

**A CHAMELEON ROLE:
HOW ADOPTION FUNCTIONS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
BRITISH FICTION**

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father, Kirk Sorley, who has been a constant source of support, encouragement and love from the very beginning. He inspires me to fly higher than the flock.

Abstract

In my thesis I look at adopted characters in nine nineteenth-century works: Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights, Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, Elizabeth Barrett-Browning's Aurora Leigh, George Eliot's Silas Marner, Rudyard Kipling's Kim, and both Bleak House and Great Expectations by Charles Dickens.

From these works we see that the figure of the adopted child both destabilizes and expands the Victorian concept of the family, a concept which the literature of the time was often concerned to reinforce. Since adoption implies the injection of a foreign element into the fabric of family life, it serves to underline the fragility of blood-ties. In this sense, the adopted child functions as a figure of subversion and instability within the heart of the family. But because adoption also implies a looser acceptance of what family means, it may serve to expand the definition of kinship. The tension between these two ideas is dealt with in my thesis. No two novels treat adoption in the same way and the possibilities for adoptive relationships are endless, with potential for good and bad relationships, allegory and realism, expansion and deconstruction of the family.

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Introduction

Adoption has been altering the dynamics of family relationships since time immemorial and it is only natural that it should be a major feature of literature. However, to speak of adoption in nineteenth-century English literature is something of an anachronism, since adoption as we know it today did not exist until 1926 with the passing of the Adoption Act. The question to be answered here is how adoption is presented in nineteenth-century novels and how adopted characters in these novels affect the families that they are taken into.

The figure of the adopted child both destabilizes and expands the Victorian concept of the family, a concept which the literature of the time was often concerned to reinforce. Since adoption implies the injection of a foreign element into the fabric of family life, it serves to underline the fragility of blood-ties. In this sense, the adopted child functions as a figure of subversion and instability within the heart of the family. But because adoption also implies a looser acceptance of what family means, it may serve to expand the definition of kinship. The tension between these two ideas will be dealt with in my thesis. I will begin with a historical look at the beginnings of legal adoption and the Victorians' use of adoption to construct non-biological families. One cannot understand the implications of adoption in literature until one has a feel for what was happening in the real world of the author. I will then examine a number of works that contain adopted characters. My discussion will be organized chronologically within each chapter. Thus in my second chapter, I discuss Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights and Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, arguing that in these novels the adopted child is a destabilizing element in the adoptive family. Fanny Price, Heathcliff and Jane Eyre all

cause considerable disturbance in their non-biological families, and their experiences of familial rejection and rootlessness leave them altered profoundly. My third chapter focuses on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epic poem Aurora Leigh, George Eliot's Silas Marner and Rudyard Kipling's Kim. These three narratives demonstrate adoptive relationships that are an expansion of kinship. In each work the "artificial" family created by the adoptive relationship redefines the boundaries of kinship. For example, Kim and his adoptive parent-figure, the lama, make an unorthodox pair, but their relationship may arguably be called familial in nature. Charles Dickens's Bleak House and Great Expectations are discussed in the final chapter as examples of how the act of adoption can be used for the self-serving purposes of the adoptive parent and can thus have a profoundly negative effect on the future development of the adopted child. Esther Summerson is literally "bought" through adoption by John Jarndyce not only to be a daughter, but also to become a wife. Pip and Estella are manipulated horribly by their adoptive parents. Magwitch uses Pip by making the boy into the gentleman Magwitch himself cannot become and Miss Havisham tries to turn Estella into a scourge of all members of the opposite sex. By focusing on these three aspects of the adoptive relationship, I hope to demonstrate how the fictional representations of adoption add another dimension to an understanding of the nineteenth-century family.

Chapter 1: A Historical Overview of Adoption in the Nineteenth-Century

In order to understand the role adoption plays in the fiction of the nineteenth-century it is first necessary to look at what was occurring in the real world of the nineteenth-century author. To put nineteenth-century adoption in context it is necessary to look briefly at the Victorian family. The family was undergoing subtle changes in the nineteenth century. In the previous generations a common pattern in bourgeois families was a father and mother who together ran the family business as partners. Increasingly in the nineteenth century middle-class men were called into urban areas to work, leaving their wives and children at home. Notions of middle-class respectability called for a mother whose sole duty was the raising and nurturing of children. Anything that threatened the sanctity of the family was to be avoided. It is possible to see, then, how adoption might function both as a source of instability in a family – the insertion of a foreign element – and also as a method of expanding kinship ties, effectively providing a safe place for otherwise parentless children.

To the Victorians the family was a vital institution for several reasons. It was more than just a unit in which to raise children. In an ideal family a husband could look forward to coming home to a place that would be a haven from the harsh capitalist world in which he worked. The family was supposed to be a place of calm renewal for men who battled in the fiercely competitive public sphere. Carol Dyhouse writes: “Having produced industrial capitalism, the Victorians sought refuge from it. For the middle-class, the most important of such refuges was the family” (Dyhouse, 4). It was necessary, then, to keep the public and private spheres separate so that the

world would not corrupt the family.

The man of the house was not the only member to be nurtured. Victorians believed that the home was the first place in which children learned obedience and good Christian values. Only after a proper upbringing could they become productive members of society. If a child grew up to be wayward, the family was believed to be at fault for improper teaching. Ideally the mother was constantly concerned for the well-being of her children, and in the safe nest of the family unit the children learned how to behave. Many historians point out that the construction of gender roles has its roots in the family unit; accordingly, little girls learned how to behave like proper little ladies and boys like little men (Dyhouse, 4; Ittmann, 143; D'Cruz, 53). Carol Dyhouse writes of the family's influence over the gender roles of female children:

Inside the family, relationships between parents and the organization of domestic life constituted the first lessons in the sexual division of labour, and if these relationships conformed to the patterns the child perceived in a widening world around her they were likely to be accepted as normal, part of the given order of things. Mothers provided small girls with their first models of feminine behavior. (Dyhouse, 1)

The family played a huge role in moulding the characters of society's youngsters. Most believed that a good strong character needed to be nurtured in a child in order to enable that child to cope as an adult. George K. Behlmer writes:

The term “character” condensed widely shared assumptions about the personal qualities needed to cope with an increasingly complex and competitive world. Both the individual citizen’s quest for material security and Britain’s fate in the struggle among nations for economic dominance seemed to depend on the same attributes – physical vigor, perseverance, and adaptability. Thus the security of the Empire hinged on the fate of the family, for it was above all family life that forged character. (Behlmer, 75)

Because the family was the place in which a person’s moral character developed, the security of the Empire rested on the fate of the family. It is no wonder that the nineteenth-century family was such an important institution. It represented all that was good and wholesome. It was the soil in which good and productive members of society were to be nurtured.

A perfect middle-class family that contained ideal children with strong and upright characters may have been the desire of most, but in reality the ideal family was difficult to create. It required a host of servants; and the very least a cook and a maid. The women’s manuals of the day preached the importance of cleanliness, budgets and orderliness. Mrs. Beeton’s Book of Household Management was a popular woman’s manual in the nineteenth century. It counsels the mistress of the house in all things pertaining to the running of the household. According to Mrs. Beeton, cleanliness, frugality and orderliness are of enough importance to be listed as the first three qualities necessary for a woman to possess in order to run a proper home (Beeton, 8). This family ideal was particularly difficult for the lower middle class to attain, let alone the working

class family who struggled to make ends meet. Working-class women often needed to work outside the home and leave the raising of their children to others. Middle-class reformers tried to persuade these working-class families that respectable families followed the middle-class ideal of a mother who stayed home to raise the children. Shani D'Cruze writes of these reformers' ideas:

Working-class activist and orator Mary Fletcher told striking Preston textile workers in 1853 that it was a "disgrace to an Englishman . . . to allow his wife to go out to work." Mary MacArthur, the Labour Party activist and trade unionist, said in 1917 that she was "sufficiently old-fashioned" to agree that there is "something to be said" for the notion that women should be at home. (D'Cruz, 53)

The main concerns for many working-class families were simply eating and surviving. The middle-class model of a mother who stayed home from work was unattainable for most. Feeding a family was no small task, as Ellen Ross points out: "food was a matter of life or death, for starvation deaths continued to be a regular occurrence even in the kinder years after 1870" (Ross, 27). The working-classes had their own notions of respectability that were based not on a home that ran itself like a well-oiled machine, but on the desire to simply make ends meet. The reality of the family experience was that it often varied widely from any type of ideal. Wives were widowed. Children were orphaned and still needed to be cared for. Adoption was a method of dealing with grim reality and avoiding the workhouses.

In the nineteenth century there were no laws that dictated how adoptions were to be conducted. Under the law, adoption did not exist. It is therefore difficult to refer to a practice that occurred in the nineteenth-century but was not labeled as adoption until well into the twentieth century. It is central to this thesis that the term "adoption" be used with caution when applied to the nineteenth century practice. Although adoption did not exist in law, there was a strong discrepancy between law and common practice. Ellen Ross says that informal adoptions were very common, especially among the lower classes (Ross, 133).

Although there were no laws governing adoptions, there were legal conventions to accommodate adopted children. For example, The Custody of Children Act of 1891 allowed courts to prevent the return of children who were staying with friends or relatives to parents who had been judged unfit. This offered some protection to abused children who had been lucky enough to be placed with other families. There were also numerous charity groups that attempted to place orphaned or deserted children with new families. The three main groups were Dr. Bernardo's homes, the Children's Home and Orphanage and the Church of England Waifs and Strays. As George Behlmer points out, however, the absence of legal documentation regulating adoptions caused problems: "The line between fostering and adoption could easily become blurred in these organizations" (Behlmer, 293).

A common scenario often reported by journalists of the time was the foundling left on the doorstep and raised by some kindhearted woman; another scenario was of the young girl who got pregnant and had a child in secret and gave it to an aunt or grandmother to raise. Such is the case with Lady Dedlock in Dickens' Bleak House, who gives her daughter Esther Summerson to a lady Esther calls her godmother. Esther is told that her unknown mother is "her disgrace" and that

she is to forget that she ever had a mother (BH, 30). There were romanticized newspaper reports of working-class mothers who took in orphaned babies and children because women who were mothers themselves could not bear to think of the “young ‘uns cryin,’ wretched and neglected and dirty” (Ross, 134). The notion that orphaned children would be better off with their own close friends and extended family and out of the hands of the authorities must have been powerful motives for these adoptive relationships. Ellen Ross describes one mother who took in an orphaned three-year-old, although she had ten children of her own already. This action was approved of by the woman’s daughter, who obviously thought very highly of their mother: “Mum-being the angel she was – decided to look after her. We never regarded Kathy as anything else but our sister” (Ross, 135). Even in Campbell Road, notorious as North London’s worst street, a mother’s sickness and inability to cope led to the baby becoming a permanent part of the neighbourhood brood, taken care of by the other mothers on the street (Behlmer, 300).

Not all of the children who were adopted into new relationships were orphans. There are many examples of children who were neglected for one reason or another, but still had one or more birth-parents living. A case in Bermondsey in 1896 illustrates this point. A woman left her workhouse-born baby with a paid nurse and claimed her child a year later, only to return to the workhouse to have a second baby. The nurse had become so attached to the girl that she asked the mother if she could adopt her and got consent. A few years later, the real mother married and never laid claim to the child (Ross, 136). A situation like this is fine for all concerned, but sometimes there would be fights over a child who had been raised in an adoptive relationship and then was expected to live with the natural parents again. One case tells of a nurse who became so attached to a young charge that she attempted to run away with the young child. When caught and

sentenced, she told the court that she did not believe she had “stolen” the child, because he had cost her a lot of money. In her mind, the six years of care she had provided gave her some legal rights over the child. She had taken good care of him, and years of litigation followed to sort out the case (Ross, 137).

There are several functions that adoption can serve besides providing homes for orphans and foundlings. First, there are always childless couples who are in want of children, and in such cases adoption can fill a need. Secondly and often most important, adoption can be used to create heirs for property. This is where adoption begins to be a problem in the history of the English in particular. George K. Behlmer points out that “. . . the English had a inordinately high regard for blood lineage. . .” (Behlmer, 273). As was the case in other countries at the time, there was a fear among the early modern English about the safety of inheritance rights. They firmly believed in the acquisition and transmission of property only to a biological male heir. Legal adoption might threaten the economic order of things when the parents adopt a child and also have biological children living. This disturbance of the “order of things” is a main theme in Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights. When Mr. Earnshaw brings home the foundling Heathcliff and obviously prefers the waif to his own progeny, the entire line of legitimate inheritance is threatened.

Mr. Earnshaw’s decision to leave land and title to his adopted son would not have been questioned in fiction or in real life. Any adopted child could inherit. Adoptive parents could give whatever they wished to their child, but in the absence of legal control disturbing problems occurred. One childless couple adopted a little girl and lavished every luxury that wealth could command on her, only to drop her off at a public workhouse years later when they managed to conceive a son of their own. Another woman adopted four children, and then when she could no

longer pay her bills, she abandoned them in various seaside towns (Behlmer, 306).

Not all adoptions ended so tragically, however. Other examples both in history and literature expand the functions of adoption beyond simply providing children with families that wanted them. The best interests of the child were often considered first and foremost. Parents may sometimes have agreed to “put out” their sons and daughters with other families in the hope of exposing them to a higher standard of education. The example Behlmer gives is of an upper-class couple who learned that a relative’s boy had lost his father during the Irish rebellion of 1841. The couple wasted no time in offering to care for the fatherless boy. Thus, for eight years, young Charles was treated as a member of the couple’s family (Behlmer, 274). This example is reminiscent of the novel Mansfield Park, in which Fanny Price is “adopted” by her rich aunt and uncle to be raised to a higher standard than her poorer parents could ever have afforded. In Jane Austen’s own life there is an example of such a situation. Her father, the Rev. George Austen, had eight children to bring up on a limited income. So when his childless cousins, the Knights, offered to let the second son, Edward, come and visit, the parents agreed. The visits became increasingly longer until eventually Edward was adopted into the Knight family and made an heir to their property (Kane, 4).

Like Edward, Fanny Price was not an orphan, because both of her parents were still alive when she left her house to live with the Bertrams. In reality, however, it was far from uncommon for homes to be broken up by the death of one of the parents. Indeed, a century ago in England, a sixteen-year-old marriage had the same chance of being broken up by death as today it has of being broken up by divorce (Kane, 2). In East London at the turn of the century, twenty-nine percent of all children could expect to lose one parent, and eight percent could expect to lose both

parents before they reached the age of fifteen (Behlmer, 299). A broken home was a disaster, especially among the lower classes, where a widowed woman with children might quickly become destitute with no husband to provide for her. Private charities and Poor Law authorities might step in at this point, using "fostering" to help manage the children. Fostering was similar to adoption in the nineteenth century, and its purpose was to temporarily help parents who could not raise their own children. It was most often a tool used by the middle class. A family would take in a child in order to help rescue him or her from a life of crime and debauchery, sometimes with mixed results.

Those who organized fostering cases held considerable power over the working-class children they placed. As Behlmer writes: "By the start of the twentieth century guardians could assume legal custody over workhouse children under the age of eighteen whose parents had died, deserted the home, gone to prison for offences against their young, been judged morally or mentally unfit, or become permanently disabled while in receipt of Poor Law Aid" (Behlmer, 286). Appeals on the part of the parents against the guardian's actions were few and far between. Guardians also sought to protect some of the abused children from their parents by the use of more permanent adoptions, so sometimes foster relationships turned into adoptive ones. One such case is particularly moving:

Alice, a child of 3 [sic], was boarded out with Mrs. Worley . . . Her mother dead, father unknown. An offer is made by a lady to adopt her. The foster-parent is in great trouble on hearing this; and one morning presented herself at headquarters with the child, and with

tears in her eyes, pleaded that she might keep her. She was quite willing to forgo the payment made to her by the Society if she could only keep the little one as her own. The child had become most dear to her; she had twined herself around her foster-mother's heart. The request was granted; for who could have refused it? (Behlmer, 294)

The interesting part in all this is that there were no legal mechanisms under which these adoptions could take place. This became a particular problem if birth-parents re-surfaced, as previously mentioned. Respectable middle-class people who wanted to adopt were often deterred from doing so for fear that after bringing a child into their homes and lavishing love and care on it, the natural parents would demand its return. Behlmer writes that: "Adoption [had] no legal sanction . . . and it would not be possible to retain a child in opposition to the claim of a natural guardian, should one appear at any time in the future" (Behlmer, 296). There are many examples of couples sadly giving up their adopted children to natural parents in this manner. Respectable middle-class couples often could not find a child of their own class to adopt and so they were forced to look for potential candidates in the poorhouses and orphanages. Yet in looking in either place for a child, the couple "lays [themselves] open to blackmail once [they have] become attached" to the child, for a "deserting parent" or a "depraved" relative might well lurk in the child's background (Behlmer, 301). Clearly, laws to govern de facto adoptions were needed.

Since, prior to the Adoption Act of 1926, there were no rules to govern adoptions, any charitable person could take responsibility for a child without legal or bureaucratic entanglements. Silas Marner, the reclusive older gentleman in George Eliot's novel of the same name, is quite

free to adopt little Eppie after she crawls into his cottage and her mother dies in the snow. Anyone could buy, borrow or sell a child with no legal documentation. This was a good thing in some cases, especially when respectability demanded that the unwed mother of a new baby jettison the “evidence” of her fallen state as quickly as possible. If a mother wanted to be freed from the demands of her child she could let someone else take the child relatively easily, as Molly does with baby Estella in Great Expectations. The lawyer Jaggers knows that Molly, who faces a murder charge, cannot care for a baby girl. He takes the baby to live with Miss Havisham, a rich but eccentric client.

One might assume that situations like this, where a doctor or lawyer steps in to help set up an impromptu adoption, must have been relatively common. Baby Estella may have been saved from an early death at a “baby farm” by Jaggers’s intervention. This was the fate of many babies during the Victorian period. Some baby farms were legitimate practices where a baby would be raised for a fee; other farms slowly starved the infants, and still others murdered the babies outright with everyone involved knowing full-well what was going on (Kane, 136). An advertisement would appear in the paper offering adoption of infants; women would send their babies to be “taken care of.” A famous case told of a Mrs. Waters and her sister Sarah Ellis who made quite a good living from taking in babies and feeding their young charges a formula consisting of common lime and water spiked with opium. When the babies died from the poison formula, the women would pawn the children’s clothing. Mrs. Waters was caught and prosecuted. She went to the gallows in 1870 (Behlmer, 279-80).

Children who had families – even if they were not very good families – were always luckier than the thousands of orphans who wandered the streets in the nineteenth century. This

reality is reflected in the literature of the period, which features the abandoned waif as a popular motif. These children represented the neglected portion of society. Children who had no adults to speak for them led lives of vagrancy, begging, scavenging and thieving. In his book The Erosion of Childhood, Lionel Rose presents example after horrible example of children being bought, sold and otherwise abused. One of the interesting things he points out is that the authorities did nothing to help these children. In fact, Rose tells how instead of being helped, children who were caught begging were punished under the Vagrancy Act of 1824. It targeted vagrants of every age. One case was of two children, aged six and seven, who had no parents and were found wandering:

These small children were locked up in a solitary cell for the seven days with absolutely nothing to do and with no human to speak to them but the turnkeys who brought them their meals. And this frightful punishment . . . was inflicted upon those poor children for the crime of poverty. (Rose, 96)

In 1876, the Education Act was passed. It required authorities to begin proceedings to commit habitually wandering youngsters to the schools, but this Act was ignored in the case of transient children. In the nineteenth century, it could be argued that the best hope for orphans was to be hidden from the respectable eyes of people of position, and if possible, to work as a prostitute or as a chimney sweeper.

Things did begin to change towards the end of the nineteenth century. In 1870, England's Poor Law Board authorized guardians to place selected children with foster parents. However, as

has been previously stated, the reason for this action was not simply the well-being of the orphans themselves. Middle-class women concerned with the numbers of children being corrupted in the workhouses and “barracks schools” that went along with them supported foster parenting. George Behlmer, writing about the Adoption Act in his book Friends of the Family, hints that the never-ending shortage of servants might have been a factor in the minds of the middle-class women so concerned (Behlmer, 285). The idea was that by putting children into good homes, they might become productive citizens (or servants) instead of thieves. Once children were being boarded out, new Poor Law Acts of 1889 and 1899 permitted guardians to adopt boys and girls. In cases where a child had been taken from incompetent mothers and fathers for its own protection, this law did not protect the child from being reclaimed by its biological parents. Again, it is important to remember that adoption as we know it had no existence in nineteenth-century law. Poor laws, although a step in the right direction, fell far short of being solutions for all children in need of adoption. They make it obvious that something was being done for foundlings and orphans, although that something was not nearly enough. In most cases, however, the children who were fostered out to families were either abused by their own living parents or rescued from workhouses that contained their real families – so they were not technically orphans – and there was still the doubt whether foster-care was only a mask for servant-work:

In County Durham’s Chester-le-Street-Union, the Workhouse
Visiting Committee permitted one girl, Sarah Thompson
to be re-adopted twice within the span of fourteen months.
Although the minutes are mute as to why young Sarah returned

to the workhouse after both placements, it may have been the case that she, like Poor Law children in several other localities, had been exploited as a short-term servant. (Behlmer, 287-8)

Other charitable organizations came into being late in the nineteenth century that were separate from the government. They were all symptomatic of a new era, in which people felt that it was despicable how foundlings and orphans were “slipping through the cracks” of society. Dr. Bernardo’s Homes, the Children’s Home and Orphanage, and the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society were all private institutions operating throughout England (Behlmer 289). Dr. Bernardo’s Homes were founded by the man himself in order to keep a door constantly open to young outcasts. He is quoted by Behlmer as saying: “If the children of the slums can be removed from their surroundings early enough, and can be kept sufficiently long under training, heredity counts for little, environment counts for everything” (Behlmer 291).

One can imagine the difficulties in trying to adopt a child under these circumstances where laws were so badly needed. By 1900, judicial adoption was fully legal in America (Behlmer, 301). In Britain, the post-World War I years had left thousands of young fathers dead, and also hundreds of “war babies” in need of homes. Behlmer writes: “Never before had there been so many children in need of homes, and so many grieving parents ready to provide them” (Behlmer, 302). Numerous committees, associations and children’s groups put considerable pressure on Parliament, and by 1926, the Adoption Act became law. Finally there was agreement between common practice and the courts, and although the Act was far from perfect – there were still many loopholes and unaddressed issues – it was a landmark in the regulation of the British family, an

institution that was increasingly singled out in the public sphere as being crucial to the raising of England's young citizens.

Tess O'Toole has some very interesting things to say about adoption in the nineteenth century and how it figured in the fiction of the period in her article "Adoption and the 'Improvement of the Estate' in Trollope and Craik." O'Toole looks at the "remoulding of the [literary] family's character through the adoption act" (O'Toole, 61). She argues that the addition of an adopted child into a family makes for the perfect "stuff of fiction," and she quotes an essay on Silas Marner by Susan R. Cohen in which the following appears: "Adoption is a model for creative human action, for the power of human fictions to displace and reshape reality" (O'Toole, 60). She acknowledges the Victorians' fears over adoption's power to disturb inheritance patterns and gives examples from fiction (namely King Arthur: Not a Love Story by Dinah Mulock Craik) in which the adopted heir turns out to be a most worthy steward for the family estate and the relationship is a benefit for all involved.

I have already pointed out how adoption appears in many different arrangements in different works of literature from the nineteenth century. The question I will consider is how these adoptive relationships affect – and figure into – the literature of the period. While it may be true that, as O'Toole writes, adoption is "the stuff of fiction," it is also important to know how adoption figured in the real world during the times in which nineteenth-century writers were writing. Knowing the history of adoptive families gives us greater insight into the novels that deal with orphans and their benefactors. For example, knowing the possible fate that may have awaited little Eppie if Silas had not taken her in in Silas Marner makes us as readers all the more

enchanted with the sweet and almost mystical relationship that develops between the little girl and her adoptive father. We also come to understand what might have possessed the hard and stately Mr. Jaggers to arrange an adoption for baby Estella in Great Expectations, rather than see her be corrupted and abused in a society that had little compassion for the innocent. It is not difficult to understand that an adopted child – desperate to be loved by his or her adoptive family – could also be a disruptive element within that family. The following chapter will deal with three such disruptive situations that are the result of adoption in Mansfield Park, Wuthering Heights and Jane Eyre.

Chapter 2: The Adopted Child as a Destabilizing Element

One might think it natural that a parent would favour his or her own biological offspring over an adopted one. Jane Austen's Mansfield Park is a fascinating example of the opposite case. The Bertram family takes in their niece in order to give her opportunities she would not have had in her birth family, and the adopted niece ends up supplanting the biological daughters in the parents' affections. Fanny Price, the adopted niece, becomes a destabilizing element in the Bertram family by the very nature of her preferential status. I will examine the complexities surrounding this switch of affections, and I will reach a number of conclusions regarding the relationships, particularly between Fanny, her adoptive father, Sir Thomas, and her cousin Edward. Fanny is embraced when the biological daughters are rejected, their lax morals underlying Fanny's adherence to strong principles in the eyes of Sir Thomas. The Bertram family clings to Fanny when the family unit is ripped apart by the injudicious actions of Maria and Julia, but we, as readers, are ultimately left unsatisfied with Fanny as a character and as a substitute daughter for the Bertram family. Fanny is not perfect; she is not even a likeable character. She is manipulative, frustratingly silent, and she gets pleasure at the end of the novel from the misery of those whom she supposedly loves. Edward's broken heart leaves her both vindicated and pleased. Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram's loneliness for their own daughters after they leave the home gives Fanny a vital role to fill as companion and comforter. Fanny's rejection by her biological family and subsequent adoption by her aunt's family leaves her feeling embittered and rootless. She then becomes extremely possessive of Edward and Sir Thomas, the leaders of the Bertram family. She

is only truly happy at the end of the novel when she marries Edward and secures her place in the Bertram clan.

At the beginning of Mansfield Park when the Bertrams are discussing bringing Fanny into their home, Sir Thomas Bertram expresses his concerns about Fanny's character and her influence on his own daughters:

We will probably see much to wish altered in [Fanny], and must prepare ourselves for gross ignorance, some meanness of opinions, and very distressing vulgarity of manner; . . . as to the distinction proper to be made between the girls as they grow up; how to preserve in the minds of my daughters the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin; and how, without depressing her spirits too far, to make her remember that she is not a Miss Bertram. (MP, 10-11)¹

This passage is highly ironic, due to the fact that both of the Miss Bertrams prove to be flawed in character as the novel progresses, and Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram will end up embracing the adopted Fanny as their own, preferring her over their biological daughters. When Fanny first arrives in Mansfield Park, however, the class-conscious Bertram family is inclined to separate her

¹ Jane Austen, Mansfield Park (London: Penguin, 1996). Future references to Mansfield Park are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

completely from their biological family unit. Fanny is not a Bertram, she is poor, she is dependent upon them. These facts make her eventual acceptance and the Miss Bertrams' rejection all the more fascinating.

Mrs. Price, Fanny's biological mother, has no qualms about giving over her oldest daughter to the care of the Bertrams. In fact, this kind of farming out and adopting of children was not unusual at the time. As noted earlier, Jane Austen's own family had eight children, and her father found it hard to provide for his family on his limited income. Jane's brother Edward was adopted by their rich and childless cousins, the Knights. He was subsequently made heir to the Knights' fortune. Edward's mother felt much the same as Mrs. Price does about the loss of her son. She told her husband, "I think you had better oblige your cousins and let the boy go" (Cecil, 1978). Fanny's mother is quite grateful for the Bertram's offer to take Fanny (MP, 11). She wonders only why her relations want a girl, when there are so many fine boys to choose from in her brood of nine. Her reaction may appear rather heartless to a modern reader, but reality was harsh for a poor nineteenth-century woman. The Price family is needy, and if Fanny does not get an opportunity to marry, she will be hard-pressed to be able to provide for herself. Being female severely limits her earning potential. Her brother William is able to work his way through the ranks of the army, whereas Fanny will be limited to a life of poverty or governessing if she remains single. Neither choice is particularly attractive. Sir Thomas is certainly aware of Fanny's lot, and in adopting her he is taking on a potentially large financial burden: "A girl so brought up must be adequately provided for, or there would be cruelty instead of kindness in taking her from her family"(MP,7). Sir Thomas knows that if Fanny does not find an opportunity to marry, he will have to provide her with a pension for the rest of her life. As P.J.M. Scott points out:

By being brought to Mansfield Park Fanny has been rescued not only from the real squalor and meanness of her childhood home but also from a probably quite grim future . . . Her debt to Sir Thomas Bertram and his household, therefore, is immense. (Scott, 135)

Knowing the considerable financial burden that he is taking on, Sir Thomas still brings Fanny into Mansfield Park, though it is arguable that Fanny is not actually brought into the family itself. Sir Thomas has made it clear that she never must be considered on an even footing with the Bertram children.

It is noteworthy that Austen makes the adopted child female. Mrs. Price wonders why the Bertrams want one of her girls and not a boy, but the reason seems clear when one considers the Bertrams' existing family. There are already two boys. Tom is the eldest and the heir, and Edmund is the second-oldest. Both boys fulfill important inheritance roles. Tom is the heir, and Edmund is a "spare" if something happens to Tom. Another adopted boy might cause competition or rivalry. A girl is not a threat. Sir Thomas has other concerns about Fanny's sex, however. He worries about his two sons and the potential for cousins falling in love (MP, 7). He has no desire for any romantic involvements between Fanny and his sons. Again, this worry of Sir Thomas's turns out to be prophetic; Thomas Bertram is only too willing to accept the adult Fanny as a perfect wife for his younger son, Edmund, at the end of the novel.

When we first meet Fanny she is quite a pathetic little creature: ". . . Small of her age, with no glow of complexion, nor any other striking beauty; exceedingly timid and shy, and shrinking from notice . . ." (MP, 12). The Bertrams arrange for her room to be located at the top of the house

away from the rest of the family, and her tears of homesickness go unnoticed until Edmund visits her and gives her comfort. Edmund becomes Fanny's friend, confidante and tutor. Tom laughs at her, while Maria and Julia think Fanny is stupid. The two Bertram girls' reactions to Fanny are interesting because through their criticisms of Fanny's education (or lack thereof) we get a look at how the Bertram girls themselves are being brought up. One gets the feeling that there is a subtle disapproval on the part of the narrator of the Miss Bertrams' educations and that their superficial schooling is negatively affecting the girls' characters. Of Fanny, the girls report to their Aunt Norris: ". . . [she] cannot put the map of Europe together – or . . . tell the principal rivers in Russia – or . . . know the difference between water-colours and crayons!" (MP, 17). Mrs. Norris tells the girls that Fanny must not be as accomplished as they themselves are, and that "it is much more desirable that there should be a difference" between Fanny and the Miss Bertrams. In the very next paragraph the narrator makes the connection between Aunt Norris' counsels, the girls' educations and their deficiencies of character:

Such were the counsels by which Mrs. Norris assisted to form her niece's minds; and it is not very wonderful that with all their promising talents and early information, they should be entirely deficient in the less common acquirements of self-knowledge, generosity, and humility. In everything but disposition, they were admirably taught. Sir Thomas did not know what was wanting, because, though a truly anxious father, he was not outwardly affectionate, and the reserve of his manner repressed all the flow of their spirits before him. (MP, 18)

Sir Thomas does not notice the deficiencies in his daughters' upbringing and education. In his eyes, they were "... becoming in person, manner and accomplishments everything that could satisfy his anxiety"(MP, 19). In the long quote above there is a sense of foreshadowing. We are told that the daughters' bad qualities are left undiscovered, and we wonder if something will happen so as to let Sir Thomas know the faults of his daughters.

It is important to note that at the exact moment when Sir Thomas learns his daughters have been guilty of an indiscretion, his respect for Fanny's good character is realized. This happens when Sir Thomas leaves his family for a business trip to Antigua, and while he is gone the whole household (save Fanny) participate in a home theatre production, complete with costumes and a curtain. This play-acting by the Bertram children and their acquaintances has been much analyzed by critics of Mansfield Park (Kirkham, 109; Moler, 122; Fleishman, 24), who all agree that Austen sets up the play-acting as a pastime that is immoral in nature. Edmund's is the voice of reason and caution, but no one wants to listen to his objections:

I must think it would be highly injudicious, more than injudicious, to attempt any thing of the kind. It would show great want of feeling on my father's account, absent as he is and in some degree of constant danger; and it would be imprudent. I think, with regard to Maria, whose situation is a very delicate one, considering every thing, extremely delicate. (MP, 105)

Edmund alone worries about the fact that Maria is engaged to Mr. Rushworth and a theatrical

would put her in direct personal contact with Mr. Yates, and more importantly, with Mr. Henry Crawford, for whom “in all the riot of his gratifications [playacting] was yet an untasted pleasure . . .” (MP, 104). One need not underline the sexual overtones in this phrase to make the point that Edmund’s fears for his sister are well founded. Fanny is the only character who avoids acting in the morally ambiguous play. (Moler describes Lover’s Vows as a “third-rate sensationalistic German play” (Moler, 122).) The title alone seems slightly dangerous to a group of young, impressionable people who have only Mrs. Norris – we have seen how she falls short of being a righteous example – and the empty-headed Lady Bertram for supervision.

The Bertram girls use the play and the many rehearsals it requires to flirt with Henry Crawford. In competing for his attentions they demonstrate a rather rude and disturbing lack of principle and sisterly love:

. . . Under such a trial as this, they had not affection or principle enough to make them merciful or just, to give them honour or compassion. Maria felt her triumph, and pursued her purpose careless of Julia, and Julia could never see Maria distinguished by Henry Crawford without trusting that it would create jealousy, and bring a public disturbance at last. (MP, 134-35)

Aside from trying to make each other jealous and unabashedly competing for the affections of the same young man (Maria is engaged at this time to Mr. Rushworth), the two sisters show a complete disregard for each other’s feelings. Fanny witnesses these faults in the girls and sees

everything as it happens, but does nothing. Fanny is silent: “Julia made no communication, and Fanny took no liberties” (MP,135).

Fanny seems to be the proverbial fly-on-the-wall throughout the theatrical proceedings. She watches everyone else, but never participates in any of the action. Sir Thomas comes back from his journey, catches the actors red-handed, and puts an instant stop to the rehearsals. All of the participants, upon learning of Sir Thomas’ return, “felt the instantaneous conviction” of guilt (MP,147). It does not take Sir Thomas long to discover “the impropriety of such a scheme among such a party” (137): Mary Crawford flirting with Edward, Maria (who is engaged to Mr. Rushworth) flirting with Henry, Julia also making eyes at Henry.

There is another issue that offends Sir Thomas. He realizes that his family has forgotten him and his absence entirely in their excitement over the play. A trip to Antigua by ship was a serious and dangerous undertaking at that time. Harry W. McCraw makes the point that nineteenth-century ships faced dangers from everything from storms to pirates. Antigua had a hot climate, at a time when malaria and yellow fever were incurable. There was a real chance that Sir Thomas might never return alive – so he was risking his life for his family and fortune (McCraw, 30). No wonder he was upset when he learned of the fun everyone was having in his absence. As soon as the home-made theatre is dismantled, Sir Thomas tries to “forget how much he had been forgotten himself as soon as he could. . .” (MP, 157). Still smarting from these feelings, Sir Thomas learns of Fanny’s exemplary behavior from Edmund:

. . . Fanny is the only one who has judged rightly throughout, who has been consistent. Her feelings have been steadily against

[playacting] from first to last. She never ceased to think of what was due to you. You will find Fanny everything you could wish.
(MP, 157)

Sir Thomas agrees with Edmund's statements, and when Mr. Yates, Mary and Henry Crawford, and Mr. Rushworth finally leave, we are told that Sir Thomas is relieved, because he wants to be "alone with his family" (162). Fanny is unmistakably included in that family. There is no doubt that Sir Thomas's respect for Fanny increases when he learns that she alone resisted participating in the play.

The time following Sir Thomas' return is quiet, and at one point the family is sitting around the fire listening to Sir Thomas tell stories about Antigua. Only Fanny seems interested and asks a question, to the delight of Sir Thomas. She asks only one question, and later when Edmund asks her why she did not ask more, she replies: "I thought it would appear as if I wanted to set myself off at [Maria and Julia's] expense, by shewing [sic] a curiosity and pleasure in his information which he must wish his own daughters feel" (MP, 166). This is extraordinary. Fanny knows the faults and self-centeredness of the Bertram girls, and she claims that she is trying to prevent Sir Thomas from discovering these truths about Maria and Julia. Either that, or she is trying to make herself look caring and sensitive at the *expense of Maria and Julia*. I believe the second possibility to be more likely. Her sincerity rings false; her goodness is almost sickly sweet. I am not proposing that Fanny is evil, simply that she is extremely aware of her surroundings, and not immune to seizing an opportunity to raise herself in the esteem of those who matter in the household and make the decisions: the family leaders, Edmund and Sir Thomas.

Why is it that Fanny is so incredibly sensitive to others and their interactions? Many critics have analyzed Fanny (Scott, 134; Waldron, 86; Tanner, 158), and P. J. M. Scott best describes how Fanny has become so sensitive to others in authority over herself. About a particularly cruel episode where Mrs. Norris attacks Fanny and brutally reminds her of her dependent situation at Mansfield Park, Scott writes:

Fanny then, and always, is thrown back in upon herself and retreats once more to her cold East Room to think out the episode, to digest it, assimilate and in doing that, the only method open to her, mitigate its hurt. In so doing over the years she has become the conscientious member of the family aware, as her fellows are not, of many essential features of their relation to her world; all her intellectual and emotional energy have been directed into thinking out conduct – the others', her own – on every side . . . (Scott, 135).

Fanny has not been taught how to put a map of England together, but she has received a harder and more important lesson. Her life as an outsider has taught her how to maneuver in a family where she must earn love and respect from her adopted family and put up with abuse in her role as a dependant. She has also learned self-awareness, thoughtfulness and depth as a result of her upbringing, whereas Maria and Julia have learned how to flirt properly and hide their true emotions. Henry Crawford brings out the worst in the Bertram girls – jealousy, flirtatiousness,

impropriety and un-sisterly love – and Fanny watches it all. She also observes Henry's faults of character, and when he fancies himself in love with her and proposes, she cannot bring herself to accept him. She is desperately in love with Edmund, and knows she can never love Henry. Sir Thomas is understandably irate with Fanny's seeming willfulness, so he sends her home to her biological family.

Sir Thomas does not exile Fanny back to Portsmouth and her biological family because he cares for her happiness. Rather, he hopes that sending her back will be “a medicinal project upon his niece's understanding, which he must consider diseased” (MP, 305). The disease he thinks Fanny is plagued with is willfulness. She refuses to marry Henry Crawford. Sir Thomas hopes that when Fanny is forced to live in the reduced circumstances of her former home that they will “bring her mind into a sober state” (305) and make her appreciate the comfort and permanence an offer of marriage to Henry would bring. Fanny innocently perceives Sir Thomas' decision to send her home as a wonderful opportunity; she is left ignorant of Sir Thomas' true intentions and dreams of the love she will receive from her birth-family:

The remembrance of all her earliest pleasures, and of what she had suffered in being torn from them, came over her with renewed strength, and it seemed as if to be at home again, would heal every pain that had since grown out of the separation. To be in the centre of such a circle, loved by so many, and more loved by all than she had ever been before, to feel affection without fear or restraint, to feel herself the equal of those who surrounded her . . . this

was a prospect to be dwelt on with a fondness that could be but half acknowledged. (MP, 306)

It is quite clear from this passage that Fanny wants to feel loved and accepted as an equal by her birth-family. She is tired of being looked down upon and bossed about. She needs to feel needed and accepted, and she is hoping for all of these needs to be fulfilled. Basically she is searching for a sense of kinship; her life with the Bertrams has always left her faintly on the outskirts.

Unfortunately, Fanny is sorely disappointed in her experience at Portsmouth.

Fanny's mother is "not unkind – but...[Fanny] never met with greater kindness from her, than on the first day of her arrival. The instinct of nature was soon satisfied, and Mrs. Price's attachment had no other source" (MP, 323). Fanny receives no great love from her mother, and even her father scarcely notices her, other than to tell her that she has grown up, and would be wanting a husband soon. Fanny feels no attachment to her siblings, except to her sister Susan, whom she grows to like later on, and to William, who is gone the entire time she is home. Fanny has no real interest in her mother; the first time Fanny sees Mrs. Price's face, she admires it only because it looks like her Aunt Bertram's (313). Fanny detests the dirty, noisy house. She observes with disgust its small size and filthy condition. She compares her birth-place to Mansfield Park, and the tiny home comes up lacking (Mansell, 135). Fanny's reaction to her family's unloving response is interesting. She does not admit to getting angry or upset; she merely comes to realize that she has no right to "be of importance to her family" (MP, 317); she has been gone too long and has been forgotten. Fanny then dreams of Mansfield Park and its occupants; ironic, indeed, considering the fact that a few days previous Fanny dreamed only of

Portsmouth and her loving biological family.

Mansfield Park seems beset with fragile blood-ties. The novel opens with the dissolving of the relationship between Mrs. Price and her sisters, because of Mrs. Price's imprudent marriage and the resulting distance between their new homes. The only reason Mrs. Price keeps up correspondence with the Bertrams is to ask for help with her nine children. The Bertrams become a valuable connection, and Austen tells us that Mrs. Price mails a letter to her rich sister in which Mrs. Price begs for financial help. Mrs. Price does not seek a relationship with her sister for loving or sentimental reasons. She needs help with her growing family, and the Bertrams offer Fanny a place to live at Mansfield Park (MP, 6). Towards the end of the novel we see how shallow Mrs. Price, Mrs. Norris and Lady Bertram's relationship is when Tom Bertram falls deathly ill. No one in the Price household is interested in the Bertrams' problems. Austen attributes this emotional separation to their physical separation, and their different financial situations: "So long divided, and so differently situated, the ties of blood were little more than nothing. An attachment, originally as tranquil as their tempers, was now become a mere name"(MP, 353).

Austen's pessimistic views of the strength of blood-related ties extends through the next generation to Fanny. One cannot help but make the connection between the pattern of the Ward sisters and Fanny's distance from her own birth-mother. A loving mother-daughter relationship is missing between Fanny and Mrs. Price. Fanny is a nuisance to her mother. She is another mouth to feed, and Fanny is not a boy who can provide help: "[Mrs. Price's] daughters had never been much to her. She was fond of her sons, especially William" (MP, 323). William shows promise of success; he will one day be able to give back to his parents. Mrs. Price shows attention only to

those who are of use to her, her sons, and occasionally the Bertrams (when she needs money).

Fanny tries desperately to make herself useful and appealing to her mother and her sisters, hence the hurried sewing for Sam so that he can be sent out to sea with proper clothing, and the little presents of two silver pocket knives to Betsey and Susan. Fanny wants to be needed, which is almost as good as being loved: "She had a great pleasure in feeling her usefulness, but could not conceive how they would have managed without her" (MP, 324). Soon Fanny begins to wither spiritually and emotionally at Portsmouth, and she begins calling Mansfield Park home, instead. It is during this very lonely and emotionally needy time for Fanny that Sir Thomas' wish for Fanny to marry Henry Crawford almost becomes reality. Fanny begins to see even Henry Crawford as someone to love and someone who would love her. She eventually rejects him, however, and he turns his attentions to Mrs. Rushworth, the former Miss Bertram. Soon, disaster results, and Fanny's life is changed.

When Maria runs away with Henry and Julia elopes with Mr. Yates, the Bertram family is forced to face its worst crisis. Tom is deathly ill, and Maria and Julia are disgraced by adultery and inopportune elopement. Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram respond to the terrible behavior and subsequent loss of their two daughters by clinging to Fanny. She becomes their comfort in more ways than one. Lady Bertram writes to Fanny at Portsmouth: "I cannot but say, I much regret your being from home at this distressing time, so very trying to my spirits. I trust and hope, and sincerely wish you may never be absent from home so long again" (MP, 356). Mrs. Bertram needs Fanny in a way that Fanny's own family does not. The fact that Lady Bertram calls Mansfield Park Fanny's home is significant; their adoptive relationship runs deeper in both their hearts than any biological one. Fanny desperately wants to be home to comfort Lady Bertram, and

when she arrives back at the Park with her sister Susan, Lady Bertram responds by “falling on [Fanny’s] neck” and saying, “Dear Fanny, now I shall be comforted” (MP, 369).

Sir Thomas reacts with extreme guilt to Maria and Julia’s behavior. He berates himself for not making sure that his daughters’ educations included necessities like morality, “principle.. and [the] govern[ing] of inclinations and tempers” (MP, 382). He realizes that self-denial of any kind was absent in the education of his daughters. They were taught social manners and superficial random facts (Waldron, 90). In the last chapter Sir Thomas admits that “Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted” (MP, 389). He prizes her for her “sterling good... principle and temper”(388). Fanny, therefore, supplants Maria and Julia in their father’s affections. Her goodness acts like a “salve to his damaged ego and a rich repayment for his initial generosity” (Poovey, 101). Fanny comforts Sir Thomas by being the good daughter and helping him feel better about himself as a father. She is the dutiful daughter, the one most loved by default. Fanny is, as Kenneth Moler says, “the remedy for the spiritual malady with which the Bertrams are afflicted” (Moler, 110). She is, however, far from perfect.

There are varying interpretations of the level of Fanny’s moral perfection. The last few chapters of the novel tell of the expulsion of Maria, Mrs. Norris and Julia from the Park. Fanny marries Edmund and further solidifies her place in the family:

When Mansfield Park welcomes Fanny back, it is no longer
to the humble east room with its chilly hearth; the wicked
Aunt [Norris] is vanquished, the two older girls disgraced,
and [Fanny] assumes her rightful place in the house . . . [Fanny]

is at last acknowledged for the princess she truly is. (Yeazell, 78)

This Cinderella-type romantic interpretation of Fanny as the pure and innocent martyr is too simplistic. Trying to turn Fanny into a textbook case of the thwarted princess leaves too many questions unanswered. Some critics even go so far as to make Fanny into some kind of saint; they claim she is the only truly moral character in the book whose duty it is to educate the rest of the characters and make them learn to appreciate her worth and share her values (Paris, 28; Duckworth, 45).

Other critics take an opposite approach to Fanny's character. Nina Auerbach finds Fanny to be an extremely destabilizing element in the Bertram household. In her article titled "Jane Austen's Dangerous Charm: Feeling as One Ought about Fanny Price," Auerbach focuses on Fanny's cuckoo-like infiltration of the Bertram family. Fanny becomes more loved, needed and respected by Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram than Maria and Julia. Auerbach describes Fanny as being like Dr. Frankenstein's monster: a spirit of solitude, a killjoy, a blighter of families. (Auerbach, 52). Auerbach goes on to compare Fanny to a cannibal, a sort of monster who wins a predatory victory over the entire Bertram household:

At the end of Mansfield Park, Fanny . . . has won a somewhat predatory victory, moving from outsider in to guiding spirit of the humbled Bertram family. Fanny's cannibalistic invasion of the lighted, spacious estate of Mansfield is purely symbolic, but, she replaces . . . feasting with a solitary and subtler hunger that possesses its object.

(Auerbach, 55)

This is an aggressive interpretation of Fanny's character, but I agree with the fact that Fanny's outward qualities of humility, thoughtfulness and virtue hide a great emptiness and an intense desire to be loved and needed. This need results in the manipulation of those from whom she wants love, such as Edward and Sir Thomas. There is also a faintly sinister quality in Fanny's concentrated quiet observance of everyone around her. There are countless scenes in which Austen puts Fanny distinctly on the periphery of the action; Fanny stays in the shadows, unseen by the characters and yet seeing everything. A good example is when Sir Thomas is reprimanding Edmund for his son's participation in play-acting: "Fanny, who had edged back her chair behind her aunt's end of the sofa, and screened from notice herself, saw all that was passing before her" (MP, 155).

Fanny's jealousy of Edmund and Mary Crawford's relationship is real and heartfelt. Fanny's reaction to Edmund's neglect is real also. She does not communicate her jealousy directly; she uses silence as a form of manipulation. Edmund finds Fanny lying down with a headache one day. He questions her about its severity, and Fanny plays the martyr, telling him that it is not very bad. Edmund does not believe her, and when he questions his mother and Aunt Norris about how hard they worked Fanny in the heat, he gets quite angry. Fanny is quiet through all of this exchange, but does find a voice to tell Edmund that she has had the ache for some time. Edmund of course feels guilty for his neglect of Fanny in favor of Mary, and Fanny relishes his remorse:

. . . For she had been feeling neglected, and had been struggling against discontent and envy for some days past . . . and the sudden change which Edmund's kindness had then occasioned, made her hardly know how to support herself. (MP, 63)

Fanny's happiness in Edmund's guilt and subsequent kindness do not provide a very shining picture of Fanny's character. Nina Auerbach acknowledges the fact that "the silent, stubborn Fanny Price appeals less than any of Austen's heroines" (Auerbach, 209). I would add needy and manipulative to the list of Fanny's unappealing qualities, and put that list forward as the reasons we as readers have such problems with her as a heroine. Fanny presents herself to the rest of the characters in the novel as faultless. Sir Thomas values her for "sterling good... principle and temper" (MP, 388) and embraced as "indeed the daughter that [Sir Thomas] always wanted"(MP, 389). All is not well, however, when Fanny is brought back to the Park and embraced by the Bertrams. The family is naturally upset over the loss of Maria and Julia. Sir Thomas feels guilt for their inadequate upbringings; Edmund is mourning the loss of Mary Crawford on top of everything else. In this shadow of gloom we are told that Fanny is completely satisfied; she even goes so far as to relish Edmund's pain:

My Fanny indeed at this very time, I have the satisfaction of knowing, must have been happy in spite of everything. She must have been a happy creature in spite of all that she felt or thought she felt, for the distress of those around her. She had sources of delight that must force

their way. She was returned to Mansfield Park, she was useful, she was beloved; . . . and when Sir Thomas came back she had every proof that could be given in his melancholy state of spirits, of his perfect approbation and increased regard; and happy as all this must make her, she would still have been happy without any of it, for Edmund was no longer the dupe of Miss Crawford.

It is true, that Edmund was very far from happy himself. He was suffering from disappointment and regret, grieving over what was, and wishing for what could never be. She knew it was so, and was sorry; but it was with a sorrow so founded on satisfaction, so tending to ease, and so much in harmony with every dearest sensation, that there are few who might not have been glad to exchange their greatest gaiety for it. (MP, 380)

The Fanny in this passage is happy when others are sad and miserable. We are told repeatedly how happy and satisfied Fanny is even when the people she supposedly loves are suffering. Fanny says she is sorry for Edmund's loss of Mary, but Fanny's sincerity is easily doubted when in the very next line we are told that Fanny's sorrow is founded on a feeling of satisfaction. Even the narrator doubts Fanny's sincerity: Fanny is happy despite "all she felt or thought she felt" from those around her.

Fanny is finally happy at the end of the novel. She is loved by Edward, Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, and Fanny's company is preferred by Sir Thomas over that of own daughters.

Fanny is a destabilizing element in the Bertram family because of the fact that she, an adopted daughter, is preferred over Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram's biological daughters. The fact that she was rejected ultimately by the Prices also affects Fanny profoundly. She feels a need to be loved by her real mother, and when Mrs. Price does not make an attempt to create a loving relationship with her daughter, Fanny is left emotionally needy. When Fanny returns to Mansfield Park from her visit to Portsmouth, it becomes obvious just how desperate she is to be loved and accepted. She is possessive to the point of being delighted by the misery of those around her. She is happy that Edward's heart is broken over the loss of Mary Crawford, and she is relieved that her company is needed due to the loss of Maria and Julia. She is happy to replace Mary, Maria and Julia. Like a cuckoo bird, she shows no regret over the loss of her adoptive sisters and thrives as she sinks her claws deeper into her new adopted family.

Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights is an even better cuckoo bird. He invades the Earnshaw family and completely supplants Hindley Earnshaw in Father Earnshaw's affections. Heathcliff is a mysterious character in many ways, in part because we are given no clues as to his origins. As far as we readers know, Heathcliff's life begins when he emerges from under old Mr. Earnshaw's coat:

[Mr. Earnshaw opened] his great-coat, which he held bundled up in his arms, "See here, wife; I was never so beaten with anything in my life; but you must e'en take it as a gift of God; though

it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil." (WH, 36)²

Mr. Earnshaw's cryptic remarks – even though they are in passing – that the boy may come from God or the devil only serve to further shroud the foundling's origins in mystery. Heathcliff is in every way an alien to the Heights, from his dark and dirty skin to his "gibberish that nobody could understand" (WH, 37). Where did this character come from? In her biography of Emily Brontë, Winifred Gérin suggests the possibility that Branwell Brontë may have inspired Emily with the character of Heathcliff after he came home from a trip to Liverpool in autumn of 1845. During this year, boatloads of immigrants were arriving in Liverpool and starving in the cellars of warehouses on the quay. Their pictures, and especially those of the children, stared out of the Illustrated London News. They were represented as starving scarecrows with a few rags on them and an animal growth of black hair almost obscuring their features. They, too, spoke Erse and may have been the inspiration for Heathcliff's character (Gerin, 226). This is the kind of strange foundling that Earnshaw brings into a house where the same family has lived for three hundred years, as evidenced by the date above the door: "1500" (WH, 4).

The obvious question, then, is *why* does Mr. Earnshaw adopt Heathcliff? He brings home a boy-child who threatens his own son's patrimony, christens the foundling after a son who died in childbirth (WH, 39) and evidently prefers the adoptee to his own blood-children, "petting him up far above Cathy, who was far too mischievous for a favourite" (38) and taking sides with Heathcliff over his own son. We are not given any clues as to the old man's motive: "Not a soul

² Emily Brontë, Wuthering Heights (London: Penguin, 1995). All future references to Wuthering Heights are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

knew to whom it belonged, he said, and his money and time, being both limited, he thought it better to take it home with him, at once, than run into vain expenses there; because he was determined he would not leave it as he found it" (WH, 37). Here we see the first evidence of the adopted child causing serious rifts in the existing family structure.

Mr. Earnshaw's preference for his foundling produces negative effects on the legitimate son, Hindley:

So, from the very beginning, [Heathcliff] bred bad feeling in the house; and at Mr. Earnshaw's death, which happened in less than two years after, the young master had learnt to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections, and his privileges, and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries. (WH, 38)

Cathy, too, is profoundly affected in her relationship with her father when Heathcliff is introduced into the family. It is almost as if she misbehaves in order to get the attention of her father, instead of brooding like her older brother. Her father's anger only provokes her to misbehave more, and her power to make him angry is her triumph:

[Her father's] peevish reproofs wakened in her a naughty delight to provoke him; she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she defying us with

her bold, saucy look, and her ready words . . . doing just what her father hated most, showing how her pretended insolence, which he thought real, had more power over Heathcliff than his own kindness: how the boy would do *her* bidding in anything, and *his* only when it suited his own inclination. (WH, 43)

Cathy tries to make up with her father two times, and both times she is rebuffed in a display of paternal rejection: "Nay Cathy . . . I cannot love thee; thou'rt worse than thy brother. Go, say thy prayers, child, and ask God's pardon. I doubt thy mother and I must rue that we ever reared thee!" (WH, 43). It is interesting that Cathy's father would choose to insult her with his rejection of her as a daughter, while at the same time embracing an adopted son, Heathcliff. Later when Cathy again tries to reconcile with her father and he asks her, "Why canst thou not be a good lass, Cathy?" she insolently responds with "Why cannot you always be a good man, father?" (WH, 43). Cathy turns to Heathcliff for comfort from her hurt feelings, and Heathcliff is the first person she turns to after Mr. Earnshaw dies: "Oh, he's dead Heathcliff! He's dead!" (44).

Later that night, Cathy and Heathcliff stay up late and comfort each other, and Nelly observes that neither of them need her comfort. They have each other. The fact that Cathy, the real daughter, is so cruelly rejected by her father in favour of Heathcliff, an adopted son, only serves to bring her closer to Heathcliff, instead of further away. Hindley, on the other hand, smarts over Heathcliff's favoured position and feels the brunt of Mr. Earnshaw's obvious preference for the adopted boy. When Earnshaw gives the better of two colts to Heathcliff and the

better colt turns lame, Heathcliff demands that Hindley give him his colt. There is a violent exchange, and even though Hindley is physically more powerful than Heathcliff, Heathcliff gets his way using the threat of tattling to Mr. Earnshaw, since both boys know full well whose side the father would take. Hindley gives in, but his frustration is evident: "Take my colt, gypsy, then! And I pray that he may break your neck; take him, and be damned, you beggarly interloper! and wheedle my father out of all he has: only afterwards, show him what you are, imp of Satan..." (WH, 39).

One could argue that Cathy embraces Heathcliff because she is a girl, and she stands to lose nothing in the patriarchal order of inheritance if Heathcliff supplants Hindley in Mr. Earnshaw's affections. Hindley's position as the first son in the family is directly threatened by Heathcliff's presence in the family. Who knows how the situation might have been different had Mr. Earnshaw brought home a little female gypsy from Liverpool. One might argue that a female "interloper" would have caused less damage in the Earnshaw family. However, Jane Eyre causes considerable disturbance in her adopted family, and she is female. But I will argue that her presence is not a threat to inheritance; she is female and will never threaten John Reed's inheritance. She causes a disturbance because of sexual competition with Mrs. Reed. Jealousy over the affections of the late Mr. Reed makes Jane competition in Mrs. Reed's eyes, and thus a target for abuse and scorn.

When Cathy turns to Heathcliff for comfort after her father's death, the first seeds of love are planted that will bind Cathy to Heathcliff. Many critics have noticed that, together, Cathy and Heathcliff constitute a fullness of being. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out that "Catherine's wholeness results from a very practical shift in family dynamics" (Gilbert and Gubar,

265). Heathcliff, named after a dead older Earnshaw boy (38), supplants Hindley in father Earnshaw's affections and thus gives Cathy power, through Heathcliff, to get possession of the kingdom of Wuthering Heights (Gilbert and Gubar, 265). Indeed, according to Gilbert and Gubar, Heathcliff exists only as a powerful "whip" extension of Cathy (Gilbert and Gubar 265-66). Once she is separated from him, he ceases to be able to exist in the framework of his adopted family, and he must leave. Once she is dead, he becomes a haunted former shell of the man he once was, and he spends the rest of his life trying to come to terms with his supplanted place in a world where he just does not belong.

The fact that Heathcliff has no known origins makes him vulnerable to every other character's ideas about who he is, or should be. Heathcliff has a mystery surrounding him. His lack of personal history, his "sullen uncommunicativeness" and his mysterious transformation upon returning to the Heights after his financial success make him the perfect vehicle for other people's fantasies. He is "the 'cuckoo' without a history" (Nestor, x). His story begins when Mr. Earnshaw brings him home and constructs a vision in his own mind about Heathcliff as the perfect son:

I [Nelly] wondered often what my master saw to admire so much in the sullen boy who never, to my recollection, repaid his benefactor; he was simply insensible, though knowing perfectly the hold he had on his heart, and conscious he had only to speak and all the house would be obliged to bend to his wishes. (WH., 39)

It is true that Nelly cannot be expected to see into the mind of Mr. Earnshaw, but from this quotation one gets the feeling that the adoptive father wants Heathcliff to be the perfect son that Hindley is not, and treats Heathcliff as if he were that vision of perfection, giving into his every whim. Mr. Earnshaw is not the only character who “displaces their desires and fears” onto Heathcliff (Nestor, x). Lockwood quite misguidedly imagines that he and Heathcliff are soulmates: “I know, by instinct, his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling” (WH, 5). Cathy, too, projects her desire onto Heathcliff when she realizes his pain at her marrying Edgar. She accepts only the part of Heathcliff that suits her: “That is not *my* Heathcliff. I shall love mine yet; and take him with me – he is in my soul” (WH, 159). Nelly herself cannot resist the temptation to assign a past to the boy with no past:

Who knows, but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week’s income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors, and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth. (WH, 57)

Sweet Nelly, who spins such a wonderful tale for Heathcliff, is the only character who wants nothing from the boy. She gives him hope that he might have once been someone important, and may become important again someday. Perhaps she, in attempting to instill self-esteem in Heathcliff, plays a role in his later financial success.

One must not forget when analyzing Heathcliff how demonic and animalistic he is. Isabella describes his “cannibal” teeth and his “basilisk eyes.” She calls him an “incarnate goblin,” and says: “He is not a human being and has no claim on my charity” (WH, 171). Even Nelly tells us that “I did not feel as if I were in the company of a creature of my own species” (WH,160) and describes him gnashing his teeth at her and foaming at the mouth “like a mad dog” (WH, 171). In her biography of Emily Brontë, Winifred Gerin argues that these descriptions of Heathcliff were intended by Emily Bronte not to condemn him as a character, but to inspire pity in the reader. Gerin argues that it is central to the conception of Heathcliff to understand that Bronte viewed him with compassion, and not hate, and his early ill-treatment is the cause of his turning into the ferocious man he became (Gerin, 220). Gerin does not locate “early ill-treatment” as occurring before or after Heathcliff was adopted by Mr. Earnshaw, and one wonders how ferocious a man Heathcliff would have become if he would have been left on the docks of Liverpool instead of being brought into his adopted family. This question is as big a mystery as the rest of Heathcliff’s life in Wuthering Heights. What is not a mystery is how the adoption of Heathcliff affected the family dynamics of the Earnshaws. He was brought into his new home, by his new father, to meet his new brother and sister, and his presence completely altered the lives of those he knew for two generations. In Wuthering Heights, we see an example in literature where an adopted child, Heathcliff, completely disrupts the family into which he is adopted. He supplants the biological children in the father’s affections and maneuvers to completely control the family and its posterity for years and years. The fact that Wuthering Heights plays out society’s insecurity over inheritance rights may be one of the reasons why Emily Bronte’s book was not well received by the public yet Bronte succeeds in creating a character in Heathcliff who

is both of incredible complexity and great mystery.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is no less complex and mysterious than Heathcliff. She too is an outsider and represents a great disruption to her adopted family, but unlike Fanny and Heathcliff she is not a cuckoo. Brontë does not waste time in letting her readers know that Jane Eyre is an outsider in the Reed household. The first scene in the novel consists of Mrs. Reed surrounded closely by her three happy children. Jane is seated in a window seat, encircled and separated from the others by a curtain. Jane's physical separation from the rest of the Reeds in this scene is symbolic of Jane's position in her adoptive family. Jane is a foreign element – an outsider – and she is constantly reminded of this fact. I will argue that Jane's position as an outsider in her first adoptive family affects her profoundly throughout the rest of the novel. She searches for parental figures as she grows up, and she is not at peace until she creates a real family of her own. It is this search for kinship bonds that drives her throughout the novel. I will examine the main relationships that Jane forms in the novel, beginning with her horrible relationship with the Reed family, and I will describe how her rootless beginnings affect each subsequent relationship. Ultimately, one comes to understand that a central theme in *Jane Eyre* is the loneliness of living in a world without kin.

The opening scene in *Jane Eyre* is vital to the rest of the novel for two reasons: first, because it sets Jane up in the role of outsider, and second because it is the first in a successive pattern of scenes in which Jane is literally and figuratively on the outside edge of belonging. Marianne Adams sums up Jane's situation at the Reeds': "[Jane] is in but not of the family with

whom she resides as a dependent” (Adams, 161). Technically Jane lives, eats and sleeps in the Reeds’ house, but she is treated very differently from the other Reed children who are biological family members. In the Reed drawing room, the Reed children – Eliza, John and Georgianna – cluster chick-like around their mother at the fireplace. This cozy image excludes Jane, who is lowest in the family pecking order. Jane suffers physical abuse from John Reed later in this same scene; he knocks her about, and she cuts her head open on the door (JE,17).³ John is the oldest child, and he is male. These two facts make him infinitely more important than little Jane, who is not even a real sister in the young heir’s mind. If one were to compare Jane and the Reeds’ relationship to that of Cinderella and her wicked step-mother and cruel step-sisters, there would be many similarities. Mrs. Reed is every bit as mean and wicked towards her adopted daughter as any evil step-mother in a fairytale. In one passage we get Jane’s own reasoning for her step-aunt’s cruelty:

... I knew [Mr. Reed] was my own uncle – my mother’s brother – that he had taken me when a parentless infant to his house; and that in his last moments he had required a promise of Mrs. Reed that she would rear and maintain me as one of her own children. Mrs. Reed probably considered she had kept this promise; and so she had, I dare say, as well as her nature would permit her; but how could she really like an interloper not of her race, and unconnected

³ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London: Penguin, 1996). Future references to *Jane Eyre* are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

with her, after her husband's death, by any tie? It must have been most irksome to find herself bound by a hard-wrung pledge to stand in the stead of a parent to a strange child she could not love, and to see an uncongenial alien permanently intruded on her own family group. (JE, 23-24)

There are several interesting things happening in this passage. Much has been written by critics about the fact that Jane Eyre is written in the first person. (See for instance Knies, 109). Here we have a perfect example of how well this narrative voice works for the novel. Jane is obviously writing the book looking back on her life, and in this scene Jane reflects on the reasons why Mrs. Reed did not like her as a child. Jane's cool appraisal of her pitiful and lonely childhood situation is very effective in making the reader feel pity for her. Brontë plays on our emotions here. By having Jane interpret how Mrs. Reed must have felt about being forced to take in an alien child, we see clearly the meanness of a woman who cannot even try to love a poor little lonely girl. Jane reminisces about the fact that Mrs. Reed hates her for not being a biological member of the family, and that as a child she knew she was not the cause of Mrs. Reed's hatred for her. Jane knew that she could do nothing to win her adoptive mother's favour. We are as sensitive to this injustice as was little Jane.

The first-person narration also enables Jane to point out the faults of her adoptive family. Mrs. Reed probably thought she had kept her promise regarding Jane "as well as her nature would permit her" (JE, 24). Because of the first-person narration, we as readers are left with only Jane's interpretation of Mrs. Reed's nature; we see the woman completely through Jane's eyes. Brontë

leaves open no possible interpretation of Mrs. Reed's character other than that of an evil step-aunt. The above passage also outlines Jane's reasoning as to why Mrs. Reed is so hostile. To Mrs. Reed, Jane is an undesired responsibility, a forced intrusion into the Reed family. The result of this revelation is that we feel profoundly sorry for poor orphaned Jane.

Mrs. Reed is not the only family member who is horrible to young Jane. John Reed is physically abusive, and he forces Jane to acknowledge her dependency upon his family:

You have no right to take our books; you are a dependant,
mama says; you have no money; your father left you none;
you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama's expense. (JE, 17)

It is significant that John says "...you are a dependent, *mama says...*" (italics mine); Mrs. Reed has taught John to treat Jane with disdain. The mother of the house has made sure her biological children feel the same way as she does about Jane.

Why does Mrs. Reed go back in the first place on her promise to her dead husband regarding Jane's fair treatment? In addition to the fact that Jane is not Mrs. Reed's biological child, she is also not the ideal Victorian child: happy, docile, charming and obedient. Jane's non-conformity to this ideal gives Mrs. Reed another unfair excuse to treat Jane badly. In her article, "Madam Mope: The Bereaved Child in Brontë's Jane Eyre," Susan Bernstein presents an image of Jane as a child suffering from a common response to the loss of loved ones (Bernstein, 119).

Presumably Bernstein is writing about Jane's mother and father, or more likely, the loss of Uncle Reed. Jane retreats from the rest of the Reed family, and her sullenness earns her the nickname "Madam Mope" (JE, 15). Mrs. Reed berates Jane for Jane's lack of "a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner – something lighter, franker, more natural as it were" (JE, 13). Susan Bernstein believes that Mrs. Reed's rejection of Jane stems directly from Jane's behavior, which strays far from the ideal happy Victorian child:

In the nineteenth-century British literature, there is a romanticized view of childhood as an idyllic time. A child like Jane who showed any feeling contrary to the expectation of an "attractive and sprightly manner" was considered somehow at fault. Jane's overriding crime for which she is banished is her candor in grieving.

(Bernstein, 120)

Bernstein believes that Jane's sullenness is a symptom of her grief over losing those she loves, and that Mrs. Reed unfairly berates Jane for her normal behavior. Jane herself realizes upon reflection that her temperament as a child was not acceptable to Mrs. Reed. Jane knows that "[she] was a discord at Gateshead hall" (JE, 23), and the servants know it too; they call her a "little toad" amongst themselves (JE, 34).

Brontë is creative in using the gossip of servants to let us know how Jane came to be orphaned in the first place. Brontë is limited by first-person narration. She cannot tell us anything unless Jane knows it also, and so she writes that Jane overhears a conversation between the

servants about her birth-parents. Jane learns that her father was a poor clergyman, and Jane's mother married him against the wishes of father Reed, who cut his daughter off without a penny. When both Jane's parents die of typhus a year after their wedding, Jane is left penniless (JE, 34). Jane's Uncle Reed takes pity on his sister's baby and brings Jane home to live with his own family. When he dies, Jane's last known blood family tie is severed, and she is left at the mercy of Mrs. Reed. Jane is left an intruder in her aunt's house.

It does not become apparent just how horrible Mrs. Reed is toward Jane until later in the novel. Long after Jane has left the Reed household, she returns to her step-aunt's deathbed. Mrs. Reed is delirious and does not recognize Jane. While Jane is by Mrs. Reed's side, the dying woman deliriously recounts how much of a burden Jane was as a baby. Mrs. Reed does not realize that it is Jane who is sitting by the bed. An understanding of this passage is important if one is to understand why Jane is so despised by her adoptive mother:

He [Mr. Reed] would send for the baby; though I entreated him rather to put it out to nurse and pay for its maintenance. I hated it the first time I set my eyes on it – a sickly, whining, pining thing! It would wail in its cradle all night long – not screaming heartily like any other child, but whimpering and moaning. Reed pitied it . . . In his last illness, he had it brought continually to his bedside; and but an hour before he died, he bound me by a vow to keep the creature. I would as soon have been charged with a pauper brat out of a workhouse . . . (JE, 260)

Words like “it,” “thing” and “creature” relay strongly Mrs. Reed’s feelings of detachment from baby Jane. Mrs. Reed has no maternal feeling towards her niece, no desire to care for the orphaned baby. The image of Jane as a baby alone and wailing pitifully is a poignant one and is powerful in raising emotions of disgust in the reader for Mrs. Reed’s refusal to tend Jane.

Another reason for Mrs. Reed’s hatred of Jane surfaces in the next paragraph:

Reed pitied it; and he used to nurse it and notice it as if it had been his own: more, indeed, than he ever noticed his own at that age. He would try to make my children friendly to the little beggar: the darlings could not bear it, and he was angry with them when they showed their dislike. (JE, 260-1)

It is true that Jane’s lack of blood-ties makes her unappealing to Mrs. Reed, and their personalities clash, but jealousy is at the heart of their sour relationship.

In his book Charlotte Brontë and Sexuality, John Maynard writes about the highly charged sexual jealousy and competitiveness Mrs. Reed feels towards Jane (Maynard, 101). It stems from Mrs. Reed’s hatred and jealousy of Mr. Reed’s sister, Jane’s mother. Mr. Reed loved Jane’s mother, and when she died, he “wept like a simpleton” (JE, 260). Mrs. Reed observes his emotion jealously, and when her husband demands that they adopt Jane, this jealousy is transferred to the baby, whom Mrs. Reed knew was also loved by Mr. Reed. Mrs. Reed is jealous of her husband’s love for his sister and also of Jane. This interesting dynamic makes Jane unloved by Mrs. Reed and punishable for her mother’s sin of being loved by Mr. Reed. The

mother in Mrs. Reed also worries that her husband's affection for his own biological offspring will be supplanted by his love for his infant niece. Here we have yet another example of the adopted child posing a potential danger to biological offspring. Fanny and Heathcliff both supplant biological children in their adopted parents' affections. Mrs. Reed's fears appear to be justified, for she notes that Mr. Reed "notice[s] [Jane] as if [she] had been his own: more, indeed, than he ever noticed his own at that age" (JE, 260-61). Maynard writes that, "In the opening scenes of the novel we see Jane, for her part, strangely able to answer back to Mrs. Reed's accusations, as if beneath [Jane's] sense of justice . . . she is aware of the female competition that places them on a similar level" (Maynard, 101).

Maynard goes on to explain the intense Electra triangle in the novel with Mr. Reed at the centre of Jane's first love interest. Maynard sees Jane's adult life as a repetition of her troubled childhood; at Thornfield, Jane finds herself once again not only in a bitter relationship with a mother-figure but in intense sexual competition with her beloved's wife, Bertha (Maynard, 103).

Jane's "troubled childhood" resurfaces in the novel in many ways. Because Jane was alienated so brutally by the Reeds and left orphaned by her real parents and uncle, she spends the rest of her unmarried life searching for love and acceptance from surrogate mother and father figures. Many critics have noted that the heart of the novel is essentially Jane's quest for love and fulfillment stemming from her childhood beginnings in a deprivation of love (Maynard, 98; Knies, 120; Wohl, 163).

The first place that Jane goes after she leaves the Reed house is Lowood, a school that is full of girls like Jane, girls who are separated from their families, either because they are orphaned like Jane or simply away from their parents. Together they make a homogenous group: dressed

the same, given the same lessons, fed the same food. Here, for the first time Jane is in a position of equality with those around her. There is one girl, however, who is not treated quite like the rest. Helen Burns is picked on, chastised and punished by her teacher. Jane notices Helen because Helen never reacts to her teacher's scorn. Unlike passionate Jane, Helen takes her teacher's abusive treatment without response (JE, 64-65). Jane becomes interested in Helen, and although Jane is intrigued, she disagrees with Helen's philosophy of quiet acceptance. Jane shows great desire to believe in Helen's beliefs about heaven, however:

“You are sure then, Helen, that there is such a place as heaven; and that our souls can get to it when we die?”

[Helen replies] “I am sure there is a future state; I believe God is good: I can resign my immortal part to him without any misgiving. God is my father; God is my friend: I love him; I believe he loves me.”

[Jane asks] “And shall I see you again, Helen, when I die?” “ You will come to the same region of happiness: be received by the same mighty, Universal Parent, no doubt, dear Jane.” Again I questioned; but this time only in thought. “Where is that region?

Does it exist?” (JE, 95)

In this passage key things emerge that Jane has lacked in her life: “father . . . friend . . . parent . . .” Helen and her beliefs fill a guiding maternal void in young Jane's life. Helen gives comfort,

friendship, spiritual guidance and love to Jane. Jane listens with interest about the possibility of a “Universal Parent,” a heavenly father or mother. Jane wants desperately to believe in a place where no one is an orphan. Helen’s beliefs are a salve to Jane’s injured affections.

Miss Temple is also a kind of maternal surrogate for Jane. Miss Temple shows a special interest in Jane and Helen, and it is obvious that Jane basks in the light of Miss Temple’s affection. Miss Temple’s treatment of Jane is almost exactly the opposite of Mrs. Reed’s. Miss Temple believes Jane to be honest when others do not (Mrs. Reed was always accusing Jane of being sly and dishonest.) Miss Temple is physically affectionate: “She kissed me, and still keeping me at her side (where I was well content to stand, for I derived a child’s pleasure from the contemplation of her face and dress. . .)” (JE, 84). Miss Temple also treats Jane like the person she is; there is no discrimination in their relationship, and to Miss Temple Jane is not an unwanted intruder: “. . . You two [Jane and Helen] are my visitors to-night; I must treat you as such” (JE, 84). Mrs. Reed treated Jane more like a disobedient servant than an adopted daughter, whereas Miss Temple embraces Helen and Jane as she would her own children. She says at one point: “God bless you *my* children!” (italics mine) (JE, 86). Miss Temple is the sweet and loving mother Jane desires.

Sadly, Helen and Miss Temple both leave Jane: Helen dies, and Miss Temple gets married. Jane feels the loss of Miss Temple sorely: “From the day she left I was no longer the same: with her was gone every settled feeling, every association that had made Lowood in some degree a home to me” (JE, 98). Jane finds temporary peace in Miss Temple as a mother-figure, but soon after Miss Temple leaves Jane is restless. She does not know what she wants; she hungers for something, anything for a change. She is no longer at peace without the comforting

motherly presence of Miss Temple, so Jane starts on another journey to search for the father and mother figures she needs.

When Jane gets to Thornfield Hall and takes her post as a governess she meets her student, Adèle. I feel that Jane's reaction to Adèle is puzzling. Adèle is Mr. Rochester's ward, and her mother was Rochester's French mistress, a dancer named Céline Varens. When her mother dies, Adèle is brought to Thornfield as a "ward" and not as an adopted daughter. Adèle's wardship stresses the fact that Rochester does not accept little Adèle as his biological daughter. Rochester tells Jane that: ". . . Varens . . . had given [him] . . . Adèle; who she affirmed was my daughter; and perhaps she may be; though I see no proofs of such grim paternity written in her countenance: Pilot [Rochester's dog] is more like me than she" (JE, 164). Jane meets Adèle and the little girl tells Jane that Rochester is gone from Thornfield and Adèle misses him. With her mother dead and Rochester as an absent (and not kind) father-figure, Adèle too is a lonely orphan. One might think that Jane would embrace Adèle and love her as Jane herself once wanted love from her first mother, Mrs. Reed, but Jane does not respond very warmly to Adèle. On the contrary, Jane imposes the same unfair standards on Adèle that Mrs. Reed imposed upon her, praising Adèle only when she is "sufficiently docile" (JE, 119). As I have shown earlier in this chapter, Mrs. Reed often chastised Jane for not being docile herself. Jane also has feelings of jealousy towards Adèle, just like Mrs. Reed had feelings of jealousy towards Jane. Rochester tells Jane the story of his relationship with Céline and how he brought Adèle to Thornfield because he felt sorry for the poor orphaned child. Jane knows how besotted Rochester was with Adèle's mother, and Adèle looks and behaves like Céline. Rochester tells Jane how alike the two are: "[Adèle] is now with Sophie, undergoing a robing process: in a few moments she will re-enter; and I know what I shall

see, – a miniature of Céline Varens, as she used to appear on the boards at the rising of – :but never mind that” (JE, 158). The strangest part of this last passage is that Rochester is condemning Adèle for being excited and grateful for a dress that he himself has bought for her, of “rose-coloured satin, very short” (JE, 158). The fact that the dress is “very short” is odd; it appears as if Rochester is trying to sexualize Adèle and turn her (in her dress at least) into a miniature of her mother. Then when he criticizes her he is in a way criticizing Céline.

Jane sees the strange relationship between Mr. Rochester and his ward and also immediately begins to criticize Adèle for her concern with her clothes and appearance. In a key passage Jane contrasts Adèle’s toilette with Jane’s own. Jane and Adèle are preparing to meet with friends of Rochester’s, and Jane wears her only good dress, a grey silk adorned with a small pearl brooch, and her hair smoothed down. Adèle spends a great deal of time preparing. The girl wears her hair curled and down in smooth ringlets, the pink satin frock that Rochester gave her, and lace mittens. Adèle takes her appearance seriously: “The importance of the process quickly steadied her, [and] she sobered down” (JE, 193). While Jane and Adèle wait to meet the guests, Adèle begs Jane for a flower to complete her outfit. Jane’s reply is telling:

“You think too much of your toilette, Adèle: but you may have a flower.” And I took a rose from a vase and fastened it in her sash. She sighed a sigh of ineffable satisfaction, as if her cup of happiness were now full. I turned my face away to conceal a smile I could not suppress: there was something ludicrous as well as painful in the little Parisienne’s earnest and innate devotion to

matters of dress. (JE, 194)

In this passage Jane laughs at Adèle for wanting to look beautiful when she meets Rochester and his friends. Something in Jane's choice of words – "ludicrous" and "painful" – seems unreasonably harsh here. I believe that Jane is experiencing a type of jealousy and sexual competition towards Adèle. We know by this point that Jane has feelings for Rochester and having a miniature of Rochester's former lover in the room makes Jane uncomfortable. After all, Adèle is a reminder of Rochester's steamy relationship with a French stage dancer. Jane wants Rochester to be her lover and her father-figure, not Adèle's. Jane is not able to make peace with Adèle and embrace the little girl until the end of the novel when Jane and Rochester are safely married and the sexual competition is lessened.

When Rochester comes into Jane's life there are many qualities in him that make him a perfect father-figure for Jane. First, he is old enough to be her father. Miss Fairfax informs Jane of this fact: ". . . There are twenty years of difference in your ages. He might almost be your father" (JE, 297). Second, Mr Rochester is a large man; next to him Jane is small and girlish. He calls her names like "girl-bride" and "elfish". Third, because Rochester is Jane's employer, he is also her provider. She lives in his house and eats his food. Last, Rochester loves Jane and she loves him. One of the interesting things about Jane's love for Rochester is her pet name for him: Master. Jane embraces Rochester not only as a lover, but also as one who has authority and control over her. To her, Rochester fills the missing role of father; she embraces him as her master.

John Maynard writes about Rochester as a father-figure to Jane and ties together Jane's

previous experiences with male authority figures:

Jane comes to her sudden and compressed sexual awakening with the additional burden of an accumulation of problems from her childhood. She has found most men in her life so far cold, hostile, or even sadistic à la John Reed or Brocklehurst. She hushed a childhood trauma over her complicated feelings about the absent presence of the one man who was kind to her [her uncle], which ill prepares her for exactly the experience she is about to have with a man whose inner vulnerability comes wrapped in a shell of fatherly age and authority. (Maynard, 117)

In this passage Maynard acknowledges the fact that Jane's childhood rejection by the only father-figure she knew [Mr. Reed] leaves her affected as an adult and unprepared to deal with the intensity of Rochester's sexual passion and love when they are tied in with his fatherly attributes.

I do not wish to minimize Jane's sexual attraction to Rochester when I stress her desire for a surrogate father-figure in him; there is no lack of references in the novel to a strong sexual attraction between the couple. Jane herself writes of spending a feverish night tossing in bed after saving Rochester from the fire in his bed. (One need not point out the erotic overtones of the nature of the emergency.) Jane writes of the "strange fire in [Rochester's] look," and then of her own feelings: "Sense would resist delirium: judgement would warm passion. Too feverish to rest,

I rose as soon as day dawned" (JE, 171-72). This sexual attraction is combined in an Oedipal model; Jane needs a father-figure and a lover. This need is intensified when she realizes that she has lost Rochester after the fateful wedding day. Immediately upon losing one father/lover, she yearns for another, this time a Heavenly Father:

I looked at my love: that feeling which was my master's -- which he had created; it shivered in my heart, like a suffering child in a cold cradle; sickness and anguish had seized it: it could not seek Mr. Rochester's arms -- it could not derive warmth from his breast... One idea only throbb'd life-like within me -- a remembrance of God . . . (JE, 330-31).

Jane's love, created by Rochester in her, is reminiscent of Jane herself as a baby, untended and wailing in her borrowed baby-cradle. Both Jane's love and her inner child seek returning love from Rochester, but thwarted in her desires again, this time by the existence of Rochester's wife Bertha, Jane turns to Helen's God, the all-embracing Heavenly Father.

Jane is also in need of a mother. In her wandering, Jane has no mother to comfort her and help her in her misery. Luckily "Nature here becomes a substitute or symbol for the mother to whom a girl in Jane's position might normally return" (Maynard, 132). In an almost grotesquely literal way, Jane snuggles up to Nature's breast for the night, and feeds herself on it by gathering bilberries (JE,132). Jane is completely alone after Thornfield, and by embracing Mother Nature she finds a moment's respite:

I have no relative but the universal mother, Nature: I will seek
 her breast and ask repose . . . Nature seemed to me benign and good;
 I thought she loved me, outcast as I was; and I, who from man
 could anticipate only mistrust, rejection, insult, clung to her with
 filial fondness. To-night, at least, I would be her guest – as I was
 her child: my mother would lodge me without money and without
 price. (JE, 362-63)

In Jane's hour of direst need, Mother Nature is her loving parent; the one mother who does not reject her or leave her. This kind of symbolic mother cannot satisfy Jane for long, however. After wandering for a few days, Jane begins to realize the desperate situation she is in. Hunger demands to be fed; cold and rain demand shelter. Jane is reduced to begging for bread, and stealing porridge from pigs (JE, 369).

Brontë does not abandon Jane to perish all alone, however. Jane stumbles on her last legs to the door of a cottage in which she finds pity. She is nursed by a servant named Hannah, two sisters, Diana and Mary Rivers, and their brother, St. John Rivers. St. John finds Jane a teaching post after she regains her health and under the false name of Jane Elliot Jane scratches out a living for herself. By an incredible coincidence, Jane learns through the Rivers that she is the heiress of 20,000 pounds and distant cousin to the Rivers. After learning of her newfound wealth, she confesses her desire for close kin to her cousin St. John:

And you . . . cannot at all imagine the craving I have for fraternal

and sisterly love. I never had a home, I never had brothers and sisters; I must and will have them now . . . I want my kindred: those with whom I have full fellow-feeling. Say again you will be my brother . . . (JE, 432)

Here Jane strives not for a father, but for real brothers and sisters. The Rivers are her distant cousins, but this is not enough for Jane. She wants fraternal and sisterly love. It is significant that after she learns of her fortune, she immediately desires to re-open Moor House (the Rivers' childhood home), clean it, re-decorate it, and bake delicious things in preparation for the Rivers sisters return. When they do come to the house, Jane watches closely for their approval (JE, 435). She even gives them a great portion of her fortune. She is desperate for their loyalty, their family home and ties. She is driven to please them, to feel their love and appreciation. She wants close kin of her own. Still restless after everything that has happened to her during her stay with the Rivers, she goes back to Thornfield.

Jane does not make peace with her family-want until she has her own family. She marries Rochester, this time as an independent woman married to a man who, after losing his sight, is more her equal. Jane writes about herself in the last chapter as a mother, loved and needed by Rochester and the center of her own home instead of a disrupting element in someone else's. She even finds it in herself to love and embrace Adèle, Rochester's lonely little ward and Jane's former pupil:

You have not forgotten little Adèle, have you reader? I had not;

I soon asked and obtained leave of Mr. Rochester, to go and see her at the school where he had placed her. Her frantic joy at beholding me again moved me much. She looked pale and thin; she said she was not happy. I found the rules of the establishment were too strict, its course of study too severe, for a child of her age: I took her home with me. (JE, 499)

Jane's embrace of Adèle is a fitting end to Jane's own quest for love. Adèle was "pale . . . thin . . ." and "not happy," much like Jane herself at Lowood. By taking Adèle home it is as if Jane is finally making peace with her inner child.

In Mansfield Park and Wuthering Heights the two adopted characters, Fanny Price and Heathcliff Earnshaw, are like cuckoo birds that land in the nests of their adopted families and push out the biological children. They entwine themselves in the hearts of their adoptive parents and soon are preferred to their adopted brothers and sisters. In this light they are disruptive characters that function as figures of instability and subversion within the hearts of their families. Jane Eyre is a disruptive element in the Reed household also, although she is not loved by her adopted mother, Mrs. Reed. On the contrary, Jane is so hated by Mrs. Reed that Mrs. Reed forces the girl out of the Reed nest and throws Jane out into the world with no kin to protect and love her. As a result of her cold and miserable childhood, Jane spends the rest of her life searching for parental figures to fill the hole in her heart. It is an ironic twist that Jane feels so much competitiveness towards Adèle, who is so much like little abandoned Jane. It is fitting that in the

end Jane finds peace with her inner child by embracing both Adèle and Rochester and thus creating a nest of her own.

Chapter 3: Adoption as an Expansion of Kinship

This is a chapter about the search for roots. To be orphaned and adopted by someone is to be uprooted and learn to grow in new soil. The characters in Aurora Leigh, Silas Marner and Kim are adopted characters who are all ultimately searching, discovering and growing after being orphaned by the deaths of their natural parents. Aurora, Eppie and Kim's relationships with their adoptive parents will be examined at length. Also, I will discuss the theme of orphans and adoption as it features in the above works. Aurora Leigh is a poem that is centered upon a young woman who is completely uprooted and must spend the rest of her life learning to deal with the loss of her parents, especially her mother. Silas Marner is pro-adoption, containing an adoptive relationship that works so well that the adopted child refuses to live with her natural father. Kim contains an adoptive relationship that can be seen as an allegory of the Imperialist relations between Britain and the colony of India. It is an idealistic relationship, stemming from a sentimental author who was imagining when he wrote the novel the India of his childhood. All of the works benefit by being examined from the point of view of the artificial links established as a result of the loss of one's original roots.

Aurora Leigh is an epic poem about the education of an orphan girl who wants to write, in a world where the ideal woman is a submissive, self-abnegating, married woman. Aurora rejects a marriage proposal at a young age in order to follow her quest to become a poet. Before this, however, Aurora is a little girl who falls victim to the "Orphan Condition" that Baruch Hochman

and Ilja Wachs write about in their book, Dickens: the Orphan Condition. This condition entails a “profound sense of having been rejected and abandoned. It also involves a sense of rage at the parents, who are felt to have withdrawn their sheltering attention and love; [these orphans] crave maternal nurturing” (Hochmann, 14). Aurora suffers repeatedly throughout the poem from an extreme case of what Barrett-Browning calls “mother-want.”

Aurora’s mother is frail, like Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s own mother (Leighton, 121), and Aurora finds herself motherless at the tender age of four years old. Her father tries to raise her: “His large man’s hands afraid to touch [her] curls,/ As if the gold would tarnish (AL, bk.1, li. 96-97).⁴ Aurora herself is too young to mourn her mother’s death, a fact which becomes significant in Aurora’s adulthood. She never has the chance to mourn and thus put closure to her mother’s death. Her father seems to acknowledge this fact when he has inscribed on his dead wife’s tombstone: “Weep for an infant too young to weep much/ When death removed this mother” (AL, bk.1, li.104-05). After the death, Aurora and her father move to the mountains above Pelago (bk.1, li.11) because her father believes orphaned children need nature to replace their mothers:

Because unmothered babes, he thought, had need
Of mother nature more than others use,
And Pan’s white goats, with udders warm and full
Of mystic contemplations, come to feed

⁴ Elizabeth Barrett-Browning, Aurora Leigh, ed. Margaret Reynolds (New York: Norton, 1996). Future references to Aurora Leigh are to this edition of the work and appear in the text.

Poor milkless lips of orphans like his own. (AL, bk.1, li.112-16)

Mother Nature is offered by her father as a sort of surrogate mother for Aurora. It is as if her father hopes that Mother Nature will educate Aurora in the “mystic contemplations” that a man cannot provide for a female child, especially one with the “milkless lips” of mother-orphanhood. It is a futile hope, because despite Mother Nature, Aurora is ultimately left with a horrible sense of loss:

I felt a mother-want about the world,
 And still went seeking, like a bleating lamb
 Left out at night in shutting up the fold,--
 As restless as a nested-bird
 Grown chill through something being away, though what
 It knows not. (AL, bk.1, li.39-45)

Dorothy Mermin points out that Aurora’s mother is an ambiguous figure, of whom Aurora remembers only six words: “Hush, Hush – there’s too much noise.” (bk.1, li.17) This is an ominous legacy to leave to a poet daughter, yet spoken as “her sweet eyes/ Leap[t] forward, taking part against her word/ In the child’s riot.” (bk.1, li.17-19) (Mermin, 508). This is all she remembers, and these words are of little help to a young girl desperately in need of female guidance. The only thing that Aurora has to look at in order to remember her mother is a macabre portrait painted after her death. The little girl examines it often, and left as she is to define what it

means to be female (Cooper, 152), it is no wonder that her ideas get jumbled and confused. As Aurora looks at the picture, she is haunted by the image and filled with contradictory feelings and emotions:

Hates, fears, and admirations was by turns
 Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch and sprite
 A dauntless Muse who eyes a dreadful Fate,
 A loving Psyche who loses sight of Love,
 A still Medusa with mild milky brows.
 All curdled and all clothed upon with snakes
 Whose slime falls fast as sweat will; or anon
 Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed with swords
 Where babe sucked; or Lamia in her first
 Moonlight pallor, ere she shrunk and blinked
 And shuddering wriggled down to the unclean. . .

(AL, bk1, li.154-63)

These fantasy-filled and conflicting images of her mother illustrate perfectly the Orphan Condition. Aurora is confused and angry over the loss of her mother; hence the violent words and images in the above passage: "Hates, fears . . . fiend . . . Medusa . . . all curdled . . . with snakes . . . Lady of the Passion, stabbed with swords/Where Babe sucked . . ." This confusion not only breeds horrible images, it leaves her with a need for maternal nurturing and for a female role

model to help her sort out the confused images of the female self: a “dauntless muse . . . a loving psyche . . . a still Medusa.” As Mermin suggests, these are images of virtue and power thwarted, self-contradiction and defeat. The mother’s picture becomes the shifting embodiment of everything Aurora “read or heard or dreamed” (AL, bk.1, li.148) about woman, the object of worship, desire, repugnance, fear (Mermin, 509).

It is no wonder that one of the major themes of this *kunstlerroman* is the constant resurfacing of “mother-want” in the journey of self-discovery as a woman that Aurora takes in this poem. The images of suckling, breasts, and mothering resurface countless times in the epic. There are two key examples of these images that specifically pertain to Aurora and her own birth-mother that I will mention to further demonstrate Aurora’s fascination with mothering. When Aurora loses her father, she leaves Italy, the place of her own and of her mother’s birth. As the ship pulls away, she is taken farther and farther away from the only home she has ever known. It is almost as if she were losing a third parent when she is forced to leave her maternal homeland. It is interesting that in her last view of the hills of Italy she personifies the land with female characteristics but not nurturing ones:

The white walls, the blue hills, my Italy,
 Drawn backward from the shuddering steamer-deck,
 Like one in anger drawing back her skirts,
 Which supplicants catch at. Then the bitter sea
 Inexorably pushed between us both,
 And sweeping up the ship of my despair

Threw us out as a pasture to the stars.

(AL, bk1, li.231-38)

The female motherland “draws back her skirts/ Which supplicants catch at.” They are helpless supplicants, given no chance at reaching out to the mother, with the sea thrust between them just as death thrusts itself between the little orphan and her lost mother. So Aurora sails “on her ship of despair” to a new place, this time her father’s homeland of England. Even a long time later, when Aurora returns to Italy as a woman, she uses the same maternal metaphor to personify the hills:

My own hills! Are you 'ware of me, my hills,
 How I burn toward you? do you feel tonight
 The urgency and yearning of my soul,
 As sleeping mothers feel the sucking babe
 And smile?

(AL, bk.5, li.1266-71)

It is as if Aurora is addressing directly her long-dead mother, and instead of thinking of an angry woman who draws back her skirts, she tentatively pleads for an understanding of her yearning for the mother she lost so young. Even after all the years and experiences, Aurora still yearns for maternal love (Mermin, 509).

Because Aurora Leigh is written “after the fact” by a retrospective narrator, we as readers

are given ample warning that Aurora will be orphaned by the deaths of both her parents when she is still a child. So it comes as no surprise when she loses her father, too. At the very beginning the narrator writes: "O my father's hand,/ Strok[ing] heavily, heavily, the poor hair down./ Draw, press the child's head closer to thy knee!/ I'm still too young, too young, to sit alone" (bk.1, li.25-29). Aurora has a real fear of being left alone, and later in the verse we learn that at the young age of thirteen, Aurora "suddenly awoke/ To full life and life's needs and agonies/ With an intense, strong, struggling heart beside/ A stone-dead father" (bk.1, li.206-10). Angela Leighton reads these lines to mean that Aurora lost her father at the critical time in a girl's life when she "attains the menarche" (Leighton, 122). Whether or not this is so, it is obvious that Aurora's childhood is over. She is an orphan now, and reality hits with a cruel blow as she is taken from her beloved Italy and shipped to her father's homeland, England. It is suggested in the poem that Aurora never forgets the huge influence of her father's sudden death. Like the theme of motherlessness, "the theme of fatherlessness appears again and again . . . "grave" imagery is prevalent in the poem" (Leighton, 124).

Aurora arrives in England and meets her adoptive aunt, the woman who is to be a new female role model. Aurora at first clutches at this new woman in hopes of finding a replacement for all she has lost: "I clung about her neck, - /Young babes, who catch at every shred of wool/ To draw the new light closer, catch and cling/ Less blindly. In my ears my father's word/ Hummed ignorantly . . . / 'Love, love my child" (AL, bk.1, li.114-19). Poor Aurora is prepared to love blindly the only connection that she has to her lost parents, but her hands are "wrung loose," and she is held at "arm's length" (bk.1, li.325-326). In a violent description of her aunt's probing eyes she is "stabbed through" when the woman searches Aurora's face for the look of Aurora's

mother, whom the aunt believes ultimately murdered her brother by taking him away from his native home and rendering him unable to look after the family estate. Aurora finds no female love and nurturing from her new adoptive “mother.” Indeed, their relationship is a hazardous one, as one critic points out: “Under her aunt’s tutelage, Aurora almost sank into female invalidism, until poetry averted it” (Cooper, 159). I presume the critic speaks of the type of female invalidism that squelches creativity and imagination; for in the beginning, Aurora “felt no life which was not patience – did/ The thing she bade me, without heed to a thing/ Beyond it . . . walked demurely . . . read her books . . .” (AL, bk.1, li.483-491). Aurora learns to part her hair severely and braid her curls into neatness; she learns to speak English and never Italian, read scripture, music, French, mathematics, and how to please a man by being subservient and obedient. Aurora learns little bits of useless knowledge, valuable only in making pretty conversation and in displaying female accomplishments. She balks silently under this tutelage and is angry that she is wasting her skill and intellect on these mundane tasks:

By the way

The works of women are symbolical.

We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our sight,

Producing what? A pair of slippers, sir,

To put on when you’re weary – or a stool

To stumble over and vex you . . . ‘curse that stool!’

Or else at best, a cushion, where you lean

And sleep, and dream of something we are not

But would be for your sake. Alas, alas!

This hurts most, this – that, after all, we are paid

The worth of our work, perhaps.

(AL, bk.1, li.455-65)

She compares her useless education to “water torture . . . flood succeeding flood/ To drench the incapable throat and split the veins” (bk.1, li.468-70). Aurora is completely uprooted spiritually and physically, and her spirit is drying up faster than an unwatered plant. She expects to find a loving, nurturing second mother in her aunt, but instead finds an adoptive mother “who betrays her daughter by inculcating the subservience of women” (Mermin, 509). When her aunt tries to finish Aurora’s education in feminine subordination by persuading her to marry Romney Leigh, Aurora finally asserts her own will and rejects him. She then loses her third “parent” when her aunt dies and leaves her to go her own way.

There is another character in the poem who may be classified as an orphan under the definition of the Orphan Condition. Marian Earle was born to two living parents, but as described by Baruch Hochman and Ilja Wochs, Marian is born into a “violent and assaultive world.” Even though she has both parents living, she “might as well be an orphan for how [she] is treated” (Hochman and Wochs, 14). Aurora discovers Marian after Marian has been tricked into leaving Romney at the altar by Lady Waldemar – a wicked woman who loves Romney and wants him for herself – tricked into prostitution/slavery and left with a bastard child. Marian tells her story to Aurora, complete with the horrible tale of her childhood. This tale strikes a chord deep inside Aurora, and Aurora “grow[s] passionate” as she retells Marian’s story in her poem (AL, bk.3,

li.847). Marian was beaten, treated cruelly, and made to work hard at a young age. Her father was a drunkard, her mother abusive. They tramped all over England. Despite this horrible upbringing, Marian found the local Sunday School and learned about God. She was an essentially spiritual child, and “some grand blind Love came down,/ And groped her out, and clasped her with a kiss;/ She learnt God that way, and was beat for it/ Whenever she went home –”(AL, bk.3, li.894-96). She hungered for beautiful things and was good and pure despite her debauched parents. When her mother tried to sell her to a squire, Marian fled and ended up in a hospital where she was discovered by Romney Leigh, who tried to marry her to make a social statement about how two classes could be united in marriage. Lady Waldemar talks her out of the match, and she ends up pregnant after being tricked, drugged, and taken into a brothel. Aurora finds her and discovers that despite her childhood and the horrible fate in the brothel, she is still the saintly Mary and now is the epitome of the perfect earth mother. This image is contrasted sharply with both Marian’s own mother and the treacherous Lady Waldemar, whom Marian herself describes as “A woman . . . both her breasts/ Made right to suckle babes . . . she took me off” (AL, bk. 6, li.1182-4). This motherly image makes Lady Waldemar seem more deceitful than ever because of the fact that she led Marian to her fate. She is the bad mother – the untrustworthy and malicious woman. Marian on the other hand is described as being saintly at heart and Madonna-like with her child, for whom she has a love that is:

. . . Self-forgot, cast out of self,
 And drowning in the transport of the sight,
 Her whole pale passionate face, mouth, forehead, eyes,

One gaze, she stood: then, slowly as he smiled
 She smiled too, slowly, smiling unaware,
 And drawing from his countenance to hers
 A fainter red, as if she watched a flame
 And stood in it a-glow. "How beautiful,"
 Said she.

(AL, bk 6, li.604-12)

Marian is saintly even though she has a child with no father. She is technically a fallen woman, yet she "was not even conscious of her sexual violation and is therefore not morally 'fallen' at all" (Mermin, 511). By having her play the innocent victim in this way, Barrett-Browning manages to turn Marian into her own literary version of the Virgin Mary. Aurora visits Marian prepared to condemn her for her state, but her mother-hungry soul cannot resist such a loving mother-figure. Aurora seems to hunger after Marian precisely because Marian is the mother whom Aurora misses so badly. In a small way, Marian is an answer to Aurora's mother-want. Aurora talks of Marian "whom still I've hungered after more than bread" (AL, bk.6, li.544).

Aurora's reaction when she sees Marian in the square for the first time is strangely reminiscent of the passage at the beginning of the poem when Aurora describes her own mother. Marian is described as "a dead face, known once alive" (bk. 6, li.240), much like Aurora's mother's portrait, which is also a picture of a dead face. Marian's description is charged also with contradictions: "old" and "new" (bk.6, li.239). Aurora tries to rescue Marian, but interestingly the orphaned child in her quickly emerges as she herself submits to the mother Marian: "[Marian]

led/ The way, and I, as by a narrow plank/ Across devouring waters, followed her,/ Stepping by her footsteps, breathing by her breath” (bk.6, li.500-03).

Aurora’s strong response to Marian is due largely to Marian’s role as the mother-figure. Aurora cannot condemn Marion for her state; instead Aurora offers to bring Marian and the child to her home in Italy. Aurora then has the opportunity to be a kind of mother herself to the child. She tells Marian that: “[she] is lonely in the world,/ And thou art lonely, and the child is half/ An orphan. Come, – and henceforth thou and I/ Being still together will not miss a friend,/ Nor he a father, since two mothers shall/ Make that up to him” (AL, bk.7, li.121-25). Aurora does not describe herself as a “father”; she wants to be an adoptive mother to the baby. She tries to find peace from her mother-want by becoming a kind-of mother herself or at least having the ultimate mother, Marian, near her in her home.

The theme of rootlessness is common in any novel where a character has been ripped from the comfortable soil of home and family by the death of one or both parents. Often the search for new roots can be looked upon as a strong basis for the actions of the orphaned character and the basis for intricate plot manipulations. Such is the case with Jane in Jane Eyre, Oliver in Oliver Twist (although he ultimately finds his old real roots when he stumbles into his mother’s extended family), Daniel in Daniel Deronda, Esther in Bleak House, Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights (although he ultimately tries to destroy the family who adopts him) and Henry in The History of Henry Esmond Esq. In Silas Marner, the little orphan Eppie is adopted by a man who otherwise would bear no connection to her, yet this artificial relationship is a blessing to both of them.

Silas Marner tells of a child adopted by an older man who is in desperate need of companionship. In the epigram to her book, George Eliot quotes Wordsworth: "A child, more than all other gifts/ That earth can offer to declining man,/ Brings hope with it, and forward looking thoughts." I believe these short lines are key to understanding both Eliot's purpose in writing Silas Marner and also the relationship between Silas and Eppie. The idea for the story "thrust itself" upon Eliot and interrupted her writing of Romola, the novel she was then working on. She wrote that Silas Marner began as a "legendary tale that she tried to infuse with realism." She also wrote that "it sets -- or is intended to set -- in a strong light the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations" (Carroll, viii). Silas Marner contains a "pure, natural human relations[hip]" (Pinion, 130) that is essentially unnatural because the child who comes into the life of Silas Marner is adopted. George Eliot wrote Silas Marner to show how powerful a child can be in reawakening a sense of purpose in someone who has lost his direction in life. As Silas cares for little Eppie he forgets his worldly cares and is elevated to a new sense of life and vitality.

In Silas Marner George Eliot is imagining a fairy-tale relationship that is taken from her own experience. In The George Eliot Companion, F.B. Pinion argues that the reason for the sentimentality in Silas Marner is the fact that when it was written, George Eliot was forty years old and had chosen to have no children (Pinion, 131). Pinion believes that Eliot must have known yearnings for motherhood, as well as that reverence for life which (again in Eliot's words as quoted by Pinion) "makes us feel a certain awe" (Pinion, 132).

Eppie is different from the other girls in the village in which she and Silas live. Her hair

curls naturally unlike any of the other girls' (SM,138),⁵ and when she speaks it is with the proper grammar of a well-bred English girl. When a speech by Eppie is compared with that of another woman in the village – Dolly Winthrop – the difference is plain. Here Eppie is speaking: “I should like to go on a long, long while, just as we are. Only Aaron does want a change: and he made me cry a bit – only a bit – because he said I didn’t care for him, for if I cared for him I should want us to be married” (SM, 149). And here is Dolly’s speech: “And yourn’s the same Bible, you’re sure o’ that, Master Marner – the bible as you brought wi’ you from that country – it’s the same as what they’ve got at church . . .” (143). Dolly speaks with the local dialect and the absence of dialect is noticeable in Eppie’s speech. It is possible that this difference in Eppie may be attributed to her more “noble” birthright as Godfrey Cass’ natural daughter, but more likely it is because of Eppie’s loving and tender upbringing by Silas. George Eliot herself explains Eppie’s differences in the following quotation taken from Pinion’s book, The George Eliot Companion:

The tender and peculiar love with which Silas had reared her in almost inseparable companionship with himself, aided by the seclusion of their dwelling, had preserved her from the lowering habits, and had left her mind in that freshness which is sometimes falsely supposed to be an invariable attribute of poetry which can exalt the relations of the least-instructed

⁵ George Eliot, Silas Marner (London: Penguin, 1996). Future references to Silas Marner are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

human beings; and this breath of poetry had surrounded Eppie from the time when she had followed the bright gleam that beckoned her to Silas' hearth; so that it is not surprising if, in other things besides her delicate prettiness, she was not quite a common village maiden, but had a touch of refinement and fervor which came from no other teaching than that of tenderly nurtured unvitiated feeling.

(Pinion, 140)

Instead of being different because of her birthright, Eppie is different because of her nurturing relationship with Silas. Interestingly, Eliot does not attribute Eppie's differences to any sort of natural inheritance, but instead to her relationship with Silas. Also worth mentioning is the fact that Eppie does not seem to inherit any of her natural mother's tendencies towards addiction, again possibly because of the influence of a "father" like Silas.

Eppie is given an almost angelic persona in the novel. Her very presence has religious significance for Silas. In the beginning of the story, Silas is betrayed by his best friend and his fiancée, and even when he re-settles and makes a lot of money, it is stolen from him. As a result of his bad luck, he has even lost his faith in God: "Poor Marner went out with that despair in his soul that shaken trust in God and man, which is little short of madness to a loving nature" (SM, 14). He is left spiritually bereft, blinded by the loss of the money into which he poured his every thought and desire and he cannot be comforted. Mr. Macey tries to convince him to come to church and find solace in God, but Silas will not (SM, 79). In fact, he refuses church altogether

until Dolly makes the point that Eppie must be baptized. Silas only reaches out to church and the people of his town when he thinks that Eppie will benefit from it: “He had no distinct idea about the baptism and the church-going, except that Dolly had said it was for the good of the child; and in this way, as the weeks grew to months, the child created fresh links between his life and the lives from which he had hitherto shrunk continually into narrower isolation” (SM, 125).

As Robert Dunham points out, Silas is as physically blind as he is spiritually blind (Dunham, 652). Silas cannot even see the baby Aaron when Dolly brings the child over to cheer up the old man: “Marnier . . . saw the neat-featured rosy face as a mere dim round, with two dark spots in it. . .” (SM, 84). Eliot assumes that readers will understand how a child’s presence can heal spiritual blindness as well as physical blindness: Silas’ life with Eppie heals his eyes. When we see him later in the novel, “his large brown eyes seem to have gathered longer vision . . . and they have a less vague, more answering gaze” (138). Silas’ purpose is no longer lost when he finds Eppie. Eppie leads Silas back into life and away from spiritual destruction: “Eppie called him away from his weaving, and made him think all its pauses a holiday, reawaking his senses with her fresh life, even to the old winter-flies that came crawling forth in the early spring sunshine, and warming him into joy because *she* had joy” (SM, 125). As stated above, Eppie is given an angelic status as Silas’ daughter. She is his salvation:

In the old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threat-

ening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth
gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more
backward; and the hand may be a little child's. (SM, 131)

Silas Marner is a novel that is optimistic about the possibilities of adoption. In fact, children are presented as the keys to happiness: Dolly believes that a visit from her little Aaron will cheer Silas' spirits after his money is stolen, and Silas' life is completely changed for the better by the appearance of Eppie. We even get a look at the misery that is the result of refusing to adopt. Godfrey Cass wants his wife, Nancy, to adopt a child when it becomes apparent that she cannot have any children. Her answer is an interesting description of Nancy's belief that adoption flies in the face of Providence and should be avoided. She believes that to adopt a child is to "choose your lot in spite of Providence" and that the adopted child would not "turn out well" (SM,156). Nancy Cass believes not only that a Higher Power rules her life, but that to rebel against it is to ensure unhappiness. She cites an example of a woman whose sister adopted a child at the "Royston Baths," and the child was transported to a penal colony at twenty-three (SM,156). Nancy does not suggest that she believes an adopted child turns out badly because of its 'bad' natural parents. She thinks an adopted child turns out badly despite nurturing adult care because the actual adoption is a cursed act, since it goes against the will of God. She attributes Eppie's sweet looks and behavior to the fact that Silas did not choose her; she was brought to his hearth by the will of God. This devoutly religious and negative view of adoption is evidently not approved of by the narrator; in the next paragraph there is a description of Nancy's beliefs as "pieced together out of narrow social traditions, fragments of church doctrine imperfectly understood, and

girlish reasonings from her small experience” (SM, 157).

This religious view is neatly contrasted with the religious experiences that Silas undergoes as he is, in effect, resurrected by the little angel Eppie. It is interesting to compare lonely, stubborn Nancy who wastes away her vital years as the mistress of a cold and childless life to Silas, who is loved by and loves Eppie. Silas is ignorant of the religious conviction to which Nancy is so loyal, and it is he who ends up enjoying the happiness of caring for Eppie while Nancy remains childless. Organized religion is not presented in a favorable light in this novel, and neither is the parental discipline enjoined by the religious view of “spare the rod and spoil the child.” As readers, we do not wish to see poor little Eppie punished, so we are pleased that Silas does not succeed in his intention of disciplining her, choosing instead to “[rear] her without punishment, the burden of her misdeeds being borne vicariously by father Silas. The stone hut was made a soft nest for her, lined with downy patience; and also in the world that lay beyond the stone hut she knew nothing of frowns and denials” (SM,129). Eppie grows to be a sweet and charming girl – all the better for Silas’ gentle hand. The quotation above goes so far as to set Silas up as a kind of Christ-figure of a religion that is different from Nancy’s cold and infertile one, a religion in which “father Silas” bears the sins of his adopted daughter. This way of thinking is very different from the rule-burdened, narrow-minded way that Nancy thinks. Nancy is the victim of her belief in a religion that prevents her and Godfrey from experiencing the happiness of adopting a child. It is a final ironic twist that when Nancy and Godfrey try to take Eppie from Silas, Eppie chooses a life with Silas in which she can live without the rules of society as a burden.

With Silas as her father, Eppie is free to choose whom she will marry and where she will live. With Nancy and Godfrey as parents she would surely live as a young woman of “society,”

burdened with the duties of being a “lady” and a Cass. Godfrey wants to own Eppie; to “have” her is the word he uses when talking to her and Silas about bringing her home with him and Nancy (SM,168). He wants to “treat her in every way as [his] own child” (168). This would entail inheriting the Cass wealth and all of the burdens that would come with it. Godfrey offers her the soft life of a lady with no physical labor, but instead Eppie wants a life where she makes her own decisions, a life with her beloved Silas. She rejects the “golden fetters” Godfrey offers her (Conway, 267). Eppie is not alone in her desire to keep things as they are; in an emotional display, Silas boldly proclaims that he has heard Eppie call him “father”. . . “ever since she could say the word” (SM, 170). He condemns Godfrey for stating that he is the real father, and tells him that “God gave her to me because you turned your back upon her, and He looks upon her as mine: you’ve no right to her! When a man turns a blessing from his door, it falls to them as take it in” (SM, 169).

In his exchange with Silas it is clear that Godfrey wants to make a decision for Eppie. He would rather not let her make up her own mind. He assumes that she will accept his offer and feels “an irritation inevitable to all of us when we encounter an unexpected obstacle” (SM, 169) when she rejects him. In contrast, Silas does not presume to try to make up Eppie’s mind for her. He says only: “Eppie, my child, speak. I won’t stand in your way. Thank Mr and Mrs Cass” (168). It is no wonder that Eppie rejects Godfrey. Eppie wants to “fend and do everything for [Silas]” and “marry a working man” (169), which she could not do as a Cass. She also loves Silas, and this is the major factor in her decision to stay with him. In this case, adoption worked so well that it seems unnatural to take Eppie away from Silas, whom she loves, and expect her to be happier with her rightful father.

I have already argued that Silas Marner is a novel that is very pro-adoption. It is not hard to see that Eppie is happy with her loving adoptive father, so happy in fact that she rejects her biological father in order to stay with Silas. The whole theme of “roots” and “rootlessness” is present throughout the novel and reinforces the idea that a root nurtured by a loving caretaker will flourish, no matter in whose garden it grows. The first reference in the novel to “roots” concerns Godfrey himself. He is afraid to tell his father of his secret marriage for fear of the father’s wrath. Godfrey is afraid of disinheritance and he has no desire to earn his own living: “The disinherited son of a squire, equally disinclined to dig and beg, was almost as helpless as an uprooted tree, which, by the favour of the earth and sky, has grown to a handsome bulk on the spot where it first shot upward” (SM, 28). Godfrey, a strong and able-bodied young man, is terrified of losing the favour of his father and thus his means of support. He, in turn, commits a horrible wrong to his own daughter, by letting her be “rooted” in someone else’s garden. Luckily for Godfrey, fate provides a nurturing home for her. Silas is described as follows:

. . . [As] some man who has a precious plant to which he would give a nurturing home in a new soil, thinks of the rain, and the sunshine, and all influences, in relation to his nursling, and asks industriously for all knowledge that will help him to satisfy the wants of the searching roots, or to guard leaf and bud from invading harm. (SM,131)

This is a tender metaphor, and it speaks volumes about the power of a loving parent to nurture a

child and help it to grow no matter who the “real” parent is. Godfrey realizes his mistake, but, alas, too late:

While I have been putting off and putting off, the trees have been growing – it’s too late now. Marner was in the right in what he said about a man’s turning away a blessing from his door: it falls to somebody else. I wanted to pass for childless once, Nancy – I shall pass for childless now against my wish. (SM, 174)

Eppie is too rooted in her life with Silas to move in with her real father, and Godfrey knows it.

It is also interesting that Eppie is so consumed with the idea of having a garden of her own. When we find her and Silas together towards the end of the novel, Eppie is grown up, and the first words she speaks are: “I wish we had a little garden, father. . .” (SM, 138). She tells Silas that it would be a lot of work, laying stones and soil and such, and that he could not do the heavy work. Eppie yearns to plant things, nurture them and watch them grow. The garden can be seen as a manifestation of Eppie’s desire to have a family and establish roots of her own. Of course Silas cannot help her with this task, hence the introduction of Aaron, who offers to help. Silas agrees that Aaron would be the best person for the job and so does Eppie, “half-bashfully, half-roguishly. . . Aaron would be so good. . .” (SM, 139). Aaron and Eppie want only strong roots in their garden, ones that will grow beautiful flowers like “snowdrops and crocuses, ‘cause Aaron says they won’t die out, but’ll always get more and more” (SM, 147). Eppie and Aaron plant their seeds right next to the furze bush under which Eppie’s mother – essentially her only known roots

until Godfrey reveals himself as the father – died in the snow (SM, 147). When Godfrey and Nancy come to visit, Eppie again talks about her planned garden, this time as the only thing that she is lacking with Silas. Silas tells Godfrey that, “[there’s] little we want” to which Eppie replies, “Only the garden, father” (SM, 167). Eppie’s desire for a family and roots are satisfied when she marries the maker of her garden, Aaron. We are told that when they finally marry and live with Silas, “Eppie had a larger garden than she had ever expected there now” (SM, 183).

How would Silas Marner have been different had the adopted child been a boy, not a girl? Rudyard Kipling’s Kim provides the answer. In Kim, as most critics have noted, women play a remarkably minor role. Edward Said notes:

[Kim] is an overwhelmingly male novel. [Men] make up the novel’s major, defining reality . . . All of them speak the language men speak among themselves. The women in the novel are remarkably few by comparison, and all of them are somehow debased or unsuitable for male attention – prostitutes, elderly widows, or importunate and lusty women; to be “eternally pestered by women” says Kim, is to be hindered in playing the Great Game, which is best played by men alone . . . At best, women help things along; they buy you a ticket, they cook, they tend the ill, and . . . they molest men. (Said, Culture and Imperialism, 136)

This attitude towards women is undoubtedly part of the argument some critics use to say that there

are homosexual overtones in Kim's relationship with the lama. I disagree, however, and go along with Edward Said in seeing their relationship as "celebrating the friendship of two men in a difficult, and sometimes hostile environment" (Said, 138). Kipling's sometimes misogynistic attitude towards women in this novel is demonstrative of a young boy who is too wrapped up in the excitement of life to notice women – yet. In Kim, we are dealing with the theme of the young boy growing to manhood, and it would be difficult to imagine the same story with a young girl as the main character in this anti-female atmosphere. Plus, the autobiographical nature of this novel means that Kipling is writing in large part about his own experience as a boy in India. It would have been impossible for Kim to accomplish just about everything that he does in the novel (for example, joining the Secret Service) had he been a female child.

The issue is not so clear-cut in Silas Marner. Eppie could have been a male child, and it is interesting to speculate how the story would have been different had this been the case. I suspect that Molly would have forced her way into Godfrey's public life much earlier had her child been male, because if Eppie were a boy, she would have been Godfrey's firstborn son and heir. Molly was his first legal wife, after all. Instead, Molly tries to bring Eppie to Godfrey's family party on New Year's Eve to force him to acknowledge both herself and their daughter. Godfrey, "in a fit of passion, had told her he would sooner die than acknowledge her as his wife" (SM, 107). If Eppie had been a male child, Molly could have used more than public embarrassment and her status as his wife to force Godfrey's acknowledgement. She could have laid claim, through Eppie, to the Cass fortune, thereby safeguarding her own future as the mother of an heir. Instead, Eliot tries to dodge the issues of male inheritance by making Eppie a female child and conveniently killing Molly before she even has a chance to speak. The fact that Eliot does not

permit Molly to have a voice in the novel might be read as problematic, but it does diminish Godfrey's sin as the abandoning father. By not giving Molly a voice, Eliot is free to picture her as an opium-addicted, bad mother and not as the abandoned wife that she is. There was a popular stereotype in nineteenth-century literature of fathers with daughters-as-redeemers and "angels in the house" (Gorham, 42). Eppie and Silas fit this model perfectly. Eppie is the angel who rescues Silas from a life of loneliness and misery, and the fact that she is female is vital to this formula. We cheer as Eppie wanders into Silas' hut and enjoy their sweet relationship all the more knowing that Eppie is finally safe from her horrible mother.

In Kim, what Kipling portrays in the relationship between the main characters Kim and the lama is most interesting when one considers Kipling's perspective. Many critics have hinted at personality traits in the characters that tie in with imperialist notions, but I will argue that the primary adoptive relationship in the novel can be read allegorically. The relationship suggests many interesting ideas about the British as colonizers (as embodied in the character of Kim), and the Oriental people as the colonized (as embodied in the figure of the lama).

Because adoption is a rather vague term, it is necessary to explain why it can be argued that the relationship between Kim and the lama is an adoptive one. Kim is an orphan whose mother died of cholera. His father died of an opium overdose. The lama acts as Kim's adult father-figure, loving Kim, traveling with him, instilling a sense of morality in him, paying for an expensive English education for the boy, and ultimately leading Kim to his destiny as an agent in the British Secret Service. There is a great deal of love between the lama and the boy, and the lama treats Kim as he would his own child. What is interesting about their relationship is that in this situation one might logically assume that the older, wiser lama would be the one to lead,

guide and care for the younger, more innocent Kim. But this is not so. The novel turns traditional ideas of parenthood on their head. Sometimes Kim seems more like the parent in the relationship than the lama does. Kim is nothing like the stereotype of the passive child who is seen and not heard. Indeed, at times it seems as if Kim is the leader and the lama the follower.

When they first meet, Kim sees that the lama is alone and confused. Kipling describes the lama as “helpless” (K,4).⁶ The lama cannot speak the language of the people because he is not a native of the area and when addressed by a policeman cannot communicate. Kim approaches the lama with the utmost confidence, and assuming that the lama is a tourist, tells him about the Lahore Museum. Kipling describes the meeting in which Kim “enlightens” the lama (K, 4) and strangely enough, asks the grown man if he is fed! This is the fifth sentence spoken between them, and like a child, the lama admits that he is very hungry and hands over his begging-bowl, “as simply as a child” (K, 5). In this opening passage there are other references by the narrator in which the lama is depicted as childlike next to Kim. When introduced to the museum curator (who is British, and gives the lama his eyeglasses in order that he might better see the museum pieces, thereby symbolically bequeathing the European viewpoint to the oriental lama), the lama hands over a piece of paper with his name on it, “printed in clumsy, childish print”(K, 6). Even the lama’s movements are described as “shuffles” that bring him dangerously close to collisions with passers by, whereas Kim “dodges” the crowds with the ease and security of a natural leader. There is also a passage in which the lama tells Kim that he is essentially lost and alone. His previous chela (student or apprentice) died, leaving him in the quasi-orphaned state in which Kim

⁶ Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co, 1962). Future references to *Kim* are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

finds him.

Why does Kim show so much interest in the lama? Kim sees in the lama an opportunity not to be overlooked: “The lama was his trove, and he proposed to take possession” (K, 11). Once Kim becomes interested, he begins to protect the lama. A policeman rebukes the lama for resting under the gun called Zam – Zammah (a huge cannon) that Kim had previously been sitting on top of before meeting the lama. Kim cockily silences the policeman and so demonstrates how grown-up he is and how much control he has over the little world he lives in. The lama speaks with authority only once in this passage. He says he will “teach [Kim] other and better desires upon the road” (K, 14). Presumably he means other and better desires than begging and scavenging. But Kim is still the one who in the very next paragraph finds a sleeping-place for the lama and, while taking him there, “fend[s] [him] between excited men and excited beasts” (K, 14). Kim leads the lama like a little child through the crowds. Kim also orders the lama to “go” when he talks to his friend Mahbub about business, and the lama obeys. In the morning Kim wakes the lama before the city stirs and “leads him away” on the trip to Benares, while the lama “follows obediently” (K, 21). All of these passages, placed as they are at the very beginning of the novel, establish Kim as occupying the strange position of a child, yet also of a parent. His behavior and the author’s treatment of him and the lama fit perfectly the argument that they are analogous to an imperialist picture of the colonizer and the colonized: one protecting and leading, the other following.

There are many situations where Kim uses his street-smarts to protect the lama in their travels. He makes sure the innocent man is not overcharged by the ticket seller at the train and gets free handouts from generous passengers. He takes care of the lama’s every need, feeding

him, even tucking him into bed at night. The lama even expresses concern as he falls asleep that Kim will leave him alone after all (K, 30). This clearly demonstrates how much the lama depends upon Kim. Indeed, this dependence is underlined when Kim himself tells the lama: "Was there ever such a disciple as I? All earth would have picked thy bones within ten miles of Lahore city if I had not guarded thee" (K, 35). The lama in turn wonders aloud to Kim "whether thou art a spirit . . . or sometimes an evil imp" (K, 35).

The lama does much in return for the service Kim provides. Kim's father was a soldier in the British Army, and before he died in an opium-induced delirium he told Kim that if he were ever to find the army in India, Kim should tell the general who his father was and he would then be taken care of. Kim understands his father's last words as his personal destiny. He believes he needs to find his fellow Britons, and the lama is instrumental in helping him. The lama makes Kim's "quest" his own, and when they stumble together upon the "red bull" flag that is simultaneously a part of Kim's father's story and the British army's flag, it is the lama who urges Kim to go down and meet his destiny. When Kim is caught and almost whipped because he is suspected of being an orphaned ruffian who intrudes on the camp for the purpose of stealing supplies, it is the lama who vouches to the General for Kim's true identity (K, 75). Kim, together with the lama, finds his fellow Englishmen and learns the principle "Once a sahib, always a sahib" (K, 75). Finding the General is the beginning of Kim's schooling in the ways of the English, and the lama even pays the 300 rupee-a-year tuition to St. Xavier's English school so that Kim can be educated there. Why does the lama do this for Kim? The lama makes the statement that "it is no[t] wrong to pay for learning; to help the ignorant to wisdom is always a merit"(K, 80). Kipling attributes the lama's generosity to the lama's religious belief in helping those in need, but Kipling

takes for granted that an Oriental lama would see so clearly the benefits of an English education that he would pay Kim's tuition out of his own pocket. This assumption fits with the imperialist mode of thinking that is prevalent throughout the entire novel, as I will demonstrate later.

Up to this point it might seem that the relationship between Kim and the lama is purely exploitive on Kim's part. This notion would fit in nicely with the argument that their friendship is an allegory of imperialistic domination. However, one cannot ignore the extremely deep love that connects Kim to the lama. They have a bond that is unbroken throughout the novel, despite the fact that they are occasionally separated. The lama never fails to meet Kim wherever Kim asks him to, and Kim is always worrying and fretting about the lama being on the road without him (K, 83). In one touching passage, Kim tells Father Victor how fond he is of "his" lama and how fond the lama is of him (K, 88). Kim tells the Father that the lama refers to him as the "apple of [his] eye" (K, 89). In the tent of the General when Kim first meets the British Army and his fate is being decided by the men who find him, Kim "thought only of his lama" (74), and when Kim and the lama say goodbye in front of St. Xavier's gates, Kim cries, "But whither shall I send my letters?" as he clutches at the lama's robe, forgetting that he is a sahib. The lama replies, "Dost thou love me? Then go, or my heart cracks . . . I will come again, surely I will come again" (K, 104). At the end of the novel, in a final show of fatherly affection, the lama calls Kim "Son of my Soul"(247).

So we have here a loving lama who has many good qualities in his character, and Kipling never diminishes the truthfulness of the lama's quest: to find the River of the Arrow that washes away sin. Edward Said admits that Kipling has a genuine admiration of the lama:

We can believe in the novel's respect for the pilgrim. Indeed, the lama commands respect from everyone . . . and in an especially nice touch in chapter fourteen, Kipling has him tell a "fantastic piled narrative of bewitchment and miracles" about marvelous events in his native Tibetan mountains, events that the novelist courteously forbears from repeating, as if to say that this old saint has a life of his own that cannot be reproduced in sequential English prose. (Said, Culture and Imperialism, 139-40)

Yet, despite the respect with which he is depicted and the wisdom that is attributed to him, the lama needs Kim's youth, his guidance and his wits. At the end of the book the lama even acknowledges his absolute religious need for Kim when he tells the story of the "Jataka." This is a parable about a young elephant (the Lord Himself) who frees an old elephant (Ananda) imprisoned in a leg iron (K, 141). From this we infer that the lama sees Kim as his savior. This is echoed at the very end of the novel when the lama is beaten by two Russian agents who try to steal his wheel of life. Kim fights off the two men and saves the lama from further harm (K, 224).

Furthermore, the lama's character is stereotyped. He is self-abnegating and self-immolating. He sacrifices money, love, and time in his quest to help Kim attain an education befitting a sahib, all the while believing that in actuality Kim is saving him and will help him in his search for the Great River. The lama falls into the category of character that Patrick Brantlinger describes in his book Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914: "Savages who did not 'develop' the land and its resources were often viewed as having no

right of possession, and the task of 'civilizing' them was defined in terms of their ability to 'produce labor' or 'industry'" (Brantlinger, 29). Natives are described as ultimately passive, while the British are aggressive. This can be seen over and over again in the relationship between Kim and the lama. Kim provides food and shelter; he leads the lama by the hand and is the more aggressive of the two, the one who gets things done. The lama follows placidly, thanking Kim for his superior ability to provide for both of them. Brantlinger goes on to describe the superior feeling that the colonizers felt towards the colonized:

For most Victorians, whether they lived early or late in the Queen's reign, the British were inherently by "blood" a conquering, governing and civilizing "race"; the "dark races" whom they conquered were inherently incapable of governing and civilizing themselves. Racist theories of history were prevalent well before the development of Social Darwinism, and these theories were often used to explain Britain's industrial and imperial preeminence. (Brantlinger, 21)

Writers throughout the nineteenth century proved no exception to the prejudices of their time. Indeed, writers were often the ones who dictated the beliefs of the readers they wrote for. A writer from the earlier part of the century who, like Kipling, perpetuates stereotypes about India is Sir Walter Scott in his short novel The Surgeon's Daughter (1827). Scott had never even been to India, and his long descriptions of the Rajah and the Prince of India are full of stereotyped Indian characters. After reading his book, readers are left with a picture of the Indian people as

scheming, inherently dishonest, un-Christian in their morals, and animalistic in their desires. At one point in the novel, the Indian Prince Tippoo is compared to a hungry tiger, who drags away innocent maidens to be eaten in the forest (Scott, 155-56) Hartley, the British knight-in-shining-armor, takes on the evil prince and rescues the duped and innocent maiden from a life of debauchery in an Indian harem.

Nearly eighty years later, we can see in Kim that although the lama and Kim have a wonderfully loving relationship, the lama is always the lesser of the two. He is not a sahib. He is essentially the dependent one. He is the one who relies on Kim to be fed, put to bed, and rescued from his own ignorance of the ways of the material world. At the end of the novel the lama tells Kim, "Child, I have lived on thy strength as an old tree lives on the lime of an old wall" (K, 222). According to the stereotype of the valiant British hero, Kim is the "Blessed one," the one who is described frequently by Kipling's native characters as "Friend of all the World" (K, 115). Kim uses his status as a sahib many times in the novel to gain a position of power, and he is given the dominant position over and over again precisely because he is white. He was raised in India, however, and is completely at home among the natives. He has a privileged position as a white boy in India who by virtue of his birth is a member of the colonizers, yet he is equally at home among the colonized. In his article "Ethnography and the Hybrid Boy in Kipling's Kim," Don Randall says: "[Kim] ends up as a valuable tool, English, but with a view from the inside" (Randall, 87). This quality is what makes Kim a perfect agent for the Secret Service. Kim has a "deep, almost instinctive knowledge of his difference from the [people] around him" (Said, Culture and Imperialism, 156). Kim is different, and through the help of the lama, Kim becomes more completely aware of this fact.

I have been arguing that the relationship between Kim and the lama can be read allegorically to demonstrate a stereotypical relationship of Oriental dependence upon the British. This argument does not explain a key factor, however, unless one considers the invasive role that Kipling's feelings play in shaping this allegorical relationship away from the typical stereotype. One might expect that a colonized society would chafe under the yolk of the colonizers and that tension would result from misunderstood cultural differences. The relationship between Kim and the lama is loving and kind. How does this discrepancy fit with the allegorical model that I have presented? The answer lies with the author. Kipling firmly believed that the colonies were improved by Britain's civilizing influence, and it did not occur to him that any difficulties would arise between the two cultures. Kipling was raised as a child in India, and many critics have pointed to the fact that the descriptions of a wonderful Indian cultural experience in Kim are taken from the memory (however inaccurate) of Kipling himself. Kipling loved India and Britain, and wrote fondly of his childhood spent far away from his mother country. Kim is lovingly loyal to his Indian friends, and he is equally loyal to the British Secret Service. Essentially, this means that Kim has no qualms about spying on Mother India for Father Britain. This duality is no problem for Kim or Kipling: "There might have been a conflict had Kipling considered India as unhappily subservient to imperialism . . . but he did not; for him it was India's best destiny to be ruled by England" (Said, Culture and Imperialism, 146). Kipling depicts Kim and the lama and the East and the West as living side by side in harmony in Kim, even though historians and critics alike have shown that tensions were high between the colonizers and the colonized in India during Victorian times. Said writes: "Kipling's choice of the novel form and of his character Kim O'Hara engages profoundly the India that he loved but could not properly have" (Said, CI 162).

Kipling is remembering, sentimentally, the India of his youth in Kim. There are two peoples, the British and the Oriental, living side by side, mutually loving and needing each other just like Kim and the lama do – an allegorical and idealistic relationship.

On a literal level orphaned Kim latches on to the lama and finds a father-figure and a means of extending his personal “family.” The lama and Kim love each other, travel together and learn from each other. The lama pays Kim’s way into an English school and helps his adoptive son fulfill his destiny in the British Secret Service. Kim and the lama may not be a traditional family, but through their relationship they discover an extended family that serves both their emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs. These three works: Aurora Leigh, Silas Marner and Kim all contain adopted characters who search for new roots: Aurora, who tries to satisfy her rootless mother-want throughout the epic poem; Eppie, who is nurtured by Silas; and Kim, who searches all over India and finds love and acceptance with his lama and the Secret Service. It is no wonder that the character of the orphaned child was such an endless source of fascination for the Victorians.

Chapter 4: Adoption Gone Bad: The Self-Serving Parent

I have chosen to end with two novels by Charles Dickens, Bleak House and Great Expectations. Dickens' novels offer the best illustrations of the ambiguous relationship between adoptees and their adoptive parents. In Charles Dickens's novel Bleak House John Jarndyce adopts Esther Summerson as a young girl, pays for her education, and then invites her to live with him. He proposes marriage soon after she arrives and admits that he wanted her for a wife the first time he saw her as a child. Esther accepts his proposal, even though she needs Jarndyce to be a father-figure, not a husband. Jarndyce manipulates Esther's emotions and plays on her feelings of gratitude for his many years of support. He uses adoption to gain not only a daughter, but also a wife. In Great Expectations the two main characters, Pip and Estella, have two important things in common. Both lose their natural parents and are raised by other people, and their relationships with their non-biological parent-figures leave them scarred psychologically well into adulthood. In Pip's case, there are many negative and complex parent-figures. His first "mother" is actually his sister. She is both cruel and abusive and instills in Pip the first doses of guilt that he carries all his life. Jaggers, Joe and Magwitch are all father-figures to him in different ways, yet they all fall short of being good role models. Each leaves him with emotional baggage. Estella's adopted mother is a recluse named Miss Havisham, who raises beautiful Estella to despise all men and break their hearts. Because of her adopted mother's teaching, Estella loses the ability to love and to enjoy life. After demonstrating how Pip and Estella are almost ruined by their self-serving and manipulative adoptive parents, I will discuss gender as an issue. For example, how do their life-

experiences in their artificial families differ because of their sex? What opportunities and limitations are imposed upon them because of their sex? And last, to what extent are Pip and Estella chosen by their adoptive parents because of their gender?

One thing that Bleak House and Great Expectations have in common is that they are both filled with bad parents. In a novel as long and as populous as Bleak House there is much to be said on the topic of bad parenting, but I will deal here only with the adoptive relationship between Esther Summerson and John Jarndyce. I will argue that Jarndyce is a most interesting type of bad parent-figure because he is so covert in his manipulations of Esther. He is controlling, dishonest, and self-serving in his relationship with her, and in an Oedipal maneuver he tries to marry his adopted daughter by asking her for her love when she is most vulnerable, after her recovery from small-pox. At the end he then decides not to marry her and gives her away to Alan Woodcourt as one gives away a possession, without even asking her about her desires. Esther and Jarndyce's relationship resembles some of the relationships Pip and Estella share with their adoptive parents in Great Expectations, and I will compare the two novels using the non-biological relationships in each. I will also discuss gender as an issue and point out how Esther in her adoptive relationship is a victim of her "femaleness" in a patriarchal family dynamic in which John Jarndyce is the king.

As far as their sad fates as children go, Esther in Bleak House and Pip in Great Expectations have a lot in common. Both are orphaned by their parents – Pip by death and Estella by rejection – and raised by cold, cruel women. Pip's earliest remembrance is of reading his

parent's tombstones. Esther, early in her narrative, writes of being told that she is "orphaned and degraded," by which is meant that she is illegitimate and that she is to "forget her mother . . ." (BH, 30).⁷ Like Pip, whom I will discuss later, Esther is raised to feel a healthy dose of guilt simply for being alive. Esther has to live "a life begun with . . . a shadow on it" (BH, 30), and that shadow is the shame her godmother has in the little girl's very existence due to her birth out of wedlock. Esther begins her young life knowing that she is a thing of shame, a burden and a rejected orphan. This is where the similarities between Pip and Esther diminish, however, for as they grow older, their gender differentiates their experiences. Pip becomes the adopted son of Magwitch and gains financial freedom to become a gentleman. Esther is adopted by Jarndyce to become a wife. Jarndyce brings her into his house as a young woman to work, but he admits at the end of the novel that he wanted her all along as a life-partner. Both Pip and Esther are used by their adopted parents, but for different purposes.

In the beginning when Esther is brought to Bleak House and introduced into Jarndyce's domain, it is because Esther is to be a companion to Richard and Ada, his two wards. Barbara Gottfried makes the point, however, that by the time Esther comes to the house, she is twenty-one years old and Richard and Ada are nineteen and seventeen respectively. Esther herself because of her age is not in need of a guardian legally entitled to custody of her and her affairs (Gottfried, "Fathers and Suitors. . .", 177). So why does she go? Since Jarndyce wants her to be his wife, it is clear why he invites her to live with him, but why does Esther agree to the arrangement? Jarndyce had been Esther's benefactor during the years she spent at school, and upon their first

⁷ Charles, Dickens, Bleak House (London: Penguin, 1996). Future references to Bleak House are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

meeting Esther is fully aware of the debt she owes him:

I had . . . never yet enjoyed an opportunity of thanking one who had been my benefactor and sole earthly dependence through so many years. I had not considered how I could thank him, my gratitude lying too deep in my heart for that: but I now began to consider how I could meet him without thanking him, and felt it would be very difficult indeed. (BH, 81)

Esther wants to meet the man to whom she owes so much for her schooling. Her desire is to thank him and she gets the opportunity to do much more. When she gets to the house, she is given a large ring containing all the housekeeping keys (BH, 81). She is assigned to run the house and is not consulted as to her wishes on the matter. Her only response is to become “. . . quite lost in the magnitude of [her] trust . . .”(BH, 89). Esther displays no reluctance or surprise at the fact that Jarndyce does not ask if she would like the responsibility. He merely sends his servant to give her the keys as soon as she is settled and alone (BH, 89). Jarndyce later asks Esther to call him “Guardian” and christens her the “good little woman of our lives” (BH, 121). She is the housekeeper. In the following passage Esther lists all of the names that Jarndyce calls her. They all reflect her house duties:

That was the beginning of my being called Old Woman, and Little Old Woman, and Cobweb, and Mrs. Shipton, and Mother

Hubbard, and Dame Durden, and so many names of that sort,
that my own name soon became quite lost among them. (BH, 121)

It is interesting that the names Esther is called are all names one would call someone much older. Even "Mrs. Shipton" seems to describe a much older married woman. Why would Jarndyce pick nicknames like these for Esther? Barbara Gottfried points out that by giving Esther the responsibilities of keeping house, Jarndyce is acting most insidiously. He gives her the responsibility and trust that she craves, but he also effectively traps her. While she is busy being a housemaid and companion to Jarndyce, she cannot marry anyone else (Gottfried, "Fathers and Suitors. . .", 178). I think that Jarndyce gives older, more maternal and nurturing nicknames to Esther because he secretly wishes that Esther will one day marry him and take care of Bleak House forever. He wants her to be a permanent fixture until she is an "Old Woman," forever keeping away "Cobwebs," and certainly becoming a "Mrs." to him.

Jarndyce keeps Esther to run his house, but their relationship remains that of guardian and ward until one night when she cannot sleep she goes downstairs and finds Jarndyce also awake. They have a conversation in which he tells her what he knows of her mysterious past. Esther is grateful for the information and responds by "bless[ing] the guardian who is a Father to her!" (BH, 277). Jarndyce's response is strange:

At the word Father, I saw his former trouble come into his
face. He subdued it as before, and it was gone in an instant;
but it had been there, and it had come so swiftly upon my words

that I felt as if they had given him a shock. . .I did not understand it. Not for many a day. (BH, 277)

In this passage, Esther is writing about the exchange long after it happens. When she writes, it is with the retrospective knowledge that Jarndyce already wanted her for his wife when this conversation occurred, but had not yet told Esther of his intentions. This explains why Jarndyce is troubled when Esther calls him "father." He wants to be more than a father to her. About this passage Gottfried writes that, "if Jarndyce is troubled it is because [Esther's] identification of him as a "Father" figure desexualizes him" (Gottfried, "Fathers and Suitors. . .," 178). I think that Jarndyce has pushed Esther into the role of housekeeper, and he wishes that she will one day be the *housewife*. When she calls him "father" he becomes uncomfortable with the fact that it is not acceptable for a father to wish to marry his daughter; hence he tries to hide his feelings. It is the fact that he hides his intentions towards Esther that makes him seem insidious. He does eventually propose to Esther, but the circumstances surrounding the proposal do not do much to lessen the slyness of his behavior.

Esther agrees to marry Jarndyce when he asks her. The question then becomes why would Esther, who is twice as young as Jarndyce, agree to marry the man whom she has always regarded as nothing more than a father? Lawrence Frank sums up Esther's reasons for accepting the proposal : "Esther commits herself to John Jarndyce not out of love or passion, but out of gratitude; she is aware that she will 'become the dear companion of his remaining life' (Frank, 76). Jarndyce is certainly a less-than-appealing choice for a young, passionate girl. Instead of love and excitement, Esther gets to take care of Jarndyce for his "remaining life." Esther's gratitude is

strong, however, and she accepts her adoptive father's proposal, despite "cry[ing] very much" and burning the dried flowers that Allan Woodcourt gave her (BH, 691). Allan is a young surgeon whom Esther obviously loves, but the fact that she burns the so-carefully preserved flowers signifies that she will at least try to forget Woodcourt: "[The flowers] had only been preserved in memory of something wholly past and gone, but it would be better not to keep them now" (BH, 693).

In her article, "Fathers and Suitors: Narratives of Desire in Bleak House", Barbara Gottfried acknowledges the fact that Esther accepts Jarndyce's proposal out of her sense of obligation to him, but Gottfried takes this argument one step further. She makes the point that Jarndyce waits to propose until Esther is at her most vulnerable. After being sick with smallpox, Esther's beautiful face is scarred forever, and she is weakened by the disease. Esther believes that her chances for marriage are diminished because of her lost beauty. Jarndyce chooses to propose at this point, when Esther is the most insecure. Gottfried writes:

Jarndyce chooses not simply the moment when Esther feels most grateful and obliged to him, but the moment of her greatest sense of her own vulnerability, when she is most likely to say yes because of her awareness of the attenuation of her circumstances and possibilities, her lack of resources for independence and strength. Thus Jarndyce's proposal brings up for Esther not simply the disadvantages of her illegitimacy and loss of looks, but the difficulty of her position as a dependent,

particularly with regard to her continuing in his household without any “official” status. (Gottfried, “Fathers and Suitors. . .,” 193)

Esther does not see anything negative or manipulative in Jarndyce’s behavior. She is only grateful for the offer of marriage. In the following passage we see that she believes herself unworthy of love and therefore is extremely vulnerable to Jarndyce’s desires for her: “When my old face was gone from me, and had no attractions, he could love me as well as in my fairer days . . .” (BH, 691). No matter how wrong it may seem to the reader that Esther agrees to marry the man whom she once considered a father and whom she does not even love, Esther herself gives no clue that she thinks about resisting his offer except when she “cries very much” (BH, 692). Even when she admits that she cries, she does not tell why she cries; she only hints that the chance for real love will be lost to her: “. . . [It was] as if something for which there was no name or distinct idea were indefinitely lost to me. I was very happy, very thankful, very hopeful; but I cried very much” (BH, 692). Esther is so general in her description of her emotions here that one wonders exactly what she means. She proves herself to be completely submissive and obedient.

She is so submissive as the story continues that she does not even balk at Jarndyce’s final manipulations of her life towards the end of the book. In a plot-twist that causes at least one critic to label him a “despot who shuffles women around as extensions of his property” (Danahay, 422), Jarndyce “gives” Esther away to Allan Woodcourt, her true love. Once again, Jarndyce never consults Esther about this life-altering decision; he merely acts on her behalf and convinces Allan to go along with the plan. While Jarndyce’s “giving” away of Esther may be unthinkable to a contemporary reader, it is possible to argue that nineteenth-century readers would not have

reacted as strongly. A nineteenth-century reader from a patriarchal society might think it simply sweet that Jarndyce gives Esther away. My argument that Jarndyce is a self-serving manipulator still stands, however, when one examines how Jarndyce brings about the marriage of Allan and Esther and how Jarndyce treats Esther before the marriage takes place. Jarndyce is conniving and spiteful towards Esther, and this, I believe, negates any truly selfless and loving considerations of her happiness. For instance, when Jarndyce makes the following speech, he has already decided that Esther would be happier with Allan than she would be with her guardian. He has made up his mind to give her to Allan, yet he makes this speech to her:

The day on which I take the happiest and best step of my life--
 the day on which I shall be a man more exulting and more envi-
 able than any other man in the world-- the day on which I give
 Bleak House its little mistress, shall be next month then. (BH, 943)

Jarndyce tells Esther that marriage to her will make him a source of envy among men and will be the “best step of [his] life,” even though he has no intention of marrying her himself. What is he trying to do here? Barbara Gottfried calls this action by Jarndyce an “unnecessary and tormenting prolongation of [Esther’s] ignorance” (Gottfried, “Fathers and Suitors. . .,” 198). If Jarndyce knows Esther and Woodcourt love each other and he intends to give Esther to Woodcourt, why prolong his and Esther’s engagement and consequently her suffering? Jarndyce obviously wants to “test” Esther for some reason, and when she passes the test, he rewards her with her true love: Allan. Jarndyce gets to feel like the all-powerful one, and maybe this feeling

of omnipotence saves him from hurt feelings that he does not get the one he loves after all.

Gottfried sums up the imbalance of power between Jarndyce and his adopted daughter:

Esther is aware retrospectively, as she writes her narrative, of the power of Jarndyce's money to control even as she acknowledges her debt to him for "smoothing her orphan way." While Esther cares deeply for Jarndyce, toward whom she feels she can never be "grateful enough," what continues to disturb her is his exploitation of the unequal power relations between them. It is especially painful for her when Jarndyce takes advantage of the structural inequalities between them to ask for the one thing (marital love) that is supposedly beyond the reach of "sordid" monetary concerns, then uses his patriarchal privilege to act as if it gives him the proprietary right to dispose of her as a "gift" or object of barter and exchange. (Gottfried, 9)

Jarndyce admits when he "gives" Esther away that he had an "old dream [he] sometimes dreamed when [Esther] was very young, of making [Esther] his wife one day" (BH, 964). This admission means that Jarndyce, who is so much older than Esther, adopts her as a young child, pays for her schooling, and brings her into his home as a young lady, all the while planning for her to be his wife. The fact that he "bought" her through adoption and then "gives" her away to Woodcourt is disturbing enough; it is no wonder that we as readers breathe a sigh of relief that Esther does not

have to go through with marrying the manipulative Jarndyce. At least the way the novel ends gives us hope that Esther will be happy with Allan and that she will be free from her father/suitor, two words that just do not seem to go together.

Marriage frees Esther from her adoptive parent, much as it will free Estella from the manipulative Miss Havisham in Great Expectations. Since they are women, the only option Dickens allows for both Esther and Estella to get away from their self-serving and manipulative adoptive parents is marriage. In reality, a “respectable” woman’s options were limited to either marriage or governessing. Estella will get to choose her marriage partner and use her own agency, however bad the decision is for her later on. Esther is not even given the choice. Esther is the essence of Victorian femininity: docile, obedient and ever-cheerful even when faced with marrying a man she does not truly love. It is only by the will of Jarndyce that she ends up with Allan after all.

Dickens returns to the theme of abusive parents in Great Expectations, which was written later. Mrs. Joe is the first of Great Expectations’ bad parents. She is not even a parent; she is Pip’s older sister. She raises Pip “by hand”⁸ and is both insensitive and abusive towards her only surviving brother. Pip himself tells us about the flaws in his sister’s parenting:

My sister’s bringing up had made me sensitive. In the little world
in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up,

⁸ The 1999 Norton Critical Edition of Great Expectations tells us that raising “by hand” means to feed a baby with a bottle and formula instead of wet-nursing. Pip confuses this term with his sister’s habit of laying her heavy hands in physical abuse upon his person. See pg. 12.

there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice.
 It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to, but
 the child is small, and its world is small, and its rocking-horse stands
 as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter.
 Within myself, I had sustained, from my babyhood, a perpetual con-
 flict with injustice. I had known, from the time when I could speak,
 that my sister, in her capricious and violent coercion, was unjust to me.

(GE, 53-54)⁹

Dickens stresses the smallness and vulnerability of Pip in this passage, and this makes Mrs. Joe's abuse seem more horrible. Pip himself knows that his sister is unjust and abusive, and these two qualities make her appear very un-maternal. She cares for him as far as his physical needs go, feeding his physical body, but she is greatly lacking in nurturing skills. Dickens takes Mrs. Joe's negative characterization even further when he describes her as wearing "a coarse apron, fastened over her figure behind with two loops, and having a square impregnable bib in front that was stuck full of pins and needles" (GE, 13). Mrs. Joe's prickly bib leaves one with the impression of an equally prickly personality. The word "impregnable" further negates her maternal qualities by seeming to say that no baby could ever be produced from such a woman.

Mrs. Joe repeatedly uses the "Tickler," a long cane, on both Pip and her husband Joe. On one occasion, Mrs. Joe hits Pip and throws him across the room, where Joe tries his best to catch the poor boy and put him on his feet again (GE, 14). Such violent descriptions do nothing to

⁹ Charles Dickens, Great Expectations (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999). Future references to Great Expectations are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

endear Mrs. Joe to us. Instead we feel quite sorry for poor little orphaned Pip because the only mother he knows is unjust and violent. Robert Polhemus notes that Mrs. Joe is not even given a feminine name of her own (Polhemus, 143). In every way she is the antithesis of the sweet and loving maternal figure.

In his article, "The Rape of Miss Havisham," Curt Hartog focuses exclusively on the women in Great Expectations. He writes about how their inability to love makes them destructive to men. Mrs. Joe denies motherhood and maternal love, and this denial is "especially scarifying for Pip" (Hartog, 249). Mrs. Joe sees Pip as a burden, and she "resents him without qualification" (250). Pip is aware of his sister's feelings towards him, and the fact that she harbours such resentment makes her seem even more unjust in Pip's (and the reader's) eyes. Pip does, however, feel an unwarranted amount of guilt for the "trouble" he is to Mrs. Joe, and I will deal with this fact later in a discussion of how Mrs. Joe's bad parenting affects Pip.

If Mrs. Joe is a brutish domestic bully who is violent and unmotherly towards Pip, where does Mrs. Joe's meek husband, Joe, fit into the family equation? Just as some critics decry Mrs. Joe as a poor example of motherly affection, others see Joe as an inept father-figure. For example, while Goldie Morgentaler sees Joe as a good man who acts with his heart and loves Pip, she makes the point that he is a bad parent to Pip because Joe's love is inept and "cannot save Pip from the harshness of his sister's upbringing" (Morgentaler, 718-19). Whenever Mrs. Joe hits Pip and throws him around, Joe is a passive observer. Joe expresses the wish to Pip that Pip might be saved from Tickler (GE, 43), but Joe still will not defend Pip from Mrs. Joe. Joe is meek, whereas Mrs. Joe is bullying and controlling. From Joe's example Pip learns to be passive in the face of injustice. Joe never stands up to his wife for fear of "going wrong in the way of not doing

what's right by a woman" (GE, 43). Curt Hartog has this to say about Joe's passivity:

The cost of [Joe's] noble act is high, especially to Pip, who not only suffers under Mrs. Joe's reign of terror, but develops, under Joe's expert tutelage, a masochistic, passive, and feminine character. His model for mature relationships remains that of mother-child, or worse, nurse-patient. However admirable Pip's capacity for gentleness and sensitivity, he lacks masculine identity, for which the role reversal of Joe and Mrs. Joe is essentially causative. (Hartog, 251)

Hartog accuses both Joe and Mrs. Joe of together scarring Pip's lifelong ability to have a mature relationship. Hartog sees Pip's very identity as a man as being in jeopardy because of the bad example Joe sets, and he also suggests that Pip is the one who bears the brunt of Joe's passivity in the face of the abusive Mrs. Joe. The idea that Joe and Mrs. Joe switch roles (Mrs. Joe the aggressive male controller and Joe the passive and obedient male) is also remarked on by Rowland and Juliet McMaster: "Pip starts with a double difficulty; not only are his sister and Joe not his real parents but their proper roles are reversed, his sister being the tyrant, Joe the comforter" (McMaster, 74).

In a change from her normally cold behavior, Mrs. Joe becomes interested in Pip when she finds out that Mrs. Havisham wants him to come and play at Satis House. Her interest is not for Pip's sake, however. There is a generous dose of self-interest present when she hears that their uncle Pumblechook has offered to take Pip to the mansion. Mrs. Joe instantly wonders if there is

any money to be made in letting Pip associate with a woman as rich as Miss Havisham (GE, 45). Gail Turney Houston makes the point that “Mrs. Joe expects remuneration for having raised Pip by hand, for obviously she hopes to advance her own fortunes by placing him at Miss Havisham’s” (Houston, 18). The fact that Mrs. Joe is so self-serving makes her an even more unattractive character. Robert Polhemus is even more harsh than Gail Houston when describing Mrs. Joe’s attitude about Pip going to Miss Havisham’s: “Mrs. Joe, one of many bad parent substitutes, sends [Pip] up to play for a rich woman’s warped amusement in hopes of being paid money” (Polhemus, 143). Mrs. Joe does not ask any questions about what Pip is to do at Satis House or even whom he is to play with.

It is not enough to simply present the ways in which Pip’s first adoptive parents fall short and demonstrate bad parenting. The question is, what effect does their treatment have on Pip himself? Does he recover from his early childhood, remain pure despite it, like *Oliver Twist*, or does it scar him for life? The answer is that Pip is scarred psychologically for the rest of the novel because of his first parents. I have already suggested that Joe’s passivity taught Pip to be both “passive and feminine,” in the words of Curt Hartog. The effects that the bullying Mrs. Joe has on Pip lasts much longer, however. Many critics write of Pip’s guilt (Rawlins 672, Houston 22, Stein 1, Puttock 19). Pip’s guilt begins early in his life. Mrs. Joe makes him feel guilty for his very existence – he is the only boy to survive both his mother and father and his five brothers. And she makes him feel guilty for all the years of work is took to raise him. In one key passage, Pip is accused most unjustly by his adoptive mother of being a nuisance:

“[Pip] was a world of trouble to you, ma’am,” said Mrs. Hubble,

commiserating my sister. "Trouble?" echoed my sister; "Trouble?"
And then entered on a fearful catalogue of all the illnesses I had
been guilty of, and all the acts of sleeplessness I had committed, and
all the high places I had tumbled from, and all the low places I had
done tumbled into, and all the injuries I had done myself, and all
the times she had wished me in my grave and I had contumaciously
refused to go there. (GE, 27)

While this passage is obviously written to be humorous, it is really quite horrible that Mrs. Joe would say such things, especially in front of Pip. There are no soft words here, only nasty accusations of nuisances and even admitted wishes that Pip had died long ago. It is hard to imagine a crueller or more unloving description of a child. One need not mention the injustice of blaming a child for being ill or injured. Though Pip clearly recognizes his sister's unfairness, a small part of him feels guilt that he has caused her so much grief. Jack Rawlins writes that Pip knows Mrs. Joe is wrong in her harsh accusations, but "another part of Pip fears Mrs. Joe is right – he is guilty of being sick, of not going to his grave when asked to" (Rawlins, 673). Rawlins also points out how the guilt Mrs. Joe plants in Pip follows him throughout the rest of the novel and is manifested in "moments when he chooses without external reason to convict himself . . ." (Rawlins, 673). For example: when Mrs. Joe is struck down, Pip assumes for a moment he did it; when Mrs. Pocket rages at her children, Pip wonders without justification "what he had done to rouse her anger" (Rawlins, 673). Pip's sense of his own guilt does not leave him; on the contrary, his next parent-figures only compound the guilt-complex Mrs. Joe plants.

The next adult who functions as a parent-figure for Pip is as guilt-inducing, confusing and negative as Mrs. Joe. Mr. Jaggers is not physically violent, but he plays with Pip's mind in a disturbing manner. Jaggers is a character who seems to leave critics divided. For instance, Jack Rawlins describes him as "the devil" (Rawlins, 675), whereas Rowland and Juliet McMaster suggest he "stands for God himself" (McMaster, 81). All critics agree, however, that Jaggers, as Pip's guardian, is like a father-figure to Pip.

Pip comes to London with no true knowledge of who his benefactor is. He suspects (wrongly) that it is Miss Havisham, but it is Jaggers the lawyer who distributes Pip's allowance so that Magwitch's identity can remain a secret. Jaggers is thus put into the position of Pip's advisor and guardian. When Pip unwisely squanders money on expensive dinners, furnishings and entertainment, Jaggers "behaves like a chiding, disapproving father" (Hutter, 106) and gives Pip advice. Mark Spilka also refers to Jaggers as a legal guardian and as a "father" to Pip (Spilka, 112). Jaggers is the one person in Pip's world who knows all of the secrets: the secret behind Pip's benefactor and the secret of Estella's parentage. It is this knowingness that makes him God-like, according to Rowland and Juliet McMaster. Jaggers' clients fear him, the judges are in awe of him, and "his ability to manipulate, his power, knowledge and detachment make him God-like" (McMaster, 81). They also make the point that: "Jaggers is familiar enough as that aspect of the father the child both admires and resents: the kingly, knowing, rule-maker, seeing through all the petty artifices of the child's world, remote in his cunning and authority" (McMaster, 82). This explains Pip's ambivalent reaction to Jaggers. Pip admires, fears and needs Jaggers, but at the same time dislikes him because of his brisk and mocking manner. When they first meet, Pip leaves Jaggers' office with an impression "not of an agreeable kind" (GE, 155). Jaggers is very

professional and very secretive.

When Magwitch is ill and staying with Pip, Pip learns that Magwitch has a daughter. Pip pieces together Magwitch's history and figures out that Magwitch is Estella's father (GE, 302-3). Pip then promptly confronts Jaggers with this information demanding to know what part Jaggers played in Estella's adoption by Miss Havisham, and Pip prepares for a confrontation. Pip wants to know what role the all-knowing Jaggers played in Estella's adoption by Miss Havisham. Pip's guess is that Jaggers took the baby Estella away from Molly, her natural mother, and gave the little girl to Miss Havisham, while keeping Molly as a servant around his house. Pip saw Molly at a dinner party Jaggers once gave and noted for himself the "fiery air" of her face (GE, 165). Jaggers makes it hard for his guests not to notice Molly. At one point he grabs her hand, ignoring her protests, and shows Pip and the other guests her scarred and disfigured wrists and her strong hands (GE 166). Jaggers is obviously completely in control of Molly, and when he ignores her pleas not to be singled out he demonstrates a lack of care for her feelings. He entertains his guests by showing her off, against her wishes. Jack Rawlins describes Jaggers as the devil personified: he "works from a desk chair like a coffin, sets man-traps for everyone, hires false witnesses, torments Molly for his own amusement in front of his guests while boasting of his courtroom dishonesty, and generally in his dealings with the human race has 'em [sic] heart soul and body" (Rawlins, 674). Pip knows that Jaggers will refuse to tell any information about a client, but Pip's desire to know of Estella's true parentage is strong, and he makes an impassioned plea for his suspicions to be confirmed: "I wanted assurance of the truth from him. And if he asked me why I wanted it and why I thought I had any right to it, I would tell him . . . I loved Estella dearly and . . . whatever concerned her was still nearer and dearer to me than anything else in the world" (GE,

306). When Pip tries to confront Jaggers about the lawyer's role in Estella's adoption, Jaggers expertly defends himself by saying that his actions were humane. He claims that he saved Estella from the fate of a criminal's child, and by keeping Molly in his house he shelters her and "[keeps] down her wild nature" (GE, 307).

While it is true that Jaggers probably did save Estella from a life of low-class drudgery, Jaggers is very careful not to admit anything: "I'll put a case to you. Mind! I admit nothing" (GE, 307). Jaggers then goes on to confirm what Pip already suspects regarding Estella's adoption. Jaggers tells Pip that a man (who Pip knows is Jaggers himself) "held a trust to find a child for an eccentric rich lady to adopt and bring up" (GE, 307). Miss Havisham was then a client of Jaggers. He also had another client, a young woman (who is Molly – Estella's mother – though she is carefully not named by Jaggers). Jaggers defended Molly from charges of murder, and he knew she had a young female child. Jaggers tells Pip he took the little girl from Molly. In a key passage Jaggers tells Pip how he got the little girl away from his client:

. . . Over the mother the legal advisor had this power:

"I know what you did, and how you did it. You came so and so, this was your manner of attack and this the manner of resistance, you went so and so, you did such and such things to divert suspicion. I have tracked you through it all, and I tell it you all. Part with the child . . . Give the child into my hands, and I will do my best to bring you off." (GE, 307)

What is disturbing about this passage is that Jaggers uses his position of power essentially to blackmail Molly into giving up baby Estella. Jaggers tells Molly of his plan and *then* tells her that he will do his best to clear her from the courts. I believe Jaggers wanted to please the rich Miss Havisham, his client, and so he took advantage of Molly's precarious position for his own benefit. Because there were no laws governing adoption no one would need to know what Jaggers was up to when he brought Estella to Satis House.

Pip was sure he had pegged Jaggers with some secretive manipulation in regards to Estella's adoption, and Jaggers manages to come across as a saint. The ethical intricacies of whether Jaggers was right or wrong in his role of intermediary for Miss Havisham are less important for my argument than how Pip feels in relation to Jaggers. In the words of Jack Rawlins, "[Jaggers] appears to be wise and loving – and what of Pip? He looked and saw the devil – there must be something wrong with him"(675). Jaggers is a hopelessly confusing father-figure for Pip. He portrays himself as saint, and yet Pip himself witnessed Jaggers' mean and degrading behavior towards Molly. Jaggers also inspires guilt in Pip by making him an unwilling accessory in the secret of Estella's adoption. Jaggers convinces Pip that to tell Estella and Magwitch the truth would be the worst thing to do:

For whose sake would you reveal the secret? For the father's?

I think he would not be much the better for the mother. For the daughter's? I think it would hardly serve her, to establish her parentage for the information of her husband, and to drag her back to disgrace after an escape of twenty years, pretty secure

to the last for life. But add the case that you loved her, Pip, and had made her the subject of those 'poor dreams' which have, at one time or another, been in the heads of more men than you think likely, then I tell you that you had better—and would much sooner when you had thought well of it— chop off that bandaged left hand of yours with your bandaged right hand . . . (GE, 308)

This is a persuasive speech that convinces Pip that he must keep the secret from Magwitch that his daughter is alive and well. In essence, Jaggers convinces Pip that it is better to lie than to tell the truth.

Pip's relationship with his next adoptive father is the most complex relationship in the novel. This relationship has its beginnings in Pip's childhood, and it has the most profound effect on adult Pip for obvious reasons. Without Magwitch there would be no great expectations for Pip. Magwitch gives all of his earnings to Pip in order to endow Pip with a gentleman's lifestyle. This fact alone makes Magwitch seem like a male version of a fairy godmother. There are many other factors, however, that complicate this fairy-tale relationship.

When Magwitch bursts into Pip's life, their encounter is far from a typical fairy-tale. In fact, the scene is more like a horror film. Pip is all alone in a graveyard at dusk. The graveyard is a "bleak place overgrown with nettles" (GE, 9). Beyond the graveyard there is a "dark flat wilderness," marshes, a river, and the sea: "the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing" (GE, 9). Pip describes himself as "a small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry. . ." (GE, 10). In a final creepy image Magwitch "start[s] up from among the

graves" (GE, 10) where Pip's own dead father is buried. Robert Polhemus makes the connection between the location of Magwitch's first appearance and the macabre thought that Magwitch is like a rising fatherly corpse:

It is as if the convict *were* Pip's father popping out of the earth to roar at him. The whole scene between them looks like a case of displaced infant terror at the raging father. . . Magwitch handles and whirls Pip the way a furious parent might yank a baby around. He threatens to eat Pip, to sic a cannibal killer on him, to have his heart torn out from him and devoured. Pip, at first consciousness, takes from the escaped prisoner a patrimony of guilt, terror, hunger, and implicit violence. (Polhemus, 140)

Pip's "patrimony" from Magwitch is complex indeed. In their short exchange Pip is left with extreme guilt over the fact that Magwitch terrifies him into stealing from the Gargerys. Magwitch is cold, mud-soaked and on the run as an escaped convict. He asks Pip if he "knows what wittles is" (GE, 11). Pip responds in the affirmative, and Magwitch demands that Pip bring him some. Magwitch also demands a file when he learns that Joe is a blacksmith. Not only does Pip become guilty of stealing from Mrs. Joe's pantry, he also is guilty of stealing from Joe, whom he loves. Pip is guilty of aiding a criminal. The guilt Pip feels is extreme: "The guilty knowledge that I was going to rob Mrs. Joe almost drove me out of my mind" (GE, 16). The issue of guilt is present from the first moment that Pip meets his adoptive father.

Many critics support the idea that Magwitch is like a father to Pip (Spilka 115, Polhemus 140, Morgentaler 718). Pip's every financial need or want is provided for by Magwitch as soon as Pip comes of age. In Magwitch's mind this fact makes Pip an adopted son, much to Pip's chagrin when he finds out that Magwitch is his benefactor much later in the novel. Pip responds to the new knowledge with extreme shock and repugnance. The following passage gives a clear picture of Magwitch's ideas about their father-son relationship and Pip's rejection of his newfound "father":

Yes, Pip, dear boy, I've made a gentleman on you! It's me wot (sic) has done it! I swore that time, sure as ever I earned a guinea, that guinea should go to you. I swore afterwards, sure as ever I spec'lated and got rich, you should get rich. I lived rough, that you should live smooth, I worked hard, that you should be above work... Look'ee here Pip. I'm your second father. You're my son – more to me nor any son. (GE, 240-1)

Pip's reaction to Magwitch is powerful: "The abhorrence in which I held the man, the dread I had of him, the repugnance with which I shrank from him, could not have been exceeded if he had been some terrible beast" (GE, 241). Dickens compares Magwitch to a "terrible beast" here, but ironically it is Pip who is behaving like a beastly snob. It is almost as if Magwitch has created a monster in Pip. Magwitch wanted to create a gentleman, but when the creator/father confronts his gentleman/son, that son responds as a true snobbish gentleman would. Pip rejects Magwitch for

being rough and low-class. This fascinating dynamic pollutes whatever real love Magwitch may have for Pip as a son; the fact is Magwitch has used Pip. Jack P. Rawlins writes that: "Magwitch is the epitome of basic adult perversion: the desire to create, own and exploit human beings as property and extensions of the ego" (Rawlins, 677).

Magwitch can hardly be called a good father-figure when one considers how twisted his motives are for adopting Pip. Rowland and Juliet McMaster call Magwitch Pip's "terrible father . . . with his [criminal] record, his fearful appearance . . . and his claim of ownership" (McMaster, 78). As with Pip's other parent-figures, the question is how does Magwitch affect Pip as an adult? Robert Polhemus lumps Magwitch in with Pip's two other father-figures, Joe and Jaggers, when he writes: "The father-figures for [Pip] – Magwitch, Joe and Jaggers – do not appear as desirable models, but as freedom-robbing beings, different as they are, who threaten his identity" (Polhemus, 141). I agree with this statement, but it leaves out a vital ingredient – the guilt that all of these fathers inspire in Pip. Magwitch is especially guilt inducing for Pip, not only when they first meet on the marshes, but also when they meet for the second time when Pip is grown up.

That second time when Magwitch presents himself to Pip and claims Pip as an adopted son, Pip's guilt flares up again. This time Pip is guilty of feeling a strong repulsion towards Magwitch. Pip loathes Magwitch, not because Magwitch has used Pip for his own self-serving plot, but because Magwitch is "of poor breeding and coarse manners" (Rawlins, 678). Pip is a snob and is ashamed that the lowly Magwitch is his benefactor. He then feels guilty about his strong feelings. Magwitch creates the gentleman Pip, and then the gentleman in Pip is repulsed by his own maker. Kath Filmer compares Magwitch and Pip with Frankenstein and his monster

when she writes: "Magwitch does not shrink from his creation...it is Pip who shrinks from his creator" (Filmer, 240).

There is another adoptive parent-child relationship in the novel that closely mirrors Pip and Magwitch's relationship. Here too we see a horrible parent-figure using an adopted child as a revengeful extension of a bruised ego. Miss Havisham adopts Estella and raises her to hate men and break their hearts just as Miss Havisham's heart was broken years before. Whereas Magwitch pays for Pip to be the gentleman Magwitch never was or could be, Miss Havisham raises Estella to break the hearts of men like the one who broke her heart by jilting her on her wedding day. Most critics agree that Estella is psychologically scarred by Miss Havisham (Pickerel 160, Hornback 58, Darby 216). Estella is given everything in the way of material possessions, food and shelter, but she is taught from early childhood to scorn the world around her. Estella's adoptive mother raises young Estella to be cold, heartless and unable to love. Being female, Estella's options are severely limited, and in order to escape from the manipulations of Miss Havisham, Estella marries the abusive Drummle. Just as Pip rejects Magwitch for his coarse manners, Estella rejects Miss Havisham because of the cold monster that Miss Havisham has caused her to become. Miss Havisham is the ultimate bad parent figure. She trains her daughter to be cold and then curses her for learning that lesson so well that there can be no love shown to the adopted mother. In the chilling scene where Estella confronts Miss Havisham, we can see how well Estella has learned to be cold and unloving:

"You stock and stone!" exclaimed Miss Havisham. "You cold, cold heart!"

"What?" said Estella, preserving her attitude of indifference as she leaned

against the great chimney-piece and moving only her eyes;

“do you reproach me for being cold? You?”

“Are you not?” was the fierce retort.

“You should know,” said Estella. “I am what you made me.

Take all the praise, take all the blame; take all the success; take all the failure; in short, take me.”

“O, look at her, look at her!” cried Miss Havisham bitterly.

“Look at her, so hard and thankless, on the hearth where she was reared!” (GE, 230)

It is as if Miss Havisham is seeing Estella for the first time. The creator is shocked and horrified. Estella asks Miss Havisham what she wants, and Miss Havisham replies, “Love!” Estella’s reply to this pitiful request is chilling:

“Mother by adoption,” retorted Estella, never departing from the easy grace of her attitude, never raising her voice as the other did, never yielding either to anger or tenderness, “Mother by adoption, I have said that I owe everything to you. All I possess is freely yours. All that you have given me is at your command to have again. Beyond that, I have nothing. And if you ask me to give you what you never gave me, my gratitude and duty cannot do impossibilities.”

(GE, 230)

Estella calls Miss Havisham “mother by adoption” two times in this passage, and never calls her by any other name. Surely it is not by accident that Estella stresses Miss Havisham’s role as her adoptive mother. Miss Havisham wants Estella to love her but Estella is unable and unwilling because of Miss Havisham’s teachings to say she loves her adopted mother. Estella asks the miserable old woman:

“When have you found me false to your teaching? When have you found me unmindful of your lessons? When have you found me giving admission here,” she touched her bosom with her hand, “to any thing that you excluded? Be just to me.” (GE, 230)

Miss Havisham even stretches out her arms in an effort to embrace Estella in a maternal gesture, but Estella only looks at her adopted mother, “...with a kind of calm wonder” (GE, 230). Estella lives up to her name (Stella – star) and behaves in a cold, sharp and faraway manner to the woman who reared her. Miss Havisham later tells Pip that “One night [Jaggers] brought her here asleep, and I called her Estella” (298). Miss Havisham could not have picked this name by accident. She had a purpose in mind for the little girl even back when Estella was a little baby. Estella was meant to be like her name – stellar in her personality – far away, cold and untouchable. Estella is puzzled when Miss Havisham expects her to act lovingly like a daughter. Estella marvels at her adopted mother’s anger and disappointment when Estella refuses to love.

“So,” said Estella, “I must be taken as I have been made.

The success is not mine, the failure is not mine; but the two together make me.” Miss Havisham had settled down . . . upon the floor, among the faded bridal relics with which it was strewn. (GE, 231)

Miss Havisham’s heart – whatever is left of it after being broken by Compeyson, the man who stood her up at the altar – has been broken again by her own creation.

One gets the impression that things are never the same between Estella and Miss Havisham after this fateful confrontation. Pip is the sole witness to it, and when he finds them later seated at the hearth and asks Estella if the marriage to Drummle is Miss Havisham’s idea, Estella’s comment is telling:

“I am going,” she said again, in a gentler voice, “to be married to him. The preparations for my marriage are making, and I shall be married soon. Why do you injuriously introduce the name of my mother by adoption? It is my own act.” (GE, 271)

There is that cold label again: “mother by adoption.” Estella is making her own decision, disobeying Miss Havisham and acting on her own: “Miss Havisham would have me wait, and not marry yet; but I am tired of the life I have led, which has very few charms for me, and I am willing enough to change it” (GE, 272).

In her article, "Listening to Estella," Margaret Flanders Darby makes the point that Estella's decision to marry Drummle is a horribly self-destructive one. Estella knows Drummle is a less than ideal partner (he turns out to be abusive towards her), and Darby believes this choice is because Estella has such a low opinion of herself after being used and manipulated all her life (Darby, 226). I believe Estella is desperate to make a decision on her own, and because her options are so limited, marriage is the only logical answer. Pip is left alone and unmarried at the end of the novel because he *can* be. He has his own money, and the fact that he is male leaves him free to wander through society unattached. Estella may have money through Miss Havisham, but unless she marries she will never be free of her manipulative and demanding "mother by adoption." Estella saw marriage to Drummle and the freedom that comes with finally making her own decision, whether good or bad, as more attractive than staying with Miss Havisham.

The ironic part is that Pip sees Estella's decision not to marry him as pure coldness and cruelty. Estella does not want to hurt Pip by marrying him and then not being able to love him. She knows because of Miss Havisham's cruel training that love for Pip is as impossible for her as love for Miss Havisham. Estella tries to warn Pip that her heart is too cold and scarred to love: "Pip, Pip . . . will you never take warning?" "Of what?" [Pip asks and Estella replies], "Of me" (GE, 227-8). Pip stubbornly refuses to understand Estella and replies: "Warning not to be attracted by you, do you mean, Estella?" Love is blind in Pip's case. Estella tries to warn Pip away, but he will not relent in his pursuit of her. Margaret Flanders Darby agrees that Estella tries to warn Pip:

[Estella] never lured [Pip], rather warned Pip repeatedly to

no avail. Hard and haughty she was as a child, but capricious, never. Quite the reverse, with almost no room to manoeuvre through Miss Havisham's careful training, she found the strength, without Pip's help, to end Miss Havisham's abuse. (Darby, 227)

At the end of the novel we find a changed Estella. In the original ending and also in the changed ending Estella herself tells Pip, "I am greatly changed" (GE, 357 and 359). Both endings present Pip and Estella as victorious over their horrific, manipulated and sometimes violent lives.

Pip and Estella are both used by their adoptive parents. Magwitch uses Pip as an extension of his ego, and Miss Havisham uses Estella as an extension of hers. The effects that Pip and Estella's bad parent-figures have on the two characters are profound and negative. Pip's guilt is nurtured by his first parents, the Gargerys, and each father-figure after them nurtures Pip's guilt in his own way. Pip is manipulated, used, and controlled by Jaggers and then Magwitch, and he is left alone at the end of the novel. Dickens does write at the end that Pip "saw the shadow of no parting from [Estella]" (GE, 358), and while some may interpret this to mean that Pip marries Estella, the statement is highly ambiguous. We never actually see Pip married, and therefore he is alone at the end of the novel. Estella is also used and controlled by Miss Havisham; she then all but destroys the woman who raised her when she obeys her adoptive mother's childhood lessons and refuses to love the one who taught her how not to love. Pip and Estella's relationships with their parent-figures show the dark side of adoption – the self-serving parents and the victimized children.

In the lives of the three main characters in Bleak House and Great Expectations, adoptive parental relationships leave much to be desired. Jarndyce, the Gargerys, Jaggers, Magwitch and Miss Havisham: all of them are essentially self-serving parents. They are in their own ways manipulative, controlling and dishonest. Miss Havisham, Magwitch, and Jarndyce all use adoption as a guise under which to hide their true intentions: their own self-serving purposes. The fact that Pip is male and Estella and Esther are female alters the way that they can be used by their adoptive parents, but it does not alter the fact that they are used.

Conclusion

It is an interesting fact that adoption as we know it did not exist in Britain until 1926 when the Adoption Act was passed. This does not mean that adoptions did not take place prior to that date. On the contrary, adoptions have taken place in just about every culture since antiquity. Trading children about due to the death of the child's parents or a childless couple's need for children has always been a common practice, so common, in fact, that actual laws governing the practice were not put into place until the twentieth century.

Adoption is a major feature in literature as well as in history. I have given several examples of adopted characters in nineteenth-century English literature and shown how these adopted characters affected the families into which they were taken. I have also provided a historical overview of adoption in nineteenth-century society and Victorians' use of the practice in order to make comprehensible the real-life world of the nineteenth-century author. From this overview we can see that in regard to adoption, art imitates life. That is, adopted characters feature in fiction in much the same way as they did in reality. Readers of novels would have understood characters being raised by people who were not the child's real parents. For a modern reader, my overview clarifies the complete lack of bureaucratic involvement in fictional representations of adoptive situations. When one knows that there were no laws prior to 1926 to govern adoptions, one does not question Jagger's ability to give baby Estella away to Miss Havisham with no legal complications.

Adoption fulfills a complex role in the fiction I have dealt with. Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights and Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre all contain adopted

characters who represent destabilizing elements in their adoptive families. In Mansfield Park, Fanny Price succeeds in supplanting their own biological daughters in the affections of Sir Thomas Bertram and his wife. Like a cuckoo bird who finds itself in a foreign nest, Fanny Price in Mansfield Park and Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights displace the natural children in their adoptive families. They completely destabilize their adoptive families by taking the affections of the parents away from the biological children in the family. Fanny eventually marries her adopted brother and thus becomes the daughter-in-law of Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, while the two Miss Bertrams leave home in disgrace due to bad marriages. Heathcliff's manipulations destroy the relationships between Cathy, Hindley and their father. His controlling behavior negatively impacts the entire household.

In Jane Eyre little orphaned Jane is adopted by her uncle Reed. When he dies and leaves her to the mercy of his jealous and cruel wife, Jane becomes a destabilizing element in the Reed household. She is abused horribly by the only mother she has ever known simply because Mrs. Reed is jealous of the attention her husband once paid to the little girl. Jane leaves the Reed household and searches constantly for surrogate parent-figures throughout the rest of the novel. She finds peace only when she marries and has a family of her own. In each of these three novels adoption is depicted negatively, with the adopted child functioning as a destabilizing element in his or her family.

By contrast, in Elizabeth Barrett-Browning's Aurora Leigh, George Eliot's Silas Marner and Rudyard Kipling's Kim adoption plays a more positive role. All of the adopted characters are orphaned and thus completely uprooted from their natural parents. They search and find new roots in the formation of adoptive relationships with surrogate parent figures. Aurora Leigh loses

her mother at birth and her father when she turns four. Like Jane, she too searches for parent figures and eventually finds peace when she becomes an adoptive mother to another woman's baby. She uses adoption to create a little family for herself to replace the one she lost as a child. In Silas Marner baby Eppie is also orphaned when her mother dies and her father refuses to take her. Eppie is adopted by Silas, a lonesome single man. Eppie becomes his source of joy and saves him from his depression. She rescues him just as he rescues her by adopting her. Together they form new roots in their close-knit, loving little family. Eliot makes a strong argument for adoption by contrasting the happy family of Silas and Eppie with the Casses, a childless couple. Nancy Cass refuses to adopt, and so her life remains cold and infertile.

Rudyard Kipling creates a loving and sweet adoptive relationship between Kim and a Tibetan lama in Kim. Kim is a street-wise orphan when he meets the lama. Both are wandering rootless through life and provide each other with a sense of family. Although at times Kim acts like a father to the lama, caring for him, feeding him and guiding him in their travels, the lama also helps Kim to get an education and grow to be a noble young man. Because Kim is of British descent and the lama is a native of Tibet wandering through India, their relationship can be read allegorically. Kim and the lama need each other just as Kipling believed that Britain and her colonies needed each other. Ultimately, Kim needs the lama to extend his personal family. By adopting the lama as a father-figure, he replaces the father he lost as a child.

Charles Dickens provides examples of extremely ambiguous relationships between adoptees and their adoptive parents in Bleak House and Great Expectations. Bleak House contains a disturbing situation where John Jarndyce takes a fancy to young and abandoned Esther Summerson when she is just a girl. He adopts her and pays for her schooling until she is of a

marriageable age, then manipulates her into accepting his proposal of marriage. He uses adoption to buy himself a wife. In Great Expectations Pip and Estella are manipulated horribly by their parents. Pip has several negative and complex parent figures who all care more for their own interests than for Pip. Estella too is raised not to be herself, but to wreak Miss Havisham's unfulfilled revenge. The end of the novel leaves both Pip and Estella forever maimed by their horrible adoptive parents. In both novels the adoptive relationships are soured by the self-serving desires of the adoptive parents.

All of these novels present adoption in a different light. Adopted characters function as disruptive elements in their adoptive families, create new kinship ties, and become victims to self-serving adoptive parents. Like the chameleon lizard who changes colour according to his surroundings, the role of adoption changes according to the situations and characters the authors create. No two novels treat adoption in the same way and the possibilities for adoptive relationships are endless, with potential for good and bad relationships, allegory and realism, expansion and deconstruction of the family – and wonderful storytelling.

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