver fainting: "Oliver knew not the cause of this sudden exclamation; for, he was not strong enough to bear the

start it gave him, and he fainted away" (12).[1] As in the fifth number, change of scene is accomplished by Oliver's falling unconscious. The original chapter 13 reverts to the Dodger and Master Bates, running away from the pickpocketing incident, and returning to Fagin's den to report their loss of Oliver. In the 1846 revision of Oliver Twist, this chapter break was moved forward several pages in order to publish uniform sixteen page monthly numbers, appearing from January to October 1846. The new redivision of chapters, along with other changes, was maintained in the single volume edition of these monthly numbers, and is considered by Mrs. Tillotson the stable text, on which she bases her edition of Oliver Twist. Joan Schweitzer notices in her work on the "Chapter Numbering in Oliver Twist," that "the intention of the serial and the other early editions appears to be to separate the scene involving Oliver from that involving Fagin's gang."[2] But it would seem not only to separate the scenes, but to mark their change with a change in consciousness. J. Hillis Miller has remarked that "Over and over again we see Oliver simply falling asleep in these 'foul and frowsy dens where vice is closely packed and lacks the room to turn' (Preface to the third edition, O. T., p.. ix)." Miller's conclusion is that

> Cut off altogether from the past and the future, enclosed in a narrow shadowy present which does not make sense, he loses consciousness altogether, so exhausted is he by anxiety and by his failure to

---

[1]This is the original version printed in Bentley's, given by Kathleen Tillotson in the apparatus to her Clarendon edition of Oliver Twist, p. 72.

[2]Joan Schweitzer, "The Chapter Numbering in Oliver Twist," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, LX (1966), 337-43.

> comprehend what is happening to him. More precisely, he is reduced to the simplest and most undifferentiated form of consciousness, sleep.[1]

Mary Rohrberger, in making a case for Oliver Twist's surrealism comments on Oliver's hypnogogic states between waking and dreaming in chapter 9:

> Conditions similar to this often accompany Oliver as he passes from one plane of reality to another. The movement from the magistrates court to Brownlow's house is accompanied by fainting, coma, a prolonged period of restless waking and sleeping, and then a deep and tranquil sleep....The movement to the Maylies' again finds Oliver fainting and brought in unconscious where he experiences memories of a happier existence....With these kinds of transitions Dickens moves Oliver out of the nightmare world to the daydream world, where conditions of wish-fulfillment exist....

Rohrberger concludes that

> He spends most of his time unconscious, muddled, confused, sleeping, sick. The exterior confusion and agitation is matched by interior anxiety and bewilderment. This characterization makes him a near-perfect figure from which to project a dream-work. His is the surrealistic dreamer's stance, his the hallucinatory experience which finally unites daydream and nightmare, art work and real world, dream and reality.[2]

Bill Sikes is introduced for the first time at the point when Dickens switches from the unconscious Oliver to the Dodger and Charles Bates returning to Fagin; thus, while Oliver is unconscious Dickens is creating a new development in Oliver's nightmare, a new demon to

---

[1] J. Hillis Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels, p. 47.

[2] Mary Rohrberger, "The Daydream and the Nightmare: Surreality in Oliver Twist," Studies in the Humanities, VI (March, 1978), 21-28.

snatch him from his warm bed and the protection of Mrs. Bedwin and Mr. Brownlow. Then in chapter 14, the beginning of the seventh number, the narrative switches back to Oliver at Mr. Brownlow's; and while we may have forgotten that we last saw Oliver unconscious, Dickens immediately reminds us by beginning the chapter with Oliver's return to consciousness: "Oliver soon recovered from the fainting-fit into which Mr. Brownlow's abrupt exclamation had thrown him..." (14). Switching abruptly from the scene at Brownlow's to Fagin's world with Oliver's fainting-fit, and then back to Brownlow's with Oliver's regaining consciousness, without much sense of chronology, seems to deliberately link Fagin's nightmare with Oliver's unconscious state, but the world of Mr. Brownlow's Goodness is preceded by the loss of consciousness at the end of the fifth number, so it too is linked to Oliver's unconsciousness.

Instead of being rendered unconscious at the end of the seventh number, Oliver is kidnapped, but the kidnapping is described as an overpowering of the senses:

> Weak with recent illness; stupefied by the blows and the suddenness of the attack; terrified by the fierce growling of the dog, and the brutality of the man; and overpowered by the conviction of the bystanders that he really was the hardened little wretch he was described to be; what could one poor child do! Darkness had set in; it was a low neighborhood; no help was near; resistance was useless. In another moment, he was dragged into a labyrinth of dark narrow courts.... (15).

"Weak," "stupefied," terrified," "overpowered," Oliver is "dragged into a labyrinth" of the nightmare city-scape; surely the description of a "labyrinth of dark narrow courts" is more evocative of nightmare

than of the London Dickens knew so well, and described in so many novels in such a different way.

After Oliver is kidnapped at the end of the number, the scene changes in the eighth number and Oliver is back again with Fagin. The first chapter of the number ends with Oliver asleep: "But he was sick and weary; and he soon fell sound asleep" (16). Oliver's sleeping here precipitates still another change of scene, a reversion to Bumble. Chapter 17 begins with Dickens's long apology for scene shifting; although Dickens is primarily justifying a return to the comic Bumble in the midst of Oliver's non-comic saga, this apology very much calls our attention to the way Dickens proceeds with "sudden shiftings of the scene, and rapid changes of time and place" (17). Dickens seems to be justifying himself by his examples of "the custom on the stage" (17); seemingly, he is putting himself within this melodramatic tradition, but the examples of how changes of scene are usually effected on the stage only emphasize how Dickens is deviating:

> The hero sinks upon his straw bed, weighed down by fetters and misfortunes; and, in the next scene, his faithful but unconscious squire regales the audience with a comic song. We behold, with throbbing bosoms, the heroine in the grasp of a proud and ruthless baron: her virtue and her life alike in danger; drawing forth her dagger to preserve the one at the cost of the other; and, just as our expectations are wrought up to the highest pitch, a whistle is heard: and we are straightway transported to the great hall of the castle: where a grey-headed seneschal sings a funny chorus with a funnier body of vassals.... (17).

But Oliver, the hero, not only "sinks upon his straw bed, weighed down by fetters and misfortunes," but he conspicuously faints or falls asleep, time after time. He dreams; he has deliriously unconscious

fevers; he experiences sleep-waking; surely this is more extreme and pointed than the hero sinking upon his humble bed in a traditional pose of misery and despair. And like the hero Dickens mentions, Oliver's virtue and life alike are in danger, but instead of drawing forth a dagger, Oliver faints or falls asleep, and dreams, dreams.

The ninth number reverts to Fagin's den, but without mention of Oliver awakening at the beginning; however, the number ends, as we might expect, with Oliver asleep. Fagin has decided with Sikes to use Oliver in the robbery, and he goes back to his den to speak of the plan with Oliver, but finds him asleep. Michael Slater points out that this scene is reminiscent of Satan in Paradise Lost, unable to disturb the sleep of the beautiful Adam and Eve in Paradise when he first sees them:[1]

> The boy was lying, fast asleep, on a rude bed upon the floor; so pale with anxiety, and sadness, and the closeness of his prison, that he looked like death; not death as it shows in shroud and coffin, but in the guise it wears when life has just departed; when a young and gentle spirit has, but an instant, fled to Heaven: and the gross air of the world has not had time to breathe upon the changing dust it hallowed.
>
> 'Not now,' said the Jew, turning softly away. 'To-morrow. To-morrow.' (19)

The tenth number begins "When Oliver awoke in the morning...." (20). This number deals with the Maylie robbery. On his way to the robbery, Oliver often falls asleep. Before starting out, Oliver spends the night with Sikes and Nancy: "Weary with watching and

---

[1]Slater, op. cit., p. 78.

anxiety, he at length fell asleep" (20). Awakening before morning, Oliver and Sikes strike out. Stopping at a public house on the way, Oliver "dozed a little at first; and then, quite overpowered by fatigue and the fumes of the tobacco, fell asleep" (21). Later, immediately before the attempted robbery itself,

> Oliver fell into a heavy doze: imagining himself straying alone through the gloomy lanes, or wandering about the dark churchyard, or retracing some one or other of the scenes of the past day: when he was roused by Toby Crackit jumping up and declaring it was half-past one. (22)

After Oliver is shot at the Maylies' and Sikes pulls him back through the window, "the noises grew confused in the distance; and a cold deadly feeling crept over the boy's heart; and he saw or heard no more" (22); thus, the tenth number (January '38) and Book I, as it was originally divided in Bentley's, end. This tenth number, beginning with Oliver waking and ending with Oliver unconscious, follows the sleep-waking pattern begun in the fifth number. Oliver's loss of consciousness at the end of these numbers triggers a change of scene. And so, the eleventh number opens with the romance between Bumble and Mrs. Corney. We have not seen Bumble since he came up to London to malign Oliver for the five guineas offered by Mr. Brownlow for information on Oliver, but now, while Oliver is once again unconscious, Dickens leads Bumble still further into the plot of the nightmare. Chapter 24 has Mrs. Corney listening to the confessions of the nurse who assisted Oliver into the world and stole his only mark of identity; thus, the stage is set for Mrs. Corney and Bumble to meet Monks in a future chapter. Chapter 25 reverts to Fagin, brooding

before a fire "While these things were passing in the country workhouse" (25). Toby Crackit comes in and reports to Fagin that he and Sikes have left the unconscious Oliver in a ditch. Fagin rushes off in chapter 26 (twelfth number) to acquaint Monks with the new development; Nancy spies upon their conference; thus, preparing the way for her meeting with Rose, the betrayal, and her violent death. Chapter 27 reverts to Mrs. Corney and Bumble immediately after the death of old Sally, the thieving nurse. Bumble goes off to Sowerberry's and meets Fagin's future spy, Noah Claypole. Leaving Sowerberry's, Bumble takes his way home, and Dickens ends the number reminding us of Oliver's unconscious state, by promising to "set on foot a few inquiries after young Oliver Twist; and ascertain whether he be still lying in the ditch where Toby Crackit left him" (27). The next number (thirteenth) tells us not only that he is still lying in a ditch, but how he came to be dropped in the ditch after first losing consciousness way back at the end of the tenth number. We have already heard what happened from Toby Crackit, and it is rather confusing for the reader when the chapter begins with the scene between Toby and Sikes that Toby has already described several chapters previously. Lance Schachterle in "Oliver Twist and Its Serial Predecessors" believes that

> Without being coy or artifical the twelfth installment (March 1838) does exactly what the eleventh did--it keeps Oliver to the fore without revealing the consequences of his being wounded. Only in chapter 28, at the beginning of the thirteenth instalment (April 1838) does Dickens drop back to Oliver and Bill to record what actually passed after the robbery was foiled. By means of these carefully constructed delays, Dickens managed

> without being unduly opaque to keep up suspense about Oliver for three months.[1]

As far as keeping up suspense is concerned this is, as Mr. Schachterle points out, superior to the serial predecessors, but Oliver's unconscious state is not just a device especially conjured up for the purposes of these particularly suspenseful numbers, and a hero's fainting or falling asleep is not the only way for a serial writer to create suspense over a period of time; nor is this a precedented way of ending serial instalments--none of the serials discussed by Mr. Schachterle use this device; although, the sleeping heroine is part of the tradition in Gothic romance, Dickens uses Oliver's sleep in his own "inimitable" way. In the Flint and the Flame, Earle R. Davis describes how

> Emily, in the Mysteries of Udolpho...is always half-asleep, it would seem and coming awake to watch a latch slip, or to hear a noise and see a dim form enter the room and approach her bed. She nearly faints with terror, pretends to be asleep, and hopes till the last moment that the fiend will go away.[2]

This is rather different from the way Dickens uses sleeping and fainting in Oliver Twist, for as we have seen, Dickens has been using Oliver's unconsciousness in very pointed and patterned ways ever since he first introduced Fagin to the plot. That Dickens is able to use so suspensefully Oliver's loss of consciousness in the numbers Mr. Schachterle singles out is, of course, an indication of Dickens'

---

[1]Lance Schachterle, "Oliver Twist and It's Serial Predecessors," Dickens Studies Annual, III (1974), 11.

[2]Earl R. Davis, The Flint and the Flame: The Artistry of Charles Dickens, p. 90.

skill as a serial writer, but also a further indication of how deliberately Dickens is using the motif of Oliver's unconscious state.

The last time I read this novel, upon coming to the thirteenth number, and reading what had happened to Oliver after I had already heard from Toby Crackit chapters ago, I felt forced to go back several chapters and try to sort out the time. And something odd has been happening to the time. Oliver, Sikes, and Crackit set off for the robbery at "half-past one" (22) in the morning. Oliver faints soon after this, and the narrative begins to alternate Bumble with Fagin, assuring us that what is happening with Bumble and Fagin is happening simultaneously, but Fagin's time (and therefore Bumble's) is three nights after the robbery. We know three days have elapsed because Toby Crackit has been on the run and has not eaten for three days: "'I can't talk about business till I've eat and drank; so produce the sustainance, and let's have a quiet fill-out for the first time these three days!'" (25) There was plenty of food and drink at the hide-out where Oliver and Sikes met Toby; both Oliver and Sikes are given food by Barney and Toby and although Oliver eats little, Sikes "satisfied his appetite." (22) So, if Toby has not eaten for three days, we must begin to number the days of deprivation from the night of the robbery. Three days have just disappeared, and Dickens leaves Oliver unconscious and finds him still unconscious five chapters, and three days later. Time seems forced out of the chronological track. Dickens apologizes for having left Bumble "waiting, with his back to a fire, and the skirts of his coat gathered up under his arms" (27), while Dickens has been busy with Fagin. Dickens has been "unfortunately

compelled" to leave Bumble waiting because of a "want of time and space." (27) This cavalier treatment of time and space reminds me of the passage on a "drowsy state, between sleeping and waking," at the beginning of Chapter 9, which describes the mind as "bounding from earth and spurning time and space." (9) While Oliver is unconscious, Dickens seems able to spurn these dimensions in the narration of the events listed above; just as he is apparently able to do in this semi-conscious state between waking and sleeping, he attributes to Oliver, and of which he writes with such knowledge and conviction. Oliver seems to be in such a state when he gets out of his ditch:

> After a short return of the stupor in which he had been so long plunged, Oliver...got upon his feet, and essayed to walk. His head was dizzy...
>
> And now, hosts of bewildering and confused ideas came crowding on his mind. He seemed to be still walking between Sikes and Crackit....Then, he was alone with Sikes, plodding on as they had done the previous day....Suddenly, he started back at the report of fire-arms; and there rose into the air, loud cries and shouts....Through all these rapid visions, there ran an undefined, uneasy consciousness of pain, which wearied and tormented him, incessantly.
>
> Thus he staggered on: creeping, almost mechanically, between the bars of gates, or through hedge-gaps...here the rain began to fall, so heavily, that it roused him. (28)

He is walking along the road, but yet he is dreaming. Through all this stupor, dreaming, and his ability to wake and dream at the same time, how "roused" can we believe him to be? As soon as he reaches the Maylies' house, he sinks down, unable to speak. The link between Oliver's unconsciousness and the nightmare of Fagin's world, is not that Oliver dreams the whole nightmare of Fagin and his crowd, and then wakes to find himself safe and adopted, for the Maylies too have

their existence in dream no less than Fagin. And Oliver undergoes too many levels of unconsciousness, semi-consciousness, and consciousness, for the reader to be able to distinguish one from the other. The story happens neither entirely in dream, nor entirely in a waking reality, but somewhere in between. Oliver, dreaming, unconscious, is a cipher, the clue to that level of the mind Dickens either is exploring here in the story or experiences himself in the writing of Oliver.

Oliver stumbles to the Maylies' house "knocked faintly at the door; and, his whole strength failing him, sunk down against one of the pillars of the little portico" (28). The servants "endeavouring to restore Oliver, lest he should die before he could be hanged" (28), carry Oliver up to bed upon the instructions of their mistress. When Rose Maylie goes up to see the wounded criminal, who has "sunk into a deep sleep"

> ...her tears fell upon his forehead.
>
> The boy stirred, and smiled in his sleep, as though these marks of pity and compassion had awakened some pleasant dream of a love and affection he had never known; as a strain of gentle music, or the rippling of water in a silent place, or the odour of a flower, or even the mention of a familiar word, will sometimes call up dim remembrances of scenes that never were, in this life; which vanish like a breath; and which some brief memory of a happier existence, long gone by, would seem to have awakened, for no voluntary exertion of the mind can ever recall them. (30)

Oliver dreams of what he has never known, his mother, and now "love and affection" awakened by Rose's tears. Notice that in this passage --as in the passage on sleep-waking at the beginning of the fifth number--Oliver, asleep, wakes into dream. This curious phenomenon

best describes the ambiguous state of consciousness throughout the book: Oliver sleeps and he wakes, but when he wakes it is as if he only wakes into a "pleasant" dream or a nightmare. Rose and other kind protectors are indeed "dim," and they have their existence in a "dream of love and affection" where they inhabit "scenes that never were in this life." This is Dickens' dream, a desire for the never-never land of childhood security that was blotted out in his childhood. But it is a desire to create security, not goodness, that is behind their conception. This passage links memory and dream, recall and awakening; and it may be useful to see the process by which Dickens so fuses them and describes an involuntary ability to reach the obscure corners of the mind: tears... awakened... dream of what he had never known; gentle music... call up... remembrances of scenes that never were; memory... awakenened... remembrances of scenes that never were. As the third of these clauses seems to explain, the "gentle music" etc., first recalls a "memory of a happier existence" which in turn awakens "remembrances of scenes that never were." And as one recalls these remembrances, so one awakens into dream. What else could Dickens be describing when he writes of waking into dream and remembering what is not in the memory but the subconscious? To recall a conscious memory seems to be the first step to awakening the remembrance that is the unconscious memory, the subconscious. And linking dream with this remembrance not only helps to describe the subconscious, for which Dickens has no word, but also defines dream as it is experienced in this novel by Oliver. Oliver drifting off into sleep seems to act upon Dickens' mind as tears of gentle music,

recalling or awakening the dream/remembrance, the subconscious that Dickens is aware of without having read Freud. It is as if Oliver's unconscious states throughout the book, fainting or sleeping, involuntarily puts Dickens in touch with his own subconscious. Oliver in a state between waking and dreaming, or waking into dream, corresponds with Dickens' own state of mind in which he conjures up his own subliminal feelings of fear and desire, and through the mysterious agency of creation, is able to give fear and desire an embodiment in Fagin and Rose Maylie.

As the narrative does not revert to Fagin and company for some time, the thirteenth and fourteenth numbers do not end with a dramatic fainting-fit or an emphasis on Oliver falling asleep. Although the fourteenth number is not a reversion to the world of Evil, Oliver does have an eerie brush with it in that very peculiar scene with the dwarf. If the dwarf is an agent of Fagin's, the scene could imply continuing danger for Oliver, as the dwarf could report to Fagin Oliver's situation. But if the dwarf has some sort of pragmatic function in the plot, why then does Dickens make it so ambiguous? Oliver is sure that the house he sees while out with Mr. Losberne is the house the thieves took him to; but yet, "not an article of furniture; not a vestige of anything, animate or inanimate; not even the position of the cupboards; answered Oliver's description!" (32). If the dwarf is Fagin's minion, and this was the house the robbers used, it does not seem likely that everything about the house could be changed so completely; and Dickens is so emphatic about there not being a "vestige of anything" that fits Oliver's description. If Oliver has

simply made a mistake as Mr. Losberne concludes, what is the point of the incident? Whatever the purpose, the scene has an unsettling effect. The nightmare is never really over for Oliver; even just out riding, he meets a "demon" who eyes

> Oliver for an instant with a glance so sharp and fierce, and at the same time so curious and vindictive, that, waking or sleeping, he could not forget it for months afterwards." (32)

Once again that curious blending of "waking or sleeping." Dickens' description of the dwarf anticipates Quilp: "the mis-shapen little demon set up a hideous yell; and danced upon the ground, as if frantic with rage" (32). It is as if Fagin's world, real as it may be in its effects on Oliver, is not real in the sense that it may be verified through the senses. This scene may serve to remind us of the essential nightmare quality of the Fagin narrative.[1]

Something of the same sort of confusion about the "reality" of Fagin and company occurs in his second explicit passage on the state between waking and dreaming at the end of the fifteenth number. Oliver must fall asleep before we can see Fagin again:

> There is a kind of sleep that steals upon us sometimes, which, while it holds the body prisoner, does not free the mind from a sense of things about it, and enable it to ramble at its pleasure. So far as an overpowering heaviness, a prostration of strength, and an utter inability to control our thoughts or power of motion, can be called sleep, this is it; and yet we have a consciousness of all that is going on about us; and if we dream at such a time, words which are really spoken, or sounds which really exist at the

---

[1] See Chapter Note 1.

> moment, accommodate themselves with surprising readiness to our visions, until reality and imagination become so strangely blended that it is afterwards almost a matter of impossibility to separate the two....
>
> Oliver knew, perfectly well, that he was in his own little room; that his books were lying on the table before him; and that the sweet air was stirring among the creeping plants outside. And yet he was asleep. Suddenly, the scene changed; the air became close and confined; and he thought, with a glow of terror, that he was in the Jew's house again. There sat the hideous old man, in his accustomed corner: pointing to him: and whispering to another man.... Oliver awoke with the fear, and started up .... There--there--at the window; close before him; so close, that he could almost have touched him... stood the Jew! (34)

Even though Dickens describes Oliver's vision of Fagin and Monks as first dream and then reality, it is difficult to believe that it is real when all the physical evidence fails to corroborate Oliver's insistence that it is not dream. At the beginning of the sixteenth number, Oliver points out the direction he saw Fagin and Monks take, and he and his friends rush off in pursuit. But this is what they find:

> There were not even the traces of recent footsteps, to be seen. They stood, now, on the summit of a little hill, commanding the open fields in every direction for three or four miles... the men must have made a circuit of open ground, which it was impossible they could have accomplished in so short a time.... The grass was long; but it was trodden down nowhere, save where their own feet had crushed it. The sides and brinks of the ditches, were of damp clay; but in no one place could they discern the print of men's shoes, or the slightest mark which would indicate that any feet had pressed the ground for hours before.[1]

In this passage Dickens goes further in suggesting Fagin's association

---

[1]See Chapter Note 2.

with dream than he does in the passage in the fifth number at the beginning of the Fagin narrative. Here, he first describes Oliver dreaming and then waking, but then offers extensive evidence negating the vision as corporeal reality. As Dickens says, in this state that seems particularly to occupy his thoughts, waking and dreaming, or rather as it is called in this passage "reality and imagination become so strangely blended that it is afterwards almost a matter of impossibility to separate the two." And it is a "matter of impossibility to separate" reality and imagination in this novel. Dickens is working with a very precarious balance between the two. How can the reader distinguish between the two separate states when Dickens seems to be deliberately blurring the distinctions. Dickens blurs the distinction in this scene just as the distinction is blurred in the Fagin narrative as a whole. In a sense fiction itself is "reality and imagination become so strangely blended." The creative writer is dependent on both the real world and the world of his imagination; fiction is a blending, a synthesis, or balance of the two. Oliver's state of mind, between dreaming and waking, not only corresponds to Dickens' own state of mind when he is in ~~contrast~~ contact with the subconscious, but it is a vehicle for expressing the synthesis between the real and the imaginary that is Dickens' own creativity. People brooding over fires, the dark streets of London, the waifs, the deformity of want and crime--these are the elements in the real world that ignite the imagination: this is reality, waking, and consciousness. But the surface is animated from behind by the imaginary, the dream, the subconscious, making these characters from the underworld of London's

slums into the underworld of our minds: this is the creation of a mythology. And Dickens shows us how he does it: he is awake, he is conscious, he is writing; real faces and scenes picked from London's dark dirty slums are used, but yet he is dreaming; he is giving himself up to his subconscious, and through Oliver, waking into dream, he releases his nightmare of fear and insecurity, and his dreams of desire and security.[1]

Even after Oliver ceases to be as an important part of the plot as he is in the beginning, Dickens is still concerned with unconscious states of mind. Rose's illness is one of fever and loss of consciousness; and the first time Oliver encounters Monks, he [Monks] immediately falls down in an epileptic seizure and loses consciousness. But the strangest incident occurs in the seventeenth number. The second chapter of this number (the first deals with Bumble) is a reversion to Fagin's world. The change of scene begins with "Mr. William Sikes, awakening from a nap" (39). Nancy, "weak and exhausted" faints under a barrage of Sikes's oaths; Fagin comes in, promises to give Nancy money for Sikes while Sikes has a "snooze while she's gone" (39); and the number ends as Sikes "laid his head upon his pillow and resumed the slumbers which her arrival had interrupted."[2] (39) In the revision of 1846 this original ending of the Bentley number is not even noted with a chapter break. In making up the new 1846 numbers, Dickens sacrifices his original breaks--his original

---

[1] See Chapter Note 3.

[2] Original version printed in Bentley's, given by Kathleen Tillotson in the apparatus to her Clarendon edition, p. 266.

tendency to end numbers with a loss of unconsciousness--for the sake of a sixteen page uniformity in the new reprinted numbers, and he did not revert to the original breaks when the 1846 one volume edition was published in accordance with the revisions made for the sixteen page numbers of 1846. Bentley's eighteenth number begins with Sikes awake and Nancy watching "until the housebreaker should drink himself asleep" (39). She finally gives him laudanum and he lapses "into a deep and heavy sleep" (39); thus, allowing Nancy a chance to seek out Rose Maylie (a change of scene). The number ends with Dickens comparing the two women's interview with a dream: "Rose Maylie, overpowered by this extraordinary interview, which had more the semblance of a rapid dream than an actual occurrence, sank into a chair, and endeavoured to collect her wandering thoughts." (40) Not only is Oliver's experience of the denizens of Fagin's realm dream-like, but Rose's experience as well.

The beginning of the twenty-first number begins with one of Dickens' descriptions of the loathsomeness of Fagin, but more importantly this description seems to imply that Fagin has his being when everyone else is asleep and dreaming:

> It was nearly two hours before daybreak; that time, which, in the autumn of the year, may be truly called the dead of night; when the streets are silent and deserted, when even sound appears to slumber, and profligacy and riot have staggered home to dream; it was at this still and silent hour, that the Jew sat watching in his old lair, with face so distorted and pale, and eyes so red and bloodshot, that he looked less like a man, than like some hideous phantom: moist from the grave, and worried by an evil spirit. (47)

By this point in the narrative Dickens has no trouble persuading us

that Fagin is like a "hideous phantom," and "evil spirit." When Sikes prepares to kill Nancy he finds her asleep; and Fagin in his cell sits, "awake, but dreaming." (52) Throughout the narrative Dickens has blurred the distinction between these two states. Catching sight of Oliver in his cell, Fagin knows Oliver's proper place: "'Oliver too-- quite the gentleman now--quite the--take that boy away to bed!'" (52) Dreaming, unconscious, waking, Oliver has nearly always been in bed. Fagin points this out to us at last in case we have missed it: "'Take him away to bed!' cried the Jew. 'Do you hear me, some of you? He has been the--the--somehow the cause of all this'" (52).

"The Secret Agony of my Soul..."[1]

As Fagin and Rose Maylie embody Dickens's feeling of Fear and Desire, so do they embody conscious moral judgements of Evil and Good. It is not surprising that what Dickens fears should also be judged evil. Fagin has for Dickens an objective evil in that he is a criminal, an accessory to murder, and a corruptor of youth, but what really interests Dickens--and frightens the reader--is how Fagin is evil to Oliver, and this is where evil becomes very personal and subjective: Fagin's greatest evil is that he tries to isolate Oliver from his friends, friends who offer a home and security. This is the root of Fagin's evil, and the root of Dickens' life-long insecurity. He too was isolated from his family when his father was imprisoned in the Marshalsea and young Charles was "imprisoned" in the blacking warehouse. In the autobiographical fragment he writes of

---

[1]Forster, op. cit., p. 26.

> The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame... of the misery.... I felt keenly, however, the being cut off from my parents, my brothers, and sisters; and when my day's work was done, going home to such a miserable blank.[1]

What security he had known as a boy in Chatham was utterly destroyed:

> My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of my life.[2]

The traditional function of the villain, isolating the hero from family and friends, is utilized here as the basis of plot, but it transcends the conventional, for with the villain (superficially a melodramatic literary figure) Dickens was able to embody his own personal fears, and through the conflict between villain and hero, dramatize his own desire. "No words can express the secret agony of my soul,"[3] Dickens writes; but that agony is expressed through words and through the structure of plot.

Joseph Gold is certainly right when he argues that Dickens "was fully cognizant of all the social and psychological issues grouped by our present awareness under the concepts of alienation, and integration its opposite." Mr. Gold then discusses Bumble as an active alien (one who chooses alienation) and Fagin as a passive alien ("socially alienated by forces of circumstance"). Fagin, the Jew and devil figure, is the "refuge of the alienated," and the "world of the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 26, 29.

[2] Ibid., p. 26.

[3] Ibid., p. 26.

workhouse with Bumble as King, Ruler, father, what you will, is the perfect setting, sterile and inhuman, in which Dickens can begin his presentation of alienation."[1] While this is an interesting and suggestive way of defining Fagin and Bumble, Dickens' chief purpose in making Fagin and Bumble "exemplary aliens" is that they might extend their own alienation to the hero, for it is Oliver's ordeal in physical isolation and in alienation (usefully defined by Mr. Gold as "a condition of separateness in the midst of a potential harmony")[2] that most interests Dickens.

In Pickwick the isolation of the hero in the Fleet provides a test; likewise, the isolation of Oliver in Fagin's den provides a test. This is, of course, the dramatic means by which Dickens shows "in little Oliver, the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last." Oliver is more severely tried than Mr. Pickwick, perhaps, but it is significant in terms of Dickens' attitude towards evil, that in both these novels isolation, social alienation, is at the very heart of evil. For this reason, I cannot agree with Robert McLean who states that Fagin as a prototype of Dickens' early villains incorporates three villainous stereotypes--Newgate criminal, Jew, and devil, and that subsequently Dickens "outgrew this shallow view of evil--and learned to find a profound evil in social exploitation."[3] Even though Dickens focuses on

---

[1]Gold, op. cit., p. 77-89.

[2]Ibid., p. 79.

[3]Robert S. McLean, "Fagin: An Early View of Evil," Lock Haven Review, IX (1967), 29-36.

broader social phenomena as a source of evil in later novels, they all have one thing in common with each other and with the villains of the early novels--they isolate individuals from family and community. Chancery and the French Revolution breed orphans and break up homes. And like Oliver in Fagin's den, Little Dorrit's predicament, in her series of prisons, is essentially one of alienation and isolation. This is the effect of the evil in her world just as it is the effect of the evil in Oliver's.

In the first eight chapters of Oliver Twist, Oliver's condition exemplified loneliness and isolation. No sooner is he born than he is left alone. Death is all around him; and Oliver's solitude is portrayed as something death-like (just as community in Dickens' work is allied to life, joy, marriage, procreation of children). At birth, he hangs between life and death; his mother dies almost immediately, and her death gives rise to Oliver's most basic isolation. Thereafter, he is surrounded by death: the babies at the baby farm tend to die rather than live: and Oliver "beaten, and starved and shut up" (7), is hardly encouraged to live. After asking for "more," Oliver becomes a "close prisoner in the dark and solitary room to which he had been consigned by the wisdom and mercy of the board" (3). Oliver's chief complaint to Mr. Bumble is that he is "'So lonely, sir! So very lonely!'" (4). Fittingly, Oliver is left alone to sleep with coffins at Sowerberry's. Noah Claypole defined Oliver's situation accurately when he said,

> 'Let him alone!' said Noah. 'Why everybody lets him alone enough, for the matter of that. Neither his father nor his mother will ever interfere with him. All his relations let him have his own way

pretty well.' (5)

After his fight with Noah, Oliver is "shut up" (7) and "left alone" (7). Steven Marcus remarks that "throughout the novel Oliver is repeatedly imprisoned in cells and cellars, shut off in that vacant, featureless darkness in which the largest part of the story is enacted."[1] On his way to London, he is "cold and hungry, and more alone than he had ever felt before" (8). In such a vulnerable condition, he is led to Fagin's den, where he, as Marcus points out,

> isolated and alienated in an alienating world, finds his first shelter and affection in the person of the'merry old gentleman.' This very affection, the thing Oliver most wants and needs, is at the same time the greatest threat to his moral existence.[2]

Fagin's den is Oliver's first experience of a community; and though evil, it has its attractions: Fagin is humourous in his way; the boys are amusing. But Dickens never lets us forget that the core of Oliver's experience here is that "desolate and deserted, he stood alone in the midst of wickedness and guilt" (my italics, 20). Though no longer physically isolated, Oliver remains alienated in the sense that he maintains a "condition of separateness in the midst of potential harmony." Fagin's "little community" (43) is wicked and perverse, but so tempting to one who has endured isolation and never known community, that only the "principle of Good" could hold out against it. When Oliver is taken into the Brownlow household, he escapes the physical isolation of his earliest days as well as the

---

[1] Marcus, op. cit., p. 65.

[2] Ibid., p. 366.

alienation experienced in Fagin's den. Having known this household harmony at Brownlow's, having experienced integration at last, Oliver is then abruptly kidnapped and returned to a state of alienation in Fagin's den. Fagin understands that Oliver's experience in a community will make a return to isolation all the more unbearable; thus, he manipulated Oliver through his loneliness, hoping that an almost disorienting course in solitude will make Oliver accept an integration into the thieves community:

> And so Oliver remained all that day, and for the greater part of many subsequent days; seeing nobody, between early morning and midnight; and left, during the long hours, to commune with his own thoughts: which, never failing to revert to his kind friends, and the opinion they must long ago have formed of him, were sad indeed.
>
> After the lapse of a week or so, the Jew left the room-door unlocked; and he was at liberty to wander about the house...
>
> ...
>
> Spiders had built their webs in the angles of the walls and ceilings; and sometimes, when Oliver walked softly into a room, the mice would scamper across the floor, and run back terrified to their holes. With these exceptions, there was neither sight nor sound of any living thing; and often, when it grew dark, and he was tired of wandering from room to room, he would crouch in the corner of the passage by the street door, to be as near living people as he could; and would remain there, listening and counting the hours, until the Jew or the boys returned. (18)

After this extreme course in isolation, Fagin, feeling Oliver's vulnerability increased, changes the treatment and

> Oliver was seldom left alone; but was placed in almost constance communication with the two boys, who played the old game with the Jew every day: whether for their own improvement or Oliver's, Mr. Fagin best knew. At other times, the old man would tell them stories of robberies he had committed in his younger days: mixed up with so much that was

> droll and curious, that Oliver could not help laughing heartily, and showing that he was amused in spite of all his better feelings.
>
> In short, the wily old Jew had the boy in his toils; and, having prepared his mind, by solitude and gloom, to prefer any society to the companionship of his own sad thoughts in such a dreary place, was now slowly instilling into his soul the poison which he hoped would blacken it, and change its hue for ever." (18)

In Pickwick's macabre interpolated tales, isolation, evil in itself, breeds other anti-social evils: violence, madness, and the desire for revenge. This is exactly what Fagin counts on in subjecting Oliver to a course in intensive isolation. Unlike Mr. Pickwick (but like Heyling of the "Queer Client") Oliver does not choose isolation of his own free will, rather it is wickedly forced upon him; but like Mr. Pickwick (unlike Heyling) Oliver is proof against the danger of the contagion of evil; he passes the test Dickens set for Mr. Pickwick and for Heyling; he does not allow evil to engender evil; he preserves his "better nature";[1] in short, he does not become a thief. In Pickwick the test set for Mr. Pickwick (who passes) and Heyling (who fails) involves a decision whether to preserve one's better nature or give in to the extravagance of revenge. In Oliver Twist the question of revenge as I shall presently discuss, is complicated by the sort of machinations found in Nicholas Nickleby. Like the heroes in Nicholas Nickleby, Oliver certainly does not seek revenge, but Dickens himself exacts revenge for his hero, just as he does in Nicholas Nickleby.

---

[1] Steven Daniels, "Pickwick and Dickens: Stages of Development," Dickens Studies Annual, IV (1975), 77.

The evil of the manipulative ability of Dickens's early villains, may correspond to Dickens's fear of not being in control of the events of his own life. Apparently an inherently masterful personality, Dickens as an adult controlled his family and friends, manipulated the emotions of his readers, controlled his money, and grew to gain a tight control of his art. Given what must have been a great predisposition for the ability to control, his rage and fear as a child in not being able to control the unhappy events of his childhood must have been enormous. Life manipulated him; bankrupted his father, drove him out of his home and into the blacking warehouse. Such control and power outside himself is finally judged wrong and evil in his villains. Like Dodson and Fogg, Fagin is a professional manipulator, who makes his living by manipulating others for financial ends. Dodson and Fogg are on the right side of the law and Fagin is on the wrong side, but there are similarities in their occupations. An arch-manipulator, Fagin never acts for himself; he only causes other people to act for him; he is not a thief, but the controller of thieves; he does not even do much of his own spying, but uses Noah Claypole to spy on Nancy.

The manipulation of Nancy's death occupies Fagin and the last part of the novel once Oliver is removed from his clutches. Fagin poses a threat of isolation for Oliver, and for Nancy he poses a sexual threat. The sexual threat and the resulting murder receive a sensational treatment that does not transcend the conventional aspects of melodrama in the way that the treatment of the threat of isolation does. Though not sexually interested in Nancy himself, Fagin--like

Ralph Nickleby, but to a greater degree--uses Nancy as sexual bait. Not only is Nancy sexual bait in her role as prostitute and thief, but as a recruiter of new "myrmidons" for Fagin to control:

> He had conceived the idea--not from what had just passed, though that had tended to confirm him, but slowly and by degrees--that Nancy, wearied of the housebreaker's brutality, had conceived an attachment for some new friend. Her altered manner, her repeated absences from home alone, her comparative indifference to the interests of the gang for which she had once been so zealous, and, added to these, her desperate impatience to leave home that night at a particular hour, all favoured the supposition, and rendered it, to him at least, almost a matter of certainty. The object of this new liking was not among his myrmidons. He would be a valuable acquisition with such an assistant as Nancy, and must (thus Fagin argued) be secured without delay. (44)

A more sophisticated way of looking at Fagin as a sexual threat is suggested by Angus Wilson who comments that "it has been left to quite recent productions to even hint at the underlying pederastic quality in Fagin's relation to the gang of boys."[1] An interesting bent to a conventional aspect of villainy.

In his role as arch-manipulator, Fagin's initial plan is to manipulate Nancy into killing Sikes:

> 'With a little pursuasion,' thought Fagin, 'what more likely than that she would consent to poison him! Women have done such things, and worse, to secure the same object before now. There would be the dangerous villain: the man I hate: gone; another secured in his place; and my influence over the girl, with a knowledge of this crime to back it, unlimited.' (44)

---

[1]Angus Wilson, Introduction to Oliver Twist, (Penguin English Library Edition), p. 22.

Like the villains of Pickwick's macabre interpolated tales and Ralph Nickleby, Fagin is vengeful; he has a particular desire for "revenge on Sikes" (47), but through his spy, Noah Claypole, Fagin finds out what is really afoot with Nancy; and just as he would not himself kill Sikes but manipulate Nancy into doing it, so he would not kill Nancy but provoke Sikes into killing her for him. But it is his manipulation of Sikes that brings about his own hanging. Fagin tries to control the way in which Sikes commits the murder, cautioning him to be "'not too violent for safety. Be crafty, Bill, and not too bold.'" (47) But Sikes is a sort of absolute in violence as Oliver is an absolute in Goodness: both prove resistant to Fagin's attempts to control them absolutely. From Dickens' point of view, it is appropriate that Fagin's death should result from his manipulations of one of his own gang: thus, freeing the principle of Good from a sordid involvement in revenge. Fagin must die; Dickens must have his revenge--a crime against a child is the unforgivable sin. In Pickwick, the tension between forgiveness and vengeance that occupies Dickens throughout the novel climaxes with Mr. Pickwick's triumphant forgiveness of Jingle, Job and Mrs. Bardell. But the words of Mercy that ooze from the lips of the Cheerybles and Oliver are hollow, because all the while Dickens is extracting his pound of flesh. It is for the crime against Smike that Ralph is punished, just as it is for the crime against Oliver no less than the crime against Nancy that Fagin is punished.

Trying to free the Good characters from the odiousness of vengeance, Dickens arranges for Ralph to take his own life. (After

the Cheerybles reveal to him the full horror of his crimes against his own child, he could hardly do less). Fagin's involvement in Nancy's murder is the ostensible reason for Fagin's hanging; although, this is very unclear for Dickens fails to inform the reader on just what charges Fagin is convicted. But just to make sure that Oliver is not tainted by the vindictive impulse Dickens feels compelled to gratify, Oliver is very awkwardly led to Fagin's cell so that he might say "'Oh! God forgive this wretched man!' cried the boy with a burst of tears'" (52). Having demonstrated perfection, Oliver is given his reward, the antithesis of the isolation he has endured, community. Mr. Brownlow adopts Oliver,

> Removing with him and the old housekeeper to within a mile of the parsonage-house, where his dear friends resided, he gratified the only remaining wish of Oliver's warm and earnest heart, and thus linked together a little society, whose condition approached as nearly to one of perfect happiness as can ever be known in this changing world. (53)

But as the formation of the community does not follow forgiveness and reconciliation it is not the perfect community of Pickwick; it seems rather smug. (The community formed at the end of Dombey and Son avoids this because there is forgiveness of and reconciliation with Mr. Dombey--though Carker must be killed off.) One of the glories of the community in Pickwick was the lack of blood kinship between Mr. Pickwick and his friends; this made the community seem more open, more of a Brotherhood. The revealed kinship of Oliver to the Maylies tarnishes the ideal of the open community to some extent, making it seem motivated by considerations of kinship.

Irving Kreutz argues that Dickens' villains destroy themselves, for their misdeeds have no motive that can actually help them, but rather harm them. Fagin has been promised money by Monks as a motive for his corruption of Oliver, but this lack of motive in villains does pertain to Monks, who is, according to Kreutz, one of those peculiar villains in Dickens, whose motive, what there is of it, seems destined to destroy the villain himself rather than the character he persecutes. His hatred of Oliver turns back upon him and because of it he loses to Oliver the half of the fortune that was his.[1] Fagin, too, knows he is being destroyed because of his persecution of Oliver. In jail, ostensibly as an accomplice to Nancy's murder, Fagin knows why he is being hanged: it is for his persecution of Oliver; "'He has been the--the--somehow the cause of all this'" (52).

"I know that but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond."[2]

All the villains of Oliver Twist--Fagin, Bumble, Monks and Sikes--are engaged in making Oliver appear a villain himself. Just as Mr. Pickwick was made to appear a threat to the ladies, so Oliver is made to appear a thief. But the motif of misleading appearances is no longer a joke, for they wish him actually to be a thief. If all they can do is to make him appear a thief to his friends then this will do. The first incident is when Mr. Brownlow mistakes him for the child who

---

[1] Irving Kreutz, "'Sly of Manner, Sharp of Tooth': A Study of Dickens's Villains," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXII (March, 1968), 331-348.

[2] Forster, op. cit., p. 28.

has picked his pocket. Fortunately, Oliver is able to clear himself, but later when he is kidnapped and restored to Fagin, Fagin gloats in the fact that at the moment he was kidnapped, he was in possession of money and some valuable books. It will seem to Mr. Brownlow that Oliver has stolen them: "'they will think you have stolen 'em. Ha! ha!' chuckled the Jew, rubbing his hands; 'it couldn't have happened better, if we had chosen our time!'" (16). Answering an advertisement of Mr. Brownlow's requesting any information on Oliver, Bumble comes forward to give a bad character of Oliver and thereby make it seem that "'he has been a thorough-paced little villain, all his life'" (17). Like Mr. Pickwick, Oliver has a hard time in contradicting these appearances. Appearances are always against him, but fortunately his new friends possess a "clearer vision" than the rest of the world and intuitively believe in him:

> Men who look on nature, and their fellow-men, and cry that all is dark and gloomy, are in the right; but the sombre colours are reflections from their own jaundiced eyes and hearts. The real hues are delicate, and need a clearer vision. (34)

Rose Maylie expresses her own "clearer vision" after the doctor describes the bad appearances of Oliver's involvement in the house breaking. Speaking of the policemen, the doctor remarks that "'viewed with their eyes, there are many ugly points about it; he can only prove the parts that look ill: and none of those that look well.'" (31) But Rose responds, "'I see it, of course...but still do not see anything in it, to criminate the poor child.'" (31) These people, the Maylies and Mr. Brownlow, are different from the rest of the world. Fagin knows that if a boy can be made to appear a thief, the world

will happily believe he is a thief. His own reason for using Oliver in the house breaking is that he "'must be in the same boat with us. Never mind how he came there; it's quite enough for my power over him that he was in a robbery'" (19). Because Evil cannot comprehend Good, Fagin does not expect the peculiar vision of the Maylies. For them, it is not enough that Oliver "was in a robbery." Jonathan Bishop points out the extended use of guilt in Oliver Twist; Oliver's mother dies through sexual fault, and Oliver is born into guilt; in the pocket hankerchief affair with Mr. Brownlow, Oliver runs as if guilty; and in the housebreaking Oliver gets the bullet Sikes and Toby deserve.

> Such false indentification of Oliver as a villain for comic effect may lead us to recall Fagin's endeavour to corrupt Oliver, to make a real villain of him. Let Oliver participate in crime, Fagin thinks, and he must recognize his responsibilities for the whole of the evil which goes on about him.[1]

The villain in Dickens' early work has three reasons for his existence: the first, and most obvious, is that a villain is needed to set up conflict, and precipitate narrative action; the second is, as I have argued in the case of Fagin, the imagination's need to give definite shape to an abstract fear, creating in nightmare form the central experience of Dickens's insecurity--Dickens was not writing his real-life story in Oliver Twist, but perhaps the story insisted on being told, and as Dickens' subconscious gained a certain ascendancy, this part of his mind, closest to the vitality of his imagination,

---

[1]Jonathan Bishop, "The Hero-Villain of Oliver Twist," Victorian Newsletter, XV (Spring, 1959), 14-16.

told the story through the images and symbols of dream; and the third, underlying the second, is the need to have a target for the blame that cannot be satisfactorily directed towards social evil. Dickens could not be content with blaming society for the debtor's laws that sent his father to prison or for the acquiescence in child labour that sent him to Warren's. Although, debtor's laws and child abuse were the two major targets in his attacks upon society, the personal experience of these two social evils perhaps gave him the impetus to objectively identify and attack other social evils such as we find in Bleak House, for example. But there is beyond what he knew of the horror of social injustice that contributed to his misery, the fact of his father's irresponsibility in repeatedly contracting debts, and the fact that his mother was keen to send him back to Warren's after the family left the debtor's prison ("'I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back;'"[1] thus, just to blame social ills no matter how unjust and cruel is simply not enough. Oliver begins with his experiences in various forms of child abuse, but something not so abstract, something more human is needed as a target. Avoiding the pain of directly blaming his parents for his sense of insecurity and loss, at the same time recognizing that outside social ills are also partly responsible, Dickens uses the villain, involved in social evil, but more importantly involved in a personal individual expression of evil. The theme of the father's crime against the child that occurs in the macabre interpolated tales

---

[1]Forster, op. cit., p. 35.

of Pickwick and in Nicholas Nickleby, Barnaby Rudge and Dombey and Son is not absent in Oliver Twist. Fagin's relationship to the boys and to Oliver is quasi-paternal, but by avoiding an explicit father-son relationship, Dickens (somewhat obscuring the personal aspect the father-son relationship had for him) seems more able in Oliver Twist than in Nicholas Nickleby to explore the misery of isolation, and the fear and hopelessness he felt in his experience of the crime against the child, Charles Dickens, perpetrated by John Dickens, that most likeable, even loveable, but finally guilty, father.

In the debate over whether Dickens' evil is the evil of the Christian or the Manichean, I would suggest that, however much these two metaphysical conceptions may lend themselves to application in Dickens' work, Dickens' view of evil is social before it is religious or metaphysical. His conception of evil as that which threatens the security of the family and the individual in the family, seems very close to the way in which morality must have developed: to kill one's brother is first unacceptable because it is anti-social--because it threatens the integrity of the family which in turn threatens the security of society--before such a crime is defined as evil in terms of religion, as the direct result of original sin, and the impulse to follow the devil.

Finally, the despair over the prevalence and power of evil that the reader of Oliver Twist ascribes to Dickens' metaphysical conception of the world is partially a result of the atmosphere and mood of the nightmare. The power of the demon in the nightmare is always supreme; and we are never victorious. The nightmare is a vision of

the subconscious and cannot be said to represent an objective reality. Fagin's world triumphs not with the victory of the external metaphysical Evil or Christianity or of the Manichean, but triumphs as a nightmare triumphs inside of us, making us cringe with abject fear. Graham Green is right when he says that the happy ending does not invalidate the victory of Fagin's world, for that which triumphs is not the force of a metaphysical evil, but the personal evil of insecurity, an insecurity that controlled Dickens all his life, making him strive towards ever increasing fame and popular approbation.

Chapter Notes

1 In "Two Missing Links in Oliver Twist," N.C.F., XXI (Dec. 1967), 225-235, Colin Williamson, dismissing the element of fantasy and nightmare, suggests that Dickens had planned "that Losberne's action in entering the house should give its occupant a chance to see and identify Oliver;" thus, preparing for another recapture and also explaining how Monks and Fagin trace Oliver to the Maylies where Oliver sees them at the window while he is in a drowsy state. But Dickens left the episode with the dwarf dangling and unexplained because

> Losberne's impetuosity on this occasion would have been instrumental in bringing about Oliver's recapture. . . A good impulse, he may have felt, could not be shown to bear bad fruit. If this was the case, it is an interesting example of the two sides of Dickens the artist pulling in opposite directions. The side that aimed at greater structural logic designed a cause and effect sequence vital to the novel because it was to lead to Oliver's second and nearly catastrophic period of captivity; but the other side, the advocate of spontaneity and powerful feelings, was prepared to abandon structural neatness rather than raise an awkward question as to whether impulsive behaviour is not sometimes undesirable and potentially dangerous.

2 Autobiographically suggestive but perhaps overstated is Marcus' article "Who is Fagin," op. cit., p. 358-378. Marcus believes that this hypnogogic scene in chapter 35 and in the similar one at the beginning of chapter 9 are presentations of the primal scene:

> These scenes have in common several elements: a boy in a state of sleep or half-sleep in which

> conscious and unconscious impressions, fantasies and realities, dreams and recollections, tend to be fused and confused; supervening on this an intense experience of watching and of being watched which then gives way to emotions of threat and terror. . . . I think that we are witnesses here to the decomposed elements of what Freud called the primal scene, to either a memory or fantasy of it: the child asleep, or just waking, or feigning sleep while observing sexual intercourse between his parents. . . The Symbolism of the jewel box and the knife in the first scene are self-explanatory; for the window and the book we recur to the scene in the window at the blacking factory, and behind it, perhaps, to Dickens's earlier recollection of himself as a small boy on 'a summer evening . . . sitting on my bed, reading as if for life.'

Although interesting, I find the "primal scene" explanation hard to take too seriously. As in most Freudian explanations, the tendency is to reduce everything to the infantile state, dismissing as inconsequential subsequent happenings in a child's life. The "scene in the window at the blacking factory" referring to Dickens's remembrance of working at the window of Warren's and being observed by his father is more credible as an influence in these two scenes.

3 My five year old child gave me a curious demonstration of waking into dream. He was over-tired after the departure of a little friend, and hoping to distract him, I began to play a familiar dialogue game, in which we both assume character voices, enacting little stories we make up. I am usually directed to be a witch or something scary by five year old standards. On this particular day, my would-be sinister middle-European accent was just too frightening for an already over-stimulated child, and he burst into tears. Through his sobs he told me he wanted to

tell me a "sad joke." The "sad joke," punctuated throughout with streaming tears and sobs, is as follows: "Once upon a time there was a little elephant who didn't have a mommy or daddy. Bad men, soldiers, shot them. Then they chased the little elephant through the streets. They wanted to kill him too. He ran and ran, and it was so dark. Finally he met some nice people who took him home with them and took care of him" (I interjected here, soothingly, "and then he was safe from the bad men"). Harder sobs, "No, they found him and looked through the window!" More tears and then off to bed exhausted.

This tale of dead parents, the persecution of the young by the wicked, the adoption by the kind and the Good, continued persecution, the face of Evil at the window, is so like Oliver's story; but yet my child had never seen at that time the musical on the stage or on television; nor had I ever told him the story, being particularly anxious to introduce Dickens at a more suitable age. The little elephant, was obviously borrowed from the Babar stories with which he was quite familiar. A waking nightmare, this little story, like Oliver Twist, seemed to me to be an allegory of basic childhood fears and insecurities, fears and insecurities that even a more or less normally happy child is prey to. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Oliver Twist is mythic. It relates childhood fears that we as adults perhaps have forgotten, but nevertheless, we recognize something of ourselves in little Oliver--we recognize the fear at least.

CHAPTER TWO:

The Dreamer and the Nightmare:

Sexuality in The Old Curiosity Shop

The conscious intentional plan in The Old Curiosity Shop is Nell/Good versus Quilp/Evil, rendered in a Christian allegory,[1] with the outcome of an angelic, sentimental, martyred death which is also a sort of apotheosis. Malcolm Andrews comments that "More than any other of Dickens's novels, The Old Curiosity Shop's design is dependent on the realization of such broad contrasts: youth and old age, beauty and deformity, country and city, light and darkness, freedom and constraint, illusion and reality."[2] The theme of the conflict between good and evil, innocence versus depravity is achieved partially by simple contrast but is also integrated into a plot through the conflict between villain and hero/heroine. Quilp isolates Kit and sexually threatens Nell which are traditional aspects of villainy, but

---

[1]See Rachel Bennett's discussion of Dickens' evocation of Pilgrim's Progress in "Punch Versus Christian in The Old Curiosity Shop," Review of English Studies, XXII (Nov. 1971), 423-434.

[2]Malcolm Andrews, introduction to The Old Curiosity Shop (Penguin English Library Edition), p. 18. In Malcolm Andrews' doctoral thesis, The Composition and Design of The Old Curiosity Shop: A Study in the Working of Dickens's Imagination," he fully discusses the design of contrasts in the novel, particularly the contrast between the city and the country-side, with Quilp and Nell respectively as integral parts of the contrast.

Quilp is so much more violently sexual, and in his scenes with young Nell, so indecently sexual that we should be alerted that something much more disturbing is going on than can be accounted for and contained in the melodramatic stock situation. In the preface written long after The Curiosity Shop was completed, Dickens claims that his idea was to contrast Nell's "innocent face and pure intentions" with "associates as strange and uncongenial as the grim objects that are about her bed when her history is first foreshadowed."[1] If all that is at work here is the idea of purity and innocence versus the "grotesque" and the "strange and uncongenial" then surely Quilp's persecuting concupiscence is rather more than is necessary in establishing the "grotesque" and "uncongenial." The fact that he is amusing, and an un-real grotesque helps to conceal how serious a subject is raw, ungoverned sexuality in a Victorian novel, a Dickens novel at that. Quilp, in his relationship to Nell, turns the pattern of good versus evil, innocence versus grotesque, into an irreconcilable conflict between self-indulgent, uncontrolled, sexual desire in its most elemental form (if Freud read this novel he should have been pleased with Quilp as the perfect representation of the Id) and a symbol of unwavering sexless bloodlessness. Good versus Evil becomes non-sexual versus sexual. Quilp and Fagin are linked in their transcendance of the pattern of isolating the hero and sexually threatening the heroine: as Oliver Twist is Dickens' ultimate testimony to the agony of childhood alienation and isolation; so The Old

---

[1]Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, Preface to the First Cheap Edition, 1848 (Oxford Illustrated Dickens), p. xii.

Curiosity Shop is his ultimate description of the Victorian's inability in general and Dickens' inability in particular to reconcile the sexual impulse with decency, duty, and the hearth.

In many ways Quilp conforms to the role of villainy developed by his predecessors in Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby. He does manage to manipulate for ill most of the characters in The Old Curiosity Shop. He isolates Kit, making him seem a thief (like Oliver and Nicholas are made to seem by Fagin and Ralph), throwing him in jail and separating him from his family. Kit is not what one could call a hero or even a main character, but inadvertently having chased Nell out of town, Quilp must make do with Kit, her buffoonish champion and squire. Dickens cannot allow Kit hero status as Dickens is at pains to emasculate Kit who might be presumed to be sexually attracted to Nell. Dickens prefers to keep romantic relationships as sexless as possible, and Kit's lower class status as a servant and his clownishness effectively emasculate him as a would-be lover to Nell.

Nell shares in the motif of isolation, though Quilp is not at first directly responsible. Hillis Miller notes that

> From the point of view of the characters themselves, this kind of life may be defined in a single word: isolation. Each of these novels, [Nickleby, Rudge and Curiosity Shop] like Oliver Twist, has at its center characters who are alienated from society, and the situation of all is to be, like Nell in the midst of the bric-a-brac of the Old Curiosity Shop, surrounded by an inimical world, a world which refuses to support or recognize their existence.[1]

---

[1] J. Hillis Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels, p. 90-91.

Like Oliver, Nell begins her story in a state of isolation; and Quilp, by frightening her out of town, making her afraid ever to return, (like Fagin, who kidnaps Oliver from Mr. Brownlow) ensures a continued isolation from the people who would be-friend her and draw her into a loving community.

Like the villains of the interpolated tales in Pickwick Papers, and Fagin and Ralph Nickleby, Quilp is vengeful. His reason for throwing Kit in jail is because Kit once said of Quilp that he was "'an uglier dwarf than can be seen anywhers for a penny, that's all'" (6). He alludes to this slight when he gloats over his success in framing Kit:

> 'What' cried the dwarf, leaning half his body out of window. 'Kit a thief! Kit a thief! Ha ha ha! Why, he's an uglier-looking thief than can be seen anywhere for a penny. Eh Kit--eh? Ha ha ha! Have you taken Kit into custody before he had time and opportunity to beat me! Eh Kit, eh?' And with that he burst into a yell of laughter, manifestly to the great terror of the coachman....
>
> 'Is it coming to that, Kit!' cried the dwarf, rubbing his hands violently. 'Ha ha ha ha! What a disappointment for little Jacob, and for his darling mother!' (60)

Like Ralph Nickleby and some of the villains of Pickwick's interpolated tales, Quilp is involved in the scheme of a mercenary marriage. Quilp has a plan to make a marriage between Dick Swiveller and Nell which he relished because Dick's motivation (along with Fred Trent's) in accepting it would be mercenary, while Quilp knows that Nell is far from being an heiress. Here again his motivation is vindictive:

> 'Here's sport!' he cried, 'sport ready to my hand, all invented and arranged, and only to be enjoyed. It was this shallow-pated fellow who made my bones ache t'other day, was it? It was his friend and

> fellow-plotter, Mr. Trent, that once made eyes at Mrs. Quilp, and leered and looked, was it? After labouring for two or three years in their precious scheme, to find that they've got a beggar at last, and one of them tied for life. Ha ha ha! He shall marry Nell. He shall have her, and I'll be the first man, when the knot's tied hard and fast, to tell 'em what they've gained and what I've helped 'em to. Here will be a clearing of old scores, here will be a time to remind 'em what a capital friend I was, and how I helped 'em to the heiress. Ha ha ha!' (61)

As in the previous novels, Dickens wishes the heroes and heroines of The Old Curiosity Shop to preserve their better natures by not participating in vengeance, but of course, Dickens himself demands vengeance if there is a crime against a child and Quilp certainly persecutes the child, Nell; consequently, he must die. Like Fagin, who sees before his death that Oliver has somehow been the cause of it all, so Quilp perceives that "'this, like every other trouble and anxiety I have had of late times, springs from that old dotard and his darling child, two wretched feeble wanderers'" (67).

In Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby the crime against the child and the sexual threat are separate activities of the villains, but in The Old Curiosity Shop they are united and directed against one character, Nell. How much more sexually menacing is Quilp to Nell than the conventional stock villain, Sir Mulberry Hawk, to Kate? The menace of the sexual threat is intensified now that it is directed towards a child. Dickens has gone from using the sexual threat as a joke in Pickwick Papers, to the sexual threat as a minor aspect of villainy in Oliver Twist, in which the villain, Fagin, is not himself sexually interested, and in which the threat is directed not to the heroine but to Nancy. Nicholas Nickleby shows a further development

of the use of the sexual threat as an important aspect of Ralph Nickleby's villainy, directed at both heroines, but here again Ralph is not sexually interested himself. His interest is in the control he might attain of Lord Verisopht through Verisopht's sexual interest in Kate. But when Mulberry Hawk becomes involved in paying Kate sexual attentions, even though his interst is not purely sensual, Ralph finds he is not able to control Hawk satisfactorily. Dickens seems to back away from this potentially explosive development and switch his interest to Gride and his scheme for a mercenary marriage which promises to be a more controllable plot development in terms of its sexual ramifications. In The Old Curiosity Shop the sexual threat cannot be said to be an aspect of Quilp's villainy as Quilp is sexual threat incarnate. Unlike Ralph who merely wants to manipulate other characters' sexual interest, and unlike Hawk and Gride who have respectively the motives of vengeance and mercenary marriage attached to their sexual interests in the heroines, Quilp is very much sexually interested in Nell himself and is without other motives diluting his desire for her.

Not only does The Old Curiosity Shop, like Oliver Twist, follow the nightmare pattern of the child being pursued by some fabulous creature, and not only does Dickens create the fantastically shaped and peopled atmosphere of a dream, but he very pointedly refers to Nell's existence in the beginning, middle and end, as an "uneasy dream" (12; 27; 54) and calls Quilp a "nightmare" (49). I do not think he could have been more explicit. As Dickens seems very conscious of it, we are permitted, even asked, to respond to the story

as we would a dream: look for what is concealed under what is revealed as we try to do with dreams. Hillis Miller remarks that "The Old Curiosity Shop is Dickens' most dreamlike novel, the only novel of his which reminds one of the dream voyages of the German romantics. And like those prototypes it unequivocally identifies the voyage from the city to the country, from the present to the past, with death."[1]

Master Humphrey begins the story at night, a time most suitable for dreaming. After escorting Nell home and observing her strange surroundings he goes home only to find that "waking or in my sleep, the same thoughts recurred and the same images retained possession of my brain. I had ever before me the old dark murkey rooms... and alone in the midst of all this lumber and decay and ugly age, the beautiful child in her gentle slumber, smiling through her light and sunny dreams" (1). Master Humphrey curiously enough dreams of Nell dreaming. His conception of her, even in his own dreams, is as a dreamer. This image of Nell is established in the first chapter, even before Dickens decided to make a novel of his little story,[2] and he thereafter continues to associate Nell with dreaming. The many references to Nell asleep or dreaming suggests that The Old Curiosity Shop, like Oliver Twist, exists on the level of dream or some such subconscious state. Like Oliver, Nell seems to be a cipher or symbol for the state of mind in himself that allows the imagination the freedom from restraint

---

[1] Ibid., p. 95.

[2] Robert L. Patten, in "'The Story-Weaver at His Loom': Dickens and the Beginning of The Old Curiosity Shop," Dickens the Craftsman: Strategies of Presentation, ed. R. B. Partlow, Jr. (1970), p. 44-64, discusses the evolution of The Old Curiosity Shop out of the Clock.

characteristic of the early novels. The dream atmosphere gives the subconscious a realm in which ambiguity is not questioned. Like Oliver's story, the story of Nell conceals meaning by having little similarity to Dickens' own life, but yet in ways this is a very personal story. The relationship of Nell to Mary Hogarth has been remarked upon by many critics. Mark Spilka is most explicit when he writes that Dickens was able to achieve an "honest release of [his] sexual frustrations in the comic villain Quilp, whose grotesque leerings at Nell suggest Dickens' barely repressed desires for Mary Hogarth."[1] In the Stone letter Dickens describes the dreams he had of Mary Hogarth for nine months after her death.[2] Five years after the dreams ceased he wrote to Mrs. Hogarth that

> After she died, I dreamed of her every night for many months--I think for a better part of a year--sometimes as a spirit, sometimes as a living creature, never with any of the bitterness of my real sorrow, but always with a kind of quiet happiness, which became so pleasant to me that I never lay down at night without a hope of the vision coming back in one shape or other. And so it did. I went down into Yorkshire, and finding it still present to me, in a strange scene and a strange bed, I could not help mentioning the circumstance in a note I wrote to Kate. From that moment I have never dreamed of her once, though she is so much in my thoughts at all times...that the recollection of her is an essential part of my being, and is as inseparable from my existence as the beating of my heart is.[3]

---

[1]Mark Spilka, "Little Nell Revisted," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Art, and Letters, XLV (1960), 432.

[2]The Letters of Charles Dickens, ed. W. Dexter (The Nonesuch Dickens), I (Feb. 2, 1851), 268-269.

[3]The Letters of Charles Dickens, (The Pilgrim Edition), ed. M. House and G. Storey, III (8 May, 1843), 483.

The idealized image of Mary after her death must have crystallized in his dreams; thus, the fictional image becomes Nell, existing in a dream-land, a dreamer herself.[1]

It is significant that the next sight we have of Nell after the invocation of her as dreamer by Master Humphrey, she is "closely followed" (3) by her bete noir, Quilp, and thereafter her dreams become "uneasy" if not nightmarish. Michael Steig points out that

> In the first account we get of Nell after Quilp's (mocking?) offer of marriage, she has begun to have 'mournful fancies'... [Dickens] also cites Nell's brooding on 'one of those hideous faces below, which often mingled with her dreams [9].' It seems reasonable to associate these horrible faces with the misshapen and ugly Quilp, and though Nell's fears about her grandfather's increasing strangeness (owing to his gambling mania) play a part in these 'fancies,' the fact that this scene both follows and immediately precedes passages in which Quilp threatens Nell sexually suggests that the dwarf is the dominant cause.[2]

(Angus Easson reveals that Dickens dwelt even longer on Nell's morbidity in the manuscript, but cut several passages dealing with this

---

[1]Paul Schlicke, in "A 'Discipline of Feeling': Macready's Lear and The Old Curiosity Shop," Dickensian, LXXVI, (Summer, 1980), 79, somewhat qualifies Dickens' grief for Mary by insisting on the influence of Macready's Lear/Cordelia interpretation in his production of Lear. Schlicke suggests that "One should perhaps take more to heart the comments by the editors of the Pilgrim edition of Dickens's letters, when they suggest that Dickens was generally buoyant in spirit while writing The Old Curiosity Shop and self-consciously reactivated his grief over Mary Hogarth's death in order to write more convincingly about Nell's." p. 87. But Steven Marcus in Dickens: from Pickwick to Dombey, p. 132-133, suggests that Dickens "associated and identified Mary's sudden, untimely death with his experiences of 1822-24; her death revived with still deeper intensity Dickens' consciousness of those earlier events. In this sense, Mary came partly to be an image of himself, of that conception of himself which he saw as still existing in the past."

[2]Michael Steig in "The Central Action of The Old Curiosity Shop, or Little Nell Revisited Again," Literature and Psychology, XV, 163-70.

morbid streak in her nature in his corrections for Master Humphrey.)[1] The "light and sunny dreams" seem utterly wiped out. We are told that she has begun to worry that one night Grandfather

> should come home, and kiss and bless her as usual, and after she had gone to bed and had fallen asleep and was perhaps dreaming pleasantly, and smiling in her sleep, he should kill himself and his blood come creeping, creeping, on the ground to her own bed-room door (9).

Why is Nell particularly concerned that Grandfather will commit suicide while she is dreaming? It is as if such a horrible deed could only be committed while she is dreaming, that the dreaming is somehow connected to evil deeds. Her fears are borne out, for it is while she is dreaming that Grandfather becomes a thief to his own granddaughter:

> At last, sleep gradually stole upon her--a broken, fitful sleep, troubled by dreams of falling from high towers, and waking with a start and in great terror. A deeper slumber followed this--and then --What! That figure in the room! (30)[2]

Later, when Nell overhears the gambler persuade her grandfather to steal Mrs. Jarley's money while she sleeps (just as he stole Nell's money), Nell goes to the old man, wakes him from his sleep and says,

> 'I have had a dreadful dream,' said the child, with an energy that nothing but such terrors could have inspired, 'A dreadful, horrible dream. I have had it once before. It is a dream of grey-haired men like you in darkened rooms by night, robbing the

---

[1]Angus Easson, "The Old Curiosity Shop: From Manuscript to Print," Dickens Studies Annual, I (1970), 126-128.

[2]Earle Davis, The Flint and the Flame, p. 91, points out that this scene is a case of exact borrowing which can be identified in The Mysteries of Udolpho by Ann Radcliffe: "All in all, the Gothic technique added another narrative device to the arsenal of dramatic weapons in Dickens' possession."

> sleepers of their gold....This dream is too real. I cannot sleep, I cannot stay here, I cannot leave you alone under the roof where such dreams come. Up! We must fly....To-morrow night will be too late. The dream will have come again. Nothing but flight can save us. Up!' (42)

Nell calls his past theft and the future theft planned a dream, and by interpreting it to him as dream, she conceals and reveals what she knows about him. Warning him and protecting him from the dream that is "too real," Nell flees once again with her grandfather in tow. Nell is contantly fleeing, fleeing from Quilp and the "uneasy dreams" experienced in the Curiosity Shop and now fleeing from the bad dreams of her grandfather as thief.

What makes Nell flee from Quilp, of course, is his sexuality, and Dickens loses no time establishing this potent sexuality. Mrs. Quilp hints at it during her tea party when she claims that "'Quilp has such a way with him when he likes, that the best-looking woman here couldn't refuse him if I was dead, and she was free, and he chose to make love to her.'" (4) Further, Quilp keeping Mrs. Quilp up all night, promising to "'blaze away all night'" (4) has great sexual suggestiveness, as Gabriel Pearson notes.[1] Apparently, Quilp has even been irresistable to Sally Brass, and is partially responsible for the Marchioness' birth. Dickens alludes to the Quilpian parentage through Dick Swiveller:

> but Mr. Swiveller, putting various slight circumstances together, often thought Miss Brass must know better than that; and, having heard from his

---

[1]Gabriel Pearson, "The Old Curiosity Shop," Dickens and the Twentieth Century, ed. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson, p. 84.

> wife of her strange interview with Quilp, entertained sundry misgivings whether that person, in his lifetime, might not also have been able to solve the riddle, had he chosen. (73)[1]

Quilp soon establishes himself in a sexually threatening relationship to Nell when he asks her "'How should you like to be my number two, Nelly? .... To be Mrs. Quilp the second, when Mrs. Quilp the first is dead, sweet Nell...to be my wife, my little cherry-cheeked, red-lipped wife.'" (6) Mrs. Quilp is in no less danger than Nell, as Quilp seems to count on being a widower:

> 'Say that Mrs. Quilp lives five years, or only four, you'll be just the proper age for me. Ha ha! Be a good girl Nelly, a very good girl, and see if one of these days you don't come to be Mrs. Quilp of Tower Hill.' (6)

In his next encounter with her, he is even more explicit about his attraction to Nell's physical charms:

> 'Ah' said the dwarf, smacking his lips, 'what a nice kiss that was--just upon the rosy part. What a capital kiss! .... Such a fresh, blooming, modest little bud, neighbour,' said Quilp...'such a chubby, rosy, cosy, little Nell!...so small, so compact, so beautifully modelled, so fair, with such blue veins and such a transparent skin, and such little feet, and such winning ways--but bless me, you're nervous! Why neighbour, what's the matter?' (9)

Critics have found as many sources for Quilp as they have for Fagin. Robert Simpson McLean demonstrates his derivation from three sources: the ugly evil dwarf of European folklore; the devil figure

---

[1] Angus Easson, in "Dickens's Marchioness Again," M.L.R., LXV (July 1970), 517-18, discusses Dickens' omission of Sally's explicit revelation that she is the Marchioness' mother.

(a source for Fagin as well), whose "desire to do evil is largely unmotivated;" and the comic devil of the English stage, particularly Shakespeare's Richard III, humorous, hunchback and a ladies' man. McLean points out the latter has a source in Vice or Iniquity of the medieval morality plays.[1] Toby Olshin compares Quilp to the fairy-tale, "The Yellow Dwarf."[2] But McLean in "Another Source for Quilp" refutes the "Yellow Dwarf" as a major source for Quilp on the grounds that the Yellow Dwarf is not a devil-figure. He also points out that when Dickens visited Walter Savage Landor in Bath in 1840, he was introduced to a dwarf named Prior who let "donkeys on hire and used a heavy stick impartially on his wife and donkey."[3] G. M. Watkins notes the similarities between Quilp and the father of Joseph Grimaldi. The Memoires of Joseph Grimaldi were edited by Dickens and published in February 1838. The father makes the wife sit up all night, pretends to be dead in order to test the disposition of his sons, and has affairs with young female apprentices.[4] Warrington Winters notices the dog-imagery associated with Quilp.[5] John Holloway, noticing certain Jewish features in Quilp suggests an association with "The

---

[1]Robert Simpson McLean, "Putting Quip to Rest," Victorian Newsletter, XXXIV (Fall 1968), 29-33.

[2]Toby A. Olshin, "'The Yellow Dwarf' and The Old Curiosity Shop," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXV (June 1970), 96-99.

[3]Robert Simpson McLean, "Another Source for Quilp," N.C.F., XXVI (Dec. 1971), 337-9.

[4]G. M. Watkins, "A Possible Source for Quilp," Notes and Queries, XVIII (Nov. 1971), 411-3.

[5]Warrington Winters, "'A Consummation Devoutly To Be Wished,'" Dickensian, LXII (Sept. 1967), 176-80.

Prioress' Tale."[1] Malcolm Andrews links Quilp's "groundless but obsessive suspicions of Fred Trent's affair with Mrs. Quilp" with Iago's suspicions of the Moor and Iago's wife. For Andrews, Coleridge's observation about Iago's "motiveless malignity" applies equally well to Quilp.[2] Both Malcolm Andrews and Rachael Bennett[3] discuss Quilp's source in Punch. Andrews draws attention to the fact that Punch and Quilp, both physically ugly and violent, are extremely concupiscent.[4] This trait is also shared by the Devil (Belial in Paradise Lost is particularly characterized by lewdness.) Andrews also points out that Punch seems to have an ancient tradition of incestuous sexuality.[5] Quilp's sexual desire also involves a taboo since directed toward the pubescent Nell it is slightly paedophiliac in nature.[6] I would offer yet another source for Quilp, for like Fagin, Quilp is another monster from the "Sea of Thought," "uncouth and wild," in which the "several parts and shapes of different things are joined and mixed by chance..." As Fagin is the nightmare creature who chases us through childhood dreams, so Quilp is quintessentially

---

[1]John Holloway, "Dickens and the Symbol," in Dickens 1970, ed. Michael Slater, p. 60.

[2]Malcolm Andrews, The Composition and Design of THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP: A Study in the Working of Dickens's Imagination, doctoral thesis, University of London, p. 180-182.

[3]Bennett, op. cit., p. 423.

[4]Andrews, op. cit., p. 171-178.

[5]Ibid., p. 172

[6]Albert J. Guerard in The Triumph of the Novel: Dickens, Dostoevsky, Faulkner, comments on Quilp's "paedophilic, prurient language for Nell," p. 83.

the ancient form of a more adult dream, the incubus, the demon or evil spirit of the Middle Ages that mounted women in dreams and rode them in carnal intercourse until the dawn.[1]

Indeed, Dickens obliquely refers to Quilp as an incubus when he compares him to a "dismounted nightmare" (49). Quilp, who has had, or whose ancestors have had their existence mounting women in dreams, has somehow been dismounted for the purposes of this novel, and allowed a more physical presence. Sexual energy incarnate, he is nevertheless tied to his associations of nightmare and of night. Dismounted, but capable and desirous of mounting, he is all the more threatening and frightening to Nell, particularly as he can invade her dreams at will --there is no escaping him.

For such an energetic demon, Quilp is a curiously prone one. In the portraits of Dickens' villains, I believe Quilp is the only villain to be caught constantly napping. We never see Quilp in his own bed at the Tower, rather we see him in Nell's bed, or a make-shift bed on the top of his desk at the wharf or in a hammock. The unconventionality of these last two beds serves the purpose of calling attention to Quilp in bed, and Quilp asleep, as if this particular state of being was most natural to Quilp. Beds are traditionally associated with

---

[1] Incubus is defined in the Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, ed. Maria Leach, Funk and Wagnalls (1949), I, 515-516, as "The demon lover: in Medieval European folk belief, an evil spirit in the shape of a man (more generally either in male or female shape, though the latter is specifically the succubus) who came in the night as a lover to women, and often sired a child...the incubi were handsome and virile, with such drawbacks as cloven feet and evil smell, etc. Elves and trolls, ancestral spirits...and such deities and spirits combined with the tempting, malicious, shape-shifting Devil in popular belief to bring forth the incubus.... The incubus was the nightmare as well, riding his victims in the dark.

something else beside sleep and that is sex. Beds, whether they be on desk tops, in hammocks, or in someone else's bed, are a natural conjunction for these two activities, both of which Quilp seems to ally himself. This is quite appropriate to the incubus who is associated with sleep and dream as much as with sex. When Nell goes to Quilp at the wharf with a letter from her grandfather and wakes him from a nap on the desktop, she finds him rather concupiscently inclined, and it is at this point that Quilp first addresses Nell with overt sexual interest. It is here that he asks her how she would like to be Mrs. Quilp the second.

Nell's bed is from the very beginning linked to both dreams and to sex. Master Humphrey reports that Nell's bed is "a little bed that a fairy might have slept in" (1), and accompanying this report is an illustration of Nell in her bed, presumably "smiling through her light and sunny dreams" (1). With these words, supported by the illustration, the first chapter ends. After the grandfather's bankruptcy and Quilp's occupation of the shop, Quilp joins his lechery to Nell's bed. When she approaches her own little room, Quilp asks if she's come to sit on his knee or go to bed. Frightened off, Nell determines not to inhabit her room any longer. Quilp immediately announces his occupancy of the little bed: "'The bedstead is much about my size. I think I shall make it <u>my</u> little room'" (11). And so he throws himself "on his back upon the bed with his pipe in his mouth, and then kicking up his legs and smoking violently" (11). His desire to defile Nell is symbolized by his defilement of her bed. She apparently feels violated in some way and increasingly threatened for it is after this

that she and Grandfather make the decision to flee, flee from their past, "that uneasy dream" (12, 54), to flee from Quilp and the "close rooms which are always full of care and weary dreams" (12). Nell briefly regrets the loss of her own little room where she had "dreamed such pleasant dreams" (12). She wakes the next day, "From many dreams of rambling through light and sunny places, but with some vague object unattained which ran indistinctly through them all" (12), and prepares for the flight. Her last sight of Quilp is while he is sleeping in her defiled bed in a most violent manner. She is "quite transfixed with terror at the sight of Mr. Quilp, who was hanging so far out of bed that he almost seemed to be standing on his head" (12). But Quilp is no ordinary sleeper, and though she escapes from him while he sleeps, she will not escape from him while she sleeps, for he will be with her in the "uneasy dreams" (27) of the future, like the incubus he is.

His sudden appearance at the town where Nell is in attendance upon the wax-works leaves the reader with the question posed in Oliver Twist when Fagin suddenly pops up at Oliver's window in the country: isn't this in the nature of a dream or nightmare? "The street beyond was so narrow, and the shadow of the houses on one side of the way so deep, that he seemed to have risen out of the earth" (27). After this apparition nothing can be more certain than Quilp really does begin to haunt Nell's dreams. She feels oppressed by Quilp, "as if she were hemmed in by a legion of Quilps, and the very air itself were filled with them" (27). She hurries home to bed, but "she could get none but broken sleep by fits and starts all night, for fear of Quilp, who throughout her uneasy dreams was somehow connected with the wax-work,

or was wax-work himself" (27). Since he cannot persecute her in London, it seems he takes to persecuting her in her dreams. Relatively safe in Mrs. Jarley's employ, Nell is nevertheless unable to still her fear of Quilp's discovery of them:

> Quilp indeed was a perpetual nightmare to the child, who was constantly haunted by a vision of his ugly face and stunted figure. She slept, for their better security, in the room where the wax-work figures were, and she never retired to this place at night but she tortured herself--she could not help it--with imagining a resemblance, in some one or other of their death-like faces, to the dwarf, and this fancy would sometimes so gain upon her that she would almost believe he had removed the figure and stood within the clothes (29).

Garrett Stewart points out that Quilp as "a perpetual nightmare to the child" seems a

> casual metaphor for the disturbing emotional effect the dwarf has on the timid child. But it can also stand as a definition for the major structural relationship of the novel. Quilp is not just nightmarish in a figurative sense; he is Nell's worst nightmare given flesh to organize the entire novel, its prose and its themes, by his polar opposition to the child whose fears he embodies. The description of Nell's languid daydreams of green fields and songbirds, her unmistakeable death-drifts, is pretty dull going, but the prose of her nightmares is riveting. The former has all the mistiness of wish-fulfilment, the vagueness of fantasy, while to the latter is brought the vividness and immediacy of terrorized imagination.[1]

John Carey discusses Dickens' preference for sex-less, penniless, underage heroines and points out that

> what he finds so delicious, we should note, is female alarm...the male appetite needs to be whetted by the fearfulness of its prey. When the Dickensian maiden does exhibit any consciousness of sex, it's obligatory that it should strike her all of a quiver. Marrying a child is pleasurable; but

---

[1]Garrett Stewart, Dickens and the Trials of Imagination, p. 91.

marrying a frightened child more so.[1]

Given this as a general taste in Dickens,[2] The Old Curiosity Shop is a high point in what Dickens finds so "delicious." Nell is surely the most fearful of his heroines and Quilp is certainly the most menacingly libidinous. Monroe Engel says of Quilp that it is "interesting that one should have real sensations of sexual hazard in this clearly unrealistic novel as one doesn't in the far more realistic Dombey and Son when Carker exerts his supposedly snake-like fascination on Florence Dombey. Quilp is a genuine supernatural...."[3] Surely this feeling of Dickens for Nell as the "child" is more pertinent than Robert Pattison's suggestion that Nell as the "child" is the conscious use of a literary type:

> In The Old Curiosity Shop, Dickens is quite consciously using the child as an evocative literary device.... Throughout the story, he speaks not of Nell and her grandfather, but of 'the child' and the 'old man.' At this point in his career, Dickens was studying the basic structure which underlies the outward trappings of characterization, the ideas and sentiments which adhere to certain character types, and the uses to which they could be put.
>
> Clearly, the source and manipulation of the sentiment which surrounds the child figure was very much on Dickens's mind in creating little Nell. He had before him the sentimental examples of

---

[1]John Carey, The Violent Effigy, p. 167.

[2]Letters, Pilgrim, IV (7 August, 1846), 599. In a footnote to Dickens' letter to Forster, Maclise is quoted as having written to Forster, "I'm never up to his young girls--he is so very fond of the age of 'Nell' when they are most insipid--"

[3]Monroe Engel, "'A Kind of Allegory': The Old Curiosity Shop," Harvard English Studies (1970), p. 140.

> Wordsworth as well as the Augustinian tradition of child depiction represented by Gray, Blake, and Shakespeare. The finished characterization of Little Nell suggests that he used both strains of sentiment, fashioning them into a highly emotional literary vehicle by which his audience could be made not simply to understand his views on man's role in a fallen world, but to feel them as well.[1]

More than Nell's usefulness as an evocation of a literary type, but not exclusive of it, she appeals to Dickens on a more basic, less conscious level. Dickens relishes the childishness of Nell in the face of Quilp's desire for sexual violation. But her position is too dangerous, perhaps too painful for Dickens to sustain, so Nell escapes and goes off on her own separate narrative. Gabriel Pearson states that

> Contact with Quilp condenses her into the object of his grotesquely insolent and aggressively sexual humour. Dickens has to separate them; and this separation accounts for the sensational reverse in what has been valued in the novel. Certainly, it affects the whole structure. Devil and angel cannot be exposed to each other, let alone fused in one personality, without sending Dickens's whole moral cosmology crashing.[2]

In their flight, Nell and Grandfather pause to rest upon the bank of the river, and so they "slept side by side," when "A confused sound of voices, mingling with her dreams, awoke her. A man of very uncouth and rough appearance was standing over them" (43). Quilp

---

[1]Robert Pattison, The Child Figure in English Literature, p. 78-79.

[2]Pearson, op. cit., p. 85.

comes to her in her dreams, and now the bargemen come to her in dream: evil comes to Nell through her dreams, and her knowledge of evil seems restricted to her subconscious. A rather nightmarish apparition, this scene recalls Oliver asleep and waking to see Fagin at the beginning of chapter 9 in Oliver Twist. Far away from Quilp, Dickens irresistably leads Nell to these bargemen who quarrel over her, use her to entertain them, and make her sit up all night. Nell's predicament is reminiscent of Mrs. Quilp being made to sit up all night with Quilp. All that the latter scene has to sexually suggest reflects on Nell's vigil with the coarse bargemen, who "bestowed a variety of compliments, which, happily for the child, were conveyed in terms, to her quite unintelligible" (43). Not that she is sexually used as Dickens perhaps means to suggest with Mrs. Quilp, but that she is in ever-threatening sexual danger. And all the time Dickens refers to her with what I cannot help but feel is paedophilic relish, as child, child. Since Dickens reports that Nell, or rather the child, "happily" did not understand the compliments of the bargemen, we may take it that they were of a highly improper nature. Nell seems to get the jist of Quilp's compliments, which are improper enough, so with the bargemen Dickens seems to suggest the possibility of even more aggressively licentious response to Nell. The bargemen's response, like Quilp's is more than is necessary to fulfill the scheme of a child existing in "a kind of allegory...holding her solitary way among a crowd of wild grotesque companions."[1] Nell, apparently so

---

[1]This passage, not found in the text in Master Humphrey's Clock, was added in the first separate volume edition (1841) of The Old Curiosity Shop.

titillating in appearance seems an unusual image for purity and innocence or for the traditional literary vehicle of the child.

The lady at the race course seems to perceive Nell's danger as Nell passes through the crowd and is indiscreetly commented upon:

> There was but one lady who seemed to understand the child, and she was one who sat alone in a handsome carriage, while two young men in dashing clothes, who had just dismounted from it, talked and laughed loudly at a little distance, appearing to foret her, quite. There were many ladies all around, but they turned their backs, or looked another way, or at the two young men (not unfavourably at them), and left her to herself. She motioned away a gipsy woman urgent to tell her fortune, saying that it was told already and had been for some years, but called the child towards her, and taking her flowers put money into her trembling hand, and bade her go home and keep at home for God's sake. (19)

Innocence must cleave to the hearth, it cannot pass through the world without becoming tarnished as this lady is tarnished. As she does not "go home and keep at home," how will she escape the lady's fate? Dickens can find no alternative other than death. Gabriel Pearson notes that "Dickens protects Nell from sexuality by early sounding the mortuary note that is to keep her forever a child."[1]

John Noffsinger in discussing Dickens' confrontation of the problem of "sustaining a reality of innocence in the world of experience (23)" concludes that it is "through the motif of dream... that Dickens suggests a correlation between a subjective inner world and the world of objective reality," that "evil of the external world" even for the pure, can be experienced through dream. In the passage

---

[1]Ibid., p. 84-85.

describing Nell existing "in a kind of allegory," Noffsinger states that

> Nell assumes the meaning she has in relation to the inimical reality which surrounds her. But in this passage the reality is completely external. Dream insulates Nell from her environment and distances her from the effect of reality. Her existence 'in a kind of allegory' emphasizes the isolation of her spiritual condition. Nell 'smiling through her light and sunny dreams,' exists as an absolute reality, because these dreams do not internalize her immediate physical situation ...her world of dream is totally separated from the evil reality external to the self...Dickens soon introduces a new and crucial complexity into Nell's dream world--the gratuitous evil which the objects in the Curiosity Shop represent becomes internalized. Dickens mentions 'one of those hideous faces... which often mingled with her dreams' (Chapter 9). Dream no longer suffices to insulate Nell in her subjective world. The mechanism of dream as a mode of distancing Nell from reality inevitably breaks down, because Dickens locates the energy in Quilp and in the inimical world of external reality. The moment this predatory reality outside the mind is internalized, Nell's fate is inevitable. Dream as an insulating barrier between the inner and outer worlds is converted into dream as a mediator between these worlds.[1]

As in Oliver Twist, dream is the medium through which Dickens approaches the subconscious. Oliver has both good and bad things come to him through his dreams. The fearfulness of Fagin is off-set by the desirability of the Maylies. In The Old Curiosity Shop, as soon as Quilp erupts into the book, dream becomes all fearfulness. The act of opening the subconscious in Nell lets in only evil, but I do not agree with Noffsinger that evil is internalized in Nell, that Nell's

---

[1]John W. Noffsinger, "Dream in The Old Curiosity Shop," South Atlanta Bulletin, XLII (May 1977), 26.

innocence is qualified by her dreams of Grandfather's suicide or by the dream/vision of Quilp popping up unexpectedly in the remote country village. Noffsinger believes that

> Those who insist on viewing Nell as a passionless embodiment of purity must eventually come to terms with such passages....The appearance of the dwarf attests to an essentially Quilpian aspect of Nell's mind.[1]

I believe that Quilp and Nell are separate aspects of the same personality or consciousness, Dickens' personality. The fact that evil comes to Nell through dream, through the subconscious, demonstrates that it is only through dream or the subconscious state that the dutiful, respectable, super-ego aspect of the mind has an extended knowledge of the other. This Quilpish aspect of personality is threatening, it threatens internalization or integration, and Quilp certainly seeks it, symbolized by his desire for violation, but the aspect of mind symbolized by Nell rejects it every time, flees from it; her death is the very thing that testifies to the inability of the personality to successfully integrate the two. Sex, which is in this book interpreted as evil, can come to Nell through her dreams; she has a subconscious knowledge of it, but she cannot come to grips with it in real-life. Monroe Engel states that "Nell is a product of Dickens' deepest psychic trouble, a <u>todlust</u> that is absolutely joined to his incapacity to connect love and sexuality."[2] The innocent, loving,

---

[1]Ibid., p. 27.

[2]Engel, op. cit., p. 143.

familial aspect of the personality cannot internalize the sexual impulse no matter how vital: Nell pursued by her dreams can only die to escape.

Toward the end of the novel, Kit experiences evil (Quilp) in the same dream-like way as Nell. Kit on his way to jail,

> ...sat gazing out of the coach window, almost hoping to see some monstrous phenomenon in the streets which might give him reason to believe he was in a dream. Alas! Everything was too real and familiar.... Dream-like as the story was, it was true...when all at once, as though it had been conjured up by magic, he became aware of the face of Quilp (60).

Knowing what we know of Quilp in his relationship to Nell, this incident reinforces the notion of Quilp as a demon from the world of dream. In jail the remembrance of Nell is likened to a "beautiful dream" (61); thus, Quilp and Nell are polarized as aspects of Kit's subconscious.

In all the commentary I have read on The Old Curiosity Shop, critics are quick to see the similarities between Dickens and one or more of the main characters in the novel. Marcus points out that Nell is more than just an image of Mary Hogarth, but is also an image of Dickens himself.[1] He identifies his childhood suffering with Nell's hardships, her innocence with his innocence, and his desire to forgive the parental figure with all the impressiveness of martyrdom, and at the same time to condemn the parent by the exposure of selfishness and to punish the parent by inflicting the pain of the child's death--all of these desires go into Nell's relationship to the grandfather.

---

[1]Marcus, op. cit., p. 132-133.

Marcus also sees that "a certain quality of his feeling for her [Mary Hogarth] while she was alive resembled Heathcliff's--and Quilp's.[1] A. E. Dyson says that "it is no new observation to point to similarities between Quilp and his creator, but Quilp could indeed be a partial self-portrait, Quilpishly drawn. His ogrish geniality is close to Dickens's."[2] Garrett Stewart draws an analogy between Dick Swiveller's "figurative and poetical" imagination and Dickens'. Dick's rosy wine, his apartments, his "blind belief in the bookcase" and such occasions of "pleasant fiction" become "an image of Dickens's own house of fiction, which you must enter on the proprietor's own terms, generous as they are demanding."[3]

We are accustomed to Dickens' identifying self with the child in his novels but in no other novel does Dickens create so many self-portraits. Nell, Quilp, and Dick Swiveller are not so much fully developed single characters as they are elements of one personality. The divided self, the conflict among contradictory impulses has many instances in literature and is later to become a very explicit preoccupation of Dickens in the characters of Bradley Headstone and John Jasper. Because Nell is an aspect of Dickens himself, the uncontrolled sexual desire is in conflict with this other aspect or image of himself. Nell is that in the mind that bows to the authority of God, morality, and public and private duty, but such high minded sub-

---

[1]Ibid., p. 154.

[2]A. E. Dyson, "The Old Curiosity Shop," Dickens Modern Judgements, p. 65.

[3]Stewart, op. cit., xxiii.

mission is in constant danger from Quilp, from that in the mind that is totally self-indulgent, that seeks and demands instant sensual gratification. This is surely a universal conflict, not one limited to Dickens' own psychology. In this instance, there is no compromise made between the two, for no adjustment of the mind can balance the two. Further, Dickens associates with Nell a lack of vitality, a graveyard creeping, death-embracing denial of life: for some reason she is essentially self-destructive. We may well ask ourselves why there is nothing in this submission to convention, to respectability, to duty, but suicide? When Nell is given a bed of ashes by the side of a furnace, she "lay and dreamed" (44), but partially waking, "She lay in the state between sleeping and waking, looking so long" (44) at the man who has given her this bed and protection that she rises and speaks to him and hears his story. At the end of the strange story Nell returns to her slumbers. Nell's "state betwen sleeping and waking" evokes such states described in Oliver Twist. Nell begins her final decline as the horror of the industrial town seems to break her. Through her eyes the scenes she walks among take on a truly night-marish dimension:

> Advancing more and more into the shadow of this mournful place, its dark depressing influence stole upon their spirits, and filled them with a dismal gloom. On every side, and far as the eye could see into the heavy distance, tall chimneys, crowding on each other, and presenting that endless repetition of the same dull, ugly, form, which is the horror of oppressive dreams, poured out their plague of smoke, obscured the light, and made foul the melancholy air. (45, Italics mine)

"Endless repetition," is found in "oppressive dreams." How much of Nell's story is not an endless repetition of unhappiness, how much is

not an "oppressive dream?" This particular oppressive dream is capable of "blasting all things living or inanimate" (45), and it certainly seems to blast Nell, for she never recovers from this experience. If we equate sexuality with the furnace fire, we can see this episode as the crystallization of Nell's predicament: the fire that is necessary, that encourages life, but also the fire that is dangerous, that destroys as it destroys the furnace man's parents; all the ambiguity that follows the sexuality in this novel is present in the fire. And it is the industrial fires that create the landscape of the "oppressive dream," "blasting all things living or inanimate," just as the fear of sexuality, and Quilp's pursuit create the oppressive dream of Nell's life and keeps her always fleeing, escaping. The hopelessness of resolving the ambiguity of the fire indicates the same hopelessness of resolving the sexual ambiguity. Noffsinger points out that

> In order to rescue Nell's subjective world from the assault by reality, Dickens must paradoxically remove her from experience altogether, and hence from dream as well: 'There are no dreams here in the village. Tis a quiet place, and they keep away' (OCS, chapter 54). Dickens thus climaxes his use of the motif of dream by characterizing death as 'dreamless sleep." Only by depicting a death which approximates sleep and is disassociated from dream can Dickens allow Nell to recapture her original uncorrupted innocence:
>
> > She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death. (OCS, chapter 71)[1]

---

[1]Noffsinger, op. cit., p. 29-30.

Quilp, on the other hand, has no sense of duty to family, he knows no standards of morality, and bows not to convention and respectability; he addresses the world through the cold voice of satire, unredeemed by social concern, and he may indulge himself in violence and malice at will. This is all subsumed under the leading element he embodies, the pure unrestrained life-affirming sexual impulse. The conscience of Nell is too firmly ingrained in Dickens, to some extent as conscience is ingrained in us all, to accept Quilpishness as an alternative, but yet Quilpishness holds a great attraction for us no less than Dickens. Dickens is in the ambiguous position of associating everything negative and self-destructive with what he must praise as Good and Beautiful, and associating the positive, vital, and life-affirming with what he must condemn as Evil and Ugly.

John Carey gives many instances of how Dickens' dual nature asserts itself:

> once we come to recognize this sinister doubleness or reversibility which lurks within even Dickens's snuggest images of orders and security, we shall find it easier to understand how the writer who craves for a bird bride in a ship-shape home, is also the writer who needs to celebrate destruction and anarchy.[1]

Carey sees Quilp as "self-criticism and emancipation from the cant and sentimentality that were always threatening to kill Dickens' art."[2] And I think there is that in the negative aspect of Nell and the positive aspect of Quilp that unwittingly criticizes that part of Dickens that is Nell and the cosy domestic ~~charters~~ characters that are made from her

---

[1] Carey, op. cit., p. 46.

[2] Ibid., p. 28.

mold, and rejoices in that part that is Quilp and the chaotic violence of the villains. One of my justifications for going into the aspects of Dickens' mind here is not only to explore how Dickens' imagination works in the early novels, the freedom it gains from conscious direction, but also to prove that Nell comes from the subconscious mind his imagination gives light and shape to no less than Quilp. And, although we feel that the Nells in his work are unsuccessful creations compared to the Quilps, this is no reason to think that the duty and domestic virtue is less an aspect of his nature and less a part of his imagination than violence and destruction. The sentimentality that mars these domestic characters springs from that sense of ambiguity explored in this novel: the sneaking suspicion of an element of deadness in convention, and the vitality of violence and sexuality. Such ambiguity he attempts to hide even from himself by the sentimentality associated with the Nells and the retributive deaths forced on his villains. He could not have created Quilp had it not been for Nell.

The Old Curiosity Shop was not the last time Dickens was to explore character duality. He came back to it most explicitly in his last and unfortunately, unfinished novel, The Mystery of Edwin Drood. Jasper leads a double life, is a split personality. He leads a dutiful, decent life of choir-master, music teacher, artist, and loving benevolent guardian to his young ward. Counterpointing this respectable self is another secret self that indulges in an opium induced dream existence, violently murders his ward, and sexually threatens his music pupil. He, himself, confesses of his respectable conventional life, that "The cramped monotony of my existence grinds me away

by the grain." (2).[1] In Bradley Headstone of Our Mutual Friend and in John Jasper the conscious split between decency and gratification is seen in one character. Dickens finally allows the two sides to mix, allows a man to live two lives, but the integration is not a success; it confirms all of Dickens's worst fears: the Quilpish violence and sexual impulse takes possession of Jasper and Headstone and dominates and destroys all principles of duty and decency. Even though he admits the self-destructive element in a life devoted to duty and decency, in the inability to reconcile the two aspects of a man's nature, presented in his characterization of the suicidal Nell and in Jasper's confession that the respectable life grinds him away by the grain, he also sees that the life dominated by the sexual impulse is equally destructive. If Dickens had finished his last novel along the plans indicated by Forster, Jasper would have been seen as a finally destroyed man, destroyed through his own violence. (Sex is always linked with violence.) In Jasper, the artistic and creative element that is also a part of him has rather sinister implications. Treated quite differently in The Old Curiosity Shop, the creative element is connected to or stimulated by Jasper's violent side. Immediately before "he goes up the postern stair" (14) to meet Landless and Drood for the last time, Dickens comments on Jasper's performance at the Cathedral service that "he has never sung difficult music with such skill and harmony." Mr. Crisparkle is moved to compliment him and thank him for the pleasure his singing has given: "'Beautiful!

---

[1]Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, ed. Margaret Cardwell (Clarendon Edition), 1972.

Delightful! You could not have so outdone yourself, I hope, without being wonderfully well (14).'" But in The Old Curiosity Shop creativity is totally unconnected with Quilp or with Nell. Violence does not stimulate creativity any more than the life of decency. And both Quilp and Nell are represented in terms of moribund and disillusioning art through Punch and the wax-works. Quilp's source, Punch, is a popular art figure who disillusions Codlin because instead of being Codlin's slave, subject to his whim and amusement as one might expect from the illusion created by the puppet show, Punch subjects Codlin to servitude:

> whereas he had been last night accosted by Mr. Punch as 'master,' and had by inference left the audience to understand that he maintained that individual for his own luxurious entertainment and delight, here he was, now, painfully walking beneath the burden of that same Punch's temple (17).

Who controls whom? Linking Punch to Quilp by using Punch as a source for Quilp, Dickens may very well be asking the same question about his relationship to Quilp. Nominally the master, Dickens may create the illusion or "delusion" as Codlin says, that he controls Quilp, but I think Dickens is beset with the worry that Quilp or Quilpishness may in fact too much control his creator. Has Quilp popped out of the imagination bringing with him all sorts of unpleasant suggestions, making Dickens distrust his imagination? Punch's initial appearance in the graveyard supports Marcus' argument that art represented in Punch and the wax-works is joined to symbols of death, and is therefore an expression of Dickens' "troubled apprehension that the illusion of

art has lost something of its power to gratify."[1] The emission, or perhaps the escape of Quilp from the imagination does trouble Dickens. Like Codlin's concern for his art, Dickens' concern is with the problem of control in his art. For me, Punch's association with death in the graveyard reflects Quilp's end and reflects Dickens' belief that Quilp and that side of his author he embodies leads only to destruction and is unconnected with Dickens' positive creative side; and as Garrett Stewart points out, "in all this overlap between the style of Quilp and his author, we are to notice a satirical common ground, not an artistic or creative one."[2] Nell is very similar to the wax-works she works and sleeps among. Mrs.Jarley says of her collection, "'I won't go so far as to say, that, as it is, I've seen wax-work quite like life, but I've certainly seen some life that was exactly like wax-work (27).'" Too much associated with death, Nell is not an image "'quite like life,'" and the nearest she can come to being an image of life is life that is "'exactly like wax-work.'" As art, Nell and the wax-works are life-less images; they may initially fool and perplex, but ultimately the viewer recognises the delusion. I do not think Dickens is making this negative comment on his art in general. One has only to compare Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness to Nell and the wax-works to see how little like wax-work are Dickens' comic characters. But with Nell (and this reflects on the heroes and heroines that follow her) the wax-works present the problem in yet

---

[1]Marcus, op. cit., p. 147.

[2]Stewart, op. cit., p. 94.

another way of the lack of vitality often found in his art. Not only do Quilp and Nell lead to death and self-destruction, for surely they destroy themselves, Nell through wish-fulfillment and Quilp through his own malice, but in their association with Punch and the wax-works, they are expressions of Dickens' doubt in his art, doubts about control and about lack of vitality. Creativity is the opposite to the self-destruction both Quilp and Nell engage in; and although they are definitely part of his imagination, they are kept quite separate from his "figurative and poetical" imagination that is devoted to making life in his fiction "'more real and pleasant'" (57), as Dick Swiveller says.

Marcus' comparison of Heathcliff to Quilp has already been mentioned. He observes that both are

> demons, alien spirits trapped in human form. Both seem to be embodiments of natural elements. Both are incomplete and seek complementary beings through whom their energies can be expressed. Both are consecreted to destruction and both are violently destroyed.[1]

Let me extend this analogy with Wuthering Heights by observing that Nell is as fittingly analogous to the Lintons as Quilp is to Heathcliff. The Lintons and Nell represent convention, respectability, gentleness, decency, but they are also non-vital and death-doomed. Cathy says that her love for Linton is like the "'foliage in the woods'" on a tree while Heathcliff is like the "'eternal rocks beneath.'"[2] And certainly, in the pastoral images associated with

---

[1]Marcus, op. cit., p. 154.

[2]Emily Brontë, Wuthering Heights, p. 97.

Nell, and her movement from summer to winter, her life is as delicate and doomed as foliage on a tree. In the character of Cathy as in The Old Curiosity Shop there is no synthesis between the two elements; the inability to integrate or reconcile the two results in death for Cathy, and here again, we meet self-destruction, for Cathy wills her death, as does Nell, as does Heathcliff. Unity is impossible: "'My soul's bliss kills my body but does not satisfy itself.'"[1] The creative impulse in Emily Brontë may be said to rest upon the tension between the two opposites, and so may the creative impulse behind The Old Curiosity Shop be found in the tension between Nell and Quilp. The reader sees the creative impulse but Dickens is concerned in locating and defining his own creativity in quite a separate place in the novel: in Dick Swiveller, quite distinct from Quilp and Nell, their self-destruction, and the conflict between them.

Dick Swiveller is the artist; he alone is associated with creativity. Dickens takes drab reality and through the agency of the imagination or fancy makes it "'more real and pleasant (57).'" As Garrett Stewart remarks, when Dick calls the small servant, the Marchioness, "To make it seem more real and pleasant,'" he creates her:

> this is a romantic daydream in which the 'real' and the 'pleasant' can be willed at once into conjunction; yet at the same time it bespeaks a mature faith in the possibilities of a better world, a faith nurtured in the love of poetry, where the real and the pleasant, truth and beauty, do regularly coincide. Here, domesticated and made comic, is a true Romantic poet's faith in the sustaining power of imagination...his language has become truly 'creative.' And by his creation he is

---

[1] Ibid., p. 402.

> saved. When his imagination turns feverish it is the Marchioness, this child of his fancy, who nurses him back to health, and we are thereby presented in a highly indirect but moving way, an image of fancy as salvation.[1]

Noffsinger points out that "Swiveller also experiences the evil of the external world through dream; like Nell's vision, Swiveller's is an explicitly Quilpian one:

> Tossing to and fro upon his hot, uneasy bed; tormented by a fierce thirst which nothing could appease; unable to find, in any change of posture, a moment's peace or ease; and rambling for ever through deserts of thought were there was no resting-place, no sight or sound suggestive of refreshment or repose, nothing but a dull eternal weariness, with no change but the restless shiftings of his miserable body, and the weary wandering of his mind, constant still to one ever-present anxiety...darkening every vision like an evil conscience, and making a slumber horrible; in these slow tortures of his dread disease, the unfortunate Richard lay wasting and consuming inch by inch, until at last, when he seemed to fight and struggle to rise up, and to be held down by devils, he sank into a deep sleep, and dreamed no more. (64)

The dark night of the soul is for Swiveller an insight into the nature of reality, but his appropriation of the world enlightens rather than corrupts."[2] Dick is saved from his evil dream because, as an image of Dickens' creativity, he is a "liverer." In the single most truly poetic line and moment in Dickens' fiction, the child of fancy banishes doubt and death, and affirms redemption when she cries out, "'I'm so glad you're better, Mr. Liverer'" (64). The conflict between

---

[1]Stewart, op. cit., p. 105.

[2]Noffsinger, op. cit., p. 32.

Quilp and Nell can never be resolved, and Dickens allows them to go their separate ways, to their inevitable deaths. Garrett Stewart points out that in the chronology of the novel, they die at the same time, as if they were two parts of one character.[1] In their deaths, Dickens separates himself from them and perhaps from the personal conflict they have reference to along with the problems in his art this conflict creates. Dickens and Dick go down to the dark cave of the kitchen as to the dark depths of the mind, find a vague, indistinct, shapeless Nobody; they name her, create her and bring her into the light of fancy. Quilp and Nell are products of the imagination, but it is the process of the imagination in the act of creating through language that Dickens celebrates in Dick. Dickens and Dick undergo a crisis in the novel; death hangs about Dick as death hangs about Dickens in the story he tells. But both find redemption and life through the imagination, but it is the imagination not as it is sometimes directed to the murderous and violent, but the imagination as it is directed to what is joyous, positive, beautiful and comic. The relationship between Dick and the Marchioness so perfectly illustrates that relationship betwen Dickens and the imagination that creates the best and most joyous in his art. Dick creates the Marchioness as Dickens creates Mr. Pickwick, Sam Weller, Captain Cuttle, Betsy Trotwood, the Micawbers and all the other characters we may individually respond to with the most warmth, knowing that in them is something unique that Dickens alone could create.

---

[1] Stewart, op. cit., p. 98.

Garrett Stewart points out a curious passage in which Dick Swiveller is the dreamer; Stewart remarks that

> though Dick's consciousness is derivative, his subconscious mind is revealed as oddly creative. When he falls asleep over his writing desk at the Brass's from the intolerable monotony of his clerkly chores, the dry and mindless copying, he begins to write in his sleep 'divers strange words in an unknown character with his eyes shut'--a remarkable image of the dreamer transcribing his own unconscious fantasies.[1]

Here in this self-portrait of the creative Dickens gives us an image of his own transcription of his subconscious. He seems to be not only aware of the freedom of the imagination from conscious control, but aware of the imagination transcribing the subconscious; and this he represents as dream.

The obvious influence of The Old Curiosity Shop on Dostoevsky's novel The Insulted and Injured (1861) has been commented on by several critics.[2] That Dickens was of continuing interest to Dostoevsky is evidenced by his explicit reference to Nell and The Old Curiosity Shop in a drunken scene in the late novel, The Raw Youth (1875).[3] The question of influence and similarity is a large and interesting subject. Of interest in terms of this thesis is the shared concern with alienation and with the dreamer. In Dostoevsky, as Donald Fanger

---

[1] Ibid., p. 105.

[2] Most recently L. MacPike in Dostoevky's Dickens: A Study of Literary Influence, 1981, gives the most detailed analysis of the ways in which The Insulted and Injured mirrors The Old Curiosity Shop.

[3] Kenneth Klotz, "Dostoevsky and The Old Curiosity Shop," Yale University Library Gazette, L (April 1976), 237.

points out, isolation is an unavoidable condition of the dreamer; both are tied to his understanding of the "frightening urban phenomena" of the "underground man."[1] Dickens, too, was concerned by the alienating effect of urbanization.[2] Nell's isolation, both in the city and the country, certainly contributes to her dreaminess, particularly the morbid dreaminess of her "uneasy dreams"--the morbid nightmares of Quilp, and the still more unhealthy dreams of the little scholar. Though Dickens does not deliberately try to make Nell's isolation essentially an urban phenomenon (her isolation is more an aspect of her personal pathology), her flight from the city to the country establishes a moral polarity that condemns the city. As early as the forties (and Kenneth Klotz convincingly argues that Dostoevsky first read the French translation of The Old Curiosity Shop in the forties)[3] Dostoevsky writes of the dreamer in White Nights and, as Fanger puts it, the fervor of the hero's dreams condemns him to

> an ever deepening solitude [and the discovery] that solitude may be at the same time an unavoidable and an untenable way of life, that the appetites it encloses do not wither, but only turn inward, consuming the ego and issuing in masochism and 'dark subterranean loathsome--not vice, but petty vice.'[4]

Not only did Dostoevsky have the example of Master Humphrey's

---

[1]Donald Fanger, Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol, p. 167.

[2]See Fanger's discussion of "The Community of Myth," p. 258, for an excellent discussion of Dickens' and Dostoevsky's attitudes toward the city.

[3]Klotz, op. cit., p. 239.

[4]Fanger, op. cit., p. 178.

dreaming, and Nell's solitude, dreaminess and morbidity--and her death-wish can certainly be termed masochistic--but he had the example of Pickwick Papers, which Dostoevsky admired very much, and which offers many examples, as I have pointed out, in the interpolated tales of crime, vice and madness growing out of isolation. But the villains of the interpolated tales are not dreamers. The dreamer for Dostoevsky came to be a type appearing repeatedly in his work; his dreamers are visionary, connected to a mysticism in Dostoevsky that was in no way influenced or shared by Dickens. The dreamer in Dostoevsky was consciously used as a vehicle often carrying his moral and spiritual vision, but the dreamer in Dickens was not so deliberately used; as Nell and Oliver dream, so Dickens writes--free association is unavoidably suggested. Oliver and Nell, both dreamers, are symbols of his own psychic centre, just as the dreamer is for Dostoevsky a symbol of his own tormented visionary experience. Did Dostoevsky recognise this in Dickens and did it pave the way for his own use of the novel in exploring such personal inner truths?

Albert Guerard writes that "The splitting of one character into two or more, all of them substantially real--a splitting that is sometimes conscious on the author's part, sometimes not--is perhaps the central movement of the Dostoevskyan creative process."[1] Some sort of splitting of Dickens' psyche is the central movement of the creative process in The Old Curiosity Shop, and I am struck by the similarity in the triple split self-portraits of Dostoevsky and

---

[1]Albert Guerard, The Triumph of the Novel: Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Faulkner, p. 35.

Dickens in The Brothers Karamozov and The Old Curiosity Shop. In Alyosha Karamozov we find that side of Dostoevsky that is devoutly Christian. In Dmitri is the passionate, sexual, reckless and violent Dostoevsky with not a little of that element of self-destruction capable of ruinous gambling and child molestation. And in Ivan is the writer, aloof, critical, searching for truth and full of the torment of religious doubt. As elements we find: the sexuality, vitality and violence of Quilp in Mitya; in Alyosha, the family duty, decency and morality of Nell, but with all that is truly spiritual and Christian in Alyosha that Dickens tries and fails to give Nell; Ivan corresponds to Dick Swiveller only insofar as Ivan is a writer and Dick creates through language. The conflict of a divided self is a universal concern, Victorian as well as Czarist Russian.

Though in my discussion of The Old Curiosity Shop novel I have advanced a few suggestions of what is hidden behind the stock melodramatic pattern and the sentimentality displayed, there is much about this novel that remains elusive and ambiguous. And like many fabulous and memorable dreams, the images themselves are far greater than what they symbolize. Dickens was not concerned only with his own psyche, and so there is always something general, universal and recognizable about what is happening that makes this novel and, in my opinion, Oliver Twist and David Copperfield mythic, while Nicholas Nickleby, Dombey & Son, Barnaby Rudge and Martin Chuzzlewit are not mythic. Although these last named novels are early novels, all having more or less that freedom of the imagination moving in them that we associate with Dickens' early work, yet they do not share this relationship of

the author's subconscious with his reader's. The medium through which we connect is perhaps the dream, in any case, it is through the dream that Dickens frees himself and the reader from an objective reality and makes it possible to explore buried themes, buried in Dickens and buried in his readers: insecurity and isolation in Oliver Twist; sexuality and violence in The Old Curiosity Shop; both in David Copperfield; in all three the inability to grow up. All three novels employ the pattern of the child against the villain, and the villains involved are the most memorable, the most frightening of all Dickens' many villains.

CHAPTER THREE:

Structural Unity in David Copperfield: The Pattern and the Obsession

Oliver Twist and The Old Curiosity Shop demonstrate that Dickens' concern with isolation and sexuality is far from being merely a convenient technical organization in his novels. David Copperfield is something of a pinnacle in the use of the conventional melodramatic pattern--villain versus hero and heroine--for in this novel he uses this standard pattern in a highly developed technical way at the same time as he, consciously or subconsciously, allows the pattern to be obliquely autobiographical. The pattern both reveals and conceals; as it does in Oliver Twist and in The Old Curiosity Shop; and in David Copperfield the thematic significance of isolation and sexuality are combined. As Philip Collins puts it in his discussion of David Copperfield as "'A Very Complicated Interweaving of Truth and Fiction,'" the novel is "a queer mixture of reticence and the urge to confide..."[1]

David Copperfield follows David from childhood to adulthood, but it never ceases to have that primary care of childhood, the family

---

[1]Philip Collins, "David Copperfield: 'A Very Complicated Interweaving of Truth and Fiction,'" Essays and Studies (1970), p. 74.

life, as its major concern; consequently, romantic love, in this particular novel, takes a secondary position to family life. Indeed, the former value is celebrated only in so far as it contributes to the latter. The first thirteen chapters are applauded for being so true of childhood. But David cannot stay a child forever. Chronologically he matures but Dickens does not convince us that the remainder of the novel deals with David's adulthood and maturity. We are disappointed that Dickens fails to give us a sense of himself as an adult as he so admirably does as a child. But if we come looking for the autobiography, we will find it in the disappointing ending just as surely as we find it in the brilliant beginning. We may fail to find Dickens' energy and the motivation for the creative ability in David, but we find in the novel's overall design the essence of his personal disappointment and desire.

Much has been written about this well-loved novel and as Gordon Hirsch points out, critics have been roughly divided between two camps: "moralistic" critics, Gwendolyn Needham, George Ford, Sylvere Monod, Jerome Buckley, who are concerned with "David's growth, learning, and personal development toward a mature, adult state in which the 'undisciplined heart' will no longer hold sway," and the traditional psychoanalytic critics, Jack Lindsay, Leonard Manheim, Mark Spilka, and E. Pearlman, who have focused

> too narrowly on David's Oedipus complex--on the way in which Mr. Murdstone, the sexualized parent, cuts David off from the exclusive search for an image of the mother that he can possess, a search that finds expression in both his marriage choices, Dora Spenlow and Agnes Wickfield.

Hirsch calls for "a course between the Scylla of moralism and the Charybdis of Oedipal reductivism."[1] (Hirsch's course I shall discuss later.) It is true that neither the purely moralistic or psychoanalytic approach is very satisfying in explaining Dickens' achievement in David Copperfield. Barbara Hardy makes the important point in her discussion of the novel's "unevenness" that while the moralistic theme of the "undisciplined heart" is certainly there it is not one of the novel's strengths.[2] And as much as I object to the pettish tone of F.R. Leavis' attack on the "American" psychoanalytical approach, I must agree that it can come dangerously close to explaining "away Dickens's creative oeuvre as the uncontrolled product of childhood obsession."[3] In this chapter I shall be looking at a connection between the early part about David and the remainder of the novel, a structural unity, that is both thematic as well as reverberatingly obsessive.

The elements of the design, villain versus hero, isolation versus community or family life, sexuality versus romantic love, had been floating around in the earlier loosely organized novels, but in David Copperfield, Dickens gathers up these elements and with great organizational control utilizes them to the best thematic advantage. But

---

[1]Gordon D. Hirsch, "A Psychoanalytic Rereading of David Copperfield," Victorian Newsletter, LVIII (Fall 1980), 1.

[2]Gwendolyn B. Needham thoroughly discusses this theme of "The Undisciplined Heart of David Copperfield," in Nineteenth Century Fiction, IX (Sept. 1954), 81-107. Barbara Hardy has one of the best essays, balancing the novel's weaknesses with its strengths, in her book, The Moral Art of Dickens, 1970, p. 122-138.

[3]F. R. and Q. D. Leavis, Dickens the Novelist, 1970, p. x.

the design which has already served its apprenticeship becomes personal in ways Dickens may not have been aware. Mark Spilka comments that David Copperfield has a "surface charged with baffling implications."[1]

"'Never,'" says Betsy Trotwood, "'be mean in anything; never be false; never be cruel. Avoid these three vices, Trot, and I can always be hopeful of you'"(15). Embodying meanness, falseness, and cruelty, which David must identify and reject in the course of his growth, the villains, Heep, Steerforth, and Murdstone follow a pattern in David Copperfield that gives the novel a structural organization that shapes theme. Not flat, crude allegorical figures, these villains are intensely realized individuals; yet it is to a great extent the elaborate detail and completeness in which their own particular vice is worked out that makes them live in our imaginations as especially fiendish. Dickens speaks of his own use of symbol and belief in a polar morality in the Preface to the Third Edition of Oliver Twist:

> I confess I have yet to learn that a lesson of the purest good may not be drawn from the vilest evil ...In this spirit, when I wished to show in little Oliver the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance and triumphing at last, and when I considered among what companions I could try him best ... I bethought myself of those who figure in these volumes.[2]

As Oliver and the heroes and heroines that follow him, stand for the

---

[1]Mark Spilka, "David Copperfield as Psychological Fiction," Critical Quarterly, I (Winter 1959), 292.

[2]Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist, ed. Kathleen Tillotson (Clarendon Edition), 1966, p. lxi.

"principle of Good" so the villains stand for the principle of Evil. Pecksniff, embodying hypocrisy, paves the way for the particularization of evil in David Copperfield. Goodness itself is given some particularization. It is family life, particularly the parent-child relationship, that is being celebrated; and in a system of polar morality what better opposite evil to "try" the home with its qualities of affectionate kindness, fidelity, and nobility than the home-wreckers, cruel, false, and mean? The allegory of Oliver Twist, "Good surviving through every adverse circumstance and triumphing at last," is alive and well in David Copperfield, but how much more complexly particularized and integrated in the narrative.

At the level of the story in which we respond emotionally to the fight between good and evil do we also respond to something archetypically mythic in the villains?[1] Who is it that chases us through the dark alleys of nightmare? Dickens has already given vivid expression to these subliminal fears with Fagin and Oliver and with Quilp and Nell. The threat of isolation explored in Oliver Twist, and sexuality explored in The Old Curiosity Shop are combined in David Copperfield and directed towards home and security, so supremely important to our psyches. The three villains give dramatic realization to our childhood fears that our families will be destroyed and that we will be cast out and alone like David and Emily, like Dickens himself. In Oliver Twist and The Old Curiosity Shop, the reader responds to and

---

[1]John Holloway gives a good discussion on symbolism and the archetypal in Dickens' work in his essay, "Dickens and the Symbol," Dickens 1970, ed. Michael Slater, 1970).

subliminally understands the themes explored through the agency of dream. The dreamwork Dickens creates frees Dickens and the reader from an objective reality making a connection between Dickens' subconscious and the reader's possible. But after The Old Curiosity Shop dreams and the fantastic, while they continue to appear in the novels that follow, are not allowed their previous freedom. At the time Dickens wrote David Copperfield he had become more concerned with artistic control and more conscious planning and organization in his work. True to his growing consciousness as an artist, he develops the theme of David's growth, maturity, and "disciplined heart." But, however it may have come about in the creative process, memory takes the place that dreamwork occupied in Oliver Twist and The Old Curiosity Shop--not to say that there are not some important dreams in David Copperfield which I shall be discussing--creating a subjective reality which allows the buried fears, vision, and preoccupations of childhood to take hold of Dickens and his readers. Robin Gilmour, giving credit to the earlier interest of George Ford and Kathleen Tillotson in the subject of time and memory, discusses the importance of the rhythm of memory as a unifying factor. But he makes the point that the prudential morality of the disciplined heart is subverted by the rhythm of the narrator's memory.[1] John McGowan calls our

---

[1]Robin Gilmour, "Memory in David Copperfield," Dickensian, LXXI (Jan. 1975), 31. Gilmour points out that "throughout the book there runs an undercurrent of loss and sadness: there is the death of David's mother at the hands of the Murdstones, the destruction of the Yarmouth household by Steerforth . . . We are made constantly aware, in reading David Copperfield, of the 'deep of Time' and of all the intractable tragic elements in life that cannot be finally understood in terms of the prudential morality of the disciplined heart. This awareness serves to counterbalance the success-story element in the novel, and I would suggest that it is established for us by the rhythm of the narrator's memory."

attention to the similarity between the images of dream and memory and discusses the subordination of dream to memory in David Copperfield, and Dickens' attempts to give both a perceptual accuracy that will lend memory "realism." McGowan's conclusion is that Dickens himself realized that the realism "thematized as the maturation of the 'undisciplined heart'" was not a success.[1] I do not have the space here to develop the discussion of memory in David Copperfield, but I would like to suggest that if we see "the long rhythm of Copperfield's memory"[2] as the creation of a subjective reality from which stems the great vitality and appeal of the novel, we can understand more fully why the objective reality, the "realism" insisted upon as David's maturity falls flat. It does not succeed because it is at odds with the subjective life created and insisted upon by David's memory, the rhythms or patterns of which establish David's reluctance, if not inability to grow up and mature. William T. Lankford articulates this when he says that

> David Copperfield is not so much about growing up as about looking back, a novel of memory rather than of progress, and the potential irony in the double position of the narrator of a fictional autobiography as he remembers himself in the past tends therefore to be subordinated to the sentiment of participating again in the past remembered.[3]

Not only is the theme of the disciplined heart subverted by the memory, but the way in which Dickens develops the theme establishes an

---

[1] John McGowan, "David Copperfield: The Trial of Realism," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXXIV (June 1979), 1-9.

[2] Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, p. 129.

[3] William T. Lankford, "'The Deep of Time': Narrative Order in David Copperfield," E.L.H. XLVI (Fall 1979), 453.

inherent contradiction within it. Jerome Buckley makes a statement about this theme that hints at the problem:

> As in Annie's use of the term, describing the possible appeal of Maldon, the undisciplined heart is clearly associated with wayward sensuality, which is so central to a number of relationships as to constitute a major theme in the novel.[1]

David's growth and maturity (the disciplining of his heart) constitutes a rejection of not just "wayward sensuality" but sensuality or adult sexuality altogether. If the disciplining of one's heart is based on rejection of the sexual element of life how then does this constitute maturity? That this theme as it is developed in the novel is at odds with itself is more clearly seen in the example of Annie Strong. Her eventual appreciative acceptance of her marriage to an old man is more a frightened avoidance of physical passion (certainly an essential aspect of adult love), rather than a mature attainment of adult love. This chapter will demonstrate how David rejects sexuality and how David's marriage to Agnes, the supposed crowning achievement in the disciplining of his heart, does not constitute the achievement of adult love. The themes that are developed through the pattern of the villains' disruption of homes are more satisfying than the theme of the undisciplined heart as a unifying thematic structure because they rise directly out of David's subjective vision, and the indulgent participation in a past from which he cannot move forward.

John Butt was the first critic to point out that in "a repetition of a leading motif" each of the villains in the novel is a

---

[1]Jerome H. Buckley, Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding, p. 38.

"shadow cast upon a scene of domestic happiness."[1] This statement needs some qualification as the Wickfield home is not quite a "scene of domestic happiness," but in this home lies the most pronounced example of the seeds of weakness found in all three domestic situations that gives the villain his chance for destruction.

Vereen M. Bell comments that "each of the retreats (the Rookery, the boathouse, the cottage at Dover) is finally destroyed in effect by forces from the outside, and David matures, reluctantly, as each is left behind."[2] I would add the Wickfields' home in Canterbury to the list of destroyed retreats and question David's maturity as he goes from retreat to retreat. Two critics since then (1979 and 1980) have come forward to particularize the "forces from the outside," and to argue a structural organization of the novel based on the villains. Michael Miller argues that the book does not fall into "two distinct and unsatisfactorily joined parts, the first treating David's childhood, the second his adolescence and young manhood" by virtue of the similarities between David's relationship to Murdstone in the first half of the novel, and David's relationship to Heep in the second half:

> Of fundamental importance among the connections between Murdstone and Heep is the basic cause of their respective conflict with David. David's entire struggle with recalcitrant reality is early given form and intensity in his rivalry with Murdstone for Mrs. Copperfield. When David's

---

[1]John E. Butt, "The Composition of David Copperfield," Dickensian, XLVI (June 1950), 131.

[2]Vereen M. Bell, "The Emotional Matrix of David Copperfield," Studies in English Literature, VIII (Fall 1968), 647.

> increasing maturity dictates a diminution of Murdstone's power, the quick entrance of Heep (Dickens allows his hero only a few weeks respite between antagonists) permits the earlier conflict to continue essentially unchanged, since David's competition with Heep for Agnes Wickfield corresponds to the earlier rivalry with Murdstone.[1]

A connection between the two villains had been discussed earlier in E. Pearlman's "David Copperfield Dreams of Drowning." After linking Heep and Steerforth in David's dream, Pearlman concludes that "David Copperfield's dream of drowning is then a path into the central structural pattern of the novel, which is the rich and complex relationship between David and two complementary figures."[2]

J.M. Reibetanz takes the idea of a structural unity based on the villains a step further when he argues that

> There are some twenty-eight characters surrounding David, grouped in some seven plots and subplots. They are arranged in three basic roles, victim, villain, and hero, through which each plot is developed and resolved ... we can appreciate them both as part of a structural pattern that helps Dickens to concentrate the novel's panoramic focus, and as the basis of the novel's central thematic problem, the nature of heroism.

Reibetanz notes that in the Copperfield-Murdstone conflict, Aunt Betsy is the hero; in the relationships of Doctor Strong, Annie and Jack Maldon, Mr. Dick is the hero; Mr. Micawber is the savior in the struggle between the Wickfields and Uriah Heep; and Mr Peggotty is the hero in the Steerforth versus Little Emily plot. David pointedly

---

[1]Michael G. Miller, "Murdstone, Heep, and the Structure of David Copperfield," Dickens Studies Newsletter, XI (Sept. 1980), 65-70.

[2]E. Pearlman, "David Copperfield Dreams of Drowning," American Imago, XXVIII (1971), 402.

fails as hero in any of these conflicts, and seems doomed not to be the hero of his own life after all. But according to Reibetanz,

> It is in the final installment of the novel that David undergoes his deepest trial and emerges from it with the stature worthy of a hero. When he plunges into darkness after Dora's death, he surrenders his spirit to a sea of confusion, misery, and guilt. Here David falls back into the posture of victim, giving himself up to forces stronger than himself rather than meeting them with equal power of spirit and will. In this instance, it is Agnes who saves him, and by her example transforms him into a hero.[1]

Although I think Reibetanz's pattern argues well for the support of a theme of heroism in David Copperfield, does the end of the novel really convince us of David's heroism? I do not think we are satisfied with David as a hero anymore than we are satisfied with David's undisciplined heart. I will add to Reibetanz's basic configuration of victim, villain, hero by discussing the characteristics that have already appeared in preceding novels arguing a preoccupation, thematic as well as personal, that goes deeper than the theme of heroism or of the "disciplined heart."

Each villain, separately described with one of Betsy's adjectives at some point in the novel, treacherously infiltrates and disrupts a domestic group. Each becomes involved with a young woman who figures significantly in David's life, and in each instance the relationship through which he gains his position as potential home-

---

[1]J.M. Reibetanz, "Villain, Victim, and Hero: Structure and Theme in David Copperfield," Dalhousie Review, LIX (Summer 1979), 321-37.

wrecker is characterized by the villain advancing a cold and sterile sexuality, gaining power and control, and extending his own isolation. These villainous activities that give dramatization to the vices of mean, false, and cruel are negative contrasts to what is positive and good in the novel: power and manipulation is in contrast to responsibiltiy; isolation to interaction both within a domestic group and among groups,[1] and sterile sexuality based on manipulative power to the marriage of Agnes and David based on mutual affection and parenthood. When David rejects these negative qualities through rejection of the villains, and the rejection of his own incipient villainy towards Dora, and when he recognizes his own irresponsibility in marrying Dora, (a potentially bad parent) and is released from her through her death, only then can he partake of his happy ending, an ending which is a brief vision, an encapsulation of all the positive values expressed in the novel dramatizing the goodness of home.

The domestic group in Blunderstone is composed of Mrs. Copperfield, Peggotty, and David. "'Smirking and making great eyes'" (14) at Clara Copperfield, as Betsy Trotwood later interprets his courtship, Mr. Murdstone succeeds in attracting the vain and foolish Clara and insinuates himself into the position of a responsible father and husband, but Murdstone merely gratifies his personal longings for power. David quickly identifies this as "tyranny" (4). Murdstone's satisfaction in Clara is in his ability to "mould her pliant nature

---

[1] I am indebted to Professor Steven Daniels for impressing upon me the importance of community and isolation as a theme in Dickens' work.

into any form he chose" (4). This ability to "mould" is the ability to manipulate, and he does of course, manipulate Clara, but unlike the villains that precede him in Dickens' work we do not see him involved in intricate plot-generating plans, designed to manipulate a heroine into a position vulnerable to a sexual and/or matrimonial threat. Manipulation of this kind is important when it is meant to be successfully resisted. The more manipulation on the part of the villain, the greater the victory in the resistance on the part of the "light." And as a light-headed widow Clara is already vulnerable; she does not resist; she succumbs almost at once to Murdstone's sexuality. Together Murdstone and his sister isolate Clara from her entire household, firstly, by taking her keys away from her and prohibiting her from any position of authority or responsibility; and secondly, by forming a stern barrier between David and her and between Peggotty and her.

After a brief, ineffectual struggle, Clara surrenders her housekeeping responsibilities to Jane Murdstone and her parental responsibilities to Mr. Murdstone. Kept from his previous intimate relationship with his mother, David is "shut out and alienated" (4). Finally, the Murdstones physically separate parent and child by sending David to a thoroughly bad school. Not only do the Murdstones isolate David from his mother, but they attempt to further isolate him from the boys at school by making him wear a sign on his back. Torn between Murdstone and David, Clara fails in her primary responsibility by giving Murdstone precedence over what is to Dickens the sacred relationship between parent and child. Not only do Murdstone and his

sister isolate Clara and David, but they isolate Peggotty as well. Peggotty, whose devotion to Clara and David is equal, is banished from her old intimate place in the parlor, kept in the kitchen, and promptly discharged after Clara's death. Murdstone, living in isolation from society, extends isolation to every member of the Rookery household. Through isolation, often associated with death in Dickens' work, Murdstone gives Clara "the wounds she died of" (14), and after her death the domestic group, once so happy, is completely dispersed. Already feeling the imperative of responsibility, David begins his journey through life, in which he will find along the way other satisfactory and unsatisfactory parent-child relationships. But no other parent ever fails a child as David's mother fails him.

When Dickens has David tell Miss Murdstone that she and her brother used him "very cruelly" (26) he is expressly connecting Murdstone with one of Betsy's three vices. And Murdstone is cruel in every respect. Even his looks are positively sinister:

> He had that kind of shallow black eye--I want a better word to express an eye that has no depth in it to be looked into--which, when it is abstracted, seems from some peculiarity of light to be disfigured, for a moment at a time, by a cast. (2).

This sort of opaque eye is suggestive of an animal's eye, and David does compare Murdstone to the "great dog" that moves into the Rookery with him. He comments that the dog was "deep-mouthed and black-haired like Him —and he was very angry at the sight of me, and sprang out to get at me" (3). As a child David is malleable enough to respond in conformity with how he is treated; David compares Murdstone to an animal since Murdstone is fond of comparing David to an

"obstinate horse or dog" that he must beat, that he must conquer even were it "to cost him all the blood he had" (4). The only one of the three villains connected with physical violence, eventually he does beat David, "as if he would have beaten me to death" (4), causing David to respond in kind by biting through Murdstone's hand. (Heep makes a special point of not hitting David when David lashes out at him.)

Mark Spilka in "David Copperfield as Psychological Fiction," discusses David's response to Peggotty's announcement, "'You have got a Pa!' I trembled, and turned white. Something--I don't know what or how--connected with the grave in the churchyard, and the raising of the dead, seemed to strike me like an unwholesome wind." For Spilka this is

> brilliant psychological fiction. Murdstone has become the risen and revengeful father; his powers involve the mysteries of sex, and somehow pull the mother out of range...In the struggle which follows, he bites the hand which touched his mother.

Spilka notes the Freudian "spectacle of a son locked in his room, shut off from his mother, and guilty of a crime against the father."[1]

---

[1]Spilka, op. cit., pp. 292-30. E. Pearlman op. cit., p. 395, notes in this novel, "a male character's genital is occasionally represented by his hand. Old Dr. Strong's, for instance, 'did nothing for itself' (16); nor is it accidental that when the oedipal struggle between David and Murdstone comes to a crisis, Murdstone is bitten on the hand. Heep's hands are long, dangly, and wet, and he manipulates them constantly." Michael Miller, op. cit., p. 68, recalls that when David and Murdstone meet for the first time it is Murdstone's hand that David rejects both for himself and for his mother, when he refuses to shake hands with his right hand and when he brushes Murdstone's hand away from his mother. Miller points out that Heep's hands are mentioned over forty times, "and no less than ten times he recalls being forced to touch one or both, nearly always with revulsion ... this feature is grounded in the first manifestation of the basic conflict, that of David and Murdstone over Mrs. Copperfield and the initial mention of Murdstone's hands reveal their psychological importance.

Though Dickens cannot openly discuss sex, he does imply that Murdstone's sexuality is cruel, possibly sadistic, and certainly unconnected with the best interests of his wife. That Murdstone cries at the death of his tormented wife removes any lingering suspicion that he married her for her small property alone. Dickens wants to make clear that Murdstone has a personal interest in "bewitching Mrs. Copperfield" and that sex is not unconnected with his power over her. David observes on his first day home that

> He drew her to him, whispered in her ear, and kissed her. I knew as well, when I saw my mother's head lean down upon his shoulder, and her arm touch his neck--I knew as well that he could mould her pliant nature into any form he chose, as I know, now, that he did it (4).

As Murdstone reduces the affectionate Clara to a frightened possession, gives her pain through David, and elevates his own authority, a very ugly sexual relationship is hinted. Murdstone becomes breathless and pale when Betsy discerns the truth about his cruelty and accuses him of tormenting Clara through David, which "'is a disagreeable remembrance, and makes the sight of him odious now'" (14).

A minor villain's perversion may be regarded as a reflection of Murdstone's sexual cruelty. The headmaster, Mr. Creakle, is, significantly, Murdstone's friend; and his appearance as a figure of power is integrated into the part of the narrative dealing with Murdstone. David describes his sexual sadism in surprisingly explicit terms:

> He had a delight in cutting at the boys, which was like the satisfaction of a craving appetite. I am confident that he couldn't resist a chubby boy, especially; that there was a fascination in such a subject, which made him restless in his mind, until he had scored and marked him for the day .... I am sure when I think of the fellow now, my blood rises against him with the

> disinterested indignation I should feel if I could have known all about him without having been in his power (7).

Though Murdstone obviously enjoys a more subtle and refined sadism than Mr. Creakle, he, too, takes "delight in that formal parade of executing justice" (4) and seems, though with a righteousness that makes his cruelty all the more chilling, to be satisfying "a craving appetite" when he takes David up to his room to be flogged.[1]

The Murdstones and David enact the crime of Mr. and Mrs. Dickens against Charles that gave rise to Dickens' obsession with the theme of the crime against the child in his work. As Philip Collins puts it, "The Murdstones here, of course, enact the wrong Dickens felt his parents had done him but without the excuse that imprisonment impended for them."[2] With the cruel Murdstone, Dickens initiates a pattern that Steerforth and Heep follow, of isolation and irresponsible power and sexuality that disrupts parent-child relationships and intimate domestic connection.

It is important to note here that unlike most of the villains in preceding novels, the villains of David Copperfield are not intent on the disruption of romantic relationships between hero and heroine, but rather, Murdstone initiates the pattern the other two villains par-

---

[1]Roger Gard in "David Copperfield," Essays in Criticism, XV(July 1965), 316, makes the same use of the juxtaposition of these two passages in discussing the sadism of Murdstone and Creakle. Mark Spilka op. cit., p. 297, comments that "Mr. Creakle is another Murdstone."

[2]Collins, op. cit., p. 79. K. J. Fielding in Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction, second edition, revised, 1964, p. 5, says that while David Copperfield blames his stepfather, "Dickens blamed his parents."

ticipate in of separating David from the incestuous love objects in his life--his mother, his "sister" Emily, his "sister" Agnes--which lends itself to the interpretation of an Oedipal problem in David's life. Murdstone is the explicit example of this problem but because Steerforth and Heep participate in the same patterning they create an Oedipal echo in the novel. The Old Curiosity Shop portrays the sexual impulse in conflict with duty and decency. In David Copperfield Dickens' problem with sexuality is seen to have its roots in childhood. Gordon Hirsch argues that the problem may be pre-Oedipal in origination:

> the plot is actually based upon recurring experiences of separation and loss ... it can also be argued that the father in the Oedipal stage should really be seen as 'the principle of separation' who merely reactivates the child's earlier sense of loss at the conclusion of the symbiotic phase of his relationship with his mother, a phase in which the infant behaves as though he and his mother were essentially fused, a single-system with a common boundary. In a sense the Oedipus complex is a reenactment of these earlier crises in the process of individuation, and in David Copperfield many things point to the earlier, pre-Oedipal phases of human development as offering the best way for understanding the psychological issues in the novel ... the book also depicts problems derived from the failure of love objects sufficiently to individuate, to separate from one another, to perceive themselves to be separate entities. The classic example of this failure is the relationship between Mr. Wickfield and his daughter Agnes. Wickfield's problem, as Dickens tells us, is that he has made Agnes his "one motive in life," to the exclusion of all else... Steerforth and his mother also represent an instance of unsuccessful individuation, and so too, probably, do Uriah and his mother, and Dora and Mr. Spenlow.[1]

(However difficult, we must bear in mind that David's Oedipal problem is not necessarily Dickens'. Dickens was a keen observer of human

---

[1]Hirsch, op. cit., p. 2-3.

nature, particularly childhood nature; and unlike David, he certainly gave little evidence of a great attachment to his mother.) Michael Slater has pointed out to me that each of the households disrupted by the villains has seeds of weakness in their over-fondness for each other. I think this over-fondness may be explained by Hirsch's theory of insufficient individuation. Mrs. Copperfield and David certainly have this doting over-fondness for one another. Her capacity for such extravagant affection leads her into a rash marriage, and her own lack of individuation causes her to be lacking in independence or will; thus giving Murdstone an easy ascendency over her, causing the downfall of David's first home. Q. D. Leavis has pointed out that

> while Mr. Peggotty seems at first sight to offer the pattern of disinterested devotion to the winning child he had fostered, what emerges is a horribly possessive love that is expressed characteristically in heat, violence and fantasies, impressing us as maniacal. And Dickens doesn't attempt to disguise this; on the contrary, it is hammered home.[1]

Mr. Peggotty's doting fondness for Emily causes her to try to meet his affection by choosing Ham as her prospective husband in order to give her uncle pleasure. This over-fondness on Emily's part gives rise to her unhappiness in this self-sacrifice which in turn gives Steerforth his chance to seduce her. Had she initially chosen someone of her own romantic liking, instead of brother-like Ham, she would not have been as vulnerable to Steerforth's enticements. It is also over-fondness in Ham to choose a bride within his family circle. Mr. Wickfield's over-fondness for Agnes leads to neurotic anxiety, which leads to drink, which leads to loss of professional control, which leads to a dependence on Heep.

---

[1] Leavis and Leavis, op. cit., p. 79.

Though David is able to recognize Murdstone as a villain more quickly than he is able to identify Steerforth and Heep, it is Murdstone that David comes dangerously close to imitating when he decides to "form" Dora's mind. Fortunately, David decides that Dora's mind has already been formed and determines to carry the shadow between them in his own heart. The marriage to Dora, as many critics have pointed out,[1] is a parallel to David's relationship with his mother. In marrying someone pretty, weak and foolish, like his mother, David is marrying irresponsibly, for Dora would have been an unfit mother to David's children, just as Clara was an unfit mother to David. Unfit as parents, Clara and Dora lose their babies and die themselves soon after.

Steerforth is Dickens' most glamorous villain. Sylvere Monod, who finds him the most fascinating as well as the most complete presentation of evil in Dickens' work, points out that he is certainly different from and more complex than previous Dickensian villains:

> Il semble pourtant que le cas le plus intéressant et la présentation la plus complète du problème du Mal dans l'oeuvre de Dickens se situent au coeur même de son oeuvre, dans David Copperfield (1849-1850), et s'incarnent dans le personnage de James Steerforth, ami, protecteur et mauvais génie de héros narrateur ... Dickens en effet, avec les anneés, a mieux compris que le Mal n'a pas toujours le visage hideux et grimacant, aisément identifiable, d'un Fagin dans Oliver Twist, d'un Squeers dans Nickleby, d'un Quilp dans Le magasin d'antiquités, ou même d'un Carker dans Dombey. Il a compris, il a enfin compris que le Mal est séduissant.[2]

---

[1] Philip Collins, Charles Dickens: David Copperfield, Studies in English Literature, LXVII, 34.

[2] Sylvere Monod, "James Steerforth ou le problème du mal dans David Copperfield," Annales de l'Université de Paris, II (1967), 2 and 8.

Indeed, Steerforth is not only a well-developed character and villain, he is a rich symbol in David's subjective life.

In a very responsible, fatherly way, Steerforth tells David, "'I'll take care of you'" (6) and David eagerly responds to the patronage, for there is a vacuum in David that is easily filled by the attractive Steerforth. Disappointed in his mother, never knowing a father, David gives all the love he might have given a father, even a kind stepfather, to Steerforth. Though he is genuinely fond of David in his way, Steerforth has "'a false, corrupt heart'" (32) as Rosa Dartle says of him and is a "'false friend'" (32) as Miss Mowcher calls him. Steerforth is a controller and manipulator, so that while he pretends to, perhaps even thinks he does, "take care" of David, David actually begins to take care of Steerforth. David gives him his money, his treats from Peggotty, and slavishly entertains Steerforth's waking hours with story telling. And for all these attentions David remains profoundly grateful. Even Steerforth's ignominious conduct toward Mr. Mell cannot cloud the vision David has of his friend and protector. As a young man David meets Steerforth again and weeps when his "old love" is revived by remembering that "his former protection" was "deserving of my gratitude" (19). Flattered by David, bored with himself, Steerforth goes off to Yarmouth to meet the Peggottys for the second time, but not before Dickens gives David warning about his friend's true nature. Steerforth tells Rosa Dartle that "'that sort of people ... have not very fine natures, and they may be thankful that, like their course rough skins, they are not easily wounded'" (20). David believes he says this in jest but David is as Betsy Trotwood says, "'blind, blind, blind'" (35).

At Yarmouth, Steerforth makes himself exceedingly charming and the Peggottys are quite won over by his "delightful qualitites" (21). But this, too, is false, a

> brilliant game, played for the excitement of the moment, for the employment of high spirits, in the thoughtless love of superiority, in a mere wasteful careless course of winning what was worthless to him, and next minute thrown away (21).

Like David as a school boy, Emily through her over-fondness for her uncle, is manipulated into accepting Steerforth's false protection. Though the manipulation of Emily leading up to the seduction, as well as the seduction itself, is off-stage, we are given to understand that Steerforth has promised to make Emily a great lady, just as he promised to "take care" of David. Steerforth uses Emily to entertain him just as he uses David. To embellish Steerforth's relationship with David as it reflects Steerforth's relationship with Emily, Dickens adds the suggestion of sexuality and feminine allurement to Steerforth's interest in David--he wishes David had a sister as she would be so pretty and he calls David by the feminine name of Daisy. Dickens is not so much suggesting boyish homosexual interests as he is emphasizing David as a parallel to Emily. They are both pretty and engaging toys to Steerforth, and he has the power to lead both astray. From the time he was a boy, David has always seen Steerforth as a "person of great power" (6). Significantly, David's description of Steerforth as a person of power is only one page removed from his description of Mr. Creakle's power. This subtle juxtaposition allies Steerforth with the villainous role of irresponsible power even before he actually does anything reprehensible. He does

little harm to David, but Agnes warns David about the dangerous aspect of Steerforth's friendship after she sees David drunk at the theatre in Steerforth's company. She does not meet Steerforth but she immediately recognizes him for what he is, a "bad angel." In contrast, the "good angel," Agnes, is a competing power in David's life and under her influence he begins to have "some lurking distrust of Steerforth....I suspect the truth to be, that the influence of Agnes was upon me, undisturbed by the sight of him; and that it was the more powerful with me, because she had so large a share in my thoughts and interest" (26). Agnes is an example of power being used in a responsible way: she saves David from seduction. Like a self-sacrificing parent, Agnes embodies the qualities of reliability and earnestness that Betsy urges David to choose in a wife after he has already fallen in love with Dora.

It is striking, especially in view of all the interaction among the various groups David is associated with (everyone seems to meet everyone else), that Steerforth is not introduced to Agnes at the theatre. Why is such a charming, eminently presentable young man, such an important figure in David's life, never introduced to any of David's friends but the Peggottys? This is part of the pattern all three villains follow. Dickens extends to the overall structure of the novel the pattern followed in each disrupted home, of domestic interaction practiced by the good characters and isolation imposed by the villain. The different homes David finds with his mother, the Peggottys, the Micawbers, Betsy and Dick, and the Wickfields are linked not only by David's membership in each domestic group but by a

benevolent interaction among the members of the different groups: Peggotty is a member of the home in Blunderstone and in Yarmouth; Agnes befriends Emily on the ship before the outcast sails for Australia; Micawber aids Betsy, the Wickfields, and Mr. Peggotty; Betsy protects the Wickfields and aids the Micawbers. But the villains never meet each other and are never allowed a position of intimacy in more than the one domestic group they infiltrate. This circumstance seems determined by the obvious villainy and the unattractive personalities of Heep and Murdstone, but that the charming Steerforth, such a well disguised villain, is never introduced to David's homes in Dover and Canterbury but only to the group at Yarmouth, is suggestive of a determination on Dickens' part to keep the villains separated from one another and isolated in the one specific group they insinuate themselves into. Thus, they are not linked in the narrative by any interaction with the other groups, which is reserved as a special function of the good characters, but are linked solely by David. Not only does this structural organization suggest a thematic concern of contrasting benevolent group interaction with isolation but it demonstrates Dickens' technical ability to extend what is true in the specific pattern to the general structure: as the good people are characterized not only by intimate connection with their own group but by benevolent interaction among the many domestic groups, so the villains are characterized not only by their power to isolate the members in a group from one another, but by their own social and narrative isolation.

Murdstone is the only villain to have any contact with a Copperfield group outside his influence, but Dickens is careful that when the Murdstones come to Dover to meet Aunt Betsy they come as intruders. Their arrival on the hated donkeys places them securely in this category and gives Betsy the opportunity for a double rejection: first, she rejects them with the donkeys on her lawn; second, she rejects them morally in her home. So far from interaction is Betsy's contact with the Murdstones, that she willfully ignores every word Miss Murdstone interjects, causing that lady to become increasingly more agitated in her efforts to make Miss Trotwood aware of her existence. But Miss Trotwood persists in denying Miss Murdstone even conversational interaction.

David meets the Peggottys for the first time immediately before Murdstone disrupts the Rookery. This position in the narrative makes Mr. Peggotty and the well-knit domestic group an extremely effective contrast to Murdstone and the family he disperses. That Mr. Peggotty is a bachelor is very important in making a comment on what might have been in David's home had his mother been more responsible in selecting a father and protector for her child: it is possible for a kind, good-natured man to care for children that are not his own. Murdstone cruelly disposes of the unwanted orphan, David, and Steerforth falsely claims to "take care" of him, but Mr. Peggotty cares for the orphans, Ham and Emily, as if they were his own flesh and blood. Emily's desertion gives Dickens the opportunity of portraying Mr. Peggotty as the parent <u>par excellence</u>. Before leaving to search for Emily, he tells David that "'My dooty here, sir ... is done .... I'm a going to

seek her. That's my dooty ever more'" (32). He never reproaches Emily for her failure in her obligation to him; he is only concerned with his own responsibility.

Steerforth's own domestic circle is an inversion of the home Steerforth pollutes. What is light in the Peggotty home is dark in the Steerforth home--everything is reversed: the Peggotty home is poor, the Steerforth home upper-middle class; Mr. Peggotty is the patriarch devoted to the orphaned daughter, Mrs. Steerforth is the matriarch devoted to the semi-orphaned son; Ham is in love with Emily, Rosa Dartle is in love with Steerforth, both pairs having been raised together as children; Steerforth disrupts the Peggotty home, Emily disrupts the Steerforth home; Mr. Peggotty and Ham feel animosity towards Steerforth who is referred to as a pollutor, Mrs. Steerforth and Rosa feel animosity towards Emily whom Rosa refers to as a "'piece of pollution'" (50); Rosa unknowingly comes in contact with Emily to "'cast [her] out'" (50) and wish her dead; Mr. Peggotty speaks only of his responsibility to Emily, never of hers to him, Mrs. Steerforth speaks only of her son's responsibility to her; she voices what Mr. Peggotty will never say, the wrong done to both parents, the "'duty, love, respect, gratitude--claims that every day and hour of his life should have strengthened into ties that nothing could be proof against!'" (32); because of Mr. Peggotty's sense of "'dooty,'" he and Emily are reunited, but Steerforth and his mother die apart. With the example of Mr. Peggotty and Emily, contrasted by Mrs. Steerforth and her son, Dickens expresses that in the parent-child relationship there

should be nothing the parent cannot forgive and nothing he will not sacrifice in his duty to the child.

Like Murdstone, Steerforth comes into an intimately connected family, and promotes a sterile sexual relationship with the young woman of the domestic circle. He isolates the Peggottys' favorite, Emily, from the family, causing not only the disruption of the parent-child relationship, but the dispersal of the entire group. His irresponsible power causes Emily to fail in her obligation to her parent and to her fiancé. Like Clara, Emily pays for her defection, but with a fate worse than death--seduced and abandoned.

Each of the three villains has no natural relationship with the domestic group into which they insinuate themselves. Like others who have been taken into the various groups, such as Mrs. Gummidge and David, they are accepted in innocent good faith. Unlike others, the villains disrupt sacred relationships and responsibilities within the group when they establish or attempt to establish sexual relationships with the women of the different groups. Each group is knit together by mutual love and responsibility, particularly between parent and child, but the power the villain assumes is devoid of any responsibility for the happiness and welfare of the young woman he controls or for the welfare of those she loves. Before or after he wins his way with her, the villain, caring nothing for her duties and ties within the home, interested only in advancing his own power, isolates the woman from the other members of her home, particularly from her parent or child; thus, in all three instances the sacred relationship

between parent and child is interfered with by the villain and the close supportive intimacy of the home is disrupted.

Emily, Clara, and Agnes are not only young and beautiful but also, especially Emily, the cohering forces around which the members of a domestic group gather. The use of the woman as the central cohering light that is threatened in each domestic group is cleverly calculated by Dickens to bring trial and exquisite pain to the members of the group and to test each member's virtue by his or her response to the villainy involved. In Pickwick Papers and Oliver Twist the light that gathers other good characters around it is a male character who is also threatened by a villain, but Dickens discovers in Nicholas Nickleby and with Nell and Quilp in The Old Curiosity Shop that to make the light a woman makes a sexual threat possible, the villainy of which has such a potential for insidiousness that Dickens retreats from it in The Old Curiosity Shop. Though Dickens allows Quilp, who bursts into the novel as a nightmare bursts into sleep, to utter the sexual threat against Nell by proposing to marry her, Dickens keeps them separated through most of the novel, as if he could not bear the pain involved in exposing Nell to the trial of unacceptable sexuality. In David Copperfield, Dickens does not shrink from the possibilities that suggest themselves in The Old Curiosity Shop and that are partially explored in Barnaby Rudge, Martin Chuzzlewit, and in Dombey and Son. In David Copperfield, Dickens explores the sexual threat in three different situations, with three villains and three women intimately connected with the narrator, David, who is the light of the whole novel. But each of the three women, his mother, his first love,

and his sister-wife, are also the light of their separate domestic groups, and David is one of the several who gather around the light. What David has at stake emotionally in these relationships is greater or at least as great as any member of the domestic group. Felicity Hughes points out that

> Young David's view of the world is colored by his preoccupation with the problem of finding and maintaining a secure and permanent home. His early experiences dispose him to see threats in terms of intrusion and dispossession.[1]

The lights of earlier novels, Mr. Pickwick, Oliver, Nell, Florence, never waver, never fail to resist villainy and evil, but two of the female lights in David Copperfield are unable to resist the villain and the sexual relationship he advances. In accepting the isolation imposed on them, and in allowing the villain a total control which knows no responsibility for their best interest and happiness, Emily and Clara fail in their own responsibility to Mr. Peggotty and the child David. Isolation imposed, responsibilities neglected, the entire group is dispersed and happiness destroyed.

The underlying pattern connecting Steerforth with the other two villains is obvious, but there are some interesting differences in David's relationship with this particularly attractive villain. Although David immediately recognizes Murdstone's villainy, David cannot identify Steerforth as a villain until Ham bursts out with "'his name is Steerforth, and he's a damned villain'" (31). David feels a sense of responsibility for his own blindness, his "own unconscious

---

[1]Felicity Hughes, "Narrative Compexity in David Copperfield," Journal of English Literary History, XLI (Spring 1974), 91.

part in (Steerforth's) pollution of an honest home" (32); and, though Emily is David's first love, his emotional attachment in this second villainous situation is with the villain and not with the woman. His disappointment in this almost father-figure is great, but even though the fascination is gone, even though Steerforth is dead for him in his heart, David cannot "reproach" this "cherished friend" (32)--just as he never reproaches his mother.

Perhaps David's great love of Steerforth reveals the other side of the Oedipal dilemma. While Murdstone epitomizes the bitter rivalry a child may feel with his father, Steerforth epitomizes the conflicting love and growing hero worship a child comes to feel for the father. Sexual identification and hero worship of the father naturally follows the child's earlier rivalry and resentment, just as chronologically Steerforth follows Murdstone in the novel. Normally a child goes from sexual preoccupation with the father and diminution of interest in the mother (Mrs. Copperfield dies after David meets Steerforth and switches for the time the object of his fascination.) to diminution of interest in both parents and sexual preoccupation with the opposite sex of the same age.[1] The late revelation of Steerforth as a villain, the changed image of the hero-father as an unacceptable sexual threat to an incestuous love-object suggests a back-sliding in emotional progress, an inability to carry through successfully with the sexual identification and hero worship of the second stage in the child's relationship with the father; thus, the child fails to go beyond the Oedipal dilemma, fails to complete the

---

[1]See Selma H. Fraiberg, The Magic Years: Understanding and Handling the Problems of Early Childhood, pp. 202-209.

resolution of the Oedipal conflict and is stuck in time. Such a sticking in time contributes to the tension critics have felt between the backwards movement of memory upon which the vitality of the novel is rooted and the strained insistence on the forward movement of growing up and maturing, about which no one is convinced or comparably interested in.

Dream reinforces memory in establishing Steerforth as a special figure in the subjective reality of David's psyche. In Chapter 6 when David first becomes acquainted with Steerforth at school, Dickens ends the chapter with David dreaming of Steerforth:

> I thought of him very much after I went to bed, and raised myself, I recollect, to look at him where he lay in the moonlight, with his handsome face turned up, and his head reclining easily on his arm. He was a person of great power in my eyes; that was of course the reason of my mind running on him. No veiled future dimly glanced upon him in the moonbeams. There was no shadowy picture of his footsteps, in the garden that I dreamed of walking in all night. (6)

David's dreams, especially the ones ending chapters and/or numbers (this one ends the second number), is reminiscent of Oliver dreaming or losing consciousness at the end of chapters and numbers. The way this works in Oliver Twist, linking the action and the characters with the unconscious workings of the mind, suggests a similar process in David Copperfield. Although dream is not the predominant means of establishing the subjective reality in this novel--memory being the primary vehicle for the subjective --dream can be seen in David Copperfield emphasizing those occurrences that have a special significance within the general subjective framework of memory. John P. McGowan, in a footnote to his article "David Copperfield: The Trial

of Realism," calls our attention to the chapters which "mention David's dreams on the last page of each chapter." But he concludes in the body of his discussion that "the clarity of dreams is stressed in order to establish the reliability of memory," and that basically "The dreams in the novel break down into isolated perceptions ... having no plot, and usually being simple repetitions of the images of the day just past."[1] I believe the dreams have more significance than this.

When Steerforth pops up again in David's life as a young man, the chapter dealing with his reintroduction ends with David's dreams: "... I soon fell asleeep in a blissful condition, and dreamed of ancient Rome, Steerforth, and friendship, until the early morning coaches, rumbling out of the archway underneath, made me dream of thunder and the gods" (19). In chapter 24, after David appears with Steerforth at the theatre drunk, and is seen by Agnes, he spends all night in "a feverish dream." David's bed in his dream is described as a "rocking sea that was never still" (24). In the next chapter, Agnes pronounced Steerforth to be David's "'bad angel'" (25). David's vision of Steerforth is not as a "real" person, but as a "person of great power," a "god," and as a "bad angel." When he rejects the "bad angel" for the "good angel," he is rejecting the father figure for the mother figure.

David's dream of his bed as a "rocking sea" after being in the company of Steerforth, recalls David's dream of drowning E. Pearlman so brilliantly interprets in terms of the villains, Steerforth and Heep, as fantasy aspects of David, representing the splitting off of the sexual side of David. Pearlman writes that

---

[1]McGowan, op. cit., pp. 5-7.

> David and Uriah are, in psychological terms, 'splits.' But a close reading of the novel, with special attention to the unravelling of fantasies, shows that David Copperfield is split not two fold but triply, and that James Steerforth is as important in David's psychological life as Heep.

In describing David's dream in chapter 16, which has Heep taking Little Emily and David off to be drowned, Pearlman observes that

> a closer look at the dream reveals that a third person, shadowy but nevertheless real, is also present. For it is Steerforth, not David, who carries off Little Em'ly and drowns. David fantasizes for himself the role that Steerforth enacts or, stated another way, Steerforth represents that part of David which desires to philander and seduce ... The dream of drowning, then, contains David and the two men who stand for alternative moral paths, and at least in the world of dreams, symbolize parts of the self. Uriah Heep represents what David fears he is or might become; Steerforth, briefly, stands for what David wishes to be, but can neither achieve nor reject ... Drowning is not only a way of dying -- it is the plunge into the sea of passion; its ineluctable corrallary is that sex and sexual passion are dangerous and destructive.[1]

When Steerforth finally drowns at the end of the novel, dream once again reinforces the significance of Steerforth and of drowning. David introduces his memory of this occurrence by stating that

> For years after it occurred, I dreamed of it often. I have started up so vividly impressed by it, that its fury has yet seemed raging in my quiet room, in the still night. I dream of it sometimes, though at lengthened and uncertain intervals, to this hour. (55)

David's final vision of Steerforth harkens back to the first night David dreams of Steerforth with his "head reclining easily on his arm" (6). David is led to the shore to see Steerforth's drowned body:

> And on that part of it where she and I had looked for shells, two children--on that part of it where

---

[1]Pearlman, op. cit., pp. 392-394.

> some lighter fragments of the old boat, blown down last night, had been scattered by the wind--among the ruins of the home he had wronged--I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school. (55)

Steerforth is drowned in the sea of passion. This is the final confirmation for David of the destructiveness of sexual passion.

The predominance of the mother image is established and underscored in David's memory through the dreams David has of his mother with her baby. At the end of chapter 7, David falls asleep in the coach on the way to Blunderstone. He wakes in chapter 8 to find the fairy-tale creature, Barkis, carrying him home to a very much changed mother, a mother with a baby in her arms. This baby is never tainted in David's mind with its association with Murdstone, rather it becomes for David as Hirsch argues, the symbol of himself, pre-Oedipal, pre-individuation: "the little creature in her arms, was myself, as I had once been, hushed forever on her bosom" (9). The baby in her arms is emphasized at the end of chapter 8, both as a last and dreamlike image of her and as an image that haunts David's dreams at school:

> I was in the carrier's cart when I heard her calling to me. I looked out, and she stood at the garden-gate alone, holding her baby up in her arms for me to see. It was cold still weather; and not a hair of her head, or a fold of her dress, was stirred, as she looked intently at me, holding up her child.
>
> So I lost her. So I saw her afterwards, in my sleep at school--a silent presence near my bed--looking at me with the same intent face--holding up her baby in her arms. (8)

This image of the mother and her baby, emphasized through the images of dream, is the core of David's dilemma in not being able to escape

the past and move forward to maturity. Frozen in time by his yearning for this infantile security, his vision of the world never changes; thus, experience forms itself into the repeating pattern the villains in the various homes establish. Unable to regain the Eden of pre-individuation, unable to resolve the resulting Oedipal dilemma,[1] David is never able to see sexuality as anything other than threatening and destructive; hence, his inability to accept sexuality in the villains or in himself.

Sylvia Manning feels that patterns rather than episodes illuminate Dickens' feelings about his own life; she cites Oliver Twist as being autobiographical as David Copperfield in its "sense of nightmare and wish-fulfillment."[2] Christopher Mulvey also sees patterns in the sexual and familial relationships in David Copperfield, and he notices a curious incident that I believe relates to the dreams David has of his mother and her baby. When Mr. Mell takes David home with him to visit his old mother David falls asleep by the fire, and "in the middle state between sleeping and waking," he

> dreamed ... that once while he was blowing into this dismal flute, the old woman of the house, who had gone nearer and nearer to him in her ecstatic admiration, leaned over the back of his chair and gives him an affectionate squeeze round the neck, which stopped his playing for a moment" (5).

---

[1]The narrative evidence both for the Oedipal conflict and for unsuccesful individuation in David Copperfield supports the theory expressed in Hirsch's article that the crisis of individuation gives rise to the Oedipal crisis in the sense that the father "reactivates" the earlier sense of loss and separation from the mother.

[2]Sylvia Manning, "Masking and Self-Revelation: Dickens's Three Autobiographies," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VII (Sept. 1976), 69-74.

Mulvey comments that "what David witnesses in his half-sleep is a picture of mother and love."[1]

David dreams at Aunt Betsy's where he regains something of his former security and mother love:

> It might have been a dream, originating in the fancy which had occupied my mind so long, but I awoke with the impression that my aunt had come and bent over me, and had put my hair away from my face, and laid my head more comfortably, and had then stood looking at me. (13)

At the end of this chapter when Mr. Dick sagaciously decides David should be put to bed, and it looks as if Aunt Betsy will shelter her orphaned nephew, David goes to sleep and dreams of his worries about home and houselessness:

> I remember how I thought of all the solitary places under the night sky where I had slept, and how I prayed that I never might be houseless anymore, and never might forget the houseless. I remember how I seemed to float, then, down the melancholy glory of that track upon the sea, away into the world of dreams. (13)

When David wakes the next morning, he finds he must face the Murdstones that day. Aunt Betsy quickly perceives the nightmare Murdstone has been for both David and Clara. She banishes the Murdstones and extends her protection to David. The chapter ends with David's relief "Now that the state of doubt was over." He

> felt, for many days, like one in a dream. I never thought that I had a curious couple of guardians, in my aunt and Mr. Dick. I never thought of anything about myself, distinctly. The two things clearest in my mind were, that a remoteness had

---

[1]Christopher Mulvey, "David Copperfield: The Folk-Story Structure," Dickens Studies Annual, V (1976), 74-94.

> come upon the old Blunderstone life--which seemed to lie in the haze of an immeasurable distance; and that a curtain had forever fallen on my life at Murdstone and Grinby's. (14)

His escape from nightmare is very like wish-fulfillment, and for this reason he is "like one in a dream."

Immediately after David meets Uriah Heep for the first time, Betsy Trotwood gives David her warning against the three vices of cruelty, falseness, and meanness; thus, all three villains have been introduced in the narrative before they are linked by the vices they embody. Towards the end of the novel, David discovers that Betsy's admonition to avoid these specific vices springs from her own unhappy experience with a villain. David overhears her say to her estranged husband that he treated her "'falsely, ungratefully, and cruelly'" (47). Little is revealed about Betsy's relationship with her husband, but apparently like Clara and Emily, she had a "tender passion" for him, found him, "'a fine looking man,'" and was ultimately disillusioned and broken-hearted. After their separation, she "'put all that sort of sentiment, once and for ever in a grave, and filled it up, and flattened it down'" (47). Like Murdstone and Steerforth, Betsy's husband gained his power over her through her "'attachment and affection.'" The relationship was sterile as Betsy has no children. This experience had the effect of isolating her from society; and it is in this seclusion at Dover that David finds her. In every home of David's childhood, excepting that of Micawbers', the woman is threatened by a villain following the same pattern: power, sterility, and isolation. The Micawbers do not play as intimate a role in David's emo-

tional life as the other menages, and perhaps for this reason they are treated somewhat differently. Although he has a certain lack of responsibility, so far is Micawber from having power over anyone, it may be said that the only experience he has of this position is in being habitually under the power of his creditors. He is certainly not sterile or isolated, children and conviviality being the two commodities he has in abundance.

Heep is the "impersonation of meanness," (35), and he is as thoroughly mean as Steerforth is false and Murdstone is cruel. His low social status, his humble origin, his small-minded baseness, his lack of dignity and contemptible pettiness of character and conduct are all aspects of that quality of character, the most complete expression of which is in his trying to attain through fawning an equality with people he secretly despises. David says that he "had never doubted his meanness, his craft and malice" (35). When "that mean, fawning fellow," (25) finally drops his mask, he reveals a "malice, insolence, and hatred" and a capacity to exult "in the evil he has done" (52) even at the moment of his downfall.

Heep's "power" is often discussed by the other characters; and it is mentioned so often that I feel Dickens is asking the reader to give special attention to this aspect of Heep's villainy. Extending over many characters, Heep's power functions in the narrative in more elaborate ways than does the power of Murdstone and Steerforth. These two, who enjoy an easily gained sexual power over their victims, carelessly ruin lives in pursuit of gratification. Gratification is certainly Heep's object but there is nothing easily gained or careless in

his pursuit. Since it is Dickens' plan that of the three females sexually threatened, Agnes will be the only one to resist, Heep is the only one of the three villains involved in complicated on-stage manipulations, designed to render the female vulnerable to the insidious threat of unacceptable sexuality. And in this case, isolation is used to create greater vulnerability in Agnes to Heep's threatened matrimonial and sexual violation. From his youth, Heep, lacking the physical attractiveness of the other two, strives for a financial power that can be used to gratify his malice. The power of Murdstone and Steerforth depends upon the moral weakness of the young woman involved in a parent-child relationship who may be said to control the heartstrings of her group, while Heep depends on the moral weakness of the male involved in such a relationship who controls the purse strings of his group. Gaining control of Mr. Wickfield puts Heep in a position to gratify a desire in respect to Agnes as well as to gratify a general desire to "umble" his betters, which he can only do by acquiring the financial power to ruin them. In the scene of his downfall, he gloats that he had "'umbled some of 'em for a pretty long time back, umble as I was'" (52)! This desire for vengeance, in Heep's case, his desire to "'umble his betters,'" is a trait not held in common with Steerforth and Murdstone, but it links Heep to the vengeance-seeking villains of the interpolated tales of Pickwick, and to Fagin, Ralph Nickleby, Quilp, and Carker. Ultimately, Heep gains the power of fear over Agnes and her father. (After an initial sexual conquest, Murdstone, too, gains such a power over David and his

mother.) The most vile aspect of Heep's power is his plan to manipulate his control over Mr. Wickfield to gain control of Agnes. Even though his plans include marriage, the nature of his "odious passions" (52) are no more acceptable than if he had tried to seduce her. Heep tells David that because she is "'so much attached to her father'", she may "'come, on his account, to be kind to me'" (25). To use or manipulate the affectionate relationships between parent and child is especially unpleasant. After Heep becomes Mr. Wickfield's partner, he and his mother move into the Canterbury home and go to work advancing Uriah's prospects with Agnes. Like Miss Murdstone with Clara, Mrs. Heep is always with Agnes, preventing her from intimate contact with the conflicting influence and rivalry of David. That part of their plan is to isolate Agnes from her father as much as possible is made clear by Agnes' complaint to David that

> 'The chief evil of their presence in the house ... is that I cannot be as near papa as I could wish--Uriah Heep being so much between us--and cannot watch over him, if that is not too bold a thing to say, as closely as I would ... I hope that real love and truth are stronger in the end than any evil or misfortune in the world.' (35)

With Heep's downfall, Dickens demonstrates that in his fictional world love and truth are stronger.

Heep's villainy gives occasion for the good characters to resist and overcome evil in a way not possible to the characters connected with Steerforth and Murdstone. After Clara fails to resist Murdstone, there is little a small child and a servant can do, except take their principles of the hearth, so to speak, and practice them elsewhere. Mr. Peggotty is so deceived by Steerforth's character that he does not

know he is a villain until Steerforth and Emily are gone and there is nothing to resist. But in Canterbury, no one is deceived about Heep's character and in Betsy Trotwood, Traddles, Micawber, and David, Heep has more to contend with than a small child and a servant. With the exception of Mr. Micawber, these characters have not really needed an opportunity to resist villainy, for their virtue has been proved already in the narrative. But Heep offers Micawber a much needed opportunity to join the forces of the good and the responsible. Micawber has been a rather ambiguous character, and David has mused upon Micawber "half gravely and half laughing" (28). Micawber, himself, admits the "'baseness of my nature, and cupidity of my motives, the poverty of my family, the general moral (or rather immoral) resemblance between myself and--HEEP'" (52). But Micawber puts all this behind him and becomes the primary instrument in Heep's downfall. In a similar way, Mrs. Gummidge, though a very minor figure, half amusing and half burdensome, proves her virtue and usefulness in the face of Steerforth's villainy. She does not capitulate to gloominess as Micawber does not capitulate to his pecuniary embarrassments.

Whatever material gain may conveniently accrue, the villains' desire for union with the unfortunate lady of their choice is primarily sexual rather than financial. This is obvious in the case of Steerforth, whose relationship with Emily is conveniently off-stage; although Dickens cannot explicitly describe the sexuality involved in the response of Heep and Murdstone to Agnes and Clara, he can indicate sexual motivation by causing Clara to be described by Murdstone's

friends not as a lady of property but as "'bewitching Mrs. Copperfield'" (2) with an encumbrance, and by causing Heep to have complete financial control of Mr. Wickfield independent of union with Agnes. The repulsive nature of the union he desires with Agnes is emphasized by the violent agitation Mr. Wickfield and David feel when Heep reveals his intention to marry Agnes. Confronted with Heep's outburst, "'with what a pure affection do I love the ground my Agnes walks on!'" (25), David recalls that he

> had a delirious idea of seizing the red-hot poker out of the fire, and running him through with it. It went from me with a shock, like a ball fired from a rifle: but the image of Agnes, outraged by so much as a thought of this red-headed animal's, remained in my mind when I looked at him, sitting all awry as if his mean soul griped his body, and made me giddy. He seemed to swell and grow before my eyes; the room seemed full of the echoes of his voice; and the strange feeling (to which, perhaps, no one is quite a stranger) that all this had occurred before, at some indefinite time, and that I knew what he was going to say next, took possession of me. (25)

David's reaction to Heep, certainly violent for a man not romantically inclined towards Agnes, and rather extreme for brotherly love, recalls David's Oedipal reaction to Murdstone's advances to his mother. Michael Miller comments on David's sense of deja vu here:

> The precursor of this scene occurs in the first part of David's career when, as a child, he returns from Yarmouth to Blunderstone to find the detestable Murdstone married to his malleable young mother and in complete control both of her and of the Copperfield home. After greeting them and seeing Murdstone's authority over his mother in action, David leaves them before the fire and shortly ascends to his bed, where, as he will do in the similar episode with Heep, he falls into an uneasy sleep.[1]

---

[1]Miller, op. cit., p. 67. Harry Stone mentions the same in his article "Dickens and Fantasy: The Case of Uriah Heep," Dickensian, LXXV (Summer 1979), 95-103.

Later that night Heep ends up sleeping in David's rooms and the chapter ends with David's nightmares of Heep:

> The poker got into my dozing thoughts besides, and wouldn't come out. I thought, between sleeping and waking, that it was still red hot, and I had snatched it out of the fire, and run him through the body. I was so haunted at last by the idea, though I knew there was nothing in it, that I stole into the next room to look at him. There I saw him, lying on his back, with his legs extending to I don't know where, gurglings taking place in his throat, stoppages in his nose, and his mouth open like a post-office. He was so much worse in reality than in my distempered fancy, that afterwards I was attracted to him in very repulsion, and could not help wandering in and out every half-hour or so, and taking another look at him. Still, the long, long night seemed heavy and hopeless as ever, and no promise of day was in the murky sky.
>
> When I saw him going downstairs early in the morning (for, thank Heaven! he would not stay to breakfast), it appeared to me as if the night was going away in his person. (25)

David's vision of Heep is clearly that of a nightmare, the incarnation of "the night." Like Murdstone and Steerforth, Heep is a symbol of sexuality for David, and this nightmare vision of him coupled with the already discussed dream of drowning underscores Heep's significance in David's subjective reality. Not only does David's conflict with Heep echo David's unresolved Oedipal complex, but Heep can also be looked upon as David's darker double. As we have seen, E. Pearlman has suggested that David, Heep and Steerforth are "splits."[1] Harry Stone offers additional incentive for looking at Heep in this way. For Stone the evidence that Uriah personifies "David's most aggressive and

---

[1]Pearlman, op. cit., p. 392.

covetous thoughts" lies in Dickens' reversing the roles in the traditional Biblical story of David and Uriah. In the Bible it is David who covets and lies with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, then sends Uriah to his death and marries Bathsheba: David is sinful and Uriah is good. The reversal in David Copperfield "suggests Uriah's role as David's darker self." The devil imagery associated with Heep calls our attention to the paradox Dickens suggests with Uriah's name.[1]

Felicity Hughes has also writen on the biblical imagery associated with Heep. For her, Heep is the snake in the Garden of Eden, Murdstone the fairy-tale ogre, and Steerforth the fairy-tale hero. She writes very interestingly that what the three villains have in common apart from their folklore roots,

> is a mysterious power and influence over David which makes him unable to resist them. Although he fears Murdstone, loves Steerforth and hates Uriah Heep, this ability to impose their will on him is common to all three and consistent in its effects. David acknowledges feelings of helplessness and subjection in their company amounting to paralysis, even in situations where there is no overt intimidation. He simply cannot resist their powerful influence. This influence is presented in terms drawn from hypnotism--magnetism, as Dickens called it.[2]

Ms. Hughes then goes on to discuss Dickens' knowledge of magnetism, a subject I have discussed in the chapter dealing with Oliver Twist. With Quilp and Nell in The Old Curiosity Shop, and Fagin and Oliver in Oliver Twist, I have argued that these conflicts between villain and

---

[1]Stone, op. cit., pp. 95-103.

[2]Hughes, op. cit., pp. 89-105.

child originate in Dickens' subconscious, portraying psychic conflicts, fears and desires. Nell and Quilp are dreamer and nightmare as are Oliver and Fagin, but in Oliver Twist, Oliver's mesmeric trances and various states of unconscious emphasize, perhaps even more than dream, not only the subconscious level in which the story has its roots, but the creative process through which the subconscious percolates to the conscious mind in the act of story-telling.

David's violent reaction to Heep's sexual threat to Agnes tends to clarify David's real response to Agnes, a response which seems to be more activated by Agnes' maternal role in David's life than by an unconscious romantic inclination. The chapter immediately following David's confrontation scene with Heep, "I Fall into Captivity" (26,) strongly suggests that the romantic yearnings and sexual tensions normal in a young man, are not in any way directed towards Agnes, for in this chapter David describes falling in love with Dora, and the completeness of his devotion indicates that he feels no conflict between an undiscovered romantic inclination for Agnes and his conscious captivity to Dora. Had such a predisposition for Agnes existed buried deep in his heart, surely the violent emotions occasioned by Heep on her behalf would have brought to the surface some consciousness of the sort of inclination for a young person of the opposite sex which usually causes young men to marry. But this sort of inclination is directed solely towards Dora. His emotions for Agnes, the sexual jealously or revulsion that bursts in his mind following Heep's revelation of his passion for Agnes, seems anchored in the maternal role Agnes plays in David's emotional life. This aspect of Agnes makes the

ending of the novel distinctly odd, but perhaps in this maze of parents and children, of variations on the motif or responsibilities neglected or honored, it is appropriate that David marry the mother who is true to him.

Agnes, ~~threated~~ threatened by "dark shadows," resists Heep to display her shining, constant virtue. Even had Heep not been physically repulsive, it is clear from her correct and severe judgement of Steerforth that Agnes would not be tempted into union with a villain. The most important distinction between Agnes and the other two young women is that the danger for Agnes is in sacrificing herself "'to a mistaken sense of duty'" (39), while Emily and Clara sacrifice duty to please themselves. Agnes is a better parent to her father than he is to her, for it is through his weakness, his inability to resist the villain, that Heep gains his power and his insinuating position in Agnes' home. Not only is Agnes a good parent to her father, sacrificing her childhood to "watch over him," but she is a good parent to David. Agnes is freed of the threat of Heep by the combined force and interaction of the Copperfield groups which have not been destroyed by the other villains. Their success pleads the virtue of group interaction, for they are successful not only because they resist evil, but because they act together, as well.

Dickens makes Mrs. Copperfield and Emily pay dearly for their foolhardy defections, and for their abandonment of responsibilities. That Agnes, though threatened and temporarily isolated in the same manner as the first two, escapes, is due to her superior attitude toward responsibility that is particularly attractive to Dickens. Her

rescue is her reward, and David, who has suffered from his experiences of lights who have been swallowed up by the "dark shadows" and have ceased to shine, can at the end of the novel recognize Agnes for the constant unwavering light that she is. David can be looked upon as a character who has been subjected to the sort of test Dickens becomes interested in in Pickwick Papers. Like Heyling in one of the interpolated tales, David suffers much at the hands of villains. But only once, when David begins to resemble Murdstone in David's resolve to "form" Dora's mind, does he falter morally. Unlike Heyling, and like Mr. Pickwick, David comes out of his ordeals without bitterness of the heart and without a desire for vengeance. Dickens himself takes revenge on Steerforth and Heep, but Murdstone escapes. This is surprising since it is Murdstone who is guilty of the crime against the child David, which usually excites Dickens' most vindictive reactions to his villains. David, like Mr. Pickwick, preserves his better nature and is rewarded with a loving and fruitful marriage with Agnes who promises to be no less a responsible parent than she has been a child. Surrounded by children, in the undisturbed intimacy of their home, we see David and Agnes, still connecting with the Copperfield groups, welcoming Mr. Peggotty, eagerly listening to news of Emily and the Micawbers. In this last encapsulated view of David we see a vision of the triumph of light over darkness: interaction within and among groups; the fruitful marriage; responsible parenthood.

Still, it is a vision rather than a fully realized enactment; the design of the novel is completed, but in a relationship that

remains as ethereal as Agnes herself is through much of the novel. There is no trace in the marriage of the vices Betsy urges David to avoid, but there also is, despite the presence of children, no trace in the partners of the sexuality the villains embody and Clara Copperfield and Emily succumb to.

Structurally, Dickens organizes the novel so that David begins as a child and ends as a parent, with the villains off-setting the values David has always recognized and embraces in his last scene; but in terms of Dickens' personal involvement in the novel, in his obsession with the relationship between parent and child, the ending is more like the wish fulfillment of the disappointed child finally gaining a mother, than it is the result of the growth of maturity towards a responsible marriage. In writing on Wuthering Heights, Albert J. Guerard says that in most great novels there is a "controlling preoccupation or obsession, perhaps unemphasized and even unintended by its author, living it may be a secret life beneath the surface of the story, yet intensifying and enriching that surface."[1] Behind David Copperfield is Dickens' obsession with the parent-child relationship, the sexually involved villain, the weak, disappointing woman, the disappointed child. The pattern begins with Murdstone but it reverberates in all its variations through the novel, ending in a fantasy of infantile desire that perhaps many of us carry to our deaths. If it is a fantasy, it is at least a true fantasy.

---

[1]Albert J. Guerard, "Introduction" to Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë, 1964, p. xiii.

Conclusion

In the three novels written after David Copperfield, designated by Lionel Stevenson as "Dickens's Dark Novels,"[1] Dickens is no longer content with individual villains presented as the embodiments of evil. This is not to say that Dickens stopped using villains; but rather that he came to focus on social abstractions as primary sources of evil. Individual villains tend to be used as representatives of specific social ills. Dickens' interest in social injustice and the use of villains as representatives of social abstractions can be seen as early as Oliver Twist, in the first part of the book dealing with the workhouse and the villain, Mr. Bumble; and in Martin Chuzzlewit Dickens explores nationalized hypocrisy in America with the Americans collectively acting as representatives of hypocrisy; in Dombey and Son, Dickens looks at the evil located in the pride of wealth with Mr. Dombey as the arch-representative of such pride.

In Bleak House, Dickens uses Chancery as an abstract but complexly functioning non-human villain, participating in the old pattern of disrupting families and communities and menacing romantic relationships.

In this novel, almost all the characters are threatened by Chancery. When John Jarndyce gathers the sole remaining parties in Jarndyce and Jarndyce, the different branches of the family have lived isolated from each other for generations. Mr. Jarndyce organizes a passive resistance against Chancery no less morally necessary than the

---

[1] Stevenson, Lionel, "Dickens' Dark Novels, 1851-7," Sewanee Review, LI (Summer 1943), 398-409.

active resistance against Heep; but this institutional villain, because its power is immense, because it is dehumanized and consequently indifferent, is unassailable. As human villains in earlier novels have tended to disrupt homes, so Chancery disrupts the home at Bleak House. Chancery seduces Richard Carstone, making him distrust his friends and isolating him from his new family, particularly from the parent figure, John Jarndyce. Out of devotion to Richard, Ada feels compelled to leave her home at Bleak House; and finally Chancery brings about Richard's death and the termination of their romantic love.

There is Mr. Tulkinghorn, of course, who is undeniably a villain; although a lawyer, he has only a very limited range. He is almost exclusively relegated to the subsidiary plot of Chesney Wold and has little to do with the heart-break at Bleak House. This comparative reduction in the role of the human villain in favour of a more insidious and abstract social evil suggests a desire on Dickens' part to find a more basic cause of human suffering. As he changes the particular social evil in each succeeding novel, the reader can see him casting about for the ultimate answer.

The villains of Hard Times represent topical evils peculiar to the Victorian Age. Gradgrind personifies Political Economy, and Utilitarianism, the social "philosophy" that Dickens regards as so inhumane and damaging. A "villain" father to his children like Dombey, Gradgrind is less individualized psychologically than Dombey, and less developed as a character. Bounderby, more of a fool than a villain, is a representative of Carlyle's "Gospel of Mammonism." A

monstrous perversion of Victorian ideals of Self-help, and the Work Ethic, he recognizes no link between himself and his employees beyond cash-nexus. Harthouse, a true villain, illustrates the "Gospel of Dilettantism." Both Bounderby and Harthouse pose a sexual threat to the heroine's well-being--Bounderby no less by marrying her than Harthouse by his attempted seduction. The men in her life do not disrupt parent-child relations or budding pre-nuptial attachments--they merely make such relationships impossible for Louisa; thus, the positive values of family and romantic love celebrated in preceding novels are unable to bloom. The want of these possibilities in the main plot is emphasized by the sub-plots: Sissy's love for her father; Stephen Blackpool's hopeless love for Rachel. But even in these sub-plots there is no triumph: Stephen dies without marrying his Rachel; and although Sissy becomes a mother there is no reunion with her father. As Dickens looks at society more comprehensibly, as he examines the social disease behind the manifestation of evil or villainy, the celebrated positive values of the early novels have a somewhat more modest presentation in their struggle for survival in a more deeply understood environment of hostility.

In Little Dorrit many of the characters are imprisoned in some way or other; thus, Dickens creates an image of society as a complex system of prisons and barriers, with an ironic juxtaposition of freedom in prison and prison in freedom. Evil originates with Mrs. Clennam, who represents Calvinism and the perversion of the Protestant Work Ethic; it is she who keeps old Dorrit in prison, justifying herself by her own imprisonment. Other evils contributing to the general imprison-

ment of society are the arrogance and incompetence of bad government, represented by the Circumlocution Office and the Barnacles; the fraudulent practices of the business world, represented by the swindler Merdle (another tribute in Dickens' work to the "Gospel of Mammonism"); and the facile and fashionable cynicism of individuals such as Henry Gowan, another Dilletante. All of these social evils work together to produce the barriers and prisons in society that break hearts and disrupt parent-child relationships and romantic attachments.

From Pickwick Papers to Little Dorrit, Dickens' presentation of evil undergoes dramatic change. In Pickwick Dickens assures us that "There are dark shadows on this earth, but its lights are stronger in contrast." The change from Pickwick to the later "dark novels," is perhaps best illustrated by the last sentence in Little Dorrit:

> They went quietly down into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed; and as they passed along in sunshine and shade, the noisy and the eager, and the arrogant and the forward and the vain, fretted and chafed, and made their usual uproar.

"Sunshine and shade," "lights" and "shadows," hero and villain, virtue and evil, remain, but one no longer exists as a foil for the other; the message for a human being is to "pass along" through both, accepting both, maintaining one's humanity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Place of publication London unless otherwise specified.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Dickens, Charles. The Oxford Illustrated Dickens, 21 vols., 1948-1958.

_____. The Posthumous Papers of The Pickwick Club, 1837.

_____. Oliver Twist, ed. Kathleen Tillotson (Clarendon Edition), 1966.

_____. The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby, 1839.

_____. Master Humphrey's Clock, 3 vols., 1840-1841.

_____. Martin Chuzzlewit, 1844.

_____. Dombey and Son, ed. Alan Horsman (Clarendon Edition), 1974.

_____. David Copperfield, ed. Nina Burgis (Clarendon Edition), 1981.

The Letters of Charles Dickens, 3 vols., ed. W. Dexter (The Nonesuch Dickens), 1938.

The Letters of Charles Dickens (The Pilgrim Edition), ed. M. House and G. Storey, et. al., Oxford, vols. 1-5, 1965-1980. In progress.

MODERN CRITICISM AND SCHOLARSHIP

Altick, R. D., "Victorian Readers and the Sense of the Present," Midway: A Magazine of Discovery in the Arts and Sciences, X (1970), 95-119.

Andrews, M., "Introduction" to The Old Curiosity Shop (Penguin English Library Edition), 1972.

_____ ., "The Composition and Design of THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP: A Study in the Working of Dickens's Imagination, Ph.D. Thesis: University of London, 1973.

Auden, W. H., "Dingley Dell and the Fleet," The Dyer's Hand, New York, 1962; reprinted in Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. M. Price, New Jersey, 1967, p. 68-82.

Axton, W., "Unity and Coherence in The Pickwick Papers," Studies in English Literature, V (1965), 663-76.

Bayley, J., "Oliver Twist: 'Things As They Really Are,'" Dickens and the Twentieth Century, ed. J. Gross and G. Pearson, 1962; reprinted in Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. M. Price, New Jersey, 1967, pp. 83-96.

Bell, V., "The Emotional Matrix of David Copperfield," Studies in English Literature, VIII (1968), pp. 633-649.

Bennett, R., "Punch versus Christian in The Old Curiosity Shop," Review of English Studies, XXII (1971), 423-434.

Bernard, C., Dickens and Dream: A Study of the Dream Theories and Dream Fiction of Charles Dickens, Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1977.

Bishop, J., "The Hero-Villain of Oliver Twist," Victorian Newsletter, XV (1959), 14-16.

Buckley, J. H., Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding, Cambridge, 1974.

Butt, J. E., "The Composition of David Copperfield," Dickensian, XLVI (1950), 128-135.

Butt, J. & Tilltoson, K., Dickens at Work, 1957.

Carey, J. The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination, 1973.

Chesterton, G. K., Criticisms and Appreciations of the Works of Charles Dickens, 1933.

Collins, P., Dickens and Crime, 1962.

_____., "David Copperfield: 'A Very Complicated Interweaving of Truth and Fiction,'" Essays and Studies (1970), pp. 71-86.

_____., Charles Dickens: David Copperfield, Studies in English Literature, LXVII, 1977.

Dabney, R. H., Love and Property in the Novels of Dickens, 1967.

Daniels, Steven, "Pickwick and Dickens: Stages of Development," Dickens Studies Annual, IV (1975), 56-77.

Davis, E., The Flint and the Flame: The Artistry of Charles Dickens, Columbia, 1963.

Dyson, A. E., "The Old Curiosity Shop: Innocence and the Grotesque," Dickens Modern Judgements, ed. A. E. Dyson, 1968.

Easson, A., "The Old Curiosity Shop: From Manuscript to Print," Dickens Studies Annual, I (1970), 93-128.

_____., "Dicken's Marchioness Again," Modern Language Review, LXV (1970), 517-18.

Engel, M., "'A Kind of Allegory': The Old Curiosity Shop," Harvard English Studies (1970), 135-147.

Fanger, D., Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol, Cambridge, 1965.

Fraiberg, S. H., The Magic Years: Understanding and Handling the Problems of Early Childhood, New York, 1959, pp. 202-209.

Forster, J., The Life of Charles Dickens, ed. J.W.T. Ley 1928.

Gard, R., "David Copperfield," Essays in Criticism, XV (1965), 313-325.

Gilmour, R., "Memory in David Copperfield," Dickensian, LXXI (1975), 30-42.

Gold, J., "Dickens' Exemplary Aliens: Bumble the Beadle and Fagin the Fence," Mosaic, II (1968), 77-89.

Greene, G., "The Young Dickens," The Lost Childhood and Other Essays, 1951; reprinted in Dickens Modern Judgements, ed. A. E. Dyson, 1968, pp. 52-58.

Guerard, A. J., "Introduction" to Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë, New York, 1964.

_____., The Triumph of the Novel: Dickens, Dostoevsky, Faulkner, New York, 1976.

Hannaford, R., "The Fairy World of Oliver Twist," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VIII (1977), 33-36.

Hardy, B., The Moral Art of Dickens, 1970.

Hirsch, G. D., Hero and Villain in the Novels of Charles Dickens: A Psychoanalytic Study, Ph. D. Dissertation: University of California at Berkeley, 1971.

_____., "A Psychoanalytic Rereading of David Copperfield," Victorian Newsletter, LVIII (1980), 1-5.

Holloway, J., "Dickens and the Symbol," in Dickens 1970, ed. M. Slater, 1970.

Hubert, C. "Converging Worlds in Pickwick Papers," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXVII (1972), 1-20.

Hughes, F., "Narrative Complexity in David Copperfield," Journal of English Literary History, XLI (1974), 89-105.

Johnson, E., Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph, 2 vols, New York, 1952.

Kaplan, F., Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction, New Jersey, 1975.

Kennedy, G. E., II, "Dickens' Manipulators of Righteousness," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VIII (1977), 15-19.

Kincaid, J. R., Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter, 1971.

Klotz, K., "Dostoevsky and The Old Curiosity Shop," Yale University Library Gazette, L (1976), 237.

Kreutz, I., "'Sly of Manner, Sharp of Tooth': A Study of Dicken's Villains," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXII (1968), 331-348.

Landa, M. J., "The Origin of Fagin," in The Jew in Drama, pp. 159-69.

Lane, L. Jr., "The Devil in Oliver Twist," Dickensian, LII (1956), 132-36.

_____., "Dickens' Archetypal Jew," P.M.L.A., LXXIII (1958), 94.

Lankford, W. T., "'The Deep of Time': Narrative Order in David Copperfield," Journal of English Literary History, XLVI (1979), 452-67.

Law, M., "The Indebtedness of Oliver Twist to Defoe's History of The Devil," P.M.L.A., XL (1925), 892-897.

Leach, N., Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, New York, 1949.

Leavis, F. R. and Q. D., Dickens the Novelist, 1970.

Lougy, R. E., "Pickwick and 'The Parish Clerk,'" Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXV (1970), 100-104.

Lubbock, P., The Craft of Fiction, 1921.

MacPike, L., Dostoevsky's Dickens: A Study of Literary Influence, 1981.

Manning, S., "Masking and Self-Revelation: Dickens's Three Autobiographies," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VII (1976), p. 69-74.

Marcus, Steven, Dickens: from Pickwick to Dombey, New York, 1968.

McGowan, J., "David Copperfield: The Trial of Realism," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXXIV (1979), 1-9.

McLean, R. S., "Fagin: An Early View of Evil," Lock Haven Review, IX (1967), 29-36.

_____., "Putting Quilp to Rest," Victorian Newsletter, XXXIV (1968), 29-33.

_____., "Another Source for Quilp," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXVI (1971), 337-9.

_____., "Another Note on Nickleby," Dickens Studies Newsletter, VIII (Dec. 1977), 6-9.

Miller, J. H., Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels, Cambridge, 1965.

Miller, M. G., "Murdstone, Heep, and the Structure of David Copperfield," Dickens Studies Newsletter, XI (1980), 65-70.

Monod, S., "James Steerforth ou le Problème du Mal dans David Copperfield," Annales de l'Université de Paris, II (1967), 1-11).

Mulhey, C., "David Copperfield: The Folk-Story Structure," Dickens Studies Annual, V (1976), 74-94.

Needham, G., "The Undisciplined Heart of David Copperfield," Nineteenth Century Fiction, IX (1954), 81-107.

Noffsinger, J., "Dream in The Old Curiosity Shop," South Atlantic Bulletin, XLII (1977), 23-34.

Olshin, T. A., "'The Yellow Dwarf' and The Old Curiosity Shop," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXV (1970), 96-99.

Paroissien, D., "Dickens' Ralph Nickleby and Bulwer Lytton's William Brandon: A Note on the Antagonists." Dickens Studies Newsletter, VIII (1977), 10-15.

Patten, R. L., "'The Story-Weaver at His Loom': Dickens and the Beginning of The Old Curiosity Shop," in Dickens the Craftsman: Strategies of Presentation, ed. R. B. Partlow, Jr., 1970, pp. 44-64.

_____., "The Art of Pickwick's Interpolated Tales," Journal of English Literary History, XXXIV (1967), 349-66.

_____., "Introduction" to The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club (Penguin English Library Edition), 1976.

Pattison, R., The Child Figure in English Literature, Athens, 1978.

Pearlman, E., "David Copperfield Dreams of Drowning," American Imago, XXVII (1971), 391-403.

Pearson, G., "The Old Curiosity Shop," Dickens and the Twentieth Century, ed. J. Gross and G. Pearson, 1962.

Reibetanz, J. M., "Villain, Victim, and Hero: Structure and Theme in David Copperfield," Dalhousie Review, LIX (1979), 321-37.

Reinhold, H., "'The Stroller's Tale' in Pickwick," Dickensian, LXIV (1968), 149.

Saunders, J. K., "The Case of Mrs. Nickleby: Humor and Negligent Parenthood," Dickens Studies Newsletter, X (1979), 56-58.

Schacterle, L., "Oliver Twist and Its Serial Predecessors," Dickens Studies Annual, III (1974), 1-15.

Schlicke, P., "A 'Discipline of Feeling': Macready's Lear and The Old Curiosity Shop," Dickensian, LXXVI (1980), p. 79.

Senelick, L., "Traces of Othello in Oliver Twist," Dickensian, LXX (1974), 97-102.

Slater, M.," On Reading Oliver Twist," Dickensian, LXX (1974), 75-81.

_____., "Introduction" to Nicholas Nickleby (Penguin English Library Edition), 1976.

Spilka, M., "David Copperfield as Psychological Fiction," Critical Quarterly, I (1959), 292-30.

_____., "Little Nell Revisted," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Art, and Letters, XLV (1960), 432.

Steig, M., "The Central Action of The Old Curiosity Shop or Little Nell Revisted Again," Literature and Psychology, XV, 163-70.

Stevenson, Lionel, "Dickens' Dark Novels, 1851-7," Sewanee Review, LI Summer (1943), 398-409.

Stewart, Garrett, Dickens and the Trials of Imagination, Cambridge, 1974.

Stoehr, Taylor, Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance, New York, 1965.

Stone, H., "Dickens and Fantasy: The Case of Uriah Heep," Dickensian, LXXV (1979), 95-103.

_____ ., "Oliver Twist and Fairy Tales," Dickens Studies Newletter, X (1979), 34-39.

Watkins, G.M., "A Possible Source for Quilp," Notes and Queries, XVIII (1971), 411-13.

Wilson, A., "Charles Dickens: A Haunting," Critical Quarterly, II (1960); reprinted in Dickens Modern Judgements, ed. A. E. Dyson, 1968, p. 30.

_____., "Introduction to Oliver Twist (Penguin English Library Edition), 1966.

_____., The World of Charles Dickens, 1970.

Williamson, C., "Two Missing Links in Oliver Twist," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXII (1967) 225-235.

Winters, W., "Dickens and the Psychology of Dreams," P.M.L.A., LXIII (1948), 984-1006.

_____., "'A Consummation Devoutly To Be Wished,'" Dickensian, LXII (1967), 176-180.