A STUDY OF THE PHYSICALLY ABNORMAL CHARACTERS IN THE NOVELS OF CHARLES DICKENS

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by

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ABSTRACT

The majority of Charles Dickens's physically abnormal characters are neither grotesque nor frightening. After Bleak House their numbers swiftly decline as Dickens concentrates upon the social problems of his time.

In the novels of Dickens's early literary period there is the repeated occurrence of deformities of the lower limbs. Male characters, and infrequently female characters, with such debilities are often unsuccessful in love affairs. When describing the sexual misadventures of these characters Dickens makes frequent use of a particular sexual symbol. This symbol of the lock and the key, representing the male and female sexual organs, has its roots in traditional literature.

Added to the list of physically abnormal characters who are afflicted with deformities of the lower limbs are those who have wooden legs. It appears that for Dickens the wooden leg symbolizes castration.

The final chapter of this thesis is devoted to explaining and examining the associations between physically abnormal servants and their masters. The degree of debility

in the servant will be shown to mirror the moral decrepitude of the respective master. A short discussion of the German 'doppel-ganger' and its possible influence upon Dickens's descriptions of servants and masters will also be given in this chapter.

In the Conclusion a brief examination is devoted to Dickens's illustrations of legal blindness. In Bleak House the blindness is metaphorical rather than actual. Chancery is constantly covered with fog. Nothing can penetrate it. Krook, who is linked to Chancery, cannot read; Chancery cannot 'see' the truth.

This thesis has been examined

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INTRODUCTION

The majority of Charles Dickens's physically abnormal characters appears to be concentrated in the novels produced during the first half of his literary career. After Bleak House the numbers of these characters swiftly decline, and this reduction seems in proportion to the author's unceasing concern with more particular social problems and ideas. While the discrepancy in the number of physically abnormal characters, between the early and late periods, convinces me that Dickens did not find them of great use in expounding the social horrors of Victorian England (as his more socially critical novels appeared during the latter portion of his literary career); these early characters are, on the other hand, neither reduced to the role of mere grotesque figures nor presented as threatening malformants simply drawn from the world of nightmare vision.

For example Joe Willet, the one-armed soldier in Barnaby Rudge, is neither threatening nor grotesque, but is clearly abnormal in his physical appearance. Many of Dickens's soldiers do lose either an arm or leg in battle. The author's matter-of-fact presentation of a one-armed or one-legged soldier seems to suggest that he did not consider them terrifying. On the other hand Dickens treats Quilp's deformity as quite frightening. There is the suggestion by Dickens

that this character's physical ugliness parallels the demonic propensities of his soul. But Dickens's treatment of his physically abnormal characters sometimes does not follow a rule of thumb; Newman Noggs in Nicholas Nickleby has a paralytic limb yet Dickens does not imply that the condition of Newman's soul, like Quilp's, can be measured by the physical condition of his legs.

This thesis will deal directly and largely with the deformities of the lower limbs, insofar as the repeated occurrence of debilities of these appendages proves conclusively that the legs hold a particularly uncommon fascination for Dickens. As the opening chapter will demonstrate, strange afflictions of the lower limbs often attack those youths who are unsuccessful candidates for the heart of some fair maiden. Within this specific study numerous references will be made to Dickens's abundant use of sexual symbols with which he illustrated the amorous misadventures and sufferings of his weak-legged lovers. Also, there is evidence that Dickens inflicted certain vain creatures, who feigned love or made a game of it, with varying degrees of weakness of the eyes. A notable example is Mrs. Wititterly in Nicholas Nickleby. Dickens often used physically abnormal persons to serve as marriage omens. Their debility, or more precisely the degree of it, seemed to foreshadow some unfortunate sexual trials awaiting the couple. The marriage omen is clearly illustrated in the

appearance of Gruff and Glum, a wooden-legged man, at Bella Wilfer's marriage in Our Mutual Friend.

The wooden leg (or wooden-legged man) appears to have been used by the author to convey the idea or condition of castration. From repeated references in his novels to the wooden leg one may conclude that the wooden leg represents the removal of the male reproductive organ; its appearance symbolizes impotency. Male characters endowed with this foreign appendage, seem to be sexually frustrated and unable to alter their disastrous sexual fate. Again there is the barrage of sexual symbols to accompany the appearance of the wooden leg. A frequently used sexual symbol for Dickens is the long established symbol of lock and key.[1] A weak-legged or wooden-legged lover's frustrated condition is often accompanied by references to the lock and the key; in the hands of weak-legged or wooden-legged lovers these implements never seem to fit properly.

A chapter will also be devoted to explaining and examining the strange, and sometimes evil, relationships existing between physically abnormal servants and their masters. The degree of debility in the servant will be shown to mirror the moral decrepitude of the master. Some discussion will be devoted to the possible influence of the German 'doppel-ganger' upon Dickens's descriptions of servants and their masters.

Certain traits should be noticed in the characters themselves. From Oliver Twist until the emergence of the "dark novels" the physically abnormal characters accept, without question, their infirmities. In a later novel, Our Mutual Friend, two of these more memorable characters feel and comment upon their physical aberrations; Jenny Wren and Silas Wegg, who become cynical and hard in their sufferings, are quite unlike the all-accepting, all-forgiving cripple, Tiny Tim. Dickens has these characters question their physical conditions.

In his novels society is normally represented as, in a sense, a unified whole through an even pattern of symbols. These symbols are the physically abnormal characters themselves.

The two previously mentioned cases are not accepting of the pattern. They decline to belong to it. In doing so they emerge into the foreground as discrepancies. They exploit their unnaturalness through their cynical comments and are thus placed apart from the pattern developed by Dickens for physically abnormal characters.

When Jenny Wren does not demonstrate christian feeling and acceptance for her crippled legs but lashes out bitterly at society, Dickens is attempting to draw attention to her condition. He uses her, as he does Tiny Tim, to

symbolize and typify the inhumanity of society. But she, unlike Tiny Tim, proves to be verbally a bitter witness. Silas Wegg reacts in the same manner to his disability; he protests vehemently the loss of his leg and despises those whose bodies are still whole. While on the one hand Jenny Wren and Silas Wegg still function respectively as symbols of inhumanity and irrevocable castration, Dickens also presents both characters as thinking, discursive individuals. He allows them to move from existence on a two dimensional plane within the novel to existence as real characters within his Victorian portrait. There is no possible reason for Dickens's alteration of style but at the same time his treatment of society changes.

Dickens now attacks the result rather than the cause of society's ills. He uses Silas Wegg and Jenny Wren as representative figures of Society. Wegg is unlike other physically abnormal characters of previous novels. Whereas the physically abnormal characters' function is primarily symbolic, Wegg's function within Our Mutual Friend is important to thematic and plot development.

NOTES

[1] George P. Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, eds., The Exeter Book (Morningside Heights: New York: Columbia University Press, 1936). The following riddle is found on p. 205. It demonstrates the traditional significance of the sexual symbol of the lock and key. It reads:

> Wraetlic hongað bi weres þeo, frean under sceate. Foran is þyrel. Bið stip ond heard, stede hafað godne; bonne se esne his agen graegl ofer cneo hefeð, wile þaet cube hol mid his hangellan heafde gretan þaet he efenlang aer oft gefylde.

The notes on p. 346 provide possible solutions of the poem. They state that

> "Dietrich, Zfd A. XI, 473f., gives two solutions, "key" and "dagger-sheath." Either solution is possible. Grein, Spr. II, 14, translates hangellan, I.6, p. 176, points out that riddles of this type are apt to depend on a double meaning for their effect..."

I am not offering proof that Dickens was aware of the traditional sexual significance of the lock and the key. I am stating that he used these objects as sexual symbols and their use as such can be traced back through traditional literature.

CHAPTER I

WEAK LEGS: A SIGN OF SEXUAL FRUSTRATION AND IMPOTENCY

Throughout the novels, from Oliver Twist to Edwin Drood, male characters who have difficulty consummating sexual relationships with women, or who have failed completely in a quest for sexual gratification of some type, almost invariably suffer from weak legs and thighs. These debilities denote degrees of sexual impotency. Despite this it might be somewhat inaccurate to label Dickens a sexually conscious writer, although in his novels there is a conscious attempt to minimize the extent of sexual activity between consenting adult characters.[1] Modern investigators into this area of Victorian sex have attested to sexual improprieties in Dickens's time.[2] It then becomes ludicrous to imply that Dickens could have been uninfluenced by sexual incidents which were exploited in both the literary and the real worlds of Victorian England. With writers like G.W.M. Reynolds and his momentous work The Mysteries of London (1845-1856), violence and lust were dramatized and formed the crude materials of future works. In 1828 the English public were treated to a mixture of literature and pornography in The Lustful Turk. Even in the areas of medical and social investigation into the causes of prostitution, the sexual side of these matters attracted wide interest through the writings of a physician, William Acton.

In Oliver Twist Dickens used the "foul and frousy dens; the haunts of hunger and disease; [and] the shabby rags that scarcely hold together"[3] not only to create an atmosphere indicative of the socially debased way of life of the criminal but also to explore the sexual degeneration which usually accompanied the low life of London. This emphatic attention to the seamier side of the Victorian underworld, which is one of the prime themes of the novel, was a direct consequence of the literature and public taste of Dickens's time. His early style and themes owned much to the rich, torrid style of the Terrific Register and the criminal atmosphere exploited by The Newgate Calendar. An insatiable public hunger for stories of crime in the thirties was fed by the works of enterprising newspapermen and journalists. These writers catered to the demand for stories of violence and eventually promoted, as the size of the reading public increased, an obvious debasement of public taste. Oliver Twist and its characters were conceived into this world which romanticized the criminal and his crime. Thackeray in his younger days commented that:

> A good murder is a great godsend. Light be the stones on Thurtell's bones; - he was the best friend the penny-a-line man had for many a day. Carder was good - Cook was good - Burke was good - Bishop and Williams were good - many others, were no doubt, very excellent, but Jack Thurtell was the flower of the flock. He fed some of the best public instructors for months; and when he was turned off, their lamentations were sincere. There are few windfalls like this.[4]

It was not Dickens's intention to promote the romantic aspect of the criminal. In Oliver Twist he intended to describe the depths of the underworld's moral and social debasement. For this task he chose, among others, the character, Toby Crackit, the unsuccessful housebreaker and swell who is a combination of the criminal type and the weak-legged lover. Oliver Twist, when viewed with a special emphasis upon the character of Toby Crackit, is replete with sexual overtones and contrived leg imagery. The association between this character and sexual matters is apparent in the thief's name - Crackit. The double meaning of the word becomes clear when the character of the housebreaker is fused with that of the swell:

> 'But do you mean to say, my dear', remonstrated the Jew, 'that the women can't be got over?'
> 'Not a bit of it,' replied Sikes.
> 'Not by flash Toby Crackit?' said the Jew incredulously. 'Think what women are, Bill.'
> 'No; not even by flash Toby Crackit,' replied Sikes. 'He says he's worn sham whiskers, and a canary waistcoat, the whole blessed time he's been loitering down there, and it's all of no use.'
> 'He should have tried mustachios and a pair of military trousers, my dear,' said the Jew.
> 'So he did,' rejoined Sikes, 'and they warn't of no more use than the other plant.'
> The Jew looked blank at this information. After ruminating for some minutes with his chin sunk on his breast, he raised his head and said, with a deep sigh, that if flash Toby Crackit reported aright, he feared the game was up.[5]

Dickens implies the personal tragedy of Crackit's double failure. He cannot, as a thief, gain access to the house since he cannot coerce any of the female servants into his

confidence. As most students would recognize, the word "crack", as well as being slang for "break" or "break open", has ribald connotations; it refers to that portion of the female anatomy, the vulva, which Toby would obviously claim as his ultimate prize. There is also the implication in Toby's failure that his status as a thief is virtually contingent upon his extraordinary sexual prowess. This is acknowledged not only in several references to his colorful dress and attempts at enhancement of his personal attractions, but also by Fagin's testimonial just quoted. Although the reasons for the thief's failure in securing the allegiance of the female staff are only hinted at, the author does reveal in a later chapter that Toby was "rather weak in the legs; but this circumstance by no means detracted from his own admiration of his top-boots...".[6]

No pattern in Oliver Twist clearly indicates that Toby's failure as a lover is attributable conclusively (or in any practical sense) to his weak legs. Nonetheless he is the first of a long line of lovers to be afflicted with this particular physical characteristic and is the ancestor or prototype for most of Dickens's unrequited male lovers. While it is not clear that Dickens intended him to become a "flash in the pan" as it were in his sexual and professional misadventures, it is obvious that Toby has failed miserably in attempting to ingratiate himself with the female servants.

In a later handling of Toby's reputation as a "heavy swell"[7], Tom Chitling, another of Fagin's youthful band, takes great pleasure in being acquainted with the housebreaker. The younger thief bestows "numerous admiring glances on his legs and boots till they were out of sight".[8] Tom even desires to be on the "same footing as flash Toby Crackit".[9] He attempts to form a close association with his hero. They pass the time in games of cribbage. In Dickens's novels this game is representative of sexual intercourse inasmuch as the game "involves sticking little wooden pegs into little wooden holes".[10] During a meeting between the two thieves Dickens inverts the roles of the characters. Tom becomes the hunter, and Toby the pursued:

> 'Well, I thought you'd have been a little more glad to see me than this,' replied Mr. Chitling, with a melancholy air.
> 'Why look'e, young gentleman,' said Toby, 'when a man keeps himself so very ex-clusive as I have done, and by that means has a snug house over his head with nobody a prying and smelling about it, it's rather a startling thing to have the honour of a wisit from a young gentleman (however respectable and pleasant a person he may be to play cards with at conweniency) circumstanced as you are.'[11]

Toby appears to be upset by Mr. Chitling's efforts to dominate the conversation. His attempts to be obliging towards Mr. Chitling prove hopeless. Toby finds it impossible to maintain his "devil-may-care swagger". Although this might be considered as a refersal of sexual roles both are incapable of a deep relationship.

In connection with Tom's apparent pursuit of Toby it must be remembered that he was involved with a girl named Betsy. Dickens hints at Tom's failure with this girl in a conversation between Charlie Bates and the Artful Dodger:

> 'I should say,' replied Master Bates with a grin, 'that he was uncommon sweet upon Betsy. See how he's a-blushing! Oh, my eye! here's a merry-go-rounder. Tommy Chitling's in love! Oh, Fagin, Fagin! what a spree!'
>
> Thoroughly overpowered with the notion of Mr. Chitling being the victim of the tender passion, Master Bates threw himself back in his chair with such violence that he lost his balance, and pitched over upon the floor;...[12]

Because Tom fails as a lover he needs a permanent relationship, no matter how spurious, even with Toby Crackit. In Tom's eyes Toby appears to be quite potent although Dickens, in this whole affair, is indicating the sexual failures of a weak-legged man and his protege. He is simply the dupe or victim of appearances. Because he is unsuccessful or impotent in amorous affairs Tom probably assumes that some of Toby's magic touch with women will eventually rub off on him.

In Nicholas Nickleby Dickens presents two characters whose deformities of the lower limbs could be assumed to be sign-posts to sexual frustration. Newman Noggs suffers from a paralytic leg and a lameness has also been inflicted upon Smike. One thing is blatantly obvious in the novel, Smike must suffer. He does not have the physical or mental

ability to gratify those sexual needs which he will feel for Nicholas's sister, Kate. Although the boy's lameness can be considered an act of God, or can be attributed to poor nursing[13], accentuated by numerous educational malpractices, it is also symbolic of the lameness which will attack and subdue his rational faculties, spirit, and sexual drive. The boy's sexual nature remains sheltered and restrained until Nicholas remarks upon the beauties of his sister. The boy, stirred by the friendship that has sprung up between Nicholas and himself, replies "'she must be very beautiful,'...with his hands folded together, and his eyes bent upon his friend".[14] Although their relationship cannot be considered a sexually reciprocal one, there exists the need, as in the case of Tom and Toby in Oliver Twist, for a close association which borders on great emulation of one character by the other. Smike also begins to foster a strong desire for Kate Nickleby. Always his thoughts are centered upon this young woman:

> '...Has she thought about me? said Smike.
> 'Has she though. Oh, has she, has she?
> 'Don't tell me so, if she has not.'[15]

Yet notice Smike's reaction when Newman confirms the boy's heart-felt hopes. Newman "saw that he had covered his face with his hands, and that tears were stealing out between his fingers".[16] Newman, though unsure whether the boy is simply reacting to his "former misery" in Dotheboy's Hall,

ignores this extraordinary display of emotion. For Smike, unaccustomed to kindness, every available morsel of friendship is needed to sustain him. In him, more than in Nicholas, love is a very important consideration; it is "very materially assisted by a warm and active imagination, which has a long memory, and will thrive for a considerable time on very slight and sparing food".[17]

In this scene Newman cannot see or understand the reason for this reaction; Smike needs to be loved, as well as to love. He can return love emotionally, if not physically, but cannot hope for recognition. Newman is completely divorced from matters of the heart and that is why he can neither understand Smike's condition nor help Nicholas Nickleby in his pursuit of a woman. He tries to act as a messenger of love for Nicholas and causes nothing but confusion. Newman conveys Nicholas's message to the wrong woman when he follows the wrong servant.[18]

Smike, as his love grows, appears to be stricken with a strange malady which attacks his spirit as well as his body. He acts strangely in company, especially in the presence of Frank Cheeryble who calls upon Kate Nickleby. Smike's physical disease is accompanied and accentuated by love sickness:

> '...And the strangest thing is, that he does not go to bed,..., and when I went upstairs last Tuesday, hours after him, I found that

> he had not even taken his shoes off; and he had no candle, so he must have sat moping in the dark all the time. Now, upon my word,' said Mrs. Nickleby, 'when I come to think of it, that's very extraordinary!' [19]

In this description Dickens is adopting a traditional concept of love-sickness as characterized in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy with its diverse symptoms of love:

> All make leanness, want of appetite, want of sleep ordinary symptoms, and by that means they are brought often so low, so much altered and changed, that as he jested in the comedy, "one can scarce know them to be the same men."
>
> Attenuant juvenum vigilatae corpora noctes,
> Curaque et immenso qui fit amore dolor.
>
> [Young men grow pale and lean from the sleepless nights and cares and pangs of love.] [20]

When Nicholas and Kate do encounter Smike in this condition he also is reminiscent of the character in Chaucer's Knight's Tale whose:

> ...sleep, his mete, his drynk is him byraft,
> That lene he waxeth, and drye as eny shaft.
> His eyen hollow, grisly to biholde;
> His hewe yellow, and pale as asshen colde,
> And solitary he was, and ever alone,
> And dwelling al the night, making his mone. [21]

Nicholas and his sister Kate fear the worst for Smike, but the boy seems to have become a man. Dickens manipulates Smike's diction, transforming him from an imbecilic youth to a dejected lover:

> 'You are not well?' rejoined Nicholas.
> 'I am better, indeed. A great deal better,' said Smike quickly.
> 'Then why do you give way to these fits of melancholy?' inquired Nicholas, in his

> kindest manner; 'or why not tell us the cause? You grow a different creature, Smike.'
> 'I do; I know I do,' he replied. 'I will tell you the reason one day, but not now. I hate myself for this; you are all so good and kind. But I cannot help it. My heart is very full; you do not know how full it is.'[22]

As Kate's relationship with Frank Cheeryble becomes more passionate Smike's 'illness' reduces him to emaciation. Although it is hinted that he is suffering from consumption he is suffering more from a broken heart. Upon his removal from London with Nicholas to a better place of rest he cannot bear to say good-bye to Kate. The scene of their departure is appallingly sentimental; Smike never knew the close relationship of a lover but he felt the pain of being separated from a girl he knew he could never win. While, here too, there is no indication that Smike's sexual frustration is linked directly with his lameness, in a literal way, he is, as in the case of Toby Crackit, unsuccessful in his relationship with the woman he wants. The debility of the legs, then, is more a symbol than a specific cause of failure. Smike must be content with mere glimpses of this relationship:

> 'Yes, yes!' said Nicholas earnestly. 'There! She waves her hand again! I have answered it for you - and now they are out of sight. Do not give way so bitterly, dear friend, don't. You will meet them all again.'
> He whom he thus encouraged, raised his withered hands and clasped them fervently together.
> 'In heaven. I humbly pray to God, in heaven!'
> It sounded like the prayer of a broken heart.[23]

Smike's secret love for Kate is confirmed on his death bed;

the closest he comes to embracing her is being as close as he is, in friendship, to Nicholas. His words "I would have died to make her happy" form the pitiable epitaph to his life and bear witness to the extremes of his sexual frustration and unsatisfied desire.

In all probability the tears of the Victorian public, induced to sentimentality by the melodramatic rendering of the sufferings of so tender a heart, were not dried upon their cheeks when there appeared a new victim of frustration, of a much less sympathetic kind. Daniel Quilp struggled against the burdens of a deformed mind and body in an effort to attain sexual fulfillment. Although it is questionable whether the fantastic gnome-like creature of The Old Curiosity Shop suffers from a broken heart, still his ghastly form is in some ways connected with the dark turbid nature of his soul. Such a soul feasts, savagely, upon extreme sexual aberrations and self-induced frustrations. Whether or not this gargoyle was carved from Dickens's imaginative rendition of characters of the Gothic tradition[24], medieval legends of demonic form[25], or from Defoe's The Political History of the Devil[26], the intrinsic evil in Daniel Quilp is only satisfied when in the carnal pursuit of little Nell; Quilp is a creature of deep sexual perversity.

From the outset the dwarf believes that a successful heterosexual relationship is one in which the woman is

obedient to the will and abuse of the husband:

> 'Ask Mrs. Quilp, pretty Mrs. Quilp, obedient, timid, loving Mrs. Quilp. But that reminds me - I have left her all alone, and she will be anxious and know not a moment's peace till I return.... Oh! well-trained Mrs. Quilp!' [27]

Dickens's presentation of Quilp's perverse delight in his wife's frightened obedience is referable to Shakespeare's expression of the demonic influences which impelled his Richard III to thoughts of sexual conquest:

> To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
> With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
> The bleeding witness of my hatred by;
> Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me,
> And I no friends to back my suit at all,
> But the plain devil and dissembling looks,
> And to win her! all the world is nothing!
>
> Richard III, (I.ii, 231-37).

Quilp's scenes with his wife symbolize sexual intercourse since the dwarf seems unable to fulfill his natural sexual urges. His execrable manners and the amusement he receives from his wife's forced conjugal obedience prompt a bizarre exhibition of coarse and odious advances to his partner. Opening his crooked legs, in a manner suggestive of the sexual delight he feels in the young woman's defencelessness, he asks her to comment upon his handsome features. In lieu of a normal love scene Dickens provides a situation filled with fear, dread, and sadistic delight. The author parodies a common enough scene to fit the savagery of the dwarf; instead of offering his wife a kiss Quilp threatens to "bite"

her. The dwarf dampens the sexual fires of his deformed loins with drinks of rum and water; he keeps the fire alive with her company as the "deep fiery red" of his cigar burns away in the dark.

I noted in the Introduction that Dickens made extensive use of certain symbols to accentuate the sexual frustration of his weak and wooden-legged lovers. The cigar is presented as a phallic symbol and provides the dwarf with the opportunity to gratify those sexual urges which he might otherwise be unable to fulfill. Although a discussion of the cigar symbol appears to be an obvious digression from the intended plan of this chapter, an investigation into its use is important to establish the sexual appetite of Quilp. Dickens's reliance upon certain sexual symbols to define the carnal aspect of a character is important enough to warrant an examination of this particular symbol. The cigar, which in the presentation of Quilp is of importance equal to his deformity, could be argued to represent a detached phallus as does a wooden leg.

With his cigar Quilp prepares himself for a night of inhuman delights and settles into a position of pleasurable repose:

> 'I feel in a smoking humour, and shall probably blaze away all night. But sit where you are, if you please, in case I want you.' [28]

And blaze away he does; like the tall furnace towers of

Coketown he fills the air with his vile smoke and belches forth in delight at his wife's "involuntary movement of restlessness or fatigue". The sexual suggestiveness of this scene is coloured by phallic implications. Quilp's cigar does blaze away and becomes more red as he achieves greater pleasure from the mental and physical discomfiture of his wife:

> ...he kept his cigar alight, and he kindled every fresh one from the ashes of that which was nearly consumed, without requiring the assistance of a candle. [29]

Ironically, if this action is sexually motivated, then the dwarf is actually manufacturing and sustaining rather than achieving, in a more natural manner, a type of chain-action orgasm. Each cigar is lit from the dying remnants of the preceding one without the aid of a candle, reinforcing, in fact, the allusion to a constant, uninterrupted form of coitus. Just as Quilp's part in the conjugal relationship stresses the bizarre and the unnatural so too does his effort to sustain a type of sexual pleasure reveal his deep need for sexual gratification. In effect the dwarf's cigar puffing is not so much symbolic of an act of coition, or for that matter masturbation, as it is an allusion to his constant fanning of the fiery eroticism of his lusty imagination. As the night wears on it appears that the aphrodisiac qualities of this prop not only dispel any "natural desire to go to rest" but in turn create an illusion of sexual gratification.

It is also a curious consideration, and one worth noting, that his cigar smoking sometimes accompanies related scenes in which the dwarf is contemplating the eventual subjection of his other associates to his demonic will.

In the case of Nell, Quilp achieves greater satisfaction from the pursuit than from the actual act of catching her. The first and most obvious sexual reference to Little Nell by Quilp is his declaration that he will inherit her bed, and this is an obvious preamble to his actual designs. Unable to gratify his growing passion, he indulges in an imaginative and symbolic conquest:

> 'She's very sensitive,' said Quilp, looking after her. 'Very sensitive; that's a pity. The bedstead is much about my size. I think I shall make it my little room.' 30

Note the recurrence of the symbols of legs and smoking when Quilp slips into Nell's bed:

> '...the dwarf walked in to try the effect. This he did, by throwing himself on his back upon the bed with his pipe in his mouth, and then kicking up his legs and smoking violently...., and the bed being soft and comfortable, Mr. Quilp determined to use it, both as a sleeping place by night and as a kind of Divan by day; and in order that it might be converted to the latter purpose at once, remained where he was, and smoked his pipe out.' 31

In the interim before Quilp and Nell are mentioned together again by Dickens, the girl and her grandfather cannot escape from weak-legged men or characters in whom

there exists the implication of abnormalities of the lower limbs. Codlin and Short, the two puppeteers of Punch, are intruded upon by the two wanderers. The center of attraction for the two showmen is Punch. Dickens's description of the puppet might easily induce the suggestion that Quilp, himself, could very well be taken for the prototype of Mr. Punch:

> . . .—for, perched cross-legged upon a tombstone behind them, was a figure of that hero himself, his nose and chin as hooked and his face as beaming as usual. Perhaps this imperturbable character was never more strikingly developed, for he preserved his usual equable smile notwithstanding that his body was dangling in a most uncomfortable position, all loose and limp and shapeless, while his long peaked cap, unequally balanced against his exceedingly slight legs, threatened every instant to bring him toppling down.[32]

If indeed Quilp <u>is</u> the prototype of Punch and, vice versa, Punch is the model for the gnome, then the allusion to the puppet's legs cannot be disregarded. His "slight" legs might very well be a hindrance to him and bring about his downfall just as Mr. Quilp's eventual downfall might be attributed to his own deformed limbs.

The relationship of these showmen of Punch with the two travellers conjures up, for Nell, old anxieties and fears. It is at this point in the novel that the young girl is reminded of her pursuit by Quilp. Deformity of the lower limbs surrounds Nell. Mr. Short seems to be inflicted

with abnormal legs; this puppeteer, by virtue of the exceedingly small proportions of his legs, received the honoured appelation "Short Trotters" or simply Short.[33] There is also the bizarre appearance of two stilt-walking show people, a boy and a girl. Before the termination of this scene there is another reference to Punch's legs. Dickens contradicts his earlier references to the puppet's frail appendages:

> 'Rough or smooth,' said Mr. Codlin, beating his hand on the little footboard where Punch, when suddenly struck with the symmetry of his legs and their capacity for silk stockings, is accustomed to exhibit them to popular admiration,...[34]

It seems that Punch, were he alive, would admire his lower limbs, despite their infirmity, in much the same way as Crackit admired his legs in top-boots. The connection between Quilp and Punch not only lies in their mutual deformities but also in the way both characters treat their wives. As Punch is constantly forcing his wife under his domination with the aid of a stick, his counterpart, Quilp, threatens his wife with "bites" and terrible tortures. Both thrive on fear and male domination by force.

These introductions to characters who have abnormalities of the lower limbs are not significant in themselves. Dickens uses them to keep before the reader the symbol of weak legs standing for sexual frustration. Instead of presenting the sexual pursuit of Nell through appearances of

Quilp, he uses other random characters to keep this idea alive. This might explain the remarkable number of references to dwarfs and weak-legged giants by Mr. Vuffin[35] at the Jolly Sandboys inn. It keeps the reader's mind turning upon the idea of abnormally shaped legs.

Quilp seeks Nell and her grandfather through Dick Swiveller who fancies himself a perfect paramour for Nell. In his determination to trap the girl Quilp decides to manipulate Dick to his own advantage:

> '...Ha ha ha ! He shall marry Nell. He shall have her, and I'll be the first man,..., to tell 'em what they've gained and what I've helped 'em to ....' [36]

Quilp's determination to despoil the child and her grandfather forces him to adopt drastic measures. Early in this chapter it was suggested that cribbage could be an allusion to sexual intercourse. Following this line of thought, notice how Quilp controls this particular game, even to the extreme of cheating. The sexual suggestiveness of the game is recognizable in Quilp's control over his wife's movements. The dwarf also fascinates Dick Swiveller with his own dexterity at "scoring":

> Among his various eccentric habits he had a humorous one of always cheating at cards, which rendered necessary on his part, not only a close observance of the game, and a sleight-of-hand in counting and scoring, but also involved the constant correction, by looks, and frowns, and kicks under the

> table, of Richard Swiveller, who being bewildered by the rapidity with which his cards were told, and the rate at which the pegs travelled down the board, could not be prevented from sometimes expressing his surprise and incredulity. Mrs. Quilp too was the partner of young Trent, and for every look that passed between them, and every word they spoke, and every card they played, the dwarf had eyes and ears; not occupied alone with what was passing above the table, but with signals that might be exchanging beneath it, which he laid all kinds of traps to detect; besides often treading on his wife's toes to see whether she cried out or remained silent under the infliction, in which latter case it would have been quite clear that Trent had been treading on her toes before. [37]

While Quilp does not actually "score" in the sexual sense, his actions thoroughly astonish Dick. Dick's bewilderment is indicative of his lack of success with Nell. His inability to follow the game, coupled with the sexual import of this exercise, is Dickens's way of foreshadowing Dick's ultimate failure. When Dick refers to sexual matters his comments are sometimes associated with wooden legs:

> '...Yet loved I as man never loved that hadn't wooden legs, and my heart, my heart is breaking for the love of Sophy Cheggs.' [38]

Although the wooden leg might be taken rather as a phallic symbol, and less appropriately as a mere figurative extension of a cribbage peg, the implication specifically of frustration is nonetheless supported by Dick's following comments upon

his thwarted love affair:

> 'Now, I hope you're satisfied, sir,' said Dick, 'and I hope Fred's satisfied. You went partners in the mischief, and I hope you like it. This is the triumph I was to have, is it? It's like the old country-dance of that name, where there are two gentlemen to one lady, and one has her, and the other hasn't, but comes limping up behind to make out the figure. But it's Destiny, and mine's a crusher!' [39]

Of course the reference to "limping" can be as pedantically literal as it is figurative. Dick is, for Dickens, the victim, and at that a humorous one, of self-inflicted misfortune. Dick is most often seen through and characterized by his allusions to his passionate nature which he mistakenly feels is parallel to a singular sexual competency. His failure is no less a blow to his pride as Perpetual Grand of the "select convivial circle called the Glorious Apollers". [40] It appears that prestige is established amongst self-congratulatory males like Dick Swiveller who fancy themselves as men among men. Notable examples of this are Toby Crackit in Oliver Twist and Simon Tappertit in Barnaby Rudge.

An examination of Dick Swiveller's sexual exploits is not altogether a digression from the theme of this chapter; the novel, The Old Curiosity Shop, in which he appears, is replete with sexual overtones. Since Dickens did not restrict his sexual theme to one character, Quilp, it is necessary to examine some of those characters who exhibit a

sexual significance and connection with the dwarf.

The sexual history of Dick Swiveller is important since it demonstrates how Dickens sustains the sexual nature of The Old Curiosity Shop without belabouring the method of sexual frustration through the affliction of weak or deformed legs. Through Dick's relationship with the small lady called the Marchioness the association between cribbage and sexual intercourse is strengthened.[41] In the novel she keeps Dick Swiveller company:

> Yes; playing cribbage with herself at the table. There she sat, intent upon the game, coughing now and then in a subdued manner as if she feared to disturb him - shuffling the cards, cutting, dealing, playing, counting, pegging - going through all the mysteries of cribbage as if she had been in full practice from her cradle![42]

As she plays the little lady tells Dick, who is in bed, how she escaped from Sally Brass. She engineers her escape by finding the correct key to fit the lock. A study by Arthur Brown has revealed that in Dickens's works locks and keys have sexual connotations. He states that the repetition of the articles can be explained by the fact that "in dreams keys often symbolize the male genital organ, while locks just as often refer to the female organ".[43] As I have stated in a note to the Introduction Dickens may have derived the symbols of the lock and the key from traditional literature. Arthur Brown only offers a different aspect of their use. The use-

of locks and keys here is not associated with a dream that the Marchioness has. She is relating the story of her escape to Dick who is, in fact, in a feverish, dream-like state. It is through relationships of adult characters like Dick and the Marchioness that one becomes aware of the depth and importance that consenting sexual activity, although only suggested, has in Dickens's early novels. When the little lady speaks to Dick about the key he reacts in a peculiar manner:

> Mr. Swiveller gathered up his knees so as to make a great cone of the bed-clothes, and conveyed into his countenance an expression of the utmost concern. But, the small servant pausing, and holding up her finger, the cone gently disappeared, though the look of concern did not. [44]

If this is symbolic of an erected phallus, it is equally a symbol of a weak phallus. The "cone" subsides as quickly as it appears. The sexual inferences to be drawn from Dick's impromptu action in some ways fit the pattern of recurring sexual confrontation designed by Dickens.

It is obvious, from Quilp's manners and habits in the second half of the novel, that his nature has remained unchanged. As he continues to plan for Nell's capture the dwarf rocks "himself to and fro in the chair" while "nursing his left leg at the same time"; [45] the perverted sexual nature of his designs is again suggested. When Quilp returns home he discovers Mr. Brass, Mrs. Quilp and his mother-in-law

with tumblers of punch; they are entertaining and nursing the belief that he is drowned. The antithetical descriptions offered by both Mr. Brass and Mrs. Jiniwin, although presentably farcical in tone, contain numerous remarks on the horrid creature's crooked legs and their implied weaknesses. It would appear that these ill-proportioned limbs were the most prominent feature of the dwarf, and ones which would decidedly identify him as Mr. Quilp:

> '...Respecting his legs now - ?'
> 'Crooked, certainly,' said Mrs. Jiniwin.
> 'Do you think they were crooked? said Brass, in an insinuating tone. "I think I see them coming up the street very wide apart, in nankeen pantaloons a little shrunk and without straps. Ah! what a vale of tears we live in. Do we say crooked?' [46]

Notice Mr. Brass's allusion to the spectre of Daniel Quilp with his legs wide apart. The sexual purport of his statement need not be stressed beyond the fact that this is the peculiarly suggestive manner in which the dwarf, early in the novel, presented himself to his hapless wife.

> 'Very crooked,' suggested Mrs. Jiniwin.
> 'We'll not say very crooked, ma'am,' said Brass piously. 'Let us not bear hard upon the weaknesses of the deceased. He is gone, ma'am, to where his legs will never come in question.-...' [47]

The emphasis is decidedly upon the implication that there is more than a physical weakness involved.

The dwarf, having announced to his family's

displeasure his resurrection, states his intention of living at his wharf which he rechristens Bachelor's Hall. This abode has a chimney which belches smoke inside the house. The chimney is an important sexual symbol for Dickens as he uses it to represent the dwarf's efforts to replenish his sexual fire. Above all else, the dwarf prefers to smoke incessantly all the night long. I suggested that the cigar and its smoke were, in effect, aphrodisiacs for Quilp. With this in view notice how this character spends his first night at Bachelor's Hall:

> ...he lighted his pipe, and smoked against the chimney until nothing of him was visible through the mist but a pair of red and highly inflamed eyes,... [48]

Quilp's pipe and his gigantic chimney puff away in unison; if he is still fanning his sexual fires, then it appears that the dwarf has found a perfect, if only symbolic, partner to complement his abnormal habit. Unable naturally to relieve his sexual pressures he is reduced to finding solace in the company of inanimate objects:

> ...in a violent fit of coughing,... slightly stirred the smoke and scattered the heavy wreaths by which they were obscured. In the midst of the atmosphere, which must infallibly have smothered any other man, Mr. Quilp passed the evening with cheerfulness; solacing himself all the time with the pipe and the case-bottle;... [49]

But towards the end of the novel, Dickens's

association of Quilp with fire falls dismally into pedantry. Quilp's need for sexual fulfillment will eventually burn him out:

> And there it lay, alone. The sky was red with flame, and the water that bore it there had been tinged with the sullen light as it flowed along. The place the deserted carcass had left so recently, a living man, was now a blazing ruin. There was something of the glare upon its face. The hair, stirred by the damp breeze, played in a kind of mockery of death - such a mockery as the dead man himself would have delighted in when alive - about its head; and its dress fluttered idly in the night wind.[50]

The original illustration which accompanies this passage contains some interesting points. Though it is not known how much control Dickens had over the work of his illustrators the picture might contain some mute evidence of the author's essential motives. The pillar by which the dwarf lies appears to rise from his loins like a huge, erected phallus; or intentionally, the body of Quilp seems to be symbolically impaled upon it. Either, in Quilp's case, would be fitting.

In later novels, and notably in Dombey and Son, Dickens develops a figurative rather than an actual weakness of the legs. An engaging example is Mr. Toots, a student at Dr. Blimber's school, who discovers that love has a very peculiar effect upon his legs:

> '...The state of my feelings towards Miss Dombey is of that unspeakable description,

> that my heart is a desert island, and she lives in it alone. I'm getting more used up every day, and I'm proud to be so. If you could see my legs when I take my boots off, you'd form some idea of what unrequited affection is. I have been prescribed bark, but I don't take it,... I'd rather not. This, however, is forbidden ground....' [51]

Not only does he faintly resemble Smike, the lame, unrequited lover in Nicholas Nickleby, but like Smike he appears unattractive to the opposite sex:

> ...one young gentleman, with a swollen nose and an excessively large head... suddenly left off blowing one day, and remained in the establishment a mere stalk....'

> There young Toots was, at any rate; possessed of the gruffest of voices and the shrillest of minds; sticking ornamental pins into his shirt, and keeping a ring in his waistcoat pocket to put on his little finger by stealth, when the pupils went out walking; constantly falling in love by sight with nursery-maids, who had no idea of his existence; and looking...like a greatly overgrown cherub who had sat up aloft much too long. [52]

Just as the lock and the key are symbols of sexual intercourse, Toots's action of placing a ring upon his small finger could represent his desire for sexual fulfillment. Toots is indecisive and faltering in his approach to the girl he loves, Florence Dombey. So the shyness of putting a ring only on his smallest finger both symbolizes lack of confidence in his sexual powers and expresses his own consciousness of it.

He is indeed weak in fulfilling his heart's desire since his love for Florence, the object of his passion, is kept suspended. When his love does begin to break loose it is expressed in a most romantic form, bordering upon blind infatuation:

> '...Mine an't a selfish affection, you know,' said Mr. Toots, in the confidence engendered by his having been a witness of the Captain's tenderness. 'It's the sort of thing with me, Captain Gills, that if I could be run over - or - or trampled upon - or - or thrown off a very high place - or anything of that sort - for Miss Dombey's sake, it would be the most delightful thing that could happen to me.' 53

Unlike Smike, Mr. Toots does not languish away in complete silence. His irregular eating habits and disjointed behaviour are revealed to Florence with humour and sentiment:

> 'Dear Mr. Toots,' said Florence, 'you are so friendly to me, and so honest, that I am sure I may ask a favour of you,'
> 'Miss Dombey,' returned Mr. Toots, 'if you'll only name one, you'll - you'll give me an appetite. To which,' said Mr. Toots, with some sentiment, 'I have long been a stranger.' 54

Toots's hopeless love affair forces him to confide in Captain Cuttle; the young man makes an accurate diagnosis of his peculiar wasting disease. The difference between Smike's manner and Toots's in this respect is quite striking:

> '...I know I'm wasting away. You needn't at all mind alluding to

> that. I - I should like it. Burgess and Co. have altered my measure, I'm in that state of thinness. It's a gratification to me. I - I'm glad of it. I - I'd a great deal rather go into a decline, if I could. I'm a mere brute you know, grazing upon the surface of the earth, Captain Gills.'[55]

Dickens's farcical representation of Toots's hopeless 'condition' hits a familiar chord in Toots's legs. These appendages seem to be wasting away in consequence of unrequited affection for Miss Dombey. Indeed this character is quite upset by his sexual condition. Toots refers to wood bark as a recommended cure; perhaps this application of such a substance would draw his legs closer to a wooden condition which will ultimately result in the deadening of his sexual powers. Captain Cuttle, knowing that Toots will never have Florence's hand in marriage, locks the door after the young man leaves while "shaking his head with the same remarkable expression of pity and tenderness as he had regarded him with before...".[56] The captain's "locking out" of Toots is symbolic of his belief that this young man has failed; the lock and the key being sexual symbols, his manipulation of these objects destroys Toots's hopes of success. The young gentleman, aware that his love for Florence cannot be fulfilled in marriage, pursues the same mode of behaviour as Smike exhibited in the presence of

Frank Cheeryble, his love's intended. Toots admits that he, too, cannot stand the sight of Florence's lover:

> '...If, at any moment, I find I cannot endure the contemplation of Lieutenant Walter's bliss, and should rush out, I hope, Captain Gills, that you and he will both consider it as my misfortune and not my fault, or the want of inward conflict. That you'll feel convinced I bear no malice to any living creature-..." [57]

Of course Toots's condition is his own misfortune. His eventual sexual failure with Florence is brought about through the planning of Captain Cuttle and Susan Nipper, the girl whom Toots is destined to marry:

> ...and the excursive Mr. Toots, who, as above mentioned, was frequently on the move afterwards, and passed but a restless evening. This, however, was not his habit; for he generally got on very well, by dint of playing at cribbage with the Captain under the advice and guidance of Miss Nipper, and distracting his mind with the calculations incidental to the game; which he found to be a very effectual means of utterly confounding himself. [58]

Needless to say, Mr. Toots is being groomed for his role as the husband of Susan Nipper, who manipulates him as Mr. Quilp had manipulated Dick Swiveller at his game of cribbage. Dickens makes one final comment upon this character's situation. Toots appears to be totally without any confidence in his masculine qualities:

> '...- I adored Miss Dombey. The banns which consign her to Lieutenant Walters,

> and me to - to Gloom, you know,' said Mr. Toots, after hesitating for a strong expression, 'may be dreadful, will be dreadful; but I feel that I should wish to hear them spoken. I feel that I should wish to know that the ground was certainly cut from under me, and that I hadn't a hope to cherish, or a - or a leg, in short, to - to go upon.' [59]

Having lost one love he turns to a second, more permanent arrangement with Susan Nipper. As Dickens later states, Mr. Toots "appeared on his legs for the first time in his life".[60] Toots's sexual drive seems to have been retarded. It seems that his weak-leggedness was deliberately self-induced and it was only part of the convention of the lover's wasting away. His union with Susan appears to have a satisfactory foundation; by the end of the novel, his wife is expecting their third child.

In Dickens's next novel, David Copperfield, he does not create entire characters, as those already discussed, whose love affairs are thwarted by weak or deformed legs. Dickens simply uses leg imagery throughout the novel without centering his attention, in this regard, on one character. For example, at Mr. Waterbrook's party, Agnes Spenlow, for whom David holds great affection, is accompanied to dinner by a "simpering fellow with weak legs".[61] In consequence of this, David does not feel that his loss of her company is of great concern. He states that "I was not so vexed at

losing Agnes as I might have been,...".[62] David's nonchalant behaviour is indicative of Dickens's symbolic inplication that a weak leg will have very little success with women.

Again:

> In the silence that ensued, my aunt walked gravely up to Mr. Dick, without at all hurrying herself, and gave him a hug and a sounding kiss. And it was very fortunate, with a view to his credit, that she did so; for I am confident that I detected him at that moment in the act of making preparations to stand on one leg, as an appropriate expression of delight.[63]

It would appear that Mr. Dick's legs are not so frail as his mind as the backgammon games between Mr. Dick and Miss Trotwood take on more significance than that of idle amusement when considered in the same light as cribbage.

There is also Mr. Omer, the undertaker, whose physical debilities leave him, metaphorically, with one foot dead and in the grave. He is content to see his daughter happy even at the price of his own legs and misery:

> 'And Joram and Minnie are like valentines. What more can a man expect? What's his limbs to <u>that</u>! '[64]

Mr. Omer's constant references to the immobility of his legs leave quite an impression upon David Copperfield. He seems to admire the elder gentleman's extreme assertion that his family's happiness is more important than his legs:

> ... [my] limbs only made my breath shorter when I used 'em.[65]

Despite the scarcity of references to weak legs in David Copperfield, their emergence indicates Dickens contrived attention to this abnormality. His intention was to continue the connection between weak legs and sexual impotence.

Dickens's references are not always direct. Sir Leicester Dedlock, the anachronistic and debilitated patrician, inhabitant of Chesney Wold, suffers frequently and heroically from the gout which "grips him by both legs".[66] Though Dickens treats his disorder as a natural, physical disease, there is the inference that Sir Leicester's weak leggedness is more than mere contamination of the blood. There is the undeniable fact that the Dedlock clan is dying off, there being no heir; though Lady Dedlock is capable of producing progeny since she is the mother of Esther by the late Captain Hawdon. The name Dedlock may be read allegorically, like so many others in Dickens's novels. Sir Leicester can produce no heir; hence his family name will die with him. Throughout the novel there are hints that Lady Dedlock is capable of conception with anyone except her husband since she "is perfectly got up; and...she is the best-groomed woman in the whole stud".[67] Almost in antithetical proportions to the Lady's reproductive capacities is her husband's sterility. The connection between Sir Leicester's gouty, bed-ridden condition (which has become part of his nature and his proud

heritage) and his sterility might be considered quite natural. But it should be remembered that not only have the male descendants of Chesney Wold been plagued by the gout, but also Chesney Wold, itself, has been plagued by the ghostly step of Sir Morbury Dedlock's wife who was crippled by her husband. Indeed the gout and Sir Leicester's sterility could be part of a curse promised by this ancestral lady:

> '..."I will die here where I have walked. And I will walk here, though I am in my grave. I will walk here, until the pride of this house is humbled. And when calamity, or when disgrace is coming to it, let the Dedlocks listen for my steps!"' [68]

As Sir Leicester is the last male of the Dedlock clan, his family will die as his ancestor had foretold. The whole world of Bleak House appears to generate some sort of disease in every relationship. Dickens makes significant use of the biblical theme that the sins of the father are visited upon the sons and daughters. Abnormal children and the loss of a normal childhood become key examples of this theme: the Smallweed children become cadaverous little men and women; Caddy Turveydrop's child is born deaf and dumb; the Neckett children, orphaned, have to grovel to survive; and poor Jo is unceremoniously despatched by Dickens to elicit public concern over the plight of the suffering poor. Although Sir Leicester is not a child, he is the last descendant and his disease is gout. Sir Leicester exists not as a

sexual failure whose long sterility is somewhat forced by authorial design, but as another example of a positive link between weak legs and sexual impotence.

Dickens's use of unrequited and frustrated weak-legged lovers is, infrequently, supplemented by the addition of minor female characters who exhibit physical and sexual debilities. One of these less-memorable characters is Mrs. Sparsit, Mr. Bounderby's housekeeper in Hard Times. The lady's great aunt, being afflicted with a "mysterious leg which had now refused to get out of bed for fourteen years"[69] had contrived that marriage between Mrs. Sparsit and her now deceased husband. This gentleman, it appears, was doomed in his matrimonial affair in so far as he was of slender form with "no head worth mentioning" and his figure was "weakly supported on two long slim props".[70] The widowed Mrs. Sparsit protects herself in her housekeeping from any physical, and perhaps sexual, intrusion. She reigns "supreme over all the office furniture, and over a locked-up iron room with three locks, against the door of which strong chamber the light porter laid his head every night, on a truckle bed, that disappeared at cockcrow".[71] Mrs. Sparsit exhibits obvious pleasure in 'locking' out the porter; she controls his movements in the same way as she probably controlled the movements of her weak-legged husband.

In Hard Times love is non-existent; marriage is a

cold contract in which people are bought and sold for idle, shallow purposes. Mrs. Sparsit, after a conversation with a delightful gentleman, seems to be attempting to recapture some pleasant feeling that is now long dead:

> Whether it was that the heat prevented Mrs. Sparsit from working, or whether it was that her hand was out, she did no work that night. She sat at the window, when the sun began to sink behind the smoke; she sat there, when the smoke was burning red, when the colour faded from it, when darkness seemed to rise slowly out of the ground, and creep upward, upward, up to the house-tops, up the church steeple, up to the summits of the factory chimneys, up to the sky....[72]

This brief, restful, but eminently symbolic, moment could be as calm as a post-coital repose that she experienced in her distant marriage. Although Mrs. Sparsit is not physically abnormal she compensates for a sexual need with symbolic images in her immediate situation. She is constantly aware of weak legs, and phallic symbols probably afford her the only opportunities to dwell on her earlier marriage. Needless to say, when the occasion for a real relationship does present itself, the former disastrous affair with her weak-minded and weak-legged husband has so disillusioned her that she cannot assert herself sexually. Subsequently when jarred from her repose Mrs. Sparsit exclaims that she is a "fool". Dickens assures the reader that "who she meant, she did not say; but she could scarcely have meant the sweetbread".[73]

When David Copperfield thinks of Mrs. Gummidge

and her constant lament for her lost husband, he does so in these lines:

> I thought of the oddest of things.... of the washing-stand being ricketty on its three legs, and having a discontented something about it, which reminded me of Mrs. Gummidge under the influence of the old one. [74]

If indeed the passage has sexual significance, the three-legged stand in its ricketty condition could represent the failing sexual union of Mrs. Gummidge and her husband when that gentleman was alive. The three legs might have phallic meanings in so far as they represent a man's legs, spread apart, with the middle appendage being the phallus itself. Consequently, as Mrs. Gummidge appears to be "under the influence of the old one" she could be reliving those pleasant, sexual memories of her experiences with her husband.

Dickens, in Little Dorrit, combines in one minor passage references to the three-legged stood and the key:

> Time went on, and the turnkey began to fail. His chest swelled, and his legs got weak, and he was short of breath. The well-worn wooden stool was 'beyond him,' he complained. He sat in an arm-chair with a cushion, and sometimes wheezed so,..., that he couldn't turn the key....[75]

While the turnkey's condition is the natural effect of old age Dickens does place obvious emphasis on the fact that the stool was beyond the old man's capabilities. If the stool is a sexual symbol then the line is explicable in itself. The turnkey's useless efforts to turn his 'key' are symptomatic

and symbolic of his sexual decrepitude. Again Dickens includes a slight but important reference to the turnkey's weak legs. The old man obviously considers himself useless both in a physical and an occupational sense. The turnkey's decrepitude, which is so clearly described by Dickens, foreshadows John Chivery's sexual problems with Amy Dorrit when he inherits the turnkey's job at the prison.

The uselessness of a man inflicted with what might be considered infirmities of the lower limbs is indicated doubly in this passage from Barnaby Rudge:

> Mr. Tappertit, nothing loath, began again; and so the three went staggering on, arm-in-arm, shouting like madmen, and defying the watch with great valour....the watchmen of that time, being selected for the office on account of excessive age and extraordinary infirmity, had a custom of shutting themselves up tight in their boxes on the first symptoms of disturbance, and remaining there until they disappeared....[76]

Further on the author makes an additional reference to these "rheumatic watchmen". The Lord Mayor of London described the rather curious, and premature, wasting away of one of his constables:

> -Would a javelin-man do? - Or there's Philips the constable, - he's disengaged, - he's not very old for a man of his time of life, except in his legs, and if you put him up at a window he'd look quite young by candle-light, and might frighten 'em very much.-[77]

Dickens continues to introduce references to watchmen who suffer from grave paralysis. The watchmen, like Mr. Omer in David Copperfield, have one foot in the grave; they only

want and wait for complete 'rigor mortis' before they exchange their watch-boxes for coffins. For Dickens they are mere shadows of men in every detail:

> ...paralysed old watchmen guarded the bodies of the dead at night, year after year, until at last they joined that solemn brotherhood; and, saving that they slept known above it, and were shut up in another kind of box, their conditions can hardly be said to have undergone any material change when they in turn were watched themselves.[78]

Dickens's preoccupation in Little Dorrit with weak legs, weak minds, and weak moral foundations is demonstrated clearly in the character, John Chivery, a turnkey's son. John Chivery pursues Amy Dorrit. Despite, and in contradiction to, his father's hopes that John would not defile or contaminate the "inheritance of an unstained key",[79] the boy nevertheless pursues Amy. With childish abandon "he locked her up in corners" and only let her out for "real kisses".[80] As he grew John peeped at Amy "through the keyhold of the great lock in the main door".[81] Having found great pleasure in these voyeuristic practices that the prison situation ironically affords him, he eventually becomes rather weak in the legs; and "one of his eyes was also weak, and looked larger than the other, as if it couldn't collect itself".[82] Not only do his legs fail him and indicate, for the reader, his eventual sexual failure, but his ocular transgressions do little to ease his feelings of unrequited love. His eye

is irritated and so is his passion. It appears that John will honour his father's expressed wish. He will not contaminate the "inheritance of an unstained key" because he is sexually incapacitated. John is unable to approach Amy on the subject of love. The pattern established by Dickens concerning weak-legged lovers will repeat itself. The boy's weak-leggedness will yield him no more than an unrequited love.

Dickens continues to use the established symbolism of the lock and the key:

> Mrs. Chivery, a prudent woman, who desired her husband to take notice that their John's prospects of the Lock would certainly be strengthened by an alliance with Miss Dorrit,... and that her (Mrs. Chivery's) sentiment was, that two halves made a whole. [83]

Many of Dickens's soft-hearted and perhaps soft-headed lovers declare openly that they are ready to do themselves great physical harm to demonstrate their undying affection for the women they desperately love. A classic example has already been cited in Mr. Toots of Dombey and Son. John Chivery seems to have been struck from the same mould as Mr. Toots; his masochistic tendencies are briefly aired in the presence of Amy Dorrit, herself:

> '...I can be miserable alone, I can be cut up by myself; why should I also make miserable, and cut up one, that I would fling myself off that parapet to give half a moment's joy to! Not that that's much to do, for I'd do it for two pence.' [84]

It appears that his passion has diseased his sense and his brain is filled with foolishness. John is continually composing touching epitaphs to his departed self to dramatize his hopeless position. The following is an example of Dickens's humorous rendition of John's attempts at romantic language:

> 'Here lie the mortal remains of John Chivery, Never anything worth mentioning, Who died about the end of the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty six, of a broken heart, Requesting with his last breath that the word Amy might be inscribed over his ashes, Which was accordingly directed to be done, By his afflicted Parents.' [85]

John continues to place more distance between Amy and himself as he recognizes that Arthur Clennam will eventually win her heart. When the latter gentleman is imprisoned in the Marshalsea for debt young John performs an act of kindness which has great symbolic significance. Knowing full well that Arthur and Amy will eventually marry John concedes this fact by permitting Arthur to enter Amy's prison room and remain there undisturbed. It is now Arthur, not John, who has control of the lock and the key which played so much of a detrimental role in restricting Amy's early movements and inflaming John's sexual desires.

As John changes so does Dickens's treatment of him. Dickens complements the lad's gallant attitude toward Arthur by stating that his "chivalrous feeling towards all that

belonged to her, made him so very respectable".[86] When John throws over his own desires for Amy's happiness, he then becomes a man. After Arthur asserts that John has been quite honourable in his attentions to Amy,[87] the boy's legs become firmer and steadier as he stands on his own feet.

In later novels Dickens continues to introduce numerous weak-legged, unrequited lovers and references to them. He further develops the study of female sexual frustration in Great Expectations. Miss Havisham limps and suffers from unrequited love. She wears only one wedding slipper and has lived alone since her lover left her on her wedding day. While her limp is not derived from an actual weakness of the legs, it nonetheless has some connection with the lady's sexual feelings. If she were not jilted by her lover, then, possibly, Miss Havisham would not wear that single wedding slipper. It not only causes her to limp but also reminds her that her sexual life has been unfulfilled. In Dickens's presentation of Miss Havisham he combines a number of sexually symbolic and sexually suggestive references to explain her physical and mental condition. When Pip is confronted with Estella he asks her if the Manor House has another name. She replies that Manor House is only one of its names:

> 'One of its names, boy.'
> 'It has more than one, then, miss?'
> 'One more. Its other name was Satis;
> which is Greek, or Latin, or Hebrew,

> or all three - or all one to me - for enough.'
> 'Enough House!' said I; 'that's a curious name, miss.'
> 'Yes,' she replied; but it meant more than it said....' [88]

Of course the word does mean more than the explanation that Estella offers Pip. The word Satis suggests the word sati (suttee) which signifies the action of a Hindu widow immolating herself on the funeral pile with her husband's body. Miss Havisham is like a character in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel: "He had become resigned to her perpetual lamentation and living suttee for his defunct rival".[89] Miss Havisham's preference for living in seclusion has a great effect upon the behaviour of her relatives. One member of the family, Camilla, feels (she says) for Miss Havisham because she was deserted by her lover, Compeyson, on her wedding day.

> 'Raymond is a witness what ginger and sal volatile I am obliged to take in the night. Raymond is a witness what nervous jerkings I have in my legs. Chokings and nervous jerkings, however, are nothing new to me when I think with anxiety of those I love. If I could be less affectionate and sensitive, I should have a better digestion and an iron set of nerves....' [90]

Camilla's afflictions appear to be an empathetic or symbolic reflection of Miss Havisham's condition. Just as Dick Swiveller is "aroused" by the Marchioness's retelling of how she suffered, so, too, is Camilla aroused by the

sufferings of Miss Havisham. Camilla's husband notices her preoccupation in this matter and feels that Camilla is being affected sexually, in the legs, by her empathetic correspondence with Miss Havisham:

> " 'Camilla, my dear, it is well known that your family feelings are generally undermining you to the extent of making one of your legs shorter than the other' " [91]

Later on her "fermenting feelings appeared to rise from her legs to her bosom". [92]

In Our Mutual Friend there is little of an overt sexual theme except in the character of Bella Wilfer and those characters associated with her. At her wedding there is a waiter:

> of a slender form and with weakish legs, as yet unversed in the wiles of waiterhood, and but too evidently of a romantic temperament, and deeply (it were not too much to add hopelessly) in love with some young female not aware of his merit. [93]

Bella's unrequited lover, George Sampson, is in the same situation. Although Dickens refers to his weakness only in metaphor, the extension of meaning is quite obvious:

> If his mind for the moment reeled under them, it may be urged, in extenuation of its weakness, that it was constitutionally a knock-kneed mind, and never very strong upon its legs. [94]

The moral and physical decrepitude which Dickens

describes in Little Dorrit is expressed in the character and appearance of Lady Tippins. The old lady, anxious to please her paramour, Twemlow, and universally bewilder the "senses of men", is "all abroad about the legs and seeking to express that those unsteady articles are only skipping in their natural buoyancy".[95] Like Miss Havisham she is subject to physical debility and a longing for male companionship.

In The Mystery of Edwin Drood Dickens describes the connection between unrequited love and abnormal or weak legs in the character of Miss Twinkleton. Although by no means an engaging creature and a believer in proper behaviour between sexes, she does show delight in gentlemanly advances by performing an affected curtsey "suggestive of marvels happening to her respected legs".[96]

The general pattern established by Dickens in having most of his unrequited lovers weak-legged, with the notable exception of Pip, reaches its height in his early novels. Dickens plainly sympathizes with his early distraught lovers, especially Smike and Mr. Toots. With the introduction of his "dark novels" Dickens's mode of presentation changes along with his characters. For example, in Little Dorrit, with its dark side of life, Dickens introduces John Chivery. This character is

different inasmuch as he is one of the first who, like Quilp, is capable of sexual perversion.

On the other hand Dickens does not describe his female lovers as being capable of the same type of sexual perversions. These females simply languish away in their discomfiture.

NOTES

[1]Russell M. Goldfarb, Sexual Repression and Victorian Literature (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1970), pp. 114-38.

[2]The statement is based on the joint interpretation offered by a reading of the following: Ronald Pearsall, The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality (Toronto: Collier - Macmillan Canada Ltd., 1969); Russell M. Goldfarb, Sexual Repression and Victorian Literature (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1970); Steven Marcus, The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1964).

[3]Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. xvi. Reprint, 1968.

[4]Keith Hollingsworth, The Newgate Novel 1830-1847 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), p. 30. According to this author, who is quoting from H. S. Gulliver, Thackeray's Literary Apprenticeship (Valdosta, Ga., 1934), p. 195, the excerpt is from Thackeray's "Solitude in September", National Standard, (September 14) 1833.

[5]Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist, XIX, p. 138.

[6]Ibid., XXII, p. 159.

[7]Ibid., XXXIX, p. 293.

[8]Ibid., XXXIX, p. 292.

[9]Ibid., XXXIX, p. 293.

[10]Arthur Washburn Brown, "A Hundred Thousand Games: Why Cribbage Represents Sexual Intercourse", in his Sexual

Analysis of Dickens' Props (New York: Emerson Books, Inc., 1971), p. 21.

[11]Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist, L, p. 383.

[12]Ibid., XXV, p. 180.

[13]Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), XXXVI, p. 270. Reprint, 1967.

[14]--------, Nicholas Nickleby, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), XXIX, p. 375. Reprint, 1968.

[15]Ibid., XL, p. 512.

[16]Ibid., XL, p. 512.

[17]Ibid., XL, p. 519.

[18]Ibid., XL, p. 526.

[19]Ibid., XLIX, p. 641.

[20]Richard Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, Vol. III. Introduction by Holbrook Jackson (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1932), p. 135.

[21]Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tales. Edited by Arthur Burrell (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1909), p. 33. This example is also referred to in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy in the edition cited in Note 20, p. 134.

[22]Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, XLIX, p. 652.

[23]Ibid., LV, p. 733.

[24]Larry Kirkpatrick, "The Gothic Flame of Charles

Dickens", The Victorian Newsletter, No. 31 (Spring, 1967), 20-4.

[25]Robert Simpson Mclean, "Putting Quilp to Rest", The Victorian Newsletter, No. 34 (Fall, 1968), 29-33.

[26]Madeline House & Graham Storey, eds., The Letters of Charles Dickens. Vol. I. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), I, p. 328.

[27]Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, IV, p. 25.

[28]Ibid., IV, p. 37.

[29]Ibid., V, p. 38.

[30]Ibid., XI, p. 86.

[31]Ibid., XI, p. 86.

[32]Ibid., XVI, p. 122.

[33]Ibid., XVII, p. 131.

[34]Ibid., XVII, p. 134.

[35]Ibid., XIX, p. 144.

[36]Ibid., XXI, p. 164.

[37]Ibid., XXIII, p. 177.

[38]Ibid., L, p. 374.

[39]Ibid., L, p. 374.

[40]Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, XIII, p. 103.

[41]Arthur Washburn Brown, op. cit., pp. 13-40.

[42]Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, LXIV. p. 475.

[43]Arthur Washburn Brown, Sexual Analysis of Dickens' Props, p. 60.

[44]Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, LXIV, p. 481.

[45]Ibid., XLVIII, p. 358.

[46]Ibid., XLIX, p. 367.

[47]Ibid., XLIX, p. 367.

[48]Ibid., L, pp. 376-77.

[49]Ibid., L, p. 377.

[50]Ibid., LXVII, p. 510.

[51]Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), XLVIII, p. 677. Reprint, 1968.

[52]Ibid., XI, p. 141-42.

[53]Ibid., XXXII, p. 464.

[54]Ibid., XLIV, p. 620.

[55]Ibid., XLVIII, p. 674.

[56]Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son, XLVIII, p. 677.

[57]Ibid., LVI, p. 785.

[58]Ibid., LVI, p. 790.

[59]Ibid., LVI, p. 791-92.

[60]Ibid., LX, p. 851.

[61]Charles Dickens, David Copperfield (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), XXV, p. 373. Reprint, 1966.

[62]Ibid., XXV, p. 373.

[63]Ibid., XLV, p. 663.

[64]Ibid., LI, p. 733.

[65]Ibid., LI, p. 733.

[66]Charles Dickens, Bleak House (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), XVI, p. 218. Reprint, 1966.

[67]Ibid., II, p. 10.

[68]Ibid., VII, p. 90.

[69]Charles Dickens, Hard Times (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), I, vii, p. 42. Reprint, 1968.

[70]Ibid., I, vii, p. 42.

[71]Ibid., II, i, p. 113.

[72]Charles Dickens, Hard Times, II, i, pp. 122-23.

[73]Ibid., II, i, p. 123.

[74]Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, IV, p. 44.

[75]--------, Little Dorrit (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), I, vi, pp. 64-5. Reprint, 1966.

[76]--------, Barnaby Rudge (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), XXXIX, p. 297. Reprint, 1961 & 1968.

[77]Ibid., LXI, p. 467.

[78]Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), IX, p. 128. Reprint, 1968. The passage by Dickens exhibits a closeness to the poem "The Last Charley" from Charles Hindley, The True History of Tom and Jerry; or The Day and Night Scenes, of Life in London (London: Reeves and Turner, 1888), p. 122. An extract from the poem is printed below:

"That rattle which the prigs to catch
Would other Charleys bring,
Watchmen, we know, are like a watch -
Nothing without a spring.

.....

"Snug in my box I bore the shocks
Of drunkard's jeer and scoffing;
Now the vile cough will take me off,
And box me in a coffin."

[79]--------, Little Dorrit, I, xviii, p. 211.

[80]Ibid., I, xviii, p. 211.

[81]Ibid., I, xviii, p. 211.

[82] Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit, I, xviii, pp. 211-12.

[83] Ibid., I, xviii, pp. 212-13.

[84] Ibid., I, xxviii, p. 218.

[85] Ibid., I, xxviii, p. 220.

[86] Ibid., II, xxvii, pp. 727-28.

[87] Ibid., II, xxix, p. 762.

[88] Charles Dickens, Great Expectations (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), VIII, p. 51. Reprint, 1966.

[89] George Meredith, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel: A History of Father and Son. The Works of George Meredith. Vol. II. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), XXXVI, p. 369.

[90] Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, XI, p. 80.

[91] Ibid., XI, p. 80.

[92] Ibid., XI, pp. 80-1.

[93] Charles Dickens, Our Mutual Friend (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), IV, iv, p. 669. Reprint, 1970.

[94] Ibid., III, iv, p. 457.

[95] Ibid., II, xvi, p. 409.

[96] Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), IX, p. 93. Reprint, 1968.

CHAPTER II

WOODEN LEGS: A SIGN OF CASTRATION

This chapter, which examines the use of wooden legs in Dickens's works, agrees with the conclusions reached by Arthur Washburn[1] who states that the:

> wooden leg signifies, on the one hand, that a real flesh and blood leg has been cut off. On the other hand, it is a more rigid member than that which it replaces.... and represents simultaneously a castration and the rigid phallus that has been cut off.[2]

Though in Dickens's time wooden legs were a common disability insofar as "operating was a crude business and many a limb which would be saved now was cut off"[3]; he used them in his novels to reflect an irrevocable sexual impediment and symbolic eviration. His early novels, notably Pickwick Papers and Oliver Twist, both contain minor allusions to wooden legs. Investigation reveals that the earliest reference attributable to Dickens's interest in wooden legs is a letter written to a school friend when Dickens was about fourteen:

> I am quite ashamed I have not returned your leg but you shall have it by Harry tomorrow. If you would like to purchase my Clavis you shall have it at a very reduced price. Cheaper in comparison than a Leg.
>
> Yours & c
> C Dickens

> P.S. I suppose all this time you have had a wooden leg. I have weighed yours every saturday Night.[4]

This early reference to leg or wooden leg has two distinct meanings in my view. While on the one hand the leg or wooden leg refers to a book, it could also refer to the phallus. Dickens's postscript concerning 'wooden' leg might be an early example of his ribald, adolescent humour in which he makes fun of his friend's habit of having an almost perpetual phallic erection.

Dickens's novels, such as The Old Curiosity Shop, clearly indicate that sexual inferences can be drawn from his use of the wooden leg; this point is especially evident in the eventual wooden-legged condition of Simon Tappertit in Barnaby Rudge. The author's literary use of the wooden leg as a sexual symbol could have been derived from his literary background as well as his theatrical.

Dickens appears to have had more than a passing interest in the play, King Lear.[5] He includes a reference to this play in The Old Curiosity Shop.[6] In this play the Fool makes a very important speech concerning men who are punished by "wooden nether-stocks" when "lusty at legs". While the Fool's recitation may have influenced Dickens directly, it was probably the author's knowledge of other works by Shakespeare, and notably works by Dekker and Jonson[7], that provided him with the traditional support

he needed to exploit the wooden leg as a symbol of castration.

In The Old Curiosity Shop it is Mr. Vuffin, the travelling showman, who first alludes to the precious nature of wooden legs:

> ...'Look at wooden legs. If there was only one man with a wooden leg what a property he'd be!' [8]

But he adds, "'if you was to advertise Shakespeare played entirely by wooden legs, it's my belief that you wouldn't draw a sixpence'".[9] This tends to support the idea that there is a connection in Dickens's mind between the traditional theatre and wooden legs.

As demonstrated the first overt sexual reference to wooden legs occurs in The Old Curiosity Shop. Dick Swiveller, contemplating and bemoaning the loss of Sophy Cheggs, resorts to adapting a "popular ballad to the distressed circumstances of his own case":

> '...Yet loved I as man never loved that hadn't wooden legs, and my heart, my heart is breaking for the love of Sophy Cheggs.'[10]

Clearly Dickens insinuates that the love of and for a wooden-legged man is no love at all; there is no strong foundation. The love is doomed to "decay" because of the symbolic castration. Decidedly Dick Swiveller does not want to be like Hood's Ben Battle who is despised for his wooden-legged condition by his love Nelly Gray.

Dickens's Simon Tappertit in Barnaby Rudge proves to be an appropriate recipient of what Lear's Fool might consider "wooden nether-stocks". Simon receives his wooden legs when a cannonball removes his real ones. The cannonball punishes him for both his part in the riot and for his sexual indescretions towards Dolly. Dickens's portrayal of him is a study of thwarted sexual designs resulting in symbolic castration. In his description of this locksmith's apprentice Dickens not only directs the reader's interest to Tappertit's legs but also conjures up memories of "swell" Toby Crackit, whose failure with women is dramatized in Oliver Twist:

> Of his figure, which was well enough formed, though somewhat of the leanest, he entertained the highest admiration; and with his legs, which, in knee-breeches, were perfect curiosities of littleness, he was enraptured to a degree amounting to enthusiasm. [11]

Of course, Simon is as poor an apprentice in the lock and key business as he is a lover; when he requires to relieve his boredom by nocturnal and clandestine journeys he must unlock the door that his master, Gabriel Varden, has secured. The sexual meaning derived from the lock and the key has been presented adequately in the previous chapter and the continuing link between the two symbols is shown here. While Dickens does not manipulate these symbols to their greatest advantage in this particular instance, he does

enable Simon's lack of skill in his trade and in human affairs to be seen in his manner of escape from the house:

> ...'Here's half the might gone already. There's only one good that has ever come to me, out of the cursed old rusty mechanical trade, and that's this piece of ironmongery, upon my soul!'
>
> As he spoke, he drew from the right hand, or rather right leg pocket of his smalls, a clumsy large-sized key, which he inserted cautiously in the lock his master had secured,...[12]

Simon cannot escape the disgust that Dolly Varden feels for him; ironically he can escape from the locked house in which she sleeps. In the reference to the "rusty mechanical trade", Simon is unconsciously foretelling his own sexual failures. He will never be a master of the lock, only an apprentice. There is also the author's mildly sarcastic reference concerning Simon's disputed manhood and virility. Not only does he use a clumsy key, demonstrative no doubt of his ineptness in his trade and his sexual affairs, but the key is large. This latter citation recalls to mind Dickens's initial description of the apprentice whom he described as:

> very little more than five feet high, and thoroughly convinced in his own mind that he was above the middle size; rather tall, in fact, than otherwise. [13]

Simon, in his conceit, automatically chooses a "large-sized key". The key, if used as a phallic symbol here, which

may well have been Dickens's intention, fits very well Simon's manner of addressing and adorning his person. He appears to follow the axiom that if one dreams, one should invariably dream 'big'. The irony that accompanies Tappertit's conceit of his appearance is given another turn by Dickens at the apprentice's secret lair, a basement tavern. The proprietor, Stagg, a blind man, covets Simon's legs and his words predict or hint at the youth's eventual loss of his real limbs:

> 'Get out!' said Mr. Tappertit, glancing downward at his favourite limbs.
> 'Go along, will you, Stagg!'
> 'When I touch my own afterwards,' cried the host, smiting them reproachfully, 'I hate 'em. Comparatively speaking, they've no more shape than wooden legs, beside these models of my noble captain's.' [14]

As Dickens proceeds to punish Simon he also lets him suffer in his friendship with Miss Miggs. She proves to be his nemesis rather than his benefactor. She fills the lock at Varden's house with coal dust to prevent Simon from entering without her help. In this situation Simon's failure to gain entry only demonstrates his inability to utilize the "tools" of his trade. The lock and the key prove to be occupational hazards in themselves:

> Then she could make out that he tried his key - that he was blowing into it - that he knocked it on the nearest post to beat the dust out - that he took it under a lamp to look at it - that he

> poked bits of stick into the lock to clear it - that he peeped into the keyhole, first with one eye, and then with the other - that he tried the key again - that he couldn't turn it, and what was worse, couldn't get it out - that he bent it - that then it was much less disposed to come out than before - that he gave it a mighty twist and a great pull, and then it came out so suddenly that he staggered backwards - that he kicked the door - that he shook it - finally, that he smote his forehead, and sat down on the step in despair. [15]

Of course, his frustration is not yet complete. Simon entreats Miss Miggs to come to his aid. In answer Miss Miggs feigns fear and says that the young man will attempt to kiss her or "some such dreadfulness". Even with such a creature as Miss Miggs, the apprentice does not fail to allude to his power over women. Simon states that "there was nothing else to be done - if I hadn't eyed her over, she wouldn't have come down".[16] Miggs needs a sexual relationship, preferably one with Simon. Even when she observed other gentlemen, she always sees them as being reminiscent of Simon Tappertit "standing among the rusty locks and keys, like love among the roses".[17] It appears as if Miss Miggs's ideas of sex do not go beyond her infatuation for Simon. The reference to "rusty locks and keys" sadly reflects the relationship that Simon and she will endure. It is destined, ironically, to be a perfect or just match since neither will fit into or be compatible with the wishes and expectations of the other. Simon will

always remain a "rusty" key and be unable to unlock her frustrated desires for sexual union.

Simon is not satisfied with Miss Miggs. He desires Dolly Varden as much as he hates Joe Willett, her lover. When Joe enlists in the army Simon assumes that his dreams of sexual conquest will come true. Simon thinks that Dolly will now be his and he thinks that his legs will attract her to him:

> He gravely descended from his elevation, took down his piece of looking-glass, planted it against the wall upon the usual bench, twisted his head round, and looked closely at his legs.
> 'If they're a dream,' said Sim, 'let sculptures have such wisions, and chisel'em out when they wake. This is reality, sleep has no such limbs as them. Tremble, Willett, and despair. She's mine! She's mine! '18

Simon Tappertit swells in self-esteem as the head of the "united Bull-dogs"; this organization, formerly the "Prentice Knights", is reminiscent of the Glorious Apollers. In his personal appearance Simon seems "to have grown smaller with years (particularly as to his legs, which were stupendously little)".[19] He is inflicted with the same problems as those with which he was tortured in the days of his apprenticeship; Simon cannot manipulate, literally or figuratively, the locks at Varden's house in order to gain free entry to Dolly. Dickens alludes to Simon's sexual deficiencies and foreshadows his castration in the scene

depicting his flight from Varden's house. Although Simon escapes from his master because "he knew the trick of that lock well"[20] he doesn't have sufficient knowledge of the workings of a lock and a key to reach Dolly. What blocks Simon's successful entry is the power Varden holds over the locks in the house. The master's hand, or knowledge of the right key for the appropriate aperture, guards his daughter's virginity. The clearest example of Simon's failure in this art is described in the rioters' attack upon Newgate. The rioters, especially Simon, are determined to enter the prison but the great lock prevents them. This youth turns angrily to Varden:

> 'Maybe,' returned his journeyman, 'but you must show us how to force it.'
> 'Must I!'
> 'Yes; for you know, and I don't. You must come with us, and pick it with your own hands.'
> 'When I do,' said the locksmith quietly, 'my hands shall drop off at the wrists, and you shall wear them, Simon Tappertit, on your shoulders for epaulettes.' [21]

According to Arthur Brown "Varden is saying to Sim that before he can get into <u>that</u> lock Sim will have to wear his master's testicles".[22]

Poor Simon is equally rebuffed by Dolly Varden, herself. When he reveals his passionate love for her, and vows that he will marry her, she retreats in horror. In the end he loses his legs by virtue of these appendages having

been "crushed into shapeless ugliness" and:

> ...being removed from a hospital to prison, and thence to his place of trial, was discharged by proclamation, on two wooden legs. Shorn of his graceful limbs, and brought down from his high estate to circumstances of utter destitution, and the deepest misery, he made shift to stump back to his old master, and beg for some relief. By the locksmith's advice and aid, he was established in business as a shoe-black, and opened shop under an archway near the Horse Guards. [23]

At the same time Miss Miggs becomes a female turnkey in the prison, the County Bridewell. Here she finally succeeds in gaining control of the key and appears to flaunt it like a sexual symbol before those inmates who cannot enjoy heterosexual relationships. She tortures each individual prisoner by "inflicting an exquisitely vicious poke or dig with the wards of a key in the small of the back, near the spine".[24] In harking back to the sexual symbolism connected with the lock and the key it seems that, while Miss Miggs is physically frustrated, the lock and the key symbolically suggest her sexual mastery over the inmates.

Simon Tappertit eventually loses his legs; in his opinion, these limbs would have enabled him to achieve sexual gratification. His wife, in a fit of anger, takes away his legs, possibly fearing that her husband will leave her as did Mrs. Gamp's:

> 'And as to husbands, there's a wooden leg gone likeways home to its account, which

> in its constancy of walkin' into wine vaults, and never comin' out again 'till fetched by force, was quite as weak as flesh, if not weaker.' [25]

In Our Mutual Friend Dickens introduces Silas Wegg, a wooden-legged man, whose disability is unquestionably a torment to him. He constantly alludes to his abnormality, especially in the presence of his friend, Mr. Venus. The woodenness of Silas Wegg is decidedly graphic:

> Wegg was a knotty man, and a close-grained, with a face carved out of very hard material, that had just as much play of expression as a watchman's rattle. When he laughed, certain jerks occurred in it, and the rattle sprung. Sooth to say, he was so wooden a man that he seemed to have taken his wooden leg naturally, and rather suggested to the fanciful observer, that he might be expected - if his development received no untimely check - to be completely set up with a pair of wooden legs in about six months. [26]

Throughout the whole range of Dickens's novels his physically abnormal characters usually neither talk of physical abnormalities nor allude to their own. As stated in the Introduction the notable exceptions to this rule are Silas Wegg and the lame girl, Jenny Wren, of the same novel. When Noddy Boffin confronts the wooden-legged man and inquires the cause of his affliction Mr. Wegg replies sharply, "'In an accident'". [29] When asked if he likes his wooden leg, Silas refuses to answer the question directly but skirts it

by saying that he doesn't have to keep it warm. Of course, this advantage is no advantage at all to his human condition.

Mr. Venus, a taxidermist and collector of bones, makes several references to Silas Wegg's wooden leg. He encourages Mr. Wegg to enter his shop with the affable greeting, "'How do you do? Sit down by the fire, and warm your - your other one'".[28] The subject of their conversation quickly turns upon the condition of Mr. Wegg's amputated limb; Mr. Wegg wants the bones of his dead leg returned. It would appear that not only is this leg-bone irregular in shape, so much so that it cannot form a part of one of Mr. Venus's skeletons; but also his remaining flesh and blood leg appears to be inflicted with a slight twist. Perhaps Dickens's allusion to the probability of Mr. Wegg being set up with two wooden legs "in about six months" might now come true. Mr. Venus not only tries to insert Mr. Wegg's amputated leg-bone into an appropriate slot in a skeleton, but also covets the gentleman's remaining flesh and blood limb. Mr. Wegg cannot endure the thought that he has lost, forever, his leg.

Unable to compensate for the loss Mr. Wegg turns his attentions to pecuniary matters, Noddy Boffin's dust mounds which, he thinks, hide a precious treasure. He uses his position in Boffin's house to try to discover profitable secrets but he fails. Dickens symbolizes Wegg's failure by drawing attention to his unnatural limb which seems to make

Wegg only part of a man:

> "...Is it for him that I have declined and falled, night after night? Is it for his pleasure that I've waited at home of an evening, like a set of skittles, to be set up and knocked over, and set up and knocked over, by whatever balls - or books - he chose to bring against me? Why, I'm a hundred times the man he is, sir; five hundred times! " 29

Mr. Wegg's "set of skittles" suggests his two legs. He feels that his good limb has been contaminated by his wooden one. Despite his declaration that he is a whole man, as natural as Boffin, his despair betrays his feelings that he is useless. He can no longer reclaim the "power" of his lost limb. Money, not sexual pursuits, becomes the sole object of his desires. Dickens thus uses imagery which normally would suit sexual scenes to describe Wegg's acute avarice. For example when Boffin is seen as toying with something in his pockets it is not his testicles he is reaching for; Wegg sees him as playing with his coins and imagines Boffin doing the same to him:

> "...I can't contain myself when I look at him. Every time I see him putting his hand in his pocket, I see him putting it into my pocket. Every time I hear him jingling his money, I hear him taking liberties with my money. Flesh and blood can't bear it. No," said Mr. Wegg, greatly exasperated, "and I'll go further. A wooden leg can't bear it! " 30

Mr. Wegg is constantly stimulated and aroused to action by

thoughts of money and his frustration is centered on his inability to attain monetary wealth. An example of Mr. Wegg's frustration is seen in his rendition to Mr. Boffin of the biography of the miser, Daniel Dancer. As he reads he hits upon certain words denoting the miser's wealth. At the same time he begins to peg away at Venus under the table with great alacrity. Finally the wooden-legged gentleman loses complete control of his rigid appendage:

> On the way to this crisis Mr. Wegg's wooden leg had gradually elevated itself more and more, and he had nudged Mr. Venus with his opposite elbow deeper and deeper, until at length the preservation of his balance became incompatible with the two actions, and he now dropped over sideways upon that gentleman, squeezing him against the settle's edge. Nor did either of the two, for some few seconds, make any effort to recover himself, both remaining in a kind of pecuniary swoon. [31]

This peculiar reaction seems to emanate from Mr. Wegg's interest in monies that have been hidden. But when their next story reveals nothing of hidden wealth the whole affair goes off "rather flatly". [32] Notice how his interest in misers' affairs is rekindled when Mr. Boffin mentions how "truly wonderful" it is to have something hidden, especially in the way of money:

> 'It's wonderful what's been hid, at one time and another,' said Mr. Boffin, ruminating; 'truly wonderful.'
> 'Meaning, sir,' observed Wegg, with a propitiatory face to draw him out, and with another peg at his friend and brother, 'in the way of money?'

> 'Money,' said Mr. Boffin. 'Ah! And papers.'
> Mr. Wegg, in a languid transport, again dropped over on Mr. Venus, and again recovering himself, masked his emotions with a sneeze.[33]

It appears that Wegg becomes very unsettled at the merest hint of hidden treasure. It is money that causes him to elevate his wooden leg. Dickens has replaced his normal sexual desires with mercenary ones; the thoughts of vast hordes of money act like an aphrodisiac on Wegg. Consequently he sees everything in monetary terms. When he plans to vent his rage upon Boffin and humiliate him as he has been hurt, his plan must involve money. For Wegg, a totally avaricious man, it is his way of emasculating an enemy:

> 'He's grown too fond of money for that,' said Wegg; 'he's grown too fond of money.' The burden fell into a strain or tune as he stumped along the pavements. All the way home he stumped it out of the rattling streets, piano with his own foot, and forte with his wooden leg, 'He's Grown too Fond of Money for That, he's Grown too Fond of Money.'[34]

Later, when Mr. Wegg plans to steal Boffin's wealth, he demonstrates his determination by pegging "his motto in the floor with his wooden leg, in a threatening and alarming manner".[35] In the end Mr. Wegg's delusions of wealth are utterly destroyed. His hopeful search for "dust" or money which buoyed up his wooden leg ironically results in his being thrown into a scavenger's cart "with a prodigious splash".[36] Mr. Wegg, in an effort to feel whole again,

resorted to money to compensate for the loss of a leg.

Dickens restores the sexual symbolism attached to wooden legs in the character of Gruff and Glum. This character not only is present and witnesses the marriage of Bella Wilfer and John Rokesmith, but also blesses the union by his "reaction" to these two people. There is an immediate reaction in Gruff and Glum as he sees Bella:

> Two wooden legs had this gruff and glum old pensioner,...he had no object in life but tobacco, and not enough of that. Stranded was Gruff and Glum in a harbour of everlasting mud, when all in an instant Bella floated him, and away he went.[37]

His interest in the couple appears to be more than natural curiosity as "he perked his neck, and looked over the intervening people, as if he were trying to stand on tiptoe with his two wooden legs".[38] A reaction begins within the old man which starts to "inflame the ardour of his timber toes".[39] It would appear as if, and then in only a metaphorical sense, he has regained a semblance of feeling in his wooden legs as "Bella had brought them back to him..."[40] Gruff and Glum is stimulated to such a sexual activity in Dickens's description that he "pegged away as if he were scoring furiously at cribbage".[41] Dickens grants him the sexual pleasure usually reserved for a whole man:

> Who taketh? I, John, and so do I, Bella. Who giveth? I, R. W. Forasmuch, Gruff and Glum, as John and Bella have consented together in holy wedlock, you may (in short) consider it done, and withdraw your

> two wooden legs from this temple. To the foregoing purport, the Minister speaking, as directed by the Rubric, to the People, selectly represented in the present instance by G. and G. above mentioned.
>
> And now, the church-porch having swallowed up Bella Wilfer for ever and ever, had it not in its power to relinquish that young woman, but slid into the happy sunlight, Mrs. John Rokesmith instead. And long on the bright steps stood Gruff and Glum, looking after the pretty bride, with a narcotic consciousness of having dreamed a dream.[42]

After the wedding Gruff and Glum's spirits are still buoyed up for he is still seen "with his wooden legs horizontally disposed before him, apparently sitting meditating on the vicissitudes of life! ".[43] Having attained and sustained what can be considered a tolerable symbolic representation of a phallic erection, Gruff and Glum completes this exercise with a kiss from Bella.

Many of the marriage ceremonies in Dickens's novels are witnessed by bizarre and physically abnormal people. When they do appear the marriage which they witness usually fails or runs into great difficulty.[44] Gruff and Glum is the only physically abnormal character who not only joyfully witnesses a marriage but also serves to bring good luck to the union.

In Dickens's novels the definite sexual inference to be drawn from the appearance of wooden legs is constantly hinted at. Perhaps the most 'obscene' example

that Dickens employs to indicate the sexual nature of this abnormality comes from Mr. Pecksniff in Martin Chuzzlewit. Not only does the following extract denote the obvious sexual irritation he is experiencing in his widowed condition, but also purports to hint at the unique properties of the wooden leg. In this case it is an allusion to his dead sexual nature as set against the condition of a man fitted with a real appendage. He hopes to arouse Mrs. Todger to succour him:

> 'This is very smoothing,' said Mr. Pecksniff, after a pause. 'Extremely so. Cool and refreshing; particularly to the legs! The legs of the human subject, my friends, are a beautiful production. Compare them with wooden legs, and observe the difference between the anatomy of nature and the anatomy of art. Do you know,' said Mr. Pecksniff, leaning over the banisters, with an odd recollection of his familiar manner among new pupils at home, 'that I should very much like to see Mrs. Todgers's notion of a wooden leg, if perfectly agreeable to herself! ' 45

Mr. Pecksniff feels that he is in a castrated state since he cannot enjoy sexual pursuits. When he asks Mrs. Todger if she would reveal her views on the wooden leg he is actually referring not only to his own dying sexual nature but is also inviting her to view his phallus which is dying or becoming impotent by a lack of use.

It is inconceivable that Dickens's audience could have possibly misinterpreted the obvious double entendre at which, this, and other extracts, hints. His use of the

wooden leg indicates that this abnormality's association with the real appendage it replaces is symbolic of the act of castration and the grim finality of the substitution.

NOTES

[1]Arthur Washburn Brown, Sexual Analysis of Dickens' Props (New York: Emerson Books, Inc., 1971).

[2]Ibid., p. 47.

[3]V.R., "The Wooden Legs in Dickens", Notes and Queries, 171 (August, 1936), 74.

[4]Madeline House and Graham Storey, eds., The Letters of Charles Dickens. Vol. I. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 1.

[5]Ibid: The following is an excerpt of an editorial note taken from the above source (p. 357). It contends that "the review of 4 Feb. ("The Restoration of Shakespeare's 'Lear' to the Stage") was by C D; and a paragraph praising the performance, quoted by Forster on 28 Jan. as by "a friend on whose judgement we have thorough reliance", may have been by C D too". Other critics believe John Forster might have been associated directly with these reviews. see William J. Carlton, "Dickens or Forster? Some King Lear Criticisms Re-examined", The Dickensian, LXI (September, 1965), no. 347, 133-40.

[6]Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), LVII, pp. 423-24. Reprint, 1967.

[7]see Robert F. Fleissner, "Fancy's Knell", The Dickensian, LVIII (May, 1962), no. 337, 125-27. He asserts that King Lear and the part of the Fook, especially, greatly influenced Dickens's creation of The Old Curiosity Shop. In Barnaby Rudge Simon Tappertit is clearly punished with wooden legs; why? This abnormality, reserved by Dickens as a form of punishment, might have had its origin in the following speech where Kent is placed in the stocks for his ill manners:

Fool. Ha, ha! look he wears cruel garters. Horses

> are tied by the head, dogs and bears by th' neck, monkeys by the loins, and men by th' legs. When a man's over -lusty at legs, then he wears wooden nether-stocks.
>
> King Lear: II; iv.

It would appear that the pun contained in "wooden nether-stocks" was probably not lost upon Dickens. The author was aware, more than likely, of other instances of the wooden-leg reference in Shakespeare's works. The logical example is that reference made by Blount to the misfortunes of war in Pericles, IV: vi, when he states that a "man may serve seven years for the loss of a leg, and have not money enough in the end to buy him a wooden one". Dickens, being equally familiar with Jonson's works, in so far as he acted in Every Man in His Humour, would probably not have missed the hidden meanings, if he came across them, possibly associated with wooden legs in The Shoemaker's Holiday by Thomas Dekker. Although the infirmity referred to is not clearly defined, it is obviously of a serious nature:

> Hodge. What fellow Rafe? Mistres looke here, Janes husband: why how now, lame? Hans make much of him, hees a brother of our trade, a good workeman, and a tall souldier.
>
> Lucy. You be welcome broder.
>
> Margery. Pardie I knew him not, how dost thou good Rafe? I am glad to see thee wel.
>
> Rafe. I would God you saw me dame as wel, As when I went from London into France.
>
> Margery. Trust mee I am sorie Rafe to see thee impotent, Lord how the warres have made him Sunburnt: the left leg is not wel: t'was a faire gift of God the infirmitie tooke not hold a little higher, considering thou camest from France; but let that passe.
>
> The Shoemaker's Holiday: III; ii.

The edition from which this extract is taken - Thomas Dekker, The Shoemaker's Holiday. Edited by Paul C. Davies (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968) - suggests also, in a note p. 92, that an earlier reference by Firke on Rafe "as being good a workman at a pricke and an awle" (I, i, 143) is a "play on hole"... [and that] "Firke is referring to other things than the tools of the trade". Also see Arthur Brown, Sexual Analysis of Dickens' Props, for

a possible cross-reference to the sexual nature of a cobbler and his 'awle'. A further example of the possible suggestiveness of wooden legs as symbolic of castration or irrevocable impotency is seen in a work by a contemporary of Dickens. In 1826 Thomas Hood's "Faithless Nelly Gray" described Ben Battle's deplorable condition with both of his legs in the grave. The reverence that Dickens felt for Hood's works is well-known; an example of the author's appreciation of this poet is seen remarkably enough in the preface to The Old Curiosity Shop. This novel contains Dickens's earliest references to the sexual purport of wooden legs:

> I have a mournful pride in one recollection associated with 'little Nell'. While she was yet upon her wanderings, not then concluded, there appeared in a literary journal, an essay of which she was the principal theme, so earnestly, so eloquently, and tenderly appreciative of her, and of all her shadowy kith and kin, that it would have been insensibility in me, if I could have read it without an unusual glow of pleasure and encouragement. Long afterwards, and when I had come to know him well, and to see him, stout of heart, going slowly down into his grave, I knew the writer of that essay to be Thomas Hood.

[8]Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, XIX, p. 143.

[9]Ibid., XIX, p. 143.

[10]Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, L, p. 374. Also see U. W. T. Ley, "The Songs Dick Swiveller Knew", The Dickensian, XXVII (June, 1931), no. 219, 207. Mr. Ley suggests that the song "Alice Gray" is the possible original of Dick Swiveller's ingenious adaptation:

> She's all my fancy painted her, She's lovely,
> She's divine;...But her heart it is
> another's She never can be mine;
> Yet lov'd I as man never lov'd,
> A love without decay,... Oh! my heart, my
> heart is breaking
> For the love of Alice Gray!... Oh! my heart,
> heart is breaking For the love of Alice Gray!

[11]Charles Dickens, Barnaby Rudge (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), IV, p. 34.

[12]Ibid., VII, p. 58-9.

[13]Ibid., IV, pp. 33-4.

[14]Ibid., VIII, p. 63.

[15]Ibid., IX, p. 72.

[16]Ibid., IX, p. 73.

[17]Ibid., XIX, p. 143.

[18]Ibid., XXXI, p. 240.

[19]Ibid., XXXIX, p. 294.

[20]Ibid., LI, p. 393.

[21]Ibid., LXIII, p. 485.

[22]Arthur Washburn Brown, p. 66.

[23]Charles Dickens, Barnaby Rudge, The Last, p. 630.

[24]Ibid., The Last, p. 631.

[25]Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), XL, p. 625. Reprint, 1968.

[26]--------, Our Mutual Friend (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), I, v, pp. 45-6. Reprint, 1970.

[27]Charles Dickens, Our Mutual Friend, I, v, p. 47.

[28]Ibid., I, vii, p. 78.

[29]Ibid., III, xiv, p. 582.

[30]Ibid., III, xiv, p. 581.

[31]Ibid., III, vi, p. 483.

[32]Ibid., III, vi, p. 483.

[33]Ibid., III, vi, p. 484.

[34]Ibid., III, vii, p. 502.

[35]Ibid., IV, iii, p. 657.

[36]Ibid., IV, xiv, p. 790.

[37]Ibid., IV, iv, p. 664.

[38]Ibid., IV, iv, p. 665.

[39]Ibid., IV, iv, p. 665.

[40]Ibid., IV, iv, p. 665.

[41]Ibid., IV, iv, p. 665. see also Arthur Washburn Brown, chapter I, concerning the connection between cribbage and sexual intercourse in Dickens's novels.

[42]Ibid., IV, iv, pp. 665-6.

[43]Ibid., IV, iv, p. 667.

[44]Gruff and Glum's abnormality does not mar the wedding, or prophesy an ill-fated marriage, as do other physically abnormal or bizarre characters in many of Dickens's novels. These characters can be conveniently termed marriage omens. The fact that the pensioner's wooden legs do not apparently impede his sexual activities and debilities, even in a metaphorical sense, is not explained by Dickens. In other marriage ceremonies the tone is not as joyous as Bella's marriage. see Dombey and Son (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), XXXI, p. 439. Reprint, 1968. Mr. Dombey's unsuccessful marriage is witnessed by "an unlucky dwarf child, with a giant baby, who peeps in at the porch". As the wedding guests leave the church "the sexton tolls a funeral" (p. 445). The idea of weak legs hinted at in the dwarf child is repeated in the appearance of Cousin Feenix who gives the bride away. He seems to have a peculiarity in his legs which prevents him from walking in a straight line (p. 443). In the same novel the marriage of Florence and Walter is about to be witnessed by a wooden-legged man; but he leaves abruptly before the marriage ceremony is completed (LVII, p. 807). It seems that their marriage is saved. Also see Charles Dickens, David Copperfield (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), LXIII, p. 631. Reprint, 1966. At David and Dora's marriage an "ancient Mariner" who is "flavouring the church with rum" appears. While this character is neither dreadfully ominous nor frightening, his appearance is still irregular. In a thoughtful moment David is forced to admit that his marriage to Dora is wanting in happiness (XLVIII, p. 697). His marriage finally collapses into a routine.

[45]Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), IX, pp. 152-53. Reprint, 1968.

> novels by their archetypal quality appealed to such fundamental beliefs, used the double-figure in the presentation of his three most complex murderer-villains. Jonas Chuzzlewit, Bradley Headstone, and John Jasper....
>
> ...A writer may present a state of doubleness entirely within the character or he may, more symbolically provide a separate double, real or supernatural, to stand for the other self. He may also, of course, use some combination of the two.[2]

Although this chapter is concerned, primarily, with Dickens's own manipulation of or use of the double image as a literary device, it is interesting to note that this device bears a close resemblance to the German 'doppel-ganger'. While it is unnecessary to trace the development of this term to its emergence in English literature, especially in Dickens's day, it is known that many of the author's literary contemporaries were attracted to German tales and stories which used the 'doppel-ganger'. It is inconceivable that Dickens could have ignored, or been unreceptive to, the influence of those English criticisms and reviews of German literature which were contemporaneous with much of his own work.

Early in the nineteenth century R. P. Gillies, a friend of Sir Walter Scott and editor of the Foreign Quarterly Review, is believed to have translated "The Devil's Elixir", a work by the German author E. T. A. Hoffmann.[3] In 1824 an anonymous review of this work appeared in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. This article states that the 'doppel-

ganger' is used in reference to

> ...A man's being haunted by the visitation of another self - a double of his own personal appearance. We have something not very remote from this conception in certain wraith-stories of our own popular mythology: but either the original German superstitions are much richer in their details of the notion than ours, or La Motte Fouque, and Hoffmann, have made more of what their country — people's old tales gave them than any of our writers have made of a similar kind. In some of their works, the idea is turned to a half-ludicrous use —...— but by far the best are those romances in which it has been handled quite seriously — and of all these, the best is the book now before us in an English garb.[4]

The reference to "certain wraith-stories" and the inference that particular authors have made little use of their own mythology is a possible allusion to Sir Walter Scott's use of the wraith figure in some of his novels. A note on wraiths in A Legend of Montrose (1819) is only incidental. Scott not only suggests that "a species of apparition, similar to what the Germans call a Double-Ganger, was believed in by the Celtic tribes, and is still considered as an emblem of misfortune or death", but he also expands this latter point to include a further note concerning the "Co-Walker".[5] In 1827, Scott, upon the request of R. P. Gillies, submitted a review on the work of Ernest Theodore William Hoffmann.[6]

In England, between the years 1824 and 1843, there appeared numerous articles on German literature while prominent English writers were busy publishing the works of

famous German authors. Thomas Roscoe, in 1826, published four volumes of an eleven volume work, which were concerned with German novelists.[7] The remaining volumes contained folk tales and stories. In 1827, Thomas Carlyle, who was later to become a close associate and friend of Dickens, wrote his German Romances. Besides several notable pieces on Jean Paul Richter and Goethe, this contains an essay on E. T. A. Hoffmann and a translation of one of his stories, "The Golden Pot".[8] By 1843 there were numerous translations of German tales available in England. A fine example of this type of publication is Chamisso's "Peter Schlemihl" (1814) which describes the situation of a man who sells his shadow to the devil. In the English edition (1843) the translator alludes to two former translations of Chamisso's work:

> This translation of Chamisso's celebrated tale has not been undertaken because there already existed no English version of it, for there have been two, one of which appeared in 1824 with plates by George Cruikshank, without any name of the translator; the other by Emilee de Rouillon, without a date on the title page.[9]

The fact that George Cruikshank illustrated an edition in 1824 is interesting, indeed, insofar as he also illustrated two of Dickens's earliest literary works, Sketches by Boz and Oliver Twist. To substantiate further the idea that the story "Peter Schlemihl" was probably known to Dickens prior to its translation in 1843, it is a fact that an anonymous piece entitled "My After-Dinner Adventures with Peter

Schlemihl"[10] did appear in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (1839). Dickens was a known reader of and contributor to this publication. The story, itself, while by no means ominous in nature, does bear a resemblance to A Christmas Carol. In much the same way Hoffmann's "The Golden Pot" is connected to Dickens's Christmas story through the use of a similar literary device. The tale in Blackwood's concerns a man who is taken by a ghostly guide, Peter Schlemihl, on a tour of Liverpool. Neither the man's wife nor his doctor believes his story and both are convinced that he suffers a nightmare induced by something he has eaten. Dickens uses the same technique in A Christmas Carol. Scrooge is taken on a nocturnal visit of the city. When confronted by Marley's ghost, he tries to explain the appearance of this ghostly phenomenon in purely gastronomical terms:

> 'You don't believe in me,' observed the Ghost.
> 'I don't,' said Scrooge.
> 'What evidence would you have of my reality beyong that of your senses?'
> 'I don't know,' said Scrooge.
> 'Why do you doubt your senses?'
> 'Because,' said Scrooge, 'a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravey than of grave about you, whatever you are!'[11]

Helmut Viebrock suggests that there is a strong association between Hoffmann's "The Golden Pot" (1812) and Dickens's A Christmas Carol.[12] Both authors seem to employ

the knocker which subsequently turns into a face. In the German tale the hero, a day-dreamer, sees the door-knocker turn into the face of the old 'Applewoman' whom he had knocked down:

> He stood here, and was looking at the large fine bronze knocker; but now when, as the last stroke tingled through the air with loud clang from the steeple-clock of the Kreuzkirche, or Cross-church, he lifted his hand to grasp this same knocker, the metal visage twisted itself, with horrid rolling of its blue-gleaming eyes, into a grinning smile. Alas, it was the Applewoman of the Schwarzthor! The painted teeth gnashed together in the loose jaws, and in their chattering through the skinny lips,...[13]

Dickens uses the same technique in A Christmas Carol to describe how Scrooge sees Marley's face:

> Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look; with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air; and, though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, as its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression.[14]

Although the parallel use of the same type of motif still does not provide total proof that Dickens was acquainted particularly with Hoffmann's tales, and more directly with his use of the 'doppel-ganger', Dickens does demonstrate a

familiarity with the idea of a man being haunted by a second self. In his short story The Haunted Man (1848) Redlaw speaks to a ghostly visitor. It is Redlaw's mirror image come to haunt him:

> 'Here again!' he said.
> 'Here again!' replied the Phantom.
> 'I see you in the fire,' said the haunted man; 'I hear you in music, in the wind, in the dead stillness of the night.'
> The Phantom moved his head, assenting.
> 'Why do you come, to haunt me thus?'
> 'I come as I am called,' replied the Ghost.
> 'No. Unbidden,' exclaimed the Chemist.
> 'Unbidden be it,' said the Spectre.
> 'It is enough. I am here.' [15]

The story is not unique since it is only one of the many tales of conscience written and published by various authors at this time. In 1840 Edgar Allan Poe, who was later to have correspondence with Dickens, published his Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque in America. Volume one contained the tale "William Wilson":

> In "William Wilson" he opened a new vein. It is the first of his studies of the springs of terror in conscience. The idea itself which is developed in the story, the conception of a double dogging one's steps and thwarting one's evil designs, is an old fancy of men that has taken many shapes since Zoroaster saw his phantom in the garden. [16]

Before 1844 Poe published other notable stories with the same idea: "The Black Cat", "The Man in the Crowd", and "The Tell-Tale Heart". The personal connection between Poe and Dickens stemmed from a critical article on Barnaby Rudge

which Poe published in Graham's Saturday Evening Post, May 1, 1844.[17] When Dickens did visit America in 1842 Poe met him in the hope that the English novelist might intervene on his behalf to obtain an English publisher for his works. Research has shown that Poe provided Dickens with copies of his Tales and the review of Barnaby Rudge for his perusal and judgment.[18] In a piece of correspondence attributed to Dickens, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate his intention to help Poe.[19] In 1845 Poe's works were eventually published for the first time in England.

Dickens's use of the doppel-ganger in The Haunted Man (1848) is neither unique nor singular for its time. As early as 1842 Dickens had in his possession Poe's stories of the strange, the exotic, and the terrifying. It is inconceivable that Dickens could have been unmoved by the atmosphere and appearance of Poe's Tales,[20] which are in some ways reminiscent of the stories interpolated into Pickwick Papers.

While Dickens uses doubles and double images in his short stories to represent the battle of good and evil in man for the control of his soul, he alters his style in his novels. In these larger works he no longer relies on the use of a physical double to represent a character's alter-ego or conscience. Instead Dickens chooses to describe a character's moral decline through the appearance of a physically abnormal person. The latter is no longer an exact physical represent-

ation of the character he is haunting; the physically deformed individual simply represents or reflects the moral decline of that person. Dickens uses the physical abnormalities of many of his servants to mirror the moral decrepitude of their respective masters. Usually the masters are diseased spiritually because of greed.

When Dickens describes his more notable misers they are afflicted with diverse physical abnormalities, so that the more morally twisted they become, the more physically hideous they appear to the human eye.

In Nicholas Nickleby there are two sets of servants and masters who are united by one common entity, money. While Newman Noggs, the paralytic servant of Ralph Nickleby, is unlike his master, he must live in a purgatorial situation with him to atone for the 'sins' of his youth. There is also Arthur Gride (whose name might be pronounced like 'greed') and his hideous servant, Peg Sliderskew. They become so twisted in the turgid world of greed that they eventually seal their own doom. In the case of Newman Noggs there is a reversal of themes; he must pay for past sins, not present ones. The death of Ralph Nickleby does not harm Newman. Instead it releases him from his purgatorial state. While Ralph Nickleby lives, he is forever immersed in pecuniary matters in which there is no time or room for sentiment:

> In like manner did young Ralph Nickleby

> avoid all those minute and intricate calculations of odd days, . . ., by establishing the one general rule that all sums of principal and interest should be paid on pocket-money day, that is to say, on Saturday: and that whether a loan were contracted on the Monday, or on the Friday, the amount of interest should be, in both cases, the same. [21]

Newman's signs of past moral debility, but more especially his physical condition — two goggle eyes and a paralytic limb — serve as fitting reminders of Ralph Nickleby's fate. Ironically, the servant's external reflection of the degree of his master's internal dissolution is shown in Ralph Nickleby's own words:

> 'Yes, poor devil!' replied Ralph, drawing on his gloves. 'Though Newman Noggs kept his horses and hounds once.'
> 'Aye, aye?' said the other carelessly.
> 'Yes,' continued Ralph, 'and not too many years ago either; but he had squandered his money, invested it anyhow, borrowed at interest, and in short made first a thorough fool of himself, and then a beggar. He took to drinking and had a touch of paralysis, and then came here to borrow a pound, as in his better days I had —' [22]

Ralph Nickleby displays that same quality of hardheartedness at his own brother's death as does Scrooge in his cold reflection, that "Marley was as dead as a door-nail".[23] Nickleby's belief that money is the root of all good, or more basically the center of life, is noted in his indignant comment upon the cause of his brother's death. Despite the

widow's insistence that he died of a broken heart, Ralph reiterates the cold but sensible fact that " 'if a man can't pay his debts, he dies of a broken heart, and his widow's a martyr' ".[24] When Ralph decides to get rid of his nephew, Nicholas, by foisting him on Wackford Squeers at Dotheboy's Hall, Nicholas misinterprets his uncle's motives. He assumes that he is trying to gain a position for him. Notice how Newman reacts to this news when Nicholas relates, what he assumes to be, his uncle's kindness. Newman knows that his master's motives are generally tempered by an eye to commercial gain and in this respect, Dickens reflects, through the servant's reaction, the blackness of Ralph's soul:

> Newman Noggs made no reply, but went on shrugging his shoulders and cracking his finger-joints; smiling horribly all the time, and looking steadfastly at nothing out of the tops of his eyes, in a most ghastly manner.[25]

It should be remembered that Newman has a paralytic limb, and limps; also Peg Sliderskew, the avaricious servant of the miserly lecher, Arthur Gride, limps. In Newman's case the implication could be drawn that he is fettered by the sins of his past life and must remain chained to Ralph Nickleby in a form of purgatorial punishment. On the other hand, Peg Sliderskew, though fettered to Arthur Gride insofar as she becomes his confidant and confederate in his plan to marry Madeline Bray, is also a victim of her own

greed. Her situation is more repugnant than Newman's since she wilfully associates herself with her dissolute master. Although Dickens's A Christmas Carol is a story of a man restored to the true meaning of life, it hinges, in part, on the image of Marley being constantly chained, through greed, to those mercenary articles which helped hasten his downfall. It is not unusual to assume that Dickens, especially in this early novel, Nicholas Nickleby, is experimenting with the same idea. Dickens is possibly symbolizing the inescapable situation of Newman and Peg through the chain image. Although Newman will eventually be free but Peg will not, both must suffer for past or present greed. In Marley's own words the inexcusable sin of those devoted to money and commercial affairs is explained in all its terrifying proportions through the image of voluntary imprisonment or bondage:

> 'I wear the chain I forged in life,' replied the Ghost. 'I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?' [26]

The extent or degree of Newman Noggs's subservience to Ralph Nickleby's treachery is clearly demonstrated in the scene where Kate approaches her uncle to seek his aid in escaping the libidinous clutches of Sir Mulberry Hawk. Ralph, in trying to prevent his niece from asking him for money or aid, substitutes an empty purse for his usual locked cash-box.[27] This scene shows how Newman's physical debilities become

more pronounced as Ralph becomes more degenerate. Newman's reaction shows that he is still physically bound or chained to his master:

> Newman, with a grim smile at this manoeuvre, beckoned the young lady to advance, and having placed a chair for her, retired; looking stealthily over his shoulder at Ralph as he limped slowly out. 28

Newman, though he loathes his master, cannot leave him. He contents himself, in private, with a pantomime exercise in the fashion of a pugilistic Don Quixote, who "was thrashing to within an inch of his life, his body's most active employer, Mr. Ralph Nickleby". 29

Just as Newman is aware of the evil intent and actions of his master, Ralph in turn fears that his goggle-eyed servant is capable of hearing his thoughts. For it is Newman who is always watching his master, as if searching for some dark secret or waiting for something horrible to happen to his esteemed person:

> After a few minutes, Ralph rang his bell, Newman answered the summons, and Ralph raised his eyes stealthily to his face, as if he almost feared to read there, a knowledge of his recent thoughts. 30

Newman is satisfied to linger near his master and to haunt him with his uneasy presence. He taunts Ralph Nickleby with reminiscences of his past behaviour; Newman becomes his master's conscience. When the Nickleby family finally refuses this miser's condescending aid, it is the miser who

now feels pangs of remorse. Though this feeling is brief, Newman lingers by him like a dark shadow grown from his turgid conscience. The servant plays the part of his master's mirror image as he stands stoically by, apparently:

> ...unmoved, with his back towards him, following up, with the worn and blackened stump of an old pen, some figures in an Interest-table which was pasted against the wall, and apparently quite abstracted from every other object.[31]

This little vignette bears a close parallel to Ralph's actual moral condition. Ralph verifies Newman's opinion of him in his own admission that he is indeed "a crafty hunks of cold and stagnant blood, with no passion but love of saving, and no spirit beyond a thirst for gain".[32]

With the appearance of Arthur Gride in the novel the connection between money and moral waste, and between physical abnormality and his moral debility, becomes all the more clear. Gride's main qualities, "compounded of cunning lecherousness, slyness, and avarice"[33], appear to be indistinguishable from his actual hideous features which "expressed the most covetous and griping penury, and sufficiently indicated his belonging to that class of which Ralph Nickleby was a member".[34] It appears that as Ralph Nickleby's avarice and hatred become more vile, his companions' appearances or physical conditions seem to more clearly parallel his own immoral behaviour. Not only is Arthur Gride a most twisted creature, but he too

is inflicted with a hobbling gait, suggestive of the symbolic chain or shackle which binds his greedy soul to its eventual doom. As Ralph Nickleby becomes immersed in this decrepit lecher's scheme to marry Madeline Bray, the daughter of an invalid and similarly profligate debtor, Newman Noggs overhears their plan. Newman, succumbing to the uselessness of his position and convinced that he is unable to rectify matters, limps in protestation, while wildly lamenting the ugliness of his fate and the futility of the present situation:

> 'I don't know who she may be, or what she may be,' he said; but I pity her with all my heart and soul; and I can't help her, nor can I help any of the people against whom a hundred tricks, but none so vile as this, are plotted every day! Well, that adds to my pain, but not to theirs. The thing is no worse because I know it, and it tortures me as well as them. Gride and Nickleby! Good pair for a curricle. Oh roguery! roguery! roguery! '[35]

The relationship between Arthur Gride and his servant, Peg Sliderskew, seems to have grown from a consolatory covenant, based upon a natural penchant for evil, to an inseparable association nurtured by an unparalleled and natural selfishness. Like a grimalkin Peg Sliderskew reflects Arthur Gride's moral ugliness. She is described as a "blear-eyed old woman, palsy stricken and hideously ugly"[36]; her physical description is not unlike that of her master. Just as Ralph Nickleby feared that Newman could read his thoughts

so too does Arthur Gride fear Peg for the same reason:

> 'Oh dear! the devil's in this woman,' muttered Arthur; adding with an ugly leer, 'I said I trusted everything to you, Peg. That was all.'
> 'You do that, master, and all your cares are over,' said Peg approvingly.
> 'When I do that, Peg Sliderskew,' thought Arthur Gride, 'they will be.'
> Although he thought this, very distinctly, he durst not move his lips lest the old woman should detect him. He even seemed half afraid that she might have read his thoughts;...[37]

Yet the association between Arthur Gride and Peg is very familiar:

> ...he jocularly tapped Mrs. Sliderskew under the chin, and appeared for the moment inclined to celebrate the close of his bachelor days by imprinting a kiss on her shrivelled lips. Thinking better of it, however, he gave her another tap, in lieu of that warmer familiarity, and stole away to bed.[38]

This familiarity causes a rift between them when Gride plans to marry Madeline Bray. Peg plays the role of the jilted woman as if "influenced by some lingering feelings of disappointment and personal slight".[39] The servant's ugly appearance and ugly nature force her to hurt her master for deserting her. She plans to steal his secret papers and reveal to the public those deeds which will destroy his spirit:

> '...what's of no use, we'll burn; what we can get any money by, we'll keep; and if there's any we could get him into trouble by, and fret and waste away his heart to shreds with, those we'll take particular care of; for that's what I want to do, and what I hoped to do when I left him.'[40]

In describing the two sets of servants and masters in this novel Dickens uses the Arthur Gride - Peg Sliderskew relationship to mirror Ralph Nickleby's immoral condition and to serve as a foil for the relationship between Ralph Nickleby and Newman Noggs. On the night of Ralph Nickleby's suicide he passes by a burial ground. Upon entering the place the corpses seem to be "...corrupting in body as they had in mind...".[41] This description of awful physical rot, spawned from the moral contamination of these once living bodies, mirrors the turgid, dissolute nature of Ralph Nickleby's soul. A "black gloomy mass" which follows him at a cautious distance finally emerges as a group of revellers, among whom is a "little, weazen, hump-backed man"[42] who is, in his grotesque proportions and fantastic gyrations, more than a chance figure. In one sense he is symbolic of Ralph Nickleby's nemesis, while serving a purpose almost akin to that of a wraith figure or emblem of death. On the other hand, and in this case modifying the particular theme of this chapter, the grotesque man is as much a physical representation of Ralph Nickleby's debased nature as are other similar physically abnormal characters in the novel. In the beginning Newman Noggs's goggle eyes and paralytic limb remind his master of the direction in which his dissolute life is moving; yet Ralph's refusal to heed these signs forces him into an acquaintance with Arthur Gride. Ralph Nickleby's final companion, a grotesque little man, whose mime has the power to

move the miser to mirth insofar as he "echoed the laugh of one who stood near"[43], justifiably serves as a final, damnable warning to this wicked master. His life appears ugly and debased; he is reduced, morally, to a condition more hideous than the physically abnormal appearances of his associates. Consequently, the grotesque little man is a physical representation of, and in direct proportion to, the malignancy which finally corrupts Ralph's body and mind.

This scene is an attempt by Dickens to represent a final confrontation between a man and his conscience. The twisted posture of this creature mirrors the heinous nature of Ralph's moral condition. It is obvious that Ralph Nickleby is aware of the seriousness of his situation inasmuch as he deliberately dwells on death. Ironically, this creature is capable of making Ralph laugh, symbolically emphasizing, as he does so, the black humour and ill-fated condition of his soul.

In a later novel, Dickens makes significant use of the type of "black mass" or shadow that accompanies Ralph Nickleby in his final hours to describe how a character is capable of changing from an already fiendish form into a more vile and wicked creature. He repeats the use of the engulfing shadow in Martin Chuzzlewit to describe Jonas's change of character when he decides to kill Montague Tigg:

It was now growing dark. As the gloom of

> evening, deepening into night, came on, another dark shade emerging from within him seemed to overspread his face, and slowly change it. Slowly, slowly; darker and darker; more and more haggard; creeping over him by little and little; until it was black night within him and without.[44]

Lauriat Lane sees the double-figure in Martin Chuzzlewit as focusing upon the murderer-villain character of Jonas Chuzzlewit[45], and states that Dickens is, in turn, using internal doubleness in such a way that:

> [he] replaces the unreal and allegorical external double of Poe and Hoffman with a hallucination whose external existence at a moment of great tension results from a real psychological disturbance along with the externally-imposed symbolism of the author.[46]

While it may be true that Dickens is emphasizing this type of internal double relationship, there is also the curious association between Anthony Chuzzlewit and old Chuffey. The latter character exists in a catatonic state, maintaining his apparent inability to hear or feel and insensible to all, until he is addressed by Anthony:

> 'Yes, yes,' said Chuffey, lighting up into a sentient human creature at the first sound of the voice, so that it was at once a curious and quite a moving sight to see him. 'Yes, yes. Quite ready, Mr. Chuzzlewit. Quite ready, sir. All ready, all ready, all ready.' With that he stopped, smilingly, and listened for some further address; but being spoken to no more, the light forsook his face by little and little, until he was nothing again.[47]

The apparent closeness between the master and this servant resembles the association between Newman Noggs and Ralph

Nickleby. In the latter case, Newman is being punished for his inexcusable penchant for money in his early days; therefore, he must serve a miser in a form of purgatorial confinement. The association between Anthony and Chuffey is also very close. Dickens describes Chuffey's youthful involvement with money; as Chuffey grows older a harsh fever destroys his sensibilities to the extent that he cannot converse with anyone except his miserly master, Anthony Chuzzlewit. Besides this association between master and servant, the physical conditions of Chuffey and Anthony are very similar. Both are old, border on senility, and are physically debilitated to a degree decidedly obvious even to the briefest observation. Before he dies Anthony begins to treat Chuffey almost in a filial way. Anthony grows old and deaf, consequently mirroring Chuffey's physical defects more and more. He begins to fall into dozes which are analogous to Chuffey's catatonic spasms. The deep relationship between these two, stemming in part from their similar monetary backgrounds, is pointed out by Leonard Manheim. He refers specifically to Chuffey's habit of repeating a series of numbers at Anthony's death.[48] These verbal ramblings attest to the servant's mental debility while his insistence on numbers and the close feelings he has for his master demonstrate that a part of himself has been destroyed. Chuffey seems to have lost a vital portion of himself in Anthony's death:

> 'Three score and ten,' said Chuffey,

> 'ought and carry seven. Some men are so strong that they live to four score - four times ought's an ought, four times two's an eight - eighty. Oh! why - why - why - didn't he live to four times ought's an ought, and four times two's an eight, eighty?'
> 'Ah! what a wale of grief!' cried Mrs. Gamp, possessing herself of the bottle and glass. 'Why did he die before his poor old crazy servant?' said Chuffey, clasping his hands and looking up in anguish. 'Take him from me, and what remains?' 49

Chuffey's insane mutterings which hinge on the phrase, "who's lying dead up-stairs?"[50] not only present an unnerving picture of the Chuzzlewit house, but also faintly distrub Jonas who is planning the swift demise of Montague Tigg. The old servant's strange ramblings unquestionably fire Jonas's agitated imagination, and do little to placate his disturbed condition. The servant acts like his old master, who before his death was in his second childhood, weak, imbecile, and drivelling.[51] The son fears that the old servant will reveal his evil deed by virtue of his still firm allegiance to his former master's memory. The strained link between Chuffey and Jonas Chuzzlewit appears to be reflected in Chuffey's attempt to aid Jonas's innocent wife in her unhappy marriage. Chuffey threatens Jonas with his perpetual presence:

> 'You will not leave me!' cried the old man. 'I am strong enough to cry out to the neighbours, and I will....'[52]

The old servant's ghastly ardour in his protection of the unfortunate woman has a terrible effect upon the younger

Chuzzlewit:

> Jonas was so dismayed and conscience-stricken, that he had not even hardihood enough to unclench the old man's hands with his own; but stood looking at him as well as he could in darkness, without moving a finger. It was as much as he could do to ask him what he meant.[53]

It appears that Jonas is confronted with the evil of his past deeds and is also transfixed by the power evinced by the old servant. When Chuffey reveals how Anthony knew of his son's intention to poison him for the inheritance, he speaks in a tone like one possessed. His evidence, revealing the last thoughts of his dying master, horrifies Jonas. It seems that the words come from beyond the grave:

> ...and with his grey hair stirring on his head, he seemed to grow in size, and was like a man inspired. Jonas shrank from looking at him, and cowered down into the chair by which he had held. It seemed as if this tremendous Truth could make the dumb speak.[54]

Having exposed Jonas's "black crime" Chuffey falls once more into a lethargic state, while Jonas, in realizing the nature of his fate, bemoans the mistakes of his ignominious life. Not only has Jonas been cursed by his legacy and his father's death, a miserable marriage, and the blood of a murdered man, but his home and personal life have been haunted and "cursed by the daily shadow of the old clerk's figure".[55] Old Chuffey's debilitated condition parallels Jonas's detestable nature; and his catatonic state, a ghastly mime of the physical and mental condition of Anthony Chuzzlewit,

constantly reminds Jonas of the presence of his dead father. Because all of them are caught in a web in which each reflects a portion of the other it consequently follows that their mutual dependency is shattered when one party dies.

In succeeding novels Dickens matures and begins to appeal to his reader's sense of social justice. The execution of his social themes becomes dependent on his skill in dissecting the anatomy of society and revealing its various malignant growths. Although he graduates and advances quickly from his concentration upon individuals and small themes to his treatment of society as a whole[56], Dickens's interest in misers, particularly in David Copperfield, is sustained. Mr. Barkis, in his illness, is confined to bed with what Pegotty calls "rheumatics". Unable to move, but forced to lie supine, he composes himself by jealously guarding a locked box. Constantly reiterating to everyone that this box is filled with old clothes, he invariably wishes, all the while, that its contents were monies:

> 'Old clothes,' said Mr. Barkis.
> 'Oh!' said I.
> 'I wish it was Money, sir,' said Mr. Barkis.
> 'I wish it was, indeed,' said I.
> 'But it Ain't,' said Mr. Barkis, opening both his eyes as wide as he possibly could.[57]

When Mr. Barkis is alone in his room David can hear him search his "unlucky box" for his "trifle of money" while he suffers and groans in the agony of his disability. Despite the fact

that his wife, aware of his mental disposition, condones his neurotic behaviour because "his generous impulse would do him good, and it was better not to check it"[58], David's comments reveal that Barkis's greed is commensurate with the degree of agony he is forced to endure in protecting his secret:

> ...he had got into bed again, suffering, I have no doubt, a martyrdom; and then called us in, pretending to have just woke up from a refreshing sleep, and to produce a guinea from under his pillow. His satisfaction in which happy imposition on us, and in having preserved the impenetrable secret of the box, appeared to be a sufficient compensation to him for all his tortures. [59]

The influence of money upon Barkis's spirit seems to have separated him from the world of the living. Although his character can by no means be compared to the profligate Mr. Bray's in Nicholas Nickleby, Barkis is nevertheless a miser and an invalid whose legs, attacked by severe "rheumatics", bind him to his bed and his iron box. The degree of his mental, physical and moral decrepitude is reflected in Dickens's description of his death scene. No longer able to move from his bed, he chooses to lie "in an uncomfortable attitude, half resting on the box which had cost him so much pain and trouble".[60] In his final days he remains in an uncomfortable posture, suffering in agony, for the consolation of having his money near his embrace night and day. Dickens offers a solemn epitaph to those who would pursue the course chosen by Barkis who has his box while "time and the world were slipping from beneath him".[61]

During Dickens's middle period as a novelist he forced his readers to see, in his 'dark novels', the possible causes for England's social and moral corruption. Disease was sometimes represented in the physical conditions of his characters. It was in Bleak House that Dickens attempted to adopt the theme he would employ in later novels:

> Though it is true that the novel presents an image of possible social collapse — presenting it not alone through the death of Krook but through the equally representative deaths of Richard and Lady Dedlock and through the pervasive disease imagery — the collapse is neither prescribed nor hoped for. It is presented as a warning, a prophetic warning of what will inevitably come to pass if a stiff-necked people refuses to change its ways. But the way to change, to peaceful recuperation, as it were, throughout presented as both clear and accessible. [62]

The image of moral disease is clearly defined in the character of Grandfather Smallweed, a cadaverous old miser. He is like Arthur Gride in Nicholas Nickleby in both physical form and habits. Like Gride he constantly rubs a portion of his anatomy or an appendage when he is discussing monetary affairs. This curious action usually accompanies the appearance of George Rouncewell who is deeply in debt to old Smallweed:

> 'Do you rub your legs to rub life into 'em?' he asks of Grandfather Smallweed, after looking around the room.
> 'Why, it's partly a habit, Mr. George, and — er — it partly helps the circulation,' he replies. [63]

The withered old man's philosophy of life is like that promoted by Anthony Chuzzlewit who educated his son, Jonas, "from the

cradle on the strictest principles of main chance", and who taught him his first two words, gain and money.[64] In much the same way Smallweed raises his family according to the rule laid down by his father whose "God was Compound Interest". Accordingly:

> ...the house of Smallweed, always early to go out and late to marry, has strengthened itself in its practical character, has discarded all amusements, discountenanced all story-books, fairy tales, fictions, and fables, and banished all levities whatsoever. Hence the gratifying fact, that it has had no child born to it, and that the complete little men and women whom it has produced, have been observed to bear a likeness to old monkeys with something depressing on their minds.[65]

To this scene of physical disease and moral stagnation Dickens introduces Phil Squod, the servant of George Rouncewell. His physically abnormal appearance not only mirrors the moral decline which possibly awaits his master — if he follows in the steps of those who suffer for an overindulgence in money — but also suggests or warns of the possible social collapse of the world of the novel. Phil is lame and is subject to other physical defects. One half of his face appears to be burned and his fingers, notched and seamed, suffer from paralysis. He also has the habit of limping around the shooting gallery

> ...with his shoulder against the wall, and tacking off at objects he wants to lay hold of..., which has left a smear all round the four walls, conventionally called 'Phil's mark' ".[66]

Like Newman Noggs, he too is probably living in a repentant state. While this is partially substantiated by the tone in which Dickens hints at the possible indiscretions of his former days, there is also little doubt as to the low quality of life Phil had to endure. He reveals that he was found in the gutter by a watchman and vagabondizing became a way of life for him at an early age. His strange tacking movement is Dickens's way of portraying the actual holding up of a collapsing society. When it falls so too will Phil's master. Dickens's reference to Phil as his master's "Familiar"[67] is an allusion to the servant's protective attachment to his master and also suggests Phil's role as his master's double. The idea of Phil's holding up of a building is expressed in his sidling movement which is more than a mere mechanical aberration. As he:

> ...shoulders his way round three sides of the gallery, and abruptly tacking off at his commander, [he] makes a butt at him with his head, intended to express devotion to his service.[68]

Phil Squod's physical condition and strange behaviour are used by Dickens to form the prototype of Jeremiah Flintwinch in Little Dorrit. The character reflects, as does Phil, the moral debility of his master, Mrs. Clennam. His futile attempts to prop up the walls of his residence prognosticate the eventual moral decline of his mistress and himself. Dickens also continues to promote the theme of society's collapse in

Little Dorrit:

> That it is at least as difficult to stay a moral infection as a physical one; that such a disease will spread with the malignity and rapidity of the Plague; that the contagion, when it has once made head, will spare no pursuit or condition, but will lay hold on people in the soundest health, and become developed in the most unlikely constitutions; is a fact as firmly established by experience as that we human creatures breath an atmosphere. A blessing beyond appreciation would be conferred upon mankind, if the tainted, in whose weakness or wickedness these virulent disorders are bred, could be instantly seized and placed in close confinement (not to say summarily smothered) before the poison is communicable.[69]

Jeremiah Flintwinch is affected with a form of paralysis which causes his head to adopt an "awry" position. He moves in a "crab-like fashion" and it appears "as if his foundations had yielded at about the same time as those of the house, and he ought to have been propped up in a similar manner".[70] Dickens suggests the possible nefarious nature of this old miserly gentleman by describing his cravat which is normally knotted beneath one ear, giving him the appearance of a man who had hanged himself. The whole family menagerie is made complete by Mrs. Clennam whose rheumatic infection causes her to lose the use of her limbs, and reduces her to a condition in which she is dependent upon and subservient to the aid and advice of Jeremiah. Mrs. Clennam's state of mind, and possibly the state of her soul, are duly affected by the atmosphere which pervades the house in the presence of the servant. The dark secrets that she nurtures in her soul are

clearly reflected in her attention to certain passages in a book, which is probably the Bible. She continually prays that:

> ...her enemies (she made them by her tone and manner expressly hers) might be put to the edge of the sword,..., that their bones might be ground to dust, and that they might be utterly exterminated. [71]

The use of the double image, in the novel, first occurs in Mrs. Flintwinch's dream or vision where she imagines that her husband is accompanied by a double of himself. She 'sees' the double carry, in a most clandestine fashion, a small iron box which Jeremiah evidently covets "with jealous eyes". The box, of course, is symbolic of the wicked mercenary thoughts and designs of Mr. Flintwinch; for when his wife again 'dreams' of her liege-lord, he is in conference with Mrs. Clennam, and it is he, not the mistress, who controls the house. Flintwinch is portrayed as a taunting, goading, and commanding figure. The closeness or attachment that exists between Mrs. Clennam and the old servant is clearly reflected in her remark that he torments her "like an evil spirit". [72] It is notable that Mr. Flintwinch's furtive appearances seem to be accompanied by a corresponding dreamy condition in his wife, Affery. The "commercial cast" which binds Flintwinch and Mrs. Clennam affects Affery. She imagines that the whole house is in league with the underworld for there is something of a "premature and preternatural darkness in it". [73] She transforms her fear and dread into her accustomed dreams imagining that

these two creatures are engaged in a guilty pact. The closeness that Affery discerns between her husband and mistress changes into a vile, adulterous form as she dreams of "the two clever ones embracing each other and dissolving into tears of tenderness for all mankind".[74]

This haunting malignancy, presenting itself in the wicked covenant of mistress and servant, pervades the whole tenement, threatening destruction, while it transforms itself, in Affery's mind, into strange and nocturnal noises. Affery, unable to define the limits of her own reality, subsides into dreamlike moods from which she refuses to emerge:

> 'Don't ask me anything, Arthur. I've been in a dream for ever so long. Go away!' [75]

The correlation between a servant's physical debility and the master's moral decrepitude is expressed through Dickens's extensive illustration of Flintwinch's pernicious association with Mrs. Clennam. When this woman sends a letter to her son, Arthur, in prison, he receives it by the hand of Mr. Flintwinch. The note, itself, naming Jeremiah Mrs. Clennam's messenger and representative[76], is a final declaration of how much power this servant has over his mistress. In the end, the "angry feelings and unforgiving deeds"[77] which form a comfort and guide to Mrs. Clennam result in her being punished in a most severe fashion. She declines into a catatonic state in which she remains for three years living, and finally dying, a statue.

Jeremiah mysteriously disappears when the house collapses; the metaphorical death of the house having occurred, a proleptic meaning appears incontestable. Mrs. Clennam's insane hatred results in her decline. From the moment that her house and servant are removed, she becomes totally immobile as if in a state of suspended animation. With the disappearance of Jeremiah, Mrs. Clennam has no representative to promote the evil designs of her maniacal will. Therefore, she becomes completely paralyzed and the life-blood drains from her. In my opinion, Dickens's description of Mrs. Clennam and Jeremiah Flintwinch is by far his best portrayal of the relationship between a servant and master. Both characters seem to rely totally upon the other; if one dies so must the other.

In most cases the moral debility stems from greed, and misers being the most profligate devotees of greed, Dickens often presents them as old and withered. Thus he found it easy, and probably advantageous, especially in his 'dark novels', to allude to the condition of society through the parallel images of a physically abnormal man who must lean against some obstruction for support and a dilapidated house that is barely able to stand. When the particular character is no longer able to support himself, in a physical and moral way, his collapse often portrays the metaphorical collapse of the world of the novel.

NOTES

[1]A notable example of this type of criticism on Dickens's use of double figures is seen in Leonard Manheim, "A Tale of Two Characters: A Study in Multiple Projection", Dickens Studies Annual, I (1970), 225-37.

[2]Lauriat Lane, Jr., "Dickens and the Double", The Dickensian, LV (January, 1959), 47.

[3]see the note to Hoffmann's "The Devil's Elixir" in Coleman O. Parsons, Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), p. 260. Also see the reference to R.P. Gillies in W. E. K. Anderson, ed., The Journal of Sir Walter Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 24.

[4]"The Devil's Elixir", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, XVI (1824), no. xc, 57.

[5]Sir Walter Scott, A Legend of Montrose, Vol. XIII: Illustrated Edition (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1878), pp. 374-5. In reference to the "Co-Walker" Scott states:

> "They called this reflex man a Co-Walker, every way like the man, as a twin-brother and companion haunting him as his shadow, as is that seen and known among men resembling the originall, both before and after the originall is dead, and was also often seen of old to enter a hous, by which the people knew that the person of that liknes was to visit them within a few days. This copy, echo, or living picture, goes at last to his own herd. It accompanied that person so long and frequently for ends best known to its selve,..."
> Kirke's Secret Commonwealth, p. 3

[6]_____, "On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition; and particularly on the Works of Ernest Theodore William Hoffmann", Sir Walter Scott: On Novelists and Fiction, ed. Ioan Williams (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 312-53. Scott's article was originally published in the Foreign Quarterly Review, i, 1827.

[6]Cont'd
Scott's appraisal of Hoffmann's work and the writer's character is very harsh in its finality:

> It is impossible to subject tales of this nature to criticism. They are not the visions of a poetical mind, they have scarcely even the seeming authenticity which the hallucinations of lunacy convey to the patient; they are the feverish dreams of a light-headed patient, to which, though they may sometimes excite by their peculiarity, or surprise by their oddity, we never feel disposed to yield more than momentary attention. In fact, the inspirations of Hoffmann so often resemble the ideas produced by the immoderate use of opium, that we cannot help considering his case as one requiring the assistance of medicine rather than of criticism;...

[7]Thomas Roscoe, The German Novelists: Tales Selected from Ancient and Modern Authors in That Language. Vols. I-IV. (London: Henry Colburn; New Burlington Street, 1826).

[8]Thomas Carlyle, German Romance: Translations From the German with Biographical and Critical Notices. Vol. II. (London: Chapman and Hall Limited, 1898). Reprint (New York: AMS Press, 1969), pp. 3-114. The German Romance Vols. I-IV was originally published in 1827. Carlyle's translation of Hoffmann's "The Golden Pot" was republished in Edinburgh Tales, Vol. II, 1846, pp. 120-58. Also note that there is evidence for numerous translations of Hoffmann's tales during the early part of the nineteenth century. It appears that eleven of them were available in England by 1847 according to Edwin H. Zeydel, "Edgar Allan Poe's Contacts with German as Seen in His Relations with Ludwig Tiek", Studies in German Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, No. LXVII (1970), 53.

[9]Adelbert von Chamisso, The Wonderful History of Peter Schlemihl. translated by William Howitt (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1843), p. vii.

[10]"My After-Dinner Adventures with Peter Schlemihl", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, XLV (April, 1839), no. cclxxxii, 467-80.

[11]Charles Dickens, Christmas Books (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 18. Reprint, 1968.

[12]Helmut Viebrock, "The Knocker: Physiognomical Aspects of a Motif in Hoffmann and Dickens", English Studies, XLIII (1962), 396-402.

[13]Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann, "The Golden Pot", translated by Thomas Carlyle in his German Romance: Translations From the German with Biographical and Critical Notices. Vol. II., p. 37.

[14]Charles Dickens, Christmas Books, p. 15.

[15]Ibid., p. 331.

[16]George E. Woodberry, The Life of Edgar Allan Poe. Vol. I. (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1965), p. 232.

[17]Ibid., p. 304.

[18]Ibid., p. 326. Also see Leo Mason, "A Tale of Three Authors", The Dickensian, XXXVI (Spring, 1940), no. 254, 115. This critic states that, "on the day after Dickens had settled himself at the United States Hotel, Philadelphia, he received a communication from Edgar Allan Poe, together with the latter's review of Barnaby Rudge and two volumes of his 'Tales' ".

[19]Leo Mason, "More About Poe and Dickens", The Dickensian, XXXIX (December, 1942), no. 265, 21.

[20]_____, "A Tale of Three Authors", The Dickensian, XXXVI (Spring, 1940), no. 254, 118. Leo Mason comments upon Dickens's use of horror where the "horror he portrays is the common lot of the common man; the fear of Bill Sikes..., or better still the mental anguish of Jonas Chuzzlewit after he had treacherously murdered Montague Tigg, "and became in a manner his own ghost and phantom."...This particular description will bear more than mere comparison with Poe's story entitled 'The Tell-Tale Heart' ". It should also be remembered that this particular story was published in 1842 and Dickens did not begin to write Martin Chuzzlewit until 1843.

[21]Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), I, pp. 3-4. Reprint, 1968.

[22]Ibid., II, pp. 10-11.

[23]Charles Dickens, Christmas Books, p. 7.

[24]--------, Nicholas Nickleby, III, p. 23.

[25]Ibid., IV, p. 41.

[26]Charles Dickens, Christmas Books, p. 19.

[27]--------, Nicholas Nickleby, XXVIII, p. 369.

[28]Ibid., XXVIII, p. 369.

[29]Ibid., XXVIII, p. 373.

[30]Ibid., XXXI, p. 401.

[31]Ibid., XXXIII, p. 425.

[32]Ibid., XXXIV, p. 441.

[33]Ibid., XLVII, p. 610.

[34]Ibid., XLVII, p. 611.

[35]Ibid., XLVII, p. 619.

[36]Ibid., LI, p. 669.

[37]Ibid., LI, p. 670.

[38]Ibid., LIII, p. 708.

[39]Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, LIV, p. 709.

[40]Ibid., LVII, p. 754.

[41]Ibid., LXII, p. 802.

[42]Ibid., LXII, p. 803.

[43]Ibid., LXII, p. 803.

[44]Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), XLVI, pp. 717-18. Reprint, 1968.

[45]Lauriat Lane, Jr., "Dickens and the Double", The Dickensian, LV (January, 1959), 48-9.

[46]Ibid., p. 49.

[47]Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit, XI, p. 179.

[48]Leonard Manheim, "Dickens' Fools and Madmen", Dickens Studies Annual, II (1972), 91.

[49]Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit, XIX, p. 318.

[50]Ibid., XLVI, p. 708.

[51]Ibid., XLVIII, p. 742.

[52]Ibid., LI, p. 776.

[53]Ibid., LI, p. 776.

[54]Ibid., LI, p. 783.

[55]Ibid., LI, p. 786.

[56]"The Usual and Unusual Dickens", Times Literary Supplement, 712 (April 27, 1973), no. 3, 478. The article reviews several books on Dickens including Philip Hobsbaum's A Reader's Guide to Charles Dickens and seems to agree with Hobsbaum's suggestion with regard to Martin Chuzzlewit that "One problem was that Dickens as a man was developing rapidly, and that his technique could not keep up with him". Although further references are not given to Hobsbaum's discussion of Dickens's development it is assumed that his discussion follows this general theme.

[57]Charles Dickens, David Copperfield (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), XXI, p. 309. Reprint, 1966.

[58]Ibid., XXI, p. 309.

[59]Ibid., XXI, p. 309.

[60]Ibid., XXX, p. 444.

[61]Ibid., XXX, p. 444.

[62]H. M. Daleski, Dickens and the Art of Analogy (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 186.

[63]Charles Dickens, Bleak House (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), XXI, p. 295. Reprint, 1966.

[64]--------, Martin Chuzzlewit, VIII, p. 119.

[65]--------, Bleak House, XXI, p. 288.

[66]Ibid., XXI, p. 303.

[67]Ibid., XXVI, p. 363.

[68]Ibid., XXVI, p. 369.

[69]Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), II, xiii, p. 571. Reprint, 1966.

[70]Ibid., I, iii, p. 32.

[71]Ibid., I, iii, p. 35.

[72]Ibid., I, xv, p. 184.

[73]Ibid., I, xxix, p. 344.

[74]Ibid., I, xxix, p. 343.

[75]Ibid., II, x, p. 549.

[76]Ibid., II, xxviii, p. 752.

[77]Ibid., II, xxxi, p. 792.

CONCLUSION

Once Dickens introduces a physical abnormality he usually settles upon a particular use for it: weak legs reflect a degree of sexual impotency; wooden legs symbolize castration; and abnormalities in servants mirror their master's moral decrepitude. Although I owe a debt to Arthur Brown for his study of wooden legs and castration, it is still my conclusion and contention that Gruff and Glum in Our Mutual Friend is both a good marriage symbol and an example of a castrated man. His presence, despite his wooden legs, does not seem to interfere with Bella Wilfer's happiness at her wedding. Throughout his novels Dickens uses the appearance of physically abnormal and bizarre characters at weddings to foreshadow trouble for the newly-married couple. In Bella's case, Gruff and Glum's appearance does not spoil the happiness of Bella and her husband.

While the thesis does not discuss the issue of one-armed and one-legged soldiers, it should be understood that Dickens usually portrays veterans of the wars in this condition; they are usually restricted to his early novels, especially Barnaby Rudge and The Old Curiosity Shop. Consequently, their numbers are not sufficient to warrant a separate study of Dickens's view of their similar abnormalities. The one-armed and one-legged soldiers are used by

Dickens to serve as background characters in his novels. Their role is simple; they represent the misfortune of war. Joe Willett, the one-armed soldier in Barnaby Rudge, is the only one of this type who is described by Dickens in some detail.

Though Dickens often describes the complete wasting away of society through certain physically abnormal characters, he does not, except in one case, use them to attack a particular facet of society which is totally malignant. Dickens feels that the legal system is blind to real justice and he often describes this failure to see its own faults through the description of weak-eyed lawyers and judges. The novels which use this symbol are Bleak House, Great Expectations, and Little Dorrit. In the latter we are presented with Mr. Sampson Brass, a lawyer who has an obvious but faint ocular abnormality. Mr. Brass tries to outwit justice by misusing the short-sightedness of the courts. In Great Expectations there is Mr. Jaggers who attests to his own blind judicial nature and that of the courts when he procures from a one-eyed informer a false witness who will swear to anything for money.[1] Bleak House rests on the themes of ignorance and destruction. Dickens's description of legal blindness here is metaphorical rather than actual. Krook cannot read; and Chancery does not, and eventually cannot, 'see' the hideous truth that hides behind the dense bank of

fog that permeates its chambers. The houses of those ruined in Chancery are compared to blind, grotesque creatures which suffer because of the courts' short-sightedness and relish for expediency:

> '...It is a street of perishing blind houses, with their eyes stoned out;...the stone steps to every door (and every door might be Death's Door) turning stagnant green; the very crutches on which the ruins are propped, decaying.... These are the Great Seal's impressions,...all over England — the children know them!' [2]

According to Dickens justice is a grave infection which can be attested to by "any man with half an eye".[3]

In examining the whole range of Dickens's physically abnormal characters and deciding upon the various types to include in this thesis, I have discovered that not only do the characters concerned have little relation to particular social problems (except, of course, the examination of legal blindness), but these characters are neither grotesque nor terrifying in their abnormal conditions. While there are a few, such as Quilp, whose evil nature corresponds to the grotesque twistings of his body, the majority of these characters are not presented in a terrifying manner. When Dickens sets about to horrify the reader he chooses characters like Fagin, Jonas Chuzzlewit, and Krook, and manipulates the degree of terror associated with each one by altering certain aspects of their dark, foreboding habitations. Many of Dickens's physically abnormal characters are simple people

whose lives are made different by their misfortune; while Tiny Tim accepts his twisted limbs, the lame girl, Jenny Wren, in Our Mutual Friend, cannot be content to remain in a paralytic state all her life. Her harsh comments upon her miserable condition and society's refusal to aid her reflects not only a marked change in the quality and way of life in the novels, but also demonstrates Dickens's loss of romantic attachment to visions of a better world. In his early novels physical abnormality is accepted, not shunned. But in later novels Dickens brings a degree of horror in physical distortions home to his characters, making them aware of their, and his, inability to change the order of things.

NOTES

[1]Charles Dickens, Great Expectations (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), XX, p. 158. Reprint, 1966.

[2]--------, Bleak House (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), VIII, pp. 96-7. Reprint, 1966.

[3]Ibid., XVI, p. 220.

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