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DREAMS: SUCH STUFF AS LITERATURE IS MADE ON

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A STUDY OF THE IDEALIZED WOMAN IN CHARLES DICKENS: LITTLE DORRIT AND GREAT EXPECTATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

The worship of the angelic guardian of the hearth is endemic to Victorian novel writing, but she appears no where so frequently as in the work of Charles Dickens. The idealized woman appears in some form in everyone of his major novels. The first portion of this study attempts to look at idealization as a form of psychic process. It tries to discover what causes it and why it takes the form it does. A brief biographical sketch of Dickens early development seeks to apply what we have discovered of Freudian theory to this author's experience to see if some light can be thrown on the haunting reappearance of the ideal woman in his work.

In Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams he interprets his own now famous dream of Irma's injection. His method is to take each line of the dream and analyze it separately. Such a method would be hopelessly cumbersome in the study of a whole novel, and so it has been our purpose in chapters two and three to take important passages descriptive of the heroine and analyze them line by line. We have shown in this way that idealization always calls forth a counterpart to it in the form of a wholly bad character, sister to the idealized good one. We have been

able to show that idealization is a psychic defence which makes ambivalence toward the image of woman rather than the exaltation of her which it appears at first glance.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to look at two women in the work of Charles Dickens: Amy Dorrit and Estella in Great Expectations. I have chosen these two because at first glance Estella seems to be a departure from the type Amy represents in Dickens work. That type is the angelic guardian of the hearth -- the wife and mother. Technically Amy is neither wife nor mother, but in practice she is both. Devoted wife to William Dorrit, her father, she is "Little Mother" to Maggy the half wit, and to Fanny and Tip, her sister and brother. After she marries Clennam she adopts Fanny's children as Fanny has lost interest in them. Wife to her father, mother to her siblings, and daughter to her husband Amy avoids any taint of sexuality and yet attains the much revered position of wife and mother. Francoise Basch in her book Relative Creatures observes that in the Victorian novels of Dickens as well as Charlotte Bronte and Thackeray:

> there is an almost systematic confusion between different sorts of love: filial, fraternal, maternal, passionate . . . this particular mode of relations operating in reality and in literature, suggests a defense mechanism in the face of passionate love, erected by those who, before

> Freud, knew nothing of the sexual and incestuous components of oedipal family links.1

It is my hypothesis that it is idealization which is the defense mechanism to which Ms. Basch points. It defends against passionate love by denying the ideal woman any sexuality, and in doing so robbing her of power to experience love as passion.

According to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary an ideal is "conceived as perfection in its kind (1613)".[2] Idealization, then, is the process by which something or someone is exalted to ideal perfection. It was thought, in 1786, to be "(men's) natural propensity",[3] but by 1837 it was a novelist's propensity. The worship of the wife-mother was found in the work of Mrs. Gaskell, Anne and Charlotte Bronte, and Thackeray as well as Dickens. There is a perfact woman in nearly every one of Dickens major novels. The result of idealization is clear: some one, usually a woman, is seen as more than normally good. But what are the mechanics of this process? What psychic proceedings are at

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[1]Francoise Basch, Relative Creatures (London: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 65-66.

[2]The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, ed. W. T. Onions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 951.

[3]Ibid.

work to produce this result? What is behind the worship of the virginal wife mother? To answer these questions it was necessary to look to a more probing definition of idealization, and for that to turn to the work of Sigmund Freud. The psychoanalytic definition of idealization states that idealization is "a defense process by which an ambivalently regarded object is split into two, one resulting object being conceived of as ideally good, the other as wholly bad".[4] This definition includes and expands the Oxford Dictionary definition of something conceived as perfect in its kind. In human psychic process a woman seen as ideally good will have a counterpart who is seen as her opposite. It is the purpose of chapter one of this thesis to examine the psychic processes which lead to idealization. The ideal woman is virginal in that she has no acknowledged sexual attributes. For this reason she is exalted. Her counterpart, the sexual woman, bears the brunt of the Christian identification of evil with sex and is consequently debased.

In his discussion in "A Special Type of Object Choice Made by Men" and "On the Universal Tendency to De-

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[4]C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 67.

basement in the Sphere of Love" Freud observed that the taboo of incest made it impossible for some men to see the women of their own class as sexually desirable. Oliver Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer is a comic exploration of just such a man. Freud further observed that it was the repression of sexual drive which makes the lover endow his beloved with exceptional spiritual merit. The first woman most men love is their mother. In the boy's mind the concept of motherhood is forbidden to mingle with thoughts born of his own sexual desire. The taboo of incest separates the idea of motherhood from sexual desire, and conversely links it to nonsexual love. For the adult male this poses a problem solved only by splitting the image of woman into two: the virgin and the whore. Freud treated patients who suffered psychic impotence with their wives but who found no such problems with prostitutes.

In the novels of Charles Dickens we find splitting of the image of woman into several parts. One character seems to bear the traits of a wholly good person and another traits of a bad one. When the wholly good heroine like Amy, Little Nell, David Coperfield's Agnes, Esther Summerson or Florence Dombey appear we do not have far to look for another female figure who is absurd, grotesque, or the object of the author's scorn. Splitting is defined by psychoanalysis as a process ". . . by which a mental

structure loses its integrity and becomes replaced by two or more part structures".[5] Amy Dorrit is idealized and such a definition alerts us to look for her counterpart who bears traits which she cannot. We find that what Steven Marcus calls a poetic disjunction of a single character into antagonistic parts has taken place in Little Dorrit so that as well as Amy we have Pet who is her sexualized aspect, and Miss Wade who, for reasons discussed in chapter two, is allowed both sexuality and aggression. It is the purpose of chapter two to look at Amy, usually seen as an embodiment of human goodness, as one aspect of a disjointed female image. The chapter then goes on to look at two other characters as completions of that image.

Looking for splits in works of literature as an explanation of character is not new with the advent of psychoanalytic criticism. G. K. Chesterton in his book Appreciations and Criticisms of Charles Dickens points out that both Mr. Micawber and William Dorrit are portraits of one man: John Dickens. In drawing these two characters Dickens took ". . . one real person and turned him into two. And what is more he turned him into two persons who

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[5]C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 156.

seem to be quite opposite persons".[6] Just so. Whether it is called splitting, poetic disjunction or what Robert Rogers in his book The Double in Literature has called "object doubling" the result for literature is the same. One personality is divided into constellations which take the form of fictitious characters. It is these splits of the female image in Little Dorrit that chapter two seeks to explore.

Chapter three is a study of Estella in Great Expectations. She is remote and star-like as her name suggests. She is exalted like Amy but not desexualized like her. There is none of the confusion of relationship that we noted in Little Dorrit. Estella is no one's mother, sister, or wife. We find out only belatedly that she is Magwitch's daughter. Pip desires her and in this their relationship is a dramatic departure from that of Esther and John Jarndyce, or Amy and Clennam or Nell and her grandfather, or Agnes and David. Estella is endowed with sexuality but because sexuality and purity cannot go together in the Victorian mind she is ultimately debased. In this novel the split takes on a different aspect. Estella's counterpart is Miss Havisham; a ghastly portrait of arrested growth. She is a virgin pausing at the point where all

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[6] G. K. Chesterton, Appreciations and Criticisms of Charles Dickens (London: J. M. Dent, 1911), p. 180.

Dickens' previous heroines have paused: on the threshold of sexual maturity. Dickens, analyzing his preoccupation with prepubescent girls, has forced himself to present the logical conclusion of the life of the woman whose virginity is valued more highly than her maturity. The result is ". . . the purest symbol of death in life."[7]

Estella is pointed out to Pip as desirable from the moment he meets her. Miss Havisham asks him what he thinks of her and he replies

> "I think she is very proud."
> "Anything else?"
> "I think she is very pretty."
> "Anything else?"
> "I think she is very insulting."
> "Anything else?"
> "I think I should like to go home."
> "And never see her again though she is so pretty?"[8]

At first glance we would seem, in the portrait of Estella, to have escaped the splitting we noted as the result of idealization. But a closer examination shows that the split between the desexualized good woman and the sexualized bad one is operating here as before. Estella is desirable, but she is horribly punished for her desirability. Her marriage to Bentley Drummle is reminiscent of Pet Meagle's to Henry Gowan. There is a good deal of sadism in Dickens

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[7] F. Basch, Relative Creatures, p. 151.

[8] C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 90.

and this point is exemplified by these two marriages. In both cases the desirable woman is debased by a violent, strong and sadistic husband. Estella's life with Drummle is so intolerable that she leaves him but not before her second husband has witnessed some outrageous treatment of her. Quilp's pursuit of Nell and Murdstone's of David Copperfield's mother are other examples of sadistic treatment of pretty women in Dickens. Even if we are to accept the second ending of the novel (though I think the first more artistically right) Pip sees how Estella has been brought low when they meet at Satis House. He sees ". . . the saddened softened light of the once proud eyes;"[9] as Little Dorrit's lack of will is rewarded Estella's haughty, wilful, sexuality is punished.

In these two women we see the consequences of the defense mechanism called idealization. Amy is exalted for her goodness which is passive, sexless, and maschostic in nature. Estella is debased for her beauty, wilfulness and desirability. The splitting which we have observed as the mode of creating characters from the various aspects of one image functions not only within each novel but from novel to novel. Estella, hailed as one of the "realistic"

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[9]C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 491.

pictures of woman in Dickens work, is the product of idealization no less than Amy. Idealization functions in these novels, as it did for other Victorian novelists as well as for Victorian society as a whole, as a defense against having to deal with female sexuality in all its complexity. The nature of these split images comes, according to Freud, from the early stage of male childhood. The sensuous and affectionate stream of feeling becomes separated and men who cannot unite them in adulthood desire where they cannot love, and love where they cannot desire. An added complexity to this formula in the novels of Dickens is that where the author desires he must also punish.

CHAPTER ONE

DICKENS AND THE IDEALIZED WOMAN

Who is the idealized woman? In his Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, Charles Rycroft states that idealization is comprised of two notions: "the construction of an ideal, perfect object, and the reification of an idea . . .".[1] The question which his definition does not answer, but which seems a crucial one is, what is meant by the terms "ideal" and "perfect"? Is this defined differently by each idealizing person, or do people seen as perfect or ideal have qualities in common? Otto Rank's work The Myth of the Birth of the Hero explores the hypothesis that if the ideal person is a man he is recognizable by the traits he has in common with other heroes. Rank's study traces the prototypic hero from Sargon to Lohengrin, and shows how again and again his birth and biography follow the same pattern. Is this true for the female figure? L. F. Manheim, in his article "The Personal History of David Copperfield" quotes Karl Menninger's interpretation of Rank's formulation:

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[1]C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 67.

> When the hero in the words of Menninger's interpretation of the Rank formula proclaims "I eschew all women except madonnas for whom I have only reverence, love and devotion", he is casting a large portion of womankind, both married and unwed into outer darkness.[2]

The hero's mother is such a woman, of necessity. The virginity of his mother is a contributing factor in making him heroic, according to Rank's hypothesis. By his own decree the hero has declared himself mateless, for the only woman he can love is just the woman he is forbidden to desire. The ideal woman must be mother and virgin at once. The hero sees his own mother as virginal, and any woman who hopes to command his love must be seen similarly. No wonder, as Manheim says, most women are cast into outer darkness by this single statement.

Charles Dickens, whose novels are haunted by this ideal, virginal figure, tried over and over to come to terms with the knowledge that what he required in a woman to love her, she must lose when she becomes a wife. He did not succeed, and was maddened by her "will-o-the-wisp"-like quality of disappearing as soon as she was possessed. If this were a quirk in Dickens, and found in no one else we

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[2]L. F. Manheim, "Floras and Doras: The Women in Dickens Novels", Texas Studies in Literature and Language, VII (Summer 1965-66).

could dismiss it as an aberration of genius. However, so universal is the figure of virgin mother that it is part of the iconography of the Holy Family. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that though inimical to logic, such a figure has reality in the male psyche. The ideal woman is a sexual being in that she is a mother, and sexless or at least has no mature sexuality in that she is a virgin. She is ideal and perfect in that she is virginal, and the idea of motherhood is reified in the form of her image.

For a small child, his parents are his only source of authority, and belief. His only wish is to be like the parent of his own sex, and to be big like his father and mother. As he grows he cannot help but observe that other parents differ from his and he begins to compare his own unfavourably with them. Small slights on his parent's side aggravate his growing sense of dissatisfaction, and he resents having to share their love with siblings. A child's ". . . sense that his own affection is not being fully reciprocated then finds vent in the idea, . . . of being a step child or an adopted child".[3] This fiction Freud dubbed "Family Romance".

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[3]S. Freud, S.E.:IX:238.

The resulting imaginative tour de force on the child's part turns him into the child of much grander parents. This compensates him for the inadequacies of his real parents, and makes him unique among his siblings. The motivation of what is in fact an exaltation of his own parents, for the noble ones always share traits of the more humble reality, is ". . . an expression of the child's longing for the happy, vanished days when his father seemed to him the noblest and strongest of men, and his mother the dearest and loveliest of women".[4]

This exaltation is precipitated, according to Freud, by the child's understanding of difference in the sex roles played by his parents. His disgust at this knowledge has a formative influence on his choice of the women he loves in adult life.[5] Freud's studies of psychical impotence in adult males lead to an insight which bears on his discovery of Family Romance and further explains the idealization of women by men. It was his observation that

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[4]S. Freud, S.E.:IX:241. I am grateful to Dr. V. P. Gay for pointing out that the source of "idealizing libido" is not sexual (phallic) love for an object, but more typically projected narcissism. See Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego for Freud's discussion. (S.E.: XVIII:67-143.)

[5]See S. Freud's "A Special Type of Object Choice Made by Men", and "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love", S.E.:XI:163-190.

men suffered impotence only with certain kinds of women. These women were frequently their own wives or women of their own class. No such inhibition of sexual functioning occurred in their encounter with prostitutes, servants or other women whom they felt to be debased. In such men the affectionate current of their feeling had remained fixed upon their mothers. When, in puberty, their sensual expression of love sought a suitable object, it found it only with women who did not recall the beloved whom incest had denied him. The mother had been exalted in the Oedipal stage, during which the son's desire for her was directed toward an aim remote from sexual satisfaction. In adult life the idealized beloved participates by association in the taboo of incest, and the man cannot function in a sexual relationship with her. The debased woman is sufficiently unlike the woman he loved in childhood to remove the incest association, and the sensual current is released. Where such men love they cannot desire, and where they desire they cannot love. Fiction is full of examples of this split. Oliver Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer is an illustration of how such a man was cured of his stammering embarrassment before ladies of his own station. In Leslie Fiedler's book Love and Death in the American Novel he points out that American novelists can depict the "Good Good Girl" or the "Bad Girl" but a sexual encounter with a mature

woman of the hero's class is no where to be found on the frontier of American novel writing.

It has always been a striking quality of the state of being in love that the beloved is beyond criticism, and his/her characteristics are more highly valued than those of people who are not loved. The result is that when

> the sensual impulsions are more or less effectively repressed or set aside, the illusion is produced that the object has come to be sensually loved on account of its spiritual merits, where as on the contrary these merits may really only have been lent to it by its sensual charm.6

It is this inversion or confusion of sensual and spiritual which confronts us in the process of idealization. Sexual desire is repressed and the loved person is in like degree exalted or aggrandized, just as we saw in the sublimation of sexual desire in the child. As a man falls more and more in love he becomes, according to Freud, more and more unassuming and modest, and his beloved more and more precious and sublime: "Traits of humility, of the limitation of narcissism and of self injury occur in every case of being in love; in the extreme case they are merely intensified and as a result of the withdrawal of the sensual claims they remain in solitary supremacy".[7] According to the economics of

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[6] S.E.:XVIII:112.

[7] S.E.:XVIII:113.

Freud's hypothesis the greater the freedom of sexual expression, the less the idealization. As the sexual drive becomes spiritualized it assumes the stature of a moral absolute. What the beloved wishes is "good", and what the beloved does not wish is "bad". In cases of this extremity the beloved person has replaced the lover's conscience. He can exercise no judgement independent of his beloved's wish.

It is at this point that we may claim some insight into two questions which the process of idealization raises: why does the chosen woman whether mother or mistress, undergo idealization, and why in the process does she lose sexuality? Freudian theory, first in relation to the Family Romance and second on the state of being in love, answers those questions. Thwarted sexuality due to the incest taboo finds acceptable expression in an exalting and aggrandizing of the loved person. The more sexually repressed the lover the greater will be the spiritual qualities he ascribes to his beloved. Idealization, then, is part of the process of the sublimation of sexual desire, and as the beloved cannot become a recipient of sexual love she loses the lineaments of desirability.

The suggestion that the more unhappy the love the greater the degree of idealization is illuminating in relation to Charles Dickens. If a male child is frustrated

in his expression of love for his mother, and if he is similarly thwarted in his relations of his first love his propensity toward idealization may be extreme. This suggestion does not begin to exhaust the explanation of Dickens' creation of such characters as Amy Dorrit, Esther Summerson, Little Nell, Florence Dombey, or Estella, but it may be a beginning at understanding the recurring appearance of the idealized woman in his work.

The first woman with whom Charles Dickens fell in love was Maria Beadnell. She was the third and youngest daughter of George Beadnell, the manager of a bank at One Lombard Street. He and his family lived next door at Two Lombard Street. Maria and Charles met in 1829 when he was seventeen and she eighteen. The relatively recent recrudescence of Dickens sexuality and the sexual inaccessibility of a woman so socially placed combined in just the way Freud describes, and Dickens raised her to the stature of an angel.[8] He went regularly to visit her house during the year of 1829, and watched:

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[8]E. Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph, Vol. I (New York: Simon and Schuster), p. 67.

> as her finger wove in and out among the trembling strings of the harp. Surely the sight of that bright face, Dickens thought, would make satan himself weep and remember the angels singing around Heaven's High Throne![9]

Maria, beautiful and well aware of it, enjoyed Dickens admiration but never took it seriously. Her parents felt him an unsuitable companion and sent their daughter to Paris to be "finished". After her return he gradually gave up hope of winning her. He cherished a youthful image of her for twenty-five years, and suffered a cruel disallusionment when they met again in middle age. She assured him then that she had loved him in her youth, but his revenge on her for having turned to a fat, silly, rattle-brained creature is well known. He caricatured her in the character of Flora Finching in Little Dorrit.

It was a twist of fortune, the kind that is designed to give joy to the hearts of thesis writers, that the second love of Dickens life was also called Mary. The cultural iconography of the ideal virgin was reinforced powerfully in his personal experience. She was the sister of Dickens' wife, and she came to live with them shortly after Kate and he returned from their honeymoon. She was younger than the sister Dickens had married; kind, consider-

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[9]E. Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph, p. 68.

ate, happy spirited, and an extravagant admirer of her brother-in-law.[10] Kate and Dickens were already finding grounds for difference, and Mary's presence did not mitigate Charles growing irritation with his wife: "In the occasional small frictions of any home, a husband so situated may not always reflect that it is easier to be a perfect guest than a perfect wife".[11] Mary died one year after Kate and Dickens were married. She was seventeen, and while in life she had been charming she now assumed perfection in Dickens' mind. She collapsed one night after she and the Dickens returned from a theatre party, and Charles held her in his arms until she died the following day. He slipped a ring from her hand while she lay near him, and placed it on his little finger where it remained until his death. He wrote the following epitaph for her, and hoped for years to be buried in her grave:

Mary Scott Hogarth
Died 7 May 1837
Young and Beautiful and Good
God in his mercy
Numbered her with his angels
At the early age of
Seventeen

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[10] E. Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph, p. 133.

[11] Ibid., p. 133.

Dickens' love for her, and his premature loss such that he could not meet her as he was to meet and vilify Maria Beadnell, sealed a vision of idealized womanhood in his imagination which he was to create in his novels repeatedly. Like the enchanting Maria, she became a vision which neither grew nor changed.

So far we have looked at the process of idealization and seen how it aggrandizes or exalts the female figure in the minds of the idealizing man. Charles Rycroft's definition of idealization, a portion of which began this chapter, goes on to describe it as "a defence process by which an ambivalently regarded (internal) object is split into two, one resulting object being conceived of as ideally GOOD, the other as wholly BAD".[12] This touches on an issue which we have not considered, and which Freud does not mention. Surely, behind idealization lies anger. Freud mentions in his essay on Narcissism that sublimation is a process in which the instinct directs itself toward an aim remote from sexual satisfaction. He does not say what the repository for this sublimated energy is, and unquestionably it varies. The person who is sexually desired is idealized,

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[12]C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 67.

and in the process attributed with extraordinary spirituality. But the sexual energy of her admirer has still not found expression. In the Oedipus complex it is preserved in the unconscious during adolescence.[13] But what of the sublimated sexuality of the adult lover? Idealization occurs because of denial. The boy cannot express his sexual desire, and the adolescent Charles cannot seek sexual satisfaction with Maria Beadnell. Frustrated in one area surely his anger must express itself in another; if not toward the beloved then how? Rycroft suggests that idealization takes place because the person is ambivalently regarded. She is loved and hated. Loved and desired on the one hand, but on the other hated because she is unattainable. In Charles Dickens this anger combined with literary genius, and found expression in the parade of monstrous, grotesque and inadequate women of his novels.

Robert Rogers, in his book The Double in Literature discusses the concept of creating several literary characters from the conflicting emotions induced by one beloved person. He writes,

> An individual suffering from internal conflicts often attempts to deal with contradictory impulses by developing separate personality constellations. . . . In literature these separate

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[13] S.E.:XVIII:111.

> constellations take the form of characters representing manifest or latent doubles. . . .
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> Doubling by division of objects occurs without exception as a result of the perceiver's ambivalence toward the object. . . . The composite person who is perceived as component persons is always a love object in the usual sense of that phrase in psychoanalysis. More accurately he is a love/hate object; the object of conflicting emotions so powerful that the unstable perceiver cannot tolerate the resultant anxiety. The perceiver attempts to dispel this anxiety by the magical gesture of separating the untidy whole into compartments.14

Dickens' books are an encyclopedia of such object doubles, and not the least among them is the cast of mother-wife-daughter figures. L. F. Manheim has done a study of these women called "Floras and Doras: The Women in Dickens Novels". Mannheim divides Dickens women into three categories. The first and by far the largest is comprised of ". . . women who have passed the period of virginal innocence and have become hateful, freakish, or comic 'mothers', or equally hateful, freakish, or comic 'old maids'".[15] Manheim's conclusion from this is illuminating to our discussion of the idealized woman. He suggests that rather than the virginal figure being central to the novels she

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[14] R. Rogers, The Double in Literature (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), pp. 109-10.

[15] L. F. Manheim, "Floras and Doras: The Women in Dickens Novels", 181.

seems to dominate (Little Dorrit, The Old Curiosity Shop, Dombey and Son, Great Expectations, Bleak House) she is in fact a propitiatory offering to balance the numerous representations of the mother figure as the butt of aggression. The centrality of the vilified woman is nowhere more evident than in the writing of Little Dorrit. Amy is small (literally) compensation for Flora Finching, Mrs. Merdle, Maggy, Mrs. Clennam, and in none of Dickens novels is ". . . the drive against false mothers so heated and prolonged".[16] The image of the false mother as she is presented in Mrs. Clennam is doubly powerful: she is false in love and false in fact. She is not Arthur's mother at all. Here we have the formulaic biography of the hero as Rank chronicled it. Mrs. Clennam is the virgin mother this time with a twist, carrying the connotation of sterility rather than purity. The hero's true mother is a soft, beautiful, frail vision of fantasy, who went mad and died of grief at the loss of her son. For a brief moment we have an insight into the preconscious, paradisal closeness of mother and infant. Desirable, obtainable, and completely his own, this phantom mother is destroyed by the mother of Arthur Clennam's conscious maturity who, in the

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[16]L. F. Manheim, "Floras and Doras: The Women in Dickens Novels", p. 185.

character of Mrs. Clennam, is an icon of the punitive and vengeful superego. It is interesting to note that it is a mother and not a father, as in the more typical Oedipal pattern, who plays this vengeful role. Having recently met with Maria Beadnell after twenty-five years, Dickens saw that not only did the first tender beloved of his dreams no longer exist, but she never had existed as she had conceived her to be. This meeting may have kindled the memory of a more formative and more jarring discontinuity, which occurred during the blacking factory incident of his childhood. His father, released from prison for debt, wanted to take Charles out of the factory and put him back in school. His mother, however, was happy for him to remain at work, and said so. Charles has considered his apprenticeship the most painful kind of humiliation, and that his mother should be so insensitive to this was a betrayal he never forgave. If she was false to his ambition she was false to him. Dickens' passion against his first love and his mother meet in Little Dorrit, and two idealized figures are bitterly mocked in the creation of Flora Finching and Mrs. Clennam.

Freud, in his own analysis of works of art made no allowance for the possibility that the work be more than a projection of the artist's conflicts. He never suggested that it might be at the same time a sketch of their solution.

In Freud and Philosophy, P. Riceour suggests that the great work of art ". . . goes ahead of the artist; it is a prospective symbol of his personal synthesis, of a man's future rather than a regressive symbol of his unresolved conflicts".[17] This would reduce art to therapy but for the fact that in the synthetic paradigm which the artist presents there is something which the reader can recognize. Further, no single interpretation can exhaust the well springs of a great novel. There is no question that ". . . all genuinely creative writings are the product of more than a single motive and a single impulse in the poet's mind, and are open to more than a single interpretation".[18]

Idealization is clearly a psychic disposition which plays a part in creating character, but it is not a method of discussing it. In the next two chapters of this thesis we will discuss Little Dorrit and Great Expectations. The method these two sections will employ in the discussion

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[17] P. Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 175.

[18] S.E.:IV:266.

of these novels is the one Freud used in dream interpretation. What art interpretation can learn from dream interpretation is not so much how to expose the biographical backdrop of the text, though that is interesting as we have seen, but rather that the interpretation of a masterpiece is constructed from details. It was not Freud's intention to explain the genre from examining any one work. In his analysis of Jensen's Gradiva he is not proposing a theory of the novel. What he did in employing his method in the examination of works of art was to open and expand their meaning through examining the relationship of signifier to what is signified.

The charge against making a direct analogy between fiction and the dream is that the explanation of a work of art does not have the free association method, indispensible to dream interpretation, as its disposal. That is true, and would be important if our aim was to write Dickens' biography using his novels as a sole source of information. Fortunately, E. Johnson and J. Forster have done that job by more direct methods. Given that we have the text in hand, the associations can, and must if the method is to maintain any coherence be made within the context of the

novel alone. The interpretation is made by means of symbols, and these are all found in the text.

The assumption which this method makes is that the text, like the dream, must be elucidated. What we are interpreting is a representation of unconscious contents. Emotions must always be clothed in some form of representations, and:

> In this light, the endless stream of talk on which psychoanalytic treatment is carried becomes the opposite of a liability, as some have urged; the value of therapy is just its prolonged opportunity for the patient to formulate his emotions. Mediated as talk, emotion may be brought before the tribunal of interpretation and appeased. Hence Freud's primary interest in the discursive by-products of emotion -- wit, speech errors, dreams, arts.19

In his book, Freud: The Mind of the Moralist, Philip Rieff contends that the psychoanalytic tactic of interpretation . is not unique, but rather branches off from the tradition of religious hermeneutics. He proposes two schools of religious hermeneutics: the exegetic and reconciliatory. Exegesis attempts to bring out the literal meaning of the text. The reconciliatory school assumes that the literal

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[19] P. Rieff, Freud: The Mind of the Moralist (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1959), p. 117.

meaning is a disguise for more significant contents. It is this which psychoanalysis uses as a primary assumption. Consequently, the methods which Freud used in his first significant work, The Interpretation of Dreams, was not new in form but only in application. It is this same reconciliatory method which literary criticism has applied to fiction.

The first step in such a method is to look for disproportionate emphasis. The theme of this thesis is an example of the disproportionate emphasis on the theme of the ideal, perfect, virginal mother in the canon of Dickens' work. This analysis is done by pin-pointing specific incongruities, absurdity of context, partial forgetting, accidental utterances, the slips and evidences in fact which Freud examined extensively in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life. The second concern is to discriminate what is of primary importance, and what of secondary among these incongruities. The more genuine the layer, in the Freudian strata, the deeper. Freud's favourite metaphors were geological. The bottom strata is comprised of the formative experiences of our early life. Repressed, but not forgotten, these early experiences participate in all our later means of expression. The

assumption of the reconciliatory school is that what is said is not what is meant, and consequently the genuine content must be separated from the layers of disguise. What is ceaselessly amazing to analysts and critics alike is the ingenuity, artistry and humour of the disguises which dream and in turn fiction present to consciousness. Writers are masters of a craft which we all practice. The writer's genius is to recapture, in a narrative form, events which we all experience. It is the critics work, a work to which this mode of criticism is well suited, to rediscover the experience shared by writer and reader. Essentially, ". . . the contents of the human mind are few, simple, and boring. But it is from that primitive level of psychic redundancy that complex intellectual and imaginative materials draw their emotional power".[21] This is not to imply that what the writer says is unimportant. Rather, it is important for itself, and beyond that for what it implies. Freud's premise of interpretation assumes that the unconscious has no way of speaking for itself, and consequently can only find expression by secondary means. The task of the critic, like the analyst of the dream, is

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[21] M. Shechner, Joyce in Nighttown (Berkley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 8.

to recreate the work of art in his act of interpretation, and in doing so gain some insight into its meaning. The more sensitive the act of interpretation the more truly revealed the artist's intention will be. In this process, the sensitive critic cannot afford to overlook the artist's own measure of self-consciousness, and particularly when dealing with writers of the post-Freudian period. The Freudian Revolution has done nothing if not make us all self-conscious, and the literary artist is, by disposition, more self-conscious than most. Unlike the dream which is often wholly unintelligible the work of fiction has been submitted to an initial interpretive synthesis in the artist's hands. Art, like dream, participates in the unconscious and conscious at once. Under the impact of Freud's ideas art has been recognized as the royal road into the depths of the human psychic process. It will be the intention of the rest of this thesis to follow this path in the hope of achieving some insight into Little Dorrit and Great Expectations by Charles Dickens.

CHAPTER TWO

LITTLE DORRIT

Dickens wrote to John Forster in August 1855, speaking to him of his plans for Little Dorrit:

> It struck me that it would be a new thing to show people coming together in a chance way as fellow travellers, and being in the same place ignorant of one another as happens in life; and to connect them afterwards and to make the waiting for that connection part of the interest.1

The chance way in which people are brought together in the early chapters of the novel make it seem disjointed, and this superficial dislocation gives it the atmosphere of a dream. Marseilles, where the book opens, seems to have little to do with the story of the Marshalsea prison which we expect to read. In chapter three we are introduced to the Clennam household and in chapter six we meet the "Father of the Marshalsea". Three different, and seemingly unrelated tales, are introduced in the first six chapters. These apparently disjointed episodes, which are in fact

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[1] J. Holloway, "Introduction", Little Dorrit (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 14.

connected, resemble the experience we have in dreams.[2] Dream thoughts, like the characters in the novel, do not seem to be connected to one another. The connecting links in the novel, again as in dream, are forged from the biographical revelations of each character. Flora Finching has been Arthur Clennam's sweetheart, Mrs. Clennam has a secret in her past which Blandois is able to exploit to blackmail her. Merdle, seeming bastion of the middle class, has done a deal with the Barnacles. Doyce and Meagles are old friends, and Miss Wade has been jilted by Henry Gowan so as to marry Pet. Lionel Trilling, in his introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of Little Dorrit, says that ". . . we do not have the amazing thickness of fact and incident that marks say Bleak House or Our Mutual Friend. . . . The imagination of Little Dorrit is marked not so much by its powers of particularization as by its powers of generalization and abstraction".[3] The absence of coherent fact and incident in

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[2]It is interesting to note in this connection Freud's observation that "The form of the dream, or the form in which it is dreamt is used with quite surprising frequency for representing its concealed subject matter". The Interpretation of Dreams (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), p. 446.

[3]L. Trilling, "Little Dorrit", Kenyon Review, XV (1953), 589.

the early portion of the novel, its generalized, abstracted narrative technique give the impression that the reader and writer are sharing a dream.

The abstractness of the narrative is extended to the characterization of the novel's major female character, Amy Dorrit. Trilling sees her as allegorical rather than realistic in conception. She is ". . . to be the Beatrice of the comedy, the paraclete in female form".[4] Steven Marcus too sees Amy as an embodiment of a religious abstraction: Charity. He says that starting with Dombey and Son, "Florence is Dickens' first important representation of female caritas -- suffering all and enduring all -- the expression of both a hope and despair which are to culminate in Little Dorrit".[5] That Little Dorrit is single faceted no one would dispute. She is innocent, child-like and charitable without a dark side to her nature. A. J. O. Cockshut in his work The Imagination of Charles Dickens says that she is ". . . much nearer to some Pelegian or Rousseauist conception of virtue than to sanctity",[6]

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[4]L. Trilling, "Little Dorrit", 589.

[5]S. Marcus, From Pickwick to Dombey (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), p. 355.

[6]A. O. J. Cockshut, The Imagination of Charles Dickens (New York: New York University Press, 1962), p. 154.

and Grahame Smith in his work Dickens, Money, and Society asserts that ". . . Little Dorrit embodies moral purity in a world whose evil is so great that it imparts a dignity to her solitary struggle".[7] It remains for John Wain to point out that this paraclete-like good has left Amy a permanently disabled woman. She is able to adopt the role of suffering servant, and of wife to her father, successfully, but when a man asks her to be his wife she can relate to him only as a father. The principal couple of the work, Arthur and Amy,

> consists of a girl who has put all her energies into relieving the sufferings of her weak and selfish father, and as a result is left in a permanently disabled psychological state in which the relationship of father and daughter is the only one she can think of as real;[8]

The girl who is unable to relate to a man except as a daughter has denied her sexuality. She cannot be sexualized and pure as we saw in the discussion of idealization (see Introduction, pp. 2 and 3). She chooses purity but not without consequence as we shall see.

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[7]Grahame Smith, Dickens, Money, and Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 161-62.

[8]John Wain, Dickens and the Twentieth Century, "Little Dorrit" (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 176.

Amy is one in a long list of idealized women in Dickens: Little Nell, Ruth Pinch, Florence Dombey, Esther Summerson, and David Copperfield's Agnes. The chief quality of these characters is their sexual innocence. It was not unheard of for Victorian women to enter into marriage knowing nothing of the physical side of sex. In portraying sexual innocence in women Dickens is reflecting his time but, as John Carey points out, what is disconcerting is that Dickens should consider sexual ignorance an ideal state of affairs, and "moreover by describing as innocent and pure heroines who are in reality dangerously retarded he leaves us to infer that even normal sexuality is guilty or unclean".[9] He leaves us to infer that and much more. The idealized woman, whether she be seen as Marcus, Cockshut, Smith and Trilling see her, as a figure from allegory, or as Wain and Carey see her, as dangerously retarded, is half a woman. She is the split image of a whole human being. Splitting is a process by ". . . which a mental structure loses its integrity and becomes replaced by two or more part structures".[10] The mental structure

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[9]John Carey, The Violent Effigy (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 160.

[10]C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 156.

which has lost integrity in Little Dorrit is the image of woman. Amy represents the spiritual aspect of that split image.

Amy's spirituality is depicted in the first passage which describes her: ". . . she was so little and light, so noiseless and shy, and appeared so conscious of being out of place among the three elders, that she had all the manner of a subdued child".[11] She is a diminutive doll-child: little, light, noiseless, and shy. Amy's smallness of stature is emphasized throughout the novel. Maggy calls her "little mother", and Flora Finching calls her "an industrious little fairy" (p. 330). Arthur Clennam thinks of her as a "domesticated fairy" (p. 54) and it is he who names her "Little Dorrit". A character of small stature is a symbol of ambivalent meaning. J. E. Cirlot points out that, ". . . smallness may be taken also as a sign of deformity, of the abnormal and inferior".[12] We have already referred to John Carey's discussion of the sexual ignorance of Dickens' idealized women. They are not only dangerously

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[11]C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 93.

[12]J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 91.

retarded in their sexual relationships, but they are diminutively small in stature. Sexuality cannot be found in so child-like a woman. The novel is well named for Little Dorrit for she embodies parent and child at once.[13] Loving such a woman is a safe experience for she cannot threaten her lover with the full force of her adult sexuality. Freud discusses the threat of female sexuality to men in "Totem and Taboo". In it he asserts that,

> Man fears that his strength will be taken from him by woman, dreads becoming infected with her femininity and then proving himself a weakling. The effect of coitus in discharging tensions and inducing flacidity may be a prototype of what these fears represent; and realization of the influence gained by woman over man as a result of sexual relations and the favours she exhorts by this means, may all conduce to justify the growth of these fears.14

The authorial voice in Little Dorrit has avoided the threat of infection from female genitality by giving the heroine none. Carey sees the thesis that men fear women supported by the Victorian passion for child wives: "The Victorian effort to restrict the role of women to such sterotypes both in fiction and in real life suggests a lurking aware-

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[13]It is interesting to note in this connection that the complexity of the relationship between parent and child is an overriding concern of the novel.

[14]S. Freud, "The Taboo of Virginity", standard edition, XI, 198-99.

ness of women's threat to male supremacy". In his discussion of "Dickens' Children" Carey divides them into real children and dwarfs. The Dickensian dwarf is created to bring tears to the eyes of grown ups because he seems to possess an innocence grownup people have lost. The child-wife is a dwarf of similar nature. She represents to her lover an innocence he believes he once possessed, or if he didn't, he thinks he ought to have done so. The ideal child is adult in mind but small in body. The ideal woman is child-like in mind and body.

Amy Dorrit is little and light. Her lightness refers to her stature, but light is also traditionally equated with the spirit.[15] Lionel Trilling calls her the paraclete in female form (see above page 33). In her passivity, her servant-like role, her struggle to think only of the needs of others she is a Christ figure. The Christian symbol of the dove is well known, and Little Dorrit is referred to as a bird in a cage: "The door opened and when the small bird, reared in captivity, had tamely fluttered in, he saw it shut again; . . .".[16] Like Christ

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[15] J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 187.

[16] C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 144.

she lives a life of innocent suffering. Even in childhood she bore a

> humble consciousness of her own babyhood and want of strength, even in the matter of lifting and carrying; through how much weariness and hopelessness, and how many secret tears; she dragged on, until recognized as useful, even indispensible.17

When she grows to womanhood she alone bears the family burden of shame without any recognition or praise. She ". . . took the place of eldest of the three in all things but precedence; was the head of the family; and bore in her own heart its anxieties and shames".[18] In this striving for her family she seeks nothing for herself, and in fact, hides her "light under a bushel" so as to preserve her father's integrity. As she gains the ability to earn a livelihood she must hide this fact from her father to whom it is painful. So as to preserve his feelings ". . . the Child of the Marshalsea had always upon her the care of preserving the genteel fiction that they were all idle beggars together".[19] Mendicant in fiction if not in fact, Little

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[17] C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 111.

[18] Ibid., p. 112.

[19] Ibid., p. 114.

Dorrit adopts the role of humble, begging and willing sacrifice to her family's well being. Like Christ she lives disguised among her spiritual inferiors, "inspired to be something which was not what the rest were, and to be that something different and laborious for the sake of the rest".[20] She lives in a walled garden; an inversion of paradise. The walled garden usually carries the implication of protection, but becomes, in the form of the Marshalsea Prison, a cage harbouring the bird reared in captivity. The bird is accustomed to its captivity and dare not escape. The theme of Little Dorrit's Christly passivity and her feminine passivity merge in this image. The gate of the Marshalsea is the gate into maturity and "Through this little gate she passed out of childhood into the care laden world".[21] Never completely however. Every evening Little Dorrit returns to the protection of the walled garden where she is forever the "Child of the Marshalsea". When the Dorrits finally are released from prison Arthur carries Amy out over the doorstep in a dead faint: "Clennam appeared at the carriage door bearing the little insensible figure in his arms. . . . "She appeared to have gone to change her

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[20] C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 110.

[21] Ibid., p. 111.

dress, and to have sunk down overpowered".[22] The change from the ugly old shabby dress of her prison youth to a new dress suitable to the outside world is too great for her strength. Faced with problems of adult sexuality she faints. The desire to stay in the walled garden, child of her father, and safe from the problems of admitting to adulthood overwhelms her joy at being released from prison. In fact she feels none. The narrator is faced with the difficulty of maintaining Amy's innocence in the world outside the Marshalsea. Her fear on leaving is signalled by her fainting. She never wants to leave her father, long after she is free to do so. She wants only to be near him, to nurse and protect him as she has always done. When he urges her to marry she cries out in protest "Oh no! Let me stay with you. I beg and pray that I may stay with you! I want nothing but to stay and take care of you!"[23]

Little Dorrit is little, light, noiseless. She is the silent and suffering servant. Part of her passivity lies in her quietness. She will not speak out against her fate or claim anything for herself. Last in the list of adjectives in the novel's first description of her she is

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[22] C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 481.

[23] Ibid., p. 669.

called shy, feeling out of place among the elders in the room. She is not a child, she is twenty-two. Her child-like, selfless spirituality is excessive. Idealization is a defence ". . . against the consequences of recognizing ambivalence",[24] and it makes of her an extravagant picture of goodness. She is controlled by the omnipotent narrator with a rigidity which makes us look for a compensating wholly bad character. We have it in Blandois, but more provocative still is the evidence of anger in the characterization of Little Dorrit herself.

Little Dorrit contains three remarkable studies in psychic masochism: Mrs. Clennam, Miss and Amy Dorrit. Amy is,

> superficially the most unbelievable character: so much goodness, sacrifice, devotion, meekness, is usually not encountered on earth. Stripping off the exaggerations, however, one discovers that Dickens is describing a real type: the "nice masochist".25

The "nice masochist" is interested in everyone's troubles while escaping his own with stoicism. Edmund Bergler gives

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[24] C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 67.

[25] E. Bergler, "'Little Dorrit' and Dickens' Intuitive Knowledge of Psychic Masochism", American Imago, XIV (1957), 380.

four examples from the novel in which Amy embraces suffering. Further evidence for this picture of a woman who is deploying anger in indirect ways is found in Amy's passion for rescue. Rescue degrades the person who is rescued, and exalts the rescuer. This means to degradation is considered laudable, and masks aggression. In the act of rescue "the attitude of defiance . . . far outweighs the tender feelings in it".[26] The form of aggression which rescue hides is sexual in nature. In women the fantasy of "saving life" masks the desire to have a baby, and if the person rescued is the father it ". . . expresses the wish to have the father for a son, that is to have a son like the father".[27] This series of observations by Freud is illuminating in relation to the puzzling relationships Amy has both with her father and with Tip. Amy resolves to help Tip to escape the prison life he seems helpless to shake off:

> The brave little creature did so fix her heart on her brother's rescue, that while he was ringing out these doleful changes, she pinched and scraped enough together to ship him off to Canada.28

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[26]S. Freud, "A Special Type of Object Choice Made by Men", Contributions to the Psychology of Love, S.E.:XI: 168.

[27]Ibid., p. 170.

[28]C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 116. Italics mine.

Tip returns to the Marshalsea, never having got further than Liverpool, a prisoner for debt in his own right. Amy's response is that of the "nice masochist": "She kissed and welcomed him; but was afraid to ask him any questions".[29] Instead of venting her anger against him she sinks into a swoon of self abasement:

> For the first time in all thoseyears she sunk under her cares. She cried, with her clasped hands lifted above her head, that it would kill her father if he knew it; and fell down at Tip's graceless feet.30

Her self abasement, her talk of killing, the very act of swooning at Tip's feet (so reminiscent of her faint on leaving the Marshalsea, where she was faced with a similar need to come to terms with her feelings) all speak of her masochistic rage. At the same time by seeming to debase herself she debases Tip. He is "graceless", imprisoned and a threat to his father's life.[31] Similarly, Amy rescues

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[29]C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 117.

[30]Ibid.

[31]It is interesting to note that this masked aggression in Amy may mask aggression on the part of the authorial voice towards her. This would be difficult to prove unequivocally but certainly is reinforced by the hypothesis that idealization itself is a compensation for feelings of ambivalence.

her father and in the process degrades him. In chapter 14 of Book I she goes to visit Arthur, seemingly to plead on her father's behalf. She begs Arthur to ". . . save him and spare him . . . 'I cannot bear to think that you of all the world should see him in his only moments of degradation '".[32] Who thinks him degraded if she does not? This visit can only underscore his abject condition to Arthur. It is as though Amy, fearing that Arthur may not see how humbled her father is, wants to draw it to his attention. Amy earns money to support Mr. Dorrit, and brings home the dinner Mrs. Clennam gives her to give to her father. Truly the mother who makes her own father a son, she supports him through her work, and feeds him through her self denial. By the end of the novel Mr. Dorrit's humiliation is so crushing and so complete that it is questionable whether it can be subsumed in an analysis of Amy's character, or whether the authorial voice has broken out of that persona and speaks for itself. This is not an issue which can be examined here. It is sufficient to observe that it is seeing Amy which precipitates Mr. Dorrit's delusion that he is back in the Marshalsea, and the enactment of this delusion before the Merdle dinner party. It is she

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[32]C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 214, underscoring mine.

who tries to rescue him from this final humiliation: "She was gently trying to get him away; but he resisted and would not go".[33] In his death, she conquers him utterly. She and he become one likeness:

> Quietly, quietly, the reflected marks of the prison bars and of the zig-zag iron on the wall top, faded away. Quietly, quietly, the face subsided into a far younger likeness of her own than she had ever seen under the grey hair, and sank to rest.34

The fantasy that he is her son has moved to a more predatory extreme: she has turned him into herself. She expresses no grief but turns immediately to the care of her uncle: "It did her, for the time, the good of having him to think of and to succor".[35] She turns to the rescue of her uncle rather than express anger at father's final abandonment, or grief at his loss.

Amy is the spiritualized aspect of the split image of woman in the novel; she is the Fair Maiden. To keep the Fair Maiden fair, aspects of femininity which the author characterizes as negative, since he does not endow his idealized heroine with them, are displaced onto other

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[33] C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 708.

[34] Ibid., p. 712. Underscoring mine.

[35] Ibid., p. 713.

characters in the novel: sexuality onto Pet Meagles and aggression on to Miss Wade.[36] The opposition of the Fair Maiden with a Dark Lady begins, in the history of the novel, as early as Clarissa in which ". . . the suffering heroine was provided with a foil, a gay Miss. Howe to complement a somber Cary".[37] The Dark Lady grew to be identified with the sensuality denied her fair sister. The archetypal identification of darkness with evil developed into the association of the evil of sex with the dark haired, luxuriant woman. Pet Meagles' sensual richness makes her one of this type, found in contrast to the fair Amy. She and Amy are contemporaries in age, but Pet shows all the promise and consequent threat of mature female sexuality. She was:

> about twenty. A fair girl with rich brown ringlets. A lovely girl with a frank face and wonderful eyes; so large and so soft, so bright set to perfection in her kind good head. She was round and fresh and dimpled and spoilt, and there was in Pet an air of timidity and dependence which

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[36] S. Marcus, in his discussion of "The Myth of Nell", points to a similar but more dramatic split in The Old Curiosity Shop; "Quilp, her (Nell's) antithesis, is pure carnality. But he is more than her antithesis -- he is her other half; and in his poetic disjunction of a single character into antagonistic parts Dickens has descended toward the deepest part of himself". Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey, p. 151.

[37] L. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), p. 296.

> was the best weakness in the world, and gave her the only crowning charm a girl so pretty and pleasant could have been without.38

Pet is round and fresh, and dimpled with rich brown hair and an oh so appealing timidity and dependence. Her corporeality is in direct contrast to Amy's little, light, noiseless, shyness behind which we can find no body at all. The only description of Amy's physical appearance is of the shabby prison dress she wears. She is like Esther Summerson who surprises us by having a body that could suffer small-pox. The timidity and dependence which crowns the narrator's delight in Pet's sensuality provides an added stimulus to the male appetite: ". . . the fearfulness of its prey. When a Dickensian maiden does exhibit any consciousness of sex, it is obligatory that it should strike her all of a quiver. Marrying a child is . . . pleasurable; but marrying a frightened one is more so".[39] Because Dickens was writing for the Victorian family audience, with the avowed hope that he would never bring a blush to the cheek of a maiden, he almost never describes

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[38] C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 54.

[39] J. Carey, The Violent Effigy, p. 167.

a sexual encounter. Terrorized wives, however, are common in Dickens and sadism is often an integral part of sexual love. As we saw in the introduction (page 7) pretty girls are several times the objects of a man's sadism in Dickens. Such men as Gowan, Murdstone, Quilp, and Bentley Drummle take pleasure in hurting their wives. These are real wives, not doll-wives, and the difference between a doll-wife like Amy, and a real wife like Pet, is that real wives are sexually mature. Pet Meagles has the qualities of physical sensuality coupled with the timidity considered alluring in a woman, and sadism is an important element in the characterization of her husband, Henry Gowan.

There is no doubt that we are to understand the importance of cruelty in Gowan's makeup. It is ascribed to him in the first description of him:

> As Arthur came over the stile and down to the water's edge, the lounger glanced at him for a moment, and then resumed his occupation of idly tossing stones into the water with his foot. There was something in his way of spurning them out of their places with his heel, and getting them into the required position that Clennam though had an air of cruelty in it.[40]

Henry Gowan has adopted the role of artist as a disguise under which he can debunk the middle class. Coupled with this inverted social pose is a perverse cruelty. During

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[40] C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 245.

Little Dorrit's visit to the Gowan's, Henry kicks the mouth of his Newfoundland dog bloody. Little Dorrit observes on departing that during the visit ". . . Mr. Gowan treated his wife even in his very fondness too much like a beautiful child".[41] A more penetrating observer might speculate that so sudden, sadistic, and sensual a display toward one pet bodes no good for the nature of his sexual relationship with the other. If Gowan beats his dog with obvious pleasure in public it is possible that he beats, brutalizes and assaults his wife for pleasure in private. The more submissive the dog the more he strikes it, until Little Dorrit protests. Little Dorrit, writing to Arthur Clennam, reports of Pet that "all her love and duty are his forever, that you may be certain she will love him, and conceal all his faults until she dies".[42] In return Gowan neglects her. Female sexuality is displaced onto Pet, keeping Amy the Fair Maiden clean, and allowing the Dark Lady to be sadistically debased. In Little Dorrit libidinal energy more normally discharged through a portrayal of mature sexual love is diverted into the sadistic relationship between a man and an alluring, but sexually unconscious, child.

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[41] C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 548.

[42] Ibid.

The masochism which we found in Amy and the sexuality of Pet are condensed[43] in the characterization of Miss Wade. Miss Wade's aggression expresses itself in outwardly directed hostility. When talking to Mr. Meagles her anger ". . . flashed out of her eyes as they regarded him, quivered in her nostrils and fired the very breath she exhaled".[44] Her anger appears arbitrary and vindictive until we read chapter XXI of Book II, "The History of a Self Tormentor". In it Dickens' intuitive knowledge of psychic masochism gives us as accurate a case history as any clinician could wish for.

Miss Wade's aggression further expresses itself in her rescue of Tattycoram. She rescues her, but unlike Amy's rescue of Tip and William Dorrit, it is a passionate display of defiance. In taking Tattycoram away she rescues an image of her childhood self, and defies conventional morality. Miss Wade's lesbian passion for this girl shocks Mr. Meagles and he feels he must rescue his ward not only from her own

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[43]Condensation: The process by which two (or more) images combine to form a composite image which is invested with meaning and energy derived from both. C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 22.

[44]C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 726.

folly but from Miss Wade's perverse intentions. John Wain assures readers of this novel that "In case any reader, even in the 1860's', failed to pick up the point that Miss Wade has drawn Tattycoram into a perverted sexual relationship Dickens has Mr. Meagles go to see her and accuse her of it point-blank . . .".[45] Mr. Meagles does this in Book 1, chapter 27 in which he says "If it should happen that you are a woman, who, from what ever cause, has a perverted delight in making a sister-woman as wretched as she is (I am old enough to have heard of such), I warn her against you, and I warn you against yourself".[46] The sexuality Amy cannot express at all, and Pet only through the unconscious sensuality of her timid manner, Miss Wade is able to confess to openly. In "The History of a Self Tormentor" she records that after a quarrel she would hold her beloved 'til morning ". . . loving her as much as ever, and often feeling as if, rather than suffer so I could so hold her in my arms and plunge to the bottom of a river -- where I would still hold her after we were both dead".[47] Here, in a book written for reading in Victorian households, we have an abandonment of passion unto death, and ". . . in

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[45] John Wain, Dickens and the Twentieth Century, p. 180.

[46] C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 379.

[47] Ibid., p. 377.

such a symbolic world sex and death become one".[48] Further, it is passion between female lovers. Either Dickens thought his audience obtuse indeed, or he wrote out of a realm of his imagination not subjected to conscious scrutiny. Sexuality between child lovers, women lovers, men who beat their child-wives, these were safe for the ears of the most innocent, but the adult love of a mature woman for a man of her own age would disgust the Victorian reading public and Dickens would not write about it.

Miss Wade's aggressiveness is expressed in her defiance, lesbianism, and finally in masochism. She is what Bergler has called the "injustice collector".[49] The triad of punishment, moral reproach, and guilt develops in a child who cannot vent his aggression toward his parents. The only way this pattern becomes bearable is to libidinize it, and in doing so develop psychic masochism: the pleasure-in-displeasure pattern. Miss Wade is an illegitimate and orphaned child who seeks out victimization. She provokes disappointments and chooses coquettish, rejecting girl friends.

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[48] L. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, p. 296.

[49] E. Bergler, "'Little Dorrit' and Dickens' Intuitive Knowledge of Psychic Masochism", 385.

Miss Wade is one of Dickens' successful female portraits. His insight into her suffering is not couched in self-protecting idealization, irony or grotesqueness; his favourite distancing techniques. We are led gradually to understand her suffering and through it, her personality. Her life story provides an insight into the limited opportunities Victorian society offered to an independently-minded, aggressive woman without birth or money. She was, masochist or not, always at the behest of someone to whose patronage she was indebted. She fell in love with Henry Gowan because of his independence from all the things that bound her. In his own estimation he was superior to everyone around him, and made her feel that she belonged in his realm. She felt elevated ". . . with Mr. Gowan, who knew how to address me on equal terms, and how to anatomize the wretched people around us".[50] Her fiance's family made her feel inferior as though they ". . . had gone into a slave-market and purchased a wife".[51] Untrammelled by the fear of feminine sexuality the authorial voice is able to give us a detailed, insightful and wholly human portrait next to whom Pet and Amy seem abstractions.

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[50] C. Dickens, Little Dorrit, p. 733.

[51] Ibid.

We have been able to observe in this chapter what Steven Marcus calls a poetic disjunction of a single character into antagonistic parts. The image of woman in Little Dorrit is split among three characters: Amy, Pet and Miss Wade. Amy is the spiritualized pure maiden, who is innocent of sex, but as we have seen, points her aggression towards herself in the form of masochism, and towards others in the form of rescue. Pet is the sexualized Dark Lady, though a compromised example of the usually luxuriant female. She is tailored to the Victorian taste for child-wives whose innocence of sex, and the fear that innocence begets, makes her appealing to men such as the narrator. The nature of the sexual relationship between Pet and her husband is sadistic. Though there is no mention of a sexual encounter between them his cruelty implies much about the sort of activity that excites him. Miss Wade has both the sexuality and aggression split between Pet and Amy, but by the time the reader meets her it is a lesbian sexuality. Because it is not men towards whom Miss Wade's feminine sexuality is directed the authorial voice does not need to employ the defence of "idealization" against her, and the result is a complete image of a certain kind of woman.

The irony of placing an idealized heroine in a novel such as this is evident when we compare her characterization with the book's chief theme, the imprisonment of the will, and its leading metaphor, the prison. Little Dorrit is a study of the relationship of the will of an individual to society, and the emblem of that relationship is the prison. The novel opens

> in a prison in Marseilles. It goes on to the Marshalsea, which in effect it never leaves. The second of the two parts of the novel begins in what we are urged to think of as a sort of prison, the monastery of the Great Saint Bernard. The Circumlocution Office is the prison of the creative mind of England. Mr. Merdle is shown habitually holding himself by the wrist, taking himself into custody. . . .52

Prisons rob men of their right to exercise their will and are for Dickens emblematic of a larger denier of freedom: society. J. C. Reid, in his work on this novel in the Studies in English Literature series, points out that the second metaphor of the book, the family, converges with that of the prison: "Society is a prison, society is a family with the wrong people at the head; both prison and family, tightly bound communities negate the individual will".[53] Where critics disagree on other points they almost

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[52]L. Trilling, "Little Dorrit", 579.

[53]J. C. Reid,"Little Dorrit", Studies in English Literature (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), 30.

all concur about the theme of Little Dorrit. It is odd, then, that in this same novel Dickens applauds his heroine for agreeing to the very thing his book cries against: the loss of her will. The idealized, angelic, wife-mother has no will; she is the servant of the will of others. The debtors' prison, an institution which the book declares an outrage which society perpetrates against individuals, is the home she cherishes and yearns to return to after her father's release. Amy's negation of her own will has turned her into a suffering servant; hers is a Christ-like passivity, applauded as exemplary of the best in womanhood. The irony of such a leading figure in this novel is that just the abnegation of the will which Dickens declares an injustice against men, he assumes is the ideal state in women. If we needed further proof that idealization is a defense against allowing women their full stature and complexity we have it here.

A corollary to the fact that the ideal woman has no will is that in the novel the wilful woman is punished. Tattycoram, who is urged to count five and twenty when she is exasperated, finally breaks out and leaves the Meagles only to return humbled and repentant. Mrs. Clennam, a symbol of pure will, is punished by a physical paralysis. This wilful woman is a false mother, cruel, vindictive, punishing, and finally punished by an annihilating stroke.

Miss Wade loses Tattycoram and is left with no compensating happiness.

Looking at this disjunction between the novel's theme and its heroine we are reminded of Charles Rycroft's comment that idealization is a ". . . defence against the consequences of recognizing ambivalence and purchases freedom from guilt and depression".[54] The worship of the ideal woman placates a sense of guilt. Perhaps the explanation of this startling incongruity in the novel is to be found in Dickens' unconscious. In a book so concerned about injustice, he was aware at an unconscious level that the victims of the greatest social injustices in Victorian society were women. The sop to this injustice was their exalted moral status. The fewer social freedoms they were allowed the more highly they were praised as wives and mothers. The praise of Amy purchases freedom from this knowledge and keeps the disparity between Little Dorrit's theme and Amy's characterization from rising into Dickens consciousness.

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[54]C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 67.

CHAPTER THREE

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Little Dorrit and Great Expectations share a common theme. We noted in chapter two that the leading metaphor in Little Dorrit is the prison; a symbol of society's ability to negate the individual will. Great Expectations deals with a man whose life is manipulated by a power over which he has no control. Great Expectations' central motif, "the donné with which Dickens began was the secret manipulation of Pip's life by Magwitch the convict -- a striking idea, which goes to the roots of several key nineteenth century notions about human existence".[1] Another nineteenth century exponent of the concept of the imprisoned will was Sigmund Freud. His premise, which he expounds in The Interpretation of Dreams, that every dream is the fulfilment of a wish which cannot be actualized in reality, agrees with the insight that lies at the heart of these two novels by Dickens. The theme in Little Dorrit is society's restraint upon the individual will, and in Great Expectations it is the restraining effect of guilt upon ambition.

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[1]H. Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), p. 250.

Critics cannot agree on the reason for Pip's feelings of guilt in the novel. Dorothy Van Ghent suggests that "Pip . . . carries the convict inside him as the negative potential of his great expectations --".[2] G. R. Strange in his article "Great Expectations Well Lost: Dickens Fable for His Time", suggests that criminality is a condition of life. G. H. Milller states that,

> Since the Dickensian hero has initially no real role, any status he attains in the world will be the result of his own efforts. He will be totally responsible, himself, for any identity he achieves, and thus "guilty" in the sense of being the source of his own values. . . . The world has simply refused to give him any assigned place, and any place he gets will have to be seized.3

There is no doubt of Pip's feeling of guilt from the first page. He is alive and his five brothers and sisters as well as his parents are not. Later he observed that Mrs. Joe confirmed his feelings that he ought to be in the graveyard among them, always treating him ". . . as if I had insisted on being born, in opposition to the dictates of reason, religion, and morality and against the dissuading arguments of my best friends".[4] Pip feels he has tres-passed a moral injunction, but it is never clear what that

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[2]D. Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston), p. 130.

[3]H. Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels, p. 252.

[4]C. Dickens, Great Expectations (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), p. 54.

moral injuction is. The theft from Mrs. Joe at the beginning of the novel is endowed with feelings of guilt greatly in excess of the deed, and points to an earlier infringement of some moral dictate. According to classical psychoanalytic theory the sense of guilt ". . . arises as a result of conflict between the superego and infantile sexual and aggressive wishes".[5] We saw in chapter one that idealization was a defense against this same conflict. The woman whom the incest taboo has placed outside the realm of the son's sexual desire is idealized. Sexual drive is sublimated and the instinctual wish is directed toward an aim remote from sexual satisfaction. This explains the process by which sexual desire is sublimated, but the definition of guilt states that the conflict is between the super ego and not only sexual but also aggressive wishes. Surely it is not too much to suggest that rather than steal from Mrs. Joe, Pip would like to murder her. The night before he creeps out to feed the convict he dreams of ". . . a ghostly pirate calling me through a speaking-

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Penguin Books, 1971), p. 54.

[5]C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 59.

trumpet as I passed the gibbet-station, that I had better come ashore and be hanged there at once, and not put it off".[6] Hanging is a punishment commensurate with murder, not pie stealing. Pip's sense of guilt throughout the novel may stem from unconscious sexual wishes toward his dead mother, but we cannot deduce that from his fantasy of her as "freckled and sickly".[7] What we can support from the text is the suggestion that Pip was guilty of the wish to kill Mrs. Joe.

Julian Moynahan in his article "The Hero's Guilt: The Case of Great Expectations", suggests that Pip fulfils this wish through his functional equivalent, Orlik. Orlik bludgeons Mrs. Joe into insensibility but Pip feels guilty for the event. Chapter 16 of the novel begins with Pip's confession that

> I was at first disposed to believe that I must have had some hand in the attack upon my sister, or at all events that as her near relation, popularly known to be under obligation to her I was a more legitimate object of suspicion than anyone else.8

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[6] C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 35.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 147.

The salient phrase here is "popularly known to be under obligation to her", for it was being constantly reminded of his obligation to Mrs. Joe, while she was so cruel to him, that bred Pip's hate of her.[9]

The murderous wish toward Mrs. Joe expressed in the first few chapters of the novel, and fulfilled before the first 150 pages of the book are complete, dictates the form of the novel's most important female character: Estella. Reparation[10] is made for this wish in the creation of this idealized character.

Estella is never described at any point in the novel. She has less corporeality even than Amy Dorrit. We only see her through Pip's adoring gaze. His first observation of her is that she was ". . . a girl, and beautiful, and self possessed; and that she was as scornful of me as if she had been one- and -twenty, and a queen".[11] The next time he sees her ". . . her light came along the

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[9]The creation of Pip, Orlik, and Bentley Drummle stems from the same disjunction of a single character into several characters that we observed functioning in idealization.

[10]Reparation: The process (defense mechanism) of reducing guilt by action designed to make good the harm imagined to have been done to an ambivalently invested object. C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 141.

[11]C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 86.

dark passage like a star".[12] She is a star; she is the constellation of all Pip's hopes of money and love and is consequently called Estella. A star, as a symbol, ". . . very rarely carries a single meaning -- it nearly always alludes to a multiplicity. In which case it stands for the forces of the spirit struggling against the forces of darkness".[13] The forces of Pip's spirit struggle manfully against his dark wish for Mrs. Joe's death, and Estella is his reward for that struggle, so he thinks. She becomes part of everything he does. He tells her when she is to marry Drummle,

> Estella, to the last hour of my life, you cannot choose but remain part of my character, part of the little good in me, part of the evil. But, in this separation I associate you only with the good, and I will faithfully hold you to that always.14

Estella is luminous and distant like a star, and cold like a jewel, the other symbol that represents her.

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[12]C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 89.

[13]J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 309.

[14]C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 378.

The jewel is also a symbol of complex meaning. Without subtlety it represents money. Pip's great expectations must include money as he has none. Jewels are the tie which hold Estella to Miss Havisham. The gilded mirror at Miss Havisham's dressing table reflects the bright jewels that ". . . sparkled on her neck and on her hands and some other jewels lay sparking on the table".[15] Miss Havisham picks up one of these jewels while Estella and Pip are playing cards, ". . . and tried its effect upon her (Estella's) fair young bosom and against her pretty brown hair".[16] The contrast of the young girl's soft body decorated with expensive jewels is no small inducement to desire, but it is emblematic as well of what Pip discovers: Estella has no heart to love. She is as cold to Pip's passion for her as are the jewels on her breast. This is to become increasingly important as we see the form of revenge Pip takes upon her. The association of the precious jewel with the repellent cold or dangerous animal is found in many folk lore traditions. Myths in which serpents or dragons hold precious stones in their possession ". . . express the maximum degree of proximity possible between

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[15] C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 87.

[16] Ibid., p. 89.

'protector' and 'adversary' -- between the guarding 'monster' and the guarded 'treature'".[17] Miss Havisham is the guarding monster hiding Estella in the dark cave of Satis House. But what is the jewel which Estella represents? If it were only love Pip could have found that, with less anguish to himself, in Biddy. If it were only money he could have that too without Estella or Miss Havisham. The answer is to be found in J. H. Miller's observation that ". . . the Dickensian Hero has initially no real role, . . . The world has simply refused to give him any assigned place and any place he gets he will have to seize".[18] Marrying Estella will be proof that Pip's great expectations have been realized. He will be a gentleman with a beautiful and rich wife. Being a gentleman will tell him what to do and who he is -- the burning questions which a man without a place in society needs answered. Both Pip's expectations are disappointed. He neither marries Estella nor becomes a gentleman. He becomes, temporarily, rich but the source of his wealth

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[17] J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 163.

[18] J. H. Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels, p. 252.

is tainted with criminality. The folklore association of jewels and snakes recurs when Magwitch declares himself to Pip. Grasping at proof that he has made a gentleman, Magwitch:

> went on, taking my watch out of my pocket, and turning towards him a ring on my finger, while I recoiled from his touch as if he has been a snake, "a gold 'un and a beauty: that's a gentleman's I hope! A diamond all set with rubies; that's a gentleman's, I hope!"19

In his introductory lectures on psychoanalysis Freud's tenth lecture is on "Symbolism in Dreams". In it he provides a list of the symbols that recur in dreams, and their meaning. Ellen Moers in her book Literary Women, the Great Writers observes that

> From the fascination of the list he provides there (of what have loosely come to be called the "Freudian symbols") modern literary criticism has never freed itself; for Freud himself gave license to criticism to find in the material of dreams the stuff from which literature is made.20

In this lecture Freud writes,

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[19]C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 338.

[20]Ellen Moers, Literary Women, the Great Writers (New York: Doubleday, 1977), p. 382.

> Symbolism is perhaps the most remarkable chapter of the theory of dreams . . . symbols . . . allow us in certain circumstances to interpret a dream without questioning the dreamer, who indeed would in any case have nothing to tell us about the symbol . . . we are faced by the fact that the dreamer has symbolic modes of expression at his disposal which in waking life he does not recognize.21

As Helen Moers points out modern literary criticism has been profoundly influenced by the relationship between symbols and dreams to which Freud points. It is interesting to look at his check list for our two symbols: the snake and the jewel. What Freud has said about the snake is known to everyone: "Among the less easily understandable male sexual symbols are certain reptiles and fishes, and above all the famous snake".[22] About jewels he writes, "Another symbol of the female genitals which deserves mention is a jewel-case. Jewel and treasure are used in dreams as well as in waking life to describe someone who is loved".[23] What we find in Great Expectations, then, is Pip's unconscious association of Estella, his beloved

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[21] S. Freud, standard edition, XV, 151-165, passim.

[22] Ibid., p. 155.

symbolized by a jewel, and Magwitch from whose touch Pip recoils "as if he had been a snake". Estella, the jewel-like beloved is the daughter of the snake-like Magwitch. Pip does not know this at the time of Magwitch's return but he has linked them unconsciously. Magwitch is the powerful genital father.[24] He has the sexuality and the money which Pip's stepfather, Joe, lacks. More terrible still Magwitch declares himself Pip's father. He says "Lookee here, Pip. I'm your second father. You're my son -- more to me nor any son",[25] Magwitch has "made" him a gentleman and Pip owes him his life as surely as any son owes a life to any father. If Magwitch is Pip and Estella's father then in the unconscious dream world in which we are working they are brother and sister. The powerful, phallic Magwitch stands between Pip and his beloved. The threatening and powerful father, the guarding monster stands by right in protection of the jewel-like Estella and very much in Pip's way.

By dint of the inversion Freud so often saw in dreams, Pip undertakes to protect Estella from Magwitch.

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[24]See A. D. Hutter's discussion of Magwitch/Joe as the split father imago in the novel in his article "Crime and Fantasy in Great Expectations", Psychoanalysis and Literary Process, Fredrick Crews, ed. (Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, 1970), p. 25.

[25]C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 339.

The thought of them together horrifies him. Denying the link of genitality with the beloved is just the outcome of idealization as we have seen. For as well as the father figure, the phallic, snake-like, chthonic Magwitch (he has even appeared from "down under") is a functional equivalent for the sexuality which Pip himself does not express. Pip begins chapter 43 of the novel by asking

> Why should I pause to ask how much of my shrinking from Provis might be traced to Estella. Why should I loiter on my road to compare the state of mind in which I tried to rid myself of the strain of the prison before meeting her at the coach-office, with the state of mind in which I now reflected on the abyss between Estella in her pride and beauty and the returned transport I harboured?26

Magwitch is not only Pip's father, but the split image of Pip himself, whose sexuality and aggression is deployed throughout the novel onto other male characters.

Estella, the star and the jewel, is the good half of the split image idealization creates. She is also what Rycroft calls, in his definition of idealization, the "reification of an idea". The ideal, perfect object embodies an idea which the beloved cherishes. She is the embodiment of Pip's expectations of property, and his hope that property will bring love with it. Miss Havisham is to leave Pip both her money and Estella.

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[26]C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 367.

As we have seen the split image of woman produces a bad counterpart to the good one. In Great Expectations, Estella and Miss Havisham are two aspects of one person; "In the sense that one implies the other, the glittering frosty girl Estella, and the decayed and false old woman, Miss Havisham, are not two characters but a single one, or a single essence with dual aspects, as if composed by montage -- ".[27] How deeply the two are interrelated in Pip's psyche can be seen from the fantasy he has after his first visit to Miss Havisham in chapter 8. Walking in the disused brewery he sees Estella:

> . . . she seemed to be everywhere. For, when I yielded to the temptation presented by the casks, and began to walk on them, I saw her walking on them, at the end of the yard of casks. She had her back towards me, and held her pretty brown hair spread out in her two hands, and never looked round and passed out of view. So, in the brewery itself -- by which I mean the large paved lofty place in which they used to make the beer, and where the brewing utensils still were . . . I saw her pass among the extinguished fires, and ascend some light stairs, and go out by a gallery high over head, as if she were going out into the sky.[28]

Immediately afterwards he has the following fantasy:

> I turned my eyes -- a little dimmed by looking up at the frosty light -- towards a great wooden beam in a low nook of the building near

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[27] D. Van Ghent, Form and Function, p. 135.

[28] C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 93.

> me on my right hand, and I saw a figure hanging there by the neck. A figure all in yellow-white, with one shoe to the feet; and it hung so that I could see the faded trimmings of the dress were like earthy paper, and that the face was Miss Havisham's with a movement going over the whole countenance as if she were trying to call me.29

The second time Pip has this latter hallucination is after his last visit to Satis House. He learns Miss Havisham is not his patroness and Estella has married Bentley Drummle. During this visit he goes back into the house to save Miss Havisham from burning to death. Julian Moynahan's comment is that

> Pip's ambivalence is embodied dramatically. It must be known not as it is talked about, but as it is enacted. A man forgives a woman, then hallucinates her death by hanging. A man watches a woman burst into flames, then leaps bravely to her rescue, but in the course of describing this rescue is forced to remark, "We were on the ground struggling like desperate enemies.30

This is interesting as far as it goes, but at the first incidence of hallucination Miss Havisham has done Pip no wrong, and yet he sees her hanging any way. It is Estella who has wounded his pride, called him coarse and common, addressed him as boy and commented on the thickness of his

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[29] C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 94.

[30] J. Moynahan, "The Hero's Guilt: The Case of Great Expectations", Assessing Great Expectations (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co.), p. 165.

boots. The hanging of Miss Havisham after his first visit is a displacement,[31] for his murderous rage against Estella. The closeness of the hanging fantasy to the fantasy that Estella was "going out into the sky" powerfully suggests that while the one woman is exalted, the other is made a substitute for her and hangs in her place.

We have seen that Estella is reified in the symbol of the jewel and the star, and that she represents Pip's expectations of money and love. Further evidence of her idealization comes from the fantasy he has when he sees her in the brewery. ". . . she seemed to be everywhere. For when I yielded to the temptation presented by the cask, and began to walk on them, I saw her walk on them at the end of the yard of casks." Estella is seen as omnipotent. She can appear and disappear at will. She can "seem to be everywhere", and yet only chooses to walk away from Pip. The casks upon which they walk are ". . . a famous Greek symbol which, as in the legend of Fanaides, symbolizes useless labour, and on another level, the apparent futility of all existence".[32] No better and more ironic symbol could

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[31]Displacement: The process by which energy is transfered from one mental image to another. Displacement . . . shifts interest from one object or activity to another in such a way that the latter becomes an equivalent or substitute for the other. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 35.

[32]J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 38.

be presented for Pip to walk upon. He is filled with bitterness at Joe for his own association with the smithy which has made him a common boy in Estella's eyes, and yet it is Pip's effort to exalt his social position which proves ultimately futile. Immediately we have contrasted in this fantasy Estella's exalted status in Pip's eyes, and his debasement in his own. "She had her back towards me and held her pretty brown hair spread out in her two hands, and never looked round and passed out of view." Estella walks away from Pip carrying her light with her. When she leaves him at Miss Havisham's door she ". . . walked away, and -- what was worse -- took the candle with her".[33] So in the fantasy she walks away from him and takes the candle of her hair with her, for hair, "Abundant beautiful hair, for both men and women, signifies spiritual development."[34] She is omnipotent and he follows her walking above ground (on the casks) until she is out of view. Being literally off the ground, Pip has "left the ground" in the sense that he is carried away by his idealization of this girl. "I saw her pass among the ex-

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[33] C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 86.

[34] J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 135.

tinguished fires, and ascend some light iron stairs, and go out by a gallery high over head, as if she were going out into the sky." Estella has led Pip from ground level on the casks, and now she passed up some light iron stairs into the sky. Her association with things of the spirit now becomes a concrete depiction of Estella passing into the realm of spiritual life -- the sky. She passes among extinguished fires. To pass ". . . through fire is symbolic of transcending the human condition . . .".[35] In Freud's lecture on symbolism in dreams he says that "Kindling fire, and everything to do with it is intimately interwoven with sexual symbolism".[36] In this case the fire has been extinguished. Estella is seen as both a symbol of desire and at the same time one before whom desire has no place. She is idealized. Pip has extinguished his sexual desire and sublimated it into energy which endows his beloved with extraordinary spiritual merit. In contrast to this fantasy is the one immediately following it in which Miss Havisham hangs from a beam. "A figure all in yellow white, with but one shoe to the feet." Freud observes that

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[35] J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 135.

[36] S. Freud, S.E.:XV:162.

"shoes and slippers are female genitals",[37] and Leonard F. Manheim in his article "Floras and Doras: The Women in Dickens' Novels", comments that Miss Havisham's shoe, never placed on her foot, is strikingly symbolic of the consummation that never takes place:

> The longed for virgin is arrested and fixed
> for ever at the moment of greatest desirability.
> She is, as it were, snatched out of time; . . .
> Let her never put her foot in that other shoe;
> let the moment of sexual consummation never come;
> yet will she crumble and fall to ruin![38]

Miss Havisham is the split image of the idealized Estella. As Manheim points out, the moment Pip realizes that the ever virginal woman must decay, ". . . the reaction sets in. Miss Havisham is not the true virgin. Estella, . . . who is never to give her love in return for that of any man . . . she is the true virgin".[39] The idealized, true virgin is exalted into unattainability, but Miss Havisham no longer young or beautiful is the target for Pip's anger against the elusive Estella. " . . . and it hung so that I could see that the faded trimmings of the dress were like earthy paper, and that the face was Miss Havisham's. . . ." In

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[37] S. Freud, S.E.:XV:158.

[38] L. F. Manheim, "Floras and Doras: The Women in Dickens' Novels", 198-99.

[39] Ibid., p. 199.

case we should miss the contrast between earth and sky Dickens has drawn it carefully for us. Estella disappears as though she were going out into the sky. Miss Havisham is wrapped in "earthy paper"; her wedding gown is her shroud. Miss Havisham herself draws the comparison between the weddings and funerals. She tells Pip

> "When the ruin is complete" said she, with a ghastly look, "and when they lay me dead, in my bride's dress on the bride's table -- which shall be done, and which will be the finished curse upon him -- so much the better if it is done on this day."[40]

Conversely, when she is wrapped in bandages after she has been saved from burning ". . . she still had something of her old ghastly bridal appearance; for they had covered her to the throat with white cotton-wool . . .".[41] Wedding and funeral, sexual consummation and consummation in death are inextricably linked in the figure of Miss Havisham. Monroe Engel, in his essay "The Sense of Self" observes that in Great Expectations "In some really frightful way, anything like normal sexuality always makes for terror and tragedy".[42] Through an extravagant display of arrested

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[40] C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 117.

[41] Ibid., p. 415.

[42] Richard Lettis, Assessing Great Expectations, "The Sense of Self", M. Engel (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1960), p. 113.

virginity Miss Havisham has become a ghoulish figure. What was once the normal sexuality of a young girl has become the figure out of nightmare Pip finds living in Satis house. As the same time she is target for Pip's ambivalence toward Estella. ". . . the face was Miss Havisham's, with a movement going over the whole countenance as if she were trying to call me." A horrible twist of his fancy makes Miss Havisham appeal to Pip to cut her down. Pip can never subdue Estella either by love or violence, but twice he has Miss Havisham at his mercy. The first time, in his fancy, when she appeals to him to rescue her, and the second time when he does rescue her from burning. The symbolism of Pip and Miss Havisham rolling together on the floor burned by the flames of the same fire is unmistakable. He remembers ". . . we were on the ground struggling like desperate enemies, and the closer I covered her, the more wildly she shrieked and tried to free herself".[43] They are on the floor, by the great table decked with Miss Havisham's bridal feast, and their consummation in fire brings about her final consummation in death. Pip cannot rape Estella (though as we shall see he has Bentley Drummle do it for him) but his rescue of Miss Havisham is unmistakably sexual in its import.

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[43] J. Moynahan, op. cit., p. 162.

We have suggested in this chapter so far that Estella and Miss Havisham, are to use Julian Moynahan's phrase, "functional equivalents" of one another; Estella being the idealized and Miss Havisham the debased aspect of one figure. Moynahan suggests that a similar "splitting" accounts for two of the novel's male characters: Orlik and Bentley Drummle. He says that

> . . . it can be shown that Drummle stands in precisely the same analogical relationship to Pip as Orlik does. Drummle is a reduplication of Orlik at a point higher on the social economic scale up which Pip moves with such rapidity through the first three quarters of the novel.[44]

As it is Pip who wishes for the murder of Mrs. Joe, and feels guilt when she is struck down by Orlik, so it is as an extension of Pip's wish that Estella makes a marriage with a man who beats and humiliates her. As we saw that Pip's murderous wish toward Mrs. Joe dictated the form of Estella's character, so Pip's wish to avenge himself on Estella dictates the form of Drummle's. Bentley Drummle has been created to ". . . break a woman who has, in the trite phrase, broken Pip's heart".[45] We saw earlier in the chapter that Estella is an idealized figure in Pip's eyes. Idealization, however, is a defense against recog-

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[44] J. Moynahan, "The Hero's Guilt: The Case of Great Expectations", 162.

[45] Ibid., p. 163.

nizing ambivalence. We saw how ambivalence expresses itself in Pip's anger against Miss Havisham but it has a further expression in Pip's vengeance on Estella through the agency of Drummle. Part of Pip's admiration for Estella stems from his loss of self-esteem. He comments that on their first meeting "Her contempt for me was so strong, that it became infectious and I caught it".[46] He loathes himself and adores her, for "idealization differs from admiration in that the idealizing person needs a perfect person to exist . . .".[47] Pip is nothing if not ambitious and his adoration of Estella stems, as we have shown, from the fact that she reifies his great expectations. When those expectations are dashed in finding that Miss Havisham is not his patron and Estella will not marry him the scene of burning immediately follows. In one chapter Pip both discovers his ambitions are disappointed and is handed the means to revenge his disappointment.

Pip's revenge against Estella and Miss Havisham is part of the novel's greater theme of revenge and the guilt it begets. As Hillis Miller points out "Just

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[46]C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 90.

[47]C. Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, p. 67.

as Magwitch, another victim of Compeyson, creates in Pip an instrument of his revenge on society, so Miss Havisham . . . will take indirect and therefore guiltless revenge and break a hundred hearts for her own one heart that was broken".[48] The vengeance theme is continued by Pip who, through Orlik gains vengeance on Mrs. Joe and on Pumblechook (Orlik breaks into his house). Miss Havisham burns horribly, and Estella is married to what we have reason to suppose is a criminal psychopath. As we pointed out on the first page of this chapter, the central motif of this novel is the restraining effect of guilt upon ambition. What we have been able to show in these subsequent pages is the consequent wish for revenge which this restraining influence begets in the novel's protagonist. Anyone who has hurt, thwarted or humilated Pip comes to some terrible end.

Dickens goes to some trouble to show what a truly criminal personality Drummle is. Startop, Pip and Drummle all go to Mr. Jagger's for dinner (chapter 26) and Jaggers is fascinated by him. When Pip introduces the group, out of their ear shot, to Mr. Jaggers, he says "Bentley Drummle is his name, is it? I like the look of that fellow".[49] We get some insight into the sort of people

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[48] J. H. Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels, p. 128.

[49] C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 234.

Mr. Jaggers "likes" when he shows the scarred wrists of his housekeeper to the dinner party. Drummle clearly fascinates Jaggers in a purely professional way. He is a criminal type. Jaggers describes him to Pip as ". . . one of the true sort".[50] It is this man, "Heavy in figure, movement, and comprehension -- in the sluggish complexion of his face, and in the large awkward tongue that seemed to loll about in his mouth as he himself lolled ab out in a room -- "[51] who is to marry the peerless Estella.

In Little Dorrit we saw that the image of woman was split among three characters and each was characterized by a different attribute. In Great Expectations to understand the vengeance theme in the novel the splitting must be understood on two levels: first in the portrayal of the heroine and her counterpart Estella/Miss Havisham, and second in the portrayal of the protagonist as Pip/Orlik/Bentley Drummle. To understand the means to revenge on the debased half of the heroine we must see that Pip has more than one guise under which he works. The debasement of Miss Havisham by Pip is clear, and she acts as a surrogate for his vengeance against Estella. However, vengeance is wrought upon Estella herself (unlike Little Dorrit who remains

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[50] C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 239.

[51] Ibid., p. 225.

idealized until the end) but at this point the avenging character can no longer be Pip. Estella's marriage to a sadist is an objective correlative to Pip's revenge fantasy. He is able to enact his wish for vengeance against those who have hurt or thwarted him by direct means, and when that is impossible through characters who are his alter ego. In this way the character, Pip, can remain the tender-minded, idealizing lover until the end just as Amy Dorrit is able to remain innocent throughout Little Dorrit. In spite of Hillis Miller's observation, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that "the donné with which Dickens began was the secret manipulation of Pip's life by Magwitch . . .".[52] Pip too is able to engage in secret manipulation through wishfulfulling agency of Orlik, and Bentley Drummle. Drummle dies ". . . from an accident consequent on ill treating a horse . . ."[53] but Orlik simply disappears, ". . . after his punitive role has been performed".[54] He does not need to be resolved as a character because he has no independent existence separate from Pip.

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[52] J. H. Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels, p. 250.

[53] C. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 495.

[54] J. Moynahan, op. cit., p. 161.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it has been the purpose of this thesis to study the splitting of the image of woman into character types in Great Expectations and Little Dorrit. This splitting results in an ideally good heroine and her wholly bad counterpart; the angelic guardian of the hearth is accompanied by a debased sister. Idealization acts to create the wholly good character and is a defense against ambivalence, resulting in the disjunction of a single character into antagonistic parts.

In Little Dorrit Amy conforms to the character type of ideal womanhood, and Pet Meagles is made the butt of the author's agression. In Great Expectations Estella is ideal and unattainable, but in this case the protagonist deploys a twist to assure his revenge. While Amy remains ideal until the end of the novel, Estella is reduced to misery by the protagonist's functional equivalent. While in one novel the author idealizes Amy and debases Pet, in the other he idealizes Estella and when thwarted by her sends a split image of himself to be avenged upon her. In these two novels we are able to observe the mirror image of the same psychic function: the disjunction of one character into antagonistic parts so as to mask ambivalence.

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