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A Psychoanalytic Study of the Theme of the Double  
in Some Works of Dickens

Steve Kahn

A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
English

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 1992

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ISBN 0-315-87268-3

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## Abstract

### A Psychoanalytic Study of the Theme of the Double in Some Works of Dickens

Steve Kahn

Although it seems a simple topic on the surface, the manifestations of the literary double are many and varied. The psychological mechanism of doubling arises out of a sense of alienation: the self becomes alienated from the self, and the ego splits. Based on psychical decomposition and projection of the decomposed aspect, the double is often a repressed unconscious aspect of the self, embodied as a discrete entity. The double need not represent a simple division in two or repetition of character. Doubling may involve multiple characters, each a personification of a different character trait as personality is fractured along psychic lines of demarcation. Freud uses the analogy of a crystal to illustrate this splitting of the ego:

If we throw a crystal to the floor, it breaks; but not into haphazard pieces. It comes apart along its lines of cleavage into fragments whose boundaries, though they were invisible, were predetermined by the crystal's structure ("New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" 59).

The most basic and familiar double is the mirror image. From this starting point it is possible to arrive at theories, definitions, and taxonomies of the forms and functions of the double in literature. A Freudian approach

is useful because the splitting of personae and projection of unconscious qualities inherent in doubling has extensive correspondence with Freud's psychic model of id, ego and superego. Thus there is some consideration of dreams in Dickens's fictions.

The superego, in its guise of conscience, is an important aspect of the Dickensian double as it appears in A Christmas Carol and an early Christmas story in The Pickwick Papers. The unconscious aggression inherent in the superego, arising in the oral and anal pregenital phases of psychical development, finds expression in the domestic enclosure, and is seen to be closely associated with doubles, in a discussion of the primal scene of parental cannibalism in "Nurse's Stories" and Dombey and Son.

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### Abbreviations of Dickens material

I have used the standard abbreviations, as listed below.

- BH = Bleak House  
CB = Christmas Books  
CS = Christmas Stories  
DC = David Copperfield  
DS = Dombey and Son  
DSA = The Dickens Studies Annual  
GE = Great Expectations  
LD = Little Dorrit  
MC = Martin Chuzzlewit  
MED = The Mystery of Edwin Drood  
NN = Nicholas Nickleby  
OCS = The Old Curiosity Shop  
OMF = Our Mutual Friend  
PP = The Pickwick Papers  
UT = The Uncommercial Traveller

All Dickens quotations in this thesis are from The Oxford Illustrated Dickens, 1987 edition.

## Chapter 1: Theories of the Double

There are some qualities--some incorporate things,  
That have a double life...

Poe, "Silence"



The common, exoteric, sense of a double is the repetition or counterpart, the duplication of outward form which resembles exactly the self. Therefore, anyone who has gazed into the mirror has seen the double. We see an image of the self, yet the consciousness of self is divided, localised in the viewer. The mirror image partakes of our outward form and so we identify with it, but at the same time it is alien: it is the self and the other at once, and so, although the mirror image may look sane and under control it also possesses an alien freedom; anything is possible, the forms of nightmare terror or fantastical vision may appear without volition. A similar splitting of consciousness occurs when we look upon a corpse: it has an outward human form and yet humanity has fled; there is an underlying fear of reanimation, and who can tell what form it may take? We only know that it is the other, clothed in the image of the self.

Doubling as a psychological mechanism arises out of a sense of alienation. An externalized awareness of the double arises out of the localization of consciousness in the self, combined with the resemblance of certain objects to the self, outside the self. An internal, psychical awareness of the double is predicated upon alienation of the self from the self, causing partition of the ego into subject and object, observer and observed. Freud writes:

The ego is in its very essence a subject; how can

it be made into an object? Well, there is no doubt that it can be. The ego can take itself as an object, can treat itself like other objects, can observe itself, criticize itself, and do Heaven knows what with itself. In this, one part of the ego is setting itself over against the rest. So the ego can be split; it splits itself during a number of its functions....I formed the idea that the separation of the observing agency from the rest of the ego might be a regular feature of the ego's structure... ("New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" 58-59)

Mirror gazing can be an alienating experience in which the personality viewing itself is split in two, into the self and an unrecognizable other. In Zamiatin's novel *We*, the protagonist experiences a moment of self-alienation when he fails to recognize and identify with his own reflected image:

I look in the mirror. And for the first time in my life, *yes, for the first time in my life* I see clearly, precisely, consciously and with surprise, I see myself as some "him"!...Steel-grey eyes encircled by the shadow of a sleepless night. And behind that steel...I never knew before what was behind that steel. From there (this "there" is at once so near and so infinitely distant!) I look at myself--at him. And I know surely that "he"...is a stranger, that I meet him here for the first time in my life. The real I is not he. (57. Zamiatin's italics)

In de Maupassant's short story "The Horla," a man is tormented by an invisible vampire which he fears is taking possession of his soul. The protagonist's image is actually absorbed by his invisible double, when it reveals itself by passing between him and the mirror:

I could not see myself in the mirror! It was empty and bright, and full of light to the very depths.

My reflection was nowhere to be seen, yet I was standing right in front of it! I could see the whole limpid piece of glass from top to bottom. I stared at it with panic-stricken eyes, unable to take a single step, to make the slightest movement, knowing that he was there, that his invisible body had swallowed up my reflection....The horror of it lingers with me still, making me shudder when I think of it. (340-341)

In Lovecraft's "The Outsider," the experience of mirror-gazing is both alienating and psychically unifying. The narrator thinks that he would like to join the world of men but, when his true nature is revealed by the glass, he more or less accepts his demonic status.

When he first confronts his reflection, he does not realise that he is looking into a mirror, and is repelled by his image:

I cannot even hint what it was like, for it was a compound of all that is unclean, uncanny, unwelcome, abnormal, and detestable. It was the ghoulsh shade of decay, antiquity, and desolation; the putrid, dripping eidolon of unwholesome revelation, the awful baring of that which the merciful earth should always hide. (58)

Once he touches the glass and realises that he confronts his own image, he experiences a kind of psychic unity:

...in that same second there crashed down upon my mind a single and fleeting avalanche of soul-annihilating memory. I knew in that second all that I had been...I recognized, most terrible of all, the unholy abomination that stood leering before me as I withdrew my sullied fingers from its own. (58)

This self-recognition brings with it both unity and alienation, for, if the narrator is no longer human, he has gained an awareness of his true nature:

...in my new wildness and freedom I almost welcome the bitterness of alienage....I know always that I am an outsider; a stranger in this century and among those who are still men. This I have known ever since I stretched out my fingers to the abomination within that great gilded frame; stretched out my fingers and touched a *cold and unyielding surface of polished glass.* (59. Lovecraft's italics)

Dickens's Christmas story for 1859, "The Haunted House" (CS), uses the device of a mirror-image double to explore the theme of alienation from the self. It is a light satirical journalistic piece which is directed "against the proponents of psychical phenomena" (Ackroyd 870), and "is in part intended as a debunking of contemporary credulity about supernatural phenomena" (The Dickens Index 117. Bently et al).

The story is comic in tone, concerned with disproving all pretensions of the house to be haunted. In the last chapter, entitled "The Ghost in Master B's Room" (CS 242), there is a thematic inversion in the narrative, which moves from external to internal focus: we leave the haunted house and take an inward journey through the narrator's haunted psyche, for the narrator is haunted by ghosts of himself, the ghosts of memory. At first he becomes fragmented in time, viewing alien visions of himself at different stages of life:

I was standing shaving at my glass, when I suddenly discovered, to my consternation and amazement, that

I was shaving--not myself--I am fifty<sup>1</sup>--but a boy. apparently Master B!....I looked again in the glass, and distinctly saw the features of a boy, who was shaving, not to get rid of a beard, but to get one....I now met in the glass, looking straight at me, the eyes of a young man of four or five and twenty. Terrified by this new ghost, I closed my eyes, and made a strong effort to recover myself. Opening them again, I saw, shaving his cheek in the glass, my father, who has long been dead. (243)

That night the ghost of Master B appears: "...waking from an uneasy sleep at exactly two o'clock in the morning, what were my feelings to find that I was sharing my bed with the skeleton of Master B" (243). "'Barber!' it apostrophised me....'Condemned...to shave a constant change of customers--now, me--now, a young man--now, thyself as thou art--now, thy father--now, thy grandfather; condemned, too, to lie down with a skeleton every night, and to rise with it every morning'" (244-245).

The ghost takes the narrator on a dream journey, causing him to re-live his childhood memories of happy fantasy and realistic disappointment. Through this experience, he learns the true nature of ghosts: they are internal, personal and of a psychical origin, projections of parts of the self. The faces in the glass are past and future echoes of the narrator's own face, and the skeleton represents his memories of the dead past. Thus the

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<sup>1</sup> Dickens was forty-seven when he wrote this story. The narrative voice is that of Dickens, thinly disguised as a journalist, like the persona of the Uncommercial Traveller.

skeleton, the mirrored faces and the ghost of Master B are projections of aspects of the narrator, who has been psychically decomposed and re-integrated. He ends the story with this sad realisation:

No other ghost has occupied the boy's room...than the ghost of my own childhood, the ghost of my own innocence, the ghost of my own airy belief. Many a time have I pursued the phantom: never with this man's stride of mine to come up with it, never with these man's hands of mine to touch it, never more to this man's heart of mine to hold it in its purity. And here you see me working out...my doom of shaving in the glass a constant change of customers, and of lying down and rising up with the skeleton allotted to me for my mortal companion.  
(252)

\*

The mirror image of the self is the autoscopic double, a primal and narcissistic form. One of the earliest doubles of this type is of course the double of Narcissus, which he saw reflected in a pool of water. According to Freud and Rank, the double has its primal genesis in narcissism, in that it represents a projection of the ego's wish to live on as an immortal soul:

By no means can psychoanalysis consider it a mere accident that the death significance of the double appears closely related to its narcissistic meaning....If we...look first for an explanation of why the idea of death in the Narcissus legend, associated with the sight of the double, should have been masked especially by the theme of self-love, then we are compelled next to think of the generally effective tendency to exclude with particular stubbornness the idea of death, which is extremely painful to our self-esteem. (Rank, The Double 69-70)

Only with the acknowledgment of the idea of death, and of the fear of death consequent upon threatened narcissism, does the wish for immortality as such appear....In this way, therefore, the primitive belief in souls is originally...a kind of belief in immortality which energetically denies the power of death. (84)

However, such narcissism threatens the ego, as it is predicated on a splitting of the ego, and thus may lead to "the defensive form of the pathological fear of one's self often leading to paranoid insanity and appearing in the pursuing shadow, mirror image, or double" (85-86). "So it happens that the double...originally created as a wish-defence against a dreaded eternal destruction...reappears in superstition as the messenger of death"<sup>2</sup> (86). In Dickens's Christmas fictions, the double often fulfils both of these functions, pursuing the erring ego and offering eternal life in the memory of others.

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<sup>2</sup> "For the 'double' was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an 'energetic denial of the power of death,' as Rank says; and probably the 'immortal' soul was the first 'double' of the body. This invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of a genital symbol. The same desire led the Ancient Egyptians to develop the art of making images of the dead in lasting materials. Such ideas, however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man. But when this stage has been surmounted, the 'double' reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death" (Freud, "The 'Uncanny'" 235).

In the works of Dickens, the autoscopic double is rare in its pure form. Examples are found in The Haunted House and The Haunted Man (CB). In the latter story, the phantom, like Marley's ghost, is a figure which offers redemption through the reacquisition of repressed memory. Here the device of an autoscopic double<sup>3</sup> serves to emphasize the internal nature of the interaction between phantom and protagonist, the protagonist's dialogic relationship with himself. As Glancy observes; "Redlaw's inner spiritual desolation is responsible for effecting a change in others....The ghost should thus not play an active part in the transfer of the curse, although...for mechanical reasons in the story, it appears to Redlaw in order to dramatize the dialogue taking place in Redlaw's psyche" (71).

In life, true visions of the double are rare, but not unknown, and are called autoscopic hallucinations. "Clinical studies have shown that the Double tends to appear at dusk, in the form of a floating face or torso, and to be a momentary, colourless apparition" (Coates 4). Lukianowicz recognizes a symptomatic autoscopy, caused by organic disease, and idiopathic autoscopy, which is

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<sup>3</sup> This double is pictured in the Oxford edition of The Haunted Man in Leech's illustration entitled "Redlaw and the Phantom."



psychological in origin. This latter form is "interpreted in terms of a compensatory or a wish-fulfilling mechanism" (Guerard, "Concepts of the Double" 5-6). Richet has collected several cases of autoscopic hallucination, observing that "[the autoscopic double] is most frequently an objectification of an idea .... There is, in fine, only an impression made on the percipient which he objectifies as an internal phantom" (554. Richet's italics).

Autoscopic hallucination was experienced by de Maupassant and E.T.A. Hoffmann, both of whom suffered from neuro-syphillis, and wrote about doubles. De Maupassant saw his double in 1889, as reported by Rank:

He was sitting at his desk in his study, having given strict orders that no one was to be admitted. Suddenly he had the impression that someone had opened the door. He turned around and to his great astonishment saw his own self enter and sit down in front of him, resting his head on his hand. All that Maupassant wrote on this occasion was dictated to him by his double. Having finished, he rose and the phantom vanished. (Rank, Beyond Psychology 79)

In his seminal study of these phenomena,<sup>4</sup> Lukianowicz relates the experience of "F," an epileptic who saw his double:

I feel dazed and "empty" in myself. My body is like an empty shell. Then, all at once, I see and feel how my "shadow," or "my other me," steps out of me, of my earthly body. He makes two or three steps, then stops, and turns his head to me. I feel how my soul and life leave my body and enter him. Soon he

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<sup>4</sup> N. Lukianowicz, "Autoscopic Phenomena." A.M.A. Archives on Neurology and Psychiatry, vol. 80. August 1958.

is the real me, and what is left of the "old" me is only my "outer body," just like an empty shell after the chick has hatched. Then he nods at me and begins to walk, and my empty body follows him like a shadow. (Cited by Guerard, "Concepts of the Double" 6. Lukianowicz's italics)

The experience of "F" clearly involves a transference of ego, as does that of de Maupassant, to a lesser degree. In both cases, we see a splitting of the ego into active and passive halves, the double always the more active. Here we see autoscopy involving both the objectification of an idea and wish-fulfilment. Objectification occurs in the separation of part of the self and its projection in the form of the double. Wish-fulfilment occurs in that the objectified part has been repressed by the ego in the unified psyche, but as a discrete entity in the form of the double, it is free to act without this repression.

According to Rogers:

case histories of autoscopy confirm the psychological validity of subject doubling in fiction. When an author portrays a protagonist as seeing his double, it is not simply a device or gimmick calculated to arouse the reader's interest by virtue of the strangeness of the episode but is, in fact, a result of his sense of the division to which the human mind in conflict with itself is susceptible. (29)

In her study of the double in Dostoevsky and Dickens (Dostoevsky's Dickens), MacPike comments on some examples of the autoscopic double in literature:

Many of the traditional doubles in literature are autoscopic...[Poe's] William Wilson has a double who is like him physically but his exact opposite

in behaviour....Golyadkin in Dostoevsky's The Double is perhaps the clearest literary example of this classification. He creates an autoscopic double who is at once just like him and exactly his opposite, as Dr Jekyll creates in Mr Hyde a release for all his unrealizable despicabilities. (152)

In this assessment, she fails to differentiate between the internal and external double. Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde represent an internalized doubling of psychic qualities, two different personae inhabiting the same body. In the other examples, doubling is externalized in the form of two separate characters. Golyadkin's double looks like him, and is therefore a true autoscopic double, but differs psychically. His double seems a projection of the ego ideal and torments him by usurping his various social roles and aspirations. William Wilson's double is an autoscopic projection of his superego who acts as an externalized conscience.

In his essay "Dickens and the Double," Lane differentiates between these two kinds of doubles, the internal and external:

Among the many ways an author can deal with this archetypal figure of the double at least one basic distinction can be made, between the internal and the external double. 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. (47)

The internal double is a case of split personality, in which psychic decomposition is contained within one shared body. The external double presents an objectification of

this psychic decomposition, in which one aspect of the psyche is projected into a discrete character: "Part of the character actually rests within his external double. He is not a whole man without his double; if he should destroy his double, he would destroy part of himself" (47). However, as is the case in many of Dickens's ghost stories, as well as in the doubles of William Wilson and Mr Golyadkin, "the external double may be only a phantom...which must either be a hallucination or be justified by some kind of supernaturalism" (47).

Another duality in the classification of literary doubles is that the double may be manifest or latent.<sup>5</sup> If the doubling is latent, the work may be read and interpreted without an awareness of character decomposition. A case in point is Oliver Twist. An awareness of Fagin and Brownlow as doubled father figures is not integral to a complete apprehension of this novel. In the case of a manifest double, the reader is explicitly

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<sup>5</sup> "The elements of the psyche as they find expression in manifest and latent doubles are analogous to the state of elements in mechanical mixtures and chemical compounds. Elements merely mixed together can be separated with relative ease, whereas those in a compound can be separated only by analysis, often with considerable difficulty" (Rogers 40).

made aware of the doubles.<sup>6</sup> The use of a manifest double incurs a

lack of esthetic distance resulting from this transparency [which] allows incipient guilt and anxiety feelings in the reader to inhibit deep identification with the characters. Where decomposition is latent, the reader can identify with the protagonist consciously and antagonist unconsciously, but where decomposition is manifest, the reader's awareness that the "bad guy" is somehow part of the "good guy" tends to block his identification with both of them. (Rogers 31)

The Two Menaechmuses of Plautus (also known as The Menaechmi) provides an example of completely externalized manifest autoscopic doubling. This play is a comedy of mistaken identity, and it known to English audiences as a source for Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors. Plautus makes use of manifest autoscopic doubles in the form of identical twins (both named Menaechmus) who are separated at an early age. Upon reaching adulthood, one of the twins searches for his lost brother, at last arriving in the town where he lives: "Everyone takes the stranger for their own fellow-citizen Menaechmus, and he is so addressed by his brother's mistress, wife, and father-in-law. At last the brothers recognise each other" (quoted from the Argument of the play).

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<sup>6</sup> Examples of the manifest autoscopic double are found in Dostoevsky's The Double, Poe's "William Wilson," Conrad's The Secret Sharer, Dickens's The Haunted Man, Hope's The Prisoner of Zenda and The Man in the Iron Mask of Dumas.

In this case, there is no psychic decomposition, for the brothers are alike in character as well as appearance, like the brothers Cheeryble in Nicholas Nickleby. The comedy arises from people mistaking one Menaechmus for the other, and from each brother's ignorance of the other's proximity. The doubles, in this case, are entirely separate and entirely similar. They are totally external to each other and do not partake of psychical decomposition or interconnectivity.

In contrast to the Menaechmi is the internal manifest double, found in the wolf-man of legend and horror films. This figure provides an example of split personality, of double selves inhabiting a single form. The lycanthropic aspect of the self lives its separate life, and, in his non-lunar phase, the reasonable man hates and fears his bestial self. This is not an example of true doubling because there is no objectification of personae, no externalized splitting of character. The personality is split while the body is shared, and each persona has complete control over the same body at different times. If we substitute chemistry for lunar influence, we may see a similar dynamic in Stevenson's Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. It is a case of internal psychic decomposition or split personality, but an externalized double is lacking, and although Jekyll and Hyde are in conflict they can never really meet or interact.

The stories of the Menaechmi and the wolf-man or Jekyll and Hyde exhibit a certain degree of doubling. They involve two simple and opposite forms of the manifest double, which is either completely internal or external. However, the elements of decomposition with external projection of character and the psychic interaction of the doubles are lacking in both cases. They lack what Keppler terms "that *sine qua non* of any second self, the paradox of simultaneous separateness from the first self and identity with him" (32).

In the realm of horror fiction, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein provides an example of the latent double predicated on psychic decomposition.<sup>7</sup> The Monster may be seen as an objectified projection of Frankenstein's bestial and perverse impulses, an externalized expression of his "unrealizable despicabilities." Philmus observes that "the monster is...logically as well as causally an extension of Frankenstein....The monster emerges from an inner struggle that releases impulses Frankenstein himself hardly dares to

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<sup>7</sup> "That the creation of the Monster is in reality a division, that the Monster and Victor are doubles, and that other sets of doubles occur throughout Frankenstein as throughout Gothic literature generally, are widely recognized.... Psychological readings of Frankenstein...explain the Monster as the agent of Victor's unconscious, committing those acts that the conscious Victor cannot or will not commit" (Patterson Thornburg 7-8).

acknowledge..." (89). Miyoshi considers the murders committed by the Monster to be "a projection of Frankenstein's own suppressed urge to destroy what he loves....The common error of calling the Monster 'Frankenstein' has considerable justification. He is the scientist's deviant self" (84). At one point in the novel, Victor Frankenstein acknowledges this psychical link with his creation: "I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror...nearly in the light of my own vampire, *my own spirit let loose from the grave*, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me" (Shelley 72. My italics).

Examples of latent doubling may be seen in three of Dickens's novels, in which there emerges the figure of the double as Punisher in characters like Rigaud, Orlick, or Heep, each of whom performs actions which the hero may secretly desire to enact, but which he represses because they are morally impossible for him. In Little Dorrit, Rigaud uncovers the secret connection between the Dorrits and the Clennams, suspicions of which haunt Arthur. In Great Expectations, Orlick beats Pip's sister just as Bentley Drummle pummels Estella, acts of violence which the gentlemanly Pip may secretly want to enact, but which he is incapable of. In David Copperfield, Uriah Heep has designs on the Wickfield daughter and property, as does David;



Uriah even prepares the way for David by attenuating the father's power as a blocking figure.

In fact, in David Copperfield, there is a Karamazov-like triplication of the hero in the figures of Heep, Steerforth, and David. On an amoral level, Steerforth seduces Em'ly and removes the blocking or rival figure of Ham, as David would wish to and, on an immoral level, Heep's criminal designs on the Wickfield establishment parallel David's wishes. Steerforth and Heep perform a wish-fulfilment function as they act in ways unacceptable to the hero.<sup>8</sup> As A.N. Wilson observes in his biography of Tolstoy; "by making Steerforth do all the running with the little Em'lys of this world, it leaves the self-image, the 'innocent,' prepubescent Copperfield-figure, free to pursue an emotional attachment to Em'ly which is untainted by sexual desire" (89-90).

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Based on Rogers's A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature, MacPike has delimited four types of the literary double (Dostoevsky's Dickens 151-153).

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<sup>8</sup> "The novelist who consciously or unconsciously exploits psychological Doubles may either juxtapose or duplicate two characters, the one representing the socially acceptable or conventional personality, the other externalizing the free, uninhibited, often criminal self" (Rosenfield 314). See Dostoevsky's Dickens for a detailed discussion of doubling in David Copperfield.

For Macpiké and Rogers, first among the four types of double is the *autoscopie double*, which has been discussed above. This is a primal and obvious form of the double, and therefore it is always manifest.

Second is the *dissociative double*, which is a "dissociative, opposing-self double, the psychological half brother. Two separate characters serve as doubles of each other....in Dickens we find Ralph and Nicholas Nickleby as dissociative doubles" (151-153).

Third is the *double of decomposition*. In this form of doubling, we see characters "who represent complementary traits, all of which are possessed by a focal character who represents either the genesis or the reconciliation of the various complementary doublings illustrated by the other characters. This is the double of decomposition--one full personality decomposed into its constituent parts" (151-153).

Fourth is the *composite double*, in which form "A single human whole is represented by a number of characters, none of whom separately is able to achieve the full spectrum of humanity....This type of double is almost mandatorily latent, for there is no individual who represents the composite of traits, values, or responses which the author implies as ideal or complete" (151-153).

This taxonomy of doubles is a little vague, for the

composite and decomposed double are identical except for the presence or absence of a central focusing character. The dissociative and composite/decomposed double are also quite similar except that one is a duality, the other a multiplication. However, it helps to define terms and illuminate the forms and functions of the double in literature. Most important is the concept of decomposition, in which the double represents a "constituent part" of a persona. This is the key to all the more interesting forms of the double, for doubling without psychic decomposition is mere repetition of character.

In the conclusion of his book, Rogers identifies six categories of the literary functions of the double (A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature 172-174).

The first function is *formal*, for the splitting of a composite character tends to enhance dramatic conflict.

The second is a *representative* function, as endopsychic conflict is portrayed in the form of interpersonal relationships between discrete characters.

The third function involves *multiple identifications*, in that the reader makes identifications on conscious and unconscious levels. According to Rogers, "Decomposition of a literary character is apt to involve a coordinated appeal to the reader's id, ego, and superego" (172-174).

The fourth is a *defensive* function as unpleasant

qualities are projected onto other characters, thus defending the integrity of the hero. An example is the David/Steerforth/Heep configuration in David Copperfield, which "cleanses" David's interest in Em'ly and Agnes.

The fifth function is one of *distortion*, in which the fantasy content is distorted by devices such as displacement, projection, or reversal, thus easing confrontation of naked concepts.

The sixth function is the *establishment of aesthetic distance*, which invokes balance and equilibrium so that intimate material is distanced. This allows the reader to "introject the potentially disturbing elements of a work without experiencing undue anxiety" (172-174). The reader is distanced consciously, on a formal level, while unconscious responses are elicited.

I have evolved my own taxonomy of doubles in the light of these considerations and with reference to the works of Dickens.

*Autoscopic double.* This manifest mirror image of the self has been discussed above.

*Projection double.* Here latent psychic qualities are projected and objectified. This form of doubling is predicated on decomposition of character but is less complex and less fully realized than the double of decomposition.

*Decomposed double.* In this form, character traits are given discrete individual existence. "One full personality [is] decomposed into its constituent parts" (MacPike 151-153).

*Superego double.* The imperious voice of ego ideal and conscience is objectified as a double, through the mechanisms of decomposition and projection.

In the case of the double of decomposition, the doubled characters, if combined in one single character, would form a complete persona. The double of projection is a less decomposed form, in which a single character trait or latent desire which is suppressed in the original is given a discrete form. Therefore it has a more intimate relationship with its character of origin than the decomposed double. In fact, the double of projection must always have a character of origin, whereas doubles of decomposition are separated aspects of an ideal character which may or may not exist in the fiction.<sup>9</sup>

Thus the projected double is predicated on psychic

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<sup>9</sup> The presence or absence of this ideal character differentiates between the composite and the decomposed double for Rogers and MacPike. However, I do not adhere to this distinction because psychical decomposition and externalized projection of the decomposed elements occur in both the composite and decomposed forms of the double, without regard to the presence of an ideal focusing character.

decomposition and is quite similar to the double of decomposition or composite double of Rogers and MacPike. The vital difference lies in that the projected double is often a single double (as opposed to the constellation of doubles which may occur in the decomposed form), expressing a single psychic quality which is latent in its character of origin.

The device of a decomposed double is used to great effect in Poe's story "The Fall of the House of Usher." Here the characters of Usher and the narrator appear as embodiments of two psychic qualities, reason and artistic sensibility. The narrator is perceptive but seems quite obtuse as he seeks to account for events and appearances in a purely reasonable way, and thus he misses their true significance. Usher is quite aware of the significance of the unearthly happenings in his house but is a creature of awareness and sensitivity only, suffering from paralysis of will and volition. If these two could somehow be merged in one person, they would comprise a complete psyche. We may see this in the way that the narrator's reasoned explanations are meant to be seen through by the reader, who as a complete persona supposedly partakes of both reason and sensitivity.

The double of decomposition can also be illustrated with recourse to a familiar theological example. It has

been said that Man created God in his own image, but devotees of the Christian religion take the process further, for their image of God is split into archetypal figures of Father, Son, and all pervading Spirit, as well as the lesser deities of Satan and the Virgin. In this way the unimaginable is rendered manageable, the illimitable sublime is limited, and made to correspond to humanly recognizable images. This Christian splitting of God corresponds to the double of decomposition, in that differing traits are given discrete existences. Here we see judgement, mercy, omniscience, evil<sup>10</sup> and purity--the differing qualities attributed to God separated and assigned discrete existence in the form of various archetypal figures.

The double of projection is the character who seems a discrete objectification of another character's unconscious drives. This double acts out the repressed wishes of the id like the figure of the double as Punisher mentioned above or the Monster in Frankenstein. In this light, the character of Carker in Dombey and Son may be seen as a projection of the more predatory aspects of Mr Dombey, an expression of naked oral aggression without Dombey's

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<sup>10</sup> "...the devil is certainly nothing else than the personification of the repressed unconscious instinctual life" (Freud, "Character and Anal Erotism" 174).

civilized and socialized trappings. In A Christmas Carol, the Ghost of Christmas Past is a latent double of one part of Scrooge's psyche, a projection and personification of his repressed memories.<sup>11</sup>

Repression is an important aspect of the double of projection, for it is the repressed aspect of the psyche that is objectified as the double. As Keppler observes:

not only must the second self be different from the first, but he must be different in a particular way, a way that is responsible for the dynamic tension that always exists between them. He is the self that has been left behind, or overlooked, or unrealized, or otherwise excluded from the first self's self-conception; he is the self that must be come to terms with. (11)

In his essay "The 'Uncanny'" Freud writes of the psychological origins of the double:

A special agency is...formed [in the ego], which has the function of observing and criticizing the self and of exercising a censorship within the mind, and which we become aware of as our "conscience"...The fact that an agency of this kind exists, which is able to treat the rest of the ego like an object--the fact, that is, that man is capable of self-observation--renders it possible to invest the old idea of a "double" with a new meaning. (235)

This is the origin of the superego double, which is predicated on guilt, ego-splitting and self-criticism. Freud goes on to say,

But it is not only this latter material...which may

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<sup>11</sup> "'I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.' 'Long past?' inquired Scrooge...'No. Your past'" (CB 25).



be incorporated in the idea of a double. There are also all the unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling in phantasy, all the strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed, and all the suppressed acts of volition which nourish in us the illusion of Free Will. (236)

Here is the origin of the double of projection, springing from repressed ego-strivings which have been driven into the unconscious, representing the fulfilment of "possible futures" and the actualization of fantasy.

## Chapter 2: The Double of Conscience

What might this be? A thousand fantasies  
Begin to throng into my memory  
Of calling shapes, and beckning shaddows dire,  
And airy tongues that syllable mens names  
On Sands and Shores and desert Wildernesses.  
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound  
The vertuous mind, that ever walks attended  
By a strong siding champion Conscience....

Milton, Comus

It is no less than the truth that even such fundamental concepts as ego, id and superego have lost their pristine clarity of definition...as for the superego, that depends nowadays on the developmental theories or caprices of whatever writer employs it. (Glover 13)

The concept of the superego is difficult to isolate and define. In the writings of Freud, it is constantly evolving, variously termed censor, superego, ego ideal, self-observing agency, and conscience; references to it are scattered throughout his works. I view the superego as a tripartite structure in its aspects of primal superego, ego ideal, and conscience.

It appears as a "censor" between the conscious and unconscious systems (the ego and the id), much concerned with the mechanisms of repression and individuation, as a psychic tormentor in its role of "conscience," lashing the ego with feelings of guilt and inferiority, and as an arbiter of social behaviour and repository of moral law in its aspect of ego ideal. The superego has its primal origins in the id, and maintains access to the material therein, but throughout life it influences consciousness and makes its presence known through feelings of guilt and the phenomenon of conscience. Most important in terms of the double in literature is the superego as psychic

observer and critic, in its aspect of conscience.<sup>1</sup>

It may not be superfluous to elucidate the meaning of a few words such as "super-ego," "conscience," "sense of guilt"...which we have often, perhaps, used too loosely and interchangeably....The super-ego is an agency which has been inferred by us, and conscience is a function of that agency. This function consists in keeping a watch over the actions and intentions of the ego and judging them, in exercising a censorship. The sense of guilt, the harshness of the super-ego, is thus the same thing as the severity of the conscience. It is the perception which the ego has of being watched over in this way, the assessment of the tension between its own strivings and the demands of the super-ego. (Freud, Civilization and its Discontents 73)

...we have been obliged to assume that within the ego itself a particular agency has become differentiated, which we name the super-ego. This super-ego occupies a special position between the ego and the id. It belongs to the ego and shares its high degree of psychological organization; but it has a particularly intimate connexion with the id. It is in fact a precipitate of the first object cathexes of the id and is the heir to the Oedipus complex after its demise.\* This super-ego can confront the ego and treat it like an object; and it often treats it very harshly. It is as important for the ego to remain on good terms with the super-ego as with the id. Estrangements between the ego and the super-ego are of great significance in mental life. You will already have guessed that the super-ego is the vehicle of the phenomenon that we call conscience. \*[The charges of energy (cathexes) directed from the id on to its first external objects (the parents) are transformed into

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<sup>1</sup> For some other views on the origin and role of conscience, see Darwin (The Descent of Man, chapter 4), and Nietzsche (On the Genealogy of Morals, part 2). Both see conscience as a socially predicated entity which arises out of our consciousness of others watching us, rather than Freud's psychically predicated self-observing agency. Nietzsche views conscience as a social contract based on fear of punishment. For Darwin, it arises from the survival enhancing benefits accrued when organisms cooperate in a group.

identifications and the objects are introduced into the ego and there take the form of a super-ego.] (Freud's note. "The Question of Lay-Analysis" 137)

The primal origins of the superego lie in the oral phase of earliest infancy ("the first object cathexes of the id"), and pre-date the formation of the ego. "It is generally accepted today that the ego is not instinctive in man. The ego is not present at birth and develops only as a product of experience and learning"<sup>2</sup> (Symonds 18). The superego later undergoes reformulation in the Oedipal phase and introjects further aspects of parental figures and the environment to form the ego ideal.<sup>3</sup> In both instances:

the installation of the super-ego can be described as a successful instance of identification with the parental agency....The basis of this process is...the assimilation of one ego to another one, as a result of which the first ego behaves like the second in certain respects, imitates it and in a sense takes it up into itself. Identification has been not unsuitably compared with the cannibalistic incorporation of the other person. (Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" 63-64)

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<sup>2</sup> "The baby new to earth and sky,/ What time his tender palm is prest/ Against the circle of the breast,/ Has never thought that 'this is I;'/ But as he grows he gathers much..." (Tennyson, In Memoriam XLV).

<sup>3</sup> De Sade formulated a theory of the ego ideal more than a century before Freud: "The word *conscience*...denominates that as it were inner voice which cries out when we do something--it makes no difference what--we are forbidden to do: and this eminently simple definition lays bare, even to the most casual glance, the origins the conscience has in prejudices inculcated by training and upbringing" (Juliette 12. Sade's italics).

Lasch explains the difference between the primal superego and the ego ideal:

The superego...consists of internalized representations of parents and other symbols of authority, but it is important to distinguish between those representations which derive from archaic, pre-Oedipal impressions and those resting on later impressions and therefore reflecting a more realistic assessment of parental powers. Strictly speaking, these latter contribute to the formation of the "ego ideal" --the internalization of others' expectations and of the traits we love and admire in them; whereas the superego, in distinction to the ego ideal, derives from early fantasies that contain a large admixture of aggression and rage, originating in the parents' inevitable failure to satisfy all the child's instinctual demands. But the aggressive, punishing, and even self-destructive part of the superego is usually modified by later experience, which softens early fantasies of parents as devouring monsters. If that experience is lacking...the sadistic superego can be expected to develop at the expense of the ego ideal, the destructive superego at the expense of the severe but solicitous inner voice we call conscience. (41)

Thus far ego ideal and conscience have been explained, but what of the primal origin of the superego in the oral phase?

What are we to make of these "representations which derive from archaic, pre-Oedipal impressions" and "early fantasies that contain a large admixture of aggression and rage?" What are the "early fantasies of parents as devouring monsters" and what is their relationship to "the aggressive, punishing, and even self-destructive aspect of the superego"?

In his book The Superego, Bergler sees the origin of

the superego in the relationship between the infant and mother-figure in the oral phase of development. It must be remembered that in this early, pre-Oedipal, phase the parental figure is seen as a threatening, monstrous being, as has been noted by Jung (this is the origin of the evil maternal figure in many fairy tales). From the infant's point of view, "sadistic as well as aggressive reactions are of course a marked feature of the stage of oral primacy" (Glover 27).

In the oral phase, certain fears arise out of a reformulation of infantile megalomania. In the womb, the baby is omnipotent, and at birth it becomes completely helpless. Thus there is a psychic habit of megalomania which must come to terms with the new state of affairs. The primal superego arises out of this conflict between the contrasting infantile experiences of omnipotence and helplessness.

The primal locus of the conflict is feeding. In the womb hunger was satisfied automatically through the umbilicus, before even the feeling of unsatisfied need known as hunger was experienced. It is only after birth that such needs make their appearance: "The wait of a few seconds or minutes for nourishment means more than caloric frustration. It is also--and above all--the graveyard of infantile megalomania. And this ineradicable infantile

megalomania follows us throughout our lives like a shadow" (Bergler 32). Reformulations of infantile megalomania then occur, in which "both dependence and mother-child duality are...negated by the...infant." In Bergler's opinion, "The child's entire development is controlled by his constant attempts to maintain infantile megalomania and autarchy, and to ward off the blows incessantly inflicted upon his aim by reality" (33). This gives rise to what Bergler calls the "septet of baby fears":

*Fear of starvation.* A fear which is attendant on feelings of hunger.

*Fear of poisoning.* A reformulation of the first fear which allows the infant to maintain its psychic autarchy and aggression when it notices that it is being provided with food.

*Fear of being devoured.* This fear is a projection of the infant's hunger and oral aggression onto the mother.

*Fear of choking.* Such dreams are common, and this fear may later emerge as claustrophobia.

*Fear of dismemberment.* This not unreasonable fear is attendant upon the infant's utter helplessness.

*Fear of being drained.* Infants fear the loss of urine and feces, which they regard as part of themselves. This is the origin of misers and of the vampire legend.

*Fear of castration.* This is a later reformulation of the fear of dismemberment which occurs in the Oedipal



phase. Bergler observes that "much of what is classified as 'phallic castration fear' is at bottom undigested oral fear" (35).

In this septet of fears, particularly those of being devoured and dismembered, lies the origin of the primal superego. These fears represent a projection onto the parent of the infant's oral aggression. This aggression becomes latent, repressed in later life through the action of the secondary mental processes, that is, through the growth of the ego and the formation of the ego ideal. The result is unconscious aggression which is directed toward the self, in the form of the superego:

His aggressiveness is introjected, internalized; it is, in point of fact, sent back where it came from—that is, it is directed towards his own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego, which sets itself over against the rest of the ego as super-ego, and which now, in the form of "conscience," is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon other, extraneous individuals. (Freud, Civilization and its Discontents 60)

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Let us now look at some manifestations of the superego in the form of the literary double.

Bakhtin notes a classical example of manifest autoscopic doubling with psychical decomposition in the "Bimarcus" of Varro (also known as "The Double Varro" and

"Varro Split"). In this work the double is internal in origin and external in aspect, a projection of the protagonist's conscience. "Marcus had promised to write a work on tropes and figures, but he does not keep his promise. The Second Marcus--that is, his conscience, his double--constantly reminds him of it, gives him no peace" (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 117). This is an instance of true psychological doubling in that the double is external, and yet is intimately involved with the first Marcus and with the contents of his psyche (his promise to himself). This simultaneous external and internal existence is characteristic of the double: "He is always...a self in his own right, never translatable into a product of mental aberration; yet...his psyche [is] intergrown by untraceable tendrils with that of his counterpart...never translatable into a purely external fellow being" (Keppler 10). As Poe expresses it in one of his many tales of doubles ("The Fall of the House of Usher"), "sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them" (Poe 46).

More recent and complex than Varro's depiction of an autoscopic double of conscience is the double in Poe's "William Wilson." I shall discuss this story at some length because it illustrates the double of conscience in terms of its ambivalent relationship with the ego, which is of

import in understanding the various aspects of the superego. Another reason for my discussing this classic double story is that I feel the explications of the double in "William Wilson" provided by Rank and Rogers in their psychoanalytic studies of the double in literature are incomplete.

The epigraph of "William Wilson" is a specific reference to conscience as a confrontational figure ("What say of it? what say CONSCIENCE grim,/That spectre in my path"). According to Rank, the double in "William Wilson" is:

...a beneficent admonitor who is directly addressed as the "conscience" of the person. As Freud has demonstrated, this awareness of guilt...measures on the one hand the distance between the ego-ideal and the attained reality; on the other, it is nourished by a powerful fear of death and creates strong tendencies toward self-punishment, which also imply suicide. (The Double 76-77) [Wilson] finally, despite the efforts of his better self to save him, kills himself. (Beyond Psychology 79)

Rogers identifies Wilson's double as a projection of the superego:

One of the most representative of superego doubles appears in Poe's "William Wilson"...In [the] disparity between the relatively innocuous nature of the protagonist's crimes and the extreme baseness by which they are characterised in the story itself, the tyrannical severity of the superego finds expression. (25)

Both assessments are similar, despite their differing use of psychological terminology, for conscience, ego

ideal, and superego are closely related terms, ego ideal and superego being more or less interchangeable. Freud writes of "a differentiation within the ego, which may be called the 'ego ideal' or 'super ego'..."(The Ego and the Id 18). The two are differing aspects of the same psychological agency, the superego the more primal, and the ego ideal the more socially oriented aspect. The ego ideal is predicated on examples of morals and correct behaviour learned from parental figures and environment, involving "a standard of perfection set up in the early life of the child" which is based on identification with a parental figure (Drever 80). The superego is the unconscious conscience. It is more severe because it is in direct contact with the id and thus contains much primal aggression.<sup>4</sup>

Conscience is a conscious phenomenon, based on guilt feelings arising from conflict between the ego and the

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<sup>4</sup> A good example of the "tyrannical severity" of a pure unconscious superego double may be found in a number of Kafka's fictions, where a character often must die because he has in some way failed a father figure (See "In the Penal Colony," "The Judgement," "The Metamorphosis"), or, in Oliver Twist, in the phantom which pursues Bill Sikes to his death. An example of the double as socially predicated ego ideal is seen in Gogol's "The Nose." In this story, a man's nose disassociates itself from him and takes a discrete existence, living out his pretensions of snobbery, that is, his social and professional hopes. Searching for his missing nose, he sees it in the street one day: "It was wearing a gold braided uniform with a high stand-up collar and chamois trousers, and had a sword by its side. From the plumes on its hat one could tell that it held the exalted rank of state councillor" (Gogol 48).

superego, one of the ways in which the superego makes itself known in the ego. According to Freud, "An interpretation of the normal, conscious sense of guilt (conscience) presents no difficulties; it is based on the tension between the ego and the ego ideal and is the expression of a condemnation of the ego by its critical agency" (The Ego and the Id 40-41).

I view Wilson's double primarily as a representative of conscience because it provides moral guidance through the tempering consciousness of social guilt. "William Wilson" externalises the conflict of the ego and the superego, and expresses not only the severity of the conscience, but also its benevolent aspect in maintaining psychic balance.

Wilson's crimes are of two sorts. During the action of the story, they consist of things like seduction and cheating at cards, which Wilson describes as "comparatively trivial wickedness." In the period of time between the narrated events and Wilson's telling of them, he commits crimes of such "unparalleled infamy" that he dare not write them down: "I would not...embody a record of my later years of unspeakable misery and unpardonable crime" (Poe 25). In their explications of the story, Rank and Rogers fail to consider the double nature of Wilson's crimes as well as the narrative frame of the story. They feel that Wilson has stabbed himself at the story's end, but the vision at the

ending is quite ambiguous, and if Wilson dies at the climax, who is left to narrate? As in "The Cask of Amontillado" the narrator of "William Wilson" gives the impression of speaking much after the narrated events. In the introductory pages, he speaks of "later years" and of the "instant [when] all virtue dropped bodily as a mantle," causing "a sudden elevation of turpitude....I passed, with the stride of a giant, into more than the enormities of Elah-Gabalus. What chance--what one event brought this evil thing to pass bear with me as I relate" (25).

The "one event" to which Wilson refers is the death of his double of conscience, as related in the story, for only after the narrated events do his enormous and detestable crimes occur. Prior to this he describes his crimes as "vice," "profligacy," "folly" and "soulless dissipation" (32). They serve to invoke the double, provoke it into action. The resulting conflict brings about the destruction of the double, and Wilson suffers. Once free of the tempering effect of conscience Wilson, like Elah-Gabalus, "abandoned himself to the grossest pleasures with ungoverned fury, and soon found disgust and satiety in the midst of his enjoyments" (Gibbon 1: 127). The second Wilson is a conscience figure who provides balance and temperance. He checks the original Wilson in transgressions of honour which would induce guilt. Without his double, the

projection of his conscience, Wilson is lost, an incomplete one-sided persona in thrall to his unrestrained appetites.

Although it is in the main a political Utopia, The Republic of Plato provides an analytical decomposition of the human psyche which is similar to the Freudian model. In this work, the state and the individual are seen as doubles or analogues, for the individual provides a microcosmic model of the state:

We think of justice as a quality that may exist in a whole community as well as in an individual, and the community is the bigger of the two. Possibly, then, we may find justice there in larger proportions, easier to make out. So I suggest that we should begin by inquiring what justice means in a state. Then we can go on to look for its counterpart on a smaller scale in the individual. (Plato 55)

Plato discerns three main qualities in both the state and in the individual: reason, appetite, and a "spirited element" which, in league with reason, rules appetite, or in league with appetite, subverts reason. In the state, reason is analogous to the philosopher kings, who rule with the aid of the guardians, who correspond to the spirited element. Appetite has its analogue in the commoners. In both the state and the individual,

it will be the business of reason to rule with wisdom and forethought on behalf of the entire soul; while the spirited element ought to act as its subordinate and ally....they must be set in command over the appetites, which form the greater part of each man's soul and are by nature insatiably covetous....[The state or the individual will be] temperate by reason of the unanimity and

concord of all three, when there is no internal conflict between the ruling element and its two subjects, but all agree that reason should be ruler. (140-141)

This tripartite division in the individual is expressed in terms of a man (reason), a lion (spirit) and a "many headed beast" (appetite), all inhabiting a single human form (316). According to Plato, the lion and the beast allied against the man will destroy reason, but the lion and the man together will tame the beast. Therefore, "He should enlist the lion as his ally, and, caring for all alike, should foster their growth" (317).

The relationships of these various images are shown in the following table, including the similarity between Plato's and Freud's decomposition of psychic qualities.

Freudian psyche	Platonic qualities		political roles
ego	reason	man	rulers
superego	spirit	lion	guardians
id	appetite	beast	commoners

(after Rogers 9)

In Freudian terms, ego is equal to reason, and id equals appetite: "The ego represents what may be called reason...in contrast to the id, which contains the passions" (Freud, The Ego and the Id 5). The superego is coequal with spirit. The first two correspondences are obvious, while the third requires some explanation.



The superego is in the main non-rational, but may on occasion rise to consciousness or make itself known in the form of guilt feelings. It is, in a sense, the arbiter between consciousness and the unconscious, between the id and the ego, and knowledge of it is a useful tool in psychoanalysis because it is much concerned with the mechanism of repression.

In the case of melancholia, the superego can be the enemy of the ego:

A leading characteristic of these cases is a cruel self-depreciation of the ego combined with relentless self-criticism and bitter self-reproaches....They show us the ego divided, fallen into two pieces, one of which rages against the second. The piece which behaves so cruelly comprises the conscience, a critical agency within the ego, which even in normal times takes up a critical attitude towards the ego, though never so relentlessly and so unjustifiably....We have been driven to the hypothesis that some such agency develops in our ego which may cut itself off from the rest of the ego and come into conflict with it. We have called it the "ego ideal" and by way of functions we have ascribed to it self-observation, the moral conscience, the censorship of dreams, and the chief influence in repression. (Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" 109-110) (As usual, Freud uses the terms "superego" and "ego ideal" interchangeably.)

Here we note the dual nature of the superego:<sup>5</sup> on the positive side, self-observation and conscience; on the negative, cruel and bitter self-reproaches, relentless and

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<sup>5</sup> "One must not always think of the ego and the superego being 'armed camps' in inevitable combat with one another ...the ego and the superego may operate in concert" (Glover 96-97).

unjustified criticism. Depending on its relation to the ego, the superego can be an agency which leads to improved self-knowledge and morality, or to depression, self-hatred, and even suicide. In this wise, it is like Plato's lion or spirited element, which can be a positive or negative quality depending on its relationship with reason, providing balance and temperance, or subduing reason.

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Since psycho-analysis has divided the personality into an ego and superego...it has become easy to recognize in...punishment dreams fulfilments of the wishes of the superego. (Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams 514)

An aspect of the role of conscience in the relationship of the id and ego is presented in Martin Chuzzlewit in a dream of Montague Tigg. As noted above, conscience is the sense of guilt arising from conflict between the ego and the superego, and is one of the ways in which the superego makes itself known to the conscious mind. Tigg's dream is precipitated by guilt, and the interplay of the ego, id, and superego within his psyche is represented in dream imagery, with the superego appearing in the form of the double.

At a earlier point in the novel, Tigg "changed his name, and changed his outward surface....Though turned and twisted upside down, and inside out...no longer Montague

Tigg but Tigg Montague; still it was Tigg" (MC 429 C27). He has changed his external persona, but the inner man remains, as is indicated by the page heading, which reads, "Mr. Tigg in a new character" (429). He only inhabits his new role. He dreams this dream when he falls asleep in the same house as Jonas Chuzzlewit, whom he is blackmailing, and who plans to murder him.

There was another door in the room, but it was locked on the outer side; and with what place it communicated he knew not.

His fears or evil conscience reproduced this door in all his dreams. He dreamed that a dreadful secret was connected with it: a secret which he knew, and yet did not know, for although he was heavily responsible for it, and a party to it, he was harassed even in his vision by a distracting uncertainty in reference to its import. Incoherently entwined with this dream was another, which represented it as the hiding place of an enemy, a shadow, a phantom; and made it the business of his life to keep the terrible creature closed up, and prevent it from forcing its way in upon him. With this view Nadgett, and he, and a strange man with a bloody smear upon his head (who told him that he had been his playfellow, and told him, too, the real name of an old schoolmate, forgotten until then), worked with iron plates and nails to make the door secure; but though they worked never so hard, it was all in vain, for the nails broke, or changed to soft twigs, or what was worse, to worms, between their fingers; the wood of the door splintered and crumbled, so that even nails would not remain in it; and the iron plates curled up like hot paper. All this time the creature on the other side--whether it was in the shape of man, or beast, he neither knew nor sought to know--was gaining on them. But his greatest terror was when the man with the bloody smear upon his head demanded of him if he knew this creature's name, and said that he would whisper it. At this the dreamer fell upon his knees, his whole blood thrilling with inexplicable fear, and held his

ears. But looking at the speaker's lips, he saw that they formed the utterance of the letter "J;" and crying aloud that the secret was discovered, and they were all lost, he awoke.

Awoke to find Jonas standing at his bedside watching him. And that very door wide open. (MC 652-653 C42)

This is a dream of the double, and a double dream.<sup>6</sup>

Tigg's psyche has explicitly "reproduced" the door in a dream, and it is a door which opens on both the inner and outer realms. We note that the introductory portion of the dream speaks of secrets and responsibility, whereas the latter part contains more primal and aesthetically striking imagery; its worms and decomposing wood are redolent of the primal horrors of corruption, and that which the door conceals seems more active and threatening, and requires aides to help thwart its ingress.

The exoteric sense of this dream is obvious, and may be derived from its novelistic context. In the waking state, Tigg fears Jonas, and Jonas is on the other side of the door. Tigg is having intimations of his coming death.<sup>7</sup> This interpretation frames the inner core of the dream. Tigg first dreams of the actual door, which is reproduced in the

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<sup>6</sup> Watkins discusses this dream in her psychological study of Dickens's fictions. See Dickens in Search of Himself 127-129.

<sup>7</sup> "Montague--very much in the role of a Dostoevskyan double, both instigator and agent of criminal impulses--has a diabolic insight into Jonas's character..." (Guerard, The Triumph of the Novel 253).

dream, and awakens to see that Jonas has passed through it. Thus the mention of letter "J" and the appearance of Nadgett, which are realistic connecting links to Tigg's conscious guilt and fear in the waking world.

"Incoherently entwined with this dream" is another, with points of reference in the inner psyche of the dreamer, and which contains the image of his doubled self frantically and ineffectually trying to bar the door and prevent the emergence of a feared and unknown creature or phantom. We note that, at this point, the dreamer's "greatest terror was when the man with the bloody smear upon his head demanded of him if he knew this creature's name, and said that he would whisper it." He fears not the creature in itself, but the revelation of its identity.

The man with blood on his head is a double of Tigg, who is soon to be murdered, but he also acts as a superego figure with access to material deeply buried in the dreamer's mind. He tells Tigg "that he had been his playfellow, and told him, too, the real name of an old schoolmate, forgotten until then," saying in effect, "I am a part of you, and here is proof." He does not fear the creature behind the door, though he seems to aid Tigg in barring it; instead he knows its identity, and would reveal it to the dreamer. Thus, on one level, the double is a prophetic figure, warning of realistic danger and, on

another, he is a personification of the superego, attempting to effect an eruption of primal material from the unconscious into the conscious mind. The rotting door and wormy nails indicate that the line of demarcation is wavering, the barrier is weakening, and breakthrough is imminent.

The phantom on the other side of the door represents the unconscious, an area of the psyche which contains, among other things, material which has been repressed. Tigg certainly has much to repress, such as his real identity and the true nature of his business. Thus, in the dream, it is "the business of his life to keep the terrible creature closed up, and prevent it from forcing its way in upon him."

The double here corresponds to the Freudian "censor," a version of the superego which Freud described in imagery which is quite applicable to this dream:

The unconscious system may be compared to a large ante-room, in which the various mental excitations are crowding upon one another, like individual beings. Adjoining this is a second, smaller apartment, a sort of reception-room, in which consciousness resides. But on the threshold between the two there stands a personage with the office of door-keeper, who examines the various mental excitations, censors them, and denies them admittance to the reception-room when he disapproves of them. (A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis 305, Lecture 19)

In this case, the ego and the superego are in conflict, the Tigg figure desperate that the door remain closed, and

the double trying to effect communication with the other side. Here, the superego appears as arbiter between the reluctant ego and the id, seeming to aid in the process of repression, but also bringing buried material towards consciousness.<sup>9</sup> The primal material here is guilt. Tigg has been living a double life, living a lie, and his ego has been fragmented through the resulting stress, "turned and twisted upside down, and inside out." Thus the dream expresses an unconscious desire for psychic reunification, and, because in the waking sphere this guilt is predicated upon Tigg's business dealings, as is Jonas's desire to kill him, the dream has a double nature and is significant to both the outer and the inner man.

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<sup>9</sup> "We see...that we have two kinds of unconscious--the one which is latent but capable of becoming conscious, and the one which is repressed and which is not, in itself and without more ado, capable of becoming conscious" (Freud, The Ego and the Id 5).

### Chapter 3: Christmas Doubles

This dark psychic power, once we have surrendered to it, often assumes other forms which the outer world throws across our path and draws them into us, so that the spirit which seems to animate those forms has in fact been enkindled by us ourselves. Through their inner affinity with us and their influence over our heart they have the power to cast us into Hell or transport us to Heaven, but that is because they are phantoms of our own ego.

E.T.A. Hoffmann, The Sandman



From time to time depressing and extraneous stories break into the irregular flow of this hilarious narrative [The Pickwick Papers]....I never liked them and used to skip them as a boy. (Smithers 27)

The use to which Dickens puts his ghost stories is quite alarming; and although many have enjoyed them, few have taken them as seriously as they should be taken. (Greenman 386)

In a discussion of the theme of the double in Dostoevsky's fictions,<sup>1</sup> Bakhtin notes that in only two cases is the figure of the double a direct personification of a character's internal voice, instances when a character sees and converses with a being which voices his own thoughts, albeit from a different perspective. These visitations are often presented in the form of dream, nightmare, or madness, so that their fictive reality is obscured, and their fantastic, hallucinatory qualities enhanced. This is true of most of the inserted tales in The Pickwick Papers, and all of those up to and including "The Story of the Goblins who Stole a Sexton" (PP C29). Critical opinion is divided as to the fictive veracity of the goblin story. The Dickens Dictionary stresses the psychic conversion of the sexton: "The goblins steal him, and so treat him that he is completely changed on his return to earth" (Philip and Gadd 130). The more recent Dickens Index stresses the hallucinatory aspect: "a misanthropic sexton

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<sup>1</sup> Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, chapter 5.

drinks himself into a stupor on Christmas eve, and has a dream in which he is tormented by goblins..." (Bentley et al 105).

Such fine distinctions are of little import, for it is the fantastical quality of the inserts, not their relative reality, which renders them significant. This may be seen in "A Madman's Manuscript" (PP C11), which is grounded in the social realities of marriage and money but which ends with an insane hallucination of the superego as a persecuting phantom. Regardless of whether they are weighted toward fictive reality or fantastic vision, these tales all involve "some kind of imaginative deviation from everyday thinking" (Thomas 20). Brown stresses the operation of repression in these visions, observing that in Dickens's novels generally, "Interpolated tales resemble dreams within dreams. They generally deal with material to which one part of the psyche is especially desirous of denying reality. The reality, consequently, is most emphatically, though negatively, affirmed" (84). Roberts notes the dream motif and that the first of these interpolations, "The Stroller's Tale," "involves delirium tremens hallucinations and offers the earliest and most emphatic presentation of the split self idea that informs the whole relation between framing tale and insets" (305).

The presentation of the inserted tales as separate narratives told by discrete narrators within the main text

liberates the tales from the aegis of a controlling monolithic authorial consciousness.<sup>2</sup> In Pickwick, the editor's voice is weak, though constant (it is most apparent in the first and the last two chapters), thus allowing for the introduction of many characters, narrators and inserted tales. Hardy observes that "Dickens's storytellers allow him to produce effects and to move into reaches where his own narrative, unaided, dare not go" (169). The interpolated tales allow greater expression of the free fantastic imagination because their narrators do not partake of the reasonable, fact-sifting editorial consciousness. The editor claims that they are dreams, visions or outright lies, thus distancing himself from his own text(s). This gives great freedom of expression to the fantastic elements inherent in the picaresque model, which tends towards a polyphonic mode of expression on account of the various and shifting characters and scenes.

The interpolations in The Pickwick Papers are presented as narrative within narrative, enclosed within the mind of a textual character. This encourages the separation of that mind into its component parts, and allows for the emergence

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<sup>2</sup> In the menippia, "the intellectual structure built up from the story makes for violent dislocations in the customary logic of narrative, though the appearance of carelessness that results reflects only the carelessness of the reader or his tendency to judge by a novel-centered conception of fiction" (Frye 310).

of Dickensian archetypes such as ghosts and phantoms who give tongue to the psyche's suppressed voices. In the dream state, perception is informed by the dreamer's psyche, not by an imposed external reality; thus, in Pickwick, the inserted tales may examine "the way in which states of mind form external reality at will..." (Axton 78). In these dreams and visions, "reality, because it is in part a construct of the mind, is difficult if not impossible to discover" (77). However, the mind does not construct its own subjective reality in order to discover objective reality. The psychic microcosm is self referential, a state wherein the mind seeks to discover itself by examining its component parts. Bakhtin observes: "Dreams, daydreams, [and] insanity destroy the epic and tragic wholeness of a person and his fate: the possibilities of another person and another life are revealed in him, he loses his finalized quality and ceases to mean only one thing; he ceases to coincide with himself" (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 116-7). It is this psychic non-coincidence, leading to the invocation of inner personae, which gives rise to the double.

The two instances of the double as a direct personification of internal voice cited by Bakhtin are the case of Mr Golyadkin in Dostoevsky's early novel The Double, and the devil seen by Ivan in The Brothers

Karamazov (2: chapter 9). There are many similarities between Golyadkin's double, Ivan's vision, and some early Christmas stories of Dickens, notably "The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton" and A Christmas Carol. In all these instances, the narrator assumes a detached comic stance. There is a splitting of dialogue and a voicing of repressed thoughts via the figure of the double. There is a blurring of the fantastic and the real, as the action occurs in "locus suspectus" or uncanny space, which, as Freud has observed, is characteristic of apparitions of the double (see "The 'Uncanny'"). Kjetsaa's observations on The Double of Dostoevsky hold true for Dickens's Christmas phantoms as well:

Some have claimed that the double is a person of flesh and blood, while others...maintain that he is only a phantom, the product of Golyadkin's vanishing hold on reality. In any case, for Golyadkin [his double] is quite real. He is simultaneously a creature of a wish-fulfilment dream and nightmare....The double is the image of Golyadkin's repressed desires and at the same time an expression of the guilt that accompanies them. (66-67)

Lastly, the experience is triggered by the protagonist's guilt and alienation. Ivan Karamazov is guilty of psychic complicity in parricide. Golyadkin has feelings of inferiority and social alienation. Gabriel Grub and Scrooge feel the alienation attendant on their misanthropy which is exacerbated by the proximity of the Christmas ritual, and Scrooge also experiences additional

unconscious guilt because of his repression of early memories of human interaction.

"Scrooge is actually deeply fearful about the consequences of his way of life; and though he has hitherto succeeded in repressing his fear, once it breaks into consciousness, it helps to work the transformation which follows" (Daleski, "Dickens and the Proleptic Uncanny" 198). This fear and alienation is embodied in the phantom. Greenman notes that Dickens "uses the device of the ghostly apparition at precisely the point when alienation begins to manifest itself in the protagonist--an effectively dramatic way to telescope the action for concentration on the protagonists' major problem" (386). In A Christmas Carol, Marley's ghost may be seen as a projection of Scrooge, for they are quite similar in character except that they are on opposite sides of the veil of death and therefore only Scrooge is capable of change and redemption. Marley is Scrooge, projected into a possible future, and he both serves as *memento mori* and offers Scrooge a new life.<sup>3</sup> In "The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton," the goblin

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<sup>3</sup> "Originally conceived of as a guardian angel, assuring immortal survival to the self, the double eventually appears as precisely the opposite, a reminder of the individual's mortality, indeed, the announcer of death itself" (Rank, Beyond Psychology 76). Marley's ghost appears in both of these roles of the double in A Christmas Carol.

fulfils both these functions as well, although the doubling is less complex in the earlier story, which lacks the constellation of doubles found in the Carol.

As Hearn observes, "the prototype for Scrooge may be found in the ill-tempered gravedigger Gabriel Grub" (12). Kotzin writes that "The Story of the Goblins who Stole a Sexton" is a "dry run for" A Christmas Carol (103). It provides a modifying summary of the later Christmas fiction, in somewhat attenuated form. Both are about a misanthrope who undergoes a change of heart as a result of ghostly intercourse and although the goblin story is much more simple in terms of action, character, and setting, it shares all the important formal, thematic and psychological qualities of the Carol. Action and affect are less fully wrought, but the psychical elements which invoke the double are present in their entirety.

These stories present a lone character who encounters a mysterious figure in some unreal setting, such as dream, delirium or supernatural visitation, so that doubt is cast on the veracity of his experience. Of great import is the dialogue which ensues, for it represents a splitting of the character's internal voice into two parts, one which speaks "in character", as it were, and one which voices repressed or unconscious thoughts. In this way the spirits that visit Scrooge bear a particular and personal relation to him;

they are the ghosts of his own past, present and future, and they reveal scenes from his own life. As Ivan Karamazov says to his devil; "...it's I, *I myself speaking, not you...*you are my illness, you are a phantom...you are my hallucination. You are the incarnation of myself, but only of one side of me" (The Brothers Karamazov 675. Dostoevsky's italics).

In the Christmas tales and Ivan's visitation, the protagonist is seen outside the pale of human interaction, and this schism is enhanced by virtue of the contrast between his alienated state and the jovial, insinuating persona of the narrator. In both the goblin story and the Carol, the narrator begins his tale only to interrupt his discourse with personal observations. The effect of this device is to establish greater narratorial intimacy, creating a monologic persona which clothes the narrator and causes the reader (auditor) to identify to some extent with its point of view. Thus Wardle muses conversationally on jocular undertakers, the narrator of the Carol on the veracity of the cliché "dead as



a door nail."<sup>4</sup> This narratorial intimacy serves to distance the protagonist from both the reader and the narrator at one stroke.

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Whereas the ego is essentially the representative of the external world, of reality, the super-ego stands in contrast to it as the representative of the internal world, of the id. Conflicts between the ego and the ideal will...ultimately reflect the contrast between what is real and what is psychical, between the external world and the internal world. (Freud, The Ego and the Id 26)

In the Christmas stories, the protagonist, environed by his favourite familiar surroundings, engages in discourse with a supernatural visitant, is shown visions of human interaction, and awakens a changed and reformed individual. To put it another way, a character engages in discourse with a suppressed aspect of himself, via the figure of the double, and awakens with an integrated psyche. The rift in his personality is healed.

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<sup>4</sup> Prior to writing A Christmas Carol, this expression occurred to Dickens in a dream: "I dreamed that somebody was dead....and I was greatly overcome when the news was broken to me (very delicately) by a gentleman in a cocked hat, top boots, and a sheet. Nothing else. 'Good God,' I said. 'Is he dead!' 'He is as dead Sir,' rejoined the gentleman, 'as a door-nail. But we all must die Mr Dickens --sooner or later my dear Sir' -- 'Ah!' I said. 'Yes. To be sure. Very true. But what did he die of?' The gentleman burst into a flood of tears, and said, in a voice broken by emotion, 'He christened his youngest child, Sir, with a toasting fork'" (Letter to C. C. Felton, September 1, 1843. The Letters of Charles Dickens 3: 550).

In the goblin story, the phantom which appears voices the protagonist's inner thoughts, shows him visions of human interaction which are also intrinsic to him, though deeply repressed (he is aware of his alienation on an unconscious level; this is implied by his violent reactions and forced morbid humour), and ultimately reforms him by causing him to be repulsed by the vision of himself, outside himself. The goblin functions as that objectified aspect of the psyche called conscience in his aspect of voicing the character's internal thoughts, thus causing reformed behaviour through greater self awareness. The protagonist's consciousness is split by repressed feelings of guilt over his misanthropy<sup>5</sup> which are accentuated by the Christmas context, which presents an ideal of human interaction. These guilt feelings are resisted by the ego's misanthropic persona and so they erupt from the unconscious as a projected superego double, in goblin form.

The conscience is always seen as possessing a discrete voice, and is often graphically represented as a tiny double sitting on one's shoulder. In psychoanalytic terms, the voice of conscience is an aspect of the superego, for

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<sup>5</sup> "The tension between the demands of conscience and the actual performances of the ego is experienced as a sense of guilt. Social feelings rest on identifications with other people, on the basis of having the same ego ideal" (The Ego and the Id 27).

although the superego is in the main an unconscious entity it may be invoked by conscious thoughts and behaviour which conflict with the ego ideal, causing psychic disunity. In Grub's case, his rejection of the Christmas ritual and affinity with the environs of death and corruption conflicts with life-affirming forces in the unconscious (the id-libido), and the superego rises to the occasion: "[The superego's] outlines become clear only when it confronts the ego with hostility or at least with criticism. The superego...becomes perceptible in the state which it produces in the ego: for instance, when its criticism evokes a sense of guilt"<sup>6</sup> (Anna Freud 6).

The image of conscience as a discrete and vocal entity also applies in terms of the quasi-religious memory function that transcends the grave. Milton put these words into the mouth of the Christian God: "And I will place within them as a guide/ My umpire conscience; whom if they will hear,/ light after light well used they shall attain,/ and to the end persisting safe arrive" (Paradise Lost 3, ll.194-7). Again we note the appearance of conscience as a separate, vocal entity, an umpire which must be "heard" to ensure correct behaviour and life eternal. This is

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<sup>6</sup> According to Webster's Dictionary the superego "rises to consciousness on critical occasions and serves as a kind of policeman of the personality."

conscience as a socially predicated aspect of the psyche which controls at an unconscious level the impulses of the conscious mind, attenuating primal impulses and guiding human relationships.

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Lucas has written that, in The Pickwick Papers, comedy "time and time again deflects Satan from paradise; death may dwell in arcady, but it makes no appearance in Dingley Dell" (7). This is a very unperceptive comment, erroneous even on the most basic textual level, for the graveyard narrative told at Dingley Dell is at the thematic center of the Christmas episode and near the heart of the novel. However, the similes Lucas employs are interesting, for, in a sense, it is Satan who makes paradise, and death-consciousness which creates arcady, by virtue of the contrast they create, as their presence gives rise to the ideal of a pre-culpa state of perfection. At Dingley Dell, the invocation of death serves to bind all the celebrants closer together, invoking human interconnectiveness in response to the consciousness of ultimate alienation.

The Christmas gathering gives rise to:

that happy state of companionship and mutual goodwill, which is a source of such pure and unalloyed delight, and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world, that the religious belief of the most civilised nations, and the rude traditions of the roughest savages, alike number it among the first joys of a future condition of existence,

provided for the blest and happy! How many old recollections...does Christmas time awaken! (PP 374 C28)

This passage, introducing the Christmas episode at Dingley Dell, explicitly connects the Christmas gathering with the gathering of the righteous in paradise: on Earth, the blessed state is connected with memory.<sup>7</sup> At this point, the narrator interjects (in the guise of the editor of The Pickwick Papers) to speak of departed dear ones with dismembered imagery so characteristic of Dickens; hearts that cease to throb, hands grown cold and still, eyes which "have hid their lustre in the grave" (374).

Holy resurrection will supposedly re-articulate and reunite lost loved ones, but the ritual Christmas gathering invokes reunification on a psychic level. Memory, in the context of the Christmas gathering, has the power to evoke the past so strongly that the loved dead seem present, and this mystical interconnectedness is seen as an elevated state, somewhere between the "cares," "sorrows," and "restless struggles" of the world and the perfect "future condition of existence." Here the consciousness of death is a catalytic force, acting on earthly consciousness so as to move it towards an ideal condition of "companionship;" the secure enclosure of home, hearth, and

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<sup>7</sup> See Welsh (The City of Dickens) for a discussion of death and memory in Dickens.

the familial circle mirroring the perfect enclosure of Paradise.

"The Story of the Goblins who Stole a Sexton" comes at the end of The Pickwick Papers' Christmas episode. "The vision of Gabriel Grub, stands at the novel's midpoint...as an epitome of the whole process of education through experience..." (Patten 26). Its occurrence within this early and quintessentially Dickensian orgy of Christmas conviviality shows the misanthropy of Gabriel Grub in an extremely lonely light: he is not only excluded from the Christmas hearth, but he is nearly outside of the Pickwickian universe. The workings of his mind are perverse, his sensibilities inverted. A flat tombstone is his "favourite resting place," suggesting a state of living death.

He goes to dig a grave in order to "raise his spirits," the human attributes of Christmas, light, laughter and song, are as "gall and wormwood" to him. The song of a child makes him "indignant," but upon beating him Grub derives a "hearty chuckle" from his cries of pain; and when digging in the churchyard he is moved to laughter by the emblems of death, exclaiming, "A coffin at Christmas! A Christmas box. Ho! ho! ho!" A peculiar comedy this, and seemingly inappropriate, much like that of the gravedigger in Hamlet: it is a comedy which depends for its effect on

the inversion of "normal" sensibilities. It also has the effect of masking the unfunny presence of death much like the narrator's introductory asides on mutes or coffin nails. The reader is invited to echo Hamlet's query: "Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that 'a sings at grave making?" (Hamlet V:1). Grub perverts the Christmas ritual, turning it into a celebration of death.

Shut out from the secure enclosure of the Christmas hearth, Grub views its emblems from the outside, from the street. The Christmas music and "cheerful light" emanating from holiday homes typically invite entry but Grub's response is meditation on death and disease, which the narrator claims "consoles" him. He then enters the churchyard, "locking the gate behind him," and begins digging while he sings a little grave-song concerning "brave lodgings for one." He has in effect created his own perverse enclosure, antithetical to the correct Dickensian Christmas spirit. The elements of safe enclosure in familiar surroundings, drink, song, and religion are here, but the hearth is an open grave, the celebrant solitary, and the attendant Christmas spirit the angel of death. Thus Gabriel Grub's position outside the enclosed Christmas hearthside grouping is his thematic position as well. He is excluded from the human family and requires redemption by being brought back into the fold, by the healing of his perverse misanthropy.

In the beginning of the tale, Grub is voiceless, emitting only "sullen growls" and "chuckles," and we learn of him first through the narrator's description ("a cross-grained, surly fellow--a morose and lonely man, who consorted with nobody..."), and through his actions. He is first voiceless, then "murmuring" his sexton's song of cold earth, damp clay, and the conqueror worm. It is only when he breaks into clear speech that the goblin appears, echoing Grub's morbid laughter, converting soliloquy to dialogue. Their discourse opens with a strangely formal interrogative litany in which the goblin questions Grub and then in turn questions an "invisible chorus" of echoes which answer for Grub.

goblin: "What do you do here on Christmas eve?"

Grub: "I came to dig a grave sir."

goblin: "What man wanders among graves and  
churchyards on such a night as this?"

chorus: "Gabriel Grub! Gabriel Grub!" (PP 399)

Bakhtin writes of The Double: "Dostoevsky transfers--almost imperceptibly to the reader--Golyadkin's second voice from his interior dialogue to the narration itself: it begins to sound like an outside voice, the voice of the narrator" (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 213). We see here a similar splitting of internal voices between Grub and the goblins, although the voice of narrator remains



unchanged. He presents Grub's story as a fable, and assumes that it is a dream or a drunken hallucination. This is in keeping with Wardle's character and thematic position in the novel. We are meant to identify with Wardle, Pickwick, and the other convivial Christmas celebrators, and to regard the goblin story as a lesson concerning the crime of misanthropy and the necessity of human interconnectivity.

Grub doubtless is cheered by his attitude, which is a vindication and celebration of his misanthropy, but it also functions as a mask. He hides the empty core of alienation beneath his perverse humour. The narrator's view of his motives corresponds to Grub's answer to the goblin's query; these are the conscious, artificial, and self-justifying motives of a misanthropic persona. The goblin's second question causes a further splitting of Grub's internal voice, he hears his name pronounced by the church yard echoes, like an unwelcome acknowledgement from the unconscious. We see Grub unmasked, the props of his misanthropic motivations knocked from under him, his very identity usurped by his chosen environs. This is much like the familial merging of identity which occurs in the Christmas enclosure, except that Grub has been merging with death, has become an exponent of death himself.

Grub responds prosaically to the goblin's query. He came in his role as sexton: he does not mention the

perverse misanthropy, with its attendant loneliness, which the goblin's second query implies, but these are confirmed by the echoes screaming his name in answer. Their discourse continues in this formal mode (query-reply-chorus) until the goblin reveals a knowledge of Grub's inner feelings which surpasses that of the narrator.

Earlier in the story, when Grub encountered a child singing in Coffin lane, "he rapped him over the head with his lantern five or six times." The narrator comments that Grub was somewhat cheered by this, in keeping with his (the narrator's) ironic detached point of view, outside the consciousness of Grub, or at least outside his unconscious.

The goblin later alludes to this act of cruelty to prove his intimate connection with him. Knowledge of the mere act could be ascribed to a magical view that a goblin has of his client, pictures from the "great storehouse" available to goblins (PP 401), but here the goblin specifically speaks of the inner motives connected with the act, motives certainly suppressed by, and known only to, Grub:

"we know the man with the sulky face and the grim scowl, that came down the street tonight, throwing his evil looks at the children, and grasping his burying spade the tighter. We know the man who struck the boy in the envious malice of his heart, because the boy could be merry, and he could not. We know him, we know him." (400)

In his knowledge of the inner man and his stress on

"knowing" him the goblin reveals himself as a double of the sexton, voicing the secret and repressed wellsprings of his misanthropy: "the boy could be merry, and he could not." Grub cannot "be merry" because he excludes himself from humanity. Therefore the goblin's viewpoint is internal, the narrator's, external. The narrator sees what Grub shows the public, a "happy" misanthrope. The goblin reveals the inner man.

Thus Grub's conscience appears as a double clothed in goblin form, in a distorting mirror image of the self, because Grub appears as a frightening ogre to those weaker than he. His relationship with the goblin is a role-reversal of his relations with the local children. Like Grub the goblins are quite playful, in their sadistic way. On a deeper, unconscious level, he fears loss of identity in the Christmas hearth group. However, fear of memory is not an issue in this tale because Grub's past here is unknown. The role of repressed memory is explored more fully in later fictions, such as A Christmas Carol. In the goblin story, memory is seen as a vague quality which converts misery to contentment and provides an entry to paradise. It is a generic quality, not specifically related to Grub or to events in his past.

Grub endures violence at goblin hands, mirroring his own violence towards those weaker than he. He is taken

beneath the earth and shown visions until "he came to the conclusion that it was a very decent and respectable sort of world after all." Although Grub is ultimately reformed, there are troubling aspects of the healing process. He is given a drink, emblematic of conviviality, but it is a tormenting "goblet of liquid fire." This burning drink has purely negative qualities in some of Dickens's later fictions,<sup>8</sup> but here we are only meant to be amused by Grub's pain, due to his role as outsider. The narrator's stance aids this perspective because he goes to certain lengths to include us as Christmas celebrators.

The goblin shows Grub a vision of a typical poor family, which is soon to become a dead family. They are first seen gathered around a hearth in "happiness and comfort," but as soon as this picture of domestic togetherness is evoked the youngest child dies and they gather around the corpse, which is "calm and tranquil,"

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<sup>8</sup> In The Old Curiosity Shop, Quilp's habit of imbibing boiling tea serves to point up his sadism and inhumanity, terrifying those around him so that they "doubt if he were really a human creature" (40 C5). In Our Mutual Friend, Jenny Wren expresses a desire to torture an imaginary husband by spooning burning liquid into his mouth while he sleeps: "I'd make a spoon red hot, and I'd have some boiling liquor bubbling in a saucepan, and I'd take it out hissing...and I'd pour it down his throat, and blister it and choke him" (242, BK2 C3). Burning liquor is an instrument of mass suicide in Barnaby Rudge (C68).

"sleeping in rest and peace:"<sup>9</sup> "They knew that he was an Angel...blessing them, from a bright and happy Heaven." Soon more than half the family are dead, but the survivors are content and beaming with cheer as they crowd around the hearth, telling "old stories of...bygone days." When the parents finally die, the "few" that remain are content in their assurance of a future reunion. They water the graves with tears and "their content and cheerfulness were restored" (PP 402).

The family engages in a massive denial of present reality; they love their dead relatives more than the live ones, but it is interesting to note that both they and Grub celebrate death, and are cheered by it. They differ only in terms of human interconnectiveness, the generic family a contented, undifferentiated blob of humanity basking in the expectation of holy reunification with the departed, Grub a happy misanthrope basking in the cynical contemplation of humankind's ultimate destination, the grave. His crime lies

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<sup>9</sup> Dickens later repudiated this view of death as peaceful sleep in the The Old Curiosity Shop: "Where, in the sharp lineaments of rigid and unsightly death, is the calm beauty of slumber, telling of rest for the waking hours that are past, and gentle hopes and loves for those which are to come? Lay death and sleep down, side by side, and say who shall find the two akin" (92-3 C29). In this context rest and calm, hope and love are explicitly disconnected from death, because they are connected with Little Nell instead. In the goblin tale however, death-consciousness is polarized in the figures of Grub and the death-happy family, split into opposites of acceptance and denial, of love and fear.

in his lack of connection with other people, and his misuse of graveyard contemplation. He is moved by the fact of death, not the fantasy, and thus fails to look beyond it to the happy realm of memory.

After viewing the generic family, Grub is shown a vision of paradise in which "Man walked forth, elated with the scene; and all was brightness and splendour." The scene corresponds exactly to an earthly location: "there is just such another...within half a mile of the old abbey town" (PP 403). This linkage occurs because the life after death exists this side of the grave, in the memory of survivors. It is, in fact, a comforting mythos, interposed between life-affirming consciousness and existential fear of death, a buffer of denial.<sup>10</sup> As Grub is long familiar with the horrors of corruption, his denial of the myth of eternal life in the collective memory of the living through good deeds and interaction is all the more stressful, causing psychic disunity. Thus he is a good candidate for goblin re-education.

The Dickensian doctrine of the memory function which transcends death is stated in stave four of A Christmas

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<sup>10</sup> "Children know nothing of the horrors of corruption, of freezing in the ice-cold grave, of the terrors of eternal nothingness--ideas which grown-up people find...so hard to tolerate, as is proved by all the myths of a future life" (The Interpretation of Dreams 287).

Carol, where Scrooge confronts his own veiled corpse, and the narrator interjects with an apostrophe to Samael: Death, set up thine altar here...for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy...it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand WAS open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender....Strike, Shadow strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal! (CB 64-5)

The lesson, of course, is that misanthropes like Scrooge and Grub, having committed no good deeds to recommend them to living memory, will be subject to the horrors of realistic death; while those who partake of human interconnectivity will have these horrors assuaged because of the contented cheer their memory will inspire in those they were connected with in life. This would seem cold comfort except for the assurance of reunification in the afterlife which good deeds and generous impulses bring, here explicitly connected with the example of Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "Ultimately our...conscience becomes a highly complex sentiment originating in the social instincts, largely guided by the approbation of our fellow men, ruled by reason, self interest, and in later times by deep religious feelings" (Darwin 500).

Dickens's relaxed religious views are well documented, but he seems to always have expressed a belief in an afterlife much resembling a family group. Little Paul Dombey, for example, has a vision of his dead mother awaiting him on some distant shore, as he lies at the point of death (DS C16). A dream of Esther Summerson related in Bleak House contains the image of the self looking back at its life experiences on a distant shore: "In falling ill, I seem to have crossed a dark lake, and to have left all my experiences, mingled together by the great distance, on the healthy shore..." (BH 488-9 C35). Unlike Paul, Esther's glance is directed towards the realm of the living, perhaps because Esther's adult experience consists mainly of sowing good deeds and partaking of human interconnectivity.

Because Dickens unconsciously feared the loss of identity which comes with the merging of individuals in the family enclosure in this world, he projected this supposedly ideal state of togetherness into the next one. Because he consciously feared the status of the lonely outsider, which had for him fearful resonances of his childhood days at Warren's, he conceived of misanthropy, of human disconnectedness, as a sin which must be corrected at all costs.



A Christmas Carol presents more complex doubling than the goblin story. The psychological dynamic is the same, the reformation of a misanthrope through discourse with repressed aspects of the self which are projected as doubles, but, because of a more thorough decomposition of the protagonist's psyche, there are more doubles. In the Carol, the figure of conscience is split into its pre-conscious and unconscious parts (ego ideal and superego), and personal and social memories appear as separate doubles. The internal nature of the doubling and the protagonist's dialogic relationship with himself may be glimpsed in the following bit of dialogue: "'I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.' 'Long past?' inquired Scrooge... 'No. Your past'" (CB 25).

The Christmas setting aside, the goblin story and the Carol are similar in that they deal with psychic conversion, and both stories contrast dream and reality, invoking a motif of psychological exploration by blurring the distinction between the two states. They differ in the more personal aspects of Scrooge's story. He sees visions of his own life, whereas Grub is shown generic scenes of goodwill. Grub's conflict was linked to his refusal to interact with society, but, in Scrooge's case, his refusal to interact socially is explicitly seen to be predicated on repression, on his refusal to interact with himself. Thus

the Carol presents a more thorough exploration of memory and the repression of memory as a device which explores the development of the psyche.

Herst writes of the Dickens hero:

He is...enmeshed in a world which proves inimical to emotional and moral wholeness...The self, for the Dickens hero, is preeminently a social entity, seeking definition in the world which surrounds it. He is haunted less by...anxieties concerning selfhood...and more by a new fear that integrity of self is impossible in the industrialized, urbanized society... (6)

This observation is quite true of Dickens's later novels, however, "anxieties concerning selfhood" are precisely what is at the psychological centre of A Christmas Carol. In this story, a didactic social message is directed towards the reader, but the real action takes place within the psyche of Scrooge. He "seeks definition" in his relationship with himself by getting in touch with his repressed memories and emotions, and the result of this is seen in his reformed attitude towards the the Christmas ritual. This new attitude supposedly will have vague beneficial effects on society through works of charity and a general good-will towards employees and other dependants. However, in stave four, a more personally important reason for reform is imparted to Scrooge by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. This is that his his very life is at stake, as well as his immortality, which, in Dickens's view, depends on memories of good-will implanted in those who will

survive him.

In A Christmas Carol, society forms a background to the psychological action of the story. Social factors define Scrooge as a socialized utilitarian man, and the necessity of a charitable nature is stressed in Scrooge's discourse on prisons and workhouses in stave one and the representative figures of society's children in stave three, but these seem mere generalities when juxtaposed with the particulars of Scrooge's remembered Christmas scenes.

Angus Wilson's comments are more to the point than Herst's in terms of my reading of the Carol, for Wilson stresses the internal, psychological aspects of the story:

There is no attempt in A Christmas Carol...to give a coherent account of the evils of the social system nor to propound any remedy other than a redemption through the grace of the Spirit; but by means of a *nightmare vision* we feel the intense precariousness of life, the extraordinary momentary possibility of joy, the vague but inescapable sense that this joy connects with *something long buried in our childhood*... (183. My italics)

Another factor which limits the extent of the social analysis in the Carol is the length of the piece. Dickens writes in his preface to A Christmas Carol: "I never attempted great elaboration of detail in the working out of character within such limits....My purpose was, in a whimsical kind of masque which the good humour of the season justified, to awaken some loving and forbearing

thoughts..." (CB xv). In keeping with this awareness of spacial limits, there is much economy of effect in the presentation of the Christmas visions. With Scrooge the reader is whisked from scene to scene, from one temporal and spacial locale to another. Taken together, the visions form a montage of juxtaposed memories and Christmas scenes which is presented with cinematic economy.<sup>12</sup>

In keeping with the idea of a masque, many of the characters in the Carol appear as allegorical figures, such as the two children shown to Scrooge by the Ghost of Christmas Present, representing Want and Ignorance. These two convey a social message to the reader, but their import within the text is specifically connected to Scrooge's comments on prisons and workhouses. They are produced so as to contrast with and provide an ironic commentary on Scrooge's previous attitudes.

The portrayal of the Cratchit family could have been used to similar effect, but, like the generic poor family in the goblin story, they are twisted by narratorial intent so as to express only the correct Christmas cheer. Davies observes that "the Cratchits...are manipulated into patterns of wish-fulfilment" (85):

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<sup>12</sup> See Eisenstein ("Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today") for a discussion of Dickens's use of montage and his influence on cinema.

their social compliance--admiration of the aristocracy, satisfaction that son will follow father into penury through clerking, absence of concern for domestic deficiencies--beggars belief as well as themselves....Most disturbing of all is [the narrator's] treatment of Tiny Tim's death. A chair is set next to the child's body in the Cratchit bedroom: "Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was quite reconciled to what had happened, and went down again quite happy" [CB 68]. The final sentence is breath-taking in its evasive manipulation in the interests of narratorial wish-fulfilment. (Davies 83)

In his limning of the Cratchit family, Dickens sacrifices social critique for the elucidation of a blind and hideous sort of contented good cheer which transcends even the death of a loved child. It is clear that, in A Christmas Carol, the criticism of society takes a back seat in favour of the portrayal of a proper Christmas state of mind.

In A Christmas Carol, the narrator works at creating a monologic text<sup>13</sup> but the story is based on Scrooge's dialogic relationship with the ghosts, which are repressed or unconscious aspects of himself.

Dickens's use of the double is very apparent in A Christmas Carol, even though an awareness of doubling is not necessary for a complete interpretation of this story. More to the point, an awareness of the Ghosts as doubles is

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<sup>13</sup> See Davies (The Textual Life of Dickens's Characters) for an in-depth discussion of the narrator's stance in A Christmas Carol.

unnecessary but an awareness of Scrooge and Marley as doubles is of import to the "message" of the story and Marley's status as a figure of warning and *memento mori*. The Ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to Come are latent doubles of decomposition. This last Ghost is usually seen as a generic figure representing death but a close look at its revelations shows that it is rather a representative of Scrooge's death.

When we read the story with double vision, it is clear that Marley and Scrooge are manifest doubles. Marley is both a projection of Scrooge and the voice of his conscience.<sup>14</sup> As the narrator informs us, Scrooge and Marley "had been two kindred spirits" (CB 11). Scrooge "lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner" (14), and is not averse to using his name: "The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him" (8). This sharing of names indicates that Scrooge

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<sup>14</sup> A manifest double in life, in death, Marley is a projected double of an unrepentant Scrooge, showing him a possible future. He is also like the superego in its role of censor, for it is he who invokes the three spirits. He tells Scrooge: "I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer" (CB 21).

identifies strongly with his business persona; Johnson has termed him "the personification of economic man"<sup>15</sup> (Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph 256), and it is indicative of doubleness in that Scrooge and Marley shared the same business persona. More importantly they share the same sins. Marley calls Scrooge a "captive, bound, and double ironed" (CB 20) and notes that they are bound by similar chains.

The Ghost of Christmas Past represents Scrooge's repressed memories. The mechanism of repression is apparent in that he has "a great extinguisher for a cap" (25) which will put out his light, the light which illuminates the scenes of memory. Scrooge has "a special desire to see the Spirit in his cap" at once, and the Spirit points out that Scrooge made the cap, and forced the Spirit "through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!" (25).

The scenes of memory revealed by the Spirit are those of Scrooge's formative years, and these scenes have such an emotional impact that Scrooge immediately is in tears. This is in violent contrast to the Scrooge of stave one, who is described as being "Hard and sharp as flint, from which no

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<sup>15</sup> Moynahan writes of Mr Dombey in identical terms: "In *Dombey*, Dickens created a permanently valid image of nineteenth-century Economic Man in all the unyielding pride of his power and the pathos and repulsiveness of his blighted heart" (129).

steel had ever struck out generous fire" (8). It is clear, even at this early point, that Scrooge is undergoing psychological change as a result of getting in touch with his early memories. By the end of stave two, Scrooge can no longer bear the revealed memories and uses the cap to extinguish the Spirit's light, that is, to shut out the painful memories (37).

The Ghost of Christmas Present, too, is a revealer of repressed knowledge. He represents Scrooge's repressed knowledge of the holiday but his Christmas scenes are presented in an omniscient style, as though he has access to the goblin's store of pictures in "The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton." These are realistic images of the future. When Scrooge goes out into the street at the Carol's end, he sees "the people...pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present" (73).

These two Spirits seem representative allegorical figures but their revelations reveal them as aspects of Scrooge, especially the Ghost of Christmas Past who shows Scrooge his own memories. The Ghost of Christmas Present partakes of both Scrooge's consciousness and the narrator's omniscience in that he presents scenes of the proper Christmas spirit both among Scrooge's acquaintances and representative social figures. In this, he represents the ego ideal because he reveals proper social behaviour.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come represents Scrooge's



repressed foreknowledge of the probable circumstances of his demise:

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save for one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded....Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him....It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror. (58)

The Ghost is obscured in darkness but for one skeletal hand. It is silent, and Scrooge must interpret its meaning and supply its dialogue. Whereas the Ghost of Christmas Present ironically repeated Scrooge's own words back to him, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come inspires Scrooge's speech through his reaction to its dread presence.

The Ghost's mute and forbidding aspect is expressive of the primal aggression of the superego and its intimate connection with the id,<sup>16</sup> in contrast to the nurturing aspects of the Ghost of Christmas Past. These two are decomposed parts of the superego, unconscious aggression and the nurturing aspects of parents and family (the ego ideal). The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is usually connected with the traditional figure of the Grim Reaper,

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<sup>16</sup> "It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality....We approach the id with analogies: we call it a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations....The id of course knows no judgements of value; no good and evil, no morality" (Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" 73-74).

but his silence and dark cloak may also represent forces deep in the unconscious. There is a touch of displaced autoscopy in that the Spirit reveals to Scrooge images of himself, his corpse, his grave, and his name written on a headstone. The Spirit also reveals the absence of memories of Scrooge's good deeds in his circle of acquaintance and so it may be seen as a forerunner of the deathly autoscopic double of Redlaw in The Haunted Man, which caused all those whom Redlaw met to lose their pleasant memories of human kindness.

Thus Marley and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come are double conscience figures, both deathly, one vocal, social and familiar (representing Scrooge's ego and self image), and the other dark, silent and disturbing (representing Scrooge's deep unconscious fears).

The result of all this ghostly intercourse for Scrooge is that he is changed and reformed after he internalizes the various aspects of his psyche which have been revealed to him in Spirit form: "I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse....I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach" (CB 70).

In his study of the literary double (The Double and the Other), Coates lays much stress on social factors as the psychic origin of the double. He views the double as a socially-predicated phenomenon arising from alienation based on nineteenth century oppositions of romanticism and science, individual desires and industrial utilitarianism: in a word, the conflict between individual and society. For him, the double has a double genesis. It arises out of the stress caused by conflict between the social and psychical spheres, between the differing internal and external personae required by and acquired through life in an urban society.

These social factors are certainly of great import to the appearance of the double in Victorian literature, and are central to Dickens's use of the figure in his novels, but it is interesting to note the appearance of the double and an awareness of psychic decomposition in classical literature. The problems of guilt feelings, repression, the voice of conscience, and the various conflicting aspects of the psyche were explored through the device of the literary double long before the nineteenth century.

Coates's stress on the nineteenth century's industrialized urban life-style as a major cause of ego splitting causes him to err in locating the "appearance of the double in literary iconography at the beginning of the

nineteenth century" (6), for he ignores the classical antecedents of the literary double such as those found in Varro, Plautus, Plato and Homer. Kilgour discerns doubles of projection in the Odyssey. She sees the Cyclops as "a grotesque literalization of Odysseus's own appetite, his hunger for home, which has been inflated into a monstrous form" (23-24). Iros, the beggar whom Odysseus fights on his return to Ithaca, "is described as all appetite, an empty hulk who is the humanized form of Polyphemos and so also Odysseus's projected double" (24). Rank cites an earlier occurrence of the double: "In the Egyptian tale of 'The Brothers,' the earliest known literary record of this motif, dating back to 2000 B.C., the two brothers...were united by a magic bond which made them inseparable throughout life and death" (Beyond Psychology 91). In Plato's Republic, the workings of the state are seen as analogous to the workings of the psyche. In Varro's "Bimarcus," the social scene is absent, for the conflict of Marcus is internal. He is in a dialogical struggle with himself, his internal monologue split between the figures of ego and conscience.

According to Coates:

Ideology socialises the individual by bringing him or her to internalize the dividedness of a class society...thereby enabling the system to rule the subject, by dividing it. The antitheses between the "here" of the individual and the "there" of others is translated into internal space....The

impersonality with which these mechanisms function...frustrates all revenge. The sole available object for one's anger is a self one furiously bifurcates. (5-6)

However, psychical bifurcation is as much a product of internal factors, of psychology, as it is produced by external influences such as utilitarianism and the pressures of an industrialised class society. I feel that the latent aggression inherent in the superego<sup>17</sup> is by far the more important factor in the splitting of the ego which is the genesis of the double, although social factors may exacerbate the condition and often define the form of its manifestations. This dynamic is clear in A Christmas Carol. Scrooge is lifted out of fictive reality for a night of ghostly intercourse with projected doubles of himself, and is then returned to the Christmas context a changed man. His inner conflict and subsequent reform have taken place in the psychical sphere, changing his actions and attitudes in the social sphere, which seems a frame or background against which he displays his contrasting personae.

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<sup>17</sup> Bergler observes; "Human malice--always present, always available for use at split-second notice, always operative --is more than a subject for sermons by moralists. It corresponds to a deep psychological inner necessity, and is virtually ineradicable. Its basis is inborn aggression, neurotically manipulated" (104). Von Krafft-Ebing makes a similar comment: "Sadistic sensations may often be traced back to early childhood and exist during a period of life when their revival can by no manner of means be attributed to external impressions, much less to sexual temper" (54).

Bakhtin observes that menippian satire is concerned less with the individual in relation to society than it is with the individual in relation to ideas, and to the self:

The menippia is fully liberated from those limitations of history and memoir<sup>18</sup> that were so characteristic of the Socratic dialogue...it is free of legend and not fettered by any demands for an external verisimilitude to life....The most important characteristic of the menippia as a genre is the fact that its bold and unrestrained use of the fantastic...is internally motivated, justified by and devoted to a purely ideational and philosophical end: the creation of *extraordinary situations* for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea... (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 114. Bakhtin's italics)

The menippian genre tends to focus on the individual rather than society and its point of view is often personal and psychical, rather than external and socially oriented. This is not to say that social considerations are non-existent, but that they are in the background; the internal psychic state is the major focus. According to Frye, "the menippian satire deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes....its characterization...is stylized rather than naturalistic, and presents people as mouthpieces of the ideas they represent" (309). When judged by menippian criteria many of the short fictions of Gogol,

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<sup>18</sup> In The Dialogic Imagination, Bakhtin expands on these "limitations of history and memoir": "The epic past...is preserved only in the form of a national tradition....By its very nature the epic world of the absolute past is inaccessible to personal experience and does not permit an individual, personal point of view or evaluation" (16).

Poe, and Kafka, for example, fall within its bounds. This holds true for a number of the shorter works of Dickens, such as the interpolated stories in The Pickwick Papers<sup>19</sup> or his many ghost stories like A Christmas Carol and "The Story of the Goblins who Stole a Sexton."

In these last two tales, social and psychological stresses are limned in microcosm in the psyche of the protagonists and in their interaction with their circumscribed and fantastic environs. It is not so much their relationship with society as it is their relationship with the artificial personae they have created in order to cope with society that causes the psychical stress leading to splitting of the ego and the conflict between consciousness and repression, which takes the form of a dialogue between the ego and the superego. Therefore I feel that, from a psychological point of view, A Christmas Carol and the goblin story have much in common with the menippian form. They are tales of psychic reformulation through the self's dialogical relationship with the self, and not only works of didactic social criticism.

In the menippia there appears for the first time what might be called moral-psychological

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<sup>19</sup> "Characteristic for the menippia is a wide use of inserted genres....The inserted genres are presented at various distances from the ultimate authorial position, that is, with varying degrees of parodying and objectification" (Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 118).

experimentation: a representation of the unusual, abnormal moral and psychic states of man--insanity of all sorts (the theme of the maniac), split personality, unrestrained daydreaming, unusual dreams, passions bordering on madness, suicides, and so forth. These phenomena do not function narrowly in the menippia as mere themes, but have a formal generic significance. (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 116)

Among the functions of these phenomena is their disintegrative effect on character, the psychical decomposition which leads to the appearance of the double: "This destruction of the wholeness and finalized quality of a man is facilitated by the appearance, in the menippia, of a dialogic relationship to one's own self (fraught with the possibility of a split personality)" (117). It is this "dialogic relationship" of the self with the self that is the origin of the literary double.



## Chapter 4: Cannibalic Pastry

Little Red Ridinghood comes to me one Christmas Eve to give me information of the cruelty and treachery of that dissembling Wolf who ate her grandmother, without making any impression on his appetite, and then ate her, after making that ferocious joke about his teeth. She was my first love.

Dickens, "A Christmas Tree"

There are several explicit stories of cannibalism in Dickens, such as those in "The Holly Tree" (CS) and "Nurse's Stories" (UT), as well as many cannibal themes, undercurrents, and references throughout his works. In Martin Chuzzlewit, for example, among the hazards which Tom Pinch fears may await him in London is the chance of being murdered by unscrupulous pie-vendors and converted into "cannibalic pastry" (C37). Cannibal consciousness is present in The Pickwick Papers, in the figure of the Fat Boy (C28, C54) and in Sam's anecdote of the "celebrated sausage factory" (C31), and may be glimpsed in The Mystery of Edwin Drood in the quicklime which is intended to consume Edwin's corpse.

Therefore I think it is significant that Dickens should have voiced an almost hysterical denial of cannibalistic activity in real life. When the searchers for Sir John Franklin's second lost arctic expedition returned to England with such tales, Dickens, in articles in Household Words, attacked the idea with outrage, and relegated it to the realm of fantasy.

In October 1854, Dr Rae reported that "he had sufficient testimony from Eskimo witnesses and from physical remains of the party to prove that Franklin and his men were not only dead but that they had prolonged their lives by cannibalism" (Kaplan 352). Rae wrote: "From the mutilated state of the corpses and the contents of the

kettles, it is evident that our wretched countrymen had been driven to the last resource--cannibalism--as a means of prolonging existence" (Beattie and Geiger 60, also Pope-Hennessy 367).

Dickens absolutely refused to accept the findings of Dr Rae, a seasoned officer who had served with Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar. He maintained that "it is in the highest degree improbable that such men would, or could, in any extremity of hunger, alleviate the pains of starvation by this horrible means" (Kaplan 352). In support of this view, he attacked the character of the native witnesses, writing "we believe every savage to be in his heart covetous, treacherous, and cruel" (Ackroyd 713). Lacking evidence and partaking of personal opinion rather than logic, his argument "became in the end no more than a litany to the virtue...of the white explorer" (713).

Kaplan notes that even though "dismemberment and cannibalism had been powerful images in his life from childhood on and had been direct and indirect motifs in his fiction....Dickens's immediate response [to Rae's report] was denial." He calls it a "semirational response" (353). It is well known, as Ackroyd is only one of the more recent Dickensians to observe, that Dickens "was no tyro in such matters; one of his favorite pastimes was the reading of traveller's memoirs" (Ackroyd 713). He was particularly

fond of such reading in his youth.<sup>1</sup> In preparing the articles for Household Words, "he immersed himself" in "the most trying and famous cases of hunger and exposure on record" (Pope-Hennessy 376). "Dickens studied the records of...unfortunate ships until he had familiarised himself with every possible aspect of the horrors of shipwreck" (376-377). In view of this, his reaction is all the more surprising, for he probably had read of Franklin's ill-fated 1819 voyage to the Canadian wastes: "When [Franklin] returned to London, his account of heroic achievement marred by murder, cannibalism and his own suffering caught the public's imagination" (Beattie and Geiger 10). Why then, this energetic denial of a subject with which he was familiar and which was a potent and recurring theme in his work? Such resistance indicates that cannibalism was obviously a matter of deep psychic resonance for Dickens.

In terms of the dialectic of the unconscious, resistance and denial are significant affirmations of

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<sup>1</sup> See Palmer ("Dickens and Shipwreck" DSA 18), and Blount ("Dickens and Mr Krook's Spontaneous Combustion" DSA 1). Kaplan accepts the cannibal evidence, as does nearly everyone. Ackroyd sides with Dickens. Rae's findings were confirmed in 1987 by a team of anthropologists and pathologists (See Beattie and Geiger).

psychological repression.<sup>2</sup> The ego denies that which exists in or is known to the id. The more vigorous the denial, the more powerful the repression and the psychically damaging aspect of the repressed material. The fact that Dickens reacted so strongly to what he knew was a not uncommon occurrence among shipwrecked men, shows that he was unconsciously conversant with the horrors and pleasures of cannibalism. Doubles and cannibals are associated in Dickens's fictions because of this resistance. The ego denies the cannibalic scene because it wishes its primal aspects to remain repressed, and thus cannibals appear in double form, either as doubles of projection or in a narrative within a narrative. They are always latent doubles, like Frankenstein's monster, and, like the monster, they fulfil the representative and defensive literary functions of the double. This results in the "establishment of esthetic distance" in which the use of a double allows for a conscious distancing of disturbing material "while unconscious responses are elicited."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "We know from the technique of dream-interpretation that it is precisely those associations against which innumerable doubts and objections are raised that invariably contain the material leading to the discovery of the unconscious" (Freud, A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis 298, Lecture 19).

<sup>3</sup> See Rogers's six functions of the double, in chapter 1 of this thesis (20-21).

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The concept of the primal scene is sometimes simplistically defined by psychoanalytical critics. A case in point is that of Brown (Sexual Analysis of Dickens' Props), who identifies and defines it as "the primal scene, which Dickens sees as the...act of sexual intercourse between the child's parents" (52). This is actually the most basic interpretation of Freud's concept of the primal scene, which Brown seems to repeat rather than interpret. Lukacher (Primal Scenes) has a more liberated view of the primal scene. He sees it in deconstructive terms:

I propose the notion of the primal scene as a trope for reading and understanding....In my use of the term it becomes an intertextual event that displaces the notion of the event from the ground of ontology....Thus conceived, the primal scene is a strategic answer to the dilemma of a critical discourse that on the one hand maintains the impossibility of moving beyond interpretation to a discourse of truth but on the other hand has not forgotten that the burden of truth continues to make itself felt. (24-25)

In psychoanalysis, the primal scene is an interpretive projection on the part of the analyst, a subtext extrapolated from dream and fantasy material provided by the analysand. This sort of approach is useful in literary analysis in locating nodes of primal imagery which seem to innervate and inform an author's entire work. Fantasy and reality merge in the primal scene as "the burden of truth continues to make itself felt" in various symbolic forms:

"The primal scene is a circumstantial construction that is predicated when there is a need to interpret but at the same time a fundamental concealment or absence of the sort of evidence that could definitively substantiate a particular interpretation" (Lukacher 330).

The primal scene is similar to a screen memory. It is a distortion and reconstruction of repressed knowledge, which has been driven into the unconscious because it is nearly impossible for the ego to face in its naked form. These scenes point back to a real or fantasized event which remains obscure, but which is recreated in the form of a symbolic representation.<sup>4</sup> Freud wrote of the primal scene,

I am not of the opinion...that such scenes must necessarily be phantasies because they do not appear in the shape of recollections. It seems to me absolutely equivalent to a recollection, if the memories are replaced...by dreams the analysis of which invariably leads back to the same scene and which reproduce every portion of its content in an inexhaustible variety of new shapes. Indeed, dreaming is another kind of remembering, though one that is subject to the conditions that rule at night and to the laws of dream-formation. ("From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" 51)

Literary creation, too, is "another kind of

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<sup>4</sup> Lacan views the purloining of the letter in Poe's "The Purloined Letter" as the story's primal scene: "[the theft of the letter] we shall straightway designate the primal scene" (Lacan 325). He sees the letter, its contents unknown, as pure signifier, and its theft and recovery as a symbolic representation of the search for meaning inherent in the detective story, psychoanalysis, and the act of reading.

remembering," especially with an author like Dickens, who drew so heavily on his own feelings and experiences. I view cannibalism as a primal scene in Dickens's fictions, in particular the theme of parents who threaten to consume their children. This theme, reproduced "in an inexhaustible variety of new shapes" through the mechanisms of distortion, reformulation, and projection, seems a symbolic representation of the parental rejection experienced by the young Dickens, when he was sent to work at Warren's Blacking, as well as an expression of earlier, unconscious primal fears which, as Bergler has demonstrated, are common to all.

In this light, I shall look at a late fairy story of Dickens, found in The Uncommercial Traveller, which embodies these early fears of rejection and dissolution as well as an aggressive response to them. One of Bergler's observations on the septet of primal fears is quite appropriate to my reading of this story: "the fear of being devoured becomes visible in later years through...phobias and unconscious fantasies. Fairy tales and dreams enshrine it" (35).

The story of Captain Murderer, in "Nurse's Stories" (UT C15), throws a dark illumination on Dickens's vision of home life. Kaplan observes; "like the tale of Captain Murderer...many of the stories of his childhood and his



later fiction were stories of cannibalism, of the self being dissected, devoured, served for someone else's sustenance, of the nightmare destiny of both the devoured and the devouring" (30). The captain's story combines the fear of being devoured with a fairy tale motif. It interests me because of the primal material it contains, the appearance of doubles in the narrative, and the use of doubled narrators, a device which serves both to distance the Uncommercial Traveller from the horrific content of the tales of his childhood and to neutralize their effect on his psyche.

In considering "Nurse's Stories," most critics only glance at the tale of Captain Murderer, preferring to concentrate on the story of Chips, a shipwright who is haunted, and eventually eaten, by supernatural rats. The story of Captain Murderer concerns a cannibalistic captain who has been much married, because he likes to dismember, cook, and eat his brides, baked in pies. He is eventually undone when he marries a fair-haired twin whose dark sister has suspicions about the captain. The dark sister spies on the ritual murder of her sister and subsequently weds the captain, swallowing poison prior to being eaten. Thus she poisons Captain Murderer as well, as a combined victim/Nemesis (The poison causes him to turn blue and to swell until he fills his entire house. He then explodes, destroying all). The tale is a version of the story of

Bluebeard, with a Dickensian twist, for Bluebeard merely murdered his wives. The cannibal theme has literary and theatrical antecedents reaching from classical mythology and theatre, through innumerable fairy tales, to the legend of Sweeney Todd, which was popular in the 1840's.<sup>5</sup>

"Nurse's Stories" begins with the Uncommercial Traveller mentally revisiting the pleasant fictional locales of his childhood, such as Crusoe's isle, Lilliput, or Don Quixote's study (Scenes of alienation and madness, actually). He finds these stories "agreeable" and has "affectionate" memories of them (UT 148), but his happy musings ultimately serve only to prove the power, not the pleasure, of memory. They are mere introduction to the realm of Mnemosyne, for the voice of the nurse soon intrudes, usurping the narrative function and drawing the narrator into a zone<sup>6</sup> of primal terror. This stripping away of childhood fancy reveals the underlying primal material

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<sup>5</sup> It was fictionalized November 1846, in a story called "The String of Pearls" in The People's Periodical and Family Library, and dramatised at the Britannia Theatre, March 1847: "Thomas Prest's String of Pearls, the story of 'the Demon Barber' who kills his clients and passes them on to a co-conspirator to be made into meat pies, became one of the most famous fictional melodramas..." (Dawson 155).

<sup>6</sup> "Zones are both a territory and a sphere of influence. Intentions must pass through 'zones' dominated by other characters, and are therefore refracted....A zone is the locus for hearing a voice; it is brought about by the voice" (The Dialogic Imagination 434. Editor's italics).

so vividly expressed in the nurse's narratives: helplessness, passivity, and the fear of being dismembered and devoured, with its attendant reaction in the child's wish to destroy its home and parents. Because of the stress on early childhood in the narrative of Captain Murderer, escape does not occur, although the destructive impulse is clearly expressed in the form of wish-fulfilment. The captain, his house and retainers are destroyed, but only after devouring has occurred. Here the dynamic of incestuous absorption in the family enclosure is overpowering.

The story of Captain Murderer presents a symbolic representation of Victorian domesticity. The captain is "admitted into the best society and possessed [of] immense wealth." He keeps horses and carriages, has a pedigree (he is "an offshoot of the Bluebeard family"),<sup>7</sup> and last but

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<sup>7</sup> The original of Bluebeard was French aristocrat Gilles de Rais (1404-1440). A homosexual pedophile and lust-murderer, "it is by that name that he has been almost universally known" (Benedetti 191). Legend has transmuted his victims into wives, like the child-brides of Captain Murderer. De Rais was interested in doubles, and used for his pleasure "beautiful children, often fair-haired and fair-skinned, like himself" (112). He was accustomed to keep among his retainers "a facsimile of himself...[who] had a place of honour in the cortege when Gilles and his household rode out, and was prominent on all public occasions. He offered Gilles a mirror of himself, so that he could be both actor and spectator at once" (125). There was no evidence of cannibalism.

not least, "Captain Murderer's mission was matrimony" (150). He makes sure that his brides are good cooks and he provides them with cooking implements of silver and gold. He sends his pies out to the baker's shop, like any bourgeois house-holder. We discern in these domestic images the child's fear of loss of identity in the home enclosure. The homely details contribute to a sense of the uncanny, as cooking implements, usually nurturing items, are employed as implements of murder.

The ego of the story's auditor is displaced onto the figure of the bride, who is literally consumed and absorbed by the parental figure. In a like manner, individual family members (particularly parents) are represented in the figure of Captain Murderer, who wields absolute power over life, death and cookery, and ultimately expands until he fills the entire domestic enclosure. It is interesting to note the infantile view of parental figures in the character of Captain Murderer. He represents a mixture of traditional Victorian male and female parental roles in that he is active both in society and in the kitchen, and is both a procurer and preparer of food. This understanding of parental figures belongs to the pre-Oedipal, or oral, phase in which the parents are not yet differentiated by gender or social roles, but are seen merely as large beings who possess absolute power.

There is a lack of gender differentiation in the oral

phase of infantile development; the locus of pleasure is oral rather than genital, and so the general fear of dismembering and destruction has not yet been reformulated as castration fear: the libidinal and oral impulses are still merged. Freud wrote of this phase: "I have been driven to regard as the earliest recognizable sexual organization the so-called 'cannibalistic' or 'oral' phase, during which the original attachment of sexual excitation to the nutritional instinct still dominates the scene" ("From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" 106). Von Krafft-Ebing, too, has noted the intimate relationship of the oral and sexual impulses in later life:

In [some] cases of lust-murder...violation is omitted, and the sadistic crime alone becomes the equivalent of coitus....In such cases it may even happen that the appetite for the flesh of the murdered victim arises, and in consequence of this perverse colouring of the idea, parts of the body may be eaten. (62-63)

In the story of Captain Murderer, the double appears in the form of twin sisters, one fair and one dark, a classic opposition of characters often seen in fairy tales. The sisters are manifest doubles. There is some psychic decomposition in that one is credulous and passive, the other, suspicious and vengeful. However, the dark sister's revenge is quite passive, in that she converts herself into poisoned food and submits to devouring. In this, her aggressive drives find both sadistic and masochistic

expression.

Frye observes that

...one very common convention of the nineteenth-century novel is the use of two heroines, one dark and one light. The dark one is as a rule passionate, haughty, plain, foreign or Jewish, and in some way associated with the undesirable or with some kind of forbidden fruit, like incest. (101)

Rosenfield, too, notes the primal qualities inherent in the figure of the dark sister:

When the passionate, uninhibited self is a woman, she more often than not is dark and the sister...of the protagonist, thus introducing the suggestion of incest....The presence of biological Doubles or Twins in a novel of psychic disintegration can suggest authorial awareness of the problem of inner duality and the subsequent terrors involved. (314)

In this case, the forbidden fruit is the bride herself and the incest motif is quite apparent: here the child is devoured by a cannibalistic parental figure. The twin motif allows for a splitting of character into victim and observer, as the fair sister is consumed and the dark one observes the pie preparations at the window. The narrator identifies closely with the dark twin: "there was a mental compulsion on me<sup>8</sup>...to peep in at the window as the dark twin peeped, and to revisit [Captain Murderer's] horrible

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<sup>8</sup> This is an instance of skoptophilia (gazing impulse). Freud links this impulse to fear of dismemberment by parental figures and credits it with providing the impetus for the creation of fantasies of the primal scene (A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis 378-380, Lecture 23).

house, and look in at him in his blue and spotty and screaming stage..." (UT 153). The identification of observer, avenger, and victim is completed, as the dark twin becomes both the captain's victim and the instrument of his destruction.

The tale is filled with graphic details which are both comic and horrific, and which partake of fairy tale conventions: the captain's pointed teeth, which he keeps sharply filed; the poison composed of toad's eyes and spider's knees, which turns him blue and spotty; his sadistic private jokes about "house lamb." One of the more interesting details of the captain's cruelty is the way he makes his bride participate in her own murder, preparing the pie-crust and then viewing her decapitation in a mirror. Again, we see the linkage of victim and observer: "And the bride looked up at the glass, just in time to see the Captain cutting her head off; and he chopped her in pieces, and peppered her, and salted her, and put her in the pie, and sent it to the baker's, and ate it all, and picked the bones" (UT 151).

The stress is on viewing, catharsis in the form of an unwelcome experience one is forced to go through. In this tale we see resistance to loss of identity in the family, but it is weak, as the auditor is cathecting more with the

parental figure<sup>9</sup> than with that of the child. After all, no sisters or brides escape. The wish for family enclosure here is stronger than the wish for independence, which carries with it the alienation attendant upon life as an discrete individual, but an awareness of the destructive forces inherent in the family enclosure is definitely expressed, as well as a response to them in the form of doubling of character. This allows for an external view of the incestuous family dynamic (peeping through the window), but escape is impossible. This parallels the narrative dynamic of *Nurse's Stories*, in which the narrator's consciousness has regressed to a childish state and is held in thrall by his nurse's horrific bedtime stories: "my remorseless nurse cut the ground from under my tender feet...and I couldn't say 'I don't believe you;' it was not possible" (158).

Thus there is also a motif of double narrators. The primal terrors of childhood are given a discrete voice in

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<sup>9</sup> "Identification [with parents], in fact, is ambivalent from the very first; it can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal. It behaves like a derivative of the first, *oral* phase of the organization of the libido, in which the object that we long for and prize is assimilated by eating and is in that way annihilated as such. The cannibal, as we know, has remained at this standpoint; he has a devouring affection for his enemies and only devours people of whom he is fond" (Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" 105. Author's italics).



the form of the remembered nurse, and they are of such power that they supersede the voice of the adult Dickens in his guise of recollecting journalist. The persona of the Uncommercial Traveller is subsumed in the remembered persona of the passive, frightened auditor of his nurse's narratives. At the article's end, he refuses to take authorial responsibility for them, writing in the penultimate sentence, "Such are a few of the uncommercial journeys I was forced to make, against my will, when I was very young and unreasoning" (158). He views the cannibal tale as a zone he was forced to visit, existing in an alien, external consciousness, and this disavowal of responsibility may in part account for (and allow for) the reunification of the twins within the body of the captain. There is no escape from Captain Murderer's kitchen because of the domesticated nature of the story's auditor and narrator, a servant and a child, creatures of the home enclosure. On a psychic level, they both exist in the belly of the captain, safe at home.

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In the story of Captain Murderer, we see the primal fear of being dismembered and devoured in the domestic enclosure. Doubling of character allows for skoptophilia and loss of identity (being devoured) at the same time. This symbolic fable is cathartic: by the use of a doubled

narrative technique the narrator devolves to a childish state and vicariously destroys the family enclosure and undergoes the experience of being devoured and dismembered along with the twins, and at the same time distances himself from the primal scene of cannibalism by giving over control of the narrative to the nurse. "The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton" also makes use of doubled narrators. The voice of Wardle is substituted for that of the editor, allowing for greater intimacy with the reader, and distancing the protagonist from both the reader and narrator. The goblin story also presents us with an example of the superego double, in that the figure which appears to the protagonist voices his internal dialogue and imparts a message of personal importance to him.

The two stories differ totally in their underlying themes. The tale of Captain Murderer is about the horrors of enclosure, and the goblin story is about the horrors of exclusion (alienation in the home as opposed to alienation in the street). What they have in common is the annihilating nature of the primal material which is revealed by the double, whether through skoptophilia (iconographic revelation) or discourse (dialogic revelation). Another factor they share is formal or stylistic enclosure. One is presented as a remembered narrative, the other as a dream, and both are fantasies

much concerned with a fear of death. Most importantly, both stories are presented as the product of a single mind, enclosed within a separate consciousness, discrete from the contextual narrative matrix.

This stylistic enclosure mirrors the theme of domestic enclosure in family life and its apotheosis in the ritual Christmas gathering, as well as fulfilling formal and psychological functions. The stories are doubly distanced from the main narrative, which allows for free play of the fantastic imagination (as in the *menippia*) and also has a defensive function in that it creates psychic and aesthetic distance. On a social level, the theme of domestic enclosure is a positive force, but, on a primal level, there is an unconscious fear of loss of identity. The primal energies are more to the fore in the story of Captain Murderer whereas the social aspect is emphasised in the Christmas stories.

The sense of family enclosure and interconnectiveness is of primal importance to Dickens, as we may see in the imagery of two dreams which are recorded in The Uncommercial Traveller and Bleak House. The first is a dream of the Uncommercial Traveller, and the other is ascribed to Esther Summerson.

I can see back to very early days indeed, when my bad dreams--they were frightful, though my more mature understanding has never made out why--were of an interminable sort of ropemaking, with long

minute filaments for strands, which, when they were spun home together close to my eyes, occasioned screaming. ("Chatham Dockyard" UT 268 C26)

In falling ill, I seem to have crossed a dark lake, and to have left all my experiences, mingled together by the great distance, on the healthy shore....Dare I hint at that worse time when, strung together somewhere in a great black space, there was a flaming necklace, or ring, or starry circle of some kind, of which I was one of the beads! And when my only prayer was to be taken off from the rest, and when it was such inexplicable agony and misery to be part of the dreadful thing?....It may be that if we knew more of such strange afflictions, we might be the better able to alleviate their intensity. (BH 488-489 C35)

In his biography of Dickens, Ackroyd links these dreams, observing only that "these dream images of...lives being tightly bound together, somehow incurring loss of identity, are of deep and continuing significance to [Dickens]" (51). Loss of identity here refers to the erosion of personal identity, which is subsumed in the greater whole of family identity by a process of inexorable absorption.

Dickens was strongly drawn to these incestuously tight family groupings, while at the same time he unconsciously resisted them. His ambivalent attitude--anger and aggression as a response to rejection, combined with a longing for the lost ideal of home--may be seen in the contrasting imagery of death and domesticity in the homes of Bob Cratchit and Captain Murderer.

We recognise, in the dreams of the Uncommercial Traveller and Esther Summerson, images of incest in its

primal form of absorption and identity loss in the suffocating womb-like enclosure of the family, as opposed to its later reformulation as sex between relatives. Dickens often romanticized this reformulation in the brother-sister relationships of such fictional couples as David and Agnes (DC) or Florence and Walter (DS), and in the father-daughter relationships of Esther and Jarndyce (BH) or Amy Dorrit and Clennam (LD). Beneath these idealized relationships, underlying the ideal of the domestic hearth, there exist repressed unconscious energies.

Chasseguet-Smirgel has analysed the drive for psychical homogeneity underlying the act of incest, in relation to the works of de Sade:

*Mixture* could be considered the heading under which the whole of Sade's fantasy world is placed. It is clear that, for Sade, incest is not in any way connected with the assuagement of a deep longing for the oedipal object, but with the abolition of "children" as a category and "parents" as a category. Expressed in more general terms, the pleasure connected with transgression is sustained by the fantasy that, in breaking down the barriers which separate man from woman, child from adult, mother from son, daughter from father, brother from sister, the erotogenic zones from each other, and, in the case of murder, the molecules in the body from each other, it has *destroyed reality, thereby creating a new one, that of the anal universe where all differences are abolished*. (294. Author's italics)

In Mr Dombey, we see a character who is interested in annihilating "difference" because it threatens him, and his

sense of power which is invested in the shared belief in the power and glory of money and Dombey and Son. To a great extent, his beliefs are supported by the society in which he lives, and the values of both Dombey and Victorian utilitarian capitalism partake of a certain Sadean selfishness, acknowledging that "the law of Nature most deeply graven in our hearts....which constantly moves and inspires us, does not instill within us the love of our neighbour as being above the love we owe ourselves. First ourselves, then the others: this is Nature's order of progression" (de Sade, "Eugenie de Franval" 431-432).

In reference to an oft-quoted passage,<sup>10</sup> Jaffe sees Dombey's selfishness as socially predicated, but also hints at the primal, incestuous, anal-sadistic underpinnings of Dombeyism:

Dombey's fear of invasion is an extreme form of the bourgeois desire for privacy. He wants too much privacy; he wants, selfishly, to keep himself to himself. And he needs too much privacy because he desires too much power: his fear of invasion is perhaps the inevitable result of imagining that "the world was made for Dombey and Son to trade in." Even as he desires Dombey and Son to be "the world," *he acknowledges and therefore fears*

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<sup>10</sup> "The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships; rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprises; stars and planets circled in their orbits, to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre....A.D. had no concern with anno Domini, but stood for anno Dombey--and Son" (DS 2).

*difference--for the presence of others signifies the existence of other worlds . (Jaffe 97. My italics)*

This fear of "difference" accounts for his extreme identification with his son, for unconsciously Dombey is engaged in anal-sadistic reality destruction, the breaking down of barriers mentioned by Chasseguet-Smirgel. In his desire to mold his son in his own image, he would achieve the ultimate annihilation of difference in ultimate similarity of a double.

There is a symbolic representation of the primal scene of domestic cannibalism in Chapter six of Dombey and Son, which seems a distillation of the energies inherent in the many of the domestic enclosures in the novel. In this scene, Florence encounters Good Mrs Brown after she panics in the street and runs from "a wild confusion all around her, of people running up and down, and shouting, and wheels running over them, and boys fighting, and mad bulls coming up, and the nurse in the midst of all these dangers being torn to pieces..." (DS 69). (Of course the nurse is only "torn to pieces" in Florence's imagination.)

In a realistic sense, Florence is in great danger just

by virtue of being in the streets alone and unescorted.<sup>11</sup> However, Dickens's depiction of Mrs Brown and her domestic environs partakes of the dialectic of the unconscious, rather than a concern with realistic urban peril.

Carey comments on the mythic and psychological symbolism of Mrs Brown and her scissors:

Woman, as nurse and mother, closer than man to the indecencies of birth and death, has haunted the masculine imagination for centuries, as we may gather from the three women of Greek mythology with their mundane instruments--the spindle, the scissors--who spin and cut the thread of man's life. (163)

He also notes that the interior of her house is symbolic and unreal, a zone of locus suspectus:

Mrs Brown carries "skins" over her arm, and her house is furnished only with a heap of rags, a heap of bones, and a heap of ashes. Hardly a convenient scheme of interior decoration, if we consider Mrs Brown as a real person. But with their suggestion of human remains the heaps take their place, like the scissors, as the attributes of woman as Death. (164)

The three mounds of rags, ashes and bones suggest

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<sup>11</sup> "It has been proved that 400 individuals procure a livelihood by trepanning females from eleven to fifteen years of age for the purposes of prostitution. Every art is practised, every scheme is devised, to effect this object, and when an innocent child appears in the streets without a protector, she is insidiously watched by one of those merciless wretches and decoyed under some plausible pretext to an abode of infamy and degradation. No sooner is the unsuspecting helpless one within their grasp than, by a preconcerted measure, she becomes a victim to their inhuman designs" (From the opening address of "The London Society for the Protection of Young Females, and Prevention of Juvenile Prostitution" May 1835. Cited by Mayhew 211).



decomposed bodies, and, at the end of the encounter, Mrs Brown tells Florence to "wait at the street corner where she would be left, until the clock struck three" (DS 72). According to Freud, "the number three has been confirmed from many sides as a symbol of the male genitals" (The Interpretation of Dreams 393). Thus the reiteration of the number three may indicate an underlying unconscious anxiety on the author's part concerning the primal fear of dismemberment.

Florence wonders about the existence of a Bad Mrs Brown, and her fears are confirmed when Good Mrs Brown claims to have a homicidal double who can kill Florence "at any time--even if you was in your own bed at home" (DS 70). Her threat is reminiscent of the opening pages of Great Expectations, in which Magwitch expresses a desire to eat Pip's fat cheeks, and claims to control a certain unseen young man who may inflict further damage:

"...your heart and liver shall be tore out, roasted and ate....That young man has a secret way pecooliar to himself of getting at a boy, and at his heart, and at his liver....A boy may lock his door, may be warm in bed...but that young man will softly creep and creep his way to him and tear him open."<sup>12</sup> (GE 3-4)

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<sup>12</sup> Compare the threat of a tinker to David Copperfield, when alone on the road to Dover: "Come here when you're called...or I'll rip your young body open" (DC 187 C13). The primal content of this threat has been demonstrated by Jack the Ripper, among others.

Like the hungry Magwitch and his invisible double, Mrs Brown is a very oral character. She smokes a pipe "as if she were eating the stem" (DS 72), her mouth "mumbled and chattered of itself when she was not speaking" (69), and Florence fears her "industrious mouth." Her theft of Florence's clothing is a symbolic representation of dismemberment, as is the threatened hair-cutting, and Florence fears at first that Mrs Brown intends to cut off not only her hair, but her head (71). In the realm of sexual psychopathology, "the hair is one of the parts of the head which most frequently exhales fetishistic influences" (Hirschfeld 72). Hair cutting is a "sadistic attack" in which "symbolic castration appears in a thin disguise" (Karpman 142).

There is an interesting correspondence between Florence's threatened haircut and a passage in The Uncommercial Traveller. In Dombey and Son, Mrs Brown is described as "hovering about her with the scissors...like a new kind of butterfly" (DS 71-72). In "Chatham Dockyard," (UT C26) the Uncommercial Traveller describes the mechanics of ship-building and writes of some oar-making machinery as resembling "two rather large mangles with a swarm of

butterflies hovering over them"<sup>13</sup> (265). On leaving the workshop, he writes of "having been torn to pieces (in my imagination) by the steam circular saws, perpendicular saws, horizontal saws, and saws of eccentric action..." (267).

At the end of this piece of descriptive journalism, he suddenly relates the childhood nightmare of ropemaking reproduced above (page 108-109). That is, he associates from the fear of dismemberment by machinery to the childhood fear of identity loss in the domestic enclosure.

Slater links the scene between Florence and Mrs Brown in chapter six with one in chapter thirty of Dombey and Son. On the eve of Edith and Dombey's marriage, Mrs Skewton asks that Florence be left with her so that she may assist "in the formation of her mind" (DS 431). Edith bitterly opposes this plan, for she fears that her mother will corrupt Florence, as she has been used and corrupted by her parent (and as Mrs Brown has used her daughter, Alice). Edith declaims: "Leave her alone. She shall not, while I can interpose, be tampered with and tainted by the lessons I have learned" (434).

Here, according to Slater:

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<sup>13</sup> "The butterflies are not true butterflies, but wooden shavings, which, being spirited up from the wood by the violence of the machinery...conduct themselves as like butterflies as the heart could wish" (UT 265).

We remember the kidnapping of the child Florence by Mrs Skewton's *doppelganger*, "Good Mrs Brown," and our memory of the physical terror and humiliation to which the witch-like old creature submitted the little girl powerfully evokes for us the potential moral and spiritual consequences for Florence of now being delivered over to Mrs Skewton for "the formation of her mind." (260-261)

Again we see the underlying theme of damage and loss of identity sustained by a child at the hands of a parental figure, reiterated through mirrored scenes and doubled characters, and intimately involved with and expressed through the figure of the double.

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The theme of cannibalism in Dickens's later novels becomes expressive of a predatory society: in Bleak House, the court of Chancery is seen as a life-destroying and parasitic social entity, a theme that finds individual expression in such characters as Mr Vholes, a lawyer who has a disconcerting habit of "always looking at a client as if he were making a lingering meal of him" (BH 550 C39).

In an article entitled "Dickens and Vampirism," Fisher considers this character along with many other vampires throughout the works of Dickens, and although he in the main regards Vholes as a vampire, vampirism and cannibalism are intimately related activities, in life and literature. On a physical level, they involve the consumption of human tissue, and, on a psychical level, both are the consumption

of human life. The vampire offers twin gifts of death and immortality. Thus the figure of the vampire is similar to the primal double of Freud and Rank, in its dual aspects of "an energetic denial of the power of death" and "an uncanny harbinger of death."<sup>14</sup>

Our last glimpse of Vholes in Bleak House presents a mixture of both vampire and cannibal imagery: "he gave one gasp as if he had swallowed the last morsel of his client, and his black, buttoned-up unwholesome figure glided away..." (BH 867). Dickens explicitly terms him a cannibal in a passage in which society's toleration of "legal voraciousness...is seen as an insane condonation of social cannibalism" (Daleski, Dickens and the Art of Analogy 165): "Mr Vholes and his relations being minor cannibal chiefs, and it being proposed to abolish cannibalism, indignant champions were to put the case thus: Make man-eating unlawful, and you starve the Vholeses!" (BH 549 C39).

Fisher feels that, with such imagery, Dickens used the figure of the vampire for "the social exploration of the

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<sup>14</sup> "There is a subterranean philosophy in this legend, which symbolizes ancient mystic belief in existence beyond the grave....In the grim abodes of terror, the vampire stands alone in the twilight zone betwixt life and death" (Varma 2). "The ideals of rebirth and recreation are grotesquely literalized in these gruesome figures....Vampirism is the gothic definition of symbiosis and communion, as Dracula takes on the role of Christ, offering his own breast and blood to Mina" (Kilgour 172-173).

new urban world and the psychology of some of its fictional inhabitants" (166). Kaplan makes a similar observation:

Many of his most potent descriptions of death and dying associate the bodies of the dead with food for the living....From childhood on, he became obsessed with cannibalism, with images and scenes of human beings ingesting other human beings, of people being transformed into food, and also with the act of eating, both as festival and Thyestes' feast. When he projected the pattern onto the world at large, it became a key to his understanding of relationships between people and an image of society's exploitiveness. (29)

The story of Captain Murderer contains the theme of cannibalism within the fictive limits of a fantastic tale. In Dombey and Son, we see this theme "projected...onto the world at large" and functioning as a symbolic representation "of relationships between people and an image of society's exploitiveness." In the character of Mr Dombey, Dickens explores the new urban world through psychology,<sup>15</sup> and it is my contention that little Paul Dombey is a species of cannibalic pastry, psychically devoured by his father. Later on in the novel, Dombey's oral aggression finds expression in characters such as Carker and Bagstock, who are projected doubles of Dombey's sadistic oral aggression.

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<sup>15</sup> "[Dickens] was a realist who saw the new urban society that was emerging and revealed the dreams and ideals that animated it; a psychologist who made his readers look at the unsettled world through the eyes of children..." (Lary ix).

Dombey's essentially sadistic persona is by no means incompatible with his favoured place in society, although much of the novel is concerned with the conflict between his inner and outer selves. Karpman writes:

Daily life abounds in sadistic reactions which usually escape notice; cannibalism, vampirism and necrophilia are more extreme reactions and are essentially sadistic. Such crimes are not so rare as is usually thought....A large proportion of sadists have sublimated their sadism and made it serviceable to culture; others have made it socially and individually innocuous through well-functioning repression... (11)

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In all these dreams and fictions, the underlying primal motif of parental cannibalism is always present in some form. As Freud observes:

There is nothing in the id that could be compared with negation; and we perceive with surprise an exception to the philosophical theorem that space and time are necessary forms of our mental acts. There is nothing in the id that corresponds to the idea of time; there is no recognition of the passage of time, and--a thing that is most remarkable and awaits consideration in philosophical thought--no alteration in its mental processes is produced by the passage of time. Wishful impulses which have never passed beyond the id, but impressions, too, which have been sunk into the id by repression, are virtually immortal; after the passage of decades they behave as though they had just occurred. ("New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" 74)

Chapter 5: Dombey and Son

Do you see these who sit before the house,  
Children like the shapes of dreams?  
Children who seem to have been killed by their kinsfolk,  
Filling their hands with meat, flesh of themselves,  
Guts and entrails, handfuls of lament--  
Clear what they hold--the same as their father tasted.

Aeschylus, Agamemnon



Dombey and Son uses extensive and pervasive doubling in its themes and settings. Even the novel's title is significant in this respect, for it stands out among Dickens's titles referring to discrete characters, all of which involve single names.<sup>1</sup> Enclosures are mirrored: the deathly church and the Dombey house, the house across the street which is empty in chapter one and then becomes the abode of a "happy" family in an ironic mirroring of Florence's lonely tenancy, the contrast between the Gills and Dombey households and, more latent, Mrs Brown's house, all mirror and invoke comment upon Dombey's house.

Characters are doubled as well. Dombey is at the center of a constellation of doubles, all of whom are motivated by him, and all of whom exhibit traces of his psyche: "Dombey's pride in self-love is played off against the self-lacerating pride of Edith Granger, the covert paranoiac pride of Carker, the appalling physical vanity of Mrs Skewton, the comic self-complacency of Joey B, and so forth" (Moynahan 123).

The first chapter of Dombey and Son exhibits great use of the double motif. Every character presented here is doubled,<sup>2</sup> even the allegorical figures of Time and Care.

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<sup>1</sup> Except for "The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices," written in collaboration with Collins.

<sup>2</sup> The sole exception is Mrs Blockitt, who is not seen again.

There is little reason for Care to be mentioned along with Time, except for the twin motif which enhances the double effect of Dombey and his Son. The figure of Time makes an appearance in later chapters, but Care is not again mentioned in connection with him.<sup>3</sup>

The doctors who attend Mrs Dombey are presented in double form. They speak as one, interrupting and completing each other's discourse so as to create the effect of a single voice speaking in twain, converting dialogue to monologue. They possess identical watches, whose double ticking presides over the dying Mrs Dombey as Dr Blimber's clock will later preside over the waning of little Paul. Dombey also possesses a "very loud ticking watch." Lukacher links him with the figure of Chronos, noting that "Swallowing and consuming are the perogatives of the father and his trading firm Dombey and Son" (311). "Time is the greatest cannibal of all, who envies and so preys on all human achievements: it is hardly surprising that there is an ancient confusion between *Chronos*, Time, and the *Kronos*, Saturn, who devours his children" (Kilgour 40. Author's italics). All these figures, the doctors, the educator,

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<sup>3</sup> The figures of Time and Care are linked because they have similar effects. Care is an attribute of time, affecting people as time passes: "The poison shrubs are dropping/Their dark dews day by day;/And Care is hourly lopping/Our greenest boughs away!" (Tennyson, "Memory").

and, most importantly, Dombey, are swallows and consumers of people.

Dombey and Son is a double novel, centered around a double character. Mr Dombey's psychic duality informs and ties together the themes, causes the the action and motivates the characters and conflicts, and unites the two parts of the story. Because of the shift in Dombey's psychical focus from the parental to the connubial role, critical opinion has been divided as to the unity and thematic cohesion of the novel. Miller claims that "the reader is conscious...of a single steady current of duration which follows with a slow and stately curve the relations of a proud father and his daughter from their beginning to their end. Dombey and Son has a temporal coherence which was entirely lacking in The Pickwick Papers" (143). On the other hand, Leavis and Leavis contend that the theme of "the profound, far-reaching and...representative irony of Paul's fate" is replaced by the theme of Edith as the 'bought bride.'" They consider this to be a "striking defeat" <sup>4</sup>(23). Coates acknowledges

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<sup>4</sup> This contradicts another of their observations: "Dombey and Son marks a decisive moment in Dickens's career; he offered it as a providently conceived whole, presenting a major theme, and it was his first essay in the elaborately plotted Victorian novel" (Leavis and Leavis 2). As if Barnaby Rudge and Martin Chuzzlewit lack elaborate plots, or Oliver Twist is not a "Victorian" novel.

both the shift in focus that occurs in the novel and its unity. Unlike Leavis and Leavis, he views the "change in tone midway through the book" (Paul's death) as an organic part of a double novel. It is "the caesura which renders [Dombey and Son]...two books within the covers of a single one" (50). He also notes the "obsessive doubling"<sup>5</sup> in the novel: for him structural and character doubling is "a sign of controlled fictional patterning...whereby Dickens imposes on his novel a unity hitherto unprecedented in his work" (51).

It is true that there is a distinct break in the plot, action, and in Dombey's consciousness and the social and psychical influences acting upon him. New characters and locales are introduced after Paul's death, but the novel exhibits organic unity when viewed with double vision. In terms of action, setting, and characterization it falls into two parts, two discrete sections concerning Paul and Edith. In the first domestic, internal, and personal alienation is portrayed from the child's point of view, and in the second external, social, and financial alienation is shown through social and adult concerns like money and marriage. However, both parts are united in that their

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<sup>5</sup> Coates sees many doubles, like the Carker brothers, Dombey's wives, and the Browns and the Skewtons, but he fails to note that Carker is Dombey's double, a projected expression of oral aggression.

effects resonate in the consciousness of Dombey and in that their action is propelled by Dombey's aggressive and controlling drive. The novel's and Dombey's duality are linked, in that both result from the conflict between his social persona and unconscious drives. His shift from a parental to a connubial role involves only a reformulation of domestic sadism.

A comic and seemingly insignificant symbolic representation of the primal scene of domestic cannibalism occurs at the very beginning of Dombey and Son. Newsome observes that Mr Dombey embodies "an unholy and unwholesome chain of twins. Dombey assumes himself to be all-powerful and therefore self-sufficient; or rather, he assumes an eternal and self-sustaining sequence of identical Dombey and Sons" (208). Dombey identifies with Son, and we recall the intense oral aggression of the unconscious dynamic underlying identification, "in which the ego picks out an object....wants to incorporate this object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is...wants to do so by devouring it (Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" 249-250).

In the light of these considerations, I find the opening sentence of Dombey and Son quite significant:

Dombey sat in the corner of the darkened room in the great arm-chair by the bedside, and Son lay tucked up warm in a little basket bedstead, carefully disposed on a low settee immediately in

front of the fire and close to it, *as if his constitution were analogous to that of a muffin,* and it was essential to toast him brown while he was very new. (DS 1. My italics)

In an article entitled "The Unreadable Dombey," Sheridan remarks on the mention of a muffin as an example of an unnecessary detail which slows down the reader's apprehension of the more important aspects of the text, interfering with "the acquisition of information" (142). Although he admits that, in the case of the muffin, "there is the possibility of retrospective thematic significance," alluding to the eventual warming of Dombey's cold persona later in the novel (145), he basically views it as an unmeaningful "comic detail." He feels that "the detail is presented here without a context...and thus has a delaying effect....This, it would seem, is typical of Dickens, that he will say a great many small things while leaving some large things unsaid" (144).

Because the muffin appears in the first sentence of the novel, context has yet to be established. Dombey and son are of course more important, we infer this from the title of the book and the chapter, but there is a deeper reason than mere comedy for this "detail" to appear here, embedded between the descriptions of Dombey and son, and the allegorical figures of "Time and his brother Care."

Dickens was obliged to delete many passages of Dombey and Son in the proof stage, because of the spacial

restrictions imposed by serial publication.<sup>6</sup> With regard to these deletions, Butt and Tillotson have observed that "when forced to lop and crop, Dickens was accustomed to make his cuts at the expense of his comedy" (22). By my account, Dickens deleted sixteen passages from chapter one. With all this cutting going on in the neighbourhood of the muffin, how did it survive, if it is an unnecessary detail?

It is not surprising that Dickens should mention muffins in many of his fictions, for he was much concerned with limning the details of everyday life in his fictions and interested in descriptions of food and in providing meals for his characters. Thus, references to muffins are scattered throughout his works, from the cries of the muffin boys which are an integral part of the London scene in the Sketches by Boz (Scenes II), to the description of the gravestone of a certain "former pastrycook and muffin-maker" in the cemetery at Cloisterham in The Mystery of Edwin drood (43 C5).

A symbolic muffin appears in the novel immediately following Dombey and Son, in close relation to the theme of the abandoned child. In David Copperfield, after being expelled from his happy home by the advent of the Murdstones, David describes his room at the Micawber's

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<sup>6</sup> These passages are restored in context in the Penguin edition of Dombey and Son.

house: "My room was at the top of the house, at the back: a close chamber; stencilled all over with an ornament which my young imagination represented as a blue muffin; and very scantily furnished"<sup>7</sup> (DC 158 C11). We may sense the personal import of the Copperfield lines for Dickens in the way that the opening sentence of the chapter in which they occur is often quoted by biographers as Dickens writing about Dickens, not David Copperfield:<sup>8</sup> "I know enough of the world by now, to have lost the capacity of being much surprised by anything; but it is matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age" (DC 154).

In Nicholas Nickleby, we also see muffins associated with the theme of neglected children. In chapter two, there is a satire of parliamentary proceedings involving Ralph Nickleby's efforts to bring a bill before parliament which will form a muffin monopoly and enable Ralph to profit on

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<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to compare this description of David's room with the experience of Paul at Dr Blimber's school: "And there with an aching void in his young heart, and all outside so cold, and bare, and strange, Paul sat as if he had taken life unfurnished, and the upholsterer were never coming" (DS 150 C11).

<sup>8</sup> This is because it is from the "autobiographical fragment," which is reproduced in Forster's biography of Dickens: "...perhaps while writing Dombey, certainly before beginning David Copperfield, he created a fragment of an autobiography...he drew upon some of it for the fourth number of David Copperfield" (Kaplan 216).



shares. In his speech before the house, the member laments at length "the cruelties inflicted on muffin boys by their masters," which are crowned by the fact that, while "the muffins were provided with warm clothing and blankets, the boys were wholly unprovided for and left to their own miserable resources" (NN 15). The subject of muffins, muffin boys and the name of the proposed company<sup>9</sup> are quite silly, and here Dickens is being comic and ironic, satirizing Ralph and political business scams in general, but still we see a concern, albeit spurious, for the children in the wet, cold streets, who are miserable and unprovided for while the muffins, more valuable merchandise, are protected. There is clearly a theme of personal resonance enveloped in this comedy.

In Dombey and Son, the image of the muffin is brought from the streets to the domestic hearthside, but the touch of comic absurdity it contributes to the first chapter is subsumed in the presence of death and the tragic quality of the writing. Its symbolic presence here and the identification of muffin and child may be due to Dickens's increasing interest at this time of his life in his childhood, particularly those aspects which he had repressed: "The letters [to Forster] relating to Dombey and

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<sup>9</sup> "The United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company"

Son reveal Dickens's increased concern with a need to explore the painful experiences of the past he had hitherto avoided" (Paroissien 27).

When we consider the attributes of a muffin, they seem similar to those of a baby. Homely, domestic articles, they are small, passive, and quite edible (from the baby's point of view). In actuality, the muffin which appears in the opening sentence of Dombey and Son is fraught with thematic significance: it is an emblem of pedophagia, of the parent devouring the child.

There is an element of skoptophilia as Mr Dombey watches the toasting of his son most attentively: Dombey and Paul are doubles; the child is intended to be a literal projection and extension of the father, projected into the future to provide security against the crumbling of the House. Like any muffin, Paul is in danger of being devoured. Almost as soon as he is born he is subsumed, consumed, and entombed in Dombey and Son. At once Mr Dombey expresses his wish to insert the child into the structure of the House, intoning to his dying wife: "The House will once again...be not only in name but in fact Dombey and Son" (DS 1).

The narrator later comments on Dombey's considering and treating his son as a projection of himself: "Mr Dombey's young child was, from the beginning, so distinctly

important to him as a part of his own greatness, or, (which is the same thing) of the greatness of Dombey and Son..." (90).

If there was a warm place in his frosty heart, his son occupied it...though not so much as an infant, or as a boy, but as a grown man--the "Son" of the Firm...the boy...*must* become the man with whom he held such constant communication in his thoughts, and for whom he planned and projected, as for an existing reality, every day. (91. Dickens's italics)

Dombey introjects the image of his son into his ego. He sees him as a literal part and projection of himself and wants to shield him from others, as Dombey himself is shielded, enclosed in his paranoid pride and sense of social superiority. The motif of introjection and psychic absorption is nicely expressed in the following passage:

Mr Dombey had truly revealed the secret feeling of his breast. An indescribable distrust of anybody stepping in between himself and his son; a haughty dread of having any rival or partner in the boy's respect and deference....In all his life, he had never made a friend. His cold and distant nature had neither sought one, nor found one. And now when that nature concentrated its whole force so strongly on a partial scheme of parental interest and ambition, it seemed as if its icy current, instead of being released by this influence, and running clear and free, had *thawed but for an instant to admit its burden, and then frozen with it into one unyielding block.* (47. My italics)

On a conscious level, it is clear that Dombey loves his son, as is proved by his concern for his health and the way that Paul's illness causes him to cry and suffer. However, many parents claim to love their children, and also harm or

even destroy them. Dombey's love of Paul is inseparable from his love of himself and his business, which, like his son, he sees as a projection of himself. Thus his attempted repression of emotion and fancy in the son is related to the similar repression of these qualities in himself.

Dombey wants to absorb Paul into the firm, and to this end forces him into a socially predicated mold, a planned life. Paul is attenuated, exhausted, and eventually overcome by his artificial existence, but in a sense it is not so much devouring as the toasting that does him in. He is prematurely forced into a pre-planned mold, his childhood is denied him, and this literally is what kills him. According to Marcus, "Paul is dying of a metaphysical and moral disease: middle class culture" (329). Dombey, of course, is the major exponent of such culture, on a personal and social level. Marcus terms it "Dombeyism." According to Goldberg, "Paul instinctively divines the sickness at the heart of the adult society and is fatally infected by it" (54):

The illness that kills him is never specified, but it is the burden of the whole context of Dickens' moral fable to make it clear that his death is the result of some deep inward rupture...as the victim of a *psychic murder*, his death corresponds to the death of feeling in Mr Dombey and as such contributes to the novel's criticism of the way the human personality is damaged in a money-obsessed society by a false conception of priorities. (55-56. My italics)

We may see the effects of a money-obsessed society on

the human psyche in the following comments. Moynahan observes: "In *Dombey*, Dickens created a permanently valid image of nineteenth-century Economic Man in all the unyielding pride of his power and the pathos and repulsiveness of his blighted heart" (129). Johnson (who saw in Scrooge the image of Economic Man), notes that, in *Dombey and Son*, Dickens "portrayed society as a single interlinked system poisoned by the heartlessness of a money ethic" (*The Heart of Charles Dickens* 137). This "poisoning" and "heartlessness" has an effect on the domestic enclosure similar to that of the cash nexus of Carlyle and Marx and Engels: "the bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation" (Marx and Engels 38).

Thus *Dombey* reflects the heartlessness of society in a personal reformulation of sadism. He sees his son in only terms of his future social role as a *Dombey*, not as a child. This helps to explain his coldness towards Florence. As a female, she is of no use to the firm, and so for *Dombey* she has no importance, except as a rival for his son's affections. For all *Dombey's* denial, however, Florence may be seen as a decomposed double of her father. Moynahan touches on aspects of dissociation and similarity in their characters, observing that "Florence has an enormous capacity for tender feeling, while *Dombey*, for

reasons never explained, is afraid of feeling" <sup>10</sup>(123). He maintains that, at the novel's end, "father and daughter are finally alike, with a genius for weeping" (124). But Dombey weeps from the beginning of the novel. The difference is that, at first, his tears are kept obsessively private, hidden behind his social facade, whereas, at the novel's end, his social persona has been destroyed; and so he expresses himself openly, displaying an "almost anguished tenderness for the children of [his] daughter" (Johnson, The Heart of Charles Dickens 118). The basic emotive expression is the same, only shifted from the private to the public arena.

To return to Dombey's relations with his son, Mr Dombey's coldness may be culpable in Paul's mother's death, for it is possible for hearts to die as a result of economics, as is demonstrated by Mr Pipchin's Peruvian demise. Dombey's economic view of his world is clearly an

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<sup>10</sup> The key to this difference lies in a psychological similarity, repression. As Dickens explains in his preface, Dombey represses all emotion. And Florence represses the natural feelings of aggression and anger towards her father's treatment of her. Kaplan sees Florence as a decomposed double of Dickens, a projection of his better nature: "Dickens found it natural to create a female character whose moral sentiments are so deep and full that they embody his sense of himself at his best. Florence has none of his bitterness, frustration, and vengefulness. His inability to forgive his mother and his unresolved anger at his father, which played themselves out ceaselessly in the crucial episodes of his life, have their fictional antimodel in the creation of a perfect sister..." (218).

important aspect of the novel, as the narrator in chapter one likens Dombey's love of his wife to his love of household articles.

Dombey removes Paul's surrogate mother prematurely, and although this action is taken because of class transgression, which is linked to Dombey's deeper fear of a changeling, the end result for Paul is starvation. As Mrs Chick observes, the child is "prematurely deprived of its natural nourishment" (DS 82 C6). Then he is frozen at his christening. The narrator says that "the chill of Paul's christening had struck home, perhaps to some sensitive part of his nature, which could not recover itself in the cold shade of his father; but he was an unfortunate child from that day" (89-90).

Finally, his development is unhealthily forced at Blimber's academy. Like Dombey, Dr Blimber is a devouring figure. In their first interview, he views Paul as a species of small animal which he intends to stuff, and he is likened to the Sphinx (142). As classical sources (Oedipus Tyrannus) inform us, those who could not answer her questions were eaten. And so it is not surprising that Paul's schooling has "disastrous effects on him" (Kotzin 41), as well as on his fellow pupils. As a result of the forcing system of education, the students are despondent, Toots's mental development is stunted, Briggs is suicidal,

and Paul's health goes into a terminal decline.<sup>11</sup> Dickens describes Blimber's system as a slippery slope of psychic persecution leading to the grave:

The young gentlemen were prematurely full of carking anxieties. They knew no rest from the pursuit of stony hearted verbs, savage noun-substantives, inflexible syntactic passages, and ghosts of exercises that appeared to them in their dreams. Under the forcing system, a young gentleman usually took leave of his spirits in three weeks. He had all the cares of the world on his head in three months. He conceived bitter sentiments against his parents or guardians in four; he was an old misanthrope, in five; envied Curtius that blessed refuge in the earth, in six... (DS 143 C11)

In the notes to the Penguin edition of Dombey and Son, Fairclough relates the death of Curtius as a heroic suicide. However, in his "Life of Romulus," Plutarch gives various versions of the story, including one that Curtius simply fell into some deep mud, and informs us that, in ancient Rome, the Curtian Lake was a large open sewer. What is of import is that Curtius was swallowed up by the earth, just as Paul is "swallowed up" by the door of Elimber's school.

Paul's tutor, Miss Blimber, is described as a ghoul who exhumes the graves of dead languages (DS 147 C11).

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<sup>11</sup> "Paul's experience is used to show the terrible evils of cramming in any life, especially in the life of a delicate child. Paul was killed by his father and Doctor Blimber...Modern psychology fully sustains Dickens in his view" (Hughes 106-107).



Ghouls are specifically creatures who eat the bodies of the dead, as Dickens was later to observe in Household Words: "In the whole wide circle of the Arabian Nights, it [cannibalism] is reserved for ghoules, gigantic blacks with one eye, monsters like towers, of enormous bulk and dreadful aspect, and unclean animals lurking on the sea-shore" ("Lost Arctic Voyagers" Household Words, February 12, 1855. Cited by Ackroyd 713). Here we note the fairy tale motif and the appearance of sea-monsters, both of which important themes appear in the Brighton schools. Pipchin's and Blimber's houses are described in fairy imagery, one is the castle of an ogress, and, in the other, Paul discerns strange figures and animal faces in the carpeting and woodwork. At Blimber's, he is denied access to old Glubb, a protean figure whose importance for Paul "is that he represents, for the starved and thwarted child, the life-fostering indulgence in creative 'wonder'...for the lack of which...he wilts" (Leavis and Leavis 21).

Another important attraction of old Glubb is that he knows how to avoid sea-monsters. In that these primal devouring monsters, "of enormous bulk and dreadful aspect," are long and rigid, we may see them as phallic in aspect (like the towering one-eyed cannibals mentioned above). The figure of the threatening monster is a symbolic

representation of Dombey,<sup>12</sup> whose stiffness is so often emphasized by the narrator that he seems a human erection. According to old Glubb, avoiding sea-monsters requires much twisting and turning and so we may see the evasive manoeuvres as a wish-fulfilment of Paul's desire to deviate from Dombey's plan for his life's course, which is so harmful to him.

These are the physical and psychical factors which contribute to Paul's death. They are the direct results and perfect expressions of the father's wish to absorb the son into himself.

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In Dombey senior, he created a version of John Dickens transformed into a self-contained monster of personal pride and love of self, that very aspect that had resulted in Charles's being sent to the blacking factory. Like John Dickens, Dombey becomes a bankrupt. The first step in his bankruptcy, ironically, is the death of his son, a projection of himself so intense that the son almost prefers to abdicate his life since so little of it is his own. (Kaplan 217)

Kaplan considers both Paul and Florence Dombey to be projections of Dickens, and Mr Dombey to be representative of a devouring father. This is a valid claim from the point of view of psychoanalytic biographical criticism, and many

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<sup>12</sup> The strong-room in Dombey's offices "might have represented the cavern of some ocean-monster, looking on with a red eye at these mysteries of the deep" (DS 169).

have noted the operation of wish-fulfilment in the premature death of the mother figure in many of Dickens's fictions besides Dombey and Son, where the mother is dispatched in the first chapter. However, there are other distinctions to be made and lines of demarcation to be drawn in considering the mechanism of projection in this novel. I shall prefer, in this discussion, to stress projection and character decomposition within the fictive world of the text, although I also avail myself of certain biographical data. As Bergler observes: "Too often, reality factors are triumphantly produced by biographers as the 'real reason' for the peculiarities of their subjects...when the answer lies, not in external details, but in their use and misuse within the unconscious of that individual" (102). And so it is that Kaplan takes a more simplistic view of Dombey's character than I. Dombey is certainly a "self-contained monster of personal pride and love of self," but he is also a deeply divided man, a being in which opposing selves are at war. These two views of Dombey express the inner and outer man, respectively.

Dombey's dual nature is apparent from the start. In the novel's second chapter, after treating Mrs Richards exactly like a commodity, Dombey closets himself "in solitary wretchedness" and wipes "blinding tears from his eyes." The narrator then interjects to observe that Dombey pities his

son primarily, and himself second: "It may have been characteristic of Mr Dombey's pride, that he pitied himself through the child. Not poor me....but poor little fellow!" (DS 18).

In the novel's early chapters, we are exposed to two Dombey's, which is to say that the narrator reveals Dombey as an internal manifest double. In his dealings with other people, he is consistently cold, hard and prideful, full of his sense of self-importance as he dominates those around him. When he is alone it is surprising how often he lapses into tears. Thus Dombey is not an unfeeling man, although his emotions are totally repressed and he is completely unable to express emotion to others. In the "Preface of 1867," Dickens comments on the dual nature of Dombey. He speaks of "the confounding of shyness with arrogance" and goes on to say that "Mr Dombey undergoes no violent change." This is a strange comment to make of a character who more or less turns inside out in the course of the novel, and Dombey's arrogance is much in evidence throughout most of the book, but Dickens says that this is due to his divided psyche:

A sense of his injustice is within him, all along. The more he represses it, the more unjust he necessarily is. Internal shame and external circumstances may bring the contest to a close in a week, or a day; but, it has been a contest for years, and is only fought out after a long balance of victory. (DS xv)

I take this character analysis to mean that Dombey's basic emotional core is in evidence throughout the novel, but is repressed until the end. The "close of the contest" involves the breakdown of his socially predicated persona and the removal of repression, which ultimately leaves him on the sea-shore, in the bosom of his recreated family.

Dombey is an double entire in himself, who turns inside out in the course of the novel. At the end, his previously repressed emotive persona is in the open, in control, and presumably his cold pride and oral sadism are now repressed, as they should be: "Early on, he is a version of the nightmare father who devours his children. At the end, he is transformed into the benevolent father who loves his child more than himself, more than his own life" (Kaplan 217-218). At the novel's end, Dombey is quite outside the social edifice, awash with sentiment and pathetically trying to make up for his wasted opportunities for warmth and love. Characters such as Bagstock carry on unchanged and unenlightened, and, back in the city, we are certain that a hundred Dombey's and a thousand Carkers will spring to fill the vacated places. The ending of Dombey and Son has little to do with a didactic message of social reform; it focuses instead on the personal change in Dombey, on the destruction of his external, social persona and the emergence of the emotional, inner Dombey.

As Dickens remarks in his preface, the key to the duality of Dombey's character is repression. He has a hard, cold persona through which he relates to the external world, and a repressed inner emotional self which he hides from all.

In considering Dombey's psyche, Miller writes of "the enclosure of personality within itself and within the things it has transformed into a mirror of itself...the unconscious repetition of the same narrow judgements, feelings, and view of things, a repetition which eventually blinds one to all the world" (145). In this, he refers to Dombey's outer, social self, a persona predicated on pride and power. Dombey's emotional coldness and physical stiffness may be seen as attributes of psychic depersonalization.

According to Symonds:

[One] sign of depersonalization is to be found in the person's attitude and bearing. The absence of feeling and emotion may show itself in impersonality, stiffness, formality and rigidity in social relations. The individual may become lifeless, a mere automaton going through the motions of the day's experiences without animation or vitality....Another sign of depersonalization is the tendency to identify oneself with another and live out one's aspirations and desires, hopes and fears through the experiences of another person. (156-157)

This analysis certainly fits Dombey's relationship with himself and his son. Dombey's depersonalization may explain his extreme reserve, as well as his intense identification

with Paul, for the love of his son is the one thing which penetrates to the inner Dombey. However, because of Dombey's psychical make-up, this love and identification finds its perfect expression in the destructive energies of the primal scene of domestic cannibalism.

Dombey's cannibalistic drives are latent in the novel and deep in Dombey's unconscious. They are not readily apparent either to Dombey or the reader (or even to Dickens?) for they are repressed, wish-fulfillments of the id, rooted in primal aggression. This repression, however, does not obviate or attenuate the aggression:

...repression does not hinder the instinctual representative<sup>13</sup> from continuing to exist in the unconscious, from organizing itself further, putting out derivatives and establishing connections. Repression in fact interferes only with the relation of the instinctual representative to one psychical system, namely, to that of the conscious...the instinctual representative develops with less interference and more profusely if it is withdrawn by repression from conscious influence. It proliferates in the dark, as it were, and takes on extreme forms of expression, which when they are translated and presented to the neurotic are not only bound to seem alien to him, but frighten him by giving him the picture of an extraordinary and dangerous strength of instinct. ("Repression" 149. Freud's italics)

The cannibalistic drive is a basic part of Dombey's

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<sup>13</sup> This term is similar in meaning to "symbolic representation." It is that which represents the primal instinctual drives of the id. In the case of a kleptomaniac, the instinctual representative is the act of theft, for an erotomaniac, sex. In the case of Dombey and son, it is the primal scene of domestic cannibalism.

psyche, from his earliest formative years. His character is anal, arrested in the second pregenital phase of sexual and emotional development. This analysis is consistent with his character traits and explains both his need for total control of his environment and his unconscious aggression towards his children.

Analysts have long been agreed that the multifarious instinctual impulses which are comprised under the name of anal erotism play an extraordinarily important part, which it would be quite impossible to overestimate, in building up sexual life and mental activity in general. It is equally agreed that one of the most important manifestations of the transformed erotism derived from this source is found in the treatment of money. (Freud, "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" 72)

The people I am about to describe [anal-erotic personalities] are noteworthy for a regular combination of the three following characteristics. They are especially *orderly*, *parsimonious* and *obstinate*. Each of these words actually covers a small group or series of inter-related character-traits. "Orderly" covers the notion of bodily cleanliness, as well as of conscientiousness in carrying out small duties and trustworthiness....Parsimony may appear in the exaggerated form of avarice; and obstinacy can go over into defiance, to which rage and revengefulness are easily joined. ("Character and Anal Erotism" 169. Freud's italics)

These attributes of the anal personality are all found in Dombey. Dombey's avarice is such that his entire personality is based upon the business with which he so closely identifies. He demonstrates his trustworthiness in the way that he insists on discharging all his debts after the collapse of his firm, even though he is left penniless.



He is certainly obstinate, and will countenance no check to his will, and this obstinacy turns to rage and revengefulness in his dogged pursuit of Carker. Dickens merges the qualities of order and avarice with great economy in the following description, as well as limning Dombey's extreme identification with his money: "[Dombey] was one of those close-shaved close-cut moneyed gentlemen who are glossy and crisp like new bank-notes, and who seem to be artificially braced and tightened as by the stimulating action of golden shower-baths" (DS 17).

Because of his perverse psychical development Dombey's love of his son find its ultimate and most egregious expression in the child's untimely death, for the primal forms of love are entirely self-centered, and thus entail little regard for the well-being or even the discrete existence of the loved object. Thus Dombey's essentially anal character and his intense oral aggression, combined with his extreme identification with his son, combine to snuff out of existence the very object on which he is fixated:

Preliminary stages of love emerge as provisional sexual aims while the sexual instincts are passing through their complicated development. As the first of these aims we recognize the phase of incorporating or devouring--a type of love which is consistent with abolishing the object's separate existence....At the higher stage of the pregenital sadistic-anal organization, the striving for the object appears in the form of an urge for mastery, to which injury or annihilation of the object is a

matter of indifference. Love in this form and at this stage is hardly distinguished from hate in its attitude towards the object. (Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" 138-139)

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In this discussion of Dombey and Son, I have written only of the primary relationship among the many doubles in the novel, that of Dombey and son. This is partly because of spacial considerations, for I have reached the point where I must conclude this thesis.

However, an analysis of the father-son relationship is quite revealing in that Dombey's obsessive identification with his son as his double is seen to have its psychical origins in unconscious factors such as the ego's aggressive wish to incorporate another ego into itself, combined with the wish to stave off loss of identity in the creation of another, identical self.

The dynamic of the unconscious has been a major concern of my discussion of the double, for the double has its origin in primal unconscious energies, fear and aggression. Both the repressed cannibalistic drive of Dombey and the accusatory superego figures of the Christmas fictions are motivated by these primal energies, deep within the id.

The unconscious and the double are intimately linked because of the double's origin in psychical fragmentation, thus the double as a conscience figure is a universal

fictive motif, predicated upon the natural psychical lines of demarcation as elucidated by Freud, the separation of the psyche into an id, ego, and superego.

The quality of identification inherent in doubling has its roots in the id, and is reformulated in various ways, but it is always rooted in the drive for cannibalistic incorporation which underlies identification. This primal unity is ultimately impossible to achieve because of the contradictory dual nature of the double. In both the duality of alienation and identification inherent in the mirror image, and in the dual promise of death and immortality inherent in the narcissistic primal scene of mirror-gazing, we see the ambiguity that lies at the heart of the psychological double.

I should like now to close with some words of Carlyle on Dickens's fictions, taken from a letter to Forster. Both Kaplan and Ackroyd have used this quote as an epigraph for their biographies of Dickens, and it expresses nicely the motif of buried primal forces which is connected with the figure of the double throughout the works of Dickens. Underlying the inimitable and wildly varied elements of his art there may be glimpsed "...deeper than them all, if one has the eye to see deep enough, dark, fateful silent elements, tragical to look upon; and hiding amid dazzling radiances as of the sun, the elements of death itself..."

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Chronology of publication dates of Dickens's works

- 1836, 1839 Sketches by Boz
- 1836 "Sunday Under Three Heads"
- 1837 The Pickwick Papers
- 1838 Oliver Twist
- 1839 Nicholas Nickleby
- 1840 Master Humphrey's Clock
- 1841 The Old Curiosity Shop  
Barnaby Rudge  
 "The Lamplighter"
- 1842 American Notes
- 1843 A Christmas Carol
- 1844 Martin Chuzzlewit  
The Chimes
- 1845 The Cricket on the Hearth
- 1846 Pictures From Italy  
The Battle of Life
- 1848 Dombey and Son  
The Haunted Man
- 1850 David Copperfield  
 "A Christmas Tree"
- 1851 "What Christmas is as We Grow Older"
- 1852 "The Poor Relation's Story"  
 "The Child's Story"  
 "To Be Read at Dusk"

- 1852, 1853, 1854 A Child's History of England
- 1853 Bleak House  
"The Schoolboy's Story"  
"Nobody's Story"
- 1854 Hard Times  
"The Seven Poor Travelers"
- 1855 "The Holly Tree"
- 1856 "The Wreck of the Golden Mary" (with Collins)
- 1857 Little Dorrit  
"The Perils of Certain English Prisoners"  
"The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices" (with Collins)
- 1858 Reprinted Pieces  
"Going Into Society"
- 1859 A tale of Two Cities  
"The Haunted House"  
"Hunted Down"  
"A Message From the Sea" (with Collins)
- 1861 Great Expectations  
"Tom Tiddler's Ground"
- 1861, 1868 The Uncommercial Traveller
- 1862 "Somebody's Luggage"
- 1863 "Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings"
- 1864 "Mrs Lirriper's Legacy"
- 1865 Our Mutual Friend  
"Dr Marigold"
- 1866 "Mugby Junction"

- 1867 "No Thoroughfare" (with Collins)  
 1868 "George Silverman's Explanation"  
 "Holiday Romance"  
 1870 The Mystery of Edwin Drood

Some other works mentioned in this thesis

- Homer The Odyssey C 700 BC.  
 Plato Republic C 366 BC.  
 Plautus The Two Menaechmuses C 270 BC.  
 Varro "Bimarcus" C 70 BC.  
 Milton Comus 1637, Paradise Lost 1674  
 Hoffmann The Sandman 1816  
 Mary Shelley Frankenstein 1818  
 Gogol "The Nose" 1836  
 Poe "William Wilson", "The Fall of the House of Usher" 1839  
 Dostoevsky The Double 1846, The Brothers Karamazov 1880  
 Stevenson Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde 1886