

UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

**ADOPTION ISSUES AND THE DISPLACED
CHILD IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY
ENGLISH CULTURE**

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1. Portrait of Captain Thomas Coram by Hogarth, 1740



AGNIEŃ CIEMBAKOWSKA-EVANS

Foundling girls in the Chapel

Doctor of Philosophy

2005

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Frontispiece

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Statement of intellectual ownership

So far as I am aware, the identification of displaced children as a distinct group has not formerly been made. Nor has the link between the late date of legal adoption in this country, 1926, and its significance when reading of so-called adoptions in the nineteenth-century English novel. Apart from the guidance of my supervisor, I have worked entirely alone and there has been no collaboration with any other person. Where I have commented on research by published authors, references to names, dates and publishers have been given throughout.

Abstract

Adoption Issues and the Displaced Child in Mid-Nineteenth Century English Culture

This thesis examines the particular situation of displaced children both in nineteenth-century culture and as represented in the mid-nineteenth century English novel. It covers the understanding of adoption in fiction and in practice before the Act of Adoption, 1926, particularly in the period 1837-1870. In the course of its development, it identifies the particular situation of displaced children and their ideological significance in selective fiction of 1837-1870 concerned with their representation.

Displaced children may be orphans, strays, destitute, legitimate or illegitimate. What makes them identifiable as a distinct category is their placement and rearing outside their biological family; a process often erroneously referred to in the novels as adoption. Such children appear not to have, hitherto, been identified as a distinct group in literature. Wide-ranging models of such fictional displacees have been selected, mostly foregrounded children with a handful of memorable minor ones.

The core-text novels are, with one exception, from canonical novelists whose main output was between 1837-70. Dickens has been privileged and the others are Charlotte and Emily Brontë, George Eliot, Thackeray and the non-canonical Hesba Stretton.

The approach has been new historicist insofar as materials have been assembled which might enable reconstruction of the lost sensibilities of these displaced children and their nineteenth-century readers. To this end examples of paintings, journals, newspaper articles, Parliamentary debate, letters, ditties and cartoons have been used to illustrate and consolidate the content of the thesis.¹

The period 1837-70 has been chosen because it opens with Victoria's accession and the start of the Dickens output. The final date, 1870, marks the death of Dickens and the passing of Forster's Elementary Education Act whose provisions, albeit slowly implemented, turned the street urchins into the new school children. The intervening years take in major works from the canonical novelists drawn on here, and a wave of writers pressing for betterment of the lot of destitute children.

The role of sustainers who, in both fact and fiction, run throughout as counter-point to the displaced children is discussed. In fiction the all-important bonding between displacee and sustainer which transforms them into a duality is emphasised because it sets the seal on what is, initially, a trial and error relationship. Similarly, the growth of reciprocity as the displacee matures is given particular attention. State and charitable sustainers such as workhouses and

¹ Flint points out that the mid-Victorian novels which addressed social problems did not exist in isolation but alongside a vast number of pamphlets, art, journals and newspapers of which novelists and readers must have been aware. See Flint, K., *The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change*, (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p.12.

Coram's Foundling Hospital are examined, as are the commercial and frequently corrupt baby-farms.

A key question in the thesis is whether or not it was possible to take in a destitute child as spontaneously and easily as the novelists describe, without recourse to any legal or official procedure. To this end, fictional displacees and sustainers are scrutinised to see how far what the novelists depict correlates positively with actuality as recorded by social historians. Allied to this the displaced child and its enormous potential as a novelistic perennial favourite is considered. Displacement is of crucial importance in both fact and fiction affecting, as it does, the child's sense of identity, its precarious status and the liberating opportunities it affords.

A further issue is the huge difference in the understanding and practise of adoption between the nineteenth-century reader and a modern one. With the realisation that in the nineteenth century adoption was, at best, a flimsy arrangement with no legal safeguards and, at worst, open to huge abuse and irregularities, the sensibilities of the earlier reader must have been greatly affected and their concern heightened when set alongside those of a later reader. There appears to have been no recognition of this difference in such a relationship in literary criticism to date.

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I am grateful to the Librarian and staff at The Learning and Resource Centre, University of Derby for help in obtaining books. Thanks also to Helen Lord and Sue Henson for guidance through the administrative maze of a Ph.D. Chéron Stevenson and staff at the Student Support Unit have given much practical help, especially Nicki Browne who typed the final draft of this thesis.

Martin Olive, former Senior Librarian in Local Studies at the City of Sheffield Library, gave valuable help in providing useful data on the nineteenth-century 'Sheffield Experiment' with destitute children. The Librarian and Staff at Church Stretton Library, Shropshire were also most helpful in allowing me access to their archives relating to Hesba Stretton.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to the pre-1926 adoptees who responded to my quest for material regarding their experiences. Their readiness to contribute their experiences and their candour in letters,

telephone conversations and personal meetings has been remarkable. They can not be named for reasons of confidentiality, but their letters are placed in Appendix One to this thesis and I place great store by them.

I thank my unflappable son-in-law, Andrew Hall, who has steered me through some terrifying moments when my nerve failed over the idiosyncrasies of my computer. His skill and level-headedness have been immensely reassuring and a great steadying force.

Most of all, I thank my daughter, Isobel Juliet Hall, who works so hard at her own studies, for her loving encouragement throughout and her sympathetic support when I thought this thesis would never be finished. This is for her with my love and gratitude.

Introduction

This thesis outlines and scrutinises a particular situation in childhood both in nineteenth-century culture and as represented in the English novel of that period. It examines the depiction of what will be referred to as the 'displaced child'. But what is a displaced child? A displaced child, be it orphan, foundling, legitimate or illegitimate, extended family member, welcome or unwelcome, destitute or well-provided for, is one distinguished by being reared outside its biological family.¹ Many such children in fiction are adopted and the understanding and practice of adoption in fiction and in fact, particularly in the period 1837-1870, is examined. So, too, is how far novelistic content tallies with legal history and social practice.

From the foregoing, it will be seen that the thesis is, by its very nature, interdisciplinary combining, as it does, literature, social history especially as it applies to children, and the understanding of adoption prior to the 1926 Act of Adoption.

The particular situation of displaced children and their ideological significance in selective fiction of 1837-70 is examined. There is a multiplicity of such displaced children to be found in both fact and fiction during this period. What makes them significant as an identifiable group is their placement and rearing outside their

¹ It is quite distinct from the political displacement used to describe millions of people, especially after World War Two, who fled their country of origin and took up residence in another place.

biological family, often erroneously referred to as ‘adoption’.² It is the conditions and problematics of fictional displacees in the mid-nineteenth-century English novel which are investigated. Such children, it would appear, have not hitherto been identified and scrutinised as a distinct group.

In tracing the history of such displacees and how adoption in this country was understood and practised throughout the period 1837-1870, a new historicist approach has been taken; a ‘literary’ rather than a ‘historical’ term. Thus, the displaced child is examined through literary text with a non-literary co-text running in parallel.³ Such material is presented in an Appendix to each chapter. They are, as Peter Barry, 1995, suggests, ‘expressions of the same historical “moment”, and interpreted accordingly’.⁴ They are used to detect attitudes towards, and popular notions about, historic events expressed through data which hangs on such historic facts. Therefore, the literary text, (selected novels from the period 1837-70), is not over-privileged

² Adoption is placed in inverted commas here to signify the ambivalence of its usage. From this point onwards, however, inverted commas will not be used although the term should be kept in mind as one whose meaning has changed over time both in fact and fiction.

³ The latter includes paintings, cartoons, poems, ditties, tokens, extracts from Parliamentary debate, letters, and eye-witness accounts relating to the same issues in the same period.

⁴ Barry, P., *Beginning Theory*, (1995; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002 edn.), p.173.

but is used concurrently with other sources which help to identify and particularise aspects of the same period.

In the novels selected, displacement is of huge significance in the social and psychological development of the child, and wide-ranging models of such displacees, including the pious, the rebellious, the reforming, the successful and some who die, are discussed. Mostly the protagonists are the foregrounded displacees, but a few are notable minors who require mention because they exhibit daring or exceptional features. There is a multiplicity of fictional children who fall into the category of displacees and a superabundance of novels which foreground such children. This is both a problem and an argument for the concerns raised; problematic because it required much sifting out of material and narrowing down in selection of material, advantageous because it helps to consolidate the plight of such children in their particular situation which this thesis argues.

Choice of novels

The underlying rationale has been to select canonical novels which represent displaced children ranging from the destitute to the aristocratic, the unloved or the welcomed, set them in a wide variety of situations and relationships, follow their progress and eventually arrive at some kind of resolution as to their development, status, relationships and prospects. It was the ease of placement or adoption, in some cases quite bizarre, and the frequent transfers from one

placement to another, which aroused the writer's initial interest in the topic and which is so significant in the chosen novels.⁵

The frequency with which the novelists present children being discovered in some state of distress and simply taken home to be adopted as a family member with no monitoring forces in evidence prompted speculation as to how far this was indeed possible. Any 'rights' or suitability of the sustainers were mostly so scanty as to be almost non-existent. There are a few instances, such as that of Eppie in *Silas Marner* and *Copperfield*, who have some small check on their transfer, but these are exceptional. The majority are able to just be taken to a new family without any mention of objection, hindrance or any kind of legal monitoring.

As the research developed the whole issue became much more complex arising from the discovery that there was no legal adoption in this country at the time the novels were written. Adoption in this country only became legal after the Act of Adoption, 1926.⁶ Not only did it mean that the understanding and practice of adoption pre-1926 was quite other than that presently understood, it also meant that to be displaced, and subsequently adopted, was a much more hazardous

⁵ In *Great Expectations*, 1861, (henceforth referred to throughout footnotes as *GE*), the adoption of Estella by Miss Havisham, crazed and vengeful, is one such bizarre placement.

⁶ It became legal in Scotland two years later, in 1928.

undertaking altogether.

One hypothesis was that the novelists may have been exaggerating the situation, partly to draw attention to the plight of destitute children and, simultaneously, feed a huge public interest in what was a burning issue of the day; namely, the hordes of wretched starvelings making a public nuisance of themselves on the streets. The fictional displacees were easy enough to find. Novels of the period were littered with them. The much more difficult task was to sift out those who best exemplified a breadth of situation, provenance and personality in novels within the chosen period.

Moreover, fictional sustainers also appeared in a range as wide as that of the displacees themselves. They came upon a needy child and their response was often spontaneous, resulting in the child being immediately taken home with them. What needed to be ascertained was how far what the novelists represented bore any relation to what was actually taking place in society.

Open to most doubt was the ease of adoption as represented in fiction. The possibility of hindrance is scarcely touched on; a child is in need, a sustainer appears and the two go off together with no cavil raised. Mr. Brownlow does exactly this when he comes to the rescue of Oliver Twist. Mr. Earnshaw does the same with Heathcliff, carrying him across country from Liverpool to the West Riding. Even Fagin, a criminal gang-master, is able to take in sizeable numbers of destitute boys. This is no over-simplification but precisely what takes place in

the novels.

Social and legal practices had to be investigated as had the question of factual sustainers, if indeed the latter existed. A search to discover factual sustainers of the same period was necessary to see how far they and their relationship with the displacees bore any positive correlation to what the writers put forward. These factual sustainers were not particularly hard to find, and further examination revealed that many of the better-known ones were remarkably like their fictional counterparts in so often being single, bold in action, often rather solitary and somewhat eccentric in personality.

The relationship between sustainer and displacee is a major theme in the selected novels and any number of others could have been found.⁷ The development of their engagement, its tensions and rewards, and the frequency of role-reversal as the sustainer ages and the child is empowered, called for scrutiny because it sets up the important ethos of reciprocity. This latter is essential in all the novels as part of the closure of the displacee's debt of gratitude. It signifies the completion of the bonding process and the displacee's maturity. The notion of an obligatory duty of return, possibly somewhat

⁷ See, for example, Mrs Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman*, 1856, in which a poor orphan boy is taken home and given employment by a prosperous tanner, Abel Fletcher. The boy, John, works diligently to improve himself and eventually marries Fletcher's daughter. Similarly, in Henry James's *Watch and Ward*, 1871, Nora, a child whose father has just taken his own life, is spontaneously adopted by Roger Lawrence, a wealthy young bachelor, and the two eventually marry.

uncomfortable to a present-day reader because it imposes an extra burden on the child, was very necessary to reader-requirements given the period of the novels.

Displacees are perennial literary favourites and considerable numbers appear not only in the period used here, but in literature from Biblical times to the present. The reasons for such a long and continuing appeal was obviously important in any scrutiny of them.

Taking into account that canonical novels of the selected period which had a foregrounded displacee, one or more sustainers, and a substantial emphasis on their interaction were pre-eminent requirements, the following novels were chosen.

From Dickens *Oliver Twist*, 1838, *David Copperfield*, 1849, *Bleak House*, 1853, and *Great Expectations*, 1860-61, were taken. From Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 1847, and from Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 1847, have been included. Thackeray's *The History of Henry Esmond*, 1852, George Eliot's *Silas Marner*, 1861, and *Daniel Deronda*, 1876,⁸ came next and, finally, Hesba Stretton's *Jessica's First Prayer*, 1867.

⁸ *Daniel Deronda*, (henceforth referred to throughout footnotes as *DD*), is slightly outside the given dates but has been allowed to stand because he is a singular displacee who has to cope not only with displacement but also with his racial identity.

The chosen novels are ones in which the centrality of displacement and its catalytic effect on child and sustainer is emphasised. The child's displacement and seemingly easy transference from one sustainer to another when the intricacies of the plot required this was essential. So, too, was the intervention of sustainers who would radically affect the displacee's prospects. In short, the search was for displacees, sustainers and adoptive transactions.

Moreover, the novelists themselves had to be those who were widely read in their own time, and have become part of the canon of English novels. Dickens has been privileged because he dominated the period in terms of popularity, sales and critical esteem, and large numbers of displacees appear as both foregrounded and minor characters in his novels. With one exception, of whom more shortly, the others are first-rank writers, widely read and influential in their own time, whose novels have endured. What they wrote affected public opinion and helped to shape public attitudes. Some, especially George Eliot and, to a lesser degree, Thackeray, were bold in their views and unafraid to represent situations and circumstances which were controversial. For example, George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* embraces his Jewish origins at a time when anti-Semitism was widespread in England. Thackeray introduces a displacee, Henry Esmond, who marries his former sustainer and surrogate mother, Rachel Castlewood, thus coming close to transgressing the sanctity of the mother-son relationship. In addition Esmond is given a Jesuit tutor,

the excellent Father Holt. This is a daring choice for the novel came out at a time when, in this country, of all Papists the Jesuits were most detested and incurred the greatest suspicion.

The exception to these, singled out earlier as being widely read but not canonical, is Sarah Smith who also used the pseudonym, Hesba Stretton. She, too, depicted displaced children but wrote for a less middle-class audience than the other novelists, and here it is useful to make some comment on her work and the reasons for her inclusion.

Stretton, 1832-1911, was in her time read widely, especially by the poorer classes. Dickens regarded her favourably and included several of her stories in '*All the Year Round*'. She also wrote for '*Sunday at Home*', a Religious Tract Society periodical which catered for family reading. Bratton points out that her stories 'owe something to Dickens's training of his young journalists, and more to a sharp and observant eye'.⁹

Her background was modest, her father being a printer and postmaster of a small town, Wellington, in Shropshire.¹⁰ Like Dickens, she suffered from a period of personal unhappiness in youth which had a permanent effect on her. In her case it was not a blacking-factory, but the chilly reception she and her sister received at a local

⁹ Bratton, J.S., *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*, (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p.82.

¹⁰ She used the pseudonym Hesba Stretton as a tribute to Church Stretton where she often stayed with her family. Hesba was a name made up from the initials of her own first name and those of her siblings.

chapel when they were living in lodgings in Manchester. Very young, away from family and with no social connections, the sisters worshipped regularly at a local chapel. Far from meeting with the expected Christian welcome, it had taken over a year for anyone to speak to them. It is this kind of gap between Christian belief and practice which is fundamental to *Jessica's First Prayer*, the short novel which brought her fame and which is included in the core-text novels.

It has been included for various reasons: firstly because little has been written about Stretton, secondly because it is aimed at a lower-class readership and because Jessica is a displacee who, in many ways, runs counter to the rest. Stratton's realistic presentation of low-life has as its mainspring an evangelical intent to promote God as the parent to whom all have access and who sustains when earthly ones fail. The novel has no love-interest, its absence emphasising Stretton's fundamental intention to concentrate on a theme of conversion.¹¹

Stretton wrote from an entirely evangelistic intent which incorporated social concern for the poorest ranks of society. Despite, or possibly because of this, the book sold 1,500,000 copies with a readership stretching from Lord Shaftesbury to the Tsar of Russia. Now largely neglected,¹² Stretton is, nevertheless, accorded an entry

¹¹ There are references to the Almighty in thirty-four of the ninety-five pages of *Jessica's First Prayer*, (henceforth referred to throughout footnotes as *JFP*.)

¹² The reason for such neglect may be because her work is so strongly evangelical

in *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* which runs, ‘... a prolific writer of tracts, pamphlets, stories and booklets. ... *Jessica’s First Prayer*, 1867, was reprinted innumerable times, brought tears to the eyes of Kilvert, and remained popular for many years’.¹³ Avery, commenting on the popularity of the evangelicals, writes, ‘They had the secret of the common touch; they could find the subject and the style that was able to grip both cottage and drawing room. ... Time and time again evangelical writers hit the jack-pot, and were able to bask comfortably in the warming thought, as few best-selling writers are able to do, that they had won souls as well’.¹⁴

Pretty well all the fictional displacees, whether foregrounded or minor, are met in infancy or childhood, although their beginnings are often known only in retrospect. Most of them, although not all, are survivors. Usually, death is the lot of minor displacees, it probably being considered too cruel a fate for those foregrounded.¹⁵

and in this has less appeal for modern readers.

¹³ Drabble, M., ed., *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 944-945. Kilvert was the Rev’d. Francis Kilvert of diary fame. Two of the parishes in which he ministered were not far from the Shropshire borders in which Stretton spent her youth.

¹⁴ Avery, G., *Childhood’s Pattern*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), pp. 115-116.

¹⁵ By contrast, Paul Dombey in *Dombey and Son*, 1847-48, and Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 1841, (henceforth referred to throughout footnotes as *TOCS*), although not core-text novels, are foregrounded children who do die. Readers

To some extent the novels are formulaic in their presentation of a destitute child placed in a new environment. These placements range from the privileged and benevolent to the dangerous or bizarre and are, to the displacee, invariably bewildering. The emotional and moral growth of the child and its sustainer(s) conclude with success in terms which the mid-Victorian reader approved, enjoyed and understood.

Choice of period, 1837-1870

The starting date, 1837, marks Victoria's accession to the throne and the start of the Dickens output. At this point he was a youthful new writer whose *Pickwick Papers*, 1836, had already excited favourable attention in the reading public and *Oliver Twist* was to follow in 1838. Dickens was on his way with all his major output still to come. It was also the time when the other novelists used here were at the peak of their powers.

The closing date, 1870, marks both Dickens' death and the advent of W.E. Forster's Elementary Education Act which aimed at making elementary education available to all children. It was not yet compulsory, nor entirely free, and satisfied neither the Church nor the Dissenters. Nevertheless, controversial as it was, it marked the beginning of the end for the street children of this thesis for it opened

tapping into public sympathy for those who had lost a child, a common enough experience at the time.

the way to the new School Boards and the new school children. It opened opportunities of basic literacy and numeracy to the great mass of the population who, until that time, were largely untutored. (In so doing, the State became a sustainer.)¹⁶

It meant that the feral children roaming the streets were about to be herded, often unwillingly, into the new school buildings which were making their appearance countrywide. None of its provisions was fully implemented for a decade or more, but it was a major step forward in the total progression of basic education for all. The destitute children of this thesis, so long detested as a nuisance and a scourge on the cities, were now being controlled and gathered into schools which did their best to give them an education, albeit of a sketchy kind. (Twenty years later they would have been harder to find for they were by then becoming the new school children.)

The disturbing fact that the destitute street children were both detested and neglected is yet another aspect of the hypocrisy of a society whose culture sentimentalised childhood, yet could so disregard the needy children to be seen all about them. These diseased and dirty urchins, so crude in speech and manner, who begged and thieved, did not conform to the privileged children glorified in literature, poems and paintings. Their 'otherness' placed them outside the range of what society wanted to believe of childhood.¹⁷

¹⁶ See section on Definitions later in this chapter.

¹⁷ 'Other' is used here to signify those marked by such differences of speech, appearance and behaviour as to make them almost a different species. It is only

Thus, the period was admirable for the purposes of this thesis combining a new reign, virtually the whole of Dickens' output, important major novels from the leading novelists of the period, and closing with the death of Dickens and the Elementary Education Act of 1870 which was the beginning of the end for so many of the street children of this country.

The intervening years

It is useful here to outline major aspects of the period which have a bearing on the thesis. The intervening years take in Darwinism which entered the scene in 1859, arguing for an evolutionary rather than a Divine order. The writers would almost certainly have been keenly aware of the ensuing religious controversy. They present children who are survivors and who do have a 'fitness' although not usually of a physical kind but more to do with mental or moral strength. Yet in differing degrees all of them recognise the supremacy of God. Dickens is content with a general acknowledgement of a God who watches over the affairs of mankind. At the other extreme, Hesba Stretton's clear evangelical purpose is to bring her characters to an awareness of God's love and, in so doing, invite her readers to seek him also.

appearance and behaviour as to make them almost a different species. It is only fair to point out that many people were positively afraid of being accosted, as they were, by gangs of rough youths with possibly criminal intentions.

It was a period of huge contrasts characterised by the growth of the cities, the development of the railways, of industry and capitalism accompanied by appalling poverty, slum housing, disease, and indifference to the fearful conditions of child labour. Alongside the growth of the railways and exciting advances in industrial technology, there was widespread ignorance, a dearth of education for the great mass of the population, and a huge gap in children's welfare. The churches were full, adherence to Biblical teaching advocated, and charitable concerns flourished. Set against these was the sham of so-called Christians of the utmost respectability who turned blind eyes to the plight of starving, abandoned and neglected children who 'inconvenienced' them daily on the streets.

It was also a time of much hypocrisy with a huge gap between Christian lip-service and any real practice of Christian tenets. The poor were left hungry, the starving were **not** fed, and people most certainly did **not** always love their poorer neighbours. The shameful workhouses where all conditions of the destitute, including the sick, the insane, the criminal, the aged and the new-born were housed together on a near-starvation diet. At the same time industry prospered, the new breed of entrepreneurs and wealthy industrialists flourished, the Empire was being carved out, and the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace was showing-off to the world.

Asa Briggs divides what he terms 'Victorianism' into three

parts, the first being 1837-51 and culminating in the Great Exhibition, 'the first landmark of the reign'.¹⁸ The second period is the 1850s to the 1870s and, lastly, the period from then to the end of the reign in 1901. It is the first two parts which are of concern here.

The second part Briggs cites as W.L. Burns's, 'the age of equipoise',¹⁹ although pointing out that, 'the poor were still there'.²⁰ In the novels, aspects of poverty are often highlighted and the well-being of the better-off contrasted with the degradation of the poor; as a novelistic ploy it makes for more dramatic appeal. This is not to say that the writers were exaggerating but they may have been eclectic in their novelistic content. There were clearly great contrasts between the 'haves' and 'have nots', but at the same time there were no mass riots, and the fears so apparent in the early years of the century brought about by the French Revolution were not entirely gone but fading. Moreover, cheap travel on the new railways meant that for the first time in this country the relatively prosperous members of the working classes could visit the sea-side or travel to distant cities.²¹

Most significant for its relevance to this thesis, Briggs identifies two national ideals of mid-Victorian conduct, these being

¹⁸ Briggs, A., "Chapter One; The Later Victorian Age", in Ford, B., ed., *Victorian Britain: The Cambridge Cultural History of Britain*, (1989; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992 edn.), vol.7, p.5.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.6. 'Equipoise' indicating a more balanced society.

²⁰ Ibid., p.7.

²¹ See Walvin, J., *Beside the Seaside: A Social History of the Popular Seaside Holiday*, (London: Allen Lane, 1978)

the 'gentleman' and the hero of 'self-help'.²² These prototypes appear regularly among the fictional displacees who are not portrayed as flabby recipients of outside help but show a spirited determination to succeed. Self-help is emphasised and opportunities for improvement arise frequently. In this the fictional displacees exhibit qualities which conform to what was very well-regarded in the period and, doubtless, endeared them to readers.

Some comment on the pre-1870 situation regarding education needs mention at this juncture. There was some meagre provision but it was makeshift and patchy. The so-called Monitorial System in which the older, more advanced children conveyed what they had learned to groups of younger children had been propounded by Bell and Lancaster and was moderately successful as far as it went, but it was only intended to convey the basics of the three R's and many of the 'teachers' were but one step ahead of their pupils.²³

There were numerous Dame Schools to be found throughout the country. (That attended by Pip in *Great Expectations*, where he is taught by Bidley and Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt, is one such.) Yet, small as their fees were, they were utterly beyond the means of the great majority of the lower classes.²⁴ The Sunday Schools set up by Robert

²² Ford, B., 1989, *op.cit.*, p.7.

²³ Young, G.M., notes that for a time it was adopted at Charterhouse. See *Portrait of an Age*, (1936; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969 edn.), p.58, n.1.

²⁴ Mostly they charged a few pence per week, differentiating between readers, writers and 'counters'.

Raikes earlier in the century, gave some tuition in reading and writing to both children and adults, but this was clearly inadequate as a means of mass education. A few enlightened employers taught privileged servants the basics of reading and writing, but they were few and far between.

By 1870, the time was more than ripe for a much more extensive and comprehensive means of education for all to replace the existing piecemeal provision. Action towards this end was brought about by William Edward Forster, the Dorsetshire Quaker who became Minister of Education in Gladstone's government of 1868.²⁵ Forster grasped the essentials of what was required to improve the lot of poor children and, simultaneously, remove them from the streets where they were a positive scourge, running wild, begging, thieving and frequently dying.

Moreover, a more literate and numerate population was required to cope with the new technology of an industrial age. In 1870, Forster warned the Commons that, 'On the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity, the safe working of our constitutional system, and our national power. ... If we are to hold our position ... among the nations of the world, we must make up for the smallness of our numbers by increasing the intellectual force of the individual.'²⁶

²⁵ Forster was much admired by Victoria who liked his Quakerly plain-speaking and he was, 'among her most trusted friends'. Young, G.M., *op.cit.*, p.116.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.115.

The beadle, a figure of wry fun in Dickens, was about to be replaced by the new School Board men, more expressively known as 'whippers-in', whose job it was to see that children did indeed attend the new schools which were being built countrywide after 1870.²⁷ Education was still grossly inadequate with poor quality teachers, often young men and women who had themselves come up through the pupil-teacher system and whose own education was limited.²⁸ Nevertheless, with all its inadequacies, the 1870 Act did bring about the resolution to gather the young into schools and educate them.

In the north the growth of industry flourished and child labour was to be seen at its most degrading in the woollen mills, cotton factories and coal mines. Dickens after a visit there included his impressions of the poverty, filth, disease and unrest of the cotton workers in his novel, *Hard Times*, 1854. He emphasised how dehumanised were the workers by the practice of referring to them as 'the hands' which both distanced and diminished them. Dickens did not know the industrial north as an 'insider', nevertheless what he described in the novel was akin to that of other interested observers, notably Engels.²⁹

²⁷ It is worth noting that the new School Board elections were hotly contested and a few women for the first time became involved in local government.

²⁸ This lack of fully effective education was to be revealed during the First World War when large numbers of conscripts were found to be illiterate.

²⁹ See Engels, F., "Chapter 2: The Great Towns", *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, (1845; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993 edn.), pp.36-86.

Trade unions were gaining strength, especially in the northern factory towns such as Bolton, Rochdale and Oldham. They sought for safer working conditions and a rise in the paltry level of wages. They campaigned against dangerous work practices in the mines and factories where not only men and women but children as young as seven were frequently employed. Working men, and sometimes women, were for the first time in this country being effectively organised and finding a voice through which to press their cause.³⁰

From the above it will be seen that 1837-70 was not only a viable period on which to draw for the richness of its literature, in particular the novel. It was a time when religious beliefs were being challenged by Darwin's scientific theories, a time when workers, including children, suffered some of the harshest working conditions ever seen in this country. It saw a more vigorous approach by writers and poets, including Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who campaigned more positively for an improvement of life for labouring children. Philanthropists, notably Shaftesbury and the retiring but enormously generous and influential Angela Burdett-Coutts, were struggling to improve the lot of children.³¹

Probably what most characterises the period is the huge contrast between the lives of the comfortably-off and the wretchedly

³⁰ Women cotton operatives in the north were especially forceful in Union activities.

³¹ It was Angela Burdett-Coutts who financed Urania Cottage, the home for unmarried mothers and their children which she and Dickens founded.

poor. This, of course, is to generalise – always dangerous – but nevertheless what Disraeli wrote of in *Sybil*, was close to reality.³² He describes the poverty of the workers of a foul industrial town, Mowbray, who were so oppressed by their employers that some parents resorted to the appalling practice of sending very young children out to ‘play’ in the hope that a passing cab might end their life and thus make one less mouth to feed.

All of which gives some idea of the best and the worst features of the period and should be kept in mind throughout.

Rationale

The mid-nineteenth-century English novel is littered with destitute children of all kinds; the orphaned, the illegitimate, the homeless, the abandoned, waifs and strays and loose children of every kind. In some instances they are specifically identified as being in such a particular category. Often, however, they are of unknown origin and circumstances. This thesis makes no such distinctions but enters them all as displaced children, for such they become immediately they are taken in by a sustainer or sustaining body. From this point on they are displaced from what would have been their customary rearing within their biological family.

There were more fortunate children, of course, celebrated in

³² See Disraeli, B., *Sybil: The Two Nations*, 1845, a novel in which the glaringly different worlds of the rich and the poor are represented and a sympathetic attitude taken towards the radical Chartists.

fiction as displacees. In Captain Marryat's *The Children of the New Forest*, 1847, the Beverleys, whose father is a friend of the king, move from the huge privilege of life in a great country house to one in a wild forest in which they must fend for themselves or die.³³ Although this thesis confines itself to the novel, it is notable that displaced children are every bit as popular in juvenile fiction published in the same period.³⁴ (They would make a fascinating follow-up study to this thesis, for their success with generations of children is every bit as evident as that of the novelistic displacees.)

Outside fiction, glimpses of the privilege wealthy children often enjoyed are discussed by Adeline Hartcup in *Children of the Great Country Houses*, 1982. They were often indulged with ponies and beautiful toys, and educated either by private tutors or at good schools.³⁵ Dickens himself, although at times capricious towards his

³³ In his earlier *Masterman Ready*, 1841, a not dissimilar situation arises where parents and children are marooned for a lengthy period and must acquire survival skills of a basic kind. It seems to indicate a particular fascination of his readership with self-survival skills.

³⁴ Amongst such are Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, 1886, Susan Cummins' *The Lamplighter*, 1854, and Elizabeth Wetherell's *The Wide Wide World*, 1851, a tremendously popular import from America. Possibly Kingsley's *The Water Babies*, 1861, is the most famous. All of them foreground displaced children whose experiences and characteristics are very similar to those of the fictional displacees used here.

³⁵ Hartcup, A., 1982, op.cit., passim.

own children, indulged them lavishly at their annual Christmas visit to a Holborn toy shop where he ‘loved to give them “treats”’.³⁶

Much has been written about fictional orphans, strays and foundlings but displaced children as a distinct and identifiable group appear to be unchronicled.³⁷ The original intention in this thesis was to examine the representation of such children in the mid-nineteenth century fiction to see how far they tallied with what social history indicates. Whether or not it was possible that in fact, they could just be taken home and kept as easily as the novelists put forward was the chief issue coupled with factual examples, if such there were. The issue arose from the present writer’s scepticism over the seeming ease with which, in fiction at least, stray children were able to be taken up, kept for a time, shifted about and transferred from one sustainer to another.

It seemed scarcely credible that this could have happened outside fiction. Yet so many of the novelists present these very situations which the reader was, presumably, to accept as realistic.

As the thesis progressed, however, it became apparent that the child-sustainer relationship is so crucial that the two become, in effect, a duality and it is in this light that they are, largely, scrutinised.

³⁶ Ackroyd, P., *Dickens*, (London: Guild Publishing, 1990), p.453.

³⁷ See Peters, L., *Orphan Texts*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), for a critical account of the orphan in fiction.

The second concern had not been foreseen but presented itself, quite astonishingly, after exploring what exactly was meant by adoption in this country before the entry of the 1926 Adoption Act.³⁸

From the discovery that the pre-1926 understanding of adoption was based on a non-legal, affective transaction, it was reasonable to surmise that there was a profound and distinct difference between what the novelists describe and the understanding which prevailed after the Act of Adoption, 1926. Suffice it to say here that the earlier understanding had no legal basis of the kind which is now taken for granted. This must, surely, have given rise to an entirely different perception of what it meant to adopt and to be adopted; an altogether flimsier and non-binding contract of an emotional kind. (In some ways, the informality must have made it an altogether easier undertaking, but its irregularity and lack of safeguards must have also made it hugely hazardous for both child and adopter.)

Thus it is this difference between the earlier reader-perception based on the awareness that an adoption could end as easily as it had begun, and the non-legality of such adoptions which forms much of the content of this thesis. The awareness of such a discrepancy widened the scope of the thesis; an unexpected and not altogether desired change of plan. However, it was a finding so relevant that it could not be ignored. It is an area which has been unexplored so far as can be ascertained.

³⁸ The Adoption Act of 1926 was largely unknown except to interested parties.

It became evident that making this connection between the non-legal and legal forms of adoption was highly important because of the changed understanding between a contemporary reader of the time and the modern reader. In its time, the Act of 1926, certainly caused no great stir amongst the general public. It was an act of interest only to a narrow group of people, namely, those who wished to adopt, and those who were concerned with protecting the rights of the child.

Earlier readers must, surely, have perceived the child's situation as being much more vulnerable because of the lack of any regulatory under-pinning of the transaction. Such differing sensibilities between those of nineteenth-century readers and present-day readers make a great difference to reader-response. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'sensibility' as, '...power of sensation or perception. ... a readiness[...]to respond to sensory stimuli', and this is precisely where the change lies in the context of the thesis³⁹. The nineteenth-century reader had a perception of adoption which was markedly different from a modern reader. Steedman, 1986, emphasises the importance of psychological consciousness, i.e. how people make sense of a particular situation at a given time.⁴⁰ This clearly resonates with the approach of this thesis to the condition of the adopted/displaced child in both fact and fiction.

³⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, (1989; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004 edn.), pp.981-982.

⁴⁰ Steedman, C., *Landscape for a Good Woman*, (London: Virago Press, 1986), p.13.

This is not to claim that one can ‘prove’ such a belief, but a vigorous claim can be made that in a society where adoption was so differently understood, the earlier reader would have had an altogether keener awareness of the appalling pitfalls surrounding its irregularity. It stands to reason that with no legal safeguards in place for either adopter or adoptee the situation was open to exceptional hazards. The modern reader knows that an adopted child cannot be abused, discarded, or neglected at the whim of the adopting adult(s) without severe penalties arising. (In the very few cases where this has happened it is not from want of safeguards but because these safeguards have been poorly implemented. The fact that when it occurs it makes headline news registers its infrequency.) Adoption is rarely, if ever, problem free, but with the earlier absence of legal structure it must have been an even more precarious business.

The nature and practice of adoption is of much importance throughout. It was the ease with which adoption was practised in the novels which was the trigger-point of the study, but at the outset it was impossible to appreciate how much more complex and fragile it was in practice and understanding.

In almost any novel where the focus of attention is a displaced child, there is almost inevitably an element of poignancy engendered by the child’s innocence, inexperience and bewilderment in its new situation. This thesis aims to assemble materials and arguments which might enable some reconstruction of the lost sensibilities of those

displacees in the nineteenth-century novel, and those of their contemporary readers.

Kate Flint's work of 1987 has influenced this aspect of the research.⁴¹ She points out that the mid-Victorian novels which addressed social problems such as poverty, ignorance, and brutality did not exist in isolation but alongside a vast number of pamphlets, paintings, journals and newspapers of which both novelists and readers were aware. (Dickens, of course, satirised such statistics but knew their power.) Flint's examination of literature alongside social history is relevant to the approach made in this study insofar as examples from similar sources are used to illustrate and consolidate its content.⁴²

Behlmer, 1998, refers to 'the dark side of adoption' in the nineteenth century⁴³. He draws attention to the fact that '... the disposal of illegitimate offspring, had become a thriving trade by the 1860's'.⁴⁴ This, alongside the studies of Walvin, J., 1982,⁴⁵ and Mills, J. and Mills, R., 2000,⁴⁶ have added further insights into how

⁴¹ Flint, K., *The Victorian Novelist. Social Problems and Social Change*, (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p.12.

⁴² See also Tuchman, B.W., *Practicing History*, (New York: Knopf, 1981.)

⁴³ Behlmer, G.K., *Friends of the Family*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.274.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.275.

⁴⁵ Walvin, J., *A Child's World, A Social History of English Childhood*, (London: Penguin, 1982.)

⁴⁶ Mills, J. & Mills, R., eds., *Childhood Studies. A Reader in perspectives of*

childhood has been treated historically. Jean Mills in her chapter on ‘The child in nineteenth-century literature’, draws particular attention to the naivety of the child’s view of events and its perception of others, using as an example the ‘black pillar’ of Mr Brocklehurst as he appears to Jane Eyre.⁴⁷ This thesis draws on similarly raw perceptions on the part of the child, usually of a psychological kind, which are key images affecting relationships.

Importantly, in almost all cases the novel takes the child into the relative safety of adulthood by which time the child is empowered to make its own decisions and the reader is convinced that these will be sound. The moral growth of the displacee is emphasised, and this is always by way of incremental stages with occasional lapses.⁴⁸ They are *bildungsromans* in which the displacee, (and quite often the sustainer), develops moral and physical stature. Occasionally there are flashes of insightful learning but, overall, the development is steady rather than dramatic. Running parallel to this, the cementing of the bond between sustainer and displacee takes place in a similarly incremental fashion.

childhood, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 41-76.

⁴⁷ Mills, J. & Mills, R., 2000, op. cit p.49. See also Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p.31. (Henceforth referred to as *JE* throughout footnotes.)

⁴⁸ In *Great Expectations*, Pip lapses into regression during his association with the flashy Finches of the Grove. In *David Copperfield*, (henceforth referred to as *DC* throughout footnotes), Copperfield makes a tender but foolish first marriage to Dora Spenlow which he redeems by his later marriage to Agnes Wickfield.

Objectives

The first objective has been to consider literary representations of displaced children and their sustainers in the English novel, 1837-1870. Following on this, to argue that it is displacement itself which is the binding element common to all conditions of the fictional destitute children; a condition which makes them such an engaging subject for writers and readers.

The second objective has been to reappraise the understanding and practice of adoption prior to the Act of Adoption, 1926, and to relate this to the fictional displacees.

The third objective has been to present the argument that the earlier understanding of adoption must have resulted in a very different reader-response to the displacees whose position would have been regarded as far more precarious because they had no right of tenure to adoption.

Definitions

Here it is necessary to set out definitions of terms to be used throughout the thesis. These working definitions of the kind of children and sustainers with whom this thesis is concerned are from the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

A foundling is, 'a deserted infant whose parents are unknown, a child whom there is none to claim.'⁴⁹ An orphan is, 'one deprived by

⁴⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, (1989; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004 edn.), p.122.

death of father or mother, or more generally, of both parents; a fatherless or motherless child'.⁵⁰ A stray is, 'a homeless, friendless person'.⁵¹ A waif is, 'one without home or friends; an unowned or neglected child'.⁵² A ward is, 'a minor under the control of a guardian'.⁵³

To sustain is, 'to support the efforts, conduct, or cause of; to succour, support, back up'.⁵⁴ This is true of all the sustainers, but as a group they require some categorisation. For instance, the State is a sustainer in its provision of workhouses and orphanages. Employers are sustainers insofar as they provide work and, sometimes, food and shelter, too. God, by the characters in the core-text novels, is regarded as the ultimate sustainer to all.

Even thus far, it will be apparent that not all sustainers are human. For the purposes of this thesis where displacee and sustainer so often function as a duality, sustainers of a human kind are of prime importance. Nevertheless, the others mentioned here play a part in sustaining some of the displacees in both fact and fiction.

Almost anyone may act as a sustainer, either long or short term. However in fiction, and to some extent in actuality, there is a preponderance of bachelors and spinsters. Such celibates are popular as fictional sustainers because their single, (and often solitary), state

⁵⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2004, op.cit., p.944.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.863.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.812.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.895.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.326.

frees them from hampering family commitments. In fiction, sustainers may be amorous, sinister, paid, unkind, naïve, unwilling, or transitory and are to be found within all classes. There are child sustainers, sustainers who die, and a few so bizarre that they are either comic or tragic. For instance, Miss Havisham is both bizarre and tragic, while Fagin is both sinister and comic.

Understandably, sustainers are not so cut-and-dried as this may seem and there is much cross-categorisation of different types. It is important, moreover, that sustainers should be capable of change in order to benefit from new circumstances and relationships, especially as these apply to the central sustainer-displacee relationship. The bond between child and sustainer must develop, progress, (and sometimes temporarily regress), in order that a wide spectrum of hopes, fears, tragedies and triumphs are encompassed within the novel itself.

The definition of adoption poses very real problems and any attempt at precision is so charged with reservations that it is impossible to offer a brief working definition such as those given of the other terms. One of the major issues to be raised in the thesis is that the nineteenth-century novelists use the word in a way quite other than that presently understood.

Legal adoption in this country was not possible until 1926, thus adoption as envisaged by the novelists is entirely different from the legal and binding contract of today. The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests it has very early religious and legal meanings,

e.g. '1387, the sacrament of adopcioun [sic] (sacramento adoptionis), i.e. a baptism',⁵⁵ and '1581, the lawiers [sic] ... define Adoption to be a legitimate act imitating nature, found out for their solace and comfort, which haue [sic] no children'.⁵⁶ Yet despite this early usage by 'lawiers', legal adoption was not possible in this country until 1926. The *Oxford English Dictionary* goes on to define it (actively) as, 'the act of taking up and treating as one's own' and (passively) as, 'the act of being so taken up and accepted',⁵⁷ and mostly this is the way the novelists use it, i.e. a private matter between adopter and adoptee which usually has no legal sanction; an affective and precarious understanding rather than a legally binding contract.

It is this earlier notion of adoption which is to be used throughout because it is the way it was understood by both novelists and readers at the time. They had no notion of legal adoption as practised today which only made its arrival in this country almost a century later. Similarly, it is not easy for twentieth and twenty-first century readers to fully comprehend the huge gap between the present day meaning and practice of such a transaction. None of the writers query its flimsiness or its dangerous aspects, none campaign for more safeguards for the adoptee. In the novels it is either considered a 'good deed' or a matter of obligation. The significance of this is crucial to this thesis and one which appears to have been hitherto unrecognised.

⁵⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary*, op.cit., p.171.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.171.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.171.

Adoption had long been practised within the extended family and within the community. Many citations of such will be found in Chapter Two on Illegitimacy and Adoption. Richards, 1989, writes, 'the social and moral stigma attached to illegitimacy often got in the way of these arrangements, and it was in the United States, where these restraints were less important, that the practice of adoption in the modern sense first evolved. There the rearing of orphaned or homeless children by homesteaders, in return for their labour, satisfied a pressing economic need'.⁵⁸ ('In return for their labour' sounds to modern ears more akin to the old pauper apprenticeship but on better terms.)

In this country, the need for legislation came about, largely, because of the many children left orphaned or fatherless after the huge toll of the First World War. Josling writes, 'In the 1920s concern for children, and particularly the desire to regulate family placement, led to the passing of the Adoption of Children Act 1926'.⁵⁹ The Act, 'permitted adoptions by Court order by married couples or single persons, after due investigation of the circumstances'.⁶⁰ It, 'made general provision for the statutory adoption of children by means of a Court order vesting in the adopter the natural parents' rights and liabilities in respect of the future custody, maintenance and education

⁵⁸ Richards, M., *Adoption*, (Bristol: Jordan & Sons, 1989), p.3.

⁵⁹ Josling, J.F. & Levy, A., (1947; *Adoption of Children*, London: Oyez , 1985 edn.), p.4.

⁶⁰ Kiralfy, A.K.R., ed., *Potter's Historical Introduction to English Law and its Institutions*, (1958; London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1962 edn.), p.641.

of the child. Rights and interests in property were expressly left undisturbed by the order'.⁶¹ This is the legal adoption with which we are familiar but which was not in force at the time the novels were written, and it is the very real difference between the present clearly-defined terms of legal adoption and the earlier, much more loosely understood adoption in practice, which is distinctive to this thesis and examined in a later chapter.

Guardianship needs mention because in the core-text novels not all those who assume responsibility for a child are described as adopting it, although the majority are. Some are referred to as 'guardians', notably John Jarndyce in *Bleak House*. A 'guardian' is legally appointed by other persons, although there do seem to have been those who were unofficial guardians. It has more to do with the care of a child who has some fortune at stake although very often, both inside and outside the novel, the child is regarded as being adopted.

'Displaced' needs careful explanation as to its usage here. The fictional children of this thesis are, first and foremost, displaced children and from the foregoing it can be seen how difficult it was to apply, accurately, any one definition to the multiplicity of children envisaged as being part of this research. For example, Copperfield and Pip are both orphans but not foundlings because they have not been left with no one to claim them. *Oliver Twist* is both orphan and

⁶¹ Kiralfy, A.K.R., 1962, op. cit., p.641.

foundling. Eppie in *Silas Marner* is a waif or stray insofar as she has strayed from her dying mother, is homeless and wrongly assumed to be fatherless. Henry Esmond is mistakenly taken to be illegitimate and Heathcliff's origins are shrouded in mystery but he is regarded as a foundling. Jane Eyre is an orphan reluctantly taken in by her aunt and Hesba Stretton's Jessica has a neglectful mother and an absentee father.

A term which was accurate, descriptive and comprehensive needed to be applied to them as a group and, to the present writer, the most appropriate was 'displaced children'. Thus, they will be referred to throughout as displaced children or displacees.

The following definition, (that of the present writer), is made as it relates to the material of this thesis. A displaced child is one reared outside what would have been its customary place by birth and family; one reared outside its biological parentage and home, although not necessarily orphaned. This definition raises issues of class, culture and period which will be developed in Chapters One and Two.

Displacement, as a topic, appears to be absent from literary criticism, although the way of orphanhood has been a well-trodden path. In this thesis it will be displacement itself which is under scrutiny, as are its concomitant problems, relationships, advantages and disadvantages. In the novels it is shown as both bewildering and often harsh, yet it is also hugely liberating for both displacee and sustainer. The word itself is not used at any time within the core-text

novels yet the situation of displacement is common in all, (as it is in many other novels of the same period.)

Order of chapters and content

Chapter One surveys the ways in which, historically, children were regarded, how treated, how used, (for used they were as labourers, skivvies, prostitutes and as ‘commodities’). It takes in children’s workhouses, baby-farming, apprenticeships, and boarding-out and looks at estimates of numbers of destitute children.⁶² Public attitudes towards the plight of destitute children are noted, including those of the State, employers and ordinary families.

Chapter Two traces class differences in the way illegitimacy and adoption were regarded and practised both in fact and fiction. Reference is made to clergy and aristocratic bastards as contrasted with those of the lower classes. The important part played by Coram’s Foundling Hospital in its humane and enlightened treatment of foundlings and unmarried mothers is emphasised. It cites examples of single women who adopted children in fact and fiction. Throughout, evidence from the novels is set against what social history indicates in order to ascertain how far there is a positive correlation between the two.

⁶² The numbers are imprecise until 1836 when registration of births became mandatory, although even then many were left unregistered.

Chapter Three evidences the perdurance of displacees as a favourite subject in literature and Biblical texts. Possible reasons why the displacee, although not referred to as such, is a perennial literary favourite are put forward and examined in depth as are the concomitant factors of illegitimacy and adoption. The positive effect that, in fiction, these two seemingly adverse conditions may have is emphasised.

Ways in which the writers create a favourite displacee and set them on varied routes to success, notably self-help and self-improvement, are discussed. Different models of fictional displacees are put forward, and the question of what makes them such an attractive and compelling subject to both readers and writers is probed. How the prevailing social mores and moral ethos affect their representation is discussed, as are reader-expectations of a favourite. How far these change over time is considered, and whether or not there are permanent traits which hold good over the centuries.

Biblical paradigms are touched on briefly, because although not necessarily fictional, they would have been very familiar to nineteenth-century novel readers.

The means whereby displacement opens up routes to success for the foregrounded child are discussed. These include self-help, influential friends, testing choices and problematic situations. The ability to seize such opportunities as are open to it, (part of the required self-help), whilst maintaining an innate integrity, is emphasised. Inimical forces may also contribute to the making of a

favourite for they summon up reader-concern for the child. In addition overcoming them adds to the ultimate lustre of the child.

How far nature or nurture takes precedence in affecting development is touched on insofar as these relate to the novelistic displacees. No overall pattern emerges and this is largely due to the mandatory respect for parents which readers expected. However, ways in which the writers deal with parents as unspoken rivals to the sustainers are identified.

The particular difficulties which all the displacees experience over self-identity are scrutinised. References to those who cross social class are made, and particular attention is paid to Daniel Deronda who must come to terms with his new racial identity as a Jew, and the prognosis of a transforming future.

Chapter Four concentrates on the centrality of the sustainer-displacee relationship and their growth as a duality is emphasised. One cannot exist without the other and their interdependency is crucial to the structure of the novels. As novelistic material they are a liberating and exciting duality, affording wide possibilities. Tracing the complexities of the relationship is the chief concern of this chapter.

From an authorial stance, a sustainer is second only in importance to the displacee and together they account for a predominant theme in all the novels. Their circumstances, their problems and anxieties, result in a cohesion which is important even when the sustainer has undesirable traits or, like Fagin, a sinister

personal agenda. Its importance lies in the fact that it leaves an indelible, and often strengthening, mark on the character of the child.

Role-reversal which occurs when the child is taken through to adulthood and the sustainer to old age is probed, as is reciprocity which is always required on the part of the child to conform to reader-expectations and the culture of the period.

The emphasis placed by all the writers on the process of bonding is evident, and the reasons for this are discussed. Usually it is fraught with setbacks, in addition to which some displacees have numerous and transitory sustainers.

Adoption issues are re-opened, as is the disruptive force of the displacees. That so-called adoption was every bit as easy as the novelists indicate becomes obvious. Varieties of fictional sustainers ranging from the dangerous to the benign are considered, and sibling or quasi-sibling sustainers are included because of a recent renewal of literary interest in them.⁶³

Factual sustainers of the period including Mary Carpenter, Charlotte Despard, Constance Maynard and General Gordon are discussed and, drawing on correspondence and biography, some speculation as to what may have prompted their actions is made. A comparison is drawn between them and their fictional counterparts to ascertain how far their intentions and experiences compare or contrast with those presented by the novelists.

⁶³ See Sanders, V., *The Brother-Sister Culture in Nineteenth-Century Literature: From Austen to Woolf*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002)

Chapter Five is a summarising chapter which restates the objectives and indicates the main findings of the thesis, especially as they relate the understanding of adoption at the time of the novels to the greatly changed one of today.

It assesses how far what the writers put forward correlates with actuality. Discussion is made of the extent to which the thesis has confirmed expectations, uncovered surprising or unexpected facts and practices, particularly those to do with adoption, in both fact and fiction.

Appendix One

This Appendix which contains correspondence between the present writer and pre-1926 adoptees, needs some comment in this Introduction. It is a long Appendix which contains over fifty letters from pre-1926 adoptees or their immediate descendents. It being obvious that any adoptees of the 1837-70 period were now long dead, it was impossible to gain at first-hand anything they might have to say on their experiences. However, the thesis writer believed there was a possibility that some pre-1926 adoptees might still be alive, although by now very old people. A search for any such existing adoptees might reveal personal insights into how adoption was practised and understood before it had any legal under-pinning.

Advertisements in both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, journals and magazines brought in a small batch of responses by way of letters and telephone calls recalling experiences and reflecting

opinions of a decidedly personal kind. As might be expected, they are first-hand accounts with some bias and prejudices alongside happier experiences. All letters were replied to and, in some cases, followed by meetings or telephone conversations.

The letters are, of course, outside the working dates of the thesis, but the emotions expressed are vividly recalled and are the nearest it is possible to get of first-hand accounts of adoptions without legal sanction or safeguards. No attempt has been made to statistically analyse them and no questionnaires were used. The present writer decided it was better to allow the adoptees to express their stories in their own fashion, emphasising such aspects of their history as they felt were significant. A questionnaire would have been limiting and, possibly, over-facing for people well into their senescence writing of highly sensitive events which had affected their whole life.

Appendix Two

Copies of cartoons, illustrations, poems, ditties, hymns, letters and various archive materials are given in an Appendix to each chapter at the end of the thesis. This is in keeping with the new historicist approach which seeks to inform and elaborate the main content of the chapter through social practices and contemporaneous opinion as revealed in ways which are not limited to more conventional material.

Chapter One

Social history and the understanding and practice of adoption

Preamble

As indicated in the Introduction, the apparent ease with which so many of the fictional displaced children move from household to household with little or no formality was a starting point for this investigation into adoption. Was it possible that the ‘succourless poor child,’ a Tudor category,¹ could find a home in this haphazard fashion?

Child-stealing had a long history; children were stolen for the value of their clothes, or to be sold into prostitution, or as chimney-sweeps, and until 1814 there was no punishment for child-snatching unless it could be proven that the child’s clothing had been stolen; a dehumanising treatment of a child as a piece of property. But how common was it for a child to be, not exactly stolen, but still taken by strangers who had no ‘rights’ conferred by close relationship or parish regulations?

Such doubts about the ease of so-called adoption centred on whether what was described in the novels bore much relation to what was happening to loose children of this country at the same period and, more especially, whether or not such instant adoption was widespread.

¹ Pinchbeck, I. & Hewitt, M., *Children in English Society*, (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1969), vol.1, p.126.

One cannot just jump into the nineteenth century without some understanding of how, historically, children were regarded, how treated, how used, (for used they were as labourers, skivvies, prostitutes and as 'commodities', especially in the lower rungs of society.) In this chapter the ways in which, historically, society coped with destitute children leading up to the period 1837-70 are briefly examined. Pre-sixteenth century records are rare unless the child is of noble birth or an estate is involved. The issue of adoption, however, goes beyond the mere taking-in of a child and involves baby-farming, apprenticeships, child labour, and the efforts made to improve the lot of these destitute children.

Adoption and guardianship are crucial issues for the displacees and when their historic and legal development is related to specific events in the novels they become highly significant to the understanding of the relationship between child and receiving adult. Considerable attention to this is given here and again in Chapter Two.

Kane, 1995, writes, 'Novels are ... a rich source of information about how people lived at the time, and what they thought'.² Tuchman, 1981, advises similarly, 'Do not overlook the novel',³ seeing, 'no reason why a novelist should not be as reliable as a general

² Kane, P., *Victorian Families in Fact and Fiction*, (1995; London: Macmillan, 1997 edn.), p.x.

³ Tuchman, B., *Practicing History*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), p.40.

or a journalist'.⁴ Both advocate that the nineteenth-century realist novel is more than a fictional account and may well be regarded as source material of a documentary kind.

Tuchman's example of a journalist or a general as 'reliable' is somewhat strange, for journalists are not noted for reliability and generals are quite likely to be prejudiced in favour of their own strategies or forces. However, despite the subjectivity of such an opinion, it may still hold good in the case of a realist novel which incorporates factual history of which there is no doubt. In such a case, the novel may well incorporate many aspects of hard fact history, thereby holding considerable reliability. Much depends on the novelist who has the interest of his characters, (and readers), in mind. Dickens, for example, had an intimate knowledge of the seamy areas of London and personal experience of commercial child labour.⁵ Hesba Stretton knew from her campaigning work for abandoned children how pitiful was their lot. Both introduce personal experience into their novels. Yes, they have an axe to grind, but what they write is overwhelmingly confirmed by autobiographies, archives, correspondence and, in particular, the detailed records of the Foundling Hospital, these latter usually accompanied by impeccable corroborative material evidence.

A novel, by definition, is fiction but may well contain incidents which come close to reality. For example, the workhouses of this

⁴ Tuchman, B., *Practicing History*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), p.41.

⁵ See Ackroyd, P., *Dickens*, (London: Guild Publishing, 1990), p.67.

country in the period used here were every bit as grim as that described by Dickens in *Oliver Twist*. Therefore, far from overlooking the novel, it is used in this thesis as an important element of information alongside songs, poems, autobiography, eye-witness accounts, paintings, coats-of-arms, correspondence and magazines. This documentary realism is an indication of how popular culture expressed itself through such media, and the tokens such as locket, pieces of lace and letters deposited at the Foundling Hospital are clearly material evidence. Drawing on such evidence this chapter examines provisions and conditions for the destitute children who, once taken in, become the displaced children of this thesis.

Earlier provision

One must not romanticise the past, but destitute children do appear to have received relatively benign care during the Elizabethan period, being often regarded as objects of compassion and given financial aid, mostly of a private kind. The lot of destitute children was, in many ways, better during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than for the next two hundred years, public attitudes as well as provision being more liberal and less condemnatory. For example, the Elizabethans set up orphanages, notably Christ's Hospital in London, where the children were trained in useful skills on the general understanding that there was a public responsibility for them.

But from this time on, it was downhill for destitute children.

The reduced circumstances of the wealthy following on the Civil Wars resulted in less charitable giving, and this was followed by the Puritans who practised thrift verging on parsimony coupled with the belief that poverty was, in itself, disgraceful. This repressive attitude paved the way for the Children's Workhouses and a tradition of child labour strengthened by the needs of the Industrial Revolution.

The 1722 Poor Relief Act empowered every parish to build a workhouse for the destitute of all ages, the sick, criminal and insane. These were called Bridewells, the old name for houses of correction and were the kind of which Dickens wrote in *Oliver Twist*; places where Oliver and the other children 'suffered the tortures of slow starvation... where the bowls never wanted washing'.⁶ This last is a black reference to the ravenous hunger of the inmates.

With the start of the Industrial Revolution and its need for cheap labour, the labouring child whose lot was appallingly brutalised appeared. Children had long been workers but mainly at home in cottage industries of spinning and weaving. Children helped on small holdings, or carrying out domestic tasks. The new demand for industrial child labour meant that destitute children with no one to look after their interests were horded into mines and factories.

From the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries children in this country worked in what were probably the most appalling conditions in English history; their long working hours, near-starvation diet and heavy dangerous work in mines and factories is

⁶ *Oliver Twist*, (henceforth referred to throughout footnotes as *OT*), p.13.

well-documented.⁷ In cities children often had their own street ‘patches’ selling stays, flowers, ribbons, or as crossing-sweepers and prostitutes.

It is worthy of comment that even sensitive and intelligent people saw nothing amiss in the use of children for such harrowing work.⁸ Charles Lamb, scholarly and imaginative, writes,

‘I like to see a chimney sweep[...]one of those tender novices blooming through their first negritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek, such as come forth with the dawn[...]their little professional notes sounding like the peep-peep of a young sparrow. I have a kindly yearning towards these dim specks[...]poor blots[...]innocent blacknesses.’ Lamb then goes on to delight in ‘the mysterious pleasure’ of pursuing him into the ‘fauces Averni’.⁹

It says much for the strength of sentimentality coupled with a distancing from the terror of these small boys as their abominable chimney treks were hastened on by the burning of paper in the grate.

In 1773 and 1785, Jonas Hanway, a robust campaigner against the cruel conditions of the young sweeping boys published pamphlets which eventually resulted in a Commission to report on such.

⁷ For example, see Hoppen, K. T., *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp.330-331.

⁸ See Southgate, G. W., *English Economic History*, (London: Dent, 1970), p.180.

⁹ Lamb, C., ‘*The Praise of Chimney Sweeps*’ in *Essays of Elia*, (1823; London: Macmillan, 1931 edn.), p.153.

Following on this Robert Burton introduced a Bill forbidding the use of boys under eight to climb chimneys. In practice, however, because so many of the boys, especially the orphans and foundlings, were often uncertain of their age this became impossible to enforce. Lord Shaftesbury introduced Bills to protect the child sweeps in 1852, 1853 and 1854 but all were defeated. Their lot had not yet sufficiently affected public opinion.

Yet child-sweeps as a group do seem to have had a certain attraction for the general public, their treble 'sweep sweep' likened to the 'tweet tweet' of a bird and their sooty face appealing by their oddity. Grown sweeps considered themselves the aristocracy amongst artisans. Mayhew calls them,

'clever fellows compared to many of the dustmen and scavengers. The great mass of the agricultural labourers are almost as ignorant as the beasts they drive[...]but the sweepers[...]are known, in many instances, to be shrewd, intelligent and active'.¹⁰

It is child sweeps who more properly fall within the scope of this thesis but the foregoing indicates that sweeps had a superior group identity, another anomaly of Victorian society.¹¹

¹⁰ Mayhew, H., *London Labour and the London Poor*, (1851-52; London: Penguin, 1985 edn.), p.250.

¹¹ See Cullingford, B, *Chimney Sweeps*, (Princess Risborough, Bucks: Shire Publications, 2003), pp.19-28.

Baby farming

Baby farming was common, especially for illegitimates. The infants were 'hand-reared' by dubious women who appear to have had more thought of profit than of infant care. This developed into an infamous trade in which many infants died from starvation, neglect or infanticide.¹² Social historians are in agreement as to the scandal of such places. (One very old counter-view, now overtaken, is that of Marshall who claims that baby-farmed children did as well as those at home in similar circumstances, and that the rate of mortality was no higher than it would have been had they not been so placed.¹³)

Margaret Waters was one baby farmer found guilty of neglecting infants until they died and leaving their bodies under the railway arches. It was her custom to advertise adoption in return for five pounds. Her trial and execution horrified the public, helping to bring about the Infant Life Protection Act, 1872.¹⁴ (Shaftesbury had for years pleaded their cause.) The provisions of the Act were for decades evaded, continuing well after the period of this thesis as evidenced in the case of Mrs. Dyer who in 1896 was convicted of strangling the babies in her care and disposing of them in the Thames. A popular ditty of the time records her outrageous acts.¹⁵

¹² Disraeli writes of it in *Sybil*, 1845 and George Moore in *Esther Waters*, 1894.

¹³ Marshall, D.M., *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century*, (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1926), pp.97-98.

¹⁴ Appendix 1. Execution of Margaret Waters, '*Illustrated Police News*', 15th October, 1870, Courtesy British Library.

¹⁵ Appendix 2. Ditty, 'Mrs. Dyer, the Baby Farmer', circa 1896, Pinchbeck, I. &

Moreover, some contemporary critics believed the Act only worsened the position because,

‘By demonstrating the risks that baby farming entailed, they argued, the State was merely encouraging mercenary nurses to demand higher fees, thereby increasing the chances that unwed mothers would perform their own killings’.¹⁶

(A not altogether unlikely possibility for desperate and penniless young women.)

Child labour

Child labour was commonplace, children having worked at home in the cottage industries which preceded the Industrial Revolution. But the appalling conditions of child labour in factories and mines was new. Southgate writes,

‘People were not shocked at the idea of children of five, six or seven, doing factory work. ... Kindly men and women would not admit that brutality and under-feeding and excessive hours were necessary accompaniments of child labour’.¹⁷

Hewitt, M., op.cit., p.597.

¹⁶ Behlmer, G.K., *Friends of the Family*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.280.

¹⁷ Southgate, G.W. *English Economic History*, (London: Dent, 1970), p. 180.

Thus, with no effective championship of their cause within the general public, the factory children's lot was horrendous.

Charles Shaw in his autobiography, 1903, gives a first-hand account of just how terrifying a place the workhouse was for children.

'The boy was laid flat on the table, his breeches well pushed down so as to give as much play as possible for the birch rod. Four of the biggest boys were called out to hold each a leg or an arm. ... Thin red stripes were seen on the poor lad's back after the first strokes. They then increased in number and thickness as blow after blow fell on his back. ... Ultimately his back was a red inflamed surface'.¹⁸ As the flogging went on, 'his screaming became less and less piercing. ... If he was conscious I should think only partially so'.¹⁹

(That writers wished to draw attention to this kind of savage punishment is evidenced in Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger*, 1910, when Darius Clayhanger suffers a similar flogging in the 'Bastille', the name for the local workhouse in the Five Towns.²⁰)

The hated New Poor Law, 1834, did not allow for outdoor relief. Rather than extend relief to the poor in their own homes, the Charity Commissioners built workhouses across the country, institutions so degrading and feared that many chose to let themselves

¹⁸ Shaw, C., *When I was a Child*, (1903; London: Caliban Books, 1977 edn.), p.112.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.112.

²⁰ Bennett, A., *Clayhanger*, (1910; London: Methuen, 1960 edn.), p.36.

and their children starve rather than enter them.

Moreover not all Parliamentary debate concerning destitute and labouring children was benevolent. There were those who advocated that the high rate of child mortality was natural and helped the economy. Lord Brougham believed that

‘charity is an interfering process with a healing process of nature, which acts by increasing the rate of mortality, and thereby raising wages’.²¹

Such a piece of reasoning amply demonstrates how lightly held were the destitute children of this country at that time.

When the young Victoria asked Melbourne about the provision of education for poor children, he famously quoted Sir Walter Scott, ‘Why do you bother the poor? Leave them alone’.²² On another occasion the eighteen-year-old Victoria asked him if he could recommend the recently published *Oliver Twist*. He replied that he did not want her to read it.

“‘It is all among the workhouses and Coffinmakers and Pickpockets[...]I wish to avoid them; I don’t like to see them in reality, and, therefore, I don’t wish to see them represented”’.²³

²¹ Bennett, A., 1910, op.cit., p.113.

²² Viscount Esher, ed., *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, (London: John Murray, 1912), vol.2, p.122.

²³ Ibid., p.144.

This unwillingness to confront reality, let alone improve it, exemplifies how dismissive those in authority could be about the thousands of destitute children running wild and whom Members of Parliament would see daily in the city.

Numbers of destitute children

Numbers of destitute children are important to this thesis because some of them, in both fact and fiction, were adopted and thereby displaced; displaced, that is, from their biological family or from the community of street-life. Numbers are imprecise until 1836 when with the appointment of Registrars, registration of births became mandatory. Even so, many were left unregistered for long periods and exact dates forgotten. (Unsurprising with big families and a largely illiterate population.) Not until 1907 did registration of births within forty-eight hours become a legal requirement.

Walvin writes,

‘The population of England and Wales, which at the first census of 1802 stood at less than ten millions had, by the time of the accession of Victoria in 1837, risen to fourteen millions. ... By 1901, the population was in excess of thirty two millions. Throughout those years of colossal change, the proportion of that expanding population aged fourteen and under, never fell below thirty per cent, and for much of that period was nearer forty per cent’.²⁴

²⁴ Walvin, J., *A Child's World; A Social History of English Childhood, 1800-1914*, (London: Penguin, 1982), p.18.

These figures reveal how strong a presence children must have been. Stroud confirms Walvin's description of them as 'ubiquitous'.

'Swarms of children were let loose in the London streets to live by their wits. The officials of the Poor Law were too overwhelmed with work to go out hunting for more. If destitute children were actually brought in, then the relieving officer would take them to one of the huge institutions such as that at Banstead, where were incarcerated hundreds and hundreds of children with shaven heads and ugly clothing; and no free-wheeling street arab chose to go there. The police had no power to intervene unless the children were actually detected in crime... as in 1846 when a boy of twelve who had been running a gang of young pick-pockets was sentenced to five years penal servitude. But often the children would risk that fate; for often they would be beaten unmercifully by their parents and forced by them to go out and prostitute themselves, or steal. Sometimes they would choose to go on the run rather than return "home"' ²⁵

In literature this accords with *Oliver Twist's* fear of the law, first for alleged stealing and then for house-breaking. Crime, not welfare, was the concern of the police who, otherwise, had no power to intervene even when children were being grossly ill-used. Similarly, Stroud's 'free wheeling street arabs' and Walvin's 'independent children' accord strongly with the Dodger and Charley Bates in the same novel. For a resourceful child, life on the streets was not

²⁵ Stroud, J., *Thirteen Penny Stamps*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1971), p.6.

necessarily worse than that in one of the public institutions or a grim home.

Stroud and Walvin write from hindsight but Mayhew's contemporaneous on-the-spot records confirm both Dickens's fictional accounts of street-wise children and what later historians affirm. A street lad tells Mayhew, 'Father[...]died when I was three[...]we did as we liked with mother. ... On a Sunday I goes out selling, and all I yarns I keeps'.²⁶

These street children, old before their time, were notably free from adult supervision or restraint. Even Shaftesbury, that tireless champion of children's rights, spoke of their 'barbarian freedom from all superintendence and restraint'.²⁷ And the children themselves often had a hardened appearance, their faces no longer appearing childish. Mayhew records a girl of eight who sold watercress and whose face, 'was wrinkled where the dimples ought to have been'.²⁸ Their childhood had been sacrificed to a way of life which robbed them of any appearance of health and innocence. Summarising the causes of this sad state of these loose children, Mayhew cites the bad conduct of parents and masters, the influence of early associates, orphanhood and destitution, street life and employment and the dispositions and tastes of the children resulting from these. (Taking in these causes, it could

²⁶ Mayhew, *op.cit.*, p.35.

²⁷ Cunningham, H., *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500*, (London: Longman, 1995), p.146.

²⁸ Mayhew, *op.cit.*, p.65.

have been written today of many children who fall foul of the law.)

Mayhew cites the 'Penny Gaffs', a form of street theatre where the jokes were lewd and obscene, as an example of the corruption of little girls whose precocity was such that,

'the girl of nine will, from constant attendance at such places, have learnt to understand the filthiest sayings, and laugh at them as loudly as the grown-up lads around her'.²⁹

It was a similar picture in the provinces where large numbers of unruly and vagrant children were often associated with petty crime.³⁰ Moreover, local opinion strongly denied that these mendacious children were from the working population of the district which they troubled. The Mayor of Leeds, for example, accuses them as being the children of, 'idle and profligate parents[...] attracted to a large town by its resources [...]which enable them to escape regular labour'.³¹

The writers and poets of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were less effective in coming to the aid of these children than were the later ones such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Even Blake whose 'Songs of Innocence' celebrate the beauty of

²⁹ Mayhew, *op.cit.*, p.37.

³⁰ Cunningham, H., *The Children of the Poor*, (London: Blackwell, 1991), p.105.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.105.

childhood appears to feel that the desperate resignation of 'The Chimney Sweeper', sold by his father, his mother dead, and who can only find refuge in his dreams, is part of his Christian lot. He preaches a gospel of adherence to whatever duty God requires and although there is sorrow for the sooty lot of these small boys, there is no call to rebel nor any call for relief.³²

Later, in his 'Songs of Experience', Blake's attitude changes. The voice of suffering is louder and Blake's perspectives are wider, very sombre and the resignation of the earlier poems replaced by a chilling realism coupled with a plea for these poor starvelings.

The foregoing gives some idea of how mixed were the viewpoints towards child destitutes, old before their time, corrupted to the point of prostitution, and how varied the response of the influential.

Illegitimacy

Illegitimacy is the topic of Chapter Two, but deserves some mention here for at all times they fared worst, often being left to die in streets, in doorways or on the dunghills. It was the shock of seeing such child corpses on the dunghills at Rotherhithe which aroused the initial concern of Thomas Coram. Appendix 4 is a highly 'refined' representation of him coming across an abandoned child.³³ Those

³² Appendix 3. Blake, W., 'The Chimney Sweeper'. See Wain, J. ed., *Oxford Library of English Poetry*, (London: Guild Publishing, 1986), pp. 215-216.

³³ Appendix 4. Unattributed engraving, *Captain Coram and a Foundling*, 1741,

who survived had a lower life-expectancy partly due to their poor start in life and very often because of the harsh and physically damaging apprenticeships to which they were bound at a very early age. Walvin estimates that throughout the nineteenth century they died 'at something like twice the rate of their legitimate peers'.³⁴ Suffice it here to say that with a few exceptions such as aristocratic and clergy bastards and those born within the lowest, most irresponsible classes, illegitimates fared badly and Coram stands out as their earliest and most effective champion.

Literary examples

Some examples of fictional children 'adopted' by protectors of one kind or another and referred to throughout as 'sustainers' now follow.

Oliver Twist, wrongly accused of theft, released from police custody and taken home by Brownlow, begs to be allowed to stay to which Brownlow replies, 'You say you are an orphan without a friend in the world; all the inquiries I have been able to make confirm this statement'.³⁵ This telling phrase reveals both his readiness to take the boy and an innocence which almost matches that of Oliver himself. Child and sustainer are already in the initial stage of the bonding process so necessary to a successful relationship, springing from

McClure, R.K., *Coram's Children*, (Yale: Yale University, 1981), pp.4-5.

³⁴ Walvin, J., *op.cit.*, p.21.

³⁵ *OT* pp.104-5.

Brownlow's inner loneliness and Oliver's desperate need of protection. The takeover is done and was, presumably, not too far-fetched for Dickens's readers. (Dickens was far too alert to both reader-response and actuality to have otherwise let it stay.)

Recaptured by Fagin, Oliver is temporarily lost to Brownlow who advertises for him and only gives up the search after Bumble's false and discrediting account of him. Later still, when he falls wounded into the Maylie household, Mrs. Maylie decides in much the same spontaneous fashion as Brownlow that she will keep him and the Bow Street runners leave 'without troubling themselves very much about him'.³⁶

This accords absolutely with the earlier findings that in law as it then stood, criminal offence took precedence over welfare. The police had no power to intervene unless a criminal offence was suspected. Dickens' readers would have been well aware of this and safe in the knowledge that within the very safe Maylie nest, Oliver was in for a spot of much-needed cosseting. Any considerations to do with adoption simply do not arise and there is a complete absence of formalities on this head. That Oliver is discovered much later to be the blood relative of Rose Maylie, herself a displaced child, is not important here; it is simply a final bonus for Oliver.

In *Great Expectations*, it is reasonable that Pip should be taken on by Mrs. Joe, his one remaining sibling, but what of Estella whose

³⁶ OT p.245.

parents are Magwitch and Mollie, housekeeper to Jaggers? At the age of three she is sent to live with Miss Havisham who, deranged and solitary, has a vengeful fancy to adopt a little girl, all of which is arranged by Jaggers, the lawyer, very much aware of his client's manic eccentricity. He has his own motives to do with maintaining power over Estella's parents, gratifying a substantial client, and being in overall control. What is relevant to this thesis is that a lawyer should proceed with an adoption of such deceit and unpropitious circumstances. It seems, at the least, to point to a very casual and haphazard attitude towards the placing and adopting of destitute children.

In *Our Mutual Friend*, 1864-65, the naïve and childless Boffins have mixed motives over adoption. They want a child as an 'In Memoriam' for John Harmon, wrongly presumed dead. This notion of a child as a replacement for one who has died is interesting in itself, suggesting that children are interchangeable and that nurture is able to mould one child into some semblance of another. Heredity as a shaping factor in development is, apparently, regarded as of less important.³⁷ Because of the high rate of infant mortality it may have been a common practice and comes close to de-personalising the child whose function is to be a replica of the earlier one.

³⁷ This same view of replacement crops up in *Wuthering Heights* when Earnshaw names Heathcliff after a son who has died. (Henceforth referred to as *WH* throughout footnotes.)

The Boffins' predicament is how to set about 'adoption', their first idea being a newspaper advertisement. However, 'Mr. Boffin, wisely apprehending obstruction of the local thoroughfare by swarms of orphans, this course was negatived'.³⁸ It is taken for granted there will be a multiplicity of candidates, the grim joke being the traffic obstruction and not the advertising for a child as one might for some inanimate object such as a piano. Nor does their clergyman find anything odd in their request although his 'latent smile' indicates his sobering experience of how a child can be used as barter for 'blankets, or boots, or firing and these converted into drink'.³⁹ His realism set against the Boffins' naivety allows Dickens to point out how little a child could be valued. The clay-pits and the workhouse are then suggested as likely sources of spare children, as is the inadvisability of selecting an older child, one with a squint, or one with troublesome relatives. (It seems that then, as now, if one wishes to be adopted it helps to be young, physically perfect and free of family.)

Such examples of the way adoption was understood and practised are not confined to Dickens. In *Wuthering Heights*, Earnshaw carries home Heathcliff from Liverpool to the West Riding, telling his wife that he found 'it' starving and homeless, asked after its

³⁸ Dickens, C., *Our Mutual Friend*, (1865; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952 edn.), p.102. (Henceforth referred to as *OMF* throughout footnotes.)

³⁹ *OMF* p.106.

‘owner’ and found none.⁴⁰ Heathcliff is, of course, exceptional with the supernatural forever clinging to him and referred to more than once as ‘half animal’ and ‘part devil’. The question here is whether or not one could just ‘lift’ a child off the streets and keep it. All the evidence suggests that one could and Emily Brontë must have believed that her readers would accept the possibility. (It is certainly more of a possibility than some of the other events in the novel.)⁴¹

In *Jane Eyre*, adoption is referred to both formally and facetiously. Formally when John Eyre in his planned provision for his niece sets down ‘... as I am unmarried and childless, I wish to adopt her during my life, and bequeath her at my death whatever I have to leave’.⁴² In the same chapter the dying Mrs Reed in her confessional explanation also speaks formally of adoption. ‘... for you to be adopted by your uncle and placed in a state of ease and comfort was what I could not endure’.⁴³ A death-bed utterance usually has literary significance resting on the belief that one close to death will very likely tell the truth. Here, Mrs. Reed’s dying words vindicate Jane’s dislike of her in childhood. There is, moreover, the question of

⁴⁰ *WH*, p.35.

⁴¹ Van Ghent, D., *The English Novel: form and function*, (New York: Rhinehart, 1959), p.39, poses the tantalising question as to what difference it would make to the novel if Heathcliff had a normal parentage. It would certainly cast doubts on his metaphysical relationship with Cathy.

⁴² *JE* p.241.

⁴³ *JE* p.241.

inheritance and with it the working of conscience. Mrs. Reed is at least a notional Christian whose troubled conscience belatedly prompts her as to her duty. It is an aspect of her own development and allows some extenuation of her former behaviour towards Jane.

It is used facetiously when Rochester jokes that Mrs. Fairfax, 'will be all right now that she has her adopted daughter back again'.⁴⁴ It points to the housekeeper's affection for Jane and presents adoption as a warm relationship.

However, Brontë does not use it when Jane is taken by the Reeds. 'Charity carried the friendless thing to the house of its rich maternal relations; it was reared by an aunt-in-law'.⁴⁵ And Jane herself uses 'rear' when she tells of her uncle requiring of his wife that 'she would rear and maintain me as one of her own children'.⁴⁶ It seems to indicate a much more functional and formal relationship. Possibly Mrs Reed's *froideur* and the fact that she has **not** met this requirement precludes the use of the word 'adoption' as Brontë understood it.

In the same novel, Adèle and Rochester are always referred to as 'ward' and 'guardian', even though Rochester allows the child may be his natural daughter. It may well have been Brontë's way of both formalising and distancing the relationship, making it less intimate than adoption. Guardianship carried legal safeguards, (often problematic when money or estate were concerned), adoption none.

⁴⁴ *JE* p.249.

⁴⁵ *JE* p.384.

⁴⁶ *JE* p.16.

George Eliot's eponymous Silas Marner takes in Eppie because in his catatonic trance he believes her to be a humanised return of his missing gold, insisting that he has a 'right' to keep her when it is suggested she be placed in parish care. Cass and Kimble, minor gentry and aware that any parish interest in the child will be solely economic, opine that 'the parish isn't likely to quarrel with him for the right to keep the child'.⁴⁷

Interestingly, Marner like Earnshaw, believes that the child has been Providentially sent. Conversely, Nancy Cass believes it wrong to adopt a child when God has deemed that one should be childless because it is going against Providence, and that children so taken usually turn out badly. Eliot's own enlightening comment on the issue is 'Adoption was more remote from the ideas and habits of that time than our own'.⁴⁸ The novel came out in 1861 and is set half a century earlier, so the reasons given by Nancy for her refusal to adopt may very well have been commonly voiced in the earlier part of the century. As the reader knows, Nancy is a rigid thinker and highly conventional, but nevertheless the reader is intended to believe that her reasons hold weight. George Eliot, however, does seem rather to confound this belief when the substantial Kimble says, 'I've seen the time when I might have quarrelled with him to keep it myself', before

⁴⁷ *Silas Marner*, (henceforth referred to throughout footnotes as *SM*), p.176.

⁴⁸ *SM* p.216.

allowing that he and his wife are now too old to rear a child.⁴⁹

What is puzzling is that one is left uncertain as to what had happened in the intervening half century to account for the change in attitude towards adoption of which Eliot writes. At either point in time it could not have been a legal adoption. Possibly it was that more and more ordinary people were taking-in destitute children and finding that they did as well as any others. Or it may be that as the practice continued with greater frequency, people simply got used to the idea. It is possible that Eliot was ahead of her time because there was certainly prejudice towards them during the first part of the twentieth century as many of the letters from the pre-1926 adoptees show.⁵⁰ Almost certainly, this has withered and/or is less openly-voiced.

Toynbee, 1985, writing of adopted children in search of their biological mothers, says

‘Before researching this, I had never given much thought to the importance of genetic origins[...]but I am now quite certain that the idea of blood ties and genes is common to most people’.⁵¹

This confirms the view of the present writer that known origin

⁴⁹ SM p.176.

⁵⁰ See Appendix One to this thesis.

⁵¹ Toynbee, P., *Lost Children: The Story of Adopted Children Searching for their Mothers*, (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p.196.

remains important. The conflicting views of Marnier and Nancy Cass were probably held outside fiction and indicate that then, as now, adoption issues were far from clear-cut and engendered strong feelings.

As a novelistic device, adoption is promising material, although for full dramatic effect these adoptions must hold hazards as well as potential benefits. Dickens' contemporaneous readers would know it was relatively simple to take in a stray child and 'adopt' it as it was then understood. Apart from any legal aspects, the writers may have been pandering to the vanity of their readers by attributing to them a flattering altruism; namely, that, of their charity, men and women of goodwill would find room for a destitute child in their home. Moreover, had there been any obvious barriers to such adoptions surely the novelists would have pounced on them in order to make the fictional child's situation even more alarming and exciting.

Adoption in practice

Currently, it is almost taken for granted that, once adopted, a child's interests will be safeguarded and maintained by a responsible adult(s). Knowing that such legal adoption was not possible in this country during the period of this thesis, it is reasonable to argue that one should not take the fictional adoptions on modern terms, and that this has a profound effect on our understanding and response to what takes place in the novels, especially as it affects the displacees.

Exactly what the novelists meant when they wrote of adoption is impossible of any sharp resolution, but it is certain that it was nothing like the long-term, legally binding contract of today. An awareness of the historical background, the historical usage of the word, a knowledge of the 1926 Act of Adoption and attention to the text of the novels is clearly important.

Behlmer, 1998, writes

‘Ironically, it was England’s social stability that helped to make the issue of adoption so complex for although legal adoption[...]was not possible in England until 1926, children had been adopted *de facto* since time out of mind. Thus, for generations there had existed a glaring contradiction between common law and popular practice. ... Functional alternatives to adoption were readily available in medieval and early modern times’.⁵²

Importantly for this thesis, pre-1926 adoptions could hold good for as long or short a time as it suited the adopter with no safeguards for the child, and it is pointless to think of it in modern legal terms. However, it is possible to think of it in practical functional terms and allow that it involves nurturing a child, (usually within one’s own home), providing support and assuming responsibility for its general welfare. Adoptions of this kind have a long history, a view which Josling supports.

⁵² Behlmer, G.K., *op.cit.*, p.296.

‘It has always been possible in given circumstances, for a man, whether relative or stranger, to put himself *in loco parentis* towards another person i.e. the office and duty of a father in making provision for that person’.⁵³

In fact, it was only the Adoption Act of 1950 which

‘... made important changes in the direction of equating the child’s status with that of a natural born child so that it might inherit property on intestacy from the adoptive parent, and it loses its claims on the natural parents whose consent to the adoption is essential, if they survive’.⁵⁴

Here there is the possibility that were the natural parents wealthy there might be greater estate in that quarter than from the adoptive parents and even a poor unmarried mother who had relinquished her child might well have made a later, prosperous marriage. (In *Bleak House*, Lady Dedlock does exactly this.) Conversely an adoptive parent might lose substance. The important fact seems to be that the child cannot claim twice, so to speak.

Historically, to be an heir carried penalties. An heir could be held responsible for the debts of an ancestor, as could the executor. By 1327, this debt liability became curtailed although the notion of voluntary repayment of parental debts as a matter of honour lingered.

⁵³ Josling, J.F. & Levy, A., *Adoption of Children*, (1947; London: Longman, 1985 edn.), p.3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3.

(Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, 1860, feels bound to pay off his father's creditors.) Whilst not wishing to over-extend my examination of adoption itself, there is clearly some overlap between the situation of an adopted child and an heir.

As used by the novelists, adoption may be regarded in a fairly simple way, it being when the adoptee lives with the sustaining adult mostly, although not always, as their own child. In Gilbert Pierce's, *The Dickens Dictionary*, 1878, there are references throughout to adoptions, including those of Copperfield, Estella and Rose Maylie.⁵⁵ Moreover, it is not only the writers of the period who use it this way but writers a century or more later. For example, Margaret Drabble, 1985, refers to both *Oliver Twist*⁵⁶ and *Eppie*⁵⁷ as being adopted. Neither Pierce nor Drabble add any qualifying comments as to its usage.

Despite much searching, however, no discussion by literary critics of this important issue has come to light. The nearest appears to be Cockshut who writes, '... it is possible that no one ever acquired legal control of a child so quickly and easily as Betsy [sic] Trotwood did of David',⁵⁸ which hints at some unease over the transaction.

⁵⁵ Pierce, G., *The Dickens Dictionary*, (1878; London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1891 edn.), passim. See, for example, reference to Copperfield's adoption, p.312.

⁵⁶ Drabble, M., ed., *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.715.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.904.

⁵⁸ Cockshut, A.O.J., *The Imagination of Charles Dickens*, (London: Collins, 1961), p.121.

Nevertheless, Dickens does sometimes seem to have had in mind more than a spontaneous arrangement. For example, Betsey Trotwood makes a firm decision to adopt Copperfield. Yet when she takes the boy to see her lawyer, it is to arrange a school for him, not to discuss adoption for this she says **she has already done**.⁵⁹ (My emphasis.) Up to this point Wickfield has no knowledge of the boy, let alone his adoption. Had there been any formal documentation surely Wickfield, her trusted lawyer and friend, would not only have known of it but drawn it up. It is confusing, to say the least.

In *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham tells Jaggers that she wants a little girl

‘to love and rear and save from my fate. ... He told me that he would look about for such an orphan child. One night he brought her here. ... She herself knows nothing, but that she was left an orphan and I adopted her’.⁶⁰

Setting aside the fact that Estella is **not** an orphan which Jaggers knows, it leaves wide open the question of what Miss Havisham understands by adoption. ‘To love and rear’ sounds very positive, but it is ‘to save from my fate’ which sets alarm bells ringing as to just how she will accomplish this. All of which indicates how irregular adoption was and how easy it was to take in a destitute child.

⁵⁹ DC p.277.

It also points to Jagger's duplicity for he is well aware that Estella is not an orphan.

What can be claimed is that it indicates a distinction in Dickens' mind between adoption and any other taking-in of a child. Possibly he meant what was called 'private adoption' which went on until very recently. Jones, 1987, writes,

'... private adoptions were made illegal in 1982 unless the child's mother places the child for adoption with a close relative. This now makes it impossible for someone to legally adopt a baby they know of through a friend, clergyman, doctor or relative'.⁶¹

These were almost certainly what Dickens had in mind when the Boffins consult with their clergyman and Miss Havisham with Jagger.

Confirmation that such arrangements went on is evidenced in correspondence with the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering. They refer to pre-1926 adoptions being,

'arranged by indentures which were properly drawn-up legal documents. ... It is also correct that sometimes a doctor, clergyman or friend knew of someone who was having a baby and was unable, or did not want, to keep it. If they also knew of a couple who wanted a child,

⁶⁰ *GE* p.430.

⁶¹ Jones, M., *Everything You Need to Know About Adoption*, (London: Sheldon Press, 1987), p.3.

the arrangement could be quite privately made... there might be some difficulties for the child if he later had to produce a birth certificate, unless he was handed over at such an early age that the adoptive parents simply registered him as their own child. I think that some adoptions were also made through solicitors who possibly drew up some kind of legal document'.⁶²

Note the reference to 'some kind of legal document', which seems to emphasise its haziness.

Correspondence with The Catholic Children's Society ran,

'While we know of third party placements through friends, doctors, nurses etc., we were never party to these placements and so have no specific information'.⁶³

Whilst avoiding criticism, the tone of the letter is one of rebuttal and one notices by its absence any inclusion of clergy in third party placements. It may be that a Roman Catholic Society would deliberately avoid any reference to priests taking part in such arrangements lest there be anything 'doubtful' about them.

As to the original speculation as to how easy or difficult it may have been to adopt a child during the period used here, two main

⁶² Appendix 5. British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, letter to the thesis writer, 3rd December, 1992.

⁶³ Appendix 6. Catholic Children's Society, letter to the thesis writer, 1st December, 1992.

findings emerge. One, that it was not possible to legally adopt a child at that time. Two, that it was likely to have been quite easy to adopt in the private way to which Jones refers, or even more informally, simply by usage. That there was no shortage of children is confirmed by Richards,

‘Before 1926, the law did not control “trafficking in children” who could be passed from one parent figure to another, bought or sold, or taken out of the country without hindrance and without record’.⁶⁴

The Tomlin Committee’s Report which led directly to the 1926 Act of Adoption commented ‘The people wishing to get rid of children are far more numerous than those wishing to receive them’.⁶⁵ From all of which it is reasonably safe to assume that what Dickens *et al* meant by adoption was taking in a child and caring for it, which is what most of the sustainers in both fact and fiction do, although in highly idiosyncratic ways.

One well-documented piece of evidence as to the ease of adoption and how *ad hoc* the transaction could be makes the point nicely, and as Manton writes,

‘Nothing could show more vividly the fearful precariousness of life for the poor in the Victorian Golden Age. ... In 1853[...]a man named Foxon was called to the common lodging-house to a woman

⁶⁴ Richards, M., *Adoption*, (Bristol: Jordan & Sons, 1989), p.3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4.

named Margaret Powell, destitute with a baby girl, six weeks old, named Rosanna. Foxon put the little girl in the workhouse where she was soon said to be, “declining in health”. In 1858 he applied to the famous Muller orphanage, a showpiece of evangelical philanthropy in Bristol.

Pastor Muller refused to take Rosanna because, at five years old, she could not produce evidence that she had been born in wedlock. Foxon wrote to Mary Carpenter. ... “God put it into my head”, said Mary ingenuously, “that I ought to be a mother to the little thing”. ... “Do you think you could live with me in this house, and love me, and be happy?” she asked. Rosanna, fresh from the workhouse, said simply, “Yes”⁶⁶.

The further history of this adoption confirms the point made earlier about how complex these spontaneous adoptions could, and did, turn out in practice. In 1860, the child’s mother brought an action for child-stealing.

‘Carpenter accused the mother of abandoning her child whom she had adopted in good faith as an orphan. ... At the news that Miss Carpenter “was bringing up the child as her own”. ... She said “her prayers had been answered”⁶⁷.

Carpenter was staggeringly ahead of her time in her resolve to be a mother, middle class and unmarried as she was.

⁶⁶ Manton, J., *Mary Carpenter and the Children of the Streets*, (London: Heinemann, 1976), p.146.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.146.

“Just think of me”, she wrote to a disconcerted relative, “with a little girl of my own. About five years old! Ready made to hand and nicely trained, without the trouble of marrying etc., a darling little thing, an orphan. I feel already a *mère de famille*”.⁶⁸

This is not an attempt to make a case for nineteenth-century irresponsibility over adoption, nor that it was always undertaken so spontaneously, (with or without God having put it into one’s head), but to illustrate that it was indeed possible to adopt in a way now quite unrecognisable. When reading of such instances, and they are innumerable in the novels of the period, we should read with a changed awareness of how adoption was understood and practised.⁶⁹

This point can scarcely be over-emphasised, so huge is the change between the earlier and the present terms of adoption. It makes a tremendous difference to reader-perception of events in the novels and it is astonishing that there appears to be no investigation of the topic. This is almost certainly due to a failure to connect the late date of legal adoption in this country and the fictional representation of it in the novels of the period used here.

⁶⁸ Manton, J., op. cit., p.147.

⁶⁹ In fiction, Roger Lawrence uses almost exactly the same words as Mary Carpenter when he takes in a girl of twelve he scarcely knows. He asks the child, ‘Do you think you could love me. ... Will you come and try?’ He simply tells his friends, ‘I have adopted a little girl, you know’. James, H., *Watch and Ward*. (1871; New York: Grove Press, 1960 edn.), pp.36-37.

Guardianship

The important relation of guardian and child historically carried more legal weight than adoption. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines guardian as

‘a defender, protector or keeper; a person who is legally responsible for someone who is unable to manage their own affairs, especially a child whose parents have died’.⁷⁰

It is a serious business in *Bleak House* where Jarndyce is guardian to Ada Clare and Richard Carstone, but not to Esther Summerson. (The Guardianship of Infants Act, 1886, came sixteen years after Dickens’ death so he could not possibly have known its provisions.) Until that time it was the property of the infants which appears to be of greater moment than the infants themselves. Guardianship may have been undertaken by several people each having control of different properties inherited by the child.

‘But for[...]the ordinary orphan, who was not an heir to land, the common law seems to have made no general rules’.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, (1989; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 edn.), vol. vi, p.917.

⁷¹ Holdsworth, W.S., *A History of English Law*, (1923; London: Methuen, 1966 edn.), vol. iii, p.512.

Holdsworth writes,

‘... the truth is[...]that the law of guardianship was defective and inadequate because it halted between two opinions... the older opinion that guardianship was a valuable right which existed for the benefit of the guardian, and the newer opinion that guardianship involved responsibilities to the infant’.⁷²

There was, earlier, a Court of Orphans, orphans being so numerous. Carlton estimates that until the end of the eighteenth century

‘something like one in three children lost a parent. ... By the end of the seventeenth century chancery had forged a monolithic system which, within a century and a half, had degenerated into the paralysis of *Bleak House*. Charles Dickens’ case of *Jarndice v. Jarndice* [sic]... was no great flight of the novelist’s fancy’.⁷³

This still leaves open the question of why Dickens who treats guardianship in such a weighty fashion when it relates to Jarndyce is positively light-hearted when Betsey Trotwood invites Mr. Dick to become joint guardian of Copperfield. Agreed it is part of her constant promotion of his self-confidence but even allowing for this it seems to

⁷² Holdsworth, W.S., *op.cit.*, p.512.

⁷³ Carlton, C., *The Court of Orphans*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1974), p.64.

be a non-legal, private arrangement between the two of them.⁷⁴ Or it may be that Dickens wanted to draw on the tradition of the ‘wise fool’, an ‘innocent’ who discards irrelevancies and gets to the nub of a question; a time-honoured literary practice which sets up a nice piece of role-reversal here. Moreover, Dickens refers to ‘guardianship’ in this chapter and ‘adoption’ in the next as if the two were synonymous. (He may well have thought they were, so loosely by later standards are they used.) For this reason one is disposed to think that here, at least, one should not differentiate between them. The crucial difference may well be that of property which features so importantly in *Bleak House* and hardly at all in *David Copperfield*.

George Eliot provides a quite different example in *Daniel Deronda* whose mother has parted with him in infancy, partly for selfish reasons and to relieve him of ‘the bondage of having been born a Jew’.⁷⁵ She asked Sir Hugo to ‘take my boy’ and ‘made Sir Hugo the trustee of your fortune’.⁷⁶ Sir Hugo tells him, ‘You lost your father and mother when you were quite a little one; that is why I take care of you’.⁷⁷ Sir Hugo, a man of great integrity appears to have no scruples about implying that the boy’s parents are dead, the euphemism ‘lost’ than as now being commonly used to mean ‘dead’. Until mid-

⁷⁴ DC p.271.

⁷⁵ DD p.471.

⁷⁶ DD p.477.

⁷⁷ DD p.121.

twentieth century it was quite common to allow an adopted child to believe that its natural parents were dead, often being considered as a positive gesture to both adoptive parents and adopted child and to further cement the relationship. George Eliot undoubtedly intends it as a kindly gesture, for Sir Hugo is represented as an excellent sustainer. There is also the clear intention that Sir Hugo will control the boy's fortune, pointing to the duties of a guardian, although the arrangement appears to be defined only in conversation.

Informal taking-in

Recent opinion varies as to how much informal taking in of young destitutes there may have been, so much rested on class, status and notions of 'respectability'. Toynbee gives evidence that the stigma of illegitimacy was so great that respectable families were reluctant to take in a bastard child.

'In Victorian days orphanages were filled with illegitimate babies, whose death rate was a national scandal. ... Reformers wished to get the children out of orphanages and give them the chance of a new life with a new family. But so strong was the stigma against bastard children that respectable families could not be found to take them in'.⁷⁸

Walvin's research on the topic is far more positive. He writes of ordinary people doing exactly what the novelists describe, i.e.

⁷⁸ Toynbee, P., op.cit., p.11.

rearing a destitute child within their own family.

‘... it was in London where the problem was worst and where the main thrust of charitable relief took place. There were, in addition, numerous examples of people, rich and poor, taking street children into their homes’.⁷⁹

Walvin’s ‘rich and poor’ tallies with Mayhew’s factual account a century earlier of the poor helping the poor. It was quite different from the taking-in of children by relatives, where there may have been a financial incentive if the child was in employment.⁸⁰

Two fictional examples of humble sustainers helping a destitute child are George Eliot’s Silas Marner and Hesba Stretton’s less well-known Daniel Standring. Both are artisans, both lonely, (despite the fact that each earns his living selling to the public), and Standring is altogether tougher than Marner. The latter makes an instant decision to keep a destitute child while Standring takes rather longer to offer Jessica a little food. Significantly, neither acts from any keen sense of altruism; Marner is in a state of mental confusion, while Standring manages a grudging response to a stray child who is part-nuisance, part-heroic in her disarming honesty.

This is novelistic realism of a very basic kind with no sophisticated sub-play at work, although the two authors could

⁷⁹ Walvin, J. *op.cit.*, p.150.

⁸⁰ See Dupree, M.W. ‘Family Structures in the Staffordshire Potteries, 1840-1880’, D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1981, p.412.

scarcely be less alike in style. The text of both novels clearly indicates that taking in a stray child was easily possible and accords with what Walvin describes; namely, ordinary people from the lower ranks of society taking in a needy child. Their motivation is not the concern here; its significance lies in the fact that, in both fact and fiction, destitute children were being adopted by those of modest means.

Fostering, boarding-out and apprenticeship

Davenport-Hill in *Children of the State*, 1868, describes large numbers of foster-parents employed in paid boarding-out which was more regularised than merely taking in a stray child. It was a half-way arrangement and seems to have been supervised quite well.

‘It made for the greater happiness of the children than any other method of dealing with children on the rates’.⁸¹

Her comment takes in both the welfare of the children and the cost to the taxpayers, a happier balance than those of many of her contemporaries.

McClure’s more recent account of Coram’s is detailed.

‘A surprisingly large number of children were apprenticed to the husbands of the nurses who had cared for them since infancy. The strength of the affection that grew up in the intimate relationship

⁸¹ Davenport Hill, F. *Children of the State*, (1868; London: Macmillan, 1889 edn.), p.204.

between nurse and child made many nurses reluctant to part with the children when the time came for them to return to the Hospital. ... The foster fathers, too, became fond of the children nursed by their wives'.⁸²

Dickens draws on this kind of affection in *Dombey and Son*.⁸³

As early as 1761, The Clerk of Coram's writes

'... the nurses who have brot [sic] up our children acquire so great an affection for them that they would frequently maintain them at their own expense[...]but we don't often accept these offers for fear of being a burthen on poor families or Parishes which may be inconvenient to them'.⁸⁴

The moving use of 'our children' denotes the possessive concern of Coram's eighteenth century clerk.

An article by Jenny Bourne Taylor⁸⁵ draws attention to a painting by Emma Brownlow King, **The Foundling Restored to its Mother**.⁸⁶ It should be noted here that the return of the child should

⁸² McClure, R.K., op.cit., p.56.

⁸³ In *Dombey and Son*, 1848, the wet nurse, Polly Toodles, and her husband are similarly devoted to Paul Dombey.

⁸⁴ McClure, op.cit., p.57.

⁸⁵ Taylor, J.B. "Received a Blank Child"; John Brownlow, Charles Dickens, and the London Foundling Hospital – Archives and Fictions', 2001, '*Nineteenth Century Literature*', vol. 56, No.3, pp.293-363.

⁸⁶ Appendix 7. **The Foundling Restored to its Mother**, 1858, oil painting, Emma

the mother's circumstances improve was always an important part of the Hospital's policy. The narrative painting is one of benevolent farewell and a return to a respectable family. Significantly Bourne Taylor comments on the fact that Hogarth's painting, **Moses Brought before Pharoah's Daughter**, 1746,⁸⁷ a story with which visitors to the Hospital would have been very familiar, appeared with three others depicting child rescues on the four walls of the magnificent Court Room, the centrepiece of the Hospital; paintings intended to show Biblical endorsement of the Hospital's policy of taking-in destitute children. (Hogarth was one of the four Governors appointed when the Hospital opened in 1739.)

The article explores the role of the foundling in narrative Western culture claiming that it 'has possibly shaped collective narrative and individual psychic life more than any other'.⁸⁸ Taylor develops the idea of the foundling as an ambivalent figure in

Brownlow King. Postcard, Thomas Coram Foundation for Children, London. Notice the original receipt for the child lies discarded on the floor. Emma Brownlow King's father had himself been a foundling, admitted in 1800, and went on to become Clerk to the Governors, a position of considerable importance. For further reading and illustrations see Lambourne, L., *Victorian Painting*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1999.)

⁸⁷ Appendix 8. **Moses Brought before Pharoah's Daughter**, oil painting by William Hogarth, 1746. See '*Nineteenth Century Literature*', vol.56, No.3, p.299.

⁸⁸ Taylor, J.B., *op. cit.*, p.295.

both society and in ‘the English cultural imagination’.⁸⁹ This seems to point to the exciting possibilities of the child’s unknown genetic potential, and the notional threat posed by a child from a dangerous undercurrent of society.⁹⁰ It points to the fact that while orphans were objects of compassion their unknown provenance conjured up considerable feelings of unease and suspicion.

The problem in accepting the offers from Coram’s nurses was that common law made no provision for adoption. McClure writes, ‘Apprenticeship in these situations provided the legal basis for what was, emotionally, an adoption’.⁹¹ This category of ‘emotional adoption’ incorporates many of the conveniences associated with fictional adoptions. Even more significant is the date at which the Treasurer is writing, 1761. In the very properly set-up Foundling Hospital, the law was being acknowledged and no short cuts taken over adoption. It is even stranger then, that Dickens and the other novelists have no such nicety, nor apparently had people in general. It could be that Coram’s, as in so much else, was ahead of its time in its concern to safeguard ‘our children’.

These benevolent apprenticeships were, however, the exception and there are records of appalling apprenticeships,

⁸⁹ Taylor, J. B., op. cit., p.296.

⁹⁰ See Benjamin Disraeli’s novel, *Sybil*, 1845, in which the Chartist Movement is treated sympathetically and the urchin, Devil’s Dust, a child from the restive underclass of society, eventually becomes an MP. It resonates with Taylor’s reservations, and those of the thesis writer.

⁹¹ McClure, R. K., op. cit., p.130.

especially pauper apprenticeships. Coleridge was a campaigner for legislation to control their working hours and conditions. So horrendous was their lot that he referred to, 'our poor little White-Slaves, the children in our cotton Factories'.⁹²

Nineteenth-century attempts at reform

Poets were amongst those who campaigned for better conditions for the apprentices. Crabbe in his narrative poem, 'The Borough', 1804, sets down in harrowing detail the brutality of an apprentice-master, Peter Grimes, who so ill-uses his parish-boy apprentices that they fall down, their backs bloody and ridged with beatings.⁹³ This is during the latter part of the Industrial Revolution and shortly before the period of this thesis when the plight of destitute children was probably at its most horrifying. Reformers had not yet made much progress in bettering their lot, many of the earlier attempts at reform having failed, been ignored or were inadequate. Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her 'Cry of the Children', writes, 'Go out children, from the mine and from the city', and of a God whom the children perceive as 'speechless as a stone'.⁹⁴ It is as though the children feel that God himself has abandoned them.

⁹² Cunningham, H., *op.cit.* p.139.

⁹³ Appendix 9. Extract from George Crabbe's, 'The Borough', 1810. Benjamin Britten's opera, **Peter Grimes**, also tells his story.

⁹⁴ Appendix 10. Extract from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'Cry of the Children', *Oxford Library of English Poetry*, Wain, J. ed.,(London: Guild Publishing, 1996), vol. iii, p.51.

Cunningham argues that,

‘To the English the offence against childhood was compounded by the fact that it was occurring in “the country of the free” – in England. But in essence what Barrett Browning and others influenced by romanticism meant was a childhood for all children everywhere which was in harmony with nature and in which manual labour had no part’.⁹⁵

He cites Douglas Jerrold, one of the founders of ‘*Punch*’, writing in 1840 of factory children as being

‘children without childhood. ... He did not need to elaborate; the romantics had helped to fix in the British mind an idea of what childhood should be’.⁹⁶

Yet childhood for thousands of apprentices and labouring children was one of severe deprivation and downright cruelty.

Charles Kingsley in *The Water Babies*, 1863, presented a realistic boy-sweep, Tom, a far cry from Lamb’s sentimental whimsy a century earlier. The illustration to the first edition shows how wild, filthy and ragged the boy is, reflected in a mirror so the reader views him from two angles.⁹⁷ Compared with a nineteenth-century print of a

⁹⁵ Cunningham, H., op. cit., pp.143-144.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.144.

⁹⁷ Appendix 11. Illustration to Charles Kingsley’s, *The Water Babies*, 1863, taken from the second edition, 1864. This illustration also appeared in the first edition.

child-sweep, it is readily apparent that the illustration is no exaggeration.⁹⁸

Mary Carpenter, referred to earlier in this chapter, was one of the most vigorous reformers, trying to establish the child as a child and not a small labourer, and emphasising the need for a child to be reared within a family who positively cherished its dependency as part of its development. Shaftesbury, Angela Burdett-Coutts and Hesba Stretton were founders of the London Society for the Protection of Children, later to become the NSPCC, which strove to improve the lot of abused children.⁹⁹

Hesba Stretton's letter to '*The Times*', 8th January, 1884, displays not only the strength of her feelings but of how continuing was the neglect of children.

'Few people have any idea of the extent of active cruelty... towards children of our degraded and criminal classes. ... In Liverpool a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has been recently

⁹⁸ Appendix 12. Victorian print of a Child Sweep. Unattributed illustration in Hopkirk, M., *Nobody Wanted Sam*, (London: Murray, 1949), p.74.

⁹⁹ Appendices 13, 14, and 15.

Appendix 13. In 1997 the NSPCC placed a commemorative plaque on the building where on the 27th July, 1832, Stretton was born: 14, New St., Wellington, Shropshire. '*Shropshire Star*', 27th June, 1997. Appendix 14. Photograph taken by thesis writer, 2005, of the house where Stretton was born, now a gentlemen's outfitters and next to it an amusement arcade. Appendix 15. Photograph taken by thesis writer, 2005, of the church at Church Stretton. Inside is a stained glass window of a little girl in a green cape. It is a representation of the fictional Jessica.

started. ... the knowledge that such a Society exists will help passionate and brutal persons to control their violent tempers; and children thus protected from their tyranny will not grow up brutalized [sic] or enfeebled in mind and body'.¹⁰⁰

Angela Burdett-Coutts together with Dickens set up Urania Cottage, a home for unmarried mothers and their children. The sight of the young prostitutes on 'their nightly parade beneath her window' prompted her action.¹⁰¹ Dickens' own work in this sphere went well beyond highlighting the condition of the destitute in his novels. It extended to much personal endeavour in the oversight of Urania Cottage and its needy occupants.

Thus, by the end of the period of this thesis, there were more vigorous attempts to raise concern for destitute children by Parliamentarians like Shaftesbury, philanthropists like Burdett-Coutts, and writers as disparate as Dickens and Stretton. In his autobiography, Charles Shaw pays tribute to their efforts on behalf of

'... little children[...] passing through a very Tophet of agony, and their cries were heard only by such folks as Mrs. Barrett Browning, Carlyle and Lord Ashley'.¹⁰²

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¹⁰⁰ Appendix 16. Letter by Hesba Stretton to *The Times*, 8th January, 1884.

¹⁰¹ Healey, E. *Lady Unknown: The Life of Angela Burdett-Coutts*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985), p.80.

¹⁰² Ashley was the earlier title of Lord Shaftesbury.

The perception and understanding of adoption; chronological change

Dickens and his contemporaries had an utterly different understanding of what it meant to be adopted from that of today. They regarded it from a pre-1926 aspect. In the mid-nineteenth century it was an altogether more flexible contract without legality and not necessarily either permanent or long term. It is an entirely reasonable argument, therefore, that a sharper reader-awareness of the displacee's situation pertained when the huge safety-net of legality, now taken for granted, is removed. The adopted child can be rejected with all that implies of social, emotional and material withdrawal. Granted, one cannot apply scientific 'proof' of this heightened anxiety engendered in an earlier reader, but it is a very strong conjecture.

A literary example of just such a rejection occurs in *Oliver Twist* when Rose as a child is

'... taken by some wretched cottagers, who reared it as their own. ... the people began to sicken[...]of their fine humanity. ... and there the child dragged on an existence miserable enough', until Mrs. Maylie, '... saw the child, pitied her, and took her home'.¹⁰³

Consider Oliver's anxiety to repay the Maylies and his distress when he fears that Brownlow will think of him discredibly. It adds weight to the argument that the earlier style of adoption engendered heightened anxiety in the displacee.

¹⁰³ OT p.426.

‘The child[...]ardently hoped[...]he could do something to show his gratitude[...]which would let them see the love and duty with which his breast was full[...]which would prove to them that the poor boy they had rescued from misery, or death, was eager to serve them with his whole heart and soul’.¹⁰⁴

Such a heavy debt of gratitude in so young a child and the boy’s emotional intensity over it is somewhat uncomfortable to a modern reader. Yet Dickens emphasises it by spelling out the child’s appreciation and intent to repay. No one was more aware of reader-comfort than was Dickens. He is willing to jolt readers severely when he presents them with child cruelty, or the severity of the law, but this is not such an instance. Here he is assuring readers that Oliver has the full measure of gratitude expected of a destitute child towards its benefactor.

Jane Eyre is an exception insofar as she voices her ingratitude and is sufficiently resentful to bloody her cousin. Hers is a new voice of the displacee, ahead of her time. That the narrative is first person strengthens the veracity of her remarkable attitude, and keeps the reader emotionally very close.

At the outset of this study of adoption and displacement, one major objective was to ascertain whether or not it was possible to adopt as informally and spontaneously as the novelists indicate. This

¹⁰⁴ *OT* p.246.

seemingly straightforward objective became much more complex with the startling connection between the late arrival of legal adoption in this country, and the realisation that at the time of writing the novels, it was not possible to adopt as it is now understood, i.e. with mandatory legal safeguards.

This finding posited a whole new set of questions and considerations. It was not just that the answer to the original question was so positive, the investigations into legal and social history providing ample evidence that adoption, (of a kind), could be every bit as simple as the novelists represent. It now meant that even when adopted the displaced child had no security of tenure and was still hazardously positioned, although now for reasons previously unknown to the thesis writer and which appear to have hitherto gone unrecognised. The ameliorated state which adoption might seemingly bring about could not be relied on. Should unforeseen complications arise, or even a sudden whim on the part of the adopter, then the adoption could end as easily as it had begun. A reversal of fortunes might happen to the whole adoptive family, anyway, but that would be shared adversity. It is the particular and singular danger for the adopted child which needs to be emphasised in that it is far less protected, even when adopted, than would now be the case.

Just as we accept that earlier readers dropped tears of genuine grief over the deaths of Little Nell and Paul Dombey, mawkishly sentimental as this may appear today, so would they be affected by the plight of the fictional adoptees. With the awareness that the fictional

displaced child is often taken-in with very little forethought and is never free from the risk of being discarded, a different set of reader-responses are activated; the most obvious being that the adopter can contract out, (there being no contract), at any time.

This is not to suggest that Dickens and his contemporaries kept the threat of the adoptee's dismissal constantly in mind, but to argue that their shared understanding of social reality meant that they made different sense of what they read because they had a different frame of reference.

It is not dissimilar to the earlier attitude to infant mortality which is not that of a modern reader. Today, relatively few parents in the western world experience children's deathbeds, yet the experience was common to Victorians who related novelistic accounts of such to their own experiences of deep personal sorrow over the loss of children. So, too, would be their understanding of the adopted child, as differently understood as the sick child of today is from its nineteenth-century counterpart, fictional or factual; the latter encompassed by awful hazards which nowadays rarely threaten a child. Yet so much has been written about the understanding of infant mortality at that time, both in fact and fiction, and nothing one can find of a parallel kind as to the terms and conditions of adoption.

In view of all this it is fair to suggest that for Dickens *et al* there was more need for the displaced child by its behaviour, moral rectitude and general demeanour to justify not only being taken-in but,

importantly, allowed to stay on. This awareness affects the representation of the child who has to constantly negotiate and renegotiate many new and often perplexing conditions, for it is living within a family of which it is not truly a part, (although in happy circumstances it will eventually become so.) This has the two-fold effect of allying the reader, who recognises its problems, and also to result in a fictional child who is sometimes 'too good'.¹⁰⁵

With the notable exception of Pip, Dickens does not allow the displacees to fall into moral degeneracy, appearing to take the view that nurture takes precedence over nature and that improved circumstances bring about wider improvement. (The 'too good' Oliver defies all the rules with his eclectic response to events, benefiting from the good and emerging undefiled from the squalid.) Yet for Dickens and his readers the spectre of possible banishment for the displacees must have been very real and they would have construed what took place in the novel with this lurking awareness present. The adoptee must do well in order to justify the continuance of its adoptive state for it had no 'right' to a permanency.

Many of the displacees display remarkable agility in the way they respond to frequently changing homes, circumstances and families, which may well be accounted for by the uncertainty of their status. Oliver, for example, has no notion of what the word 'orphan' means, let alone the fact that he is one, yet manages to adapt to

¹⁰⁵ See Steedman, C., *Landscape for a Good Woman*, (London: Virago, 1986), pp.105-107, for a discussion of the 'too good child'.

environments as different as Fagin's den and the Maylie's happy domesticity.

Reading with this knowledge, a raised awareness is engendered that the displaced child cannot afford to make too many slips, and the will to succeed is more than commonly necessary. (Eventual success is of enormous importance to all the displaced children and is discussed in a later chapter.) At all times the writers come down strongly on the side of the child, thus capturing the reader's sympathy and engendering an indispensable need to know 'what happens next'.

All these conditions substantially affect the way the child is represented and how it maintains its emotional grip on the reader. Yet reader-aspirations are relatively unaffected by all this. The reader still wants his hopes gratified, the Grimwig-like sceptics proved wrong and benefactors justified; all very much in keeping with mid-nineteenth century notions of charity and the belief that God notices good deeds. Dickens's readers took in the content of the novel with such considerations deeply entrenched within their social psyche.

Frequently, often through innocence, the displacee challenges adult assumptions, family identity and social practice. Two examples of this are Deronda who poses some uncomfortable questions to his tutor about Papal bastards, and Jane Eyre who challenges unjust punishment meted out to herself and, more importantly, on behalf of Helen Burns.

The nineteenth-century novel repeatedly flags the topic of adoption and the novelists set their own value-system in which they highlight the cause of the foregrounded child, persuading the reader into a sympathetic, or even empathetic, warmth towards its plight.

The foregoing gives some surprising answers to this chapter's initial question about the ease of adoption. Yes, it was easy enough to adopt as it was then understood. What was new was the discovery that there was no legality about adoption, fictional or factual, at that time and, following on this, how easy it must have been to renege on the irregular contracts made. It is these findings which open up a wealth of conjecture as to the different usage and understanding of adoption between earlier and modern readers of the core-text novels.

That there is no clear cut-off point in 1926, the date of the Adoption Act, is obvious. More important is the question of how long it took for a whole set of readers to be affected by what takes place in the novels. It is probable that the vast majority, even today, do not make an accommodation to the pre-1926 understanding. Why should they? The 1926 Adoption Act and its provisions are not widely known outside those who have a vested interest in it. We read in the light of our own mental constructs which are acutely affected by the prevailing codes of any given time, and there appears to have been no attention drawn to the arguments made here.

There has almost certainly been no literary criticism of the effect on the reader of the changed circumstances of adoption. Much

has been written, for example, about child-parent relations, infant mortality and child labour in both fact and fiction, and the need to mentally accommodate to changing attitudes and usage. Surely to these should now be added the different conditions and understanding of what was regarded and practised as adoption pre-1926, especially as these apply to the novel. A search for literary discussion or criticism on the subject has turned up nothing of consequence. It would seem that the connection has been either ignored or simply not made.

Parting with a child

It is not within the remit of this thesis to dwell on the reasons why parents, factual or fictional, part with their children, but it is of enormous interest and this chapter would be incomplete without some mention of those who ‘murdered’ their children, gave them away, left them to the mercy of others, or parted from them with the utmost sorrow. Mostly they were helpless to do any other as the earlier evidence on those mothers who left their children at The Foundling Hospital has shown, and probably few were wicked or uncaring.

Some parents, however, appear to have been quite sanguine about it. Augustus Hare writes,

‘I was born[...]the youngest child of the family[...]and a most unwelcome addition’.¹⁰⁶ When his widowed godmother offers to take him, he is transferred ‘with

¹⁰⁶ Miller, A. and Papp, J. eds., *Peculiar People; The Story of my Life by Augustus Hare*, (1896-1900; Chicago: Academy, 1995 edn.), p.6.

glad acceptance'.¹⁰⁷ More than this, his mother adds, 'the baby shall be sent as soon as it is weaned, and if anyone else would like one, would you kindly recollect that we have others'.¹⁰⁸

This last comment is quite staggering in its implication that Mrs. Hare will allow almost anyone to relieve her of a child. It is almost an invitation to do so.

In the novels parents, especially mothers, who have to relinquish a child are treated sympathetically. *Oliver Twists's* dying young mother leaves him a locket and this accords with the entries in Coram's registers as to how the distressed mothers often left a memento for their child. Nichols and Wray in their comprehensive account of the Foundling Hospital write,

'... carefully preserved at the Foundling are books used since 1741 and described as billets in which are fastened little pieces of cotton[...]trinkets, various coins, ribbons, monograms and here and there a child's caul'.¹⁰⁹

Detailed notes of the child's clothing and identifying marks were set down so that the child could be identified at a later stage

¹⁰⁷ Miller and Papp, 1995, *op.cit.*, p.6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.9.

¹⁰⁹ Nichols, R.H. & Wray, F.A., *The History of the Foundling Hospital*, (1935; Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.119.

should it be reclaimed.¹¹⁰ Such detail is astonishing in its precision over individual destitute infants at a time when few cared about them and they were abandoned, or worse, daily.¹¹¹

In the novels, parents who have parted with a child not infrequently try later to make amends for their abdication of responsibility. Magwitch tries to make a 'gentleman' out of Pip who, although not his child, is one to whom he has a long-remembered debt of gratitude. (It is also another example of the all-important reciprocity which features so much in the sustainer-child duality.)¹¹² Similarly in *Silas Marner*, Godfrey Cass, as he matures and improves, attempts to reinstate Eppie whom he has for so long ignored. Lady Dedlock in *Bleak House*, has a less honourable account, although even she has redeeming features.

In this respect the novelists come close to a well-nigh universal truth; that parents do not lightly give up their children, and when they do it is not usually from indifference but has more to do with provision, or lack of it, class attitudes and fear of the consequences of having borne an illegitimate child.

¹¹⁰ Appendices 17, 18. Tokens received with foundling children and examples of clothing billets, McClure, R.K., *Coram's Children*, (Yale: University Press, 1981), pp.82-4.

¹¹¹ Dickens who visited there may well have seen such entries and borne them in mind in his description of Oliver's mother who leaves him a locket.

¹¹² See Chapter Four for a fuller discussion of the need for reciprocity, especially from the displacee to the sustainer.

Even today this has not changed. Jones writes,

‘The people whose children go into care and may be placed for adoption are amongst the most powerless in our society. The reasons [...] may be more to do with inadequate housing or homelessness, the fact that mothers have to work to make ends meet and cannot afford proper child-minding, or that they are relatively new to this country and have no network of relatives or friends who can step in and take the child in a family crisis’.¹¹³

This last strongly suggests that the reasons underlying the availability of children have changed very little over the centuries. There are no longer hordes of destitute children roaming the streets, (although there are significant numbers of adolescents living rough.) Provision has improved out of all recognition as have the strict safeguards governing adoption and fostering. What have not changed are the social evils of poverty and homelessness and the effects of these on the decisions made as to whether or not the children are kept by their parent(s), how they are reared and by whom.

Summary

In summary it is impossible to say with exactitude how closely what the writers describe correlates positively with what went on in this country at the time they were writing. On balance, however, there is considerable evidence that they were **not** exaggerating. On numbers

¹¹³ Jones, M., op. cit., p.5.

alone, the thousands of verminous, hungry children in the major cities begging, pick-pocketing, soliciting and dying were such a scourge that for anyone to take one in would be regarded at the basest level as one less burden on the public purse; others would regard it as an act of Christian charity. Were there an inheritance at stake the situation would have been more complex, but, with the exception of Henry Esmond, the fictional displacees of this thesis do not fall within this category.

What **can** be claimed is that in all the novels used here, adoption and the plight of the displaced child are prominent issues in both of which the novelists strongly promote the cause of the displacee. By making clear the uncertainties of its position within its new family, and the wider world, they enlist the compassionate concern of the reader. All emphasise that it is displacement, (although they do not use the word), which so strongly affects the child; a displacement in which it is housed within a new family but is not yet part of that family. Psychologically, physically, socially and emotionally, it is set down in a bewildering and often terrifying new territory where the accepted rules, mores and expectations are often a mystery to the displacee.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Jane Eyre, for example, on her first visit to Thornfield mistakes the housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax, for the mistress of the house, Brontë indicating here how narrow has been Jane's social range. Even in young womanhood, she has not acquired much acuity as to the indicators of status and position in a household.

What is unlikely is that many, or even any, of the displacees would be of the calibre of an Oliver with his immaculate integrity, and he must be accepted as he is, an exceptional innocent and a literary fiction. Far more credible are the inarticulate Heathcliff, ignorant Jo forever being required to 'move on', temper-driven Jane Eyre and bold, resentful Tattycoram.

The novelists have not overdrawn the plight of the destitute children, the degradation of street-life, the humiliations of the workhouse or, the original question, the instances of stray children moving from household to household with minimum difficulty. Lack of proper legislation and failure to implement such as there was, inadequate supervision by parish officers, the callous greed of apprentice-masters and, at almost all times, a strong aversion to public money being spent on destitute children make it highly probable that what the writers set out was pretty close to the actual state of affairs.

To take in or adopt a starveling would have posed no great problem for anyone so moved, regardless of motive. An evil Fagin would have found it just as easy as a kind and generous Mrs. Maylie, an enigmatic Earnshaw, or a frosty Mrs. Reed; and just as easy to turn them out were they so inclined. In the novels, none of the displacees are actually turned out. Rather they are ill-used like Heathcliff, or like Jane Eyre sent off to a punitive institution, or like Esther Summerson, emotionally rejected and slyly criticised. In reality, however, many such children were turned out as instanced in the case of Rosanna cited earlier in this chapter.

Children's rights were not safeguarded until around 1914, sometimes regarded as the threshold date of the 'modern child'. Compulsory schooling for all children in the 1880s probably helped to initiate and consolidate such safeguarding. Hendrick, 1990, writes,

'In 1800 the meaning of childhood was ambiguous and not universally in demand. By 1914 the uncertainty had been resolved and the identity determined, at least to the satisfaction of the middle class and the respectable working class. A recognisably "modern" notion was in place: childhood was legally, legislatively, socially, medically, psychologically, educationally and politically institutionalised'.¹¹⁵

Hendrick arrives at this point through a series of stages, including the Romantic child, the Evangelical child, the factory child and the schooled child through which childhood is socially constructed. This thesis closes with Forster's Elementary Education Act, 1870, bringing in the schooled child although its provisions were not fully implemented for over a decade, nor was it yet entirely free.

The present writer would quibble with Hendrick's assertion that by 1914 children were legally safeguarded because adoptees were not, as has been demonstrated. Nevertheless the rest of what he writes confirms what this chapter evidences; that it was not until some way into the twentieth century that the rights of the child began to be

¹¹⁵ Hendrick, H., 'Chapter Two' in James, A. & Prout, A., eds., *Constructing and Reconstructing British Childhood: contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*, (London: Falmer, 1990), p.36.

safeguarded so that they were no longer at the mercy of whatever forces they encountered.

As to what is meant by adoption as used by the writers, great caution must be exercised because it is so different from the current understanding. The fictional adoptees in this thesis experience the whole gamut of treatment ranging from rejection, cruelty and misuse, to affection, respect and romantic love.

This chapter set out to ascertain how easy or difficult it would have been to single out and take in a destitute child as described by the writers. The research undertaken leaves few doubts as to the opportunities for this and the facility of carrying it out. It was not only sparse provision, the sheer numbers of loose children, or even the lack of legislation over adoption. An even more compelling reason lurked beneath all these. It was that the children themselves were so cheaply held.

Chapter Two

Illegitimacy and adoption

Outline

This chapter is devoted to the taking-in of children, often erroneously called adoption, and to illegitimacy. It examines the superstitions, religious beliefs, social mores and class differences surrounding them which are encountered in both fact and fiction. Throughout there is much inter-weaving of illegitimacy and adoption, partly because the two are clearly related and also because of the premiss that prejudice towards the former affected attitudes towards the latter.

Illegitimacy, sometimes mistakenly assumed, sometimes hinted at, sometimes openly declared, occurs frequently in the novels used here. For example, Esther Summerson and Oliver are illegitimate, Henry Esmond is long assumed to be so, Jessica has an unknown father, and one can but guess as to Heathcliff's provenance. Illegitimacy is often linked with adoption and both have such perdurance that it is difficult to examine one without the other. Bastardy, in itself, is 'so visible an offence, leaving its mark in the shape of a child needing provision',¹ and its consequences are often far-reaching for both the child and its natural or adoptive parents.

¹ Laslett, P., Oosterveen, K., Smith, R.M., eds., *Bastardy and its Comparative History*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1980), p.72.

In fact and fiction there was often prejudice towards both illegitimacy and adoption and it is important to look at the main reasons for such prejudice. Partly, it stemmed from an abhorrence of the illegitimacy which so often preceded adoption itself. Superstition, religion or notions of respectability were also determining factors. Moreover, there were wide class differences in the ways in which a bastard child was regarded and provided for – or left unprovided. Important to this thesis was how far what takes place in the novels had any positive correlation with recorded history.

Illegitimacy in both fact and fiction is almost always a moral as well as a social problem. For example, Laslett writes,

‘The frequency of illegitimate babies was taken by eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth-century registrars and social commentators as the index of the moral state of a community, and especially of a nation’.²

In this chapter some of the problems encountered in examining these topics will be discussed, as will evidence from social historians which throws light on attitudes towards, and treatment of, both bastards and adoptees. Using examples from the chosen novels, illegitimacy, (real or assumed), is discussed and a brief look taken at evidence from a wider group of novels of the same period. Fictional minor displacees who are illegitimate, and aristocratic and clergy bastards, are also discussed. Following on this, some informed

² Laslett *et al*, 1980, *op. cit.*, p.1.

speculations are made about attitudes towards, and treatment of, both illegitimacy and adoption based on what the novelists put forward and what evidence from social history indicates.

Problems arising

Problems have arisen chiefly because of the varying attitudes towards illegitimacy, and even more so towards adoption, at different periods; not least because such prejudice was, and is, often hidden. For example there is the quandary of those who may be kindly disposed towards unwanted or illegitimate children, but are secretly fearful of some genetic taint lurking in a child of unknown origin. To these can be added those at the other end of the spectrum who profess goodwill but are fundamentally prejudiced and who for reasons of 'good form' hide their misgivings. Added to such complexities are the changing attitudes at different periods of time. Lastly, because despite considerable consultation and correspondence with archivists, librarians and adoption agencies, there was a real lack of hard evidence as to the origins of the widespread prejudice towards adoption. Informed speculation based on such evidence as arises, has to suffice.³ However, such speculation here is based on potent evidence from social historians and a variety of cultural material in the Appendices to this, and other, chapters.

³ Laslett *et al*, 1980, confirm that in a stratified society such as ours there are, historically, wide differences in attitudes towards illegitimacy. References to their findings are made throughout.

Such findings have much relevance to this thesis because many of the fictional displacees experience varied prejudices towards both adoption and illegitimacy, while for others it is almost entirely absent. How far this mixed picture in the novels tallies with what historical evidence shows needed to be investigated

Aristocratic and clergy bastards

It is clear that the aristocracy and the lowest, most irresponsible classes, had more in common in their relatively relaxed attitudes towards illegitimacy than had either with the middle classes and the respectable poor. These last two social groups feared and frowned upon it because it offended the social, moral and religious codes to which they self-consciously adhered; on this historians are agreed. Amongst the nobility the occasional bastard was no great disgrace and apart from the barrier to title and estate, the child was not discriminated against and often lived within its natural family.⁴

Amongst the aristocracy there are innumerable examples of bastards who were happily maintained within their well-to-do families. One such is that of Lady Diana Duff Cooper.⁵ Hartcup, 1984, writes, '... there was no shortage of extramarital affairs

⁴ See Hartcup, A., *Children of the Great Country Houses*, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1982), p.88.

⁵ Cooper, A., in *A Durable Fire*, 1985, raises the possibility that her grandmother, Lady Diana Duff Cooper, was fathered by Harry Cust, then editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. She was reared as the daughter of the Duke of Rutland who always treated her as his own.

among the country house couples...'⁶ Allowances and bequests to mistresses and their children were often made. In her earlier work, Hartcup, 1982, writing of nineteenth-century aristocratic bastards, comments,

'The conventions of the day allowed these to be born to married women who slipped discreetly away to the Continent before their silhouettes began to attract attention'.⁷ She continues, 'Their babies were born abroad, and a few months later they came back to their homes and husbands'.⁸

More revealingly, when applied to this thesis, is her pointer to what happened to those illegitimate half-siblings who were not taken home. It shows not only how they were disposed of, but the differences in class attitudes towards the Foundling Hospital itself.

'The unlucky ones landed up in the Foundling Hospital – a fate which may, without Nelson's knowledge, have been that of Horatia's twin, born to him by Emma Hamilton'.⁹

⁶ Hartcup, A., *Love and Marriage in the Great Country Houses*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984), p.42.

⁷ Hartcup, A., *Children of the Great Country Houses*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982), p.88.

⁸ Some were reared within the family amongst their half-siblings, others by relatives. *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.88.

Yet as evidenced in the preceding chapter, there was much competition for places within the Foundling Hospital by the respectable poor. However, it was clearly considered an unfortunate place for those with a claim to blue blood.

A literary example of a titled bastard occurs in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, 1860, when Sir Percival Glyde hides the fact that he was born out of wedlock and burns to death while attempting to alter the parish register, then a hanging offence. This indicates how severe were the penalties for attempting to hold a title and estate falsely. Illegitimacy within the aristocracy **does** matter when these are at stake.

The Church also was relatively tolerant of clergy lapses. For instance, Wolsey had a child by 'one Larck's daughter', who eventually became Dean of Wells and appears to have suffered no disadvantage from his illegitimacy.¹⁰ Possibly the Church shielded its clergy from criticism arising from the laity or, conversely, made allowances for human frailty in clergy, especially the well-heeled.

The degree of prejudice towards adoption outside fiction had to be investigated to see how far it corresponded with what takes place in the novels. As so many of the fictional adoptees are illegitimate, or thought to be, it was impossible to investigate one without the other. It is hard to over-emphasise how strong was the prejudice towards illegitimacy in nineteenth-century England amongst the middle classes

¹⁰ Pinchbeck, I. & Hewitt, M., *Children in English Society*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), vol. 2, p. 203.

and the respectable poor; the latter taking their attitude in this, as in so much else, from the middle classes to which they aspired.

Moreover, economic issues surfaced; illegitimates were a drain on the public purse which aroused widespread resentment. It was an issue of which Parliamentarians were keenly aware. For example, during the period of this thesis Lord Brougham, an eminent politician, argued firmly that only the minimum relief be afforded to the destitute. This attitude is at all times highly important and must be stressed because such publicly declared disregard largely accounts for much of the deprivation of the poorest people in society.

Records of the poor, obviously, are not kept in the way as those of noble families and, because of this, recorded examples of ordinary people dealing with illegitimacy and adoption are rare. Nevertheless, within the poorest classes there seems to have been a tolerance arising, generally speaking, from a more relaxed or even careless attitude towards bastardy as citations from Laslett and Wall, 1972, confirm.¹¹

Evidence from social history

Barret-Ducrocq investigated illegitimacy, class and gender in nineteenth-century London, and a very mixed picture of prostitution, degradation and a desperate grip on 'respectability' emerged¹². Some

¹¹ Laslett, P. & Wall, R., *Household and Family in Past Time*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp.227-228.

¹² Barret-Ducrocq, F., *Love in the Time of Victoria: Sexuality, Class and Gender in Nineteenth Century London*, (trans. Howe, J.), (1989; London: Verso, 1991 edn.)

hard-pressed mothers actually steered daughters into prostitution, often because the alternative was to starve or enter the workhouse. Some of the unmarried girls tried against all the odds to keep their infants.¹³

Much of Barret-Ducrocq's research drew on evidence from The Foundling Hospital, and here an important barrier arose. Until 1980, files more than a hundred years old which had to do with fostering/adoption applications were available for inspection. However, at that point the Hospital decided to close them for another fifty years in order to protect the privacy of any living descendants. Thus, only records prior to 1840 were available when Barret-Ducrocq was carrying out her study.

At all times considerable efforts were made to assist the mothers to become reinstated in society. From 1760, the Hospital 'assumed responsibility for shepherding their mothers back to the paths of, "hard work and virtue"'.¹⁴ The Hospital initially took in all unwanted or deserted babies but this liberal policy changed because it was felt that people were being let off too lightly over their responsibility towards their out-of-wedlock children. For a time only war orphans and the children of deserted wives were taken in and then, from 1801, only illegitimates were received.

¹³ Barret-Ducrocq, 1989, op.cit., cites the case of Fanny as one such young woman, p.126.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.40.

Many of the young women who applied for their children to be received virtuously affirmed that they had been the victims of ‘carnal passion’¹⁵ or betrayal after a promise of marriage, or against their will. Interestingly, there were some rebels who made no such claims about promises of marriage. Barret-Ducrocq writes

‘Here at last is a group of genuine moral reprobates of the sort tirelessly castigated by nineteenth century reformers[...]not distinguishable from the other applicants by origin, profession or age.’¹⁶

(Their uncompromising honesty and apparent freedom from conventional protestations of inexperience is worthy of a further study.)

Two clear findings emerge. Firstly, that Coram’s made exhaustive enquiries about the character of the young women who sought their help. Secondly, that the young women mostly put up a protective camouflage trying to establish their seduction or betrayal by opportunist men. Passion was taboo so far as their prospects of help from the Foundling Hospital were concerned.

The attitudes of the relatives of the petitioners are of interest. One young man writes of ‘the burden so improperly thrust upon

¹⁵ Barret du Crocq, 1982, *op.cit.*, p.41.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.94-95.

himself and his parents by his unfortunate sister'.¹⁷ Numerous examples of this same attitude are cited and there is no doubt that within the family the cost of an illegitimate child was no small consideration. (In this the family reflects the attitude of the State.) Nevertheless, families were not entirely devoid of some feeling of support for an unmarried pregnant daughter or sibling.

Employers, too, behaved less cruelly than is popularly supposed. Although not tolerant of illicit relations, they were not exceptionally harsh when it occurred amongst their employees and many went to considerable efforts in persuading the putative father to marry or support a pregnant women servant.¹⁸ What was feared most of all was rumour and gossip within the social and neighbourhood grouping. In her study, Barret-Ducrocq found this was not class-related.¹⁹

However, when the child is the result of a married woman's liaison there is much greater prejudice towards the mother and, quite often, the child. One famous fictional example reflecting this attitude is that of Lady Isobel whose fall from grace and subsequent downhill course is the nub of Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne*, 1861.

From this, it would seem that the novelists in general, although not all those used in this thesis, may have over-reached themselves in

¹⁷ Ibid., p.166.

¹⁸ Barret-Ducrocq, 1989, op.cit., pp.172-176.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.169.

their representation of family attitudes towards bastardy. George Eliot depicts a condemnatory attitude in both *Silas Marner* and *Adam Bede* at two different social levels. Godfrey Cass from the squirearchy and Hetty Sorrel from modest farming stock, are similarly aghast at the thought of their illegitimate child becoming known. Barret Ducrocq's research just cited, suggests that local rumour and gossip were all-important factors at work. However, it is the loss of long-held respect for the family in the community which is hugely important to both Godfrey Cass and Hetty Sorrel, each dreading the possibility of their shameful situation becoming known.

If we allow that the novelists may have over-drawn the picture in this, we have to ask why, and the most probable answer seems to be multi-faceted. One, that this is in the interest of the dramatic content of the novel and helps to excite reader-compassion for the fictional child. There is also the possibility that the writers feel the need to maintain the moral high ground so as not to disturb their mainly middle-class readers, and are somewhat more punitive than would have been the case outside fiction.

Most significantly, there is no doubt that what fascinated the mid-Victorian readers was seduction, adultery, and adopted and displaced children. Knowing this, the novelists introduce these topics and make them as dramatic as possible whilst still keeping a grip on reality. Thus, they place obstacles in the way of the displaced child in order to provide challenges which will test the child's mettle and give it something to overcome, thereby establishing not only compassion

but reader-respect for the child.

However, set against the evidence from Laslett and Barret Ducrocq, it is reasonable to speculate that there was more support for the unmarried woman and her child than may be supposed from what the novelists put forward.

Laslett and Oosterveen's major study, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations*, 1977, raises several relevant points. Firstly, there is little evidence in the novels of what are referred to as 'repeaters', i.e. women who give birth to more than one illegitimate child.²⁰ Examples of mothers who continue to be bastard-bearers are rare in the novels and it is easy to understand why this should be so, for it would be straining the sympathy of even the most well-disposed reader to present a mother who produced sizeable numbers of bastards.²¹

Secondly, Laslett and Oosterveen stress how much more likely one was to lose a father than a mother, and also how rare it is to lose both parents during childhood. They write,

'... two points we have stressed more than once[...]the first is how much more likely you were to lose your father than your mother, and still are. ... The second is how rare it always has been to lose both your parents

²⁰ Laslett, P., and Oosterveen, K., *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.149.

²¹ A rare literary example of one such 'repeater' is Sue Bridehead in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, 1896, and she was ostracised by society.

when you are a child. In common parlance the word “orphan” seems to mean one who is entirely bereft of the father who begat him and the mother who brought him into the world, and Cinderella is the archetypal orphan. But Cinderella was a rarity in the traditional world where the story – that influential piece of make-believe – is set’.²²

Walvin’s citing of street children assumed to be parentless because they were running loose also accords with this.²³

However, it does not accord with what the core-text novelists used here put forward. Obviously, much depends on how the writers allow a parent to become ‘lost’, but certainly what they indicate is at variance with historical evidence. Oliver, Copperfield, Pip, Jane Eyre, Henry Esmond and possibly Heathcliff have all lost, or lose, both their parents at a very early age and in this they are atypical when tested against Laslett’s evidence.

Moreover, there is the ever-present problem of knowing just what were the social rules which governed the lives of ‘ordinary’ people. It has to be emphasised what a rarity it was for ordinary people to set down day to day events, and that when they did, especially at a time when literacy itself was rare within their ranks, they become to some extent no longer ‘ordinary’. Added to this, they tended to record what was

‘highly conventional, so proper and improving that we

²² Laslett and Oosterveen, 1977, op cit., p.172.

²³ Walvin, J., *A Child’s World*, (1980; London: Penguin, 1982 edn.), p.150.

do not know how much of it to believe'.²⁴ Thus, when they record something outrageous such as the practising of magical rites, '...and above all if a servant girl produced a bastard child, it was likely that expression would be given to the conventions and regulations which should have been obeyed.'²⁵

In other words, we get to know the rules and expectations of society when such rules are flouted or broached rather than when they are observed; what is taken for granted is not usually written down.

Laslett concludes,

'In our day we have elaborately enlightened views on illegitimacy; so much so that it may soon become quite difficult from public records to whom this unwelcome and undeserved stigma should be attached. Nevertheless, it is satisfactory in a way to find out that over the centuries of English history illegitimacy levels were, on the whole, low'.²⁶

From this it would seem that bastard children were not a majority of those who were parentally deprived, and here, the foregrounded displacees in the novels conform with actuality. In the sample used in this thesis, most are not bastards, although this was not a determinant in the initial selection. What is crucial to this thesis is not illegitimacy alone, but how far the children match up to the

²⁴ Laslett, et al, 1977, op.cit., p.102.

²⁵ Laslett *et al*, 1977, op.cit., p.102.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.257-8.

category of 'displaced', one reared outside its normal biological family.

Laslett *et al*, 1980, write,

'The problem of deciding whether there was a permissive attitude to bastardy is made more difficult by two further facts. Firstly, that in a stratified society those in one stratum may not see bastardy as a frightful offence, whilst those in other strata may condemn it fiercely'.²⁷

(This confirms evidence given earlier in this chapter that aristocratic and clergy bastards were not particularly discriminated against.) They continue,

'Secondly, that most of our evidence comes from court records, where the handling of this offence, and the degree of severity of the punishment may have borne little relation to the actual feelings at local level'.²⁸ They conclude, 'We can only speculate on the attitude of ordinary folk to bastardy and on possible changes in that attitude over the years. Throughout the three centuries there seems to have been no difficulty about having these base children baptised and from this one might argue that they were generally accepted. But against this stands the fact that many mothers must have had their bastards baptised out of their own parish. Whether this was out of a sense of shame or because they were living with the father in his parish or were away from home in service at the time of the

²⁷ Laslett, *et al*, 1980, *op.cit.*, p.118.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.118-9.

child's birth it is impossible to ascertain'.²⁹

Subsequent correspondence and conversations between Martin Olive, Senior Local Studies Librarian of the City of Sheffield, and the present writer revealed evidence of much harsher attitudes in the general public and, in particular the clergy, towards bastardy. This has much relevance for the prejudice towards the adopted children of this thesis, many of whom were bastards. It is the best hard evidence that has been found for the purposes of this thesis.

The evidence comes from an article in '*The Councillor and Guardian*'.³⁰ The writer is seeking to gain support for a scheme run by the Sheffield Board which put abandoned children out to foster homes or into service in carefully selected families.

One Anglican claimed that children should be brought up in the position that God has placed them. ... A Unitarian declared that time and money were being wasted on children who were born in sin and bred in iniquity, and could not be made better. ... A Wesleyan quoted Biblical teaching on the sins of the fathers being visited on the children and a Congregationalist considered that the children of idle, drunken and dissolute parents should not be provided with playgrounds and every appliance for amusement'.³¹ It was even

²⁹ Ibid., p.119.

³⁰ Anonymous article on 'Children of the State; Sheffield's successful experiment', in '*The Councillor and Guardian*', Farrow, T., ed., (London: Councillor and Guardian Offices, 1898), pages unnumbered.

³¹ Ibid., unnumbered.

suggested that the children should be ‘taken out on to the moors’.³² This last is, arguably, as bad as baby-farming insofar as there is, seemingly, an intent to do away with them. (The rather large number of references from the same source are used here because they demonstrate a particularly uncharitable aspect of different religious sects.) Every one of the preceding comments puts the view that it was not the duty of the State, i.e. the people, to succour such children. Rather both Church and State appear determined to do the minimum for destitute children.

The prejudice which the writer cites and against which he argues, is that shown towards children abandoned in early childhood. Now these are just the kind of children who may have been adopted and, thereby, displaced, and the views put forward clearly tend to consolidate the earlier surmise made here that the fear of taint from ‘bad parentage’ was what society believed in and most feared.

This article is dated almost thirty years after the period of the novels used here, but there is no evidence that attitudes would have been gentler during the mid-century. Indeed they may well have been even harsher because it was only later in the century that efforts to improve the lot of illegitimates became more effective. The fears of those who so repudiated what the Sheffield Board were trying to do are very like those expressed against the work of Coram’s Hospital in the early years; namely, that laxity in public morals would ensue if the poor and their bastard children were let off too lightly.

³² Ibid., unnumbered.

What stands out glaringly is that the public attitude is so highly punitive towards the children for their destitute condition and possible illegitimacy. No concession is made to their innocence over the circumstances of their birth, parental failings or neglect, and the vulnerability of their youth which makes them unable to fend for themselves.

In an attempt to further the cause of the children, the writer quotes Ruskin's rejoinder to those who condemn 'indiscriminate charity'. Reiterating Christ's command, Ruskin said,

'Do not let yourselves be deceived by any of this common talk. ... The order to us is not to feed the deserving hungry, nor the industrious hungry, nor the amiable and well-intentioned hungry, but simply to feed the hungry'.³³ The writer goes on to express fears that because one generation is 'idle and dissolute' the next generation will be degenerate unless society educates and trains them. 'Surely to refuse to succour these children because of the sins of their parents is only to perpetuate the great "damnosa hereditas"'.³⁴

The two most significant aspects of this are, firstly, that the hard-liners who take such a punitive attitude towards the children of the socially undesirable are churchmen, both Anglican and Non-conformist. It seems that religious opinion in many quarters was not liberal, was not kind, and was certainly not the charitable Christianity to be found in Ruskin's powerful advocacy of the uncompromising

³³ Farrow, T., ed., 1898, op.cit., unnumbered.

nature of Christ's teaching. Secondly, Ruskin's reference to 'this common talk' is illuminating because it indicates that prejudice against such children, abandoned, illegitimate or from poor parentage, was widespread.

With such evidence added to that from the novels, the Foundling Hospital archives, and that from social historians, one cannot but conclude that it was prejudice against heredity and illegitimacy which most strongly militated against such children stemming from the popular belief that poor genetic background could not be countered by effective nurturing. Given that genetic endowment could not be eradicated, there seems to have been little faith in improvement arising from training, stability and affection, all components of positive nurturing. Poor heredity was indeed damning and the sins of the fathers in this do seem to have been visited on the children.

Illegitimacy, assumed illegitimacy and doing well; evidence from the novels

The illegitimate child has a special claim on the reader's affections for it is, from the outset, suffering from a disadvantage which is not of its making. To be illegitimate and also displaced doubles its disadvantage and, consequently, furthers its claim on the reader's goodwill.

Overcoming the stigma of illegitimacy is important in

³⁴ Farrow, T., ed., 1898, op.cit., unnumbered.

becoming successful in terms to be discussed in a later chapter. Those displaced children who are illegitimate, or assumed to be, and who do well merit special mention for as can be seen from the foregoing evidence, there was enormous prejudice against them outside the novel.

In the core-text novels, *Oliver Twist*, *Esther Summerson* and very likely *Heathcliff*, are illegitimate. *Henry Esmond* is allegedly so for the first part of the novel, although in his case it matters less because he is an aristocrat and subject to the more relaxed attitude of his class, being penalised only in the matter of title and estate, not affection. *Eppie* in *Silas Marner* is known to the villagers of Raveloe only as the destitute child of a dead vagrant and assumed to be illegitimate, although the reader is cognisant of her parentage.

In the cases of *Oliver Twist* and *Esther Summerson*, both illegitimate but showing by the delicacy of their behaviour and person that theirs is no vulgar breeding, the business of that birth is treated with tact verging on tenderness. *Oliver's* mother, *Agnes Fleming*, is represented as a beautiful girl of good family, deeply in love with *Edwin Leeford*, close friend of *Brownlow* and father of her child. Indeed, *Dickens* steps out of the novel to defend the bastard child, his sentiments spoken by *Brownlow*,

‘The term you use[...]is a reproach to those who long since passed beyond the feeble censure of the world. It reflects disgrace on no-one living except you who use

it'.³⁵

Moreover, this is said as he draws Oliver close to him and lays a fond and protective hand on his head; body language is every bit as significant as words at this key point.

It is a foretaste of what, a decade and a half later, Dickens repeats in *Bleak House* when Esther Summerson, illegitimate daughter of Captain Hawdon and Lady Dedlock, is kept free from the taint of bad character, although in childhood she suffers from the bitter veiled hints cast by her Aunt Barbary. (The very name hints at barbed arrows with their sharp spikes.) Both Oliver and Esther are bastards who do very well, who are loved both within and without the novel and whose illegitimacy in no way damages their successful outcome.

The point here is that the novelists firmly promote the cause of the displacees who manage to do creditably despite the disadvantage which surrounds their birth. Dickens, in particular, again and again instances the courage and resourcefulness they exhibit when facing situations which are bewildering or dangerous to them in their displaced state. He emphasises their loyalty to their sustainers, their desire to repay them by reciprocal service, their ability to rise above their harsh lot and to embark on the all-important course of self-improvement.

³⁵ OT p.420.

Not all the displacees are of impoverished parentage but some are, notably Jessica and, in part, Eppie. The ability to overcome a poor start by means of kindness, training and example indicate a belief in the positive effects of proper nurturing which is seen to overcome dubious heredity. The writers unreservedly absolve the child from any disgrace over its birth, a considerable concession at that period and one which would almost certainly have run counter to the beliefs of many readers. With the exception of Dickens, this view is not presented in any great didactic fashion but depends for its effectiveness on the fictional child's progress by dint of good guidance and, importantly, its own efforts. This persuasive authorial tactic encourages the reader to share their enlightened view. The displacees do not have to achieve instant improvement and their mistakes and pitfalls, serious in the case of Pip and Estella, negligible in Eppie, form the main thrust of the novels and the focus of reader-interest.

Henry Esmond is an assumed bastard although the Castlewoods receive him warmly.

'... you cannot help your bar sinister, Harry, my dear fellow; and you belong to one of the best families in England, in spite of that',

says his cousin, Frank Castlewood.³⁶ Esmond is certainly not an outsider but he is a dependent, and it is this dependence which

³⁶ *HE* p.204.

marks him off from the others and of which he is keenly aware.

David Cecil claims that Thackeray's grasp on his characters sometimes fails him,

'... especially when the plot of this story brings him up against an incident involving the delicate question of sexual irregularity'.³⁷

He uses Pendennis from the novel of that name as an example of this.³⁸ Yet Thackeray deals very convincingly with Esmond's character development in his major decision to lay no claim to the title, even when apprised of his legitimacy. The Castlewoods have all, in their different ways, been objects of his devotion and at this point in the novel he is in love with Beatrix, venerates Rachel and is protective towards young Frank Castlewood. What is more likely than with such emotions at work, his sense of indebtedness and his tendency to priggishness, he should sacrifice his own interests in favour of theirs? It evokes reader-admiration coupled with the wish that all should be revealed, as much for the sake of recognition of Esmond's selflessness rather than any great concern over his legitimacy. He is in Pope's splendid list of those who 'do good by stealth and blush to find it fame'.³⁹

³⁷ Cecil, D., *Early Victorian Novelists*, (1934; London: Constable, 1935 edn.,) p.95.

³⁸ Cecil cites the case of Pendennis, 1848-50, 'being presented to us as improbably chaste'. *Ibid.*, p.100.

³⁹ Pope, A., *On Paradise Lost, Epilogue Dial.* i, 136.

George Eliot's Eppie is another who is presumed illegitimate. In her case it is materially less important, her father being merely from the small squirearchy. Nonetheless, when Cass belatedly claims her as his daughter and wishes to raise her from her humble status, it is a moment of decision for Eppie who shows her moral fibre by refusing a social rise and maintaining her devotion to Marner, her father in all but biological fact. What is important here, and what allies her with Esmond, is that both do well and gain reader-recognition even without the lustre of legitimacy.

Certainly Thackeray and George Eliot are liberal-minded in their treatment of the bastard child for both Esmond and Eppie are very promising even before being made 'respectable'. Moreover, they are doubly rewarded for, having done well when assumed to be bastards and then discovered to be legitimate, they are given an extra flourish which is always useful to the displaced child who needs an extra touch of 'dash'. They are in the line of the Agincourt warriors who, facing tremendous disadvantage in numbers, are spurred on by 'the fewer men, the greater share of honour'.⁴⁰ The displaced children have not only carried a prejudicial burden, but a misplaced one, and yet still triumph; an outcome very sweet to the reader.

Dickens is also benign towards his illegitimates for both Oliver Twist and Esther Summerson remain illegitimate but do very well. He sharply illustrates the unfair prejudice Esther, a charming little girl,

⁴⁰ Shakespeare, W., *Henry V*, iv, iii, 20.

suffers from her Aunt Barbary's taunts before he transfers her to the wiser care of Jarndyce, (yet another of his lonely bachelor sustainers.) Given responsibility and the happy companionship of his two wards, Esther develops from a timid, apprehensive child into a modest but highly capable young woman of considerable charm.

Dickens seems to be saying that it is never too late to develop well after a poor start for Esther is on the verge of womanhood when Jarndyce steps in. Psychologically, this is weak and is certainly at variance with Thackeray's Father Holt, a Jesuit who believes in the crucial effect of the first seven years. Yet Esther's development is convincing relying as it does on the removal, (albeit late), of a prejudiced sustainer for a wiser one.

It is left to one of his minor displacees, the uncomfortable Tattycoram in *Little Dorrit*, to burn with shame over her birth, the unfairness of which is stressed by the even more uncomfortable Miss Wade.

'You can have your droll name again, playfully pointing you out and setting you apart, as it is right you should be pointed out and set apart. (Your birth, you know; you must not forget your birth.)'⁴¹

Yet what appears to be acute sensitivity here on the part of Dickens is to some extent blunted later when he implies that the

⁴¹ LD p.356.

feeling of being stigmatised resides only within Tattycoram herself, for on her return to the Meagles she cries,

‘I used to think[...]that people were all against me because of my first beginning; and the kinder they were to me the worse fault I found in them. I made it out that they triumphed over me[...]when I know – when I even knew then, if I would – that they never thought of such a thing’.⁴²

It is as though the reader is being asked to go along with the girl’s retrospective guilt over a foolish hyper-sensitivity on her part, whereas, in fact, her resentment has been perfectly understandable to the reader.

Dickens is inconsistent here, for even allowing that society places no slur on her illegitimacy – a most unlikely and exceptionally generous attitude on the part of society at that time – Tattycoram is not a *tabula rasa* when she flees to Miss Wade but has a decade of upbringing by the Meagles behind her. This being so, her attitude is far more likely to be a learned response stemming from her sensitivity over her unknown origins and the awareness that her role is not as sister to Pet Meagles but companion-servant. Even struggling for fairness and allowing for Tattycoram’s subjectivity, it is not satisfactory, for the reader thoroughly understands her resentment and the feeling that she is being penalised for something not of her

⁴² LD p.879.

making.

Heathcliff cannot altogether be claimed as a bastard for his origins are a mystery. Certainly Earnshaw is generous enough to the 'fatherless child' and shows him more affection than he does to his legitimate son. (Brontë is unlike Dickens in this for the Meagles, good though they are, privilege their own daughter.) However, Heathcliff suffers prejudice not only from other family members but from servants too, and this prejudice extends to his 'dark as the devil' hair and eyes. This last, in particular, draws on superstitious and quasi-religious views. It points to one who is 'other', an 'outsider'.

Brontë here is steering those readers who understand the sub-text into a clear possibility of Earnshaw's paternity. She does this by showing Earnshaw's preference for the boy, and naming him after an earlier son who has died. Most of all, the fact that he has brought him all the way from Liverpool to the West Riding, (a tremendous and difficult journey over the rough terrain of the Pennines), shows more than a casual interest in the child. This, in turn, leads to the awful possibility of incest when Heathcliff and Cathy fall in love. Thus, it draws on two topics which were of immense interest to the reader of the period, illegitimacy and incest, the latter possibility only made 'available' to sophisticated readers who understood and drew on the sub-text.

In *Jane Eyre*, we know that Adèle is the daughter of Cécile

Varens and that Rochester may, or may not, be her father. In any case, as Cécile Varens is unmarried her child is, technically, illegitimate. The fact that Adèle is French, (often emphasised), and the ward of a rich man makes her 'different' and hard to place socially. In the novel she is not an object of censure because of her birth; rather it is her predisposition towards coquetry and preoccupation with fripperies which have to be ironed-out. Any implied censure has to do with what are regarded as foreign traits and values rather than illegitimacy.

Both the Brontës make unresolved paternity important for it was, and still is, of such absorbing interest to the reader, although the response of a century and a half ago would not be that of today when many child-bearing women deliberately choose to remain single and, in the main, it excites little comment. To the nineteenth-century middle-class reader, illegitimacy was shameful not only to the child-bearer; its stigma extended to the whole family, including the illegitimate child as evidenced earlier in this chapter. (This ties in with one of the main arguments of this thesis; that the fictional adoptions, having different parameters from those of today, tapped into a very different set of reader-sensibilities.)

In status, Adèle is not unlike Harriet Smith in Jane Austen's *Emma*, 1816, who, although known to be illegitimate, mixes in good society. This is, in large measure, because both are well-provided for by their fathers, (in one case acknowledged, in the other not quite acknowledged), and are not a drain on the public purse. At the end of the novel, Adèle becomes even more like Harriet for she, too, is sent

off to a decent boarding-school; a fair enough future for a minor displacee.

From these examples, it can be seen how varied are the attitudes towards illegitimacy as evidenced in the novels. On the one hand an illegitimate displacee has to have an allowance made because the 'sin' is not theirs, or to be placed with a family who will not hold it against the child. Or when, like Oliver, the child is discovered to be of 'good' family it can claim respectability from biological inheritance. Or, it can be revealed that the child has been mistakenly considered illegitimate, as Eppie and Henry Esmond are, and having done well despite an unwarranted burden get a double fanfare; the extra accolade so important to the displacee.

Set against these is the hard fact that illegitimacy would have been considered socially and morally reprehensible by the middle-class readers who formed the vast majority of the novel-reading public; an attitude shared by the literate ranks of the better-off working-class readers who took their attitude in this, as in so much else, from the middle class to which they aspired. Given such mixed findings, it is best to avoid any conclusive comments as far as the fictional displacees are concerned.

Minor fictional displaced children and illegitimacy

Although illegitimacy as such is not usually specified, the

reader assumes that most of the minor displacees are base-born. In Dickens alone, so many come from the workhouse, the Foundling Hospital, or off the streets, that there is good reason to doubt their parentage. Many of them, like the Marchioness, are introduced as little skivvies or, at best, a companion-servant such as Tattycoram and the reader knows little of their provenance. Dickens's readers would have required little in the way of explanation of how they came to be abandoned because such children were so common as to be in no way unusual. Walvin, 1982, gives overwhelming evidence that thousands of such destitute children who had fled from the workhouse, cruel apprenticeships, or been abandoned were to be found in all the major cities.

'...orphaned, deserted, neglected or simply left to fend for themselves[...]there seemed no end to the supply of independent children infesting the streets'.⁴³

In any case, it matters very little when fictional minor displacees are illegitimate because there is no need for them to be made respectable as the foregrounded children have to be, nor any need to trace their antecedents. Their status as servants is perfectly adequate for the purposes of the novel, it being better to be a servant in a decent family than to roam the streets or enter a workhouse. They remain in the servant class, their social mobility rising or falling a little in keeping with the fortunes of their employers.

⁴³ Walvin, J., 1982, *op.cit.*, p.151.

What should be kept in mind is that these minor children all stem from the lower class but are presented by middle-class writers. At this time few of the working class were literate and it is not until the early twentieth century that writers from their ranks, notably D.H. Lawrence, make their entry. They were the first generation of writers to benefit from Forster's 1870 Elementary Education Act.⁴⁴ In the novels used in this thesis, however, and in those of the nineteenth century generally, the minor children are presented from without and the reader is invited to feel compassion for them unless, as with the Dodger, they are from the criminal or debased class. They are represented as comic or pathetic, often known mainly through idiosyncratic mannerisms rather than any character delineation.⁴⁵ They are not gross or repulsive as Hogarth had earlier depicted the vulgar poor. Some are memorable for their constancy.⁴⁶ Their purpose is to serve the interests of the foregrounded children, or as comic relief. They are expendable and sometimes die as the important children, with the exception of Little Nell, must not.

Illegitimacy in their case is of not much consequence for no one is concerned about their parentage, and if they are adopted it is

⁴⁴ In France Émile Zola, who was not working-class, wrote *Germinal*, 1885, a novel about a mining community in northern France.

⁴⁵ In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 1840, Dickens characterises Tom Scott by his repeatedly standing on his head to show his defiance of his master, Quilp. *TOCS* p.46.

⁴⁶ Little Dick, *Oliver Twist's* sick workhouse companion, longs to get to Heaven before his dead sister forgets him, *OT* p.132.

only as companion-servants like Tattycoram, or Sally Jupe in *Hard Times*. Of the writers used here, it is Dickens who uses them most widely as part of the rich background he invariably sets up and which explores astonishing minutiae in all his novels.

One minor displacee, however, is atypical insofar as she is both intelligent and socially mobile. The sharp Marchioness in *The Old Curiosity Shop* is from the outset presented as able to use her wits advantageously; the perfect foil to the tender, unworldly Nell. Moreover, she is likeable and her influence on Swiveller is markedly good. He sends her to be ‘finished’ at a boarding-school and then marries her, thus moving her out of servant status to modest middle-class comfort. She is an exciting departure from the more usual minor displacees, not only for this social leap, but for managing to rise above her hinted-at parentage, namely Sally Brass and Quilp the dwarf, both quite monstrous. Thus, she steps outside the pattern of minor displacees and her astonishing progress indicates that she, at least, exemplifies the triumph of nurture over nature.

Mostly, however, the minor displacees are victims of their circumstances, utterly dependent on the treatment meted out by their employers and no one is concerned about their heredity or the way they turn out. In the main, they are treated with a patronising affection-cum-exasperation and the scope of their abilities and emotions is largely unexplored. As P.J. Keating in *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, writes,

‘...they appear briefly and then pass out of the novel

leaving behind them only the information that they were orphans or workhouse inmates and that their lives can never be clean of it'.⁴⁷

Another possible reason for the prejudice towards adoption, especially of the illegitimate, is that their poor health and the absence of knowledge of their genetic inheritance may well have affected their chances. Both in fact and in fiction adopted children were quite often taken as a replacement for a child who had died. In such cases there would be an understandable wish for a healthy child so as not to risk a second bereavement. One from unknown and quite likely poor or sickly parentage may well have given rise to doubts about the wisdom of such an undertaking. Secondly, should an adopted child from unknown parentage turn out badly, this would reflect unfavourably on the adoptive family and put family reputation at risk. Lastly, and importantly, potential adopters might have feared that dubious members of the adopter's natural family were lurking in the background, ever ready to cadge, cause embarrassment or even blackmail the adopting family.⁴⁸

In two novels outside those used here but worth citing as examples, these exact possibilities arise. Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* is taken-in by her rich Bertram cousins. Years later when Fanny

⁴⁷ Keating, P.J., *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p.18.

⁴⁸ Dickens allows the Rev'd Milvey to utter this exact warning to the Boffins. *OMF* p.104.

visits her family, their seedy, feckless way of life contrasts sharply with the assured manners and comfort of Mansfield Park and is acutely painful to both her and the reader. The second example is that of Mr. Knightley in *Emma*, who emphasises the discomfiture arising from the possibility of any revelations about Harriet Smith's background. He emphasises the wisdom of not aspiring to marriage beyond that of the young farmer who courts her.

Such misgivings amongst even the least susceptible to prejudice as to who and what is taken on by adoption is readily understandable. True, one cannot be sure as to how any child will turn out, but with the biological mystery surrounding most adoptees, the odds are shorter. Combined with these misgivings are religious objections, social mores, superstition and the vague but nonetheless potent uncertainty as to the outcome of a course involving time, money and much self-investment.

Adoption within the family

Adoption within the family appears to have had a more favourable reception than that of taking on a complete stranger. Duty and/or affection is involved and the child's biological history known in whole or in part; two hefty considerations to take into account. Such adoptions were common in both fact and fiction. In Flora Thompson's autobiographical trilogy, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, the birth of an illegitimate child is regarded more as a weakness than

sinfulness and the child is usually accommodated within the maternal family and the village community without overmuch censure.⁴⁹

In the novels used in this thesis, a mixed picture of family adoption emerges. *Copperfield*, *Esther Summerson*, *Pip*, *Jane Eyre* and *Henry Esmond* fall within this category of extended family adoptees. *Copperfield* does very well with the redoubtable Betsey Trotwood while *Esther Summerson* with her chilly Aunt Barbary less so. Joe Gargery is a first-rate sustainer to Pip, while Mrs. Joe is harsh to her young brother. *Jane Eyre* is an unwelcome addition to the Reed household but *Henry Esmond* is readily received and unreservedly loved by his aristocratic Castlewood cousins.

These examples not only accord with Laslett's findings on the extent to which 'parentless' children were accommodated within their extended family, but of how varied their experiences there could be.

Drawing on a wider range of novels outside those of this thesis, Frank Churchill in Jane Austen's *Emma*, 1816, is a family adoptee who turns out less than a gentleman. In Austen's earlier, *Mansfield Park*, 1814, Fanny Price's entry into the Bertram household as part poor relation, part adoptee, is fraught with tensions because of her ambivalent status and her own lack of self-esteem. She is shaped by the domestic regularity and cultural enrichment of Mansfield Park

⁴⁹ See Thompson, F. J., *Lark Rise to Candleford*, 1945. Thompson, 1876-1947, gives vivid first-hand accounts of culture in a close rural community at the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

which exist alongside the snubs and criticisms of her person. Only after many years is her true value recognised and her acceptance as a family equal made clear.

All in all, the picture of adoption within an extended family is inconclusive because of the hugely different reception such children received. Within the novels, motivation for such a course rests on adherence to 'duty' or a genuine affection, these resulting variously in positive dislike, tolerance, or warm welcome. What is significant is that the reader is cognisant of such variables in fiction. In socio-historic studies such as those of Laslett et al, there is far less awareness of the underlying emotions aroused, mainly because of the lack of written records, especially within the poorer, largely illiterate classes.

Single women and adoption

Mary Carpenter, detailed in the preceding chapter, was not alone in her course of action, so bold at the time, of adopting a child. There are instances of other nineteenth-century, middle-class, single women who did likewise. These were women who were, more or less, compelled to abide by the code of propriety which forbade motherhood to the single, 'respectable', woman. Vicinus, 1985, in explanation of this, writes, 'Since genteel single women could be neither mothers nor prostitutes, they were forced to redefine themselves in terms beyond those of the nuclear family. ... She was

supposed to remain virginal and utterly self-sacrificing for all who needed her'.⁵⁰

The more determined of these women, often fortified by experience of voluntary public work, or work within the Church, sometimes turned this process of redefinition of what their lives were about into leadership in social work, and **some of them adopted children.** (My emphasis.) This is of significance to this thesis and its findings on actual, as distinct from fictional, sustainers. Charlotte Despard, a Quaker, was one such purposeful single woman. She adopted the illegitimate daughter of one of her brother's junior cavalry officers. Constance Maynard, another bold spinster adopted a six-year-old French girl through a Salvation Army friend.⁵¹

As with any other adoptions, these by single women were not always successful. Vicinus comments on how difficult it must have been for eminently successful women who did not cope very successfully with an adopted child to acknowledge their failure, even though their married friends may have done no better, especially at a time when there was a widely-held belief in a woman's innate maternal instinct. She writes,

‘Although some adoptions were successful, many were not. ... Indeed, they illustrate the discrepancy between the familial ideology of single women and the reality

⁵⁰ Vicinus, M., *Independent Women*, (London: Virago, 1985), p.5.

⁵¹ In the chapter on **Sustainers** these and other actual adoptions as distinct from the fictional ones are discussed.

of their lives'.⁵² She concludes that, '... their primary connections remained with their peers, other successful working women'.⁵³

Three reasonable conclusions may be drawn from the foregoing. Firstly, that Maynard's belief it was God's will she should adopt a child is the same as that of Carpenter. It could be argued that either they genuinely believed this, or else felt that what they were doing was so radical that they needed validation from an infallible authority, namely God. It may well have been something of both.

Secondly, as there were no legal regulations over adoption at the time, these nineteenth-century adoptive spinsters enjoyed a freedom denied to single women during the early twentieth century when spinsterhood usually debarred a woman from such a step. (This is a highly surprising fact as it is more usual for freedom of action in women in the early twentieth century to be progressive rather than regressive. One has only to remember how active women workers were in the Trades Unions at this time, and even more so in demanding the right to vote.)

However, Megan Owen, 1999, points out that what was legally possible was less easy in practice and single women applying to adopt were administratively disadvantaged even after 1926. She writes,

'There has always been a strong presumption that adopters would be selected mainly from the ranks of

⁵² Vicinus, 1985, *op cit.*, p.43.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.44.

married couples'.⁵⁴ Even now, Owen continues, 'Within the legislative framework there is much scope for discretion on the part of adoption agencies'.⁵⁵

Only in the later twentieth century have single women been less discriminated against. Society was, seemingly, slow to grant a single woman the right to take on a task more traditionally that of a married woman.

Thirdly, in the case of Despard, there may have been some allowance made for an adoption within a professional group, in this case the Army, akin to that of adoption within a family.⁵⁶

Evidence of single persons and adoption within the novels

In the novels single women and single men feature heavily as adoptive parents who, almost without exception, become with time and experience highly successful in 'parenting' the displacee.⁵⁷ True,

⁵⁴ Owen, M., *Novices, Old Hands and Professionals*, (London: British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, 1999), p.3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁵⁶ The present writer has no substantial hard evidence for this, but such groups as the Church, the Army, and probably the teaching and medical professions, do have a strong corporate identity which includes some of the features of a family in their shared aims, beliefs, training and professional identity. A literary example is that of Anne Elliot in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, published posthumously in 1818. Given only casual care from her widowed father, the Sir Walter Elliot, Anne finds support akin to that of a family within the Royal Navy, notably through Admiral and Mrs. Croft, the sister and brother-in-law of her suitor, Captain Wentworth, and his fellow officer, Captain Benwick.

⁵⁷ Parenting has been put in inverted commas as the sustainers are never referred to

they make mistakes, but these are usually through inexperience and have amusing outcomes. Marner's 'coal-hole' tangle with Eppie in his attempt at chastisement is one such. His struggle to 'punish' her small disobedience is overcome by the child's appeal, her sooty appearance and his own newly-acquired tenderness in which the reader delights. It marks yet one more stage in humanising this strange, solitary man and setting him within the limited but decent society of Raveloe. It also lightens the atmosphere of a novel which until this point has been sombre.

The writers acknowledge the social delicacies involved when a bachelor brings up a child, especially a girl, so practical chaperonage is given by a homely woman, two of the best known being Dolly Winthrop, Silas Marner's neighbour, and Mrs. Bedwin, housekeeper to Mr. Brownlow.⁵⁸ The working-class bachelor Daniel Standring who, at the close, takes Jessica into his home is given no such help. His case is an interesting one for it conflicts with socio-historic evidence, for example that of Mayhew, of the poor helping the poor.⁵⁹ Stretton, however, shows her considerable knowledge of an altogether less cushioned adoption within a very poor stratum of society where paid help is impossible and even a trustworthy neighbour not necessarily present. Her intention is two-fold for she not only wants to highlight

as such but have their own very distinctive role to play.

⁵⁸ Daniel Peggotty, although not drawn on in this thesis but similarly in need of a useful woman, is assisted by the lugubrious Mrs. Gummidge.

⁵⁹ Mayhew, H., *London Labour and the London Poor*, (1851-2; London: Penguin, 1985 edn.), p.45.

deprivation but to emphasise the importance of God in the affairs of men. In the novel, all turns out well as God is Standing's help. This solution runs true to the social circumstances of the characters and affords Stretton a further opportunity to evangelise.

In Dickens' novels, a spinster who adopts with a very good outcome is Betsey Trotwood, great-aunt of Copperfield. (She has had a trial run, so to speak, with the child-man Mr. Dick.) Esther Summerson's frigid spinster aunt is less successful, chiefly because of her prejudicial opinion that illegitimacy is a disgrace for which both mother and child must suffer. Miss Havisham's adoption of Estella, undertaken and carried out so bizarrely, turns out disastrously.

Of course, motivation is important in all three examples. Betsey Trotwood longs to have a child to whom she can devote her considerable talents, even a boy! She has been present at Copperfield's birth and he is, after all, her great-nephew. Moreover, she has emerged from her verbal battle with the Murdstones as one who has a right to claim and keep the boy. Her practicality, natural ebullience and intelligence go a long way to assure the reader that she will make a good job of her undertaking. Moreover, her kind-heartedness and good sense are already established in her oversight of Mr. Dick. It is fair to say that the adoption of Copperfield by his spinster aunt is one of the most successful in fiction.

By contrast, Esther's Aunt Barbary acts from a stern, sisterly duty. Affection and interest in her small niece are absent. More than

this, she constantly voices the burden of shame attached, in her opinion, to both Esther and her mother which mystifies the little girl. Miss Havisham is deranged and bitter and has a sinister agenda to punish all men through her influence on Estella. Thus, the three adoptions start from completely different premisses.

Authorial intentions are also varied. Dickens strongly identified with Copperfield. That he was a child of 'close observation' and a man with 'a strong memory' of his childhood⁶⁰ is true of both Dickens and of Copperfield.

Outside the core-text novels, the spinster seamstress, Miss Pynsent, adopts young Hyacinth in Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima*, 1886, and their relationship is loving and gratifying to both. It is significant that she, too, is given guidance of a sensible sort from a middle-aged man friend, paralleling the bachelor adopters in Dickens and George Eliot who are guided by sound women. In this, there seems to be a tacit assumption that both single men and women need a helping hand from one of the opposite sex if they are to cope successfully with child-rearing.

This in itself makes good sense and, importantly, reflects the nineteenth-century regard for parents who also share a child. The writers use it to maintain respect for parents whilst still advantaging the child through its displacement, this latter posing a real problem for

⁶⁰ Forster, J., *The Life of Charles Dickens*, (1872-74; London: Dent, 1966 edn.), vol. 1, p.4.

the novelists. Ensuring that bachelor and spinster sustainers receive help from one of the opposite sex, (always shown here as a chaste, entirely practical relationship), may be seen as one way of acknowledging parenthood in novels where parents are largely either dead or off-scene.

Dickens passionately wanted to draw reader-attention to the shortcomings of a society in which parentless children were so much at risk. Dickens certainly intended this in his authorial outburst when he stands outside the novel to blast society for its neglect of those who, like Jo in *Bleak House*, perish from hunger, cold, and an indifferent public. (House, 1941, notes that Jo was based on a real case, that of George Ruby, brought to trial in 1850.)⁶¹ Jo sits starving on the steps of the magnificent edifice which houses the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, but gets no help from those at hand.⁶²

It was 'fashionable' to extend charity towards foreign missions rather than to the starving orphans nearer home. His contemptuous treatment of Mrs. Jellyby in the same novel is an example of this. That Dickens had strong views on what he considered the over-extension of charity to work abroad when so much was left unrecognised at home is also evidenced in a letter he wrote dated 9th July, 1852. 'If you think

⁶¹ House, H., *The Dickens World*, (1941; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971 edn.), p.32.

⁶² *BH* p.221.

the balance between the home mission and the foreign mission justly held in the present time, I do not'.⁶³ The contrast between the socio-religious attitude, especially of the middle classes, towards charity, love of one's neighbour and concern for children with what went on in reality could not be more acute.⁶⁴

'Insiders' and 'outsiders'

Throughout this chapter the terms 'insider' and 'outsider' are set in inverted commas to indicate their application in a way particular to the situation of the displacees drawn on here.

This chapter has, so far, looked at adoption and illegitimacy from a legal and socio-historic viewpoint and the subjective perceptions of the fictional displacees themselves have been largely unexplored. However, the ways in which the writers show the fictional child's awareness of what it means to be adopted, illegitimate or orphaned in practical and affective terms merits discussion. A child's understanding is, of course, not static and changes as the displacees develop or their circumstances alter. Initially, they may be passive recipients of their lot, being too young to do other than accept whatever is dealt to them by family, State or chance. Only later do their individual characteristic ways of dealing with their situation

⁶³ House, H., *op.cit.*, p.90.

⁶⁴ See death of Jo in which Dickens points an accusing finger at the nominal and neglectful Christians whose behaviour is not commensurate with what they profess, *BH* pp.648-649.

appear.

One way of approaching these issues is to individualise the displacees when they exemplify some of the more telling factors of adoption and its peripheral factors. For example, the ways in which they internalise their new circumstances tell the reader something of their calibre. The child's view of events hedged about by inexperience, innocence and youth is highly significant for these early perceptions strongly affect the rest of their development. The prevailing attitudes towards children, the expectation of deference, the assumption of acceptance, and often the child's own deep-seated sense of gratitude and the wish to repay a debt of love, are important. Thus, the approach will be individual with comment when it applies more generally.

Daniel Deronda is from the outset a highly privileged 'insider' in his displacement. His guardian is sensitive to his needs, his education is excellent, his recreational preferences indulged, and his circumstances extremely comfortable.⁶⁵ When, in adolescence, he asks his tutor why the Popes had so many 'nephews' and is given a cautious explanation, he inwardly speculates, mistakenly, that his guardian may really be his father. Only in young manhood is his true parentage disclosed to him. During a very formal meeting with his mother, a Jewish operatic singer, what affects him most is the disclosure that he is Jewish. His mother's emotional restraint is such

⁶⁵ Appendix I depicts privileged children at a children's ball at Buckingham Palace, Hartcup, 1982, *op.cit.*, pp.108-109.

that it invites little filial affection but, nevertheless, it is crucial to Deronda's appraisal of who and what he is.

It is only at this late stage that Deronda, temporarily, becomes an emotional 'outsider'. His relations with the Mallingers remain constant but now he must struggle with the tensions this new awareness that he is 'other' than them engender in him. Issues of illegitimacy and adoption arrive very late in his development and the conflict between his earlier and revised self-perception are anguishing for him. For a time he feels himself an 'outsider' of both the comfortable Englishness of the Mallinger household and the much more uneasy and, to him, complex world of the few Jews he knows. His eventual embrace of his Jewishness is consolidated when he marries Mirah, a Jewess, their united aspirations being a vaguely-outlined intention to further the Jewish cause. This is a particularly arid ending for the reader who is left uninformed as to the outcome of this momentous new step and has already had to cope with the disappointment that Deronda has not married Gwendolen Harleth, herself made wiser by experience.

Eliot's readers were unenthusiastic about the Jewish parts of the novel; unsurprising at a time when anti-Semitism was common in this country. Emrys Jones suggests that it may well have been 'the *idea* of Judaism that attracted her as a novelist', supporting this view by reference to Jews having the longest historical traditions and that its prophets and teachers expected no personal immortality.⁶⁶ Nor does

⁶⁶ Jones, E., Foreword to G. Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, (1876; London: Dent, 1964

Deronda conform to the pattern of serene domesticity and an honourable profession, the reward for so many of the displacees. It must be remembered that this is George Eliot writing, one who was bolder than most of her contemporaries in her writing as in her life. She is unafraid not only to introduce a controversial racist element into her novel but, much more than this, to make Deronda's 'Jewish quest' his eventual life-task.

However, it is not Judaism but adoption and illegitimacy which are under scrutiny in this thesis and Deronda has few problems with either. Sir Hugo's standing ensures that the boy suffers no social stigma and in this he has the same allowance as Hartcup's factual aristocratic bastards.⁶⁷ When in manhood he is beset by questions as to his origins, these do not spring from illegitimacy or adoption. They are entirely to do with his new racial identity and his conflicting ideas of what it means to be Jewish, no mean issue at a time when anti-Semitism loomed large in both English and European culture. Lipman writes of,

'... the stereotypes of Jews as representing the power of money and sharp practice in trading' which formed much of the prevailing opinion of them.⁶⁸

edn.), p.viii.

⁶⁷ Hartcup, A., 1984, op. cit., p.27.

⁶⁸ Lipman, V D., Foreword to *Victorian Jews Through British Eyes*, Cowen, R. & Cowen, A. eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.xiii.

This attitude is endorsed in the cartoons and ditties in the Victorian illustrated magazines.⁶⁹ Such affirmation is very pertinent to the new historicist approach taken in this thesis. Coming, as it does here, from '*Punch*', a witty, popular magazine which first appeared in 1841 and targeted an informed middle-class readership, it allows us to know what amused, disturbed and gripped its contemporaneous readership.⁷⁰ Clearly, Jews were both disliked and even feared for their influence when some, like Disraeli, rose to prominence in politics. Yet at the same time they were topics of somewhat black humour.

Another fortunate 'insider' is Henry Esmond, an aristocrat and assumed bastard. He is treated by the Castlewoods as one of their own children and, again, this conforms to the findings of both Hartcup⁷¹ and Laslett.⁷² Yet even after many years of acceptance, when he enters Cambridge, 'His birth was a source of shame to him, and he fancied a hundred slights and sneers...'⁷³ Moreover, he '... had been made to

⁶⁹ Appendix 2. Reference to the controversial Oaths Bill, *Ibid.*, p 27.

⁷⁰ '*Punch*' together with '*The Illustrated London News*' which came out first in 1842, dominated the market for readers who wanted a magazine which was topical, witty, and with a special interest in what was taking place in the capitol. For further reading see Michael Wolff and Celina Fox, "Chapter 24: Pictures from the Magazines", in Chellow Kesney, *The Victorian Underworld*, 1970.

⁷¹ Hartcup, A., 1982, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

⁷² Laslett, P., 1980, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

⁷³ *HE* p.93.

understand so far, that his mother was long since dead'.⁷⁴ Yet, apprised of his legitimacy, he wonders 'Who was his mother? What had her name been? When did she die?'⁷⁵ Like Deronda, it is in young manhood that he is beset by doubts over his identity.

Adolescence is commonly accepted as the time when a search for self-identity is important and Esmond and Deronda's problems at this time are greatly compounded by the mystery of their parentage. Adoption and displacement, *per se*, are not particularly problematic for either, but illegitimacy and lack of knowledge of their parents engenders emotional turmoil in both.

In this thesis, then, the two most privileged displacees in both acceptance and material terms are Deronda and Esmond and their fictional experiences accord with socio-historic findings. In childhood they face no adverse discrimination over either adoption or illegitimacy, both being readily accepted. Esmond, especially, reared within a framework of espionage and danger, has no doubts as to his family loyalties.⁷⁶ Despite this early welcome as 'insiders' both experience deep uncertainty and shame in their later adolescence and young manhood as to their true identity.

George Eliot's more humbly-placed Eppie is also a happy

⁷⁴ *HE* p.172.

⁷⁵ *HE* p.176.

⁷⁶ Esmond is also like Deronda in his unexpected choice in marriage. His rejection by the stunning Beatrix is one of the huge literary disappointments.

'insider' in her adoption. Not only does no criticism of her arise from the villagers but the new warmth shown towards Marner, who is reckoned to have behaved generously by taking-in a destitute infant, extends to her also. Problems arise for her only much later when her natural father wishes to claim her and even this is satisfactorily resolved.

Most unusually the displaced child, Eppie, is not the foregrounded character. She is secondary to Marner but she is the key to Marner's developmental maturity and the means whereby through their relationship, he acquires wider perspectives. Nevertheless, the novel is primarily the story of Marner and we know very little of Eppie's internal psychology from any direct description. Rather, Eliot shows the child's contentment by the fact of her normality, playfulness and response to Marner himself. Only in young womanhood is her understanding of her adoption challenged and revised by a new claim on her. Until this point, adoption and illegitimacy cause her no problems, and her wise choice to stay within the simple domestic Marner-Winthrop unit ensures that she continues as an 'insider'.

At the other end of the social scale, Heathcliff is subjected to the coarsest criticisms from not only the Earnshaws, with the exception of Mr. Earnshaw himself, but from their servants and farmhands. Once Earnshaw dies, the boy's position becomes desperate, his only champions being Ellen Dean and Cathy, a servant and a child, both with little power. His illegitimacy subjects him to

bullying, taunts, beatings and superstitious assumptions about his 'dark as the devil' eyes and hair.

Yet the reader has virtually no knowledge of what takes place in his mind either in childhood or adulthood. So much of the metaphysical shrouds him that he is unable to be an 'insider' of any normal world. The reader must rely on descriptions of him by others, by his animalistic groans and his physical stoicism. His mental processes are never revealed, yet the humiliations and abuse he suffers throughout from his illegitimacy are permanently damaging, and this the reader knows and understands. Even after his long, unexplained absence during which he is to some extent gentrified, nothing is disclosed as to how the change has come about. He is gentrified insofar as he returns with social graces, money, and a more assured manner. Yet that passionate forces are at work within him is never in doubt. His strange triumph comes only after death when he and Cathy together become 'insiders' of what may be called the spirit world. He remains an enigma, the reader never made privy to his mental processes.

Jane Eyre has a similarly unhappy adoption despite being legitimate and an extended family member of the Reeds. In every other way she remains a disliked 'outsider' of the Reed household. Perceiving herself, quite correctly, as unwished-for, she nurses such strong resentment and fear that her life with the Reeds becomes untenable.

Unlike the enigmatic and taciturn Heathcliff, Jane is a self-narrator who spares the reader nothing. (Viewed dispassionately, she is not a particularly likeable child.) To the reader she pours out every humiliation, every fear, so that nothing is withheld. It is this first-person frankness, this direct communication with the reader combined with her unjust treatment which makes the reader her instant ally and protector. Jane regards the circumstances of her adoption as hateful, unfair and unkind as, indeed, they are. Discriminated against by not only the Reeds but the servants, with the exception of Bessie, she is humiliated and excluded.

Brontë allows the reader to understand that it takes years of wiser guidance and education before she can overcome the frailties arising from her first displacement. In addition, Brontë cleverly places her as governess to Adèle, another displacee, on whom she can develop not only her teaching skills but her capacity for love.

For almost all those who are unhappily adopted it is their displacement and awareness of being 'different' which most frightens and bewilders them. Jane Eyre, legitimate and a family 'insider', is still socially and emotionally discriminated against. Esther Summerson feels a constant sense of disgrace over her birth without having the least understanding of the 'shame' reiterated by her aunt Barbary. Even the good Meagles unwittingly discriminate against Tattycoram by their preferential treatment of their own child, the revealingly-named Pet.

Oliver Twist has no idea that he is an orphan or even what the word means. Informed by a member of the all-important 'Board' that he is an orphan, he asks, 'What's that, sir?'⁷⁷ Too young to remember the 'baby farm' shared by him and some 'twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders', the workhouse, a place of hunger, brutality and deprivation, is all he knows.⁷⁸

As a small apprentice, he is referred to as 'work'us' by Noah Claypole, himself a charity-boy, and left in no doubt that he is at the bottom of the heap. In Oliver Dickens presents a small boy utterly out of the run of small boys in general, conforming to no theories of child-rearing practices. His sordid experiences leave him unsullied, his speech and manners impeccable, his integrity never in doubt. Even when lured into Fagin's den of vice, prostitution and murder he emerges with his character inviolate. No matter how sceptical one may be, Dickens himself believed this was possible. 'I have yet to learn that a lesson of the purest good may not be drawn from the vilest evil'.⁷⁹

The reader has direct access to the boy's anxieties and fears and they are totally convincing. Oliver's earnest wish to be cleared of suspicion and his desire to repay his benefactors are as credible as his

⁷⁷ OT p.11.

⁷⁸ OT p.4.

⁷⁹ Pierce, G.A., *The Dickens Dictionary*, (1878; London: Chapman & Hall, 1891 edn.), p.95.

earlier terror of Mr. Bumble. This authorial ploy of laying bare the boy's inner turmoil invites readers to vicariously share his predicaments, thereby enlisting their support.

Yet it is neither illegitimacy, orphanhood nor adoption as such which grieve Oliver. It is the situations arising from these which cause his unhappiness. To be adopted by Brownlow is the summit of his ambition but he is too young to ponder over what the term means. This, too, is utterly credible for his first taste of genuine kindness and content arises from his adoption. It is also the child's way of envisaging life as a secure 'insider', a hugely important shift in displacement.

Dickens, however, allows Oliver a spirited defence of the mother whom he has never known, when her reputation is blackened by the older and stronger Claypole.⁸⁰ In so doing Dickens not only pays the respect due to a dead parent but also evidences that Oliver has an awareness of motherhood as something to be revered and protected, even retrospectively. Dickens here draws on innate awareness in Oliver, for the child has no direct experience of maternal care. It is the lack of a mother combined with hardship brought about by illegitimacy and displacement which most affects him.

What these displacees have in common is, at some period, a sense of disgrace or inferiority attaching to them. They perceive themselves as different, shameful and excluded for reasons of which they have not the least understanding. This is the most difficult aspect

⁸⁰ *OT* p.46.

of their lives for ignorance, innocence and 'otherness' combine to overshadow all the rest of their experiences. The writers are, psychologically, on firm ground here as they are when they develop the theory that sound rearing results in improvement.⁸¹ Given more positive nurturing, responsibility and much encouragement, their self-image is enhanced and they take a more optimistic view of themselves and their circumstances which, in time, combine to make them 'insiders'.

One who best understands adoption in practical terms and his good fortune in this new relationship is Copperfield. Illegitimacy does not apply to him but being first singly, then doubly-orphaned, results in his fearful period with the Murdstones, the bottle factory and his perilous trek to find his aunt. Writing retrospectively of his childhood work in the bottle factory, the adult Copperfield reflects, '...it is a matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age'.⁸² (He is ten years old.) This, of course, is Dickens drawing on his own experience of working as a child in a blacking factory. Just as significantly, the expression 'thrown away' reflects the ease with which children were discarded, an important aspect of this thesis.

⁸¹ Donaldson, M., *Children's Minds*, (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1979), p.116. See also article by Nicola Leather in *Childhood Studies*, Wyse D., ed., (Blackwell: Oxford, 2004), pp.51-55.

⁸² DC p.208.

Adopted by Miss Trotwood after her verbal thrashing of the Murdstone duo,⁸³ he recognises that in her he has found a sure support. To a child who, once his mother dies, has encountered too many beatings, too much hardship and too little love, the safety of his new status is blissful and adoption from his child's viewpoint is entirely benign. The important conclusion of Ch. 13, immediately before his adoption, marks not only a turning-point in his fortunes but Copperfield's own recognition of this. The 'white-curtained bed' and 'snow-white sheets'⁸⁴ are symbolic not only of the boy's innocence but of a place from which past ogres are banished. The new prospect appears wholly favourable. Never slow to make a point, Dickens directs reader-attention to the plight of those who find no shelter and, thus, Copperfield 'prayed that I never might be houseless any more, and never might forget the houseless'.⁸⁵

Pip stands alone in his displacement for he is the only displacee who, in youth, welcomes his displacement to legal chambers in London. Orphaned early on, he is, initially, only partially displaced for he lives with his much older sister and brother-in-law. Thus, he stays within his biological family but without parental-rearing. His lot is not easy for although he never lacks food, clothes or shelter, his sister subjects him to abuse, anger and frequent touches of 'Tickler', a

⁸³ Appendix 3. Illustration by Hablot K. Browne, ('Phiz'), of the verbal battle between Miss Trotwood and the Murdstones, *DC* p.265.

⁸⁴ *DC* p.255.

⁸⁵ *DC* p.255.

whipping-stick. More important than these, however, is the sense of guilt brought on by the theft of a pie given to Magwitch, the start of the guilty feelings which haunt the rest of his life. This is a brilliant example by Dickens of a trivial theft bringing about long-lasting feelings of guilt which bedevil Pip for many years. Viewed objectively, stealing a pork pie from his sister's larder is not much of a sin, especially when under duress. Pip, however, is not objective. He views it from the stance of a small boy, always fearful of his older sister and now with the even more terrible threats of Magwitch besetting him. It is the onset of the sense of guilt which forever after affects him.

Given his home life, the foolish expectations set up by Pumblechook, and the complexities of his own mistaken assumptions as to his anonymous benefactor, it is small wonder that displacement to a London office is welcomed by him. He sees it as the first step to a wider world of money, a profession, superior company and altogether enhanced prospects. This, of course, will be the start of his foolish aspirations and many wrong moves, but neither the reader nor Pip himself is aware of this at the start of his displacement.

It is an altogether unique entry to displacement within the core-text novels, as is Pip's development and maturity. His reward is the vicarious happiness he feels in the happy families of Jo and Biddy, and of Traddles and his wife. Personal happiness eludes him and Dickens' lukewarm alternative ending does not hint at any great fulfilment.

What motivates the unhappy displacees to conquer feelings of inferiority and shame over their illegitimacy is a useful guide to their psychological make-up. Underlying all motivation is the satisfying of a need.⁸⁶ It is the need for acceptance, not necessarily unconditional, which is the greatest motivating factor for all the displacees. This theory will be pursued at greater length in the chapter on Sustainers.

Summary

In summary, it seems that some of the novelists may have over-dramatised the true situation of illegitimacy and adoption, others come close to the mark, and some been liberal in attitude. For instance, Jane Eyre's aunt Reed is harsh, unfair and, in the matter of Jane's inheritance, downright dishonest. Such a combination of attributes at work against one small girl may well be considered an exaggeration. Conversely, Daniel Deronda and Sir Hugo Mallinger seem never to have any altercations, even during Deronda's adolescence and Sir Hugo's late and unexpected marriage. The new Lady Mallinger is well-disposed towards him and when her own daughters are born, they grow to adore their 'Cousin Dan'.

There are so many variables present that one can only hazard some informed speculations over attitudes towards a taken-in child. To take in or adopt an illegitimate outsider is in some instances regarded

⁸⁶ See Sandström, C.I., *The Psychology of Childhood and Adolescence*, (London: Penguin, 1970), pp, 97-108.

as a good deed, in others an unpleasant duty. When the illegitimate child is a family member it is a duty which may be carried out lovingly as the aristocratic Castlewoods exemplify, (and in this they are very much in accord with actuality as the earlier Hartcup references indicate), or with much rancour as instanced by Jane Eyre's aunt Reed and Esther Summerson's aunt Barbary.

George Eliot treats Eppie's adoption as one which is so well-regarded by the Raveloe villagers that a new approbation is extended to Marner himself. Yet in the same novel, the middle-class Nancy Cass will not countenance adoption until her husband reveals to her that he is Eppie's father. It may have been that Eliot wanted to mark class differences in attitude and at the same time heighten the drama and suspense of Eppie's own choice.

Dickens is ambivalent; he leaves no doubt as to the excellence of the adoptions made by Mr. Brownlow, Betsey Trotwood and Jarndyce. On the other hand, Miss Havisham makes a disastrous job of adoption, while Esther Summerson's Aunt Barbary is only marginally better.

Legitimacy matters, briefly, in the case of Rose Maylie whose way to marriage is cleared by the discovery that she is Rose Fleming, aunt of Oliver himself. It matters far more in the case of both Esmond and Deronda, a title and estate being at stake in the former and racial identity in the latter. In all three cases, however, it is only in early adulthood that it becomes problematic.

Illegitimacy is always treated seriously by the novelists because it so offends nineteenth-century notions of respectability and rectitude. It is an affront to what was acceptable in religious, moral and social terms. The mid-century novelists of this thesis lack the frankness towards it shown in novels at the beginning and end of the century. Jane Austen at the turn of the century is the least easily shocked by it until Hardy arrives at the latter end of the same century. The fact that the topic can be openly discussed in a conversation between Emma and Mr. Knightley, both young, unmarried and socially impeccable reflects Austen's own clarity on the subject and also the requirements of 'acceptable' illegitimacy; namely, adequate provision, some social standing and a little education.⁸⁷

By the end of the century Hardy is even bolder, for Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead have several illegitimate children, thus defying the antipathy towards Laslett's 'repeaters'.⁸⁸ Hardy's intention is to demonstrate the narrow-minded bigotry of those sections of society which ostracised the 'fallen' woman, or couples who lived together without benefit of clergy.⁸⁹ Sue and Jude care for each other and love their out-of-wedlock children, yet Sue is, technically, an adulteress and they suffer accordingly, not least in the problem of

⁸⁷ Austen, however, holds on to the old social values in her punishment of Maria Bertram and Mary Crawford who flout such values in *Mansfield Park*, 1814.

⁸⁸ Laslett, P. & Oosterveen, K., 1977, op.cit., p.149.

⁸⁹ Hardy, Thomas, in *Jude the Obscure*, (1895; London: Macmillan, 1973 edn.), p. 64, points to the absurdity, in his opinion, of marriage vows in which couples promise lifelong fidelity. Henceforth referred to in footnotes as *JTO*.

finding lodgings.⁹⁰

Jude the Obscure is transitional in time and setting, as is *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, both veering between an older rural society and the new urbanisation. Railways, steam-powered farm machinery appear alongside the erosion of old farming methods. New questions about the position of women in society, education, social and religious values are posed. Victorianism is giving way to modernism.⁹¹ The novelists are dependent on the time of writing, their intentions, commercial prospects or a downright wish to shock.

The writers used in this thesis fall between these two points in time. They strongly uphold family values and fidelity, (the latter not only in marriage but in friendship and service). Yet they do not castigate those who, often innocently, transgress moral 'rules'. What is undeniable is that the outside world, i.e. one removed from the family hearth, is shown as a dangerous place for a young, unmarried woman both in fact and fiction. Domestic content, marriage, a financial sufficiency and legitimate children are the core values of all that is safe, desirable and virtuous.

Yet, set against this, so many of the novels depend on illicit unions, illegitimacy, fallen women and displaced children that it is obvious these are the very topics which most absorbed readers. The

⁹⁰ *JTO* pp.341-343.

⁹¹ Williams, M. writes, '*Jude* was a more outspoken novel than any reputable English work for the previous hundred years'. See Williams, M., *The Nineteenth-Century Novel and its Legacy*, (Bletchley, Bucks: Open University, 1973), p.7.

novelists draw on them constantly. Yet, just as constantly, they support the cause of the displaced child. Of this there is no doubt for it is so clearly evidenced in every novel used here.

Certainly, so many of the novels of the period both within and without the core-group used here end in marriage, legitimately-begotten children and domestic stability, that it is undoubtedly the approved pattern of both readers and writers. Most of the fictional displacees who progress into adulthood achieve this end, indicating that neither illegitimacy nor adoption are barriers to this conventional end.

The psychological forces at work in the fictional displacees are heavily influenced by the significant others who control their new circumstances in displacement. Wide-ranging attitudes towards their illegitimacy and/or adoption are obvious and markedly affect the child's self-perception.

Finally, in both fact and fiction, there is little doubt that the drain on the country's financial resources accounted in large measure for the prejudice towards bastards who required State provision, i.e. the great majority. On this there is overwhelming socio-historic evidence. Superstition, attitudes as to what comprised respectability, and Church teaching itself added to such prejudice. Aristocratic and clergy bastards fared somewhat better because they usually had more protection from either the family or the Church, both of which usually offered shelter and/or financial provision. Only when the public purse was touched did attitudes harden.

Chapter Three

The displaced child as a perennial fictional favourite

Outline

The displaced child, although not usually referred to as such, from Tom Jones to Harry Potter has been a perennial novelistic device. Looked at both in fact and fiction, the child who is abandoned, shifted around, fostered or adopted and bewildered by a myriad new circumstances demands attention. Such attention may be accompanied by exasperation or even initial dislike, dependent on authorial intention and the sensibilities of the reader. Nevertheless, the displaced child itself is a compelling topic surrounded as it is by mystery, pathos, need, or a combination of all these.

This chapter will concentrate solely on fictional displaced children. Here the concern is with the representation of them as novelistic favourites and how far such representation is influenced by a given society. Divine protection, moral awareness, self-help, influential friendships, nature/nurture, adversaries and the kind of marketable assets with which the favourites are endowed are discussed. Presentation is always important and the advantages and disadvantages of both self-narrating children and those whose histories are related by others will be examined.

Any consideration of literary favourites, whether individual or collective, must be set against the prevailing conditions and

philosophy of any given period. Thus, time will be devoted to attitudes towards children, social evils such as drink, slums and child mortality. and religious beliefs; topics which, because of their highly influential nature, help to determine what makes for and sets the course of any particular fictional favourite.

Different models of fictional displacees, their authorial treatment, the kind of challenges which beset them, and their routes to success are discussed. Suggestions are made as to why they have such an enduring hold over readers and novelists alike, and a brief comparison with Biblical displacees made. Obviously the last are not novelistic displacees but would be very familiar to the nineteenth-century readers, many of whom were habitual Bible readers. Moreover, they would be familiar even to the illiterate because Biblical stories had a strong oral tradition. They merit brief mention because the novelists may have drawn on them and because so many focus on displaced children.

Sustainers are significant in any creation of a displacee and the complexities of this sensitive relationship, including that of unexpected role-reversals, are of such importance throughout that a later chapter is devoted to them. When, out of necessity, they crop up in this chapter it is only in passing; similarly with parents who, whether alive, dead or missing, are important to the child. Even when parents are off-stage, their effect on the course of the child is not diminished. (In a dramatic context the dead General in Chekhov's *Three Sisters* is a prime example of a parent whose posthumous

influence is evident throughout, and is reflected in the philosophy and actions of all his children.)¹

Parents are, to some extent, in competition with sustainers, and attention is drawn to this nice problem in the following chapter where it more properly belongs. Suffice it to say that in the novels used here, Hesba Stretton stands alone as unafraid to deliver swinging blows in their direction, blasting parental neglect, drunkenness and cruelty. Coming as this does from an evangelical novelist who strongly upholds Biblical teaching which includes respect for parents, it says much for Stretton's realism. It singles her out as one whose veracity compelled her to represent parents as being sometimes unworthy of the respect so often given to them in fiction of the period used here.²

Finally, the tremendous importance of displacement itself is emphasised. No matter whether the child is orphaned, abandoned or destitute, displacement results and the child is, of necessity, uprooted. Illegitimacy, real or assumed, is also important for in this the child bears an undeserved social stigma. Drawing on these two factors the novelists recruit reader-compassion for a wronged child. In addition, illegitimacy can spring surprises of a kind the reader will enjoy. For

¹ See Chekhov's, A.P., *Three Sisters*, 1901.

² Stretton followed in the tradition of Hannah More, 1745-1833, and Mrs. Sherwood, 1775-1851, both writers of evangelical tract fiction. 'Her sales reached astronomical levels, her works, widely translated, were part of Sunday School libraries all over the world. ... Lord Shaftesbury thought *Jessica's First Prayer* an incomparable picture of slum life'. Bingham, S., *Ministering Angels*, (London: Osprey Publishers, 1979), p.115.

example, assumed illegitimacy may be erroneous and parentage of an unexpected kind come to light. When this happens, the parents may be dead as in the case of *Oliver*, or alive as in the case of *Eppie*. In either case it sheds new light on the displacee and its provenance. Moreover, seduction or an illicit love affair is usually involved in such disclosures, both highly fascinating to the reader of the period.

Illegitimacy does need to have reservations kept in mind, these being to do with chronology, social and class attitudes. Displacement is of paramount importance for more than any other factor it reshapes and determines the child's life. Released from the constraints of a family, the displacee is free to explore new territory of both a physical and psychological kind. This same freedom may hold challenges and hardships but they, too, further establish the child's hold over the reader.

Thus, these two seeming handicaps of illegitimacy and displacement are to the fictional child hugely advantageous. One is a condition, the other a disruption, both of such enormity in the life of the child that they completely change its prospects. Displacement is the more important being at the core of the child's situation and largely accounts for its compulsive interest as a subject. Bringing, as it does, new challenges, relationships, and opportunities for self-development of a positive kind, its importance can scarcely be over-emphasised.

Creating a favourite

Before defining a favourite, it is necessary to place it in the context of 1837-70, a period of huge contrasts. At the apex of a triangular model of society was the monarchy with a new young queen and a reasonably secure landed gentry, although the latter were always aware of growing protest from the more daring elements of the lower classes at the wide base of the pyramid. Between these was the highly influential middle-class who were in the main professional, educated, prosperous and who largely set the standards by which the country abided.³ They upheld Protestantism and church-going, were the employers of the lower classes, and the managers and guardians of public funds. It was they who set the cultural pattern of the country, respecting the monarchy, the Church and the law. They deferred to the tiny minority of the aristocracy and were themselves aspired to by the respectable poor. Davidoff and Hall, 1987, remind us however, 'that the middle strata should not be seen as a block',⁴ and that there were considerable disparities within its ranks, e.g. manufacturers and farmers who employed a labour force, and professionals such as lawyers and doctors, who provided services. Nevertheless, 'by the middle of the nineteenth century, these disparate elements had been

³ See Hoppen, K.T, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.31. Here Hoppen makes reference to Lord Brougham famously equating them with 'the wealth and intelligence of the country, the glory of the British name'.

⁴ Davidoff, L. & Hall, C., *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle-class 1780-1850*, (London: Century Hutchinson, 1987), p.23.

welded together into a powerful unified culture'.⁵

Enormous productivity went alongside terrible poverty, fashionable houses for the new industrialists co-existing with some of the worst slums in Europe. Engels, 1845, described at first-hand the appalling Manchester slums.⁶ Rural poverty, although it certainly existed, could, as Holloway writes,

‘be more easily be ignored and ... the “respectable” part of the population could preoccupy themselves with entertainment, fashion, family connections and religion’.⁷

Disraeli in *Sybil: The Two Nations*, 1845, whose sub-title points to the contrast between the lives of the landed gentry at Marney Abbey and the inhabitants of Mowbray, a foul industrial town a few miles away, indicated the reforms needed to create a fairer balance.⁸

There were other contrasts. Drink was a huge problem, especially amongst the lowest, improvident ranks of society as the cartoons and popular ditties of the time testify. The illustrations from S. C. Hall’s *The Trial of Sir Jasper*, 1872,⁹ and ‘*The Band of Hope*

⁵ Davidoff, L. & Hall, C., *op.cit.*, p.23.

⁶ Engels, F, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 1845.

⁷ Holloway, J., in *Victorian Britain; The Cambridge Cultural History*, Ford, B., ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), vol.7, p.97.

⁸ Disraeli, B., *Sybil: The Two Nations*, 1845.

⁹ Appendix 1. Hall, S.C., *The Trial of Sir Jasper*, 1872, p.3.

Review', 1867,¹⁰ indicate how desperate were the circumstances of families when the bread-winner took to drink. The former depicts the anxiety of women awaiting husbands who drank away their wages regardless of hungry families at home. The latter records an alleged intervention at the Aylesbury Temperance Meeting by a reformed drunkard whose little daughter begged him to stay away from the 'beer-house'.

Church and State were united in regarding religious observance as one way of controlling drunkenness and rebellious upsurges from the criminal poor. As the period progressed, however, the voices of the unruly, discontented poor were increasingly heard. The French Revolution was near enough, chronologically, to keep a similar threat in this country alive in the minds of the gentry. Flint, 1987, quotes Charles Kingsley's character Beames who, speaking of workers, claims that

'increasing education will only serve to make them more conscious of their own misery; the boiler will be strained to bursting pitch, till some jar, some slight crisis, suddenly directs the imprisoned forces to one point, and then – What then? Look at France and see'.¹¹

Humour played a wry part in bringing to public attention the gap between the lives of the poor and the middle-classes. A cartoon in

¹⁰ Appendix 2. '*The Band of Hope Review*', 1st March, 1867, p.297.

¹¹ Flint, K. *Victorian Novelists: Social problems and social changes*, (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p.173.

'Punch', 1859, in which the emaciated poor make a morbid joke at their own expense exemplifies this.¹² *'Punch'* was widely-read by the middle-classes and it is they whom the cartoonist aims to amuse. This particular cartoon shows a contempt for the starving combined with a grisly recognition of their stoicism. Yet, simultaneously the middle-classes organised charities, sat on committees dealing with the poor and, admittedly, must have done some good. It exemplifies the gap between undoubtedly good works and an underlying inability to truly empathise with the lot of the poor.

A favourite child is defined here as one whose history and course is absorbing and who is the object of most positive attention from novelist and reader. True, favourites are often victimised, deprived, or even die, but such experiences cannot in themselves loosen the child's hold over the reader; rather, they enhance its standing. The fictional favourite is the one whose fortunes most concern us and with whom the reader most closely identifies. Above all, the child must enlist the understanding of the reader, even when its behaviour or appearance is unattractive. Heathcliff, inarticulate and sullen, falls within this category for, once Earnshaw is dead, he is cruelly ill-used and the reader feels for this injustice. Others such as Pip, Estella and Copperfield, display youthful frailties. Yet without exception the writers are clearly on the side of the child, presenting their vulnerability and perplexities in such a way that the reader

¹² Appendix 3. *'Punch'*, xxxvi, 1859, p.35.

grieves over their faults but still makes allowances. Through an understanding of the child's situation and what has made it as it is, reader-concern is aroused and directed towards a sympathetic response.

If at the outset the displacee lacks desirable traits or displays undesirable ones, he or she must be seen as capable of self-improvement; a capability highly important to the philosophy of the period. It may be revealed by no more than some very small action on the part of the child, yet one which denotes its core quality. A ready example is that of Jessica, at first the very antithesis of exemplary childhood. After pestering the coffee-stall owner, she places her bare foot over a dropped coin, intending to steal it. Almost immediately she regrets her action and returns the coin to the coffee-stall keeper who has been unaware of his loss. His muttered 'I couldn't have done it myself', conveys his instant recognition of her underlying integrity, a recognition shared and approved of by the reader.¹³

The lot of the favourite is not an easy one; rather it is precarious and subject to setbacks. Much depends on who confers favour, who is put aside, who is jealous of, or outrun by, the favourite. This sets up conflicting authorial tasks for the favourite must endure hardships and injustices in order to satisfy the reader that he or she is of a calibre commensurate with future rewards. Without such testing the child has not earned sufficient reader-respect to merit receipt of favour.

¹³ *JFP* p.23.

The displaced children have particular conditions incorporated into their role as favourites. The hampering displacement must ultimately prove beneficial and they themselves move from weakness to strength. It is the almost unlimited possibilities open to the displacee counter-balanced by the limitations of its uncertain status which constantly interact and hold the reader's interest. The importance of this interaction must be emphasised in any interpretation of how a favourite displacee functions.

The writer determines who and how a favourite child shall be, setting these conditions against a background of issues which are of contemporary interest, or controversial, or of a kind which consistently attracted readers. These conditions include illegitimacy, infant mortality, child labour, domestic life, education and religion, all of which enter strongly in setting up the child's circumstances. The problem of the feral street children who were a nuisance, a threat and a danger as well as objects of compassion was prime material for the nineteenth-century writers, as was the hypocrisy of society towards them. The kind of control exercised by the authors, their daring or delicacy in child-representation, the blows aimed at readers themselves for the gap between professions of pity and lack of action, constantly affect reader-response which can quickly swing from delight to disapproval. (The modern reader has another control which lies in hindsight, interpretation of events outside his own time; a dangerous control when used ignorantly or without knowledge of facts relevant to the issue.)

The reader requires, and is given, opportunities to identify with a favourite who can vicariously fulfil their dearest hopes, respond to chances unavailable to themselves and exhibit qualities of a virtuous kind; in short, be a few shades better than the reader's best self. Thus, the reader invests much of himself in a favourite who, perforce, carries a burden of hopes and ambitions that have, generally speaking, to be fulfilled if the reader is to be gratified.

Of all the conditions pertaining to a favourite, it is displacement which maintains the balance between new and wider prospects and early and sometimes cruel disruption. Allied closely to this is the mystery which inevitably surrounds the displacee.

Biblical paradigms

It may be argued that the Biblical favourites are not fictional. Nevertheless, they are told in narrative form, and illustrate the long history of displacees and their enduring hold over readers. The challenges which beset them, their routes to success remain astonishingly similar in Biblical text, literature, folk tales and fairy stories spanning over two thousand years. These are not within the remit of this thesis but consolidate the importance of displacees as a topic, and their history would make a fascinating follow-up study. Biblical examples are useful because they are amongst the oldest recorded histories of displacees and there is a clear link between them and the fictional ones of this thesis.

Mid-Victorians were well-acquainted with the Bible. Even in poor homes religious texts ornamented the walls and Bible reading was common in all classes, especially as literacy increased.¹⁴ Stories were read either directly from the Bible or simply written versions from both Old and New Testaments. Bible classes satisfied a growing desire for literacy and indicated the compatibility of intention of both Church and State that the poor should be kept God-fearing. The *status quo* was considered to be ordained by God as Mrs Alexander's enormously popular 'All things bright and beautiful', 1852, attests. By the early twentieth century verse 3 was omitted. The verse ran,

'The rich man at his castle.
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high or lowly
And ordered their estate.'¹⁵

These words, so certain, so uncompromising, illustrate how determined were both Church and State that class divisions should be acknowledged and kept. Their arrogance, not then so regarded, is astonishingly bold laying claim as it does to sanction from the Almighty for such class distinction.

¹⁴ Robert Raikes's Sunday Schools were, initially, as much secular as religious and aimed at adults as well as children. Many of the working class men and women who attended learned to read there.

¹⁵ Appendix 4. This gives both versions, the earlier in miniscule. Original nineteenth-century prize-book in possession of the thesis writer, p.118.

Sunday Schools awarded prize-books for attendance and good conduct which meant that for the first time even the poor could own a few books. (How very tiny and cheap such books were can be seen in the photocopy of a nineteenth-century story, *The Little Black Hen*. The print is miniscule.¹⁶) The Bible and Book of Common Prayer were the most frequent prizes but novels of an improving kind were also awarded. The enormously popular Hesba Stretton, well-regarded by Dickens who published some of her early pieces in '*Household Words*', wrote scores of such evangelical prize-books. Their easy, short-sentenced text and realistic descriptions of low-life coupled with a Christian message accounted for their enormous popularity with the poorer classes who appreciated their frankness and dramatic style and could cope with the text.

Old Testament stories commonly feature displacees and provide a paradigm for those of this thesis. There is no hard evidence that the novelists had them in mind when they created their fictional displacees, yet the persistency of situations is striking. Similarities between the novelistic and Biblical displacees would almost certainly be evident to many readers and the clear link between the two warrants some brief discussion.

¹⁶ Appendices 5 and 6. *The Little Black Hen*, (London: Frederick Warne), anonymous and undated. Inscription dated 1912. Appendix 5 shows the miniscule print and Appendix 6 the Frontispiece.

In all Biblical instances, displacement takes the child into a higher echelon of society where influential sustainers afford exciting prospects; a perfect recipe for the displacee. Unlike the children of this thesis the Biblical displacees have great destinies. Mid-Victorian readers were part of a long tradition in their enjoyment of displacees but content with a more manageable domestic prosperity. Nevertheless, the basic predicaments and situations of the displacees are unchanged.¹⁷

Similarly, prosperity often extends to Biblical and novelistic sustainers of displacees. When the reclusive Marner takes in Eppie, there is an expectation amongst the villagers that he will prosper because he has done a good thing. From then on they show him more active interest, as do his customers. Peddling his cloth he had hitherto been treated

‘very much as if he had been a useful gnome or brownie[...] looked at with wondering curiosity and repulsion. ... But now Silas met with open smiling faces and cheerful questioning, as a person whose satisfaction and difficulties could be understood’.¹⁸

Taking in a foundling marks Marner’s entry as an ‘insider’. Similarly, Rose Maylie through befriending Oliver reaps much to her own

¹⁷ The pattern holds good today in J.K. Rowling’s hugely popular Harry Potter stories. Harry is a displacee who, although not answering to God, acts on mysterious signs and messages from magical sources outside this world.

¹⁸ *SM* p.189.

benefit, not least her true identity which clears the way for her marriage to Harry Maylie and the discovery that Oliver is her nephew.

It cannot be claimed that the fictional displacees are Divine favourites like their Biblical counterparts. Nevertheless, their authors display them as seeking God's will and displaying Christian conviction. Dickens never writes tracts, nor even with any very pointed religious slant, but there is a clear understanding that God is present in human affairs. Copperfield thanks God for the security of his aunt's cottage, and even Pip, less obviously given to prayer, asks God's mercy on the dying Magwitch. Dickens treats all this in a rather well-mannered fashion, almost as a matter of good form to give the Lord his due. Nevertheless, however perfunctory an attestation of Divine providence, the acknowledgement is made.

Outside Dickens, *Jane Eyre* and *Esmond* have regular bouts of piety, while at the other extreme Heathcliff is wont to curse. Eppie has no great intimacy with the Deity, relying more on Dolly Winthrop's practical goodness. (The reader is left in no doubt that George Eliot has more sympathy with Dolly's belief that the ritualistic patterning of her pastry is pleasing to 'Them above' than she has with the narrow bigots in Lantern Yard.) Even Eppie's wedding is as much an occasion for secular merriment as a religious contract.

Active awareness of God is more frequently seen in displacees who die; Nell, Little Dick and Helen Burns frequently voice religious sentiments. Even Jo, utterly untutored in faith, is helped to repeat a

Paternoster before he dies. One way or another, there is a pervasive, if understated, belief that God has a special concern for them.

The clear exception in authorial treatment of Divine concern is Hesba Stretton who places the child's recognition of it at the heart of her novels. (There is reference to the Almighty in both supplication and gratitude on every other page of *Jessica's First Prayer*.) Stretton postulates Christian dependency as crucial in the child's understanding of the world. Jessica epitomises the convert who is not only made aware of God's love but whose unconditional trust in Him converts others. This sequential process springs from joy in her own conversion which acts more strongly on Standring than have years of nominal Christianity.

Fictional displacees, unlike their Biblical counterparts, are not singled out for Divine attention. God's direct call to Samuel was immortalised in 'Hushed was the evening hymn', a hugely popular hymn of the period to which Sir Arthur Sullivan wrote one of the many musical settings.¹⁹ Such distinction is inappropriate to novelistic displacees; readers did not want a child of such singularity as to be uncomfortable.

Only in *Deronda* is there a mark of one singled out for greatness. George Eliot does not pursue it to any very satisfying conclusion, yet his likeness to Moses is pointed. Like Moses, he is Jewish, has a superior upbringing outside his biological family,

¹⁹ Appendix 7. Sankey, I.P., *Sacred Songs and Solos*, (London: Morgan & Scott, undated), Hymn 1148.

charismatic qualities and eventually devotes his life to Judaism. The prophet-like Zionist, Mordecai, instantly recognises him as a potential leader, a hint sufficient to convince the reader of his distinction. Yet by the close of the novel *Deronda* is only about to embark on his Jewish quest, its development undisclosed. Even George Eliot, unafraid to tackle controversial issues, can take him no further if she is to keep within the limits of what readers will stomach. 'Her mind was too massive and inquisitive to confine its incessant activities to the private practical area of experience which was all that was envisaged by the man in the street.'²⁰ She invariably treats her readers as intelligent beings but subject-matter of such philosophical profundity was beyond what they wanted.

Summarising this section so far, it is plain that there is the expectation in the novels, as in Biblical narrative, that Divine guidance will favour the child handicapped by lack of status, struggling in its displacement and beset by difficulties. Moreover, such favour extends to their sustainers.

Routes to success

All the novelistic displacees achieve success, mostly of a modest professional or domestic kind, never a hugely pioneering one. Financial sufficiency, good standing and domestic harmony with spouse and children is more favoured, being one to which readers

²⁰ Cecil, D., *Early Victorian Novelists*, (London: Constable, 1934). p.287.

themselves could aspire, thus strengthening identification with the displacee. Their routes to success are varied, displacement itself being by far the most important and the highest common factor for the fictional displacees.

a) Displacement and illegitimacy

Simply being displaced is a key factor in creating a favourite, otherwise incorporating it in the structure of the novel is pointless. This is not to disregard the problems it sets up for the writers whose 'respectable' readers frowned on the illegitimacy which often accompanied it. Simultaneously, it was a topic which titillated reader and novelists alike, associated as it was with adultery, seduction, the intimate and the improper. It parallels wider conflicts present in this country at that period; conflicts to do with the discrepancy between the polite surface of respectable society and the underlying distress of the starving and destitute. It presupposes that the child has an extra claim on the reader because, minus active parenting or home, it is assumed to be disadvantaged and the reader is, consequently, required to compensate for this in any appraisal of events.

Illegitimacy is another possible route to popularity, although some reservations must be made here because illegitimacy carried such social stigma. Conversely, for the child, a completely innocent party, to carry an undeserved blight calls into play notions of what is just and acts as a partial counter balance; partial because it did not entirely even the scales.

Chronology is another determinant of attitudes towards illegitimacy. Jane Austen, 1775-1817, was able to discuss it openly through her characters, notably between Emma and Mr. Knightly²¹, reflecting in this the relatively liberal attitude of the eighteenth-century. By 1874 when Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* was serialised in '*The Cornhill Magazine*', Fanny Robin's illegitimate baby was left out, being considered too indelicate for inclusion. Mooney writes,

'Leslie Stephen, the editor, warned Hardy that the reading public would not like the story of Fanny Robin's seduction, and was adamant that the patrons of the circulating libraries could not stomach the description of her dead baby in the coffin with her...'²²

Even the excellent Foundling Hospital suffered considerable criticism for allowing mothers to leave their illegitimate infants in its care until such time as they could reclaim it should their situation improve. McClure, 1981, cites a savage reference to it in an article, 'The Tendencies of the Foundling Hospital', as

'a legal licentious Asylum for every Bastard of every Whore, (and of every Whoremonger), under the name of a Foundling'.²³

²¹ See Austen, J., *Emma*, 1816.

²² Mooney, B., Introduction to Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*, (1874; London: The Folio Society, 1991 edn.), p.ix.

²³ McClure, R.K., *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981), p.108.

Expressed more jovially, this same attitude is seen in a ditty which opined that parents of illegitimates got off too easily.²⁴ Society, as evidenced in this ditty, is unforgiving of unmarried mothers who too lightly bore an illegitimate and returned to society unreproached. The assumption that sexual irresponsibility should be penalised is clear.

Conversely, illegitimacy in fiction is one route to popularity for it places an unfair burden on the child for which the reader is expected to compensate. There are reservations, however, these having to do with superstition, value judgements and public taste at different points in time. During the period used here, marriage with its complementary roles in parenting was undoubtedly considered the best place for child-rearing. Davidoff and Hall in their exploration of family life 1780-1850, especially that of the middle classes, write 'If home was the physical location of domesticity, marriage was at its emotional heart'.²⁵ Thus, illegitimacy, although sometimes a strong accreditation in setting-up a favourite, is a controversial one and is heavily dependent on chronology, class and the prevailing ethos at any given period.

²⁴ Appendix 8. 'Joyful News to Batchelors [sic] and Maids; Being a Song in Praise of The Fondling [sic] Hospital and the London Hospital, Aldersgate Street, London' circa 1760. McClure, R. K., *op.cit.*, p.109.

²⁵ Davidoff, L. & Hall, C., 1987, *op. cit.*, pp.178-9.

Displacement, however, is hugely important in creating a favourite and, illegitimate or not, there was a Victorian acceptance of the fictional displacee as one in need of attention. Encountered in every large town or city, they were a burning issue of the time. Small wonder that readers took an avid interest in novels which centred on such a child with its concomitant irregularities. For some, such novels would have been no more than a good read, but many middle-class readers, women as well as men, would have sat on the numerous charity committees concerned with destitute children. Through these ubiquitous children themselves, involvement with charities and for some, no doubt, experience of them in their own circle, it was an informed readership which knew a lot about displacees, although they would not then have been so called. The writers drew on an issue important to readers for economic, charitable, religious and social reasons. Without exception the authors highlight their distress, inviting reader-concern and repugnance of a society sufficiently hypocritical to be aware of their plight yet affording such paltry and grudging provision.

Fictional displacees not only have a long history but a continuing one and displacement continues to send out powerful signals that here is one in need of help. In twentieth-century fiction Flora Poste, in Stella Gibbons' *Cold Comfort Farm*, the antidote to the nineteenth-century earthiness of Mary Webb, is a temporary displacee. The novel parodies the nineteenth-century rural novel and, although

now somewhat neglected, was highly popular mid-twentieth century. Holden Caulfield in J.S. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, 1951, whose absent parents are beset by grief at the death of their other son, functions as a displacee. Emotionally fraught and himself grief-stricken at the loss of his older brother, he is shunted from one expensive boarding-school to another. By the end of the twentieth century Harry Potter is in the same tradition of disruptive displacement.²⁶ The pattern persists; only the dates change.

b) Self-help and self-improvement

Of all the desirable attributes open to the fictional favourite, self-improvement ranks high because it incorporates so many of the rest. Rodrick, 2004, writes

‘Self-improvement by individuals in order to better both the self and the larger community was the one constant of Victorian culture that cross lines of class, gender and age, uniting men and women across the decades’.²⁷

There is a strong vein of didacticism in many of the novels, and lessons the displaced child must learn – a line beloved of the mid-Victorians.

²⁶ Rowling, J.K., *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1997.)

²⁷ Rodrick, A. B., *Self-Help and Civic Culture: Citizenship in Victorian Birmingham*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p.2.

In juvenile fiction of the period, where the displacee occurs just as frequently as in the novels, this didacticism is even more apparent. For example, the siblings in *Masterman Ready*, 1841, and the aristocratic Beverleys in *Children of the New Forest*, 1847, both by the best-selling Captain Marryat, must acquire survival skills if they are not to succumb to early death. Even bespectacled, earnest and delightful Ethel May in Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, 1856, needs to take on more practical qualities before she can shoulder the burden of family care.

Self-help, closely linked to self-improvement, requires the children to be active towards their own betterment, seizing such opportunities as may arise, a philosophy dating back to Aesop's 'The gods help them that help themselves'.²⁸ This originally non-Christian saying has long been applied to a single god in 'God helps them that help themselves', and this the favourite must manage. Passivity is not the way to reader-approval.

These two close-linked attributes feature largely in the progress of the displacees who have not only to be brought to an awareness of their own shortcomings, but to the **need** for improvement. Usually this quest for betterment involves periods of hardship. Copperfield experiences many such developmental periods, each of which must be safely surmounted or the rest are put at risk. Separation from his mother, his unhappiness at boarding-school, the hardships at the bottle

²⁸ Aesop, *Hercules and the Waggoner*, 550 BC. See *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, (1941; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964 edn.), p.1.

factory and his foolish, albeit tender, first marriage are all opportunities for moral growth and the formation of the almost indefinable but necessary 'character'. Jane Eyre's struggle with early hardships and her own hasty temper result in a confident woman very much in charge of her emotions and her circumstances. Even Eppie, whose faults are but the pretty ones of an engaging child, is required to show that she has learned sufficient judgement to value her simple content with Marner rather than rise to the squirearchy. Thus, the favourite must not succumb to besetting trials but bend to them and, after struggles, rise strengthened and shaped for the better.

One who somewhat obliquely conforms to this requirement of self-improvement is Heathcliff. He certainly acquires the manners of a gentleman during his mysterious absence, although his off-scene experiences are not divulged. Yet he is rarely agreeable or exemplary, never relates happily to others and at the end is but a ghostly wanderer. Perhaps this supernatural quality precludes him from being a totally *bona fide* displacee, for he lacks humanity as ordinarily understood, being so often likened to an animal or the devil. Nevertheless, he is undoubtedly a reader-favourite, his tenacity, courage and constancy in love during his tragic course marking him out. The reader feels for his pain and his singularity even while deploring many of his actions.

Education is a major requirement in self-improvement, and some learning is demanded of both boys and girls. Oliver,

Copperfield, Esther Summerson, Pip, Jane Eyre, Deronda and Esmond all have schooling, are tutored, or have professional training.²⁹ Eppie, placed a little earlier in time, has no formal education but is taught domestic management by that model of good housewifery, Mrs. Winthrop. Jessica, from the dregs of society, has Bible instruction alongside initiation into personal cleanliness.

Put in the context of the period, Matthew Arnold had been pressing for a national education system and it was his brother-in-law, W. E. Forster, who, in 1870, brought in the first major national Elementary Education Act. Forster believed it, 'would increase the intellectual force of the individual'.³⁰ The 1870 Elementary Education Act, however, was much narrower in scope than this. H.G. Wells wrote with hindsight, '... it was an Act to educate the lower classes for employment on lower class lines'.³¹ Moreover, there were still those who feared the effects that education might have on the more vociferous workers who were pressing for better terms of employment. The 1870 Act came right at the close of the dates of this thesis, 1837-1870, and did not affect the fictional displacees in any practical way. Nevertheless, it indicates that a call for mass education was being heard in this country and eventually, implemented.

²⁹ In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 1841, Little Nell, a displacee outside the core-text novels, is given teaching by the gentle schoolmaster even though she is so close to death.

³⁰ Ford, B., ed., op cit., p.35.

³¹ Ibid., p.35.

Thomas Hood's, '*The Song of the Shirt*', 1843, appeared anonymously in '*Punch*'.³² It is the cry of a seamstress, her life eroded by drudgery, reflecting the wish of more intelligent labourers who wanted a better lot, including education. Almost twenty years later in *Great Expectations*, 1861, Gargery, a skilled blacksmith is deeply ashamed of his illiteracy.

Thus, education had long been in the nation's mind and the increasing respect and wish for it is reflected in the self-improvement achieved by all the fictional displacees, although it is very telling that education is geared to their social station rather than commensurate with their abilities.

The favourite must not be a dolt but neither is academic excellence required. Rather the children are educated in ways appropriate not to just their present situation but, sometimes, to a rather higher order. Oliver is given a so-called apprenticeship customary for a workhouse boy, but after his up-market move to the Maylie household he is given proper tutoring. Heathcliff returns from his strange absence with the marks of a gentleman about him. Even Nell, so soon to die, is prepared for this by the bachelor who brings her, (and the reader) to an understanding that. 'There is nothing[...]innocent or good, that dies and is forgotten'.³³ Jane Eyre is taught French and Esmond has a remarkable Jesuit tutor, Father

³² Appendix 9. Thomas Hood, '*The Song of the Shirt*', 1843, vv. 3, 5, & 6.

³³ *TOCS* p.395.

Holt.³⁴ Education, even allowing for class differences, is recognised by all the authors as an important means of self-improvement.³⁵

Self-improvement requires the displacees to develop moral awareness and make sound value judgements. In every novel there are decisive testing points where the favourite must exhibit moral strength or, in a favourite expression of the period, 'take the better part'. This arises always from experiential development and not education *per se*. Pip is the best example of this. He develops into a young snob, despises Gargery's homespun virtues, and chases after false goals before arriving at a point of moral equilibrium. It is his humbling realisation of his shallow values which brings this about, not something acquired through formal education.

c) Friends in high places

The displacees need influential friends, (not necessarily their sustainers), sometimes encountered by chance, sometimes more

³⁴ Despite being hated for their alleged cunning and Popishness in the overwhelmingly Protestant England of the period of this thesis, the Jesuits were acknowledged for their excellence as teachers. Father Holt exemplifies this skill.

³⁵ Play as an important aspect of physical, intellectual, emotional and social development is utterly unrecognised as such in all the novels. Not until the twentieth century did educationalists fully explore its potential as a means of learning. See Garvey, C., *Play: The Developing Child*, (London: Fontana/ Open Books, 1977.)

directly.³⁶ Access to ‘good’ society is always useful in the development of a favourite and the displacees mainly have such access. Interestingly, George Eliot reverses this pattern in *Eppie* who refuses the chance of social elevation, thus showing her awareness of Marner’s homely decency.

What constitutes ‘good’ society is, of course, speculative, but the term is used here as one which holds opportunities from which the displacees benefit. It does not necessarily depend on being a moneyed society, as is obvious from Pip’s retrograde association with the profligate ‘Finches of the Groves’. Rather it requires access to power-bearers of good standing within a wide spectrum of respectable society, the latter varying according to the novel’s setting.

Power-bearers are a noteworthy group in themselves for they conform to no set pattern, although their function is the same insofar as they privilege the cause of the displacees. Father Holt and the Dowager Lady Castlewood function in this fashion to Henry Esmond. The widowed minister stands in the same capacity to Jessica, opening for her in this highly evangelical novel access to God himself. Even Magwitch, on-the-run and with no access whatever to good society, is a power-bearer who uses his fortune to promote Pip’s advancement. Godfrey and Nancy Cass regard themselves as would-be power-bearers to *Eppie*. In general, power-bearers open doors to opportunity,

³⁶ In this they strongly resemble the Biblical favourites, David and Joseph, one brought to the notice of King Saul, the other installed at Pharaoh’s court.

the latter not always entirely free of dangerous possibilities.³⁷

These power-bearers are often older, experienced characters who have their counter-part in the innocent child whose future is waiting to be formed. Whether the older sustainer is evil, as in the case of Fagin, or entirely benevolent as are Brownlow and Marner, they feature importantly in what happens to the displacee. (This topic is raised and discussed more fully in the chapter on Sustainers.)

d) Death as a form of success

Death as one kind of success must not be overlooked. Death, especially that of a child, was frequently seen as the point at which the child's soul flew straight to Heaven. That Jesus had died to redeem mankind was not in doubt for the vast majority of this country. Tracts proclaiming it were to be seen on public hoardings, in churches, chapels and many homes. There are so many pointers to this in the literature, paintings, hymns and poems of the period that it leaves little room for doubt, and no wonder for with the high rate of infant mortality there were few families untouched by the death of a child.³⁸ To read of a fictional child's death may have been a catharsis and solace to those similarly bereaved. Moreover, conventional religion strongly pointed to the special place for children in a Heaven where there was neither pain nor sorrow.

³⁷ Potiphar opens exciting opportunities for Joseph which he, Potiphar, does not realise include his own predatory wife.

³⁸ See Chapter One for figures of premature deaths in childhood.

When the displacees die they not only leave aside their sufferings but exchange earthly displacement for a heavenly one. This applies to both major and minor displacees. Even the lowliest such as Jo, the crossing-sweeper,³⁹ enter the same paradise as the near-perfect Nell. The writers present death as a levelling force which promises great glory in a supreme displacement where a welcoming Jesus is their eternal sustainer. With no place other than Heaven left for some displacees, death must be their success. More than this; it is their triumph. For a readership who overwhelmingly 'believed' it was an entirely credible prospect.

Nature or nurture

The question of nature/nurture arises throughout in the creation of a literary favourite, although a century and a half later it is still unresolved in the psychology of childhood debate. Certainly these two influential aspects of child-rearing were of significant interest as far back as the eighteenth century in this country as the coat of arms of the Foundling Hospital shows. Mother Nature, represented somewhat bizarrely as multi-breasted to indicate her superabundance of nurturing, co-exists with the figure of Britannia, the State nurturer, working together to succour the child.⁴⁰

³⁹ Appendix 10. A chirpy crossing-sweeper offering to take a Crimean hero safely over the muddy patch. It is, of course, designed to amuse but, in fact, their lot was a hard one as Mayhew, 1851-52 indicates. Leech, J., *John Leech's Pictures of Life and Characters*, (London: Bradbury & Evans, undated edn.), vol.3, p.69.

⁴⁰ Appendix 11. Coat of Arms of the Foundling Hospital. See Taylor, J.B.,

Displacement, however, rests almost entirely on nurturing and it is displacement and its concomitant factors which are at the heart of this thesis. Nevertheless, the fictional displacees, to some extent, reflect the modern view that nature and nurture hold a moving balance in developmental influence. Authorial acknowledgement of biological forces could hardly be avoided; any denial of the importance of parents and the respect due to them would have been to sail against the prevailing wind. Stretton alone is bold enough to describe and decry thoroughly vicious parenting.⁴¹ Her underlying *rationale* is two-fold. Firstly, it is part of her insistent realism; secondly, it affirms her belief that even those from the most degraded classes are dear to God and need only seek Him for acceptance. Even George Eliot's Cass, an irresponsible, cowardly father, comes nowhere near the abusive violence of Jessica's mother.

Displacement, heavily dependent on nurturing, is at the heart of the novels and the displacees must be seen as beneficiaries of such nurturing. This poses a dilemma for the writers. Nurturing must be seen to triumph for otherwise the role of the all-important sustainers is diminished. Set against this, deference towards parents must be upheld for a readership highly familiar with the Fifth Commandment.⁴²

“Received a Blank Child”, John Brownlow, Charles Dickens and the London Foundling Hospital’ – Archives and Fictions, 2001, ‘*Nineteenth Century Literature*’, vol.56, no.3, p.316.

⁴¹ Interestingly, it did neither her sales nor her popularity any harm and she remained a best-seller for at least three decades.

⁴² ‘Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long in the land which

Dickens displays a certain ambivalence as to whether nature or nurture triumphs. The structure of *Oliver Twist* requires that Rose and Oliver are found to have decent antecedents, and certainly Oliver's early nurturing is hardly beneficial.⁴³ Yet in the same novel, the reader is in no doubt that it is Mrs. Maylies's excellent nurturing from which both most benefit. Copperfield's father chased 'wax dolls', which speaks volumes of both his parents indicating the poor taste of one and a certain empty-headedness in the other. Copperfield's early timidity is like that of his mother and his predilection for another 'wax doll', Dora, repeats a paternal flaw. Set against these, he gains all-round once nurtured by Miss Trotwood and, in adulthood, level-headed Agnes Wickfield.

In *Great Expectations*, Pip's parentage is not discussed. It suffices that they are dead. Pip is utterly unlike his uncomfortable sister, and it is the timely nurturing of Joe Gargery which counts. Estella is soured and her capacity for love thwarted by Miss Havisham's bizarre nurturing. Lady Dedlock in *Bleak House* is motivated by a scheming selfishness, none of which shows up in her daughter, Esther, who is almost totally selfless. Esther's early nurturing results in an unforthcoming girl until Jarndyce gives her responsibilities and affection. Copperfield carries characteristic frailties of both parents but responds to good nurturing. It is an

the Lord thy God giveth thee'. *Holy Communion: Introductory Rubric.*

⁴³ Oliver would have died soon after birth if dependent on nurturing and it is his own struggles to breathe which save him. *OT* pp.1-2.

inconsistent pattern and in this very close to reality.⁴⁴

One way of dealing with genetic factors is to kill off parents so that their quality is undisclosed. Oliver, Pip and Rose Maylie have parents known only in retrospect who play no part in nurturing. Esther's mother, although alive, is off-scene and takes no part in her rearing. By contrast, good sustaining influences are highly important, take place relatively early on and are, in general, advantageous to both child and sustainer. Where the sustainer is malevolent, like Fagin, or inimical to the child as is Jane Eyre's aunt Reed, their influence is overcome by better ones. (Malevolent sustainers deserve further comment and are discussed in the following chapter.) Thus, in the mixed bag of Dickens' displacees, there is no obvious pattern as to whether nature or nurture takes precedence.

Charlotte Brontë tells us virtually nothing of Jane Eyre's heredity, apart from her distant relationship to the impeccable Rivers trio. Her bad temper, so much in evidence during her aunt's ill-natured nurturing, gives way to an ability to cope with injustice and triumph over it given the judicious guidance of Miss Temple. Friendship with the extraordinary Helen Burns, a short-lived displacee with wisdom

⁴⁴ Outside the core-text novels, that remarkable displacee, the Marchioness in *The Old Curiosity Shop* has an appalling parentage, hinted at as being that of Sally Brass and the lecherous dwarf, Quilp. Yet she manages to do very well due to her sharp wits and tenacity.

beyond her years, nurtures Jane's Christian faith and an ability to profit from adversity, again indicating the strength of nurture. In the same novel a minor displacee, Adèle, hinted at as Rochester's natural daughter, manifests a love of *cadeaux* attributed as much to her Frenchness as to her mother. Jane Eyre seeks to eradicate these traits leaving the reader in no doubt that nurturing will prevail.⁴⁵

Emily Brontë reveals even less of Heathcliff's origins. He does well enough while Mr. Earnshaw is alive and showing his rough-and-ready concern for the boy. It is the abrupt change in his status once this good-enough nurturing gives way to disaffection that Heathcliff's dormant violence and resentment emerge.

In both Brontë novels, nurture features pretty well exclusively in the displacee's development; hereditary factors cannot be assessed for we have only minimal knowledge of them. Nurture is a clear winner and the Brontës must have intended it to be or they would have given far more biological clues as to what most shapes the child.

George Eliot comes down firmly on the side of nurture in her treatment of Eppie who springs from a drunken mother and irresponsible father. Not only does Eppie's decency arise from the Marner-Winthrop rearing but Cass himself greatly improves once

⁴⁵ Becky Sharp in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, 1847-48, is another Anglo-French displacee with a similar love of *cadeaux*. It may have been a quick way of marking out French females, just as an alleged love of money marked out Jews. Attention is drawn to it in an anonymous review of *Jane Eyre* in '*The Quarterly Review*', 1848, vol.84, Dec., p.160.

married to Nancy who 'nurtures' him in the ways of a good husband and an altogether better man. (Without pursuing the topic, this strongly suggests that nurturing is influential not only in the early years but also in adulthood.) Such examples weight the scales towards nurturing, unsurprising as the fictional displacees must be shown to benefit from the rearing incorporated into their displacement.

In *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot strikes more of a balance. Deronda has excellent nurturing during his formative years. When his mother is revealed as a gifted Jewess whose single-mindedness over her career led her to relinquish him in infancy, it does not augur altogether well for his heredity. Sound nurturing shows up strongly in Deronda's engaging personality but, once discovered, his Jewish origins tug at him. As he has never been subject to Judaic influences until young manhood, it can only be biological forces at work here. Eliot, however, uses the strength of his good nurturing to ensure his capacity to cope with the challenges brought about by his newly-discovered racial identity.

Hesba Stretton is unambiguous as to nurturing being paramount in her representation of Jessica who has an absentee father and a depraved mother. There is no 'balance' in what Stretton describes; everything rests on nurturing of a decidedly Christian kind. Given her evangelical bent and the fact that the Religious Tract Society were her main publishers, this is unsurprising. Nevertheless, Stretton's

Christian beliefs were no mere 'front'. Her life was one of frugality, modesty and campaigning for poor children which sprang from her undoubted belief in 'improving' influences.⁴⁶ The strength of nurturing based on Christian principles is to be seen in all her novels and juvenile stories; a belief on which her own life was founded.⁴⁷

Most of the displacees are left safely esconced within marriage and family; of their children's development we know nothing, and how far heredity shows up in them is unrevealed. By contrast the effects of nurturing show up not only in that given by the sustainers but in the fact that the child becomes, in turn, a nurturer. A discussion of this role-reversal appears in the following chapter, but it warrants mention here for it not only consolidates the strength of nurture over nature, but the fact that nurturing has a long-term aspect and its effects do not end with one generation.

So many fictional displacees eventually nurture their benefactors that the writers must have intended such a role-reversal to be important. *Copperfield* keeps the older Betsey Trotwood living close by, having already shouldered her muddled finances. Esther Summerson makes Jarndyce an honorary grandfather of her children. George Eliot flags up role-reversal in Eppie's tenderness to the ageing

⁴⁶ Appendix 12. In tribute to her work for children the NSPCC in 1997 placed a plaque on the house in Wellington, Shropshire where she was born. Close up of plaque from photograph taken by the present writer, 2005.

⁴⁷ Other examples of this belief appear in Stretton's *Pilgrim Street*, 1867, and *Little Meg's Children*, 1868.

Marnier. Jane Eyre becomes sustainer to a much-reduced Rochester. Most marked of all, Jessica whose improvement stems entirely from Christian nurturing, becomes child-housekeeper to Standing.

A reciprocal nurturing serves two novelistic purposes. Firstly, it points to the long-term effects of nurture which goes beyond the first generation. Thus, those who have themselves been well-nurtured draw on it in later relationships. Secondly, it ensures reader-recognition that the displacee is of sufficient integrity to repay its debt of gratitude.

In summarising this topic, variables to do with status, age, what is revealed, what left undisclosed, opportunities and influences are important. In view of these, one can hardly expect to arrive at a firm decision as to the supremacy of either nature or nurture. In itself, this does not matter; the debate has continued unresolved for centuries. What is important here is that for credibility **both** aspects show up in the fictional displacees.

Yet it can be strongly argued that the writers must have considered nurture had the greater influence for the effects of the all-important sustainers depend on it entirely. It is absolutely understandable that within the novels nurturing is a crucial factor in displacement itself for, mostly, little is known of the child's heredity. Moreover the sustainers, while not exactly in competition with parents, are represented as being advantageous to the child. Convention required parents be respected, even if posthumously.

Stretton alone is an 'outsider' in this homage to parents, especially mothers, who in many of her novels, not least the one used here, are castigated. Her intention was to highlight how abominable was the child's lot in low-life London slums in which such debased parenting was common. There is no point, authorially, in displacement as a strategy unless its effects are significant; effects which arise solely from nurturing, be it good, bad or indifferent.

The authors combine realism with possibility, one way of coping with the nature/nurture issue. This accords with actuality while still leaving space for speculative twists and turns. Nurturing **must** carry the greater weight for the whole point of displacement rests on it. Its consequences are long-term, the displacees in time becoming themselves the nurturers, indicating its long-term effect. This balance gives more credibility than an absolutely sharp difference would have made. In all instances, genetic endowment is represented as open to amelioration by sound nurturing and this is essential to the literary displacement itself.

Inimical forces

Inimical elements feature strongly in creating a favourite. This holds good in novels, Biblical text and juvenile literature. Unwelcome though adversaries may be, for they are by definition hostile, they are necessary in the context of how a favourite develops strengths, (usually of a moral kind once childhood bullying is over.) Adversaries are invariably more advantageously placed than the displacee either

by age, strength or rank; a younger, weaker or less privileged adversary would never do. Some adversaries place the child in physical danger, the most obvious being the hugely violent Orlick and Bill Sikes. Others pose more subtle dangers and include Uriah Heep, Steerforth and even reformed Godfrey Cass.

The negative depiction of adversaries alerts readers and summons up concern for the favourite. Not all inimical elements are immediately obvious as such, and when they become so it thoroughly jolts the reader; Steerforth is one such. Others show sinister intent by spiking the prospects of the favourite. Amongst these are Heathcliff's tormentor, Hindley Earnshaw, and Bentley Drummle, the fashionable cad who walks off with Estella. They endanger the hopes of the favourite and, more importantly, test its mettle. Such inimical forces markedly affect the course of the novel, counter-balancing any possibility of an easy run for the favourite.

Their effect, however, is to draw the reader ever more firmly on the side of the favourite, often too young or naïve to tackle adversaries itself. The reader warms to the sustainer, whose task this often is, and gets a nasty shock when a sustainer, notably Steerforth, is treacherous. In his case, he both sustains and dominates Copperfield, and eventually seduces another displacee, Little Emily. Thus, his treachery is compounded. Cecil writes, 'Creative imagination may not be the only quality necessary to the novelist, but it is the first quality. And no other English novelist had it quite in the way Dickens had'.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Cecil, D., *op. cit.*, p.59.

Steerforth's compounded villainy clearly exemplifies this creative energy at its most dramatic, original and exciting.

Searching for an identity

This merits some considerable discussion for displacees have particular problems with self-identity. Deprived of familiar surroundings, bereft of family and pre-existing traditions, a displacee must evaluate and adapt to new conditions in which fresh mores and psychological influences must be successfully encountered and turned to advantage. Where new circumstances are adverse the child must learn to assess them in relation to itself, calling for responses entirely new to it.

Jane Eyre, for example, is accustomed to show a passionate sense of injustice at her treatment at Gateshead and Lowood; injustice which the reader vicariously shares and understands. Association with Helen Burns, her first emotional sustainer, and Miss Temple, the scrupulous headmistress, re-shape her attitude without breaking her spirit. Even so, her uncertainty shows immediately she arrives at Thornfield when she mistakenly takes the housekeeper to be her employer, indicating her inability to draw on distinguishing signs of status such as speech, dress and presence.

Such experiences have their origin in the bewilderments of early displacement and the uncertain status of the displacee. Doubts of this kind are common to most children, especially in adolescence, and not exclusive to the displacees. Nevertheless, more than most, a

displacee is required to constantly re-appraise his or her existing *persona*.

Displacees must learn new roles which constantly fluctuate. Copperfield, for example, has to exchange his early cosseting for a harsh school, a tyrannical stepfather and the degradation of factory life. No sooner are these roles learned than he is called upon to adapt himself as nephew to a formidable aunt whose kindness lies hidden beneath a brusque façade.

Esther Summerson contends with more problems than most in coming to terms with self-realisation. A timid child burdened by a guilt she does not understand, it takes responsibility and the trust Jarndyce has in her to develop her abilities and innate sensitivity, thus enhancing her self-concept. In addition, she has, temporarily, to become an invalid and, more permanently, lose her looks now marred by smallpox scars; a blight which calls for new strengths in her. (A hint of her own loss of complexion occurs in her childhood when her much-loved doll with the 'beautiful complexion'⁴⁹ suffers a similar fate.) Essentially a 'giver', Esther's greatest challenge is acceptance of Jarndyce's own difficult 'gift' when he releases her from her engagement so that she may marry her true love Woodcourt.

Esmond, readily accepted by the Castlewoods, is nevertheless hyper-sensitive over his illegitimacy, Thackeray cleverly demonstrating in this how self-identity is largely determined by the

⁴⁹ BH p.15.

way others react to us. (This formation of self-identity brought about by the way others respond to them is important to all the displacees but Esmond is a prime example.) His legitimacy established, Esmond retains his acute sensitivity which now develops very positively into a keen awareness of the needs of others. Problems of self-identity are compounded by his abdication as head of a great house, taking on instead the role of family friend. Finally, it is his touching search for his mother's grave which speaks of his need for something more.

George Eliot gives Deronda no great early problems as to his self-identity for he is displaced in infancy and given an excellent nurturing. Only in young manhood and after the enormous influences worked on him by Mirah and the prophetic Mordecai, does he become obsessed by the need to find his roots and, especially, his racial origin. Apprised of this, he cries out with delight, 'Then I **am** a Jew', a pivotal point in the novel.⁵⁰ It signifies his overwhelming relief that he knows who he is. It is this certainty which is paramount rather than his Jewishness, *per se*. One might expect him to be psychologically displaced at this revelation. That he is not is due to his new-found certainty as to his parentage, race and self-identity after years of uncertainty.

That he flinches from some of the less attractive traits in the Jews who enter his life, and of whose race he is a member, is treated very frankly by George Eliot. Through the characters of the

⁵⁰ DD p.471.

acquisitive shopkeeper, Ezra Cohen, with his 'taste for money-getting',⁵¹ and his materialistic family, Eliot reveals an avaricious aspect of Jews, obvious even in Ezra's small son, Isaac. Eliot, thus, maintains a balanced attitude between them and the ascetic, scholarly Mordecai who cares nothing for money or comfort. In addition, such contrast prepares the reader for Deronda's anguishing search for his racial identity.

He opts for Judaism, marries a Jewess and takes on his role as a potential leader of his race. In this call to greatness, Deronda is totally unlike the other novelistic displacees and it is just as well that he is left at the outset of his quest. To go further would be too much for English readers at a time when dislike of Jews was common, even though Disraeli, made Prime Minister in 1868, was himself a Jew.⁵² (A significant comparison may be made between Disraeli's portrayal in life and a much more respectful posthumous one.⁵³)

George Eliot stands out from the other novelists in her representation of Daniel Deronda who must be privileged in this section. (Even the name is arresting and formidable with its alliteration, repetitive three-syllables and un-English resonance.) His singularity may be in part due to George Eliot's intellectual approach to her work. As Cecil notes,

⁵¹ *DD* p.288.

⁵² Appendix 13. Disraeli prevaricating in debate, '*Punch*', 6th July, 1872.

⁵³ Appendix 14. In Memoriam bookmark of watered silk put out by the Primrose League shows a handsome man of considerable gravitas. Bookmark in the ownership of the thesis writer.

'her plot was intended to follow not a standardised formula but what she considered to be the logical development of that idea; and this might entail something quite different from the accepted Victorian notion of a plot'.⁵⁴

This is borne out in her depiction of Deronda who is out of the common run in a novel which has no very evident conclusion. Modern in her ability to leave things as they are, Eliot does not strive for a conventional ending.

Although, chronologically, a contemporary of the other core-text novelists, Eliot belongs to a more modern period in outlook and structure. She tackles difficult ideas and principles from an intellectual standpoint and does not pander to any difficulty readers may have with this approach. (For example, the passages dealing with Mordecai's prophecies as to the future of Judaism must have been, (and still are), outside the intellectual reach of many readers.) Realism is always important and there are no hard-to-believe stretches of fancy in the content, but rather a mature relationship with her readers.

Dickens wrote in a hurl-along episodic style with the cliff-hangers which his readers loved and which to some extent were forced on him by their monthly serialisation. For him, all must be resolved by the end of the novel. (The alternative ending of *Great Expectations* is not at all in keeping with the rest of his output.) His displacees are left

⁵⁴ Cecil, D., *op.cit.*, pp. 288-289.

entirely sure of who they are and where they belong, and this holds good even for those who die. Similarly, Thackeray leaves Esmond unexpectedly in the New World, yet certain of himself, his marriage and his work.

Perhaps the ultimate example of self-certainty over identity is Jane Eyre. The confident 'Reader, I married him',⁵⁵ says it all. She has established her place as wife and mother, marriage to Rochester being her essential goal. His physical frailty and dependency reverses his former mastery of her, adding to her security. At last she can shake off the grip of patriarchy and become a woman who, while respecting and loving her spouse, is not dominated by him. Until this point, even possession of a tidy fortune of her own giving her independence is not enough to allow for her full autonomy.

Jessica has perhaps the greatest problem of self-identity for she must start with basic cleanliness, decent manners and above all, a knowledge of God; all entirely new to her. That these are achieved result in a promising and, above all, a Christian future of personal certainty that she can always rely on her heavenly sustainer. Stretton deals with this very directly, sparing her less well-educated readers complex theological arguments but using her customary basic text and straight-to-the-point style. Her approach is unsubtle yet convincing because she wrote of what she knew and passionately believed in.

⁵⁵ *JE* p.454.

Finding an identity and the sense of place and security which accompanies this, are long-term goals and it is the course of this search which forms a major part in the structure of all the novels. The knots and tangles involved are at the root of the displaced child's story and quite unavoidable; indeed, they are essential. Basic components of place, situation, status, work and marriage act on the displacees and resolve into permanent character traits and a hard-won stabilisation of self-identity crucial to all displacees.

Different models of displaced children

Displacees present in many models, some of the more significant being the evangelical, the heavenward-bound, the rebellious, the vulnerable, the nicely-normal and the not-entirely human. A sense of humour is not readily apparent in any although, on rare occasions, the child may be unwittingly amusing. Most of the fictional children, just like their human counterparts, cross categories.

a) Those who must die

The heaven-bound children are usually identifiable by their self-sacrificial actions and adherence to Christian tenets. Their luminosity combined with unawareness of their virtue is made clear. Two major examples are Helen Burns and Little Nell, both displaying a Christian forbearance, moral excellence and self-disregard which puts them particularly at risk from the horrid dangers of the wicked world in which they cannot stay over-long. The mid-Victorians had their own

too-frequent experiences of child mortality and must have read of these short-lived children with a sadness and fearfulness less acute to a later reader. Read in the context of the period they were very real indeed. Artists of the period also recognised how deeply-felt was the concern of Victorian parents over the health of their children. Such concern is depicted in the painting, **Sickness and Health**, by Thomas Webster, 1843. Centre stage are two delightful, rosy little girls, skirts held up dancing merrily, while in the background their mother watches anxiously over their frail sibling.⁵⁶

Helen Burns is instantly recognisable as one too good for this world. Her physical frailty and hacking cough would instantly alert her contemporary readers to the threat of tuberculosis, indicating that her future is limited. Her self-confessed defects are slight while her saintliness is readily apparent. Her impact on Jane Eyre, a natural contrast by temperament, is steadying, sustaining and converting. Her work done, she dies so that Jane may learn to stand alone.

From the moment we meet Little Nell, a displacee outside the core-text novels but a useful example here, she is in danger, having lost her way and wandering alone on the London streets after dark. Ackroyd, 2001, confirms London of the period as ‘a perilous place for the young’.⁵⁷ Nell’s vulnerability is compounded by her misguided

⁵⁶ Appendix 15. Oil painting, **Sickness and Health**, Thomas Webster, 1843, Victoria and Albert Museum. See Lambourne, L., *Victorian Painting*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), p.176.

⁵⁷ Ackroyd, P., *London: The Biography*, (London: Vintage, 2001), p.640.

grandfather, Quilp's lust, an inadequate protector in too-young Kit Nubbles, and most of all, her own psychological fastidiousness. Lacking self-interest and with no notion of danger, her very innocence was what so charmed Dickens' readers. Threats hover about Nell throughout and are a powerful factor in the intensely emotional affection which readers accorded her. Nell's course runs inexorably heavenwards and her demise, over which readers on both sides of the Atlantic wept hugely, was one of the most famous scenes in fiction during the period discussed here. By the end of the century Oscar Wilde was to poke wicked fun at it with his 'One would have to have a heart of stone not to laugh at the death of Little Nell'.⁵⁸ By that time, social realities were changing, innocence less highly prized and death no longer a victory.

Jo, the dying crossing-sweeper in *Bleak House*, gives Dickens a chance to condemn a society apparently unmoved by Jo and his like. He steps right out of the novel with his rhetorical 'Dead, your Majesty. Dead my Lords and Gentlemen. Dead Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order.'⁵⁹ Jo can only die, repeating a Paternoster and aware that 'the Light' is coming. It is Dickens at his most passionately dramatic and it pays off. He directs his attack at a combination of Church, State and society for their callous neglect of destitute children and does not mind breaking the 'rules' of the novel

⁵⁸ Levenson, Ada, *Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar Wilde and Reminiscences of the Author.*, (1930, p.441.

⁵⁹ *BH* p.649.

in order to further his own campaign.

In this category, too, is a notable workhouse boy, Little Dick, fellow-displacée of *Oliver Twist*. Frail and appealing, Dick is scarcely five or six years old and fears to stay overlong on earth lest his older sister, now in Heaven, should forget him before he can join her. Yet he is a most congenial and supportive companion to Oliver and a memorable displacée to the reader.

Short-lived victims of circumstance, these pathetic displacées were firm favourites of mid-nineteenth century readers, their credibility stemming from the massive numbers of tubercular and infirm children to be found in all ranks of society. Not only do they face abuse, hardship and injustices but their frailty and quintessential spirituality render them unfit for the vicissitudes of adulthood. Even Nell, with so much promise of womanhood about her, must not be sullied by the intimacy of marriage.

Death in childhood was so common that it struck terror through all social classes.⁶⁰ Hartcup, 1982, writes,

‘... pain and death were accepted as part of the Divine blueprint, signposts to the salvation of the soul’.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Hartcup, A., cites Lord Halifax and his wife who suffered the deaths of three of their sons within a few years. Halifax wrote to their remaining son, ‘You do not know how precious you are in my eyes[...]my only little son left now that God has taken my other three to Himself’. *Children of the Great Country Houses*, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1982), p.18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.63.

So the tragically short-lived fictional displacees were representative of the brief lives of many children, rich and poor, and to read of such may have been not only absorbing in itself but a likely catharsis for personal bereavement. Moreover, death itself is undoubtedly the child's reward. Their sufferings at an end, their souls fly straight to God, this being no fantasy to the great majority of the readers of the period.

b) Rebels

Fewer displacees than one might expect rebel, for rebels are themselves fictional favourites. The strange new circumstances of the displacees give rise to apprehensions and perplexities, but they rarely rebel in any obvious fashion. (This is, of course, commensurate with their powerlessness.) A notable exception is Jane Eyre and even Oliver has his moment of wanting 'more'. Jane Eyre is from the outset a doughty rebel. Exciting as this is for the reader, she is chastened partly to conform with Christian forbearance and as a preparation for such choices as she will make in womanhood.

Two minor but significant displacees, the Marchioness in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and Tattycoram in *Little Dorrit*, are outside the novels used here but deserve mention as notable examples of children who either through resentment, a sense of injustice, or a bold spirit speak out against their lot. Tattycoram voices her awareness of being treated differently from the Meagles' own child. Yet, understandable

as this is, Dickens takes no chances and returns her to the Meagles, suitably chastened. He allows her no real opportunity of a better life for her dash to freedom leads only to the uncomfortable Miss Wade at whose lesbianism he dare only hint. Understandably, he cannot show approval of lesbianism for it would have been highly offensive to his readers. (Many of his readers would not even have understood the sub-text.) Yet it is surprising that he gives such a paltry escape-route to a displacee with whose unequal treatment many readers may well have sympathised. Dickens prefers to play safe in homage to the genuinely good but partial Meagles and, possibly, as a sop to more conformist readers.

The cribbage-playing Marchioness, however, does very well. Endowed with a multiplicity of useful attributes including sharp wits and a sense of self-preservation, and aware of the paucity of her chances, she is an opportunist who wins the protection of the better-than-expected Swiveller who educates and marries her. She is the perfect foil to Nell in the same novel and the no-nonsense romance between her and Swiveller provides a love-interest in a novel which otherwise has none.⁶²

⁶² The mawkish little romance hinted at between Kit Nubbles and Nell is similar to one Dickens used in a later short story which has four romantic infant runaways intended to beguile the adult reader. "A Holiday Romance" appeared in 'All The Year Round', in January, March, April and May 1868.

c) The pious

“Pious” is used here to describe displacees who constantly turn to God, whose behaviour is affected by the intensity of their religious belief and, occasionally, the child with an evangelical bent. Piety in a child was very well-regarded during the period. Children at prayer are readily found in paintings, songs, hymns and stories of this period, many of a highly sentimental kind. One of the most popular hymns for children was ‘Gentle Jesus’.⁶³

Family prayers, with servants in attendance in the better-off families, were common and bedtime prayers for children the norm in all classes except the most debased. Thus, the pious displacees were behaving in what was regarded as a thoroughly admirable fashion, Children were encouraged to memorise not only prayers and hymns but biblical texts. (Indeed, children from poor areas were dependent on memorisation of hymns and prayers in churches and Sunday Schools which functioned on a limited budget and did not run to individual copies of prayer and hymn books.)

In the core-text novels children, with no gender discrimination, frequently resort to prayer and supplication. It was pleasing to the reader and accorded with respectable practice in almost all classes. Jessica is of especial interest for she exemplifies the child who is, in the vernacular of the time, ‘brought to Jesus’. The religious societies who sought these conversions were in full spate during the period. Their targets were wide-ranging including drunkards, petty thieves,

⁶³ Appendix 16. Wesley, C., *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1739, Hymn 1149.

adults genuinely seeking religious faith, and those ignorant of God.

Jessica is a prime example of this last. Devoid of any Christian knowledge, she is presented as a dirty, ragged little girl not above petty theft although, in accordance with the all-time English dislike of begging, she stops short of this. Her mother is a drunkard, drink being a huge social problem and one in which children often suffered. The wry cartoons from '*Working Man's Friend*', 1852,⁶⁴ and '*Will o' the Wisp*', 1870,⁶⁵ show clearly that even very young children were used to the inside of gin palaces and public houses. The cartoons used here show children scarcely more than toddlers aware of where and how to purchase drink. Moreover, they show that the practice could still be a subject for humour, although its consequences were dire.

The practice of 'signing the pledge' was very common and considered as an important step towards sobriety.⁶⁶ Mainly associated with The Band of Hope, the practice continued well into the early years of the twentieth century. George Cruikshank, a temperance zealot himself, drew the illustration of one such gathering in Sadler's Wells Theatre, 1854.⁶⁷

Thus, Jessica at the outset is, in many ways, thoroughly undesirable. Yet her candour over the dropped penny, even if slightly

⁶⁴ Appendix 17. '*Working Man's Friend*', i, new series, 1852, p.56.

⁶⁵ Appendix 18. '*Will o' the Wisp*', iii, 1870, p.283.

⁶⁶ Appendix 19, Herschel, E.D., Watercolour, *The Band of Hope*, Littlemore, Oxon., undated.

⁶⁷ Appendix 20. Cruikshank, G, '*The Illustrated London News*', xxiv, 1854, p.465.

belated, denotes one who is not beyond redemption. Stretton certainly had some didactic intention for Jessica is presented as one whose self-improvement is a model for the kind of poorer readers whom Stretton targeted. No other displacee is so vividly presented as one who 'comes' to God and exemplifies a convert who, in turn, converts others.

Stretton is the only writer used here who does not include a love-interest in the content. (She might easily have done so for the minister is a widower with two little girls and Daniel Standing a bachelor.) That there is not even a whisper of romance for two good men who seem in need of wives denotes Stretton's intention to concentrate entirely on the religious and didactic elements. Possibly she considered that these would be less powerful if a competing theme were introduced, especially in such a short novel. Or, as she aimed at younger, less sophisticated readers, Stretton may have considered it more appropriate to stick solely to Jessica's religious conversion. We can not be certain, but we do know that whatever readership she targeted, the story was an instant best seller, was applauded by men as diverse as Lord Shaftesbury and the Tsar of Russia and maintained its hold over readers of all classes for four decades or more.⁶⁸

d) Self-narrators

Self-narration brings the child very close to the reader. There are, nevertheless, some clear disadvantages in first person narrative.

⁶⁸ Neal, T, Article in 'Shropshire Star', Weekend Factfile Section, 22nd Jan. 2000.

Chiefly these are that the narrator is, in effect, debarred from relating overmuch self-credit lest it appear immodest. Secondly, it must resort to hearsay when the experiences are not first-hand. Thirdly, there is the problem of how far the reader is prepared to trust what the self-narrator claims. Lastly, as Patrick Joyce, 1994, writes, 'A split subject position is demanded of the autobiographer, one both inside and outside the tale'.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it has undeniable advantages, not least its immediacy; on this count it can not be matched. Events related at first-hand have a magnetic effect which draws the reader to the child's view of events. No one knows better than the child its own compelling emotions which even the closest outsider can only interpret second-hand.

Jane Eyre stands out as a powerful self-narrator whose brilliant opening account of her terror in the Red Room and her frankness over her own violence reveal one who has been wronged and who is honest. She is no whiner but an angry little girl whose actions are understandable to the reader. Moreover, she has been bullied, of all treatment the most abhorred. The reader immediately takes up her cause. This stunning opening is matched by the equally frank closing chapter with its unadorned, 'Reader, I married him', a phrase both confident and confidential. Nothing could be more immediate and powerfully revealing than this kind of first person narrative.

The same honesty over her looks and abilities is emphasised

⁶⁹ Joyce, P., *Democratic Subjects: the self and the social in nineteenth-century England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.155.

throughout. More subtly, her ability to charm is revealed by the fact that women as well as men like her. Miss Temple values her, Mrs. Fairfax trusts and relies on her, and Mary and Diana Rivers regard her as a sister. Straightforward narrative ensures the reader will find it credible that Rochester is ready to commit bigamy for her, and even the complex St. John Rivers prompted to offer marriage. Even more telling, her account of Rochester's supernatural cry is believable, springing as it does from her established honesty and her passionate desire for him, as well as heralding his re-entry into Jane's life.

Realism requires the self-narrators to admit their faults. Pip confesses the foolish snobbery which led him to discard old friends. Copperfield's sense of relief at Dora's death is evident. Dickens' realism links Copperfield's narrative of exasperation with the charming but impossible Dora to that of the reader who wants a better deal for him. So, in her illness, Copperfield's own account reveals that he is able to love her again, as is the reader, and no vestige of his failure in his first marriage remains.⁷⁰ The combined effects of self-narrative, illustration and fulfilment of the reader's hopes combine to make the ending one of supreme happiness.

⁷⁰ Appendix 21. The brilliant original illustration by Hablot K. Browne, 'Phiz', shows a portrait of Dora smiling down in approval on Copperfield, Agnes and their children; a wonderful example of a picture within a picture which consolidates what the text has already informed readers.

Henry Esmond, a reserved and somewhat priggish narrator, switches from first to third person throughout with interventions in note form from his grandson. Esmond suffers less than most from displacement for the Castlewoods welcome him. Nevertheless, his illegitimacy is always shameful to him. Displacement becomes dangerous when he is innocently embroiled in espionage, to him part of the delight in his attractive Jesuit tutor, Father Holt. Apprised of his legitimacy, he keeps secret his rightful claim, narrating this modestly. Only when he speaks of his dead mother does he shed his protective reticence, drawing the reader very close.

Thus, although the self-narrating displaces face undoubted limitations in relating events, on the whole these are outdone by some very positive advantages, most important of these being the immediacy of the account and the fact that it draws reader and narrator into a delightful intimacy.

Opportunism and moments of decision

A time comes when the favourite must show autonomy, no longer a dependent whose course is determined by others. This is closely linked to the self-help discussed earlier. The psychological comfort of the reader requires that the child has been sufficiently proven and will not now regress. Friends, opportunities and education are set-up to establish it as one likely to do well and the favourite is left in optimum circumstances or, if still a child, encompassed by

sound adults who have his or her welfare at heart.

Essentially, the child must be instrumental in promoting its own improvement. In this, the ability to recognise and capitalise on opportunities, even if only instinctively, is clearly approved of in both novelistic and Biblical text. Joseph exploits his dream-interpreting, Samuel and Moses act on God's bidding and David pits himself against Goliath.

The novelistic displacees show similar opportunism. Oliver has a terrible stab of awareness that Bates and the Dodger are thieves.

‘In an instant the whole mystery of the handkerchiefs, and the watches, and the jewels, and the Jew, rushed upon the boy’s mind... he felt as if he were in a burning fire’.⁷¹

It is an exceptional moment of *gestalt* learning theory in action; the second when all the discrete pieces take shape and make sense. The boy understands in a flash of insightful learning that his associates are a gang of thieves

Oliver instantly flees the situation, it being essential to remove himself from such criminality; an instinctive action which assures the reader of his moral awareness. An earlier indication of his moral decisiveness is seen when after ‘a drubbing which satisfied even Mrs.Sowerberry herself’,⁷² he is sufficiently spirited to run away.

Likewise, Copperfield flees from the bottle-factory, while

⁷¹ OT p.72.

Esther Summerson, given Jarndyce's keys, establishes herself as a home maker, thereby winning reader-approbation. These are choices made in moments of desperation, calling for courage and readiness in the displacees to change their lot.

Thackeray's Henry Esmond is especially notable, for his determined self-renunciation over title and estate ensure a long delay in recognition not only of his true status but of his unselfish motives. (Dickens had represented the ultimate self-renunciation in *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859, when Sidney Carton takes the moral high ground in a decision calling for his own life. Many Victorians would have deemed such behaviour as in line with its supreme exemplar, the crucified Christ dying to save others.) Esmond's success as soldier and head of family takes place only in his middle years and is consolidated when he daringly marries Rachel Castlewood, long regarded as a surrogate mother. His bold decision results in their move to the New World and blissful happiness.

George Eliot gives not only Eppie but her sustainer and her would-be-sustainer moments of moral decision. Unselfishly, Marner urges Eppie to choose between him and the affluent Cass, saying, 'I won't stand in your way'.⁷³ Her choice reveals both her love for Marner and her awareness of the kind of life which most suits her. Her moral decision, following on those of Cass, Nancy and Marner, combine in an almost fairy-tale ending, absolutely at one with many

⁷² *OT* p.52.

⁷³ *SM* p.229.

such elements running throughout the novel.

Autonomy of a striking kind linked to moral decision show up in Jane Eyre's response to Rochester's supernatural call just after she is given the chance of an honourable enough marriage to St. John Rivers. She recognises the more challenging option and is bold enough to seize it, taking her first step in securing her proper place as wife to Rochester.

None of these pivotal choices defines more sharply the displacee's calibre than that of Jessica. Coming as it does at the start of the novel, it offsets any offence at her dirtiness and the fact that she comes close to begging, both highly distasteful to the reader. Moreover, Stretton makes a brilliant choice in her opening setting, one of the street coffee-stalls so familiar to Londoners. Customers of these coffee-stalls were heterogeneous, vouched for by Hunt's painting, *A Coffee Stall*, 1860.⁷⁴ Ackroyd confirms this mixed clientele, referring to Charles Lamb who 'recalled the artisan and the chimney sweep mingling with the "rake" at dawn around the saloopian stalls'.⁷⁵

Such an opening is an instant focal point familiar to all classes of reader. In marked contrast to its security, Jessica stands as an outcast, her choice between a world of plenty and her own griping

⁷⁴ Appendix 22. *A Coffee Stall*, 1860, Charles Hunt, Museum of London, Ackroyd, P., *London. The Biography*, (2000; London: Vintage, 2001 edn.), between pp.504 and 505.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.354. 'Saloop' was an inferior but popular coffee made from sassafras wood, milk and sugar and probably named after the 'slurping' noises made by those who drank it.

hunger. The reader is jolted out of a world of innocent pleasure to the desperation of hunger. Stretton thus emphasises the child's innate morality when she returns a penny she intended to steal; a stunning moment of decision, a preparation for something out of the ordinary run in this small gutter-snipe.

Summary

In this chapter displacement has been emphasised as a powerful factor in the lives of fictional and non-fictional displacees. Ways in which the displacees are defined as favourites and authorial strategies which promote or hinder their progress have been examined. Certain attributes of the displacees appear not only in the novels but as far back as the Old Testament and continue to the present day. Displacement and the pitfalls and triumphs following on this have elements common to all.

Perfection in the child is not a necessary component of a favourite. Indeed it is the self-improvement gained, often with difficulty, which makes the child beloved by the reader. Sustaining relationships, role-reversals, and routes to self-improvement feature highly in both Biblical and novelistic text. Similarly, opportunism of an acceptable kind and the growth of moral awareness are important throughout. Nurturing is shown as carrying more weight than nature in psychological development but nature is not eliminated, partly out of respect for parents which Scripture and social convention of the period demanded, and also to maintain a credible balance.

Illegitimacy, orphanhood, degradation and base birth are shown as disadvantages which may be turned to positive account in the fictional displacees. Such factors help to establish compassion in the reader who, in turn, is persuaded into a vicarious sustaining. Sustainers, as numerous as the children themselves, and almost as important, have been touched on only lightly here in view of the later chapter devoted to them.

Dickens' novels move along with tremendous vitality against a background of London streets, the violence and criminality of its slums, its drunkards, prostitutes, teeming prisons and law courts. Later in the century Gissing depicted 'the city life of London as not a medley of splendidly assertive vitality, but rather one of endless extent and dreary anonymity',⁷⁶ but for Dickens the vigour of the city is essential and his displacees live their lives against its forces. The Brontës, George Eliot and Thackeray use varied settings which include the rural, the battlefield and foreign places while Stretton confines herself to one poor area of London.

Displacement is the key factor in the creation of the favourite. Despite its apparent disadvantages it is a facilitating agent offering the child prospects and opportunities it might not otherwise have expected. The displacees may be illegitimate, doubly or singly-orphaned, sickly, abandoned or ill-used and their provenance often

⁷⁶ Ford, B., ed., 1989, *op.cit.*, p.99.

mysterious, but it is displacement itself, (argued strongly here), which crucially sets up the essential conditions for a reader-response both sympathetic and empathetic. The bewilderment, apprehension and mystery of the plunge into the unknown which displacement brings about combine in their dramatic effect to attract the reader and set up the child as one in need of protective concern.

Displacement creates the crucial circumstances of the children whether they be adopted, casually taken-in or forced upon a household. No one other factor has this same power to attract and engage the reader; an engagement springing from the heart and consolidated by society and culture. Perennial favourites are so frequently displaced that the power of displacement can not be ignored. On this fact rests a main argument. Orphans, foundlings and adoptees have received much attention in literary criticism but it is the displacement following on these which sets the terms of the child's progress and unites a multiplicity of fictional children. They have not been previously looked at as an identifiable group and a claim to establish them as such is made in this thesis.

Chapter Four

The Sustainers

Outline

Sustainers are defined here as those who nourish, support and keep from falling. Those discussed, even the malign, satisfy these requirements in at least a minimal fashion and some to the most generous limits.

It is the rich variety of fictional sustainers, their engagement with the displacees, and the subsequent course of that relationship which is the main thrust of this chapter. Without a displaced child the sustainer would be non-existent. Conversely, without a sustainer the displacee would not survive. One cannot exist without the other and they are treated here as a duality. By duality is meant that they are so closely linked that although separate beings they often function as one because of their inter-dependency; an interaction on which the structure of the novels largely rests.

The centrality of the sustainer-child relationship from which so much else follows is emphasised. Not only what happens to them, but how they deal with it is crucial as the balance of needs, inhibitions, gratifications and trust swings between the two. Trust, in particular, may waver, strengthen or uneasily fluctuate but is always supremely important.

So many novels of the period draw on such a duality that there must have been an appetite for them amongst the reading public; probably stemming from a curiosity as to what might befall destitute children. What could be seen daily on the streets, i.e. ragged, abandoned children or, amongst the more 'fortunate', destitute children placed with unwilling relatives, was being translated into fiction for an avid readership. It was also an informed readership who wanted reality expressed within a narrative in which all ended well.

Dickens, in the main, gave them exactly this, as did Charlotte Brontë in *Jane Eyre* and Hesba Stretton in *Jessica's First Prayer*. George Eliot accomplished a happy ending of supreme simplicity and realism in *Silas Marner* and Emily Brontë managed an 'all is well' ending with a metaphysical union of souls. Thackeray contrived a 'just about believable' one with the marriage of Esmond and Rachel Castlewood transferred to the New World. No matter how it is brought about, all serve the same purpose of setting the displacee on a promising course, allowing the sustainer the gratification of a task well done, and the reader the feeling that, at the close, all is set fair.

From an authorial point of view the fictional sustainers are second only in popularity to the displacees themselves. Their purpose, in the main, is to act on behalf of the reader in bringing order, comfort and opportunity into the life of the child. For both sustainer and child the relationship is a delicate one involving changes in psychological and social perspectives, and utterly novel experiences for both.

Just as there are many fictional models of displacees, so it is with sustainers. Jostling with each other, often in the same novel, are sustainers of every imaginable kind. In all instances the good ones win the day, whilst the sinister ones are vanquished after tantalising and horrifying both the fictional child and the anxious reader. Sustainers, moreover, sometimes appear as corporate bodies rather than individuals, and so State workhouses, Charity schools and the Foundling Hospital are touched on briefly in this chapter.¹

Charity as displayed by both factual and fictional sustainers is considered. Private charity to needy relatives had long been regarded as a duty at this period, although often grudgingly undertaken. In the core-text novels Mrs Reed displays this aversion, as does Mrs. John Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, earlier in the century.

The reward system as it applies to the sustainer-child duality is examined for this must be applied in order to satisfy the reader that child and sustainer are cognisant of their mutual triumph. (When trust and respect develop between the two by the close of the novel, it can fairly be called a triumph.) Role-reversals are part of the reward

¹ Although the Foundling Hospital had been founded almost two centuries earlier it was still very much a going concern. Dickens was an admirer of its work and makes reference to it in *Little Dorrit*, 1857, writing, 'the originator of the Institution for these poor foundlings having been a blessed creature of the name of Coram'. *LD* p.21. He also used the chapel of the Foundling Hospital as a source of solace after the death of his young sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth. See Ackroyd, *P. Dickens*, (London: Guild Publishing, 1990), p. 228.

system, emphasising the changing needs of displacee and sustainer. This does not weaken their duality but exemplifies its vitality and ability to constantly modify and adapt itself to invasive forces of whatever kind.

This reward-system in operation for both displacees and sustainers is frequently a deferred gratification in order to hold the suspense of the novel and also to accord with reality. The rewards given to the successful sustainers and the punishments meted out to those who fall short, both of which are very necessary if the reader is to be gratified and a rough justice put in force, are considered.

Factual sustainers of the period, their similarities and dissimilarities to their fictional counterparts and to each other are discussed. Amongst them are such significant figures as Mary Carpenter and Constance Maynard, whose spontaneity and inexperience were remarkably like their fictional counterparts, while General Gordon followed an entirely idiosyncratic route in his sustaining work. All were willing to disrupt their way of life by expending time, energy and money on destitute children who were completely unknown to them.

Parents as a parallel and competitive group to the fictional sustainers are often significant by their absence, ineffectiveness or neglect, touched on in an earlier chapter but here more closely. It is a delicate area for the writers who must keep a fine balance between the advantages a sustainer may undoubtedly afford and the respect for

parents demanded by both religious and social conventions of the period.

God, in fiction at least, is the supreme sustainer to whom all must, eventually, consign themselves and all the novelists recognise this, although in widely varying degrees.

Adoption issues are re-opened. The flexibility of a contract, mainly referred to as adoption, with no legality and usually resting entirely on goodwill, spontaneity or, occasionally, scheming self-interest, is analysed, as is the way in which the writers deal with this. Hypotheses as to how it worked in practice, and to the hugely different way it was understood by the nineteenth-century novelists and readers are made.

The main objectives of this chapter, then, are to examine the complex role(s) of sustainers in both fact and fiction, and to particularise some of the more important ones within the context of the period. The crucial issue of the different understanding of adoption and what it entailed is re-opened.

Fictional sustainers

In fiction the sustainer was a popular construct which allowed the author to depict situations commensurate with reality followed, in the main, by aid for the child whose plight calls for instant attention. Good sustainers gratify reader-hopes while the dubious ones heighten the suspense of the novel and the predicament of the displacee.

Sustainers are, essentially, those who take the place of parents, but to define them as surrogate or substitute parents is both to belittle and falsify their role. True, some of the duties they undertake are those of parents but the sustainers stand for themselves, employ varied tactics towards the displacees and have their own role quite distinct from that of parents. In defining a role, it is used here as a piece of behaviour which can only be played in relation to another person or persons, developing as it is played out rather than from prescribed formulae. There is considerable overlap between sustaining roles in certain areas, for example that of good intention and consequent benevolent action. In others, such as that of how best to deal with the displacee, they differ considerably.

The role of sustainer is a complex one and it is hard to avoid an instinctive comparison with parents. In fiction the best of the sustainers must emerge as offering greater scope for the child in order to justify their role. In brief, sustainers are empowered by their role to take on a relationship which is akin to that of a good parent in affection, succour and duty, but they must be able to offer the child something extra outside the range of what might have been familial circumstances. Their function is to promote the displacee's progress during which both child and sustainer endure trials and triumphs and emerge close-bonded and often transformed. This transforming aspect of the duality is privileged by most of the novelists, accounting for much of the dramatic content of the novels.

The mutual course of this duality is an interaction which

may at any given point delight or terrify, but above all it is required to engage the reader as a vicarious participant in 'what happens next'. This interaction is crucial to the course of the novel and the outcome of the foregrounded characters. It is the means by which the child is cut loose from former circumstances and the sustainer shaken from established routine. It is a long-term experience during which new perceptions, mores and affections develop; not claustrophobic but essentially invigorating and refreshing in opening up a hitherto unknown relationship with each other, with society and often with God.

Power bearing and authority

The power-bearing role of the sustainers is much in evidence, especially during the displacee's childhood before role-reversals develop. Even working-class sustainers not normally associated with authority, such as Standring and Marner, have some power which, in the main, stems from two things; adulthood itself and the means, no matter how small, to take on a dependent. The petty and punitive Mrs. Joe Gargery, also working-class, wields her power through blows, harsh words and from the denial of small comforts; the sum total of these resulting in Pip's state of constant apprehension.

Some power, or even the semblance of power, is essential to establish the authority of the sustainer and to set up a controlling element in the relationship. It may also ensure that the child has material security which may range from affluence to a mere

competence. Child sustainers such as Helen Burns and Cathy Earnshaw have an authority stemming from their own established place in a situation new to the displacee.

The popular pattern of master and servant evidenced in the Jane- Rochester and Swiveller-Marchioness dualities is also acceptable to the reader. In both instances the 'servant' is more than a match for the 'master'; very necessary if the future is to augur well. Yet the woman is socially inferior in both instances, although in *Jane Eyre* this is somewhat revised after Jane discovers her cousins and her fortune.²

Authority is a reader-requirement of a sustainer, is closely linked to power-bearing, and is activated by various means. Sometimes it rests on the authority which accompanies a particular job such as a headteacher or an overseer, or it may rest on legal authority such as that of a lawyer or clergyman. The best example of this in fiction is Father Holt who carries both the authority of a skilful tutor and a priest to Henry Esmond. Moreover, he is a Jesuit spy, who leads Esmond into some risky escapades. Like the Jewish Fagin, he comes from a group much disliked in England, the Jesuits. There was a generally held belief that they were forever involved in Popish plots to turn the country to Roman Catholicism. Father Holt is, however, a

² This same pattern shows up in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, 1814, and also in Henry James' *Watch and Ward*, 1871, and may have been one way of denoting male superiority. 'Petticoat government' was a common criticism of the period in marriages where the wife was too obviously dominant.

notable sustainer of Esmond and the means whereby he not only learns something of politics and scholarship but of his mother and her grave. Margaret Maison, 1961, points out how influential a character he was on Catholic women novelists of the period.³ This is rather an old reference but used here because Maison emphasises its significance and cites examples of novels which indicate how sharply a fictional character can shape reality.

For the sustainers discussed in this thesis authority is most powerful when charismatic, depending entirely on personal grace or characteristics which attract others. Historically, such charismatic authority is seen in Jesus, Gandhi, Luther King, or Mandela. The sustainers in this thesis are not of such stature, nevertheless some fictional sustainers do display considerable charisma, notably Father Holt, Rochester and Helen Burns.⁴ This trio carry within themselves the ability to attract others to them, an ability which never depends on

³ Maison, M, *Search Your Soul, Eustace*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), pp.178-9. She cites F.M. Oxenham's *Edith Sydney*, 1867, Agnes Stewart's *Father Cleveland*, 1868, and Frances Noble's *Gertrude Mannering*, 1875, as examples of women novelists who, influenced by Thackeray's *Father Holt*, introduced attractive Jesuits into their novels.

⁴ Brontë make it quite clear that Helen Burns' effect on Jane is long-term. On her grave '... a grey marble tablet marks the spot, inscribed with her name, and the word "*Resurgam*"', *JE*, p.83. This is related by Jane in adulthood and the implication is clear that it is undoubtedly she who has paid this tribute to her first real friend and sustainer.

punitive means but on a positive magnetism and a touch of mystery.

The displacee as a disruptive force

The displacee invariably acts as an agent of radical change in the receiving family, such change not always being beneficial. For example, it can readily be argued that Heathcliff is a destructive force in the lives of both the Earnshaws and the Lintons, Jane Eyre is a thorn in the flesh of the Reeds and an innocent mover in the exposure of Rochester. Oliver helps to bring about the downfall of Fagin, and Esmond has it in his power to oust the Castlewoods from rank and estate. Eppie is a most unusual destructive force, an unwitting one whose very presence, unbeknown to her, haunts Cass's peace of mind for over a decade. Even the gentle Esther Summerson disrupts Jarndyce's emotional life when he falls in love with her.

Conversely, the initial disruption eventually brings about gratifying and altogether wider perspectives for the successful sustainers. Eppie's disruptive entry into Marner's life destroys the reclusive melancholy which has hitherto enveloped him. Marner's love for the little stray he has taken on prevails over his attempts to chastise her by shutting her in the coal-hole, signifying to the reader that he will never be harsh to this child who has already conquered his heart. Such inexperience in sustainers is what most captivates readers, providing light relief in novels with more than a fair share of tragedy.

Disruption is very necessary if sustainer and displacee are to develop their potential capacity for a relationship which taps aspects

of their personality so far undeveloped. Disruption involves change, trials and an awareness of novel perspectives about to open up, often before either sustainer or child are in a state of readiness for this. Concurrently, the disruptive train of events brought about ensures that even the most inexpert sustainers take on a new authority. Marner and Brownlow are two such, as is Betsey Trotwood who, despite her energy and seemingly impermeable opinions, is unused to boys whom she thoroughly detests. It is her awareness of Copperfield's needs which engage her on better projects than berating trespassing donkeys. This last is a particularly credible example of development in the sustainer rather than the child.

Categorisation of sustainers

As with the displacees the sustainers to some extent fall within broad categories without any clear cut-off points. Often there is a good deal of cross-categorisation and when this occurs, certain sustainers emerge in multi-faceted ways. Some of the more important of such categories are as follows.

a) Organisations, institutions and charitable societies

These are placed first as an acknowledgement rather than to prioritise them. The work of such organised sustaining bodies is apparent in most of the core-text novels, as it was in society. At best they offered basic nourishment, shelter, elementary education, religious instruction and some preparation for work, the latter usually

of a servile kind. The most famous and probably the best of these was the previously expanded on Coram's Foundling Hospital. The foundlings were well turned out and well-nourished.⁵ Evidence of the care taken of them has been given in Chapter Two of this thesis.

The worst of these organised sustaining bodies were very different, fictional examples being the workhouse in which Oliver Twist first draws breath, and Lowood in *Jane Eyre*, a charity school with a punitive system which exemplified religious bigotry. The worst of them eked-out a near-starvation diet and often had infants, the aged, the sick, the insane and the criminal within their walls. Small wonder that some paupers preferred to die rather than enter them. They continued well into the twentieth century and in fact and fiction were usually a chilling last resort. Ian Anstruther writes,

‘Over and over again, the poor were advised to accept their lot, and not to stain their souls by rebellion’.⁶ He describes ‘the daily penance endured by the inmates ...Habit made the Guardians brisk, and rising hunger made the paupers submissive’.⁷

In fiction it is this same expectation of acceptance from inmates too weak and subdued to make any stand for themselves

⁵ Appendices 1 & 2, Paintings by Harold Copping of The Foundling Hospital children in uniform. Collection of the Thomas Coram Foundation Museum.

⁶ Anstruther, I., *The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse*, (London: Anchor Press, 1973), p. xiv.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.123.

which makes Oliver Twist's request for 'more' so shocking to the workhouse staff.⁸

What went on in the Andover workhouse was a scandal of its time. Nevertheless, such places **did** sustain, albeit in so grisly a fashion that existence became a living death. Small wonder that to seek shelter there was an absolutely last resort.

This thesis examines cultural and social issues to do with displacees as well as literary ones. Thus, institutional sustainers have been touched on to recognise their role as sustainers in both fact and fiction. It is, however, the complexity of the much more personal sustainer-displacee relationship on which attention is chiefly focussed. The constantly shifting balance of this relationship, affected as it is by uncertainties, personal attributes and unexpected events, forms the main thrust of all the core-text novels and is illustrated in the categories which now follow.

b) Sinister sustainers

There are many of these, mostly falling within the lists of the petty, bullying, tyrannical or fraudulent. They make the displacee's existence miserable and, in turn, are themselves punished sufficiently to satisfy reader-requirements of justice. All the novelists create some such and their purpose is always to hinder, undermine or threaten the displacee. Yet in a mordant fashion they also sustain. Some of the

⁸ Appendix 3. Cruikshank's illustration, 'Oliver asking for more', *OT*, opp. p.12.

more memorable are Mrs. Reed in *Jane Eyre*, Jessica's mother in *Jessica's First Prayer*, Hareton Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights*, Steerforth, the Murdstones and Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield*.

With such an array but a few can be detailed. Thus, the truly corrosive or evil are singled out here. Rochester is certainly a dangerous sustainer for he is prepared to commit bigamy and is responsible for Jane's flight into near-death. The lighter side of this aspect of him is mischievous and teasing, apparent when, disguised as a gypsy, he tells Jane's fortune. It should not be forgotten that he is also the sustainer of Adèle whom he treats very casually, never quite acknowledging her as his child. *Cadeaux* for the child appear to suffice and he abdicates any practical concern over her to Mrs. Fairfax and Jane.

So strange and important a sustainer is Rochester that it is worth examining what contemporary reviewers wrote of him. An anonymous review of 1847, when the novel was first published, refers to him as

‘... an eccentric man, who suffers under some secret misfortune, he shuns society, and under an abrupt, hard manner hides a passionate heart and a tender nature’.⁹

That he is also arrogant and selfish is either ignored or unperceived by the reviewer; it is certainly somewhat bland. To refer

⁹ ‘*Weekly Chronicle*’, 23rd October, 1847, p.3.

to him as ‘eccentric’ is far too lame a description of a man whose towering passion leads to attempted bigamy. Moreover, Rochester scarcely shuns society for he invites a large gathering to the house-party attended by the Ingrams. The reviewer fails to differentiate between this kind of society and the more intimate one-to-one meetings with Jane. The latter he certainly does not shun for they are arranged by him. Yet at the same time he is inhibited by his past experiences of women and an understandable wish not to suffer further hurt by them. The novel is, however, much praised as being,

‘... stamped with vitality[...]minuteness and detail in every point[...]interesting beyond any other work that has appeared for very many years’.¹⁰

G.H. Lewes also refers to the,

‘... eccentric Mr. Rochester whom with all his faults and eccentricities one can’t help getting to like’.¹¹

For the time this is a surprising comment. After all, attempted bigamy is a serious matter, not a mere eccentricity. Possibly Lewes’s unhappy marriage with his mentally fragile wife influenced his opinion. A rather more light-hearted one, written eight years after the novel’s publication by which time it was well-established in the circulating libraries, declares that,

¹⁰ ‘*Weekly Chronicle*’, 23rd October, 1847, p.3.

¹¹ Lewes, G. H., ‘*Westminster Review*’, 1848, vol. January, p.581.

‘Miss A. was delighted with it, Miss B. as much disgusted – Miss C. heard it so much talked of, that she was most anxious to read it, but her married sister, Mrs. D. said “No woman under thirty ought to open it”’.¹²

Rochester is referred to as a,

‘middle-aged ruffian’ and this particular duality as ‘a wooden-legged cripple for Harlequin, a rheumatic old maid as Columbine...’.¹³

Such varied comments indicate a degree of bewilderment amongst reviewers as to how Rochester should be viewed.

One of the most acute of these contemporary reviews refers to Rochester as having, ‘the taint of the world’¹⁴ about him and as one who pours out to Jane, ‘disgraceful tales of his past life, connected with the birth of little Adèle, which any man with common respect for a woman, and that a mere girl of eighteen, would have spared her’.¹⁵

Yet it is this ‘taint of the world’ with its overtones of a wider, more sophisticated society unknown to the limited Jane which largely accounts for Rochester’s hold over her, (and the reader). It hints at experiences and possibilities open only to men, and to women from the *demi-monde*, an exciting field of speculation for the domestic reader whose daily life was so far removed from such. The possibility

¹² Anonymous review of *JE* in ‘*Sharpe’s London Magazine*’, June, 1855, p.839.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.340.

¹⁴ ‘*Quarterly Review*’, 1848, vol. 84, December, p.164.

that the world-weary Rochester has experienced such 'wickedness' is so titillating an aspect of him that it verges on the erotic.

So varied and extreme are these reviews that it shows how perplexing a character Rochester was for his contemporary readers as well as later ones. He has to be included here as a sinister sustainer and he and Jane as a duality in which role-reversals are unusually dramatic. No other sustainer is brought quite so cruelly low as Rochester, only to be uplifted by marriage to a woman who, conversely, has just as radically strengthened. Brontë presents this particular duality entirely from Jane's viewpoint which is that of one who is subjective, equally impassioned and patently honest. That she feels herself to be truly blessed in her marriage is made clear and so convincing that the reader is carried along in her joy.

Viewed dispassionately, however, Rochester endangers Jane physically and emotionally while, even allowing for the harsh attitudes towards madness which then prevailed, his treatment of his first wife is grim. Locked away in an upper storey, she is given a hard-faced wardress and no diversions. She is certainly a would-be murderess but Brontë pays little attention to extenuating reasons for this. Rochester nurses his resentment of his duped-into marriage, intent only on his passionate desire for Jane.

Brontë's intention may have been three-fold. Firstly, to show what a sharp point of memory is his first marriage, largely accounting for his liaison with Cécile Varens, his distancing of Adèle, his toying

¹⁵ 'Quarterly Review', 1848, vol. 84, December, p.164.

with Blanche Ingram and his half-bullying treatment of Jane. It is his way of controlling the power of women in his life in order to both protect and revenge himself. The shocking consequences of marriage have bitten so deeply into his emotions that he is determined never again to be at the mercy of his own passionate nature. Secondly, it makes an acute contrast to Jane's patent sincerity. Her lack of guile, her responsiveness and unsophisticated love are all the more powerful in their effect on Rochester who is utterly disarmed. Thirdly, it allows Jane to show the strength of character which upholds her after her flight from Thornfield.

At this stage Rochester shows up badly and Brontë allows his sustaining role to fail spectacularly for a time – unusual in a fictional sustainer. Conversely, Jane's independence strengthens and she finds fresh sustainers in the Rivers, a new suitor and an unexpected fortune; a perfect example of the balance between sustainer and displacee rocking wildly. Rochester's supernatural call for which one must allow 'a willing suspension of disbelief' signals his need of her.¹⁶ Role-reversal is total as a tamed but still passionate Rochester is now sustained by Jane. An assured wife and mother, the cards are all held by the former displacee. It is a theme running from Cinderella to secretary-marries-boss novels and one invariably pleasing to readers.

There are too many coincidences in the final part of the novel; the discovery of Jane's relationship to the Rivers and, simultaneously, her fortune from her long-lost uncle and Rochester's supernatural call

¹⁶ Coleridge, S. T, *Biographia Literaria*, 1847, vol.2, p.6.

just as she is hesitating over her answer to St. John's proposal. Margaret Smith acknowledges this 'crudity of coincidence', setting it against 'the neat interweaving of plot elements'.¹⁷ This is a rather generous comment which makes over-allowance for too many coincidences such as Jane's convenient fortune coming to light, and the even more unlikely coincidence that the house on which she alights when at starvation point is that of long-lost relatives. Even for a highly deserving displacee, Fortune is perhaps smiling too broadly.

Dickens's Fagin alone is a truly evil sustainer for he corrupts the young and is an accessory to murder, yet even he has redeeming features. A crafty receiver of stolen goods, he teaches his 'apprentices' to systematically pilfer. On the other hand none of his 'apprentices' go cold or hungry, but are confident, resourceful and enjoy a rough camaraderie with him. He is also a Jew, in itself at the time alerting readers to one who is not to be trusted.

He is a strange and brilliant choice for Dickens to have created. Forster, Dickens's close friend and first biographer, is revealing here.

'Thousands were attracted to him, [Dickens], because he placed them in the midst of scenes and characters with which they were already themselves acquainted; and thousands were reading him with no less avidity because he introduced them to passages of nature and life of which they before knew nothing. ... only a writer

¹⁷ Smith, M., Introduction to *Jane Eyre*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975 edn.,) p.xix.

of the first rank can bear the application of such a test'.¹⁸

Forster is clearly partial in what he writes but his suggestion that the unknown has as much purchase on the reader as the known is convincing. The unknown may contain dark material of a sinister, forbidden or tantalising kind which makes it compelling.

Here it is worthwhile considering the position of Jews in this country in the mid-nineteenth century when anti-Semitism was strong. Hoppen writes,

'By 1851 there were perhaps thirty thousand Jews in the United Kingdom, (two-thirds of them in London). ... What distinguished mid-Victorian Jewry were its increasing (but by no means universal prosperity) and the manner in which many of the members of its small but prominent economic élite sustained – especially in London – a sense of communal solidarity with their less fortunate fellows'.¹⁹ What marked them out was 'the manner in which Jews combined ethnic institutions, communal cohesion, and a sense of "otherness" in British society.'²⁰

Thus, they were considered to be 'different' from the rest of the population, and 'difference' almost always carries a touch of

¹⁸ Forster, J. *The Life of Charles Dickens*, (1872-4; London: Dent & Sons, 1966 edn.), vol.1, p.83.

¹⁹ Hoppen, K. T., *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp.442-443.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.443.

suspicion. Jews were attacked in journals and magazines which poked fun at their customs, their way of speech and their alleged cunning.²¹

In Fagin, Dickens drew on this well-established dislike of Jews and it may, or may not, have been anti-Semitism on his part. It certainly points to his reliance on contemporary attitudes for the chilling effect of a Fagin let loose on an innocent Oliver. Nevertheless, Fagin's black humour is not without appeal to the reader and comes as a pretty piece of light relief from his more menacing aspects. Dickens himself had problems with his own creation, writing to Forster in April, 1838, that he had '... not yet disposed of the Jew, who is such an out and outer that I don't know what to make of him.'²² Fagin's anguished death in Newgate was, seemingly, the answer to his creator's perplexity.²³ No other malign sustainer in the core-text novels touches Fagin for duplicity and hard criminal intent.

It is the contrast between the beauty of Oliver's innocence and Fagin's practised evil which accounts for the tension between the two. It is a wonderful example of Dickens's genius in swaying the emotions of the reader from delight to terror; delight in the child's innocence coupled with an awareness of the constantly hovering threat posed by the Jew.

²¹ Appendix 4. The Harp of the Hebrew Minstrel, '*Punch*', 12th September, 1857.

²² Forster, J., *op.cit.*, p.87.

²³ Appendix 5. **Exercise Yard at Newgate**, Gustave Doré, 1872, Radio Times Hulton Picture Library. This shows the grimness of Newgate of which Dickens' readers would have been aware; a terribly punitive ending for Fagin.

In *Great Expectations*, Magwitch is not evil, despite his fearful entry, but as a hunted convict he does endanger Pip both at the beginning and the end of the novel. Role-reversal is completely topsy-turvy here for Pip, a displacee everlastingly harried by his punitive sister, becomes himself an unwilling sustainer to the wretched Magwitch. Terrified by these conflicting roles, Pip still manages to steal food for the convict. It is a surprising twist to the more familiar role-establishment which usually takes place before role-reversal. Yet it is in the interest of the novel that this should happen in order to set up the condition whereby Magwitch feels a need to repay the child. Pip, ever mindful of his early experience, associates him with nothing but a lingering terror. Add to this the complicated machinations of Miss Havisham and Pip's own mistaken perceptions of her as his benefactor, and the novel has enough twists and turns to satisfy even Dickens and intrigue his readers.

Made cognisant of his rough sustainer at a time when he is a young snob, his values distorted and shallow, Pip feels not gratitude but desperate embarrassment. To a displacee who has embraced his displacement in London and cannot cope with reminders of his former circumstances, Magwitch is a hugely shocking reminder of them, (as Joe Gargery has been earlier). Yet his efforts to help Magwitch escape recapture, an interesting repeat of their first encounter, redeems his foolish perceptions and ingratitude and brings him to a genuine affection for his unusual sustainer.

Magwitch, a sustainer who has himself 'lost' a daughter into a corrupting displacement with a mad woman, is burdened by neither pride nor self-seeking ambition but simply a wish to better the lot of his protégé. Although he is imprisoned, Dickens rewards him with natural death before the gallows can claim him. (It is indeed a reward for death on the gallows was often prolonged and agonising.) His far greater reward, however, is to hear that his daughter '... lived and found powerful friends', and that Pip loves her.²⁴ The complexities of her rearing and marred personality are deliberately not revealed to him, a boon for the reader who is touched by Magwitch's simple desire to make good his debt. In Dickens' final touches to his representation of the criminal, it is as though Dickens realises that justice must be done but concessions allowed for the reform in himself made by Magwitch, and the criminal's genuine affection for Copperfield.

The role-reversals of this particular duality is quite astonishing as first Magwitch and then Pip hold the balance of power. Only in their final engagement do they become a duality, although not by any usual route for their time together is so brief. Magwitch emerges with some moral standing for he has made good and tried to repay his debt of gratitude. Pip, too, has by this time shed his affectation of superiority, put himself at considerable risk to save Magwitch from recapture, and tries to make the convict's passing as easy as possible by disclosing Estella's circumstances.

²⁴ *GE* p.494.

It may have been better to end the novel here, even with some unresolved business, closing on a happy note with sustainer and displacee at ease with each other. Neither of the endings Dickens gave is satisfying to the reader who has coped with more than common intricacies. The original, cancelled conclusion in which Estella and Pip meet briefly, is very tepid giving only a glimpse of them as reflective and chastened people. The second ending in which for Estella 'suffering has been stronger than all other teaching'²⁵ suggests a happier resolution for Pip sees 'no shadow of another parting from her'.²⁶

Angus Wilson suggests that the truth of the novel lies

'...in the underlying fable, and here Estella and Pip share one and the same fate. Her real father is his real benefactor; her benefactress is his supposed benefactress. ...each is ruined by his benefactor – ruined, that is, spiritually'.²⁷

With respect to Wilson, it is possible to take a different view and claim that each is spiritually enhanced, not ruined. Each has suffered from a strange sustainer, one wishing to revenge herself through an innocent child, the other wishing to gentrify Pip through the strength of money and mistaken notions as to what constitutes a gentleman. Despite their early foolish choices and shallow judgement,

²⁵ *GE* p.520.

²⁶ *GE* p.521.

²⁷ Wilson, A., Afterword to *GE* p.530.

both Pip and Estella emerge with some credit for their understanding has matured; an understanding of each other and life itself. One could argue that this would hardly be the case if they were, as Wilson claims, spiritually 'ruined'.

This is a novel in which the displacee is riddled with guilt. Pip's initial guilt over stealing the file which enables Magwitch to free himself from the leg-iron is compounded by his retrospective guilt over his shoddiness towards Joe Gargery, and his reluctance to acknowledge Magwitch as his benefactor. The stolen file symbolises his continuing culpability for it is the same file which Orlick finds and uses to terrible effect on Mrs. Joe.

Claire Tomalin, 1990, suggests that Dickens' meeting with Ellen Ternan in 1857, his separation from his wife, Catherine, in 1858 and the personal turmoil of his life at this point markedly affected *Great Expectations*. She writes

'Out of anxiety and guilt came a masterpiece cast in an unfamiliar mould'.²⁸ It may also have accounted for the fact that 'he did not embark on another novel for two and a half years'.²⁹ Tomalin opines that 'it is his saddest book, clearly marked with pain'.³⁰

In the same novel Estella, his other displacee, is certainly

²⁸ Tomalin, C., *The Invisible Woman; The Story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens*, (London: Penguin, 1990), p.130.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.132.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.130.

unlike the rest of the displacees for the reader never warms to her.

It is hard to separate what is known of Dickens' private life at this time from what went into *Great Expectations*. At odds with Catherine, his wife, in love with Ellen Ternan,³¹ and unable to share his wretched state with anyone, he eventually confided in Forster, his oldest friend.

Kaplan, 1988, writes that Dickens,

'... raised[...]the idea that he might put an end to his marital misery. ... Only with Forster could he confess such feelings'.³²

It is certainly credible that to a man as emotionally charged as Dickens undoubtedly was, something of the current guilt, anxiety and frustration in his private affections went into the novel and may well have accounted for the uncertainty and disappointment of its ending. Coming from Dickens, one who usually has a brilliantly sure touch, it is a very damp squib.

Of the smaller-scale sinister sustainers, three stand out. Mrs Reed in *Jane Eyre* is punished by the disappointing outcome of her own children and the discomfort of her conscience. Brontë makes it

³¹ Appendix 6. Photographs of Ellen Ternan as a young woman, circa 1870, Ackroyd, P., 1990, op.cit., pp.816-817.

³² Kaplan, F., *Dickens: A Biography*, (1988; Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998 edn.), p.371.

quite clear that, having repented, she is given a chance to confess her guilt, put things right and die with Jane's forgiveness.

Dickens uses a harsher pattern in *Great Expectations* when Mrs Joe is cripplingly assaulted by Orlick and never fully recovers. Her strange quietude in her broken state is in tremendous contrast to her earlier, noisy hectoring, making her more victim than punitive sustainer. Her grudging care of Pip, her martyred attitude and even her name, Mrs. Joe, which seems to deny anything feminine about her, have set up reader-aversion to her. Yet in her drawn-out period as an invalid, Dickens metes out such a cruel blow that some semblance of sympathy for her is aroused in the reader.

In *Jessica's First Prayer*, Jessica's mother, the so-called Vixen, comes close to Fagin in being truly wicked for she neglects her child to the point of near-death. Her appearances are few but her effect powerful. Bingham refers to her as 'a gin-sodden old actress'.³³ Stretton sets this up partly to recruit sympathy for Jessica and to show the effect of the demon drink, a constant theme in her novels. She may also have had in mind the sequel, *Jessica's Mother*, in which the Vixen figures more prominently and Standing loses his life trying to save her from suicide in one of her drunken bouts.

As a group the malevolent sustainers range from the merely peevish-tempered to the criminal and appear in all classes, their effect posing a real threat to the child. However, their victimisation of the displacee provokes reader-partiality for the under-dog, especially

³³ Bingham, S., *Ministering Angels*, (London: Osprey, 1979), p.87.

when an adult is set against a child.

c) Amorous sustainers

Sustainer-child affection not infrequently develops into a romantic attachment; a turn of events not always pleasing to the reader. Jarndyce in *Bleak House* is in the category of best possible sustainers. His substantial provision and unswerving devotion to the best interests of not only Esther Summerson but those of Richard Carstone and Ada Clare ensure reader-approval. Yet this same wish to see the best in others makes for his flawed judgement in personal relations, a vulnerability shown in his failure to realise Skimpole's exploitation of his generosity.

When he proposes to Esther even his proven abundance of love cannot overcome the fact that he is a generation her senior and that her love for him is entirely daughterly. Esther, part narrator of the novel, where her voice is always that of reason although as Schlicke points out, '...sometimes quite sharp', knows very well that her affection lies with the entirely eligible young doctor, Woodcourt.³⁴

This sets up a pretty reader-predicament; grief for Jarndyce's misplaced hopes set against anxiety that Esther's established unselfishness will lead to a denial of her own wishes. Her entire history of putting the needs of others before her own is only outstripped here by Jarndyce's renunciation. This is no conflict of

³⁴ Schlicke, Paul, ed., *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.50.

good against evil but a more subtle yet equally powerful one where one kind of unselfishness is set against another. Their duality reaches its ultimate point, coming right at the end of the novel, when sustainer and child exhibit all that is best in themselves and each other.

In this unselfish love Jarndyce is very like Marner who unreservedly allows Eppie to freely choose between him and her natural father. Both situations provide the reader with unavoidable regrets. In Jarndyce's case this is whole-hearted regret; less so for Cass who is made to reap the rewards of a dissolute sowing.³⁵

Henry Esmond's rejection by the dazzling Beatrix on whom reader-hopes are set is one of literature's huge disappointments. Instead, middle-aged Rachel Castlewood takes on a new bloom and even manages to bear Esmond a child. Yet the maternalism which has made her such a splendid sustainer is too deeply entrenched in the reader's mind to be shifted. Esmond's love of her has been the worship of a boy for a Madonna-like woman who sustains him as one of her own children.³⁶ To the reader, she makes an uneasy bride for Esmond and Thackeray's rushed ending summarises this unexpected turn almost as though he himself cannot develop it satisfactorily. It is

³⁵ George Eliot is doubly punitive in her treatment of Cass for he and his wife whose own baby dies, are now denied the chance of adoptive parenthood.

³⁶ In this she acts as so many nineteenth-century English aristocrats did in accepting an illegitimate child into their own nursery as evidenced in Chapter Two.

even more astonishing remembering how close to the reverential the mother-child relationship was held at this time. (Even allowing that this latter was sometimes notional rather than substantive, it is still unsatisfactory.)

Thackeray's contemporaries had doubts about it. George Eliot called it, 'the most uncomfortable book you can imagine'.³⁷ Mary Russell Mitford thought it, 'painful and unpleasant, and false – I mean the love story'.³⁸ The opinions of these two distinguished women very likely reflected those of many readers for it is so unexpected, so dismissive of convention, that it is almost bound to displease the reader who, at a very late stage, is required to completely re-appraise the nature of this particular duality.³⁹ So close does it come to broaching the sanctity of the mother-son relationship by turning it into a sexual one that it could scarcely be other than offensive to many readers.

Cathy Earnshaw, Heathcliff's sustainer is another who fails to gratify the reader in her choice of husband, the uninspiring Edgar Linton who offers a genuine but mundane love. Cathy and Heathcliff are contemporaneous sustainers in whom the balance of power constantly shifts. Coupled with its atmospheric setting and a persistent element of the paranormal, their love becomes a metaphysical union

³⁷ Jerrold, W., "Introduction" in Thackeray, W.M., *Henry Esmond*, (1852; London: Dent, 1943 edn.)

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.xiii.

³⁹ Dickens showed better judgement of reader-hopes when he refrained from a similar pairing of Esther Summerson and Jarndyce in *Bleak House*.

confined to the lonely moors. As a sop to the reader Emily Brontë revives them in a later generation whose romance is altogether more temperate.

Yet, married or not, the Heathcliff-Cathy romance is one of the great literary love stories, partly due to Brontë's genius in leaving Heathcliff's origins unrevealed, and with more than a suggestion that he is not entirely human. His stoic bearing of the insulting treatment which is his lot after Earnshaw's death, and the fidelity of his love for Cathy – a love which endures beyond the grave – ensure the reader's compassion even through his dangerous unbalanced development.

That he and Cathy may be half-siblings and what that implies of incest and all that is forbidden, is hinted at in Earnshaw's partiality for the boy, and naming him after an earlier son. It is part of the sub-text which only more sophisticated readers would perceive. The majority of its contemporary readers would probably not have been alerted to such a possibility, which is not to deny its fascinating hypothetical strength.

When sustainer and displacee are paired-off suitably it is particularly satisfying, for the duality is completed in this closest of relationships. Agnes Wickfield and Copperfield, Jane Eyre and Rochester, and the minor but noteworthy Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness fall within this category. This literary pattern is not uncommon. In novels outside those used here, Fanny Price and Edmund Bertram in *Mansfield Park*, and Roger Lawrence and Norah

in Henry James's *Watch and Ward*, pair off in similar fashion.

In these instances the reader has not been encouraged to regard the duality as a parent-child relationship. Instead, the duality is one of near-enough contemporaries, with a brother-sister affection in the case of Copperfield and Agnes. Indeed, Copperfield calls Agnes 'sister' on many occasions and even after they have fallen in love.⁴⁰ In drawing on a quasi-brother-sister relationship Dickens may well have wanted to show a love based on knowledge of each other from childhood, partly to show how much more durable this was likely to be than the earlier dizzying calf-love between Copperfield and Dora. One can not be sure. In any case, the brother-sister sibling relationship has always held uneasy overtones of incest, to many readers highly titillating because it is such forbidden territory.⁴¹

d) Sibling-sustainers

When the fictional sustainers have children of their own, as Earnshaw and the Castlewoods have, one way of coping with this and turning it to advantage is to allow displacee and biological child to fall in love with each other. The brother-sister relationship in both fact and

⁴⁰ The most revealing examples of this are when, immediately after Copperfield declares his love, he calls her 'Agnes! Sister! Dearest!', having already referred to himself as '...your friend, your brother', *DC* p.934.

⁴¹ Appendix 7 confirms that today adoptive brothers and sisters can marry each other. Letter to thesis writer from British Association for Adoption and Fostering, 1st June, 2004, referring to the Adoption Act, 1976. Only those who were siblings by birth before adoption cannot marry.

fiction was an important one in the period. Sisters were encouraged to think of a brother as a protector, especially if their father died. Within the core-text novels, Eppie and Aaron Winthrop's romance largely rests on their happy proximity during Dolly Winthrop's 'mothering' of both. Henry Esmond throughout the greater part of the novel is set on winning Beatrix, another quasi-sibling. In an interesting variant of this, Pip falls in love with Estella, a contemporary displacee with whom he 'plays' in a very contrived fashion during his strange visits to Miss Havisham.

That Dickens places importance on sibling-relationships is made quite clear from these examples. Possibly he drew on his own affectionate relationship with his older sister, Fanny. In his biography, Forster notes how tender were Dickens' memories of the time when he 'trotted about with his little elder sister in the small garden to the house at Portsea'.⁴² He was also devoted to his young sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, and distraught at her early and unexpected death.⁴³

More exciting is the possibility of incest between siblings. Valerie Sanders writes,

'Without ever revealing the truth about Heathcliff,

⁴² Forster, J., *op.cit.*, vol.2, p.74.

⁴³ Smiley writes of his having been '... quite fond of, and intimate with' Mary Hogarth. See Smiley, J., *Charles Dickens*, (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 2002), p.5. Forster, however, indicates a far stronger affection for her and writes of her having been, 'the ideal of his life', and that her sudden death 'completely bore him down'. Forster, *op.cit.*, vol.1 p.66.

Emily Brontë scatters just enough tantalising clues about his origins to hint at the possibility of incest'.⁴⁴

Yet Cathy is his sustainer, albeit a capricious one. So indivisible does she feel them to be that in a passionate outburst to Nelly, she cries, 'I **am** Heathcliff [...] as my own being'.⁴⁵ This is a highly-charged pointer to the fact that Cathy and Heathcliff are, emotionally, utterly removed from the temperate, polite world of the Lintons in the same novel. As a duality they exist **within** each other and with an intensity which cannot be sustained in the normal world. Thus, Emily Brontë gives them recourse to a metaphysical world. Of course, both live separate lives in the everyday world, Cathy as Mrs Linton, Heathcliff as a man of property who has seen the world. But neither of these is important for they are, emotionally, indivisible.

These sibling-sustainers whose relationship develops into romantic attachment are certainly daring in the possibility of incest, yet highly conventional insofar as they upheld the contemporary practice of girls' dependency on brothers. It is both contradictory and titillating. Incest being absolutely forbidden, Cathy and Heathcliff can only unite in a ghostly other-world which occasionally manifests itself to animals and the more susceptible travellers over the moors.

Outside the core-text novels, Tom and Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, 1860, and Norman and Ethel

⁴⁴ Sanders, V. *The Brother-Sister Culture in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.88.

⁴⁵ *WH* p.82.

May in Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, 1856, are useful examples of deeply loving siblings. It is as though the relationship acts as a preparation for marriage and this is in keeping with current psychological theory which places importance on girls' notions of what men are from the behaviour and attitudes of fathers and brothers.

e) Factual sustainers

Not only displaced children were to be found outside fiction. There were sustainers, too, who tried to tackle what was a grave social problem. Mary Carpenter, Charlotte Despard, Constance Maynard and General Gordon all 'adopted' destitute children. These are famous individuals, but ordinary people, unrecorded individually because of this very same 'ordinariness', were doing the same. Walvin cites '... numerous examples of people, rich and poor, taking street children into their homes'.⁴⁶

Middle-class single women who did so were in a somewhat special category because motherhood was 'forbidden' to single, respectable women. These were not the uneducated little milliners and parlour maids so much helped by The Foundling Hospital, but intelligent women from the middle-classes who had often had some success in voluntary charitable work. The more enterprising, like Constance Maynard, looked for such work away from home and became estranged from their families. Maynard, however,

⁴⁶ Walvin, J., *A Child's World; A Social History of English Childhood, 1800-1914*, (London: Penguin, 1982), p.150.

‘worked hard to stay in touch with her two sisters[...]but was utterly bored with their village charity and never ceased to regret the waste of their talents’.⁴⁷

Their interest here lies in the fact that some of them ‘adopted’ children, Mary Carpenter being the best known.⁴⁸

These non-fictional sustainers were not always successful in their relationships with the children they took on. Writing of women who took on a mothering role after charitable work or public service, Vicinus draws attention to the difficulty they had in recognising,

‘... the distance their work had carried them from conventional maternal feelings and behavior [sic].’⁴⁹ She cites Despard as one who ‘refused to give up any of her committee work and left the day-to-day care of her child to her secretary.’⁵⁰

Similarly, Constance Maynard found it difficult to reconcile child care with her preference for adult friendships with other

⁴⁷ Vicinus, M., *Independent Women; Work and Community for Single Women*, (London: Virago, 1985), p.33.

⁴⁸ Vicinus lists her with Florence Nightingale and Octavia Hill as ‘household names for the middle class’. *Ibid.*, p.30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.43.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.44.

women.⁵¹ However, their limited success is not the chief concern here. More important is that there **were** men and women who acted very much as the fictional sustainers do by alighting on a child and taking it as their own. It confirms that the writers were not fantasising but fictionalising what was actually taking place.

The eccentric and controversial General Gordon, 1833-85, was another sustainer who befriended the loose boys who roamed the alleys of Gravesend and scraped a living on the Thames barges. He called them his 'scuttlers'⁵² and, intent on their practical and spiritual improvement, washed them in horse troughs, fed them hunks of bread and cheese and tried to bring them to a love of God. His biographer, Charles Chenevix-Trench, writes,

'... the most rewarding work he did for his scuttlers – apart from bringing them to the knowledge of God – was to find them jobs in the Army, in barges and warehouses, and at sea. Where necessary he paid their apprentice fees and fitted them out, buying clothes and boots wholesale'.⁵³

Apart from religious fervour, Gordon is quite different from

⁵¹ Vicinus, M., 1989, *op.cit.*, p.44.

⁵² This was the name given to 'various youth gangs of the district, known as the "Scuttlers".' Each gang had its own territorial grounds. See Dyos, H.J. & Wolff, M., *op.cit.*, vol 1, p.76.

⁵³ Chenevix-Trench, C., *Charley Gordon: An Eminent Victorian Reassessed*, (London: Allen Lane, 1978), p.58.

the other sustainers in this non-fictional category, insofar as he took on destitute boys in sizeable numbers and did not regard himself as a parent, but subjected them to a quasi-military regime; unsurprising given his background. Nevertheless, it is clear that they were individually known to Gordon who kept a large map of the world 'on which pins marked the voyages of Jack, Willie and Harry and Alex, a "sweet child"'.⁵⁴ How far homosexual tendencies accounted for the fact that he devoted his work entirely to boys is unclear. Chenevix-Trench concludes that '... there seem to have been whispers, even in his own day, that Gordon's devotion to boys exceeded the philanthropical'.⁵⁵

Lytton Strachey writes that Gordon

'was by nature *farouche*'; the presence of ladies – especially fashionable ladies – filled him with uneasiness'.⁵⁶ Yet he must have been on easier terms with the destitute street children for Strachey goes on, 'Ragged street arabs... crowded about him'.⁵⁷ After his death, 'From end to end of the country Gordon memorials of all kinds were unveiled, Gordon Boys' Clubs opened, Gordon songs and poems poured from the printing presses'.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Chenevix-Trench, 1978, *op. cit.*, p.58.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁵⁶ Strachey, L, *Eminent Victorians*, (1918; London and Glasgow: Collins, 1959 edn.), p.211.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.211.

⁵⁸ Chenevix-Trench, *op.cit.*, p.293.

The danger of suggesting a too close comparison between fictional and factual sustainers is clear. We know far more about the fictional ones than the factual, for the novelists are privy to everything concerning the characters they have created. Nevertheless, the factual sustainers discussed here do show characteristics of the fictional ones, particularly in their eccentricity, inexpertise and solitariness.

Role reversals

In fiction, where the sustainer-displacee relationship develops successfully, it is time, mutual trust and shared experiences which bring about clear changes in power-bearing issues. Sustainer-power swings between the frailty of the earlier sustainer now in old age and that of the former displacee no longer dependent but mature, successful and anxious to repay happy debts. At this point the relationship reaches its final fruition as the early deference of the child gives way to loving respect and a desire to reciprocate the loving attention it has received. A wealth of emotional power between the two is obvious and entirely appropriate, evolving as it does through numerous key points in the novel. For example, malicious doubts as to Oliver's veracity must be expunged through the unflagging and difficult efforts made by Brownlow before their happy resolution. The sustainer has the gratification of seeing the displacee fully-fledged and held only by ties of love.

In Jessica's First Prayer, Jessica must learn ordinary good

manners and, crucially, an awareness of God's love for her, while Standring must shed his lip-service Christianity until it becomes an active force in him. Hesba Stretton is very sensitive in this latter for she does not attempt to represent Jessica as in any way 'preachy'. This would have been at odds with what we know of the child. Instead the reader comes to know her through the mutual relationship which develops between this unusual duality. It is Standring's growing awareness of Jessica's clarity in her beliefs, and his respect for the true Christianity so evident in her, which shames him into a realisation of his own superficial standards.

Possibly the final resolution of a bonded pair is at its most perfect and complete between Silas Marner and Eppie. How much George Eliot's utterly satisfying ending was appreciated by early reviewers is shown in a review of 1866.

'To a certain extent, I think *Silas Marner* holds a higher place than any of the author's works. It is more nearly a masterpiece; it has more of that simple, rounded, consummate aspect, that absence of loose ends and gaping issues, which marks a classical work'.⁵⁹

This consummation of the sustainer-displacee relationship is displayed in the unsophisticated affection between Marner and Eppie, each with a simple agenda of loving concern for the other, devoid of

⁵⁹ Anonymous review in '*The Atlantic Monthly*', October, 1866, p.482.

ulterior motives or selfishness.

Solitariness

It is essential that neither the displacees nor the sustainers have too many distracting encumbrances, their energies being required to foster reciprocal affinity. From Dickens' novels Brownlow, Miss Havisham, Magwitch and Jarndyce are all unmarried. Outside Dickens a similar pattern shows up. Sir Hugo Mallinger is a bachelor during *Deronda's* childhood, Marner is unmarried as is Standring, and Rochester tries to pass as such. The displacees are similarly solitary. Heathcliff, Oliver, Copperfield, Estella, Esther Summerson, Jane Eyre, Henry Esmond, Eppie, *Deronda* and Jessica are all either orphaned or taken to be. More than this they lack siblings.

These two differently brought about kinds of solitariness must not be confused. The fictional sustainers are required to be solitary in order to focus their energies towards the plight of the displacee. The fictional displacee is a solitary unit so that his need of succour calls out for aid. One is a giver of sustenance, the other a receiver.

Thus the 'only child' syndrome,⁶⁰ combines with that of the

⁶⁰ The 'only child' is foregrounded in countless novels. They are often represented as having a particular intensity of feeling due either to their solitariness, loneliness, or lack of siblings itself, which makes them especially attractive as fictional constructs. Their intensity is a notable augury, especially when they fall in love. Jane Eyre exemplifies this intensity first in her friendship with Helen Burns; a foretaste of her passionate response to Rochester. Often they show up best in one-to-one relationships, especially useful to the fictional sustainer-

solitary adult to set up the necessary basis for an intensely close relationship. The lack of children in one, and siblings in the other, facilitates and consolidates their relationship. Close relatives could well diffuse a bond which draws on hitherto untapped reserves of emotion and affection in the foregrounded pair. More than this, it emphasises the psychological needs of both in whom an intimate social space is waiting to be filled.

A solitary child and a solitary adult, neither having rivals vying for attention, ensures concentration on each other. The only child has always carried a heavy burden of responsibility; more hangs on their outcome for they are the sole bearers of adult aspirations and so much is invested in them. Oliver, Copperfield, Jane Eyre, Henry Esmond, Jessica and Eppie all fall within this category. Their impact on the sustainer is thus more marked.

Solitariness also emphasises the displacement of the child who must cope alone with the difficulties arising from this. With no one to share its bewilderment or with whom to talk out its problems, its solitary state is emphasised and its problematic situation compounded. As an authorial strategy it focuses reader-attention on the duality of the new relationship which is now activated. Child and adult are locked in a partnership which confers both privileges and penalties. Privileges lie in the material advantages which often open up to the child, and release from loneliness for the adult; penalties are

displacee pairing.

demanded in the huge adjustments, responsibilities and life-style changes required of both, particularly the child who is at the receiving end. On the credit side there are innumerable freedoms from restraints and opportunities of an almost endless variety waiting to be activated. Of course there are many variables on this, but these considerations invariably hover round and are not lost on the reader who wants all to go well but is prepared to be held in delightful suspense.

The reward system, maintaining the status quo and class differences

It is significant that, in fiction, none of the displacees are encouraged by either their sustainers or their own experiences to question the system from which they may have suffered or been snatched. The assumption appears to be that the best outcome for the child is that it should enter the mainly middle-class world of the sustainers and do good in a very general fashion, probably in line with what many readers themselves did. The displacees do not campaign for better conditions for other destitute children, are not politically active or radical, this being a line possibly too exceptional for reader-comfort. *Daniel Deronda* comes closest to it, although his future is left inchoate.⁶¹

⁶¹ *Deronda* is marked out as a Jewish leader, but goes no further than accepting this as his future mission. For George Eliot to have pursued the Jewish question further would probably have offended some readers and bored others. A conventional happy marriage and a secure professional future was more to the taste of readers who could readily identify with such aspirations. A political

The social supremacy of the middle-class with its professional and domestic values is never really questioned, although Hesba Stretton hovers round it in her representation of 'high' churchgoers whom she castigates for their observance of religious trappings while ignoring Jesus' teaching of humility and the equality of all in God's eyes.

Class differences when they emerge are always clear. Of the sustainers, Sir Hugo Mallinger is a minor aristocrat and Rachel Castlewood moves in royal circles. In both these instances their power over the displacee stems hardly at all from rank, but far more from affection and wise guidance. Within the reward-system of the novels, Esmond's true status is revealed and he marries Rachel Castlewood, his sustainer. Deronda, Sir Hugo's displacee, embarks on an uncertain future which holds possibilities of greatness as a leader although not through rank but through prophetic qualities.

When, exceptionally, the sustainers are working-class they are from its respectable section, and the displacee stays within it. Hesba Stretton and George Eliot take different approaches to this. In *Silas Marner*, Eppie is reared within the poorer rural class and George Eliot allows her to acknowledge the mores of her 'betters' without herself aspiring to upward social mobility. Stretton gives hard knocks to 'fashionable' church-goers indifferent to truly Christian values, and contents herself with placing Jessica in Standring's rented house as his

leader, a pioneer, or a radical campaigner was beyond the expectations of the average reader.

adopted daughter. The child is not educated but helps at Standing's coffee-stall, attends church and keeps the home. In Stretton's philosophy this is more than enough, for Jessica has learned to know God and to bring others to Him.

That a cottage, a modest occupation and a sufficiency will do is entirely in keeping with Stretton's own beliefs and the frugality of her personal life-style. She was

'brought up in a nonconformist household, which, though not extremely poor, was only a little above the working class. On reaching adult life she became an author, but one who was far different from her contemporaries'.⁶²

It was this 'difference', springing from close personal acquaintance with poor people which led to her own modest way of life and indefatigable efforts on behalf of slum children.

Mostly the displacees acquire the social codes of their sustainers and when these are perceived as admirable no more is required. None of them grow into radicals, pioneers or revolutionaries which would offensively challenge the reader's value-system and, more importantly, completely change the character of the novel. It depends more on a Good Samaritan philosophy, emphasising the Christian ethos of doing one's best within a prescribed system understood and accepted by both reader and writer. This philosophy

⁶² Crewdson, W.H.P. & Crewdson, R.D., 'Hesba Stretton' in *'Antiquarian Book Monthly'*, February, 1994., p.20.

was common ground for most readers, affirmed Church teaching, was within normal human capabilities and, at the time, would almost certainly have had the effect of seeming 'right'.⁶³

It could be argued that none of the displacees are truly 'self-made people', (a popular conceit of the period), although several overcome poor or dubious origins and go on to develop into modestly prosperous adults. Copperfield comes closest to it. That Dickens, in general, admired the self-made is clear; he himself was one and in the mid-nineteenth century there was clear approval of such. It stood for self-reliance and the aim of bettering oneself. Moreover, the self-made were no longer a burden on society but contributors to it both financially and socially.

It would not give a fair picture, however, to assert that Dickens was entirely admiring of such. In *Hard Times*, he represents the Coketown manufacturer, Bounderby, who vaunts his self-made status, as being devoid of sentiment, lying as to his upbringing and dogmatic in his opinions. His name suggests a bounder and even his hair is 'blown about by his windy boastfulness'.⁶⁴

Adoption issues as they relate to displacees and sustainers

At this juncture, it is useful to return to the issue of adoption. Again and again fictional and factual sustainers refer to having

⁶³ Such a system of rewards and punishments, duties and obligations is discussed in an anonymous article for parents in a popular journal of the period, '*The British Mother's Journal*', May, 1856, pp.98-100.

‘adopted’ a child. Yet, as we know, legal adoption only came about in 1926 in this country and 1928 in Scotland. This can not be over-emphasised in any discussion of the sustainer-displacée relation.

One way of attempting to understand the way in which the earlier reader related to taking-in a child, often called adoption, is to put it in the context of our own time. Today when a child goes missing a massive search-system comes into action. The police carry out ground searches and door-to-door enquiries, and it is headline news. Airports and seaports are monitored and a plethora of rescuing forces are much in evidence; all this for one missing child. A century and a half ago such rescuing forces were either unknown or untapped for the thousands of stray children at large in the cities of this country. This in itself is important but its importance is matched by the amazement, (probably to the point of disbelief), contemporaneous readers would have expressed to hear of such a thing. This is not to make them appear harsh but to see them in the context of their time. Stray children were so much in evidence that one more or less would not have mattered, (unless it came from a wealthy or distinguished family.) To many, possibly most, they were a danger, cluttering the streets, pestering passers-by with their tawdry wares, pickpocketing, begging, jostling their filthy malodorous bodies against the ‘respectable’, selling themselves into prostitution and spreading disease.

To hypothesise on these lines is entirely reasonable given

⁶⁴ Dickens, C., *Hard Times*, (1854; London: Penguin, 1995 edn.), p.21.

evidence such as that of Mayhew, an on-the-spot reporter.⁶⁵ Any attempt to relate so-called adoption to what takes place between sustainer and displacee pre-1926, both in fact and fiction must keep the miserable, often criminal, existence of such children in mind.

In fiction, the most glaring examples of thoroughly neglected children are Jessica and the more innocently abandoned Eppie. Set against these are the well-provided-for Esmond and Deronda. Among the middle rank are Jane Eyre and Esther Summerson. Being adopted is a complex situation even in our own time with its many safeguards, involving displacement, new relationships and strange routines. Given these plus the earlier non-legal status, it becomes a quagmire.

Relate it to the mind-set of the nineteenth-century reader and a host of threatening possibilities arise. Its insecurity is not spelt-out; it is taken for granted. Readers knew, possibly without too much concern, that the adoptee could be easily dismissed should it prove a nuisance. At best, adoption rested on familial duty or an obligation of friendship, but others were far more risky.

Just as today a missing child results in a nation-wide search, a fact one would expect to be evidenced in a contemporary fictional account, so the earlier reader expected the child to be left to whatever forces chanced on it. 'Adopting' a child held nothing in the way of permanent placement or legality and only when the novel is read with an awareness of how casual it was can its full impact be gauged. The

⁶⁵ Mayhew, H., *London Labour And The London Poor*, (1851-2; London: Penguin, 1985 edn.), p.181.

very fact that not one of the writers mention such possibilities can be taken as evidence that it was common knowledge. What is common knowledge does not have to be set down.

Adoptions were the 'emotional' adoptions cited in Chapter Two and set-up and maintained on entirely personal terms. With this in mind, the pre-1926 adopted displacees are infinitely more at risk than would be the case today. An elderly Brownlow, an epileptic Marnier or a grudging and morose Standring, all bachelors with no experience of children, would not be allowed anywhere near a stray child today. Earnshaw would have neighbours reporting an unaccountable strange boy in his family. At best, the NSPCC would invade the home of Mrs. Reed, and Miss Havisham would be in therapy.

This dark side of adoption is pointed out by Behlmer, 1998, who writes,

'... the disposal of illegitimate offspring had become a thriving trade by the 1860's'.⁶⁶ He continues, 'It was the often fatal fostering of illegitimate children that caused some social reformers to cringe at the word "adoption"'.⁶⁷

This indicates how perilous actual adoptions could be and would be very well-known to the readers of the fictional adoptees,

⁶⁶ Behlmer, G.K., *Friends of the Family*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.275.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.276.

heightening reader-concern for them in their displacement.

Yet in their time they were entirely credible because reader-expectations and understanding were related to their own time. Even if a later reader accommodates to this different mind-set, so much less inhibited by protective 'watchdogs', it is hard to appreciate just how suspenseful and dangerous the situation of the adoptee would have been.

It is on the basis of this insecure tenure that the sustainer-displacee relation rests, an uneasy one even with optimum conditions. It accounts for so many pieces of behaviour on the part of the fictional displacees such as exceptional deference, timidity, silence and the wish to please. It also accounts for the ease with which so many fictional sustainers take on adoption without any formality. A few, like Brownlow, make enquiries, although of what kind is not specified. Mostly, they are more like Earnshaw, who may or may not have personal reasons for bringing home a strange child. Or like the aunts of *Jane Eyre* and Esther Summerson, sustainers who unwillingly take in a young relation because duty demands they do so, and are very glad when the child moves on.

Affluence in a fictional sustainer is somewhat less esteemed than is social class as Magwitch illustrates. By entirely personal endeavour and ability he has amassed a large fortune generously used to benefit Pip, yet the latter is overwhelmed with disappointment when he discovers his rough benefactor. For him, the haughty and deranged Miss Havisham in her large, crumbling house is the sustainer

he would have preferred. In the society of the period used here ‘new money’ is less valued than ‘old money’ despite the great rise of the wealthy industrialists, ironmasters, entrepreneurs and merchants who had risen in the Industrial Revolution.⁶⁸

In fiction at least, and to some extent in fact, nineteenth-century sustainers and displacees are largely free from irksome restraints. As novelistic material they are wonderfully exciting and liberating models with almost no limit to the possibilities they afford.

Summary

This chapter has examined and discussed the importance of the sustainer-displacee relationship as a duality, their interaction for better or worse being crucial to the content and structure of the novel. Widely-differing fictional dualities of this kind have been particularised as has the reward system in force and the class differences which show up here.

State sustaining bodies in fact and fiction and categories of the more frequently used fictional sustainers have been discussed, as has their function within the novels.

⁶⁸ An example of this occurs in Flanders, J., *A Circle of Sisters*, (London: Macdonald Penguin, 2001), an unsentimental biography of the Macdonald sisters, daughters of a poor Methodist minister. One became the mother of Rudyard Kipling. Yet humble beginnings had irksome social repercussions. Kipling’s parents, despite the enormous contribution they had made to Indian culture during their years there, were for many years uninvited to the more important dinners and parties given by the Governor and his wife.

Socio-historic evidence of factual sustainers of the period has been given, and some of the more important of such sustainers singled out for attention. Ways in which they show similarities and/or differences to each other and to the fictional sustainers have been discussed. Possibly the most important of these is that so many of them are akin to their fictional counterparts in being unmarried, eccentric and somewhat solitary.

The disruptive force of the displacee as an authorial strategy has been emphasised, as has the effect of this on the course of the duality which is in process of being formed throughout the novels.

What is most important to this thesis is the fact that all the factual sustainers were able to adopt or take-in stray children in a way that was every bit as easy as the novelists indicate. This is one of the main issues which this thesis investigates. The transactions are all perfectly open, apart from the exceptional intricacies of Oliver and Fagiu, and in no case is there any hint of underhand dealing. Moreover, there is considerable evidence of quite ordinary people outside fiction doing much the same thing.

Adoption issues relating to the ways in which adoption was formerly regarded, and the differences its irregularities made to both factual and fictional sustainer-displacees have been discussed.

Punishment, and even death, have been meted-out to the dangerous or mean-spirited sustainers. In no instance does the displacee feel any lingering rancour towards them, merely thankfulness that better ones replaced them. This is necessary in order

to satisfy the Christian ethos of forgiveness and so that the former displacee is left free from bitterness.

By the close of all the core-text novels, displacement has been done away with and the former displacee has a secure place. The fluctuations and tensions of its initial situation have been overcome, thereby strengthening the sustainer-displacee duality. Similarly, the strange and threatening have been transformed with time and experience into all that is familiar and beloved.

Each member of the duality has created new possibilities for themselves and each other, and advantageously exploited such possibilities to their mutual benefit. Role-reversals alongside disappointments and triumphs, unrealised and gratified aspirations, unexpected changes of fortune and testing periods have conspired to bring the duality to full fruition.

Summary of thesis

Approach and unexpected developments

The approach throughout has been new historicist. Undisputed historic facts and events have been basic material, as have the core-text novels, but they have been enlivened and consolidated by examples of ditties, cartoons, letters, paintings, poems and memorabilia which affirm what more conventional history such as Parliamentary Acts contribute. This approach has been in line with Tuchman's exhortation, 'Do not neglect the novel' in any attempt to glean understanding from history.¹

In the course of its development the thesis has attempted to show that neither orphanhood, destitution, illegitimacy, adoption nor a multitude of other hazards are what most affect the fictional children of the core-text novels. Of course such factors can not be discounted and, without doubt, help to shape the child's outcome, but no single one of them accounts in such large measure as displacement. It is displacement itself which most defines and determines the progress of the displacee. Placed in a situation populated by the unfamiliar, and with new mores and expectations to contend with the child is immediately on the receiving end of new issues with which it must quickly learn to deal.

Displacement is at the heart of the displacee's new status and brings in its wake many of the other moulding and determining

¹ See Introduction to the thesis.

aspects of how the child emerges in later childhood or adulthood.

It is displacement which is the unifying and over-riding condition which defines the fictional children as a distinct group. Moreover, it brings in its wake the all-important sustainer-displacee duality which so profoundly shapes the lives of both and is the basis of the novel's structure.

Unforeseen developments to do with the absence of legality of adoption pre-1926

Quite early in its development the research became wider and more complex than originally anticipated; wider but not unwieldy, and certainly more challenging because, as evidenced in earlier chapters, issues which had not been foreseen became highly important. Most telling of such issues was the fact that adoption did not become legal in this country until 1926. This finding when applied to reader-response and perceptions set in force a host of new possibilities which could not be ignored if the thesis were to have any validity and properly present the situation. To have left unexplored the unforeseen issues raised would have been to neglect important aspects and, thereby, diminish the whole thesis.

Legal adoption only became possible in 1926, almost a century after the publication of the selected novels. It was an exciting and totally unexpected finding because the connection between this fact and the difference it makes to a modern reading of the novels appears

to have been neglected. Adoption as perceived in the novels could only have been of an affective kind, often dependent on the whim of a moment. Adoption without safeguards for the adopted child or monitoring of the adoptive adult acerbates the already precarious situation of the displacee and must have made a huge difference to the way it affected the sensibilities of nineteenth-century readers. They read with a different understanding of what it meant to be adopted; adopted in an altogether more casual, unstructured and vulnerable fashion.

Not only was it easy to adopt; it was just as easy to discard an unpleasant or tiresome child, or for almost any trivial reason. There was no question of breaking the law in such instances, for there was no law in force over adoption. In both fact and fiction they were 'emotional adoptions' of the kind described over a century later by Ruth McClure,² although she applies it to recorded instances of foster-parents employed by The Foundling Hospital, not to literature. Nevertheless, the concept of emotional adoption holds good in fiction too. In addition, research on factual sustainers of the same period has given ample evidence that adoptions outside fiction were frequently every bit as haphazard and spontaneous as were the novelistic ones.

These new findings, of course, immediately posed new questions regarding reader-response at the time. The mid-Victorian reader would have been aware that an adoptee could be got rid of as

² See McClure, R.K. *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981), p.130.

easily as it had been taken up, that it was without protection of any kind, and that its status as adoptee could, potentially, hold hazards as great as those experienced in its pre-existing vulnerable condition.

It was a highly significant new and determining factor which obviously required inclusion in the thesis. More than this, it required investigation into how adoption had been understood and practised pre-1926, and especially during the period of the thesis. This has been carried out and the differing reader-sensibilities potentially tapped by the changed understanding have been examined. The thesis strongly suggests that the earlier understanding would have heightened reader-fears and anxieties over the displacee and, thereby, brought about a more acute protective concern for it in the nineteenth-century reader than that of a later reader. It is yet another reason why the displaced child has been, and is, such a perennial favourite; an issue examined at length in Chapter Three.

Sustainers and sustaining bodies

If a displaced child is a remarkably tempting subject for the novelist so, too, are the sustainers who are as varied as the displacees themselves. Present the two in a relationship which is novel to both and whose development is paced out as the novel develops, and the result is a very good read indeed. The decisive and permanent sustainer is not necessarily the one who first takes on the role, and the child may experience a succession of inadequate or disastrous ones before the 'right' one appears. Fictional sustainers are often transitory

creatures who must be seen off when, like Murdstone, they threaten the child, or have the duplicity of Uriah Heep or the dangerous intent of a Fagin. Others, like Helen Burns, must die before the displacee is strong enough to stand alone, adding sorrow over their loss and fresh anxieties to the reader.

And here a crucial factor became manifest. The fictional displacee must be a constant in the novel, but sustainers may be transitory. This is mandatory in the structure of all the core-text novels.³ If both displacees and sustainers were to constantly change, the whole pattern and strength of the duality would shift and become altogether too diffuse and complex. Thus, the displacee is particularised and privileged as the one whose concerns are of primary concern to the reader.⁴ Of course, when the displacee is also the narrator this is a built-in factor which must, of necessity, be observed.

This thesis has focussed on fictional sustainers. They are second in importance only to the displacees, and the need for the displacee-sustainer to be perceived as a duality has been identified as critical to all the fictional pairs.⁵ On their interaction with its attendant

³ It also holds good for nineteenth-century novels as a whole where a displaced child is foregrounded. See, for example, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, 1814, Charlotte Yonge's *The Little Duke*, 1854, and Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 1874, all of which foreground a single displacee but many and varied sustainers.

⁴ Eppie in *Silas Marner* is the exception which proves the rule.

⁵ Chapter Four is entirely devoted to this issue.

setbacks and eventual bonding, the profundity and gratification of a touching relationship new to both is developed. This is an essential factor in all the novels as is the reciprocity on the part of the displacee as the child grows in understanding.

Sustainers often introduce the child to a professional, middle-class society and educate it into this same social stratum. Stretton, alone amongst the writers used here, sees no need to educate the child other than in a love of God, and gives Jessica no pretensions to a rise in social status. Social mobility is unimportant to Stretton who departs from the rest, one of the reasons why she was originally chosen as was noted at the outset.⁶ Nevertheless, even she conforms to the need for some kind of reciprocity on the part of the displacee and this is shown in Jessica's humble role as small housekeeper to Standring, her working-class benefactor.

Any biological bond does not exist in the sustainer-displacee duality and quasi-parentage is not even attempted. The sustainer and displacee take each other in a relationship which is often unplanned, sometimes undesired, sometimes one of duplicity and, occasionally, dangerous in the extreme. It is open to misapprehensions, humour, scheming and, at its most fortunate, unbounded joy. This last is most apparent when solitariness has, formerly, been the lot of the sustainer to whom the child brings wider visions, and experiences of a close and affectionate kind hitherto unknown.

⁶ See section on Choice of Novels in Introduction to the thesis.

State and charitable sustainers

Recognition has been made of State workhouses and charitable organisations as sustaining bodies. Dubious though some of them were, they sustained insofar as they provided shelter and a diet, albeit of the utmost frugality. Particular attention has been paid to the work of Coram's Foundling Hospital because it was so innovative in its handling and care of foundlings, (and their mothers), at a time when a more punitive and less generous attitude usually prevailed.⁷ Fortunately, its detailed records dating back to the seventeenth-century, so rarely kept for such destitutes, have been preserved and bear witness to the Hospital's tender concern for their youthful charges. There were criticisms levelled at the Hospital, mostly accusations that unmarried mothers and their illegitimate children got off too lightly, and that the Hospital was in danger of condoning moral laxity. They evidence how keen was the public wish to punish these so-called 'fallen women' and, even more soberingly, their children. Yet none of the core-text novelists share this wish; rather, they invite compassionate concern for both.⁸

Baby-farming has been recognised as a dubious, and sometimes lethal, form of sustaining. Very often baby-farmers were sustainers only so long as their charges were met; when these ceased

⁷ The Foundling Hospital still flourishes, although now renamed The Thomas Coram Foundation for Children, at Brunswick Square, London, WC1 1AZ. Appendix 1 shows the memorial to Coram housed in the Chapel.

⁸ George Eliot shows this kind of concern for Hetty Sorrel and her baby in *Adam Bede*, 1859.

so, too, did care for the infants. There must have been exceptions, but the overwhelming evidence is of crude mismanagement and sometimes deliberate killing of infants either by starvation, exposure, or drowning.

Factual sustainers

Actual sustainers of the period were also discovered and they acted very much as do their fictional counterparts. One of the best-documented examples is that of Mary Carpenter who has been the subject of Manton's research.⁹ Others include Charlotte Despard, Constance Maynard, and General Gordon. In all instances, apart from that of General Gordon, they referred to having adopted these children.

Their methods of rearing their displacees varied. Carpenter, for example, sought a very personal attachment to little Rosanna, while General Gordon treated his 'scuttlers' to a more impersonal discipline, good food, cleanliness and Christian principles. Different as their methods were, these factual sustainers had much in common with each other, notably in their eagerness to strive for more than what Martha Vicinus in a letter to the present writer calls the 'safe niche' of marriage.¹⁰ Moreover, they also had similarities with the fictional

⁹ Manton, J. *Mary Carpenter and the Children of the Streets*, (London: Heinemann, 1976.)

¹⁰ Appendix 2. Letter from Martha Vicinus to the thesis writer, University of

sustainers including more than a little eccentricity alongside solitariness, (there is a preponderance of spinsters and bachelors), a willingness to brave public opinion by flouting social and family conventions, and a good deal of bold and spontaneous action.

The displaced child as a perennial literary favourite

Reasons as to why displacees were such a compelling topic for both novelists and readers have been discussed; reasons based partly on literary and psychological speculations consolidated by findings from social history and from contemporary songs, poems, magazines and paintings.

That there was a huge appetite in the reading public for novels which foregrounded a displacee has been clearly evidenced. They were presented to an informed readership who knew at first-hand the plight of such children and wanted their story expressed in a fictionalised version in which all ended well. In the core-text novels of this thesis Dickens and Stretton gave them this in abundance, as did Charlotte Bronte, although not Emily Bronte. George Eliot did so in *Silas Marner* and to some extent in *Daniel Deronda*, although the latter is a highly privileged displacee whose problems are of an altogether different kind.

To take in a starving or destitute child in need of care and protection is, in itself, likely to engender a compassionate concern on the part of the reader. When that protection is known to be as flimsy a

transaction as the readers of the period knew it to be, the child's vulnerability becomes magnified, and the possibility of being cast out constantly lurks in the background. When the sustainer is as hard and unloving as Jane Eyre's aunt Reed, as chilly as Esther Summerson's aunt Barbary, or as crazy as Miss Havisham, reader-anxieties immediately surface. Or add a pair of adversarial would-be sustainers, such as Brownlow and Fagin, or Murdstone and Miss Trotwood, battling it out for the custody of the child and it is an infallible prescription for an absorbing read.

It matters not what or whom the novelists are targeting, the displacee is a compelling medium through whose situation they can express their concerns. Yet these are not propagandist novels but primarily highly compelling novels with characters and situations which amuse, terrify and challenge the reader; novels which have stood the test of time and, with the exception of Stretton, entered the canon of the nineteenth-century English novel.

The research has revealed how much dramatic effect can arise from a displacee who may be a *tabula rasa* like Oliver, or one like Deronda who first appears in later childhood. It opens up a huge range of possibilities for the writers whatever their agenda may be. For example, an evangelical writer such as Hesba Stretton is able to turn the distress of an abused and neglected child, such as Jessica, towards the love of a God of whom she was hitherto unaware. It allows a writer with the confidence of George Eliot to take up the question of

racism as she does in *Daniel Deronda*. Even the power of metaphysical forces can be very positively suggested as Emily Brontë does in the Heathcliff-Cathy relationship. It allows Dickens huge scope to press the cause of the neglected street children such as Jo, the crossing-sweeper, doomed to die from neglect.

The importance of reciprocity in the displacee as it matures and strengthens can hardly be over-emphasised and is enormously influential in promoting the displacee as a favourite. It falls within the authorial intent to represent the displacee in a favourable light which will commend it to the reader. Such a reciprocal attitude is found in all the core-text novels evidencing the favourite's moral understanding, the ability to stand on its own feet and, in turn, assume the role of protector. This, in part, is because it was essential to the ethos of the period and also because it exemplifies the growth of moral integrity of the displacee. It signifies a proper understanding of its good fortune by the child who, in turn, wishes to repay its debt of gratitude.

Moreover, it manifests a wider development of the now fully-bonded duo and the culmination of a long-standing personal relationship; a process which has strengthened and stabilised immeasurably from the early hesitancies and mistakes which marked its onset. Such an understanding and the wish to repay must develop in the displacee and is essential, even when the displacee is left while still in childhood as are *Oliver Twist* and *Jessie*.

No other fictional character has more hold over the reader

than the displacee, whose powerlessness over its circumstances allied to absolute innocence as to what has brought about its situation, make a compelling demand on the reader. It is the child's entry, through displacement, into a future which holds no parental protection and none of the biological 'togetherness' provided by a strongly familial upbringing in a secure social unit. It calls on the reader's best protective instincts and an empathetic response to a child in sore need of help. Only the most hard-hearted could stifle a spontaneous concern over its desperate plight.

This thesis has demonstrated how great was the potential of displacement itself to attract readers. On this head there can be little doubt. Add to this the further fascination of underlying illicit relationships, suspected infidelities, unknown parentage and mysterious provenance which are so often revealed as the novel unfolds. This transgression of the social, religious and moral code so positively held by the middle classes and the respectable poor was an exciting and daring departure from the customary order for the very people who most adhered to such mores. It allowed a vicarious enjoyment of what was so strictly forbidden to them in actuality, giving it the wicked attraction of 'forbidden fruit'.

In creating a displacee, the writers simultaneously create their own rules as to the terms on which the displacees function. This is, authorially, tremendously liberating for the displacee-sustainer relationship is far less constricting than that of parent-child. The latter

must always show an awareness of contemporary tenets, let alone Biblical ones, regarding parents. In the novels of this thesis, a proper semblance of respect is paid to parents who are almost always dead or off-scene, but rarely more than this. In addition, there is a tacit authorial understanding that parents can be troublesome creatures, as can extended family members.¹¹

Again the exception is Stretton who allows Jessica's deprived mother to hurl blows and abuse on the child. She is utterly realistic in her representation of a degraded social stratum and the violent and neglectful parents whom she scourges. Unafraid to aim her barbed arrows in their direction, she makes no allowance for the 'sanctity' of parenthood. Her novels, mostly published by The Religious Tract Society, were widely read by a poorer but literate readership who would have been well aware that such abuse was common enough amongst the slum-dwellers which Stretton knew so well.¹²

Chapter Three identifies the reasons why the displaced child is such a continuing fictional phenomenon. Bereft of parental care, the child is in need of help and the sustainer has far more options open than has the normal family. It allows the child the full attention of the

¹¹ Dickens draws particular attention to this in *Our Mutual Friend*, when the Rev'd. Milvey and his wife strongly dissuade the Boffins from any adoption of a child with troublesome family members who may turn up later to scrounge or make trouble.

¹² It must be remembered, however, that her readership was far from exclusively working-class. Her admirers included Shaftesbury, Kilvert and Dickens himself.

sustainer, and the pair are thus enabled to focus exclusively on each other in a way that parents usually cannot. (Parents are also husbands or wives and usually have other children to claim their attention.) Not so with the sustainer-displacee who have full scope to devote their thoughts, actions and affections exclusively towards each other. Not by chance is the fictional sustainer so often a lonely spinster or bachelor whose reserves of compassion and resourcefulness have been untapped. Thus, sustainers have their own needs which are, unconsciously, met by the child and their symbiotic relationship develops strengths and depths every bit as enriching and rewarding as that of the parent-child relationship at its best.

The thesis has identified such formulaic aspects of the novelistic displacee, and their perennial appeal over the centuries.¹³

Self-identity

Issues to do with the self-concept of the fictional displacees have been important throughout. More than most, the displacee has to cope with the question of self-identity. It is generally recognised that a foremost way self-identity develops is by the way others respond to us.¹⁴ A displacee has to cope with more than a common share of

¹³ Biblical text also draws extensively on displacees and their sustainers, notably Moses and Pharaoh's daughter, Joseph and Potiphar, Samuel and Eli, and David and King Saul. However, these can not altogether claim to be fictional favourites, although they are literary favourites, and have been mentioned in the thesis as exemplifying the pattern.

¹⁴ See Leather, N. in *Childhood Studies*, Wyse, D., ed., (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004),

critical or unfair responses many of which, fleeting though they may be, are highly significant to its self-concept and growth of its own identity. Probably the most important of such responses in fiction, (and possibly in fact), have to do with illegitimacy.

In fiction, Oliver is repeatedly referred to as 'work'us' by the charity boy, Noah Claypole, (himself but one step higher than a workhouse boy). This Oliver can cope with, but not with the slights cast on his dead mother. It is a noteworthy example of a dead parent who can be freely honoured despite her illegitimate child. Her youth, beauty, innocence and good family are taken into account and, importantly, she is given in this subtle way a part to play in Oliver's progress. (The fact that she is dead facilitates this.) More than this, it is a key point in his development for he shows a mettlesome side of himself hitherto unrevealed, although hinted at in his earlier request for 'more' gruel when, lots having been drawn, this task falls to him.¹⁵ It is a challenge for Oliver within the novel and creates a chance for readers to question their own social and moral code.

Illegitimacy, so often the burden borne by displacees, is always important to its self-concept when the child is aware of its illegitimacy. Oliver has already been cited as such a one. Henry Esmond, however, is given most unusual treatment by Thackeray, for Esmond allows his unmerited stain of illegitimacy to continue even after he knows himself to be the true heir to the Castlewood title and

pp.13-17.

¹⁵ *OT* p.13.

fortune. Assumed to be a bastard he is, nevertheless, warmly welcomed by the aristocratic Castlewoods despite his 'bar sinister' and continues for many years as a much-loved and respected family member. Yet his illegitimacy has, in his own eyes, set him apart at Cambridge, and he is constantly aware of his 'difference'. It takes a brilliant military career to establish his sense of self-worth, and he lays the ghost of his mother by finding her grave over which he can properly and decently mourn.

Daniel Deronda is similarly well-treated and has a privileged and happy childhood within the ranks of the minor but well-heeled aristocracy. Nevertheless, in early manhood his undisclosed parentage bedevils his self-image. Catherine Gallagher, 1994, claims that 'All through his life, Daniel has thought that he stood as the sign of his mother's sexual sin'.¹⁶ (If one accepts this, one would have to add that this point is not laboured during his childhood, becoming important only as Deronda reaches adolescence.) George Eliot then hugely complicates matters by adding besetting doubts as to his race. Only after a prolonged period of mental unease does he embrace his Judaism, marry a Jewess, and promote the Jewish cause. It takes this difficult affirmation of race to complete his sense of selfhood.

Esmond and Deronda, fictional though they are, conform to actuality in the warm reception they receive from their sustainers. It

¹⁶ Veesper, H Aram, ed., *The New Historicism; Reader*, (London: Routledge 1994). See Gallagher, C., Chapter 5, 'George Eliot and Daniel Deronda: The Prostitute and the Jewish Question', p.133.

was evidenced early in the findings that aristocratic bastards were often well-treated and frequently brought up within the biological family. Both Laslett *et al*, 1980, and Hartcup, 1982, confirm this, citing numerous aristocratic families who provided for and, in some cases, welcomed their illegitimate children into their own nurseries.¹⁷

Thus, the writers are keeping well within the facts when they depict this generous treatment of upper-class bastards. Nevertheless, both Esmond and Deronda despite such affectionate reception are very conscious of their status, especially in young manhood. Esmond, in particular, is hyper-sensitive over possible slights from his contemporaries at Cambridge. It is his brilliancy as a soldier which leads to high rank and which most strengthens his self-esteem rather than his long-standing awareness that he is the true heir to the Castlewood estate.

To be valued either for usefulness in a domestic fashion as are Eppie and Esther Summerson, or as a capable pupil like Copperfield, is another way of enhancing the self-image, and one used by all the writers. Another is the realisation that one is loved for oneself and one's own merits. The displacee cannot change his or her origins or birth status but can work to overcome any existing or imaginary shame surrounding it.

¹⁷ See Laslett, P. *et al*, *Bastardy and its Comparative History*, (London: Arnold, 1980). Also Hartcup, A. *Children of the Great Country Houses*, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1982), pp.78-79.

The over-riding factor in the displacee's self-concept is its relationship with its permanent and best sustainer. Such development has been emphasised throughout the thesis and its intricacies teased-out. This relationship which usually progresses in a highly idiosyncratic fashion takes place within the child's displacement and finally peaks in the all-important reciprocity towards the sustainer. The debt of gratitude is repaid, the positions reversed; the wheel has come full circle.

Authorial attitudes towards the fictional displacees

All the novelists come down firmly on the part of the child and set up persuasive factors which dispose readers to take up a positive alliance with the cause of the displacee. Despite this sympathetic representation of the displacees, the writers are realistic towards the child's faults. Jane Eyre's temper, Jessica's tendency to theft, Pip's regression to a foppish snob, and Heathcliff's violence are not hidden. Instead, they are revealed against a compassionate underlining of the circumstances which have brought about such shortcomings. The reader is apprised of the facts and, simultaneously, of the child's limited viewpoint and unhappy experiences. Such compensating circumstances thereby facilitate reader-understanding and allowance for a child's reaction to frightening and often unfair circumstances. Most of all, the child's innocence of all blame over its situation, especially illegitimacy, is emphasised; its powerlessness over its circumstances is thus understood and its vulnerability highlighted.

A charming exception is to be found in Eppie who has few faults other than those of a lively, wilful child. Her sound development is assured by the domestic worthy, Dolly Winthrop, ever at hand to guide Marner. George Eliot's somewhat disastrous attempts to set down infant speech in 'de coal hole'¹⁸ incident reveal no more than a playful naughtiness, intended to divert the reader and to emphasise Marner's inexperience and innate gentleness.

Moreover, Eppie and Marner are an exceptional duo for it is the only core-text novel in which the sustainer rather than the displacee is the key character as the title indicates. Marner's development from a reclusive celibate nursing a grievance over a past wrong into a respected village 'insider' and devoted father is the chief concern of the novel. The displaced child is, quite exceptionally, secondary to the sustainer. It is a significant remove from the customary pattern and one in which the sustainer is, emotionally, far more vulnerable than the child. (Eppie's normality, sunny disposition, good rearing and happy marriage are sufficient to vouch well for her.) Although Marner at all times occupies the key role, George Eliot does not neglect the all-important reciprocity of the displacee conveyed by Eppie's unhesitating refusal to leave him for an elevated social move to her biological father.

Whatever its initial shortcomings, including illegitimacy, sullen temper, bad manners, dirtiness and poor speech, the displacee is

¹⁸ *SM* p.188.

invariably allowed compensating reasons which mitigate on its behalf. The writers present them as victims for whom the reader must make allowance. Such allowance is consolidated by compensating factors throughout all the novels. For example, Copperfield's lack of judgement in marriage is set against a heredity tendency towards 'wax dolls', seen in his father, and Jessica's intention to steal seen in the light of her extreme hunger.

Nature or nurture

In fiction, nurture prevails over nature and this is very necessary for the full effect of the sustainer on the child's outcome to be realised. Indeed, there would be little point in having a sustainer were not nurture to be the key factor in the displacee's development. The sustainer-displacee relationship is entirely dependent on nurture for no natural biological influence is present between them. A passing nod in the direction of nature is made when this is useful, as in the case of Copperfield just cited, but the balance swings overwhelmingly towards nurture. Proof of the child's good breeding is occasionally revealed as in the case of Oliver and, in the same novel, the secondary displacee, Rose Maylie. Both are gentrified when their parentage is revealed; in Rose Maylie's case this is to straighten the way for her marriage to Harry Maylie, in Oliver's to vindicate his dead mother's lapse over his illegitimacy.

Nevertheless, without some kind of balance between biological and nurturing forces, however uneven, the displacees would lack

credibility. Moreover, the ethos of the period and the clarity of Biblical teaching¹⁹ require more than a semblance of respect for parents and, therefore, of nature. It is mandatory but not over-emphasised by the majority of the novelists. The exceptions to this are seen in Stretton's outright blows at abusive motherhood. More subtle, although with the same intention of criticising bad parenting, is Dickens's treatment of Esther Summerson's mother, the cold-hearted Lady Dedlock, who puts her ambitious marriage before the needs of her illegitimate child. George Eliot gives Deronda's mother, unengaging as she is, the allowance that she is an exceptional operatic *diva* whose career affected her decision to part with her child. More importantly, she wishes to save him from the perceived burden of being Jewish and, in further extenuation, only entrusts him to one who she knows will be an excellent guardian. Nevertheless, nurture is overwhelmingly the more important factor in all the novels used here. Uprooted children still need to know something of their parentage but in fiction, at least, the sustainers must emerge supreme.

Veracity of novelistic content

One of the questions raised was the veracity of novelistic content set against what social and legal history indicate. Chief of these was the ease with which a stray child could be taken up, moved on, shifted from one place to another through a succession of short-

¹⁹ **Book of Common Prayer**, Fifth Commandment. 'Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee'.

term sustainers. Allied to this was whether or not there were factual sustainers of the period who acted in the way in which so many novelistic sustainers do, i.e. simply come across a destitute child, make a spontaneous decision to take it home and keep it without let or hindrance, or any legal sanctioning.

The evidence from social history provides overwhelming evidence that both these were not only possible but easy. The first question concerning the casual and irregular fashion of taking-in and adopting a stray child would have posed few problems in the period under scrutiny. So great were the numbers of homeless children on the streets that to take in one of them was regarded as an act of Christian charity. Examples of actual sustainers who behaved with much the same spontaneity as the fictional sustainers have been identified. Those cited here were people of some prominence in their own sphere or profession, but that does not preclude the possibility that many ordinary people without any great means did much the same and Walvin, 1982, suggests that this was the case.²⁰ No legal sanction nor any public funding was required; one less child for the country to rear was preferable to one who was a burden on the public purse.²¹ It was an unsentimental attitude on the part of local authorities. Indeed it was

²⁰ See Walvin, *A Child's World: A Social History of English Childhood, 1800-1914*, (London: Penguin, 1982), p.150.

²¹ George Eliot makes this clear in the level-headed Trimble's acceptance of this view, *SM*, p.176.

commercial in regarding the child as a 'cost' which might be avoided if it were to be raised outside the publicly funded area.

In addition to this bleak attitude towards the destitute children, there would almost certainly be some unscrupulous sustainers who used children for their own ends as skivvies or prostitutes. It was a question of priorities and it is generally regarded as being better to live than to die. In reality this was the stark choice for some adoptees who, although they may not have been particularly happy with their lot, were at least housed, fed and kept alive. Thus, the novelists were not exaggerating the situation.

Adoption, so irregular by current standards in its laxity over suitability, conditions, and all the legal strictures now enforced, is also represented by the novelists in a 'truthful' way. Truthful, that is, to what was generally understood and practised at that time.

Nevertheless, street life as an option was not without attraction for a resourceful older child who had some capacity to fend for itself.

Mayhew's painstaking records of those who were employed and 'fairly enough used by the costermongers, and generally treated with great kindness by their wives and concubines' confirm this.²² Not all street children were weaklings and some appear to have positively enjoyed the opportunity to fend for themselves when their home life was debased or cruel. In fiction, the Artful Dodger is the best example

²² See Mayhew, H. *London Labour and the London Poor*, (1851-52; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965 edn.), p166.

of such a street-wise child, and he and his cronies run true to the observations of that reliable contemporary recorder, Mayhew.

To summarise this point, then, taken all-round the novelists were not exaggerating the social facts of the situation of displacees. Where they may be shaping the content of the novels towards sympathy for the displacee is in their individual representation of what was factual and this should be kept in mind. Few children are as disarming as *Eppie*, as impeccable as *Oliver*, as vilified as *Heathcliff* or as utterly virtuous as *Esther Summerson*, while *Esmond's* self-sacrificing priggishness requires the reader to accept almost unbelievable generosity in his disclaimer over his true status.

However, these are novels and we, the readers, are in the hands of great novelists. How far one is prepared to accept artistic licence required by the exigencies of the content is a highly individual question. One must accept the fact that street children ran amuck, were a burning issue of the period, that adoption was, to say the least, sketchy in the extreme, and that there are many examples of real-life sustainers who acted, broadly speaking, very much like the fictional ones. The State workhouses were a disgrace in their treatment of inmates, being brutal, frugal to the point of malnourishment and badly administrated.

Appendices have been used throughout as affirmation of what

the novelists depict, and as indicators of public and political attitudes towards social issues of the day, especially as they relate to this thesis.

Objectives

The first objective was to cover literary representation of displaced children and their sustainers in the English novel from 1837-1870, and to argue that it is displacement itself, i.e. being reared outside one's biological parentage, which is the binding element in all conditions of such fictional destitute children. It is displacement which also makes them such an engaging subject for writers and readers alike. This approach to displacement and the emphasis on its universally conditioning effect on a multiplicity of fictional deprived or disadvantaged children is one which appears to have been hitherto unexplored. It covers a huge range of fictional children bound together by a unifying condition and makes displacement the central factor of the child's course.

Moreover, displacement is in itself an absorbing condition containing as it does so many aspects which affect the child's psychological development, notably the self-concept. In addition it sets up the need for the balancing figure of the sustainer(s) without whom the child cannot survive.

Fictional displacees have been scrutinised through a selection of novels first published during the chosen period. From the outset care was taken to include a highly varied group of such fictional children in order to satisfy the requirement that it was displacement

itself and not individual status which most affected their course. To this end legitimate and illegitimate displacees, the orphaned, the poverty-stricken, the well-off, those from the workhouse, the streets or the extended family have been included. This means that class differences have been recognised and that fictional slum urchins and workhouse children rub shoulders with aristocratic displacees.

The thesis has strongly argued and offered substantial evidence that it is not the child's status within any of the categories given, but displacement with all its variables which is at the heart of the child's situation and which most affects its course. The very fact that they have been such an attractive and compelling subject with readers and writers alike over the centuries, (and continue to be so),²³ affirms them as perennial favourites.

Obviously, the examples have been largely confined to those displacees in the canonical core-text novels, but a good sprinkling of outside examples and references have been made to displacees in other novels and in juvenile fiction. This was useful in order to demonstrate their attraction as a novelistic topic, and the reasons underlying such attraction.

²³ J.K. Rowling's series of *Harry Potter* stories, 1997, and Lira in Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*, 1985, are two contemporary displacees who have become hugely popular. There are many stories of evacuees who were displacees of a temporary kind during the 1939-45 War, for example the eponymous Carrie in Nina Bawden's *Carrie's War*, 1973.

It has been argued that it is displacement itself, the removal from the known to the unknown, which most affects the course of the fictional displacee, not subsidiary factors such as poverty, orphanhood or class, important though these may be. Displacement means that highly powerful elements of an unfamiliar kind surround the displacee. Within this displacement variables such as social mores, standards of morality, conduct, speech, behaviour, and, most of all, relationships are set up by the writers. These combine to make displacement, *per se*, thoroughly confusing and bewildering for the child.

The displacee's course is heavily dependent on the way these new experiences are encountered and managed. Of such forces, the most important is, invariably, that of the displacee-sustainer relationship. So powerful is this that they have been examined as a duality, each such pair having unique qualities but, importantly, many common ones.

Sinister controlling influences within displacement strengthen the character of some displacees, while others bend and wilt under them. In *Bleak House*, Esther Summerson is a clear example of a displacee raised in a loveless environment who grows into an unforthcoming girl. Removed to a displacement in which a warm-hearted sustainer predominates, given the companionship of agreeable contemporaries, and trusted with new responsibilities, Esther blossoms into an assured young woman of much positive influence on those around her.

The second objective was to reappraise the understanding and practice of adoption in the selected novels, and to relate this to the possibility that the writers were exaggerating the ease with which a stray child could be taken-in, moved on, or transferred to a new place, all within the blanket of adoption. An unexpected finding during the research, namely, that there was no legal adoption in this country before the Adoption Act of 1926, posited a whole new set of issues.

The original issue queried was the ease with which 'loose children' were so readily and easily transferable as represented in the novels and how far this was possible outside fiction? It was possible that the writers may have made making too light of possible hindrances in order to facilitate the action of the novel.

In the light of the relatively late date of legal adoption, (almost a century after the publication of the core-text novels), such queries were now modified and centred on the dangers of these unstructured and all-too-easy adoptions. Far from the writers exaggerating the ease of so-called adoption, it was probably every bit as easy as they described. The findings show ample evidence of such factual transactions which were referred to as adoptions, were totally unstructured and often undertaken on the spur of the moment as so often happens in fiction. The alarming ease of such fictional adoptions are, indeed, true to what went on in reality, and ample evidence of this has been given.

The discovery of the late date of legal adoption, unexpected as

it was, at first appeared to the present writer to threaten the whole course of what had been envisaged. It completely disrupted so many assumptions and issues; for example, the irregularity of adoption as it was practised at the time the novels were written so that, far from being a safe haven, it could be more threatening than life on the streets. It added a new dimension to the thesis, carrying its own set of possibilities, in particular the fragility of the displacee's situation. Moreover, the possibility of adopters with a sinister or abusive agenda became evident.

However, what appeared as a threat to the planned project has, in fact, been a bonus. It opened up a new area of enquiry; namely, speculation as to how different must have been the response of the nineteenth-century reader to what takes place in the novels.²⁴ A heightened set of reader-anxieties for the displacee must surely have been aroused when the post-1926 legal safeguards did not exist. The likely difference between the effect on the sensibilities of the earlier and the later reader has added to the originality and scope of the thesis. It also became more challenging for the writer who had to embark on a new framework, learn from fresh insights and, from these, form a different mind-set towards the topic.

The third objective has been to argue that the earlier understanding of adoption must have resulted in a very different

²⁴ It can only be speculation, but it is an informed speculation based on the altogether different understanding and practice of adoption pre-1926.

reader-response to the displaced child whose position would have been known to be far more precarious than that understood today. Such an understanding of these ‘emotional adoptions’²⁵ would have been part of the contemporary reader’s general background knowledge. It would not have been subject to any conscious recall, but part of reader-awareness of things as they were. We construct our social reality from the known and the familiar and from this stance regard events taking place. Earlier readers did not have to keep reminding themselves that adoption was a sketchy business. It was part of an underlying fund of knowledge on which they constructed their particular social reality; something understood.

Within such a flimsy mode of adoption, the already alerted reader-fears for the child must have been far sharper than those of a later reader. Within the earlier social consciousness, the displaced child would have been known to have no right to a permanency of tenure and could have been removed without hindrance had it become an ‘inconvenience’.

This may, in part, account for the extreme deference often shown towards sustainers. Oliver is one such deferential displacee who longs to let Mr. Brownlow know of his innocence and gratitude. Similarly, Esther Summerson is deferential and timid in the company of Jarndyce until she realises how much she is valued.

²⁵ This is Ruth McClure’s term for adoptions without legality. See McClure, R. *Coram’s Children; The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981), p.130.

There is an absence of literary criticism on the topic. The nearest the present writer has found is that of Cockshut who makes a passing comment that David Copperfield's adoption must have been 'one of the easiest in legal history'.²⁶ Yet the point is of great significance in any appraisal of the relationship between adopter and adoptee in both fact and fiction; a relationship at the very heart of so many novels which foreground a displaced child.

This thesis has established the significance of the different usage, understanding and practice of adoption and related it to what transpires in the core-text novels. It could well be argued that the earlier practice of adoption was, in some ways, to be commended for its simplicity and, at best, its reliance on generous emotions governing a spontaneous action. Certainly they are undoubtedly easier to set-up and have an immediacy unavailable in the later legal adoption which is usually a lengthy procedure because so many safeguards are required. Set against this, they allowed for physical and psychological hazards, many of which were potentially permanently damaging.

Displacement at work in the novels allows the writers great scope. It is displacement which brings about bewilderment, anxiety and, eventually, advantage to the displacee whether it be illegitimate, orphan, extended family member or street urchin, whether it is welcome or unwelcome.

²⁶ Cockshut, A.O. *The Imagination of Charles Dickens*, (London: Collins, 1961), p.121.

Further work on related topics stemming from this thesis

A fruitful area for a follow-up study would be the displaced child in juvenile fiction, although not necessarily of the same period as that used here. Such fictional displacees abound and were, (and are), judging by their sales, evidently as compelling a subject for children as the novelistic displacees were for adults. The aristocratic Beverleys in *The Children of the New Forest*, 1847, L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, 1908, and Frances Hodgson Burnett's Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden*, 1911, were all displaced favourites in their time and continue to be so. The more recent sales-breaking *Harry Potter* series indicate that the appetite for displacees continues. How far they bear any resemblance to the strong meat of the novelistic displacees might well be one aspect of further research. Certainly, like the novelistic displacees, they span all social classes. As they were written for children it may be that parental issues are more strongly represented and/or more respect for parents indicated. These are but a few of the issues which might well be raised in a comparative study.

Another piece of follow-up research might be an in-depth study of the fiction of Hesba Stretton who appears to be crying-out for re-appraisal after decades of neglect. After all she was a huge best-seller for over fifty years, her popularity only slowly declining in the nineteen-twenties.

In conclusion, the findings of this thesis indicate that, in fiction at least, the emotional adoptions work well when the sustainer is sound and able to make adjustments almost as great as those of the displacee. As the writers were wishing to make the displacees objects of both interest and compassion this is unsurprising. The factual adoptions show more varied results. One can but conclude that displacement within any period or culture cannot but be a huge factor in the life of the received child and its sustainers.

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Appendix One

Letters from pre-1926 adoptees to the thesis writer

Rationale

These letters are from pre-1926 adoptees and, in some cases, their descendents. They are too revealing of what it felt like to be 'adopted' at a time when adoption was so unstructured and without legal ratification not to be included in this thesis. However, they can not properly form part of the main body of the thesis because most of the adoptees were born some fifty years or more after the closing date of the thesis, 1870.

Nevertheless, a great deal of time and effort was spent in advertising for such adoptees and replying to all who responded. Many follow-up telephone calls were made and, in or two cases, visits to particularly interesting ones. The positive feed-back was felt to be too worthwhile not to be at least set down in an Appendix.

However, it is not only for these reasons they have been included but because of what they reveal and how varied were the experiences of the displacees. All of the correspondents still have lively memories of what happened to them although, of course, these are bound to be affected by hindsight. Their frankness is refreshing

and, as no questionnaires were sent out, they were at liberty to set down what **they** wished to disclose, bounded only by their own reservations.¹ Some still felt great stigma about illegitimacy, secrecy, and the underlying reasons for their adoption. (This feeling in at least one case seems to have extended to a spouse. One adoptee asked for a reply to be sent to her friend's address because her husband still felt so strongly about her situation even after seventy years or so.)

These letters are lively, acute and very 'fresh' in recalling how the adoptees perceived their situation. Many had been left ignorant of their adoption until adulthood; sometimes it had been revealed by chance, sometimes simply ignored. Some correspondents appear to have been happily reared and express gratitude to those who took them in. Others were less sanguine about their experiences and some were, doubtless, uneasily or unhappily placed. Often the adoptive adults were family members, although this does not appear to have necessarily facilitated the situation. Some of the letters are resentful in tone, some poignant, some more or less resigned to what happened to them.

These letters are the nearest one can get to first-hand accounts of adoptees who, in many instances, experienced situations very similar to those of the fictional displacees of this thesis. They would make a useful basis for a follow-up comparative study between fictional and factual displacees of the pre-1926 period.

¹ See Introduction to the thesis for a fuller discussion of the reasons for this 'open' approach.

Why, one might ask, have these letters been included in a thesis whose working dates begin almost exactly one hundred years before these correspondents were adopted? The question is important to the thesis writer, and to the content of the thesis itself, and deserves comment. It is chiefly because this group of pre-1926 adoptees should not be characterised by chronology alone. Individual human emotions have more perdurance than changing attitudes to do with any given period of time. Feelings of isolation, problematic self-identity, bewilderment, resentment and, most of all the need to 'belong' change less. Laslett et al, 1980, Toynbee, 1985, and Richards, 1989, all show how strongly such feelings affect adoptees and, indeed, all of us.²

As one reads these first-hand accounts in the letters from the pre-1926 adoptees, it becomes clear that their feelings, anxieties and hopes have changed remarkably little from either the fictional displacees in the core-text novels, or from those in literature before and after the period of the thesis. Of course, much of the former secrecy which so often surrounded adoption has departed and many adoptees now go ahead with the search for their natural parents.³

Attitudes towards prevailing legal, social, and family situations also change with time. Nevertheless, human emotions are

² See Chapter Two of this thesis.

³ See Toynbee, P., *Lost Children: The Story of Adopted Children Searching for their Mothers*, (London: Hutchinson, 1985)

remarkably persistent. A displaced Joseph in Biblical text and a Harry Potter in modern fiction encounter situations and factors which are very much the same as the fictional displacees of the mid-nineteenth century novels.

A sense of loss, of isolation, of unease over strange mores and households and uncertainty as to status all bedevil and bewilder the fictional displacees. So often they are at a loss as to how they can, or should, respond to the new circumstances in which they find themselves. The letters from the pre-1926 adoptees show how strongly these later non-fictional displacees were assailed by similar emotions. Even in kindly circumstances with well-intentioned sustainers they are often beset by a sense of 'difference' which lingers and can be discerned in some of these letters.

Many of the letter-writers were curious as to why the thesis writer was carrying out such research and were warm in their good wishes towards the project. In their telephone conversations the great majority were chatty and informative, giving the distinct impression that they were delighted that an interest was being taken in their histories. A few requested that their details should be confined to the research thesis and not in any wider publication. The letters are set down exactly as written and no attempt made to correct spellings or grammar.

Names and addresses have been withheld for reasons of confidentiality. Similarly, the many photocopies of birth certificates, legal transactions, and other documents which would identify the writers, have also been omitted. All these and the letters themselves are held by the present thesis writer and are available for inspection if required.

These pre-1926 adoptees are all by now in their late seventies and some much older; soon there will be none left. Their responses act as a conduit between the core-text fictional displacees and the present day reader. They help to authenticate what the nineteenth-century writers put into the content of their novels. More than this, they indicate the importance of displacement as a factor in their adoption and subsequent development. These, it is felt by the present writer, are good reasons for their inclusion.

Letter 1

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska-Evans

Many thanks for your letter of August, asking me to publicize your research into the lives of those 'adopted' pre-1926.

This sounds a most interesting project, and I am only too pleased to be able to spread the word about it through our correspondence column in this journal. I am just compiling the November issue now, and there may be space to publish your letter in it – failing that, it will appear in our next issue in February.

I hope you will have a good response from readers, and perhaps in the fullness of time, when your research is complete, you may like to give me a summary of your report in the form of a short article for this journal.

Yours sincerely,

Editor *The Local Historian*

Letter 2

Dear Audrey

My Grandfather was adopted in 1895 following an advertisement in a newspaper. I have found letters written to his adoptive mother relating to the transaction. The letters cover the period before, during and following the adoption. I will have them copied for you. If you wish additional information please let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Letter 3

28th August 1994

Dear Friend

My husband and I read your letter in the Friend this week, and have two family examples of “early adoptees”. One was in my husband’s family. My husband was born in 1908, followed by two younger brothers and a sister, but there was also one older “sister”, approximately one year older than my husband. It was, he says, a long time before they ever realised that Peg, the older “sister”, was not their sister. Peg, by the way, was quite unlike the others. Peg and two of the others have died but at no time throughout their lives was there any difference at all in the way they treated each other or were treated. It was assumed, when they were old enough to think about it, that Peg came “over the garden wall”.

From 1974 – 77, I chaired the Adoption Sub-Ctee of Somerset County Social Service Committee, and the other legendary source for adoptions was “The corner shop”. The “little shop” did play a much more intimate part in peoples lives than I think even the village post office does to-day.

The other example is from my side of the family. My grand-mother who was married just before 1860, had 12 children, so the children of the oldest were not all that much younger than her youngest. When

number 2 in Grand-ma's family, Em, had already had three children, two boys and a girl, and then had a fourth child, a girl, Grand-ma said "I'd better take her for you". I will now introduce more names. The girl left with her own family was called Cis Perry. The "adopted" girl was Doll, and Doll thought she was a Yarwood. That was until she was about seven or eight, when she got sent back to her own family. Both Doll and Cis lived till their nineties, but from then on, Doll never really got on with Cis, and always, always denigrated her. Doll used to tell us how upset she had been when other children had told her that she wasn't a Yarwood; I doubt if she contributed much to family happiness when she went back. Incidentally, Doll is the one of all the family who cherished family memories and kept up with her siblings and their offspring.

I don't know if this helps. As far as I know, there were no written records whatsoever. I don't know what if anything my husband's elder sister knew about her own background, but none of the rest of us knew anything at all. Peg is certainly an example of an "adoption" that was outstandingly good.

Letter 4

Dear Audrey,

My brother Hugh Headley was “adopted” in 1921 and little is known of the circumstances. There were no written records found at my mother’s death in 1945 but I remember my mother telling me that there were two Quaker sisters whose surname was Tebbut (?) one of whom had been a missionary, possibly with the F.F.M.A in China. They were told of the plight of a young girl in Southampton or Portsmouth (?) who was pregnant, I think by a Sailor, and they searched round for someone to adopt the baby. At the same time my parents (living in Kent) were looking for a child to adopt to bring up with me (who was born in 1918). I dimly remember going with them to a big house on the Downs, I think near Chichester where these sisters lived. Whether this baby was advertised in *The Friend* or through other Quaker channels I do not know but the baby was baptised when only a few weeks old. My brother was told of his adoption when he was about 16. He never knew more than that his mother was not married.

Unhappily things did not always work out well, although my parents tried all they could to guide and help him. Hugh was educated at the Junior Department of Newport Grammar School. (my Father had business connections at Stanstead, so could visit pretty often). Then at Ackworth. He was not happy at Ackworth. He went on to Felstead near East Grinstead – a “progressive” school where he was

happier. Both my parents were very much in to the S.O.F but the Quaker influence on Hugh seems to have been minimal or non-existent. Hugh went his own way which was different.

Hugh had an active life until he became a serious alcoholic. He had fathered two children (two by a common law wife) I think he has had hard times often. He was a bad business man and squandered his inheritance quickly. He was only 27 when our mother died. Our father had died some 15 years earlier.

We keep in touch although we have never had much in common. Hugh is now 73 and is registered blind and is cared for by a friend of long standing. He does not know that I have written this.

Yours sincerely

P.S John is in Terminal Cancer so please write via me if we can be of any help.

Letter 5

1.9.94

Dear Audrey Cieslakowska-Evans,

I am replying to your letter in this week's Friend, to the limited extent which is possible. With every respect, I doubt very much if you are going to get much information on the first matter you raise, that of how adoptions pre-1926 were arranged, because most of those if not all who could have provided the information you seek are long since dead. They would have had to pass on the information to people like me who were the subject of the adoption. I may be wrong, but my hunch is that at the time the prevalent ethos was one of silence; It is only decades later that we come across the now universally accepted idea that adoptees should know everything (about which I have the strongest reservations).

I can tell you however how one adoptee fared, which is very well. My adoptive mother died when I was five, and I was brought up by my elderly and invalid adoptive father. But he always loved me and did his best for me which gave me absolute security. A bequest in my adoptive Grandmother's will allowed me to go to Oxford, and I completed my career in 1980 as a Senior Lecturer at Leicester University. I am also a JP.

I discovered that I was adopted at the age of 14. One of my Boarding School Masters took a fancy to me and saw me as the Son he had never had. Telling me of my antecedents was a blatant attempt

to gain my affections and draw me away from my father. The attempt misfired; I was filled with gratitude towards my father and repelled by my Schoolmaster.

I wish you well in your research and hope you get a good response.

Letter 6

September 4, 94

Dear Audrey Cieslakowska – Evans

I thought I would not completely ignore your letter in “The Friend” as I have an adopted sister (now aged 79 and 18 months younger than myself), there was a matter of fact I can really only answer one of your questions, “how the adoptee has fared”. (So please don’t bother to acknowledge this letter – it won’t be of much use to you.) In around 1920 adoption was as much as a hush hush affair as sex, and I knew nothing of the process by which Joyce came; though when I was clearing up my Father’s papers after his death, came across some correspondence, which I vaguely recollect was from some Children’s Organisation – (National Children’s Home or similar). The adoption of course was never a secret to my sister as she was 4 ½ and remembered her past life, though she was encouraged to forget it.

She settled down pretty well as far as I remember and did quite well at School. In late adolescence, however, she went through a period of revolt and did no work! However, she trained as a Nurse, qualified and was married. The marriage I don’t consider a brilliant success as home circumstances led to the alienation of the elder boy, who keeps only the most meagre contact with his parents. A certain insecurity, and perhaps revolt from his adoptive parents, Non

Conformist cast of thought perhaps influenced her choice of husband – but I am guessing. The marriage has lasted 55 years and is no worse than many more. Really, looked at all round, one can say that the adoption was successful and well worth while.

Yours sincerely

Letter 7

5th September 1994

Dear Friend,

ADOPTION PRE – 1926

It was with considerable interest that I read your letter in The Friend of 26 August.

My mother was adopted during the First World War; her Father had died when she was a baby and her Mother could not support 3 children. A half-brother was adopted and retained his name together with his adoptive parents' name her eldest sister went to an Orphanage run by the Army, my Grandfather having been a career Soldier. I do not know how my natural Grandmother found the Coopers who adopted my Mother, but I am enclosing a copy of the agreement which was drawn up which you may find interesting. I am also enclosing a letter from my natural Grandmother to Mrs Cooper.

My Mother told me she realised without being told that the Lady who visited her was her natural Mother. She died when my Mother was quite young.

By a strange twist of fate, my Mother married a member of her adopted Mother's estranged family, so I am related by blood to Mrs Cooper whom I loved very much and called "Grandma".

My Mother was the only child in the family and had a comfortable home and religious upbringing. However, throughout her life, she felt cheated by having missed being brought up by her natural parents. She corresponded with her siblings and had a good

relationship with her half-brother who was blinded in an accident. However, her eldest sister did not encourage a close relationship which was a source of great distress to my Mother. Since my Mother's and Aunt's deaths, I have corresponded with a cousin, who has sent me copies of photographs of my Grandparents. I regret my Mother did not have copies of these, though she was a given one picture of each of her parents as a child.

I am very interested in the subject of adoption as I have some experience of the traumas children experience in my work as an Assistant Head in a Junior School. One girl, like my Mother did, fantasises about her natural Mother, telling her friends she is a Pop-Star or a Princess. Two boys have been extremely difficult to settle in to School and have to be carefully prepared for any new experiences.

My Mother's strong feelings have come down another generation as when I took out the document and letter, I began to cry because I remember her sadness. I have a photograph of my natural Grandparents on the turn of the stairs where I see it every day; Compensation for never having met them.

I notice your address is Darley Dale; I was born in Rotherham and have often visited Derbyshire. My Mother in Law lives in Sheffield and I visit her every year. My Mother died in 1977 in Rotherham.

If I can be of any more help to you please let me know,

Friendly Greetings

Letter 8

Re Adoption Pre 1920

Dear Friend,

My adoption was in 1922 but I have very little documentary record. At the moment I have some work on hand which is rather urgent, then I go on Holiday. If the work on adoption is not too urgent I would be pleased to make a contribution.

I was never told of my adoption and when I asked for information – i.e. Birth Certificate – I was given an adoption Order – I later obtained a Birth Certificate, all very painful - especially as I was brought up to believe I was wicked, selfish and ungrateful – but never told of course why I had to be grateful. It was a long time before I was led to the Philosophy of Jung – “Make the deprivation creative – wise words but the journey has been painful, and still is.

August 29th. I scribbled this off on reading the Friend, looked at the enclosed and have held my response over to get the photostatic done.

Details of my early life will have to wait, it is all very painful and I regret to say that the troubles of childhood remain with us into the seventies. I just performed very well and have friends but no family – it gets worse as the people I knew are all forever tied up with Mother’s brothers, sisters etc etc but these ties – I listen endlessly to the family affairs of others and their Grandchildren.

I married a widower – with two children so have none of my own and that is another story.

September 6th. Have just had a lovely weekend away at Charney Manor – meeting lots of Friends and trying to switch off – this weekend was booked some four months ago – I also have to finalise the work I am taking to York University next week.

Once I return I will get down to a detailed account of things as I know then. But I have no idea how the adoption was effected. Good Luck with your research.

Yours sincerely

Letter 9

July 14th

Dear Dorothy,

Whilst at the Community Centre on Wednesday your letter was given to me by Hilary.

However you know the old saying “Blood is thicker than water” and I found over the years that is all there was between your parents and me – in fact the last two years, whilst your Grandmother lived – it became worse – because your mother told me it was my duty to stay at home to care for her. How she expected us to live on 10/- for week – which would have been our sole income – there was no handout in those days – I do not know and I was fed up with the rows. So when mother died, so did my connection with the Attwood family. I was 29 when I was told by an outsider about being adopted, I regret to say I was not told the full facts when I asked. It was not until mother died did I find the paper (with a sixpenny stamp) where my father sold me. Incidentally there is nowhere in the annals of Derbyshire showing where I had been adopted. My Solicitor informs me it is not worth the paper it is written on and would not stand up in a Court of Law.

Since learning the local family history I find that I had 2 Half Brothers and a Sister and it is they whom I am trying to trace.

I did not even know for years that you and Joyce were married. However I hope you are all happy, because I am. I have four God children who visit me and am busy with the Communiy Centre

Letter 10

26 October 1994

Dear Madam

Re: Adoption before 1926

We saw your advertisement in the Church Times dated 30 September and thought you might be interested to know the details of an estate which we are currently administering.

Our deceased died without leaving a will and we were informed by his second cousin that he was in fact adopted. However, when we came to examine his "adoption papers" we found that he was adopted rather informally in 1914 and then passed on for adoption to someone else in 1920. Neither of these adoptions was ratified once the 1926 Act had been passed.

Where an adoption has not been legally ratified it is not the adoptive family but the deceased's natural family who are entitled to his estate. This obviously has caused us tremendous problems and despite employing a professional tracing agency it seems unlikely that we shall ever be able to locate the deceased's natural family and account to them for the funds in this estate.

Our deceased's adoption was effected by means of two agreements signed and dated in the first instance by his mother and in the second instance by his first adoptive mother, the second document also witnessed. As far as we are aware no further documentation was completed.

We hope this is of interest to you.

Yours faithfully

Furley Page Fielding & Barton

Letter 11

8th Nov '94

Dear Audrey Cieslakowska

I recently read your letter in the Friend regarding pre-1926 adoptees and although I have probably nothing positive to offer I feel inclined to give my details.

All I know of myself is that I was adopted when I was about 18 months of age. My birth certificate gives my mother's name and address. It gives the address at which I was born and the date of my birth. It also give my full first names. And that is all I know of my early days. My date of birth was 28 Nov '24.

One point that may be of interest is that in contradiction of what I believe is modern day practise, I was not told that I had been adopted until I was well into my teens. As far as I can remember this disclosure had not the slightest detrimental effect on me. On the contrary, I felt that I had lived a totally 'normal' life whilst growing up, and if anything was pleased that I had been allowed to enjoy my childhood with no doubts of any sort in my mind. No doubt the easy 'transition' was largely due to the fact that I was adopted by the most wonderful couple in the world.

I would like to know more of my pre-adoption days. I have been in contact with the OPCS but have drawn a complete blank so far.

I regret that all this may be useless information to you, but

Yours

PS. My wife and I are members of Lincoln PM (more useless info?)

Letter 12

Friday 11 November 1994

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska,

In 'Life & Work' I noticed that you are asking for information about persons who were adopted before the 1926 Adoption Act. Perhaps the case of an Aunt of mine may be of interest to you. However, you will have to bear in mind that in this case Scottish Law applies.

My Aunt was born in 1902, and was actually fathered by her Mother's Brother in Law. When she was two years old, something happened that her Mother's Husband (my Aunt's reputed Father) discovered that he was not the real Father. Her Mother was told to "get rid of the child". Being friendly with my Grandmother she told Grandma the story. The result was that my Grandparents "Adopted" Aunty Ina. I have a copy of her birth certificate and on the back, in my Grandfather's Handwriting is the following entry... "I Henry Topping and my Wife Jane Ann Topping have adopted Lovina Greig Rennie as our own Child. Signed Mr. & Mrs. Topping 139 Rosebank St. Dundee. Witness Bella Rennie Mother 16th April 1904".

My Grandparents already had two sons, the eldest being my Father, thus Ina became the third child in the family. Another son was born in 1906 and a daughter in 1908. Ina was always very dearly

loved by all the family, in fact it should be said that she adopted my Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and her nephews and niece!

Following Grandmother's death in 1936 she looked after Grandfather, as well as being in partnership with Aunty May as a Grocer. She wrote to my Uncle Jim in Australia, and my Father in Newcastle every week as had my Grandmother. She nursed my Grandfather and later Aunty May in their last moments. There could not have been a more dutiful and loving Daughter, Sister or Aunt. She outlived all their generation of the family. I used to visit her regularly and we had a lot of fun together in her later years. Then one sad day, she was found dead in her bed at a ripe old age.

As the eldest Nephew, and her executor, I went to register her death and was deeply offended and grieved when the Registrar informed me that she could not be registererd as ADOPTED CHILD but had to be registered as FOSTERED. I argued the matter and pleaded my case, but to no avail. Believe me whe I tell you that this still hurts! However, I must accept it and we all still carry the memory of a most loving Aunt in our hearts.

If you feel that I may be able to help you further in your researches, please feel free to ask for any further information.

Yours sincerely

Letter 13

4th November 1994

Ref: Adoption pre-1926

In reply to your letter in the Catholic Herald some two weeks ago. I was one such child.

I was adopted in 1922 by a couple from Lancashire, having been born in London of a Scottish mother in October 1921. I have in my possession an adoption agreement drawn up by a firm of Manchester Solicitors and signed by my Mother. Part of this agreement is the stipulation that I should be brought up as a Roman Catholic.

My adoptive parents, were as you may guess, members of that Church. The fact of my adoption was revealed to me in school, when I was about ten years old, by a girl in the same class as myself – she was not feeling particularly kindly to me at that time. This caused me great distress and I ran home quickly to be assured that this was not the case. With hindsight I can see that I did not want to be faced with this truth at that particular moment. I remember saying “it isn’t true is it?” My ‘Mother’ waited just a fraction too long before she decided to say no. With the prescience of childhood I accepted the ‘no’ to ease my grief, but reserved judgement.

After that time it seemed that although I was never told officially, information about my state began to trickle through. I was told that I was advertised in the ‘Stella Maris’ a small devotional monthly and that the parish priest has provided references then required. My real mother had been in London at the time of my birth

(working, I suspect) though her address is given as Scotland on my birth certificate. That I had been placed in the care of a catholic 'Lady' of charitable bent, who looked after a few children until they could be adopted by catholic couples and that my uncle had contributed to my support. I was further told that an Irish family had wished to adopt me & indeed had taken me to Ireland. It seems that there was some form of supervision, because after some time I was taken away from them, as I had not been properly cared for. My future parents were told that I was from a good family background.

It would be only fair to say that I was treated well but periodically the strain showed. I was always absorbed in books & this was not a bookish household, our temperaments, mother's and mine, were poles apart. It seemed that there were always expectations I did not fulfill. At one point I was told that my mother did not want me so she gave me away.

This remark I suspect arose from insecurity or a fear that I would go and seek out my birth mother, leaving the one who had brought me up. Needless to say I did not try to seek her out when I was older. I used to tell myself that this was because she didn't need me barging in and disrupting her life. The real reason, I see now, is that I could not have coped if she had rejected me again.

Much of this information is necessarily vague, but perhaps it might help in your task.

Yours sincerely

Letter 14

3rd Dec 1994

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska

Having read your interest in adoption procedures in the “Life and Work” magazine I thought you might be interested in my adoption. I was born in November 1915 my mother being unmarried – a dreadful stigma in those days. Her parents hailed from the most Northern part of the UK namely the Island of Uist in the Shetland Islands. Prior to my birth they had emigrated to Canada with their son while my Mother stayed on in London where she was employed as a typist. Then mother’s two bachelor brothers and an unmarried sister stayed in a nice flat in Edinburgh where they had a good licensed grocer’s business. As my birth approached she came north and I was born in hospital in Edinburgh. Alas after a few days she returned to London leaving me with her aunt who just wasn’t capable of caring for a baby. They knew an elderly couple who had no family of their own but had adopted a boy who was now 5 years old. The person whom I was to call mother loved children. They were very poor and they took me plus a sum of £100. I had a good upbringing and I loved them dearly but had a hard life as there was never much money but it was no different for many people in those years. My natural mother’s parents had prospered in Canada but wanted nothing to do with me. When I was about 4 years old I remember my mother coming up from London, taking me on outings and buying me pretty clothes but her visit was to tell us that that was it.

Letter 15

2/12/94

Apropos your letter in Nov 94 Local Historian.

My grandmother Elizabeth Ann Johnston (formerly Ritson) died in 1916 following the birth of her daughter – baptised Annie between her mother's death and funeral.

Grandmother's sister, Mary Hannah (from Hexham) looked after the children who were then 12; 10; (died); 7; and 23 months, for some weeks. Grandfather, however, was unwilling to pay her a personal wage so she returned to her home in Hexham.

Thinking that a housekeeper would be more available without a baby in the house, G Father looked for a couple of "adopt" the baby.

Grandmother's couse 'Joe' Herdman was a miner (as was GF) and didn't care for his wife doing domestic work. They had lost their only child, and he thought a baby would keep Sally (his wife) at home.

Annie (Johnston) became Nancy Herdman.

When Nancy was at school she was told that she wasn't Nancy H but Annie J – which must have been confusing. Of course she was taunted by her fellow scholars about the confusion.

It was only at this stage that she was told of the arrangement – age 5 or 6. It wouldn't sink in.

She continued as Nancy Herdman at home and Annie Johnston at school until she left school at 13. When she married at age 24(?) she became Nancy Greig (nee? – I haven't seen the marriage certificate – but probably Johnston).

Even today she accepts that officially she is Annie; to all others she is Nancy. She is now 78, of course.

At no time during her years of adoption did her father ever go out of his way to acknowledge her – by remembering her birthday for instance; or paying towards her upkeep.

Letter 16

11.3.9

Dear Mrs. Cieslakowska,

I was adopted in 1925. The couple who took me paid money to my natural mother. So I was told when I was old enough to understand. I have quite a lot of memories of my young days right up to when I joined the naffi when I was 18 yrs old.

My Ad. Parents were not all that good and life wasn't too grand as I was an only child and when my Ad. Mother went blind when I was about 12 yrs, the running of the house fell on me. I even had to take my parent to hospital three times a week and take her to the pub up the street for her drink. They both drank you see and it was hell. Never mind I survived. I have enclosed my ADOPTION AGREEMENT and my Birth Certificate which you may use in any way.

I did try to trace my mother but could find out nothing. The man who was my father I knew as Uncle Willie and lived not far from us. Mr Walters was not married they just lived as man and wife. I found that out after Ad. Mother died when I was 19 yrs. If you wish to know more I will write again.

I remain yours faithfully

Letter 17

22-3-95

Dear Mrs. Cieslakowska,

Thank you for your letter and returning papers. Sorry I have no more 'information' to give or letters. The bank held my documents and all they gave me is what I sent. I didn't even know my birth father's name until we applied for marriage license.

You may use what you have read in any way and use real names. I don't think it will bother anyone now.

Yours sincerely

Good luck.

Letter 18

March 14 1995

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska

Referring to your piece in the Evening Chronicle I write on behalf of a friend. What method of follow up would you use? may I ask.

This child was born illegitimately to a woman of prominent family and seems not to have been baptised into the Roman Catholic church nor to have been issued a formal state birth-certificate.

She was adopted (via a newspaper advert for a home offered for 25/- (shillings) per month for a 3-month old baby) by a married woman who lived in her own house (whilst her husband an advocat dwelt in his own house).

The child was taught (educated) by her mama and looked after by two maid servants until she became companion to her adopter.

The child was never legally adopted by the husband who regarded her with affection.

The real mother died in a nursing home at a normal (old?) age and nurses there said in her last days she spoke of her daughter.

Would you consider this case unusual and have any suggestions?

Yours sincerely

Letter 19

14 March 1995

Dear Ms Cieslakowska-Evans

With reference to your letter in the 'Kent Messenger' regarding adoption, I am enclosing copies of my brother's adoption papers, birth and death certificates.

Freddie was adopted after our mother has miscarried several times. He was always every special and much loved. My sister was born four years later and myself four years after that, but Freddie was always loved by all the family and I am sure I can safely say he never looked on himself as being any different to use girls – he was a great brother.

Unfortunately by 1932 both our parents had died and we children were put in Homes. Freddie in the then 'Waifs and Strays' and us girls in 'Barnardo's'. As soon as Freddie was old enough he joined Boy Service in the East Surrey's, but was later invalided out and went to live with our Aunt in Canterbury. At the start of the war he was enlisted in the Royal Engineers and was at Dunkirk before being sent to India. He was in the Burma Campaign but sadly died from Malaria on 9 August 1944; he was only 25 years old. Speaking for my sister and myself he was and still is greatly missed.

For what it is worth Freddie is remembered on the War Memorial at Lympne Church near Hythe, Kent, which our grandmother instigated.

I hope these papers will be of some use to you in your research.

Yours sincerely

Letter 20

13.3.95

Dear Audrey,

Since 1981 I have been looking into my history. That year at the age of 60 years, I first found out who I really was.

In 1922 I was “adopted” at the age of 18 months and lived in Tooting and Balham in South London, until I moved to Hertfordshire when I was 33 yrs old and married.

My early history is very interesting, some factors still remain a mystery, one being how I was taken from North London to South London.

I found a large family and a brother, one day a book should be written about our search, which only took six months.

More details if you find these brief facts interesting.

I would be pleased to know your future plans, resulting from your research.

Enclosed please find SAE for a reply.

Yours truly

PS lovely chatting on the phone tonight.

Letter 21

27/3/1995

Dear Audrey,

Here are copies of my adoption certificate when I was fourteen years old!

A copy enclosed also of my birth certificate, which I did not see until April 1982. I was shocked to learn my real name was Doreen! and the address 'where born', 129 St Johns Rd, Islington, we later found out was the local Workhouse!!

There is also enclosed a copy letter from my "councilor" Mr Stroud, which explains I was handed to my "Mum and Dad" by the Officer of the National Adoption Society.

I hope this will be interesting and helpful to you.

Good luck in all your endeavours.

Yours sincerely

Letter 22

12.3.95

Dear Mrs Evans,

Re. Adoption

Although this is not firsthand, I can vouch for the truth of it.

My husband and I had a friend who had been 'adopted', circa 1924. His 'father' had merely arrived home with him one evening telling his 'mother' there was a baby to be looked after. All his life the 'father' never revealed anything about the boy. As the years went by the lad half-expected to be told he was his 'father's' illegitimate son. His great hope, over the years we knew him, was that all would be revealed by his 'father's' Will. Sadly, nothing was mentioned about his origins when his 'father' died. The sadness, despair, and great void in our friends life in not knowing the truth, remains with me to this day, especially as I am taking time to research my own family tree, and have come across the frustration of children being passed out of the family before 1926, if illegitimate. They are untraceable.

Yours sincerely

Letter 23

15/03/95

Dear Audrey,

I have just noticed your letter in the Kent Messenger (10th March), in which you ask if anyone has “Memories of Adoption”.

It is quite probable that my letter will be of no help to you, but you might be interested to know that my father in law, who was born in 1916, was “given” as a baby along with the sum of £12, to a woman to be looked after.

Although we know the name of the woman who looked after him for the first eight years of his life, we don't know whether she was already known to the family, or her name passed on to them.

He was born in Plymouth at St Ursula's Nursing Home, 1 Edith Avenue – I rather think that it was a Home for unmarried mothers, but unfortunately West Devon Record Office were unable to supply me with any records of this Home. I know from his birth certificate that he was registered on the 42nd day after his birth – which, I believe, is the latest date by law to register a child.

At the age of eight (1924), my father in law was actually taken into

care by the local Dr Barnardo's Home, and it has been recorded by them that his mother, grandparents, uncle and foster mother, had all been in communication with them/him, either by letter, parcel or postal order. The fact that he never met any of his family makes this knowledge quite strange – it would seem that they were keeping an eye on my from a distance! (You may be interested to know, that just five weeks ago, I located a brother and sister from the mother's subsequent marriage, and we have just met the sister. She is 15 years younger than her half brother, and when we met her last Saturday, it was obvious to one and all that they had been cast from the same mould!)

It is likely that this letter will be of little or no help to you – but if I can help you further, please do not hesitate to write to me.

Yours sincerely

I was interested in your letter regarding adoptions. I don't think I was adopted, the only papers I have are baptismal ones. I was born 1918 and the baptismal paper was 1923, all I was told was ("what do you think we got you for, to lead the life of a lady, you were got here to work") and work I did, they were strong chapel people, my step father was quite good, but my step mother, was terrible, today she would have been in serious trouble. I was well dressed, for outside places, but if I was naughty, I was put up in the attic, I was fed on dry bread and water, I remember (I could write a book about how I was treated) she made me wear lace up boys boots for school, and I hated them, so I put them against the bars of the old black range, till they were burned, I knew she would belt me for it, but I could not stop myself. I ran away to London when I was 14. I got a job in a hotel in Down St in Piccadily and then I came home, but I could not settle, and went back to London, and worked for a lovely family, in Notting Hill. I found my own mother, who was living in Peacehaven. When I got married she came and stayed with me. She died in 1953. There is a lot to tell about that association, but it would take a lot of writing, she was a 'Penn' the Quakers who went out to Philadethier, in years gone by. When I was married, I had to repeat my first name and then my adopted name, my mother in law was rather upset. I take it this letter will be of some use to you.

Yours sincerely

Letter 24

March 28

Dear Audrey

Many thanks for your letter, glad it is of interest to you. Yes you can use my name and anything else you like, I don't think there is anyone else alive now. I must tell you of one thing that might be of interest to you. Did I mention in my letter that I found my biological mother, when I was working in Brighton and she lived in Peacehaven? When I married and had my son, after the war she used to spend holidays with me, and she always said, if anything happened to her, for us to go and see her solicitor, as my grandmother left me 6 flats and 2 houses and £900 in world war 1 Bonds. But my mother drew the interest of them till her death (they were investment houses). So came the time she died of cancer of the breast at 54, so I went to see the solicitor, and he was going ahead with the will, but in the course of the proceedings he retired and his son took over, my husband rang up one day and said why was it taking so long, he said "did you know your wife was illegitimate" my husband said "yes what difference does that make" to which he said, I could not benefit from the will, I had to prove that my grandmother knew of my existence when she made the will. So I had to put a personal advert in the local paper asking anyone who knew my grandmother, I had a lady who came to see me, and told me she lived next door to my grandmother and my mother and I. My grandmother did not name me in the will, she just put children of Ada

Penn, probably thinking my mother would marry and have more children. The solicitor was sending a deposition to London for my case to be heard before Queen's counsel in Chancery court, and we were to get a copy of that statement. When I rang him and asked about it, he said "it had gone to London" and when I asked where our copy was, he replied we did not have one, I know now, we should have reported him to "The Law Society" needless to say I lost out, it all went to my mother's sister and her children. I hope you can make sense of this and excuse the spelling mistakes, as I am 77 now, and there is so much I could tell you of my life with my cruel step mother. Here is a little instance, I was approx. 10-12, and my step mother was at a cottage they had in the country, and my step dad and brother were at home, I was out playing with a friend, it was a summers night, and I had to be in by 8 o'clock, when I went home they would not answer the door, I went back to my friend's mother, and she said for me to go to the police station, which I did, and a great big sergant came home with me, when my brother answered the door, he gave them a good telling off for not letting me in, I thought I would have got a good hiding, but I was told to get my supper and get to bed, I guess they must have got a shock. Well Audrey my hand is tired now, I will say good night to you.

Yours truly

I am writing probably incompletely about an early 'adoption' in my mother's family.

My mother born in 1897 was 14 when her parents 'adopted' Molly. Molly was always referred to as an 'adopted' sister and to my sister and I she was always Aunt Molly.

My grandparents were living on a farm in Staplehurst in Kent, my grandfather was the shepherd. My mother on her way home from school would meet a lady wheeling a baby in a pram and stop to talk and admire the baby. One day the lady was very upset as she and her husband were moving away and could not take the baby with them. What would happen to Molly?

My mother asked at home if they could have the baby. Grandfather agreed on one condition that she would be treated as one of the family. So it was that Muriel Clare Mansfield became 'adopted' into the Hook family.

How this came about officially I do not know except that in later years my mother said Molly was not 'adopted' as we now know it but fostered. A Mr Taylor, who was our school inspector, visited my grandmother to keep an eye on Molly's welfare, whilst at school I would think.

As to Molly's background. She was born at a Staplehurst nursing home, from which her mother returned to London and Molly went to a local foster mother. It was thought in our family, wrongly, that Mrs Mansfield was of gentry stock, had Molly outside her marriage whilst possibly her husband was abroad in the Army. At it

turned out she was a housekeeper in London. No one even mentioned who Molly's father was.

Molly grew up, left home and married. Mrs Mansfield visited at the time Molly's first daughter Valerie was born and at her husband's insistence met her mother for the first time. Mrs Mansfield had kept in touch with my grandparents and after their deaths with my mother.

Molly settled down with her growing family in the same village as my mother and was very much a part of our family always. She had 4 children Valerie, Rodney, Jill and Roger. Valerie and Roger emigrated to Australia, coming home regularly to see their parents. It was on Molly's last visit, traveling alone at about 77 years old, that she died whilst out there. Her body was brought home and she was buried next to her husband and near to her son Rodney who was killed in a road accident in the village when he was 4 years old. This was at Hamletsham Church in Kent.

We have all missed her very much. She was never a spontaneous personality but always pleasant and friendly. To the end she was my mother and uncle's sister and our Aunt.

So a life which began in a Staplehurst nursing home ended in Australia. Molly had lived a full life though not without its tragedies. There was our little Rodney killed at 4 and her husband Bob mentally ill at the end of his life but Molly stoically coped.

Looking back and as Mr Taylor became involved I think things must have been arranged unofficially but with due care. I never heard

talk of payments by anyone to anyone but then people were not so money minded in those days there were fewer expectations in life and a good deal more contentment and security.

There is of course no one left in the family now, I am 62, who was alive and living when Molly was 'adopted' at 9 months and when she was growing up as a child. So my story is mostly secondhand and incomplete in many details.

I hope it is of some use to you.

Best wishes in your research.

Letter 25

21 March 1995

Dear Madam

Further to your recent advertisement research adoptions. We have been approached by a client who has asked us to make enquiries on their behalf.

Our client is interested in replying to you but before proceeding would like the following information:-

Are you undertaking this research as a student?

As a Social Worker?

Are you writing a book?

Producing a radio or television programme?

As you will appreciate this subject of adoption is very sensitive and hence our client's apprehension.

Yours faithfully

Letter 26

31 March 1995

Dear Adurey Cieslakowska

I am still very interested in what you are doing, the little information I have are letters, birth certificates and details of where I was born.

It seems the midwife arranged the transaction of the people who adopted me were re-compensated financially.

The Citizens Advice Bureau at Rochester are helping me write these letters as I am in my late seventies and writing is not one of my strong points.

If you are ever in the area I would appreciate a visit by you as I am not on the telephone, also if there is any other way I can help you please write.

Yours sincerely

Letter 27

Dear Audrey

My mother who is now dead, was born illegitmet here in Weymouth. She was a twin, her other twin was a boy, they where born in 1912 and the district nurse arranged for them to be fostered in Weymouth (I heard about this only last month), until they where about 5 years old. I have a photo of my mother, as a bridesmaid aged about 5 years old, to a friend of her foster mother. The foster mother died when they where about 5 years old and as the biological father was rich married and we think employed the twins mother, as a servant he paid for them to go into a childrens home. They where different sexes, so my mother went to a girls home and her brother went to a boys home in Sussex. When my mother was 12 years old she was "adopted" by a couple in Portland who had a boarding guest home for the naval personnel. She was really a 'glorified' servant to help with the navy guests. When she was 21 years old she found her brother, through the district nurse who was at her birth. She really spent her whole life trying to find her mother, but in those days, she just met a blank wall. She found out in her 20's that she hadn't been officially adopted by the Portland couple. Her brother Arthur Player in Horsham Sussex was never adopted and spent his time in Boys homes until he went on the Railways and was a guard all his life. My mother Daisy May Player was a very unhappy woman, I suppose it was her unending hope of finding her own mother, that left her rather

depressing. Her brother although they looked alike, was a very happy go lucky person, liked by everyone and his wife is still alive today.

My mother always had her birth certificate so she knew her mothers name and where she was born but there was a blank space for the fathers name.

Yours sincerely

Letter 28

27/4/95

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska

Thank you so much for informing me of your interest of my mothers history of adoption pre 1926 Act.

I would be extremely pleased for you to use the information in your thesis and there is no need to worry about the real names, I don't mind a bit, do whatever you want.

Thank you so much for your kind consideration.

Yours sincerely

Letter 29

Dear Audrey,

In answer to your letter in our local 'Evening News' requesting information for your research.

My husband was born in 1930 and was adopted as such. We still have the scrap of paper which was the drawing up of the adoption, also original birth certificate. (copy enclosed).

His blood Mother was a daughter of a middle class family which owned the local Picture House in Musselburgh. A Town a few miles east of Edinburgh. His blood Father is unknown. The adoption was obviously a private arrangement, although the stamps on the document made it official.

It would seem however that these babies were illegitimate and were pawned off to the poorer community for a negotiable sum of money, by the well off folk which obviously wished to hide the indiscretion.

How it was known who would adopt a baby I can't say but the local maternity Hospital was involved to some extent.

The lady who brought up my husband was poor with a daughter of her own. I don't know if it was through compassion or other persuasive means that he became one of that family.

However my husband's Aunty (adopted Mothers sister) also adopted three babies by these means. According to my sister-in-law – Aunty's husband, Uncle, would come home from work and there and behold was another poor wee bairn. He must have been

very easy going and kindly to accept such practice. A heard of gold surely.

Perhaps Aunty had talked her sister into taking as she had gotten a baby – ... – just four days older than my husband, so maybe had been approached to take him at the same period and was torn who to take.

These people are long dead so cannot find out through them.

I hope this information is of some use to your research but I must ask you to refrain from mentioning names if you are recording details, incase of embarrassment by any family or party in this case.

My husband has muscular dystrophy – which now medical knowledge accedes can be passed on from Mother to Son who pass it on to their daughters, though don't contract it themselves are carriers. We have four sons (Fortunayley in that respect no daughters) so the sons can safely have children without worrying if the gene will be passed on.

My husband was brought up using the name of through school, military service and married in that name. It wasn't until after we married, I anticipated future problems with insurance policies that we went to Register House to register his now known name. He did have a chip on his shoulder about his past life scenario but that is in the past now.

We never tried to find his blood mother. Perhaps left alone anyway. Although I too am intregued as to the way things were done.

Yours sincerely

Letter 30

April 21st '95

Dear Audrey C-Evans,

My brother in law who lives in Weymouth sent me a copy of the Dorset Echo with your letter in it regarding Adopted children.

As I was born in 1925 and Adopted in 1926 through the National Children Adoption Association (then at 71 Knightsbridge, London S.W.1) I was not sure if you would be interested. My Adoption went through the County Court Clerkenwell in 1934. I kept all the documents relating to my Adoption.

However, I think you were more interested in the private adoptions and transactions, so will leave it to you to decide whether you want to contact me again.

Yours sincerely

Letter 31

May 28th '95

Dear Audrey C,

Thank you for your letter of 8.5.95. It must be very interesting to work on a certain subject and I often wish I had continued with my education instead of merely becoming a farmers wife for 35 years!

However, I have looked at the papers I have re: my adoption in 1926 and the first one is a letter from the National Children Adoption Association to "Uncle" Alfred Pearce Jones (solicitor) dated 25th March 1926. Also an "Indenture" made 30th March 1926 between Edythe Madge Hillson of Lansdown Grove Hotel, Bath, Somerset (the mother) and Alfred Stuart Gibson and Emily May Gibson (his wife) of 86, Horusey Lane, Highgate. N.6. It is signed by Edythe Madge Hillson and witnessed by Mary G. Weston, Sr Martins, Blandford "Member of Board of Guardians and Infant Protection Visitor and Member of War pensions Committee". Also this document was signed by Alfred Gibson and Emily May Gibson and Witnessed by Alfred Pearce Jones (solicitor) Uncle to Alfred G

In 1935 on 14th February a petition was heard in the Court of Clerkenwell, Middlesex, saying that Alfred Stuart Gibson and Emily May Gibson were desirous of adopting the said Audrey Jean Gibson, formerly Jean Patricia Hillson. Both parents were aged 57. The petition was also served on Edith Madge Hillson who apparently made no objection.

Having been born at Paynes Farm, Tilshead nr Avesbury, Wilts, I was sent to an orphanage, Sr Martins, Blandford. There I was baptised on 28th July 1925 – Mary Weston and Sarah Elizabeth Dibley being sponsors at Blandford Parish Church. The names I was given were Jean Patricia Hillson.

My new parents gave me the names Audrey Jean thereafter. (Audrey, I believe comes from Shakespeare's "As you like it".)

If you need them I can get all the documents I've mentioned photo-copied, so please let me know if they will be of use to you.

A rather strange thing happened in 1990 when I contacted some people called Hillson at Ringwood, Hants. I wondered if I could find out about my family. Mrs Hillson sent me a copy of her husband's grandfather's death certificate. Strangely enough he lived in Islington – the same district as where I had been brought up by the Gibsons – he was also an Alfred who died 1964 aged 76. But it is too much to believe I was so near my own relations at that time. My real mother was apparently a receptionist at Lansdown Grove Hotel, Bath, and must have been a West Country girl because I was born in Wiltshire. It is noticeable that she signs her name "Edythe" but on the petition is mentioned as "Edith".

Please let me know if you need the documents photocopied.

Yours sincerely

Letter 32

24/4/95

Dear Ms Evans,

Was very interested in your article re adoption in Edinburgh Evening News. I myself was adopted in 1922 (I am 73 this October) funnily enough I took a great notion to trace my birth mother and went to Register House in Edinburgh paid £16 but it wasn't a success I just couldn't get the computer idea to work out, so I only found out one or two things I'm sorry now that I didn't stick it out and found out more.

I really would like to find out all about my parents (I was illegitimate) for my son's sake (he is my only child live in Kent). I'm very interested in your adventure with the adoption research. I do hope you will write to me and tell me all about it.

I believe I was 'just' adopted no formal transaction took place. So I'd love to know all about it.

Yours sincerely

Letter 33

23/10/95

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska,

I've always been hoping that I might hear from you re my adoptive state. I think I told you that I went to Register House Edin. A few months ago but wasn't really able to cope with the computer. I do intend going back though. I took scribbles hurriedly down when I was at the computer and on looking over them I honestly can't make head or tail of them I am enclosing copy to you. You won't be any wiser I'm sure but they may be of some assistance. You'll have had hundreds of requests I'm sure. Which no doubt will baffle you but if you are still interested I'm enclosing my few details. There were lots more at the Registrar but I gave up half way through which I'm sorry about now.

Thanking you very much for your interest.

Letter 34

27/10/95

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska

Many thanks for your very prompt reply to my letter specially when I learn that you've been ill. I would never have disturbed you if I had known. I wish you a speedy recovery, it will just take its own time.

I'll maybe hear from you sometime in the future, but I realise only when you feel well enough to go ahead.

Yours sincerely

Letter 35

23 April 1995

Dear M/s Evans,

In response to your letter to the Edinburgh Evening News of Saturday 22 April I am the widow of a man who was adopted as a child in 1920, He was completely unaware of his origins until he was twenty years old in 1940. He was then formally adopted and given a birth certificate from the Adopted Children's Register of Births.

He died at the early age of 49 without knowing anything more about his background except his natural mother and father's names, and his grandparents on the mother's side, and that he came from farming folk in Caithness. He was also told that this mother emigrated to Australia, married, and had three more children, and that his father emigrated to South Africa.

His adoptive mother had many miscarriages and it was the family doctor who arranged for the child to be fostered within three weeks of his birth.

For many years I have been researching his background and have traced relatives in Caithness, Australia and South Africa. I have been lucky enough to find photographs as well and I am now nearing the completion of a book about my research. Although I know birth certificates of adopted children can only be obtained by the child, I managed to obtain that with a little effort on my part.

If I can help in any way with your research I shall be happy to do so. Yours sincerely,

Letter 36

18 May 1995

Dear Audrey,

Thank you for your letter of 8 May. In answer to your query, there was no formal contract between the natural and adoptive parents. However, my husband was known as Grant Pentland Horne, the surname of his adoptive parents, but his natural mother registered him as Grant Pentland Horne Dunnet, her own surname. Perhaps this could be looked on as a contract of sorts as the forenames were obviously chosen by the adoptive parents.

The name of the father is not revealed in the BC but we know his name was John Oag and we now know a very great deal about the families of these two people. He refused to marry Louisa Dunnet, the mother. Perhaps the reason for this was finance. He was in the midst of a degree course in Aberdeen, and in those days would be wholly dependent on his parents. These people were not poor farmers. They had a good standard of living with farm servants, house servants and nursemaids for their children. But they had already supported one son through university, and perhaps the upkeep of a wife and child for another son would be more than they could face.

The mother's father was factor of a large estate, as well as running a farm of 300 acres, and in his community he held very many public offices, such as JP, County Councillor, and other prestigious appointments. Within four years of my husband's birth he made it his business to oust John Oag's parents and family from their farm. These families had been close friends for many years so that illegitimate birth affected a great many people.

My research has been going on for some ten years during which I wrote a book based on my husband's wartime letters, and another about my own family's life in pre-war Edinburgh. Both are out of print. Now I have such a wealth of material and photographs and documents I cannot avoid writing a book about it. I have photographs of both families, even one of an old lady born in 1812, during the Napoleonic wars, who died in 1903. I shall be doing my best to get it published, but I know that is difficult, and I know from past experience that publishers keep your work for ages before they reject it. I am 73 now and have no time to waste!

You may use my letter in any way you think fit, and I wish you well with what looks like a very long period of hard work.

Yours sincerely,

Letter 37

15 May 1995

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska

After careful consideration, I have decided not to continue with assisting in your research on adoption. I would be grateful, therefore, if you would not use my name.

However, I would like to wish you every success with your project.

Yours sincerely

Letter 38

24 April 1995

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska

I refer to your letter in the Evening Telegraph, Dundee on 17 April regarding adoption. My mother was adopted around 1918 but sadly she died in 1975.

If you are interested I can give you some information regarding her adoption, photocopies of the papers her mother signed plus other relevant information.

Yours sincerely

Letter 39

Dear Audrey,

I have enclosed a copy of the adoptive agreement and the Birth Certificate plus all that I can tell you about the adoption. When I see the adoption agreement I feel sad for the mother having had to give up a child that she has looked after for eighteen months.

Actually I don't think I would have replied to your request in the paper had your address been anywhere else, it was the fact it was Derbyshire that attracted me. Also my grandfather was born and bred in Manchester but my grandmother was from Kirkaldy – sorry useless information.

By-the-way I don't mind names being used as all those concerned are now dead.

All the best with your thesis.

Yours sincerely

Letter 40

18.5.95

Dear Audrey

I have photocopied some other letters I found – I don't know if they are of any use or not. Sorry about the smudging it's on the original, note the fee of one guinea! By the way you don't need to acknowledge the receipt of the enclosed – save a little on postage.

Yours sincerely

Letter 41

26/4/95

Dear Madam

With regard to your advert in the "Edinburgh Evening News". I was "adopted" privately. I was born on August 4th 1921 but I was never told, till after my Father died, in 1961. My adopted Mother said my father was my but I was never told, till after my Father died, in 1961. My adopted Mother said my father was my real father and my natural mother was some-one he had an affair. On my birth certificate my natural mother name was Dorothy Wilson (nurse) and I was born in the Old Simpson Maternity Hospital, Lauriston Street, Edinburgh – which does exist now.

As I say, I always assumed my Father "Alexander McKenzie", date of birth 6/6/1891, and his wife "Elizabeth Muir" (maiden name), born 19 May 1892, died 11 Oct 1918, were my real parents and nobody has told me otherwise. I would like to know if I could get information about my real mother's family.

Just write if you need any more information.

Yours sincerely

Letter 42

17/5/95

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska

Thanks for your letter. I am sorry, I don't have any more details about my adoption, but I give you permission to use my name in the appendix for your thesis.

Best of luck for the future.

Yours Faithfully

Letter 43

7 May 1995

Dear Ms Evans,

My father read with interest your letter in Edinburgh's Evening News April 22nd, as that is exactly the position he was in. Born in 1918, he was "adopted" at a few months old. I am sure you will understand that although he is interested in your work, he is nevertheless hesitant about putting in writing information which he has kept fairly secret for many years. The knock-on effect of his finding out, by accident, as a teenager, was appalling and has left permanent emotional scarring.

If you would like to contact myself, I'll see what I can do for you. I cannot imagine what you need the information for, but if we can help, we shall do so. Have put my phone number at the top, or else please write. My parents live in Edinburgh also and I see them every day, so should be able to give you information quite quickly.

Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Letter 44

12.6.95

Dear Mrs. Cieslakowska,

Thank you for your recent letter; I have just looked at the date and honestly cannot believe I have had it some 5 weeks now, meaning to reply every day!

I regret to say that we have no papers whatsoever relating to the adoption. It was a verbal agreement, from what I can gather, although Dad seems adamant that money changed hands – this seems to have been concluded by him early in life, through snippets of conversation.

We have no objection to inclusion of my letter but would appreciate your deleting my father's name. I know all this sounds utterly ridiculous, and in any case, what should it matter at this point in the 20th century; but it clearly matters to him.

I truly am sorry that I don't think we can be of further help – if all your replies are so lacking in documentation, yours is certainly going to be a heavy task. But equally, if there is information that you think I can give, do let me have specific questions and we'll take it from there.

I wish you every success in your venture.

Yours sincerely,

Passing thought: altho' there were no adoption papers, Dad's birth lines were changed to the name he now has and has always been known as: The Baptism notification – 3rd May 1919 (he was born 3.6.18), showed his adopted name. My mother had a formal amendment made to his birth lines in 1957 because of the distress the original lines continued to cause him. Apparently when he was adopted, altho' the name changed to, this was regarded as only the forenames and on the lines (altho' never in usage), the original surname remained. We had to have it changed yet again 18 months ago when, by accident, we discovered that still the surname was there, altho' my parents believed that time that it had been altered – which, in fact, it had, but not fully; however, we drew a blank at Register House in E'burgh, as they could find no further document either.

Letter 45

2 April 1995

Dear Audrey

I was most interested to read your letter to the Evening Echo regarding adoptions pre-1926, although I probably do not qualify having been adopted in 1950! However I felt you might be interested in my story.

I actually never was told, but found out by literally taking the bull by the horns when I was 40! I told my 'mother' I needed a passport having lost mine and it was necessary to know my area of birth. The whole story came out then, and more or less confirmed what I had felt for years.

I was actually the result of a relationship between a G.I. and my 'birth' mother in 1944. She was already married, the GI went off to war, her husband returned, none too pleased to find a 6 month old baby installed in his home, having been away for 2½ years! Anyway the upshot was, my 'mother' was given a choice, put me in a home and keep her husband or keep me and loose him. I was packed off to a Childrens Home and after 3½ years put up for adoption. In the meantime, my future 'adoptive' mother was having problems as her husband had an affair during the war and that had resulted in a little girl, born in 1945, the same year as myself. Iris, the mother of the little

girl, refused to let my adoptive mother take the child. I think the 'wronged' wife felt that if she got the baby she would get to keep her husband as well. She was always terrified of losing him. Apparently Iris and my adoptive father set up home for a while post-war with the baby, but had such a fight on their hands. My adoptive mother had an acquaintance, a local lady who was involved on various committees etc, and Ruby (my adoptive mother) approached her to see if she knew of a little girl of the same age, colouring etc as Iris' baby that was up for adoption. Well, Mrs Legh obviously had connections with local children's homes and found I had been put up for adoption. Our ages were very similar, my birthday April, and Iris' baby was June. We were the same colouring also. I was brought to stay at Ruby's home, on and off for a year while Ruby worked on her husband. Eventually Iris went back to Wales with her baby, Ruby's husband moved back home and I was passed off as Iris' child! I wasn't actually adopted until I was 5 as the Social Services of that day insisted a decision was made by Ruby whether to keep me or not. I must admit it was not a happy home that I lived in, and there was deep resentment on my 'father's' side. There was no affection, and I was always sent 'to my room' if 'family business' was being discussed. Obviously over the years I had my suspicions but was never able to find anything out. My adoptive parents were into their late 40's when I had been adopted. I found out quite by accident about Iris's daughter, and thought she was probably a half sister, the result of an indiscretion by my 'father' who had several affairs that I know of. My decision to leave home as soon

as I was able was greeted by threats of suicide by Ruby so I stayed at home until it got so unbearable I got married at 23 just to get away. My 'father' left within 2 months and set up home with Iris, and Ruby became a bitter old woman. She is still alive but refused to discuss the past, only to say my real mother was a 'whore'.

I did manage to contact my birth mother but she felt that it would be too much of a shock to her children that she had after me, so I have respected her wishes. I doubt if I shall ever manage to trace my 'birth' father as again I cannot get her to discuss it. Perhaps some things are better left alone. I had better close now, maybe I have written enough. I do hope you found my story of some interest.

Best wishes

Letter 46

29.5.1995

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska,

I read your request in the 'J.C.'. I was adopted before 1925, and I have documents to prove this. Before I get more involved I would like to know what you are researching.

Yours sincerely

Letter 47

25-5-1995

Dear Friend,

Reading your letter in Home & Family, I am a MU enrolling members and am sending you details of my adoption. I am now seventy, have a good husband, two lovely sons, one married with a dear wife and two tinies (a real joy) the younger son has a reliable girlfriend, sadly our daughter was killed instantly on her motor-bike at 25 in 1987 she worked at a youth hostel.

I was born March 15th 1925 Streatham, London to a nurse and I was vaguely told “they” were at University College Hospital”. I was adopted by, Mum, who was then 50, a spinster of independent means. She had adopted a boy when a few weeks old born April 1918 (he has never bothered about his background) and given us her grand-parents name We are still close and have been always as brother and sister, he lives near Canterbury, few knew we were not related! From a few years old I knew my friends all had Daddies, later I was told I was “chosen”, my parents were dead – and never spoken of. Of course this was late 20s and it was a disgrace.

I was brought up in this old cottage still with a huge garden and our elder son living in the Old Farmhouse, with a strong Christian faith which has upheld me, and a love of gardening in which our children have joined.

When mum died in 1954 I joined the WRAC/TA with much difficulty I only had a Baptisimal card and copy of my entry 5.12.1936 in the Adopted Childrens Register, a nobody! Who were my parents?

In 1975 the Childrens Act section 26 came in and in Dec 1976 I obtained a copy of my birth certificate born to, Hospital nurse of South Luffenham, Rutland at 54 Leigham Court Rd, Streatham ".....", and at 51 I at last knew who I was, but have made enquiries and got no further. Replies like, too long ago, many records destroyed by bombing! And I felt resigned to wait and meet in heaven.

I went to the National Children Adoption Ass in Knightsbridge early in 1977 (they closed soon after) they sent me a copy of the Indenture between Miss of Sundridge, Gervis Rd East, Bournemouth and Miss – 6.8.1925. A long indenture speaking of the mother of "an illegitimate child" known as (I feel like a piece of furniture or goods!) How lives have changes, but it is interesting reading, legally binding and witnessed.

At times I have longed to meet my own mother and at others feel I perhaps should not try?

Thank you for your research, I shall be interested in your reply.

Yours sincerely

Letter 48

2.7.1995

Dear Audrey,

Thank you for your letter which was awaiting me at Mary's when I also returned from "holidays", my husband works for a security firm and sometimes I go too.

If it is of use to you, you may use my "history" in the Appendix to your thesis but I wish names to be deleted.

If it would interest you I will photocopy the agreement I have? I go to Germany to-night for 18 days, my husband is returning to his home-town of Dillenburg in Hessen for a school reunion and we are visiting his relations, many I have never met, we were married here in 1958 and always lived in Margate (in the cottage I was brought up in!)

Your research work must be most interesting also being a Senior Lecturer before you retired.

When I answered your letter in the Mothers Union Home and Family, I hoped it might lead me to finding out more about my mother, but I realize this was not your object – however I am pleased to be of any help to you.

Mary and I have been close friends since we were 6 and 7 years of age.

We spent some weeks at Ogston Hall near Ogston Water a few years ago – A delightful area which was unknown to us, we had a little flat high up near the clock! And my husband enjoyed his work there.

Yours sincerely

Letter 49

Dear Mrs Cieslakowska,

Sorry I have taken so long to write to you.

I am enclosing a copy of my father's Birth Certificate which looks pretty normal, but actually my Grandparents lived in Newcastle-upon Tyne and the mother's name on the Birth Certificate was not my Grandmother.

Apparently my Grandparents could not have children but there were Agencies through which a man could have his name entered on the Birth Certificate of a child born to an unmarried mother, and she had to enter her surname as they same as his even though they were not married!

I only found this out 2 years ago when I was questioning my father with a view to tracing my ancestors. I went to Sowerby to make enquiries but no-one seemed to know anything about anyone called Scollay and the house had been pulled down. I think it must have been a home where unmarried mothers could have their babies.

I also put a notice in the Northern Echo for anyone who knew, or had, ancestors named 'SCOLLAY'. Apparently it is a common name in the Hebrides.

Hope this is some help in your research.

Yours sincerely

Sorry I can't be more help but this is all the information Dad had and I got no replies from Northern Echo!

Letter 50

20th June 1995

Dear Audrey,

I am writing to you in response to your letter in Home and Family (June – Aug 1995). I am a member of the M.U. at St. Dorothea's Gilnakirk, which is on the outskirts of Belfast, Northern Ireland.

My mother (Mrs. Nora McCready) is now 79 years old (born 4th May 1915) and when she was 14 years old and about to start work her mother gave her her birth certificate. It was then that she learned that she was adopted and that her name was Nora Mooney – not Seatan as she had always believed. Mum knows very little about her background but from time to time she has talked about how she would like to know something about her birth mother and if she had any brothers or sisters. Up until now we have made no serious attempt to trace her family, as we have been told this could prove rather expensive.

However, the little information we have may be of use to you in your research. We have a copy of mum's birth certificate, baptism certificate and solicitors letter to Hugh Seatan. Mother is still well and active – she and Dad will hopefully celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary in September this year. I feel that she would still like to know about her background – she tells us that when she was young

people did not speak openly about adoption, as they do now – in fact she only told us about her adoption when we were almost grown-up. Is it too late to find out about her background now?

I have copies of the documents I have mentioned. If they would be useful in your research let me know.

Yours sincerely

Letter 51

18 June 1995

Dear Ms Cieslakowska-Evans

I am writing in answer to your letter in the Home and Family dated June-August 1995, concerning early adoptions.

I was adopted, although not legally, at the end of 1923 and though I would write to you explaining the series of events surrounding this.

My name is Tegwydd Newton (Peggy), nee Cogbill. I was born on November 1st 1923 at Graig Melyn, Llanharan, Nr Cardiff. My mother's name was Louisa and my father Fredrick Richard. Two weeks after I was born my mother died of septicaemia and was youngest of six children, Sydney, David, Lloyd George, Enid, Agnes and Eunice and I was christened over my mother's coffin. My mother's sister Emily had come to look after the family, but could not look after a three old baby as well so my father's sister Sarah and her husband George Henry Hartnell, took me, wrapped in a shawl, on the train back to their home in Cardiff. They walked a mile, carrying me in their arms, to the rail station and then at least another mile to take me to their home at 29 Blossie Road, Llandaff North, Cardiff, where I grew up.

I was never legally adopted as my Aunt Sarah (mother) wanted me to know my real family, but to me my cousins Thelma Sarah and Sybil Mary Hartnell were to me the only sisters I knew for years, so I grew up regarding them as my real sisters. I do remember being taken once on the train to visit my family at Llanharan and two of my brothers came to see me occasionally. My other brother was away in the Regular Army and then the War and my sisters later married and had their own families. When I eventually married Walter George Newton and we had a car I was able to visit them and we visited about once a year.

I had a very good upbringing and did not ever feel adopted and I grew to love them all as if I was born to them. I do remember when I went to Canton High School, the difference in name caused a few problems as I called Sybil my sister yet our surnames were different. This was very rare in those days, not like today.

My childhood was very happy and I would advise anyone to adopt a child as you grow to love the family you are brought up with. My adopted family gave me all the love and support I needed as a child and my children, four boys and a girl, always regard them as grandparents as they did not know anyone else.

When my 'adopted' parents became elderly and infirm, my eldest sister Thelma cared for them in their home as, although married, she

did not have any children whereas Sybil and myself both had large families. When they died they did leave all their inheritance to Thelma with just a nominal £100 to Sybil and myself but as Thelma had cared for them we understood this. It was only when Thelma later died that I ever felt as if I was not a true part of the family, as Thelma left two thirds to Sybil and only one third to me as I was the cousin. This could have caused bad feeling between Sybil and myself but I have never attached any importance to money. I have always put my trust in the Lord Jesus and he has looked after me. I have remained good friends with my sister but at the time I was very hurt to think they only thought of me as a cousin as my Mum and Dad never favoured them over me when they were alive. It was never mentioned in the house that I was adopted although I was always brought up to know the circumstances of my childhood. I never felt like an outsider.

There was never a legal arrangement made by my Aunt and Uncle (Mum and Dad to me) received seven and six per week orphan's pension for me until I left school at the age of seventeen years. I still remained home until my marriage in 1946.

I do hope this is of some use to you in your research.

Yours sincerely

Letter 52

June 19th 1995

Dear ms Cieslakowska-Evans,

Pre-1926 adoptions. (Home and Family)

My late mother was adopted at the age of 4 – about 1906. Her aunt, who may in fact have been her mother, was a surgical nurse at Bell and Croydons, the fashionable Wimpole St. chemists. One of her duties was to fit specialist corsets and one of her customers was a wealthy childless woman whose doctor had recommended she adopt a child as a remedy for her depression following an unsuccessful marriage.

There were no formal papers and my adoptive grandmother was paranoid about my mother's biological family claiming her earning power when she became 14 or so. Therefore, although my mother remembers presents and letters these soon stopped especially when they moved abroad in an ever more frantic search for health and happiness.

My mother was also told she was illegitimate and should be grateful not to be in an orphanage. She came, over the years, to feel very kindly about orphanages and to wish she were in one! She had a perfectly normal birth certificate with a named father and no indication whatsoever of illegitimacy. A fact brought to light by a curate at the time of her confirmation. Neither she nor anyone else

however, have ever been able to find a marriage certificate for her parents – who may have been married abroad as her father was supposed to be an importer of fancy goods from the continent.

At the time of my adoptive grandmother's death she left a moderate sum to "my daughter" but did not name my mother. She had, in the meantime legally adopted a boy who eventually was able to claim all of her estate – though I think he made a "without prejudice" allowance to my mother.

Why my mother was 4 before she was adopted was always a puzzle. Her mother "had a chance to go to Canada" – a new husband who did not want a ready made daughter? A better job? Also my mother always remembered very warmly an "old lady" who used to cuddle her. A grandmother whose death made it necessary to make other plans? It is all quite a mystery but there was certainly no legal papers of any kind and apparently no difficulty at all in a woman who must even then have displayed neurotic symptoms, "adopting" a very young child.

Yours sincerely,

Letter 53

July 6 1995

Dear Audrey,

Re your letter on pre 1926 adoptions in Home and Family.

I was born on March 13 1924 to a Miss Jane Booth, in what was then the Old Workhouse. This much I found out in 1978 when I wrote to Access to British Records. I then obtained a copy of my original Birth Cert, and found out I was registered as a female called Sylvia.

At the age of 1 mth I was adopted into a wonderful Christian Home, and my parents were Thomas Arthur and Fanny Victoria Williams. I was baptised at the age of 2 mths, and given the name Freda.

Life went on very happily, but my 11th birthday was very special.

Years passed, and I was quite oblivious to the fact I was adopted. I was accepted by cousins aunts and doting uncles. Then out of the blue some person informed me that of course my beloved parents were not really mine. By then I was 15 or 16. This didn't bother me, but now I know why my birth cert was always sent and never given to me. Ironing one day I said Mum are you really my mother because some-one said you were not. There was a terrible silence, and at last I was told. I assured my dear mother that nothing would change and I was always hers. After that Mothering gifts became more precious and I tryed much harder to be worthy of such

wonderful people. Mam then told me that on my 11th Birthday my adoption became legal and no one could claim me back. This came about because Mother's Brother was a J.P. and ensured ever-thing possible was done.

After my parents died, I did try to find out who I really was, but I am now 71 with a wonderful husband, six grown up children, and very dear grandchildren.

So. I am me. Thanks to a Christian upbringing and very much love.

Yours sincerely

Letter 54

July 26 1995

Dear Audrey

Thank you so much for your letter of 13 July.

Of course you may use any information I have given. (names included.)

I have in front of me my original birth cert and this is the information on it.

1. When and where born:

Thirteenth March 1924

Ty Boyn

Tredegar

2. Name if any:

Sylvia

3. Sex:

Girl

4. Name or surname of Father:

5. Name surname and maiden surname of Mother:

Jane Booth Domestic Servant

6. Signature of
 Residence of Informant
 W.H.G Pallin
 Occupier
 Ty Boyn
 Tredegar

Ty Boyn is Welsh for workhouse. The other information is also in Welsh.

The only give away to my back ground I'm afraid are my hands. Awful nails etc. But I often wonder who was my father, because although I say it myself I inherited some brains and excelled at Latin while at School. Also I love cooking and fine needle work. My children with exception of 2 also follow these trends.

My children are not aware of my origins and I do not intent to enlighten them.

Hope the extra snippets will help you.

Good luck in all you do, and I also love the classics and more modern works i.e. Catherine Cookson, C.L. Skelton and Josephine Cox.

Very very best wishes,

P.S. Sorry for the delay in answering your letter but my daughter came for a holiday from Hong Kong.

Letter 55

7.8.95

Dear Audrey C-E,

I was very interested to see your letter in the Friend asking for information etc. on adoption between 1926 and '43 in this country. I was about to write to you (took down your address) at that time, referring to the Horsburgh Committee and Report, but realised that if it had anything in it relevant to your studies you would already know about it! (Far more thoro?!) I have myself been writing a history of the York Adoption Society for the last 20 years (I was a member from '48 to '76) and am (incidentally) looking for a publisher. I have found myself grappling with the social changes of this century and the enormous changes in attitude – particularly in social work (voluntary and statutory and their relationship) and trying to understand what is happening – to explain some of the catastrophes in the adoption field.

My writing covers the 30 years ending in '74 but I have been in touch with the BAAF and its predecessors and some older social service people throughout. I feel that in some respects totally out-of-date, but have nevertheless learned a good deal and maintained a keen interest in developments (now much more hopeful)!

If you are interested, I should be very glad to hear from you. If not (or too busy!) – ignore this!

Yours sincerely

Letter 56

24th Nov. 1995

Dear Mrs. Cieslakowska-Evans,

It started to write to you on the 3rd July after reading your letter in the Home and Family June – August magazine. I had different thoughts about it, I did not want to upset anyone, but it has been on my mind so I am rewriting this.

I am interested but only because I have 2 adopted children, my late husband and I chose them when they were 6 weeks old. I get very hurt inside when I keep reading about how these children or grown-ups now can find their natural mothers etc. Did the person who started all this really go into it thoroughly? I wonder.

I have been lucky I have never had any 'wanting to find their natural mother' and they both now have their own lovely families, but I always have, inside me, sadness when their birthdays are here for their 'natural' mothers.

Why do people have to keep on about adoption, can't they realise how hurtful it can be, quite dangerous in some cases. When one leaves Court after the official papers are signed etc. they are your children. It can be dangerous delving into the past, it involves so many people.

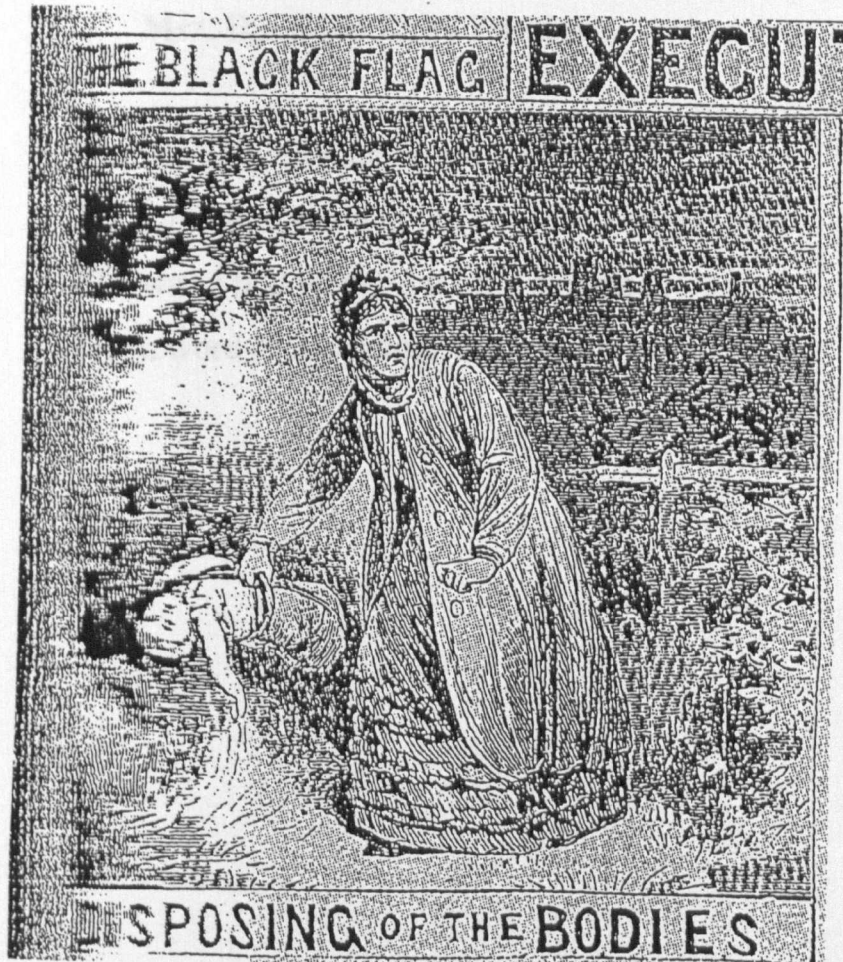
Why, please may I ask? are you researching?

Yours sincerely

Appendix Two

Appendices to Chapters One to Five

Appendices: Chapter One



Appendix 1. Execution of Margaret Waters, *Illustrated Police News*, 15th October, 1870, Courtesy British Library.

Mrs. Dyer, the Baby Farmer

The old baby farmer 'as been executed,
It's quite time she was put out of the way,
She was a bad woman, it isn't disputed,
Not a word in her favour can anyone say.

Appendix 2. Ditty, 'Mrs. Dyer, the Baby Farmer', circa 1896.
Pinchbeck, I. and Hewitt, M. *Children in English Society*, (1969;
Toronto: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1973 edn.), vol.ii, p.597.

When my mother died I was very young
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry 'weep, 'weep, 'weep, 'weep',
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little John Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved; so I said
'Hush Tom ! never mind it, for when your head's bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair'.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to work,
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty they need fear no harm.

Appendix 3. Blake, W. Extract from 'The Chimney Sweeper', *Oxford Library of English Poetry*, Wain, J. ed., (London: Guild Publishing, 1986), pp.215-216.



Captain Coram and a foundling
From an old engraving, 1741

Appendix 4. **Captain Coram and a foundling**, unattributed engraving, 1741. McClure, R.K., *Coram's Children*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981), pp.4-5.



From: William G. Hall, *The Foundling Hospital, London, 1739-1858*, 174. Oil on canvas, the original source of the surviving *Michael and Susan* by...

Appendix 7. **The Foundling Restored to its Mother**, 1858. Oil painting, Emma Brownlow King. Postcard from Thomas Coram Foundation for Children, London. Notice the original receipt for the child lies discarded on the floor. Emma Brownlow King's father had himself been a foundling, admitted in 1800, and went on to become Clerk to the Governors, a position of considerable importance. For further reading and illustrations see Lambourne, L., *Victorian Painting*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1999).

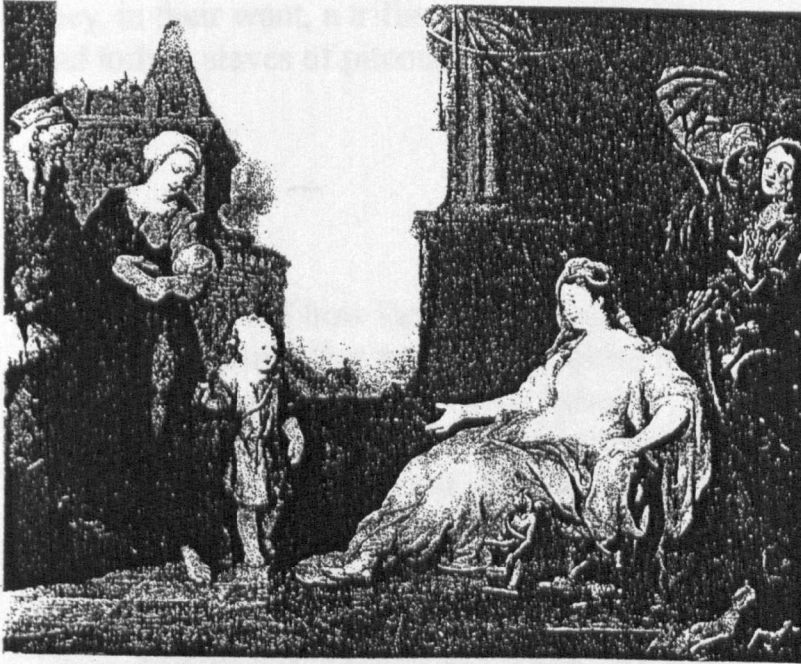


FIG. 1. William Hogarth, *Moses Brought before Pharaoh's Daughter*, 1746. Oil on canvas, 172 × 203.3 cm. Courtesy of the Foundling Museum and Coram Family.

Appendix 8. **Moses Brought before Pharaoh's Daughter**, 1746. Oil painting, William Hogarth. Taken from '*Nineteenth Century Literature*', vol. 56, No.3, p.299.

Peter had heard there were in London, then,
 Still have they being! Workhouse clearing-men
 Who, undisturbed by feelings just or kind,
 Would Parish boys to needy tradesmen bind:
 They, in their want, a trifling sum would take
 And toiling slaves of piteous Orphans make

But none inquired how Peter used the rope,
 Or what the bruise that made the stripling stoop;
 None could the ridges on his back behold,
 None sought him shivering in the winter's cold.
 Pinn'd, beaten, cold, pinch'd, threatened and abused,
 His efforts punish'd and his food refused
 Awake tormented, soon aroused from sleep,
 Struck if he wept, and yet compell'd to weep,
 The trembling boy dropp'd down and strove to pray
 Received a blow and trembling turn'd away,
 Or sobbed and hid his piteous face; while he,
 The savage master, grinn'd in horrid glee.

‘For oh’, say the children, ‘we are weary,
 And we cannot run or leap;
 If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
 To drop down in them and sleep’.

For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
 Through the coal-dark, underground,
 Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
 In the factories, round and round.

And, all day, the iron wheels are droning,
 And sometimes we could pray,
 ‘O, ye wheels’, (breaking out in a mad moaning),
 ‘Stop! Be silent for today!’.

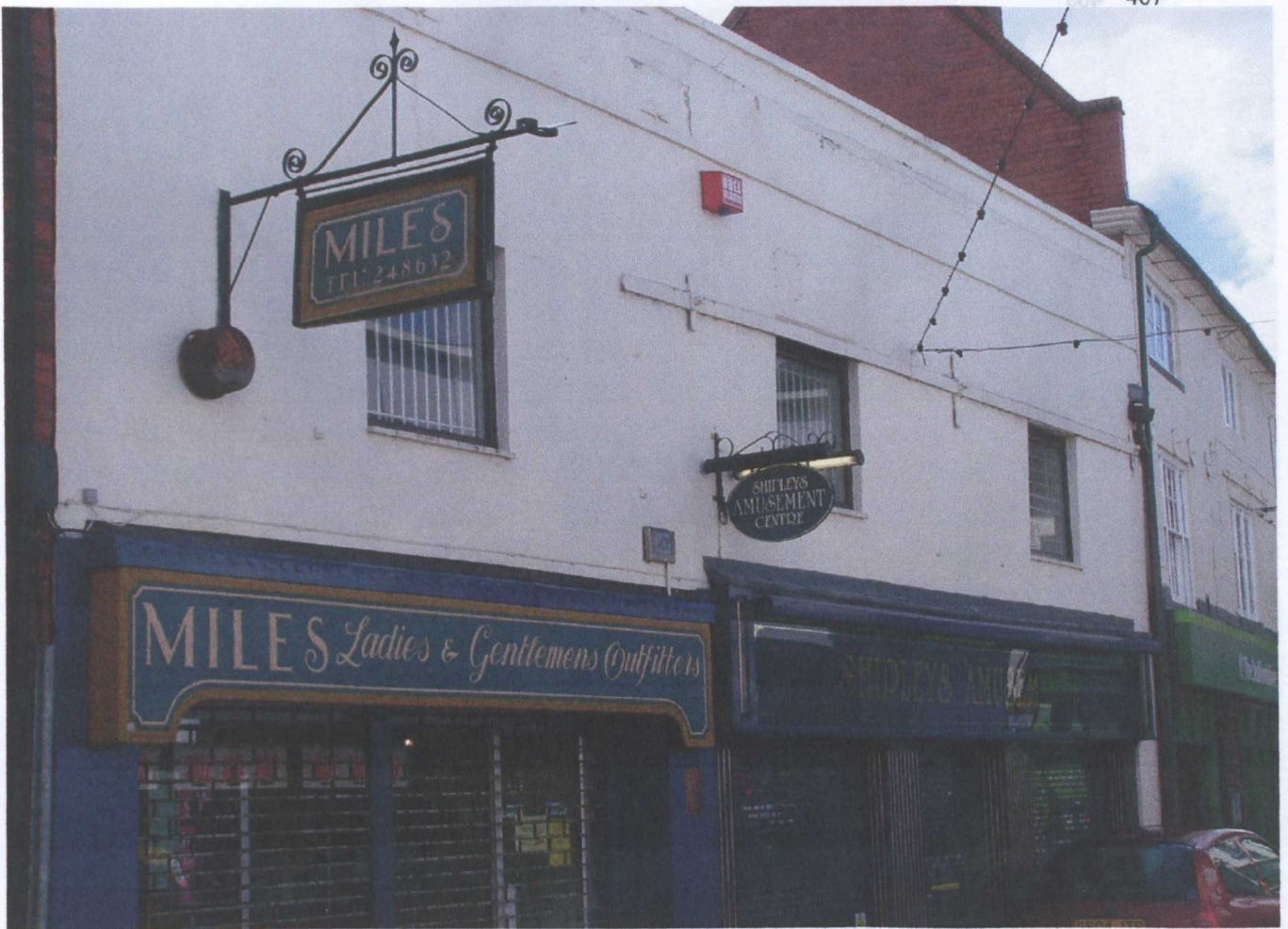
Appendix 10. Extract from Barrett Browning, E. ‘The Cry of the Children’, *Oxford Library of English Poetry*, Wain, J., ed., (London: Guild Publishing, 1986), vol. 3, pp. 51-55.



Appendix 11. Kingsley, C., *The Water Babies*, 1863. This illustration appeared in the first and second editions.



Appendix 12. Victorian Print of Child Sweep, unattributed. Hopkirk, M., *Nobody Wanted Sam*, (London: Murray, 1949), p.74.



Appendix 14. The house where Stretton was born, now a gentlemen's outfitters and next to it an amusement arcade. Photograph taken by thesis writer, 2005.



Appendix 15. The church at Church Stretton. Inside is a stained glass window of a little girl in a green cape. It is a representation of the fictional Jessica. Photograph taken by thesis writer, 2003.

Letter appearing in "The Times", dated Jan. 8th 1884.

"Few people have any idea of the extent of active cruelty among our degraded and criminal classes. Some years ago, the Rector of Spitalfields stated in Exeter Hall, that hundreds of children in his parish were systematically ill-treated and starved for begging purposes. Cases of flagrant and excessive cruelty were brought before the Magistrates, but hundreds of others a little less malevolent never came to the light of the public courts. In Liverpool a society for the prevention of cruelty to children has been recently started, and in the report of one month's work gives 86 cases in which children have been taken under the protection of the society. In none of these cases, however, did the committee feel it necessary to resort to legal proceedings, firm and kind remonstrance, with the parents and guardians having prevailed. Subsequent visits are made to the dwellings of these children, and they are not left to fall out of sight. Prevention is better than punishment, and the knowledge that such a society exists will help passionate and brutal persons to control their violent tempers and the children thus protected from their tyranny will not grow up brutalised or enfeebled in mind or body.

The need for a national society of this kind is very great, and will become greater; for the growing love of liberty developing in the girls of the lower classes, which gives them a distaste for domestic service with its distraining and refining influences tends also to an increasing roughness and coarseness of manner which will unfit them for becoming kind, patient and gentle mothers of the future.

Such a national society would quickly enlist the sympathies and co-operation of school board teachers, who of all classes are brought more closely in contact with poor children, and who, scattered throughout the land, would soon form a corps of national guardians of neglected and oppressed little ones. Let there be a society to take up, investigate, and act upon any case, and let it be widely known when and how the powers of the society can be applied on being appealed to, and a vast proportion of the tyranny oppression and neglect, suffered by helpless children would be prevented. I trust that some of your philanthropic and influential readers who possess the gift of organisation, may plan out and set on foot such a society, and deliver us as a nation from the curse and crime, the shame and sin, of neglected and oppressed childhood.

Lansdowne Road,
Notting Hill. (London).
Januzry 7th. (1884).

Faithfully Yours
(Sd.) HESBA STRETTON

Appendix 16. Letter from Hesba Stretton to 'The Times', 8th January,
1884.

R. K. Cozart & Children, Yale University Press, 1987, p. 84
Appendix 17. Photos received with the founding children, Macton.

N. 61.

May 8th
 Hatton-Garden, April 8. 1741 at 9 — o'clock

Letter G. a Female Child about 2 months old.

Marks and Cloathing of the Child.

Cap holland wth ruffled edging wth a red ribbon
 Biggin plain bordered wth plain cambric
~~Forehead-Cloth~~
 Head-Cloth a raged
 Long-Sleeve common
~~Bibb Diaper~~
~~Breast~~
~~Upper Coat~~
~~Particoot~~
~~Bodice Coat~~
~~Berrow~~
 Mantle printed flowered flannel and a green
 Sleeves corded dimity
 Blanket common
~~Neckcloth~~
 Roller common
~~Bed~~
 Waistcoat diaper
 Shirt holland wth cambric ruffles
 Clout raged
 Pilch raged wollen
~~Stockings~~
~~Shoes~~

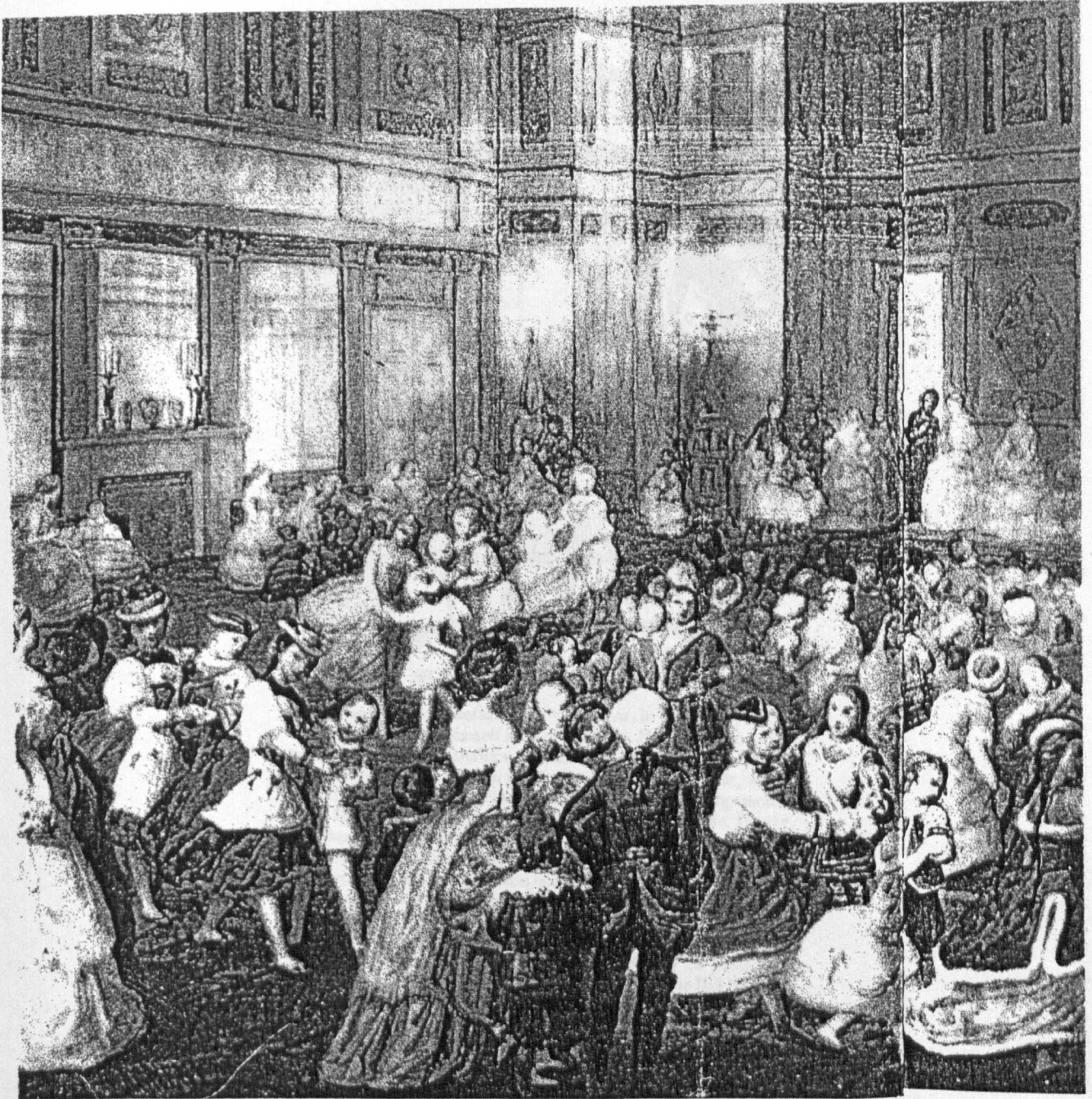
Marks on the Body.

a paper pin on the Head

Appendix 18. Billet describing a child's clothing and identifying marks, 1741. McClure, R.K. *Coram's Children*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981), p.82.

Appendices: Chapter Two

Appendices: Chapter Two



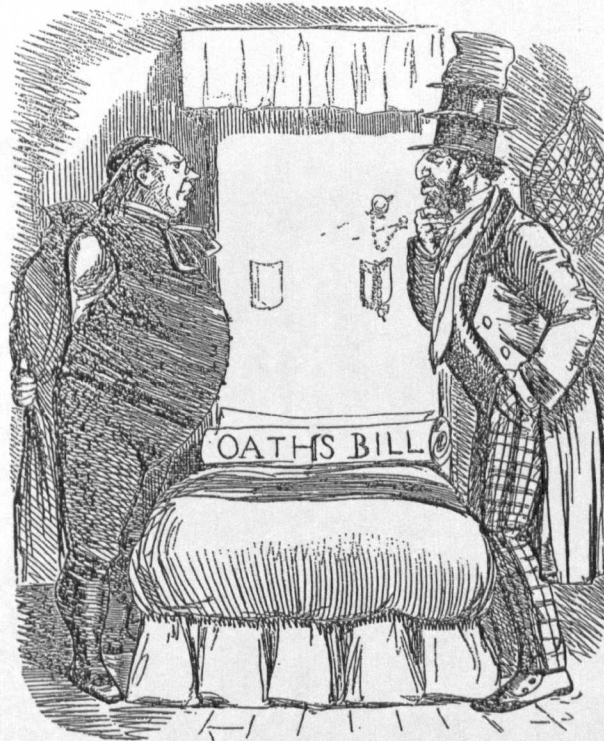
A children's dance at Buckingham Palace in 1859. 'All the juvenile nobility' were invited to the royal parties.

Appendix I. Privileged children at a Children's Ball at Buckingham Palace, 1859, Hulton Picture Library. Hartcup, A., *Children of the Great Country Houses*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982), pp.108-109. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.27



A children's dance at Buckingham Palace in 1859. All the young nobles' were invited to the royal garden.

Appendix I Privileged children at a Children's Hall in Buckingham Palace, 1859, Hulton Picture Library. Harcup, A., *Children of the Great Country Houses*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982), pp. 167-



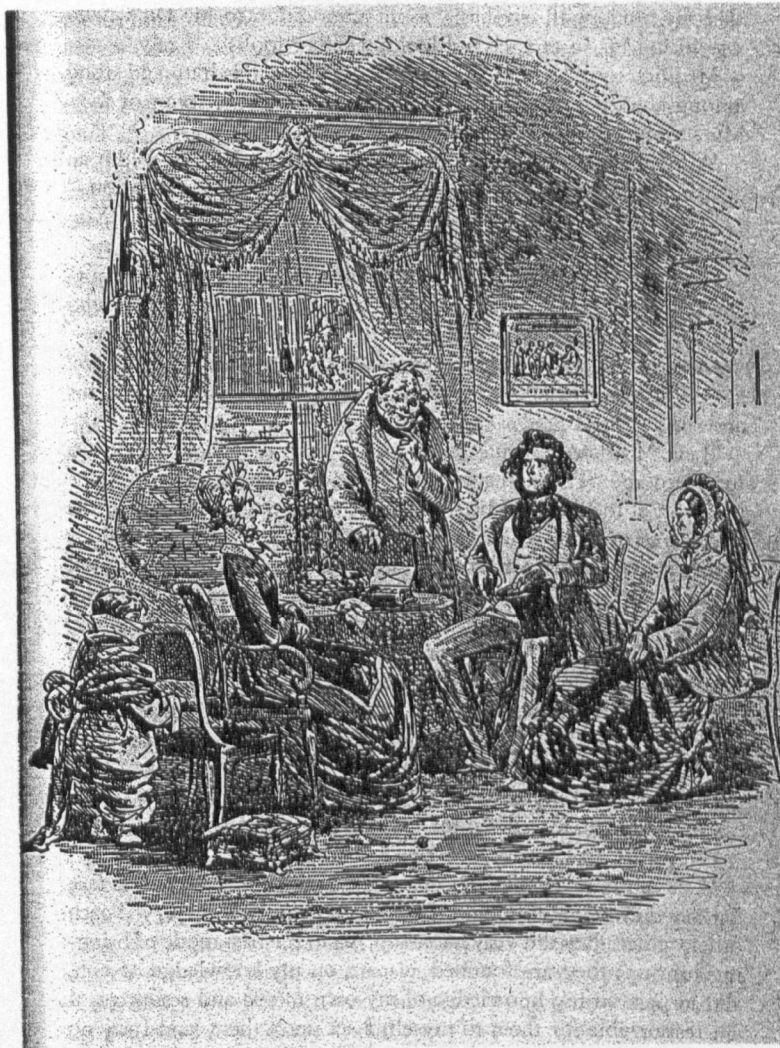
STRANGE BED-FELLOWS!

Opposition, and was defeated, by 341 to 201, in his endeavour to make a Jew declare himself a Christian. *Mr. Punch* has too often protested against the shallow nonsense talked on both sides of the question to make it needful for him to say more than that, while recording the vote, he greatly despises most of the arguments used to promote and to hinder it, and especially the Jaunty Viscount's mode of getting rid of principles by alleging that Parliament's business is with politics, not religion. In life, a man who separates his religion from his politics is excessively likely to separate the theory from the practice of duty, even to the extent of separating his neighbour's pocket-book and pocket. SIR JOHN PAKINGTON, hitherto an opponent of the Jewish claims, made a manly speech, in which he avowed his inability to persist in resisting them. MR. WALPOLE pointed out that if the Bill became law, a Jew could hold office (that of Chancellor for instance)

which a Catholic could not. Now, here is a real grievance, worth LORD CRANWORTH's weight in lead, for the Popish party. What! ISACHAR BEN MOSES may keep the QUEEN's conscience, and be raised to the peerage as BARON PHYLACTERY, and there is no such chance for PATRICK MAC SULLIVAN—no title of ROSARY-CUM-TWIDDLE. Shades of the hundreds of Catholic patriots who have died in their beds, look down upon their children, thus oppressed by the Saxon!

Punch, 27 June 1857.

Appendix 2. Reference to the controversial Oaths Bill, '*Punch*', 27th June, 1857, Cowen A. & Cowen, R., *Victorian Jews Through British Eyes*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.27.



Appendix 3. Illustration by Hablot K. Browne, ('Phiz'), of the battle between Miss Trotwood and the Murdstones, *DC*, p.265.

Appendices: Chapter Three

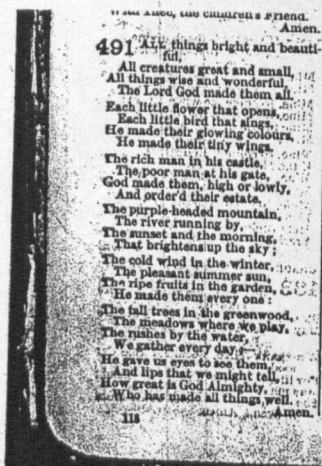


THE HOMELESS POOR.

"AH! WE'RE BADLY OFF—BUT JUST THINK OF THE POOR MIDDLE CLASSES, WHO ARE OBLIGED TO EAT ROAST MUTTON AND BOILED FOWL EVERY DAY!"

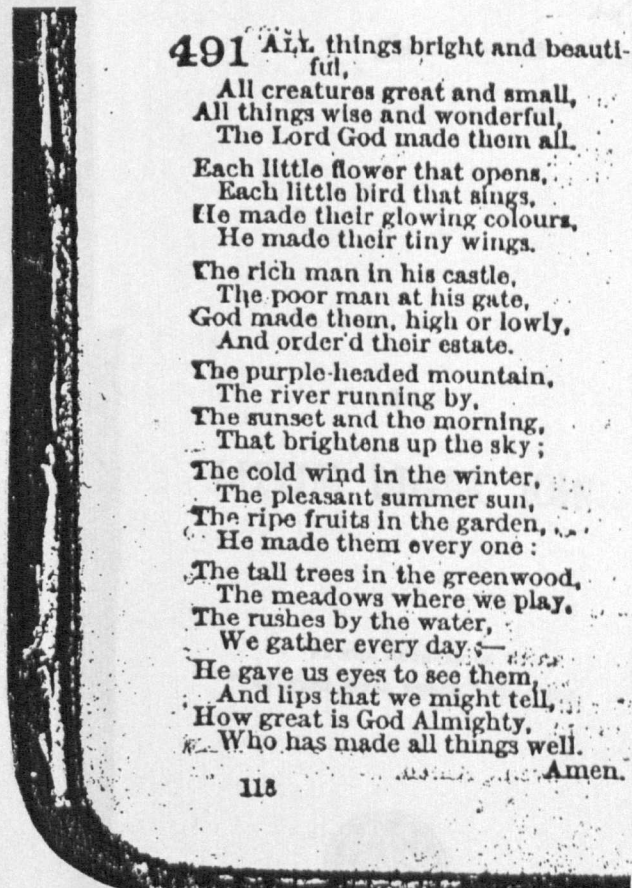
384 From *Punch*, xxxvi (1859), 35.

Appendix 3. '*Punch*', xxxvi, 1859, p.35.



491 All things bright and beauti-
 ful,
 All creatures great and small,
 All things wise and wonderful,
 The Lord God made them all.
 Each little flower that opens,
 Each little bird that sings,
 He made their glowing colours,
 He made their tiny wings.
 The rich man in his castle,
 The poor man at his gate,
 God made them, high or lowly,
 And order'd their estate.
 The purple-headed mountain,
 The river running by,
 The sunset and the morning,
 That brightens up the sky;
 The cold wind in the winter,
 The pleasant summer sun,
 The ripe fruits in the garden,
 He made them every one:
 The tall trees in the greenwood,
 The meadows where we play,
 The rushes by the water,
 We gather every day.
 He gave us eyes to see them,
 And lips that we might tell,
 How great is God Almighty,
 Who has made all things well.
 Amen.

118



491 All things bright and beauti-
 ful,
 All creatures great and small,
 All things wise and wonderful,
 The Lord God made them all.
 Each little flower that opens,
 Each little bird that sings,
 He made their glowing colours,
 He made their tiny wings.
 The rich man in his castle,
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 God made them, high or lowly,
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 The purple-headed mountain,
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 The sunset and the morning,
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 The cold wind in the winter,
 The pleasant summer sun,
 The ripe fruits in the garden,
 He made them every one:
 The tall trees in the greenwood,
 The meadows where we play,
 The rushes by the water,
 We gather every day:—
 He gave us eyes to see them,
 And lips that we might tell,
 How great is God Almighty,
 Who has made all things well.
 Amen.

118

Appendix 4. Mrs. Alexander, Hymn, 'All things bright and beautiful',
 1852. Both versions, the earlier in miniscule. Original nineteenth-
 century prize-book in possession of the present writer, p.118.



*A Birthday
Gift
Thomas Hood
March 24 1866*



THE LITTLE BLACK HEN.

THE
LITTLE BLACK HEN.

BY THE AUTHORS OF
"THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD," ETC., ETC.



LONDON:
FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.,
BEDFORD STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

Appendices 5 and 6. *The Little Black Hen*, London: Frederick Warne, undated. Appendix 5 shows the miniscule print and Appendix 6 the Frontispiece.

HYMNS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

No. 1148. ^(S.S.) Hushed was the Evening Hymn.

"The Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I."—1 SAM. III. 4.

(6.6.6.6.8.8.)

J. D. BURNS.

[By permission of Novello & Co., Ltd.] SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN.

1. Hushed was the ev-'ning hymn, The tem-ple courts were dark; The lamp was burn-ing dim
2. Oh, give me Sam-u-el's ear—The o-pen ear, O Lord! A-live and quick to hear

1. Be-fore the sa-cred ark: When sud-den-ly a voice Di-vine Rang thr-ough the sil-en-ces of the shrine.
2. Each whisper of Thy word; Like him to an-swer at Thy call, And to an-swer Thy first of all.

3. Oh, give me Samuel's heart!—
A lowly heart, that waits
When in Thy house Thou art;
Or watches at Thy gates
By day and night—a heart that still
Moves at the breathing of Thy will.

4. Oh, give me Samuel's mind!
A sweet, unmurm'ring faith,
Obedient and resigned
To Thee in life and death:
That I may read, with childlike eyes,
Truths that are hidden from the wise.

Appendix 7. Sankey, I.P., *Sacred Songs and Solos*, (London: Morgan & Scott, undated), Hymn 1148. Awarded as a prize-book with inscription, 1921, in possession of thesis writer.

You may go to Aldersgate-street,
A kind Reception there you'll meet
Most safely to lie-in.
No one will know my charming Fair,
But you are gone to take the Air,
So return a Maid again.

Because you shan't suspected be
In staining your Virginity,
When that your Month is out,
You to the Foundling House may go
And there may leave the Child you know
And go take t'other bout.

Appendix 8. 'Joyful News to Batchelors [sic] and Maids; Being a Song in Praise of The Fondling [sic] Hospital and the London Hospital, Aldersgate Street, London', circa 1760. McClure, R.K., *Coram's Children*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981), p.109.

THOMAS HOOD

1799-1845

The Song of the Shirt

With fingers weary and worn,
 With eyelids heavy and red,
 A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
 Plying her needle and thread—
 Stitch! stitch! stitch!
 In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
 And still, with a voice of dolorous pitch
 She sang this 'Song of the Shirt!'

'Work! work! work!
 While the cock is crowing aloft!
 And work—work—work,
 Till the stars shine through the roof!

It's O! to be a slave
 Along with the barbarous Turk,
 Where woman has never a soul to save,
 If this is Christian work!

'Work—work—work
 Till the brain begins to swim;
 Work—work—work
 Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
 Seam, and gusset, and band,
 Band, and gusset, and seam,
 Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
 And sew them on in a dream!

'O! Men, with Sisters dear!
 O! Men! with Mothers and Wives!
 It is not linen you're wearing out,
 But human creatures' lives!

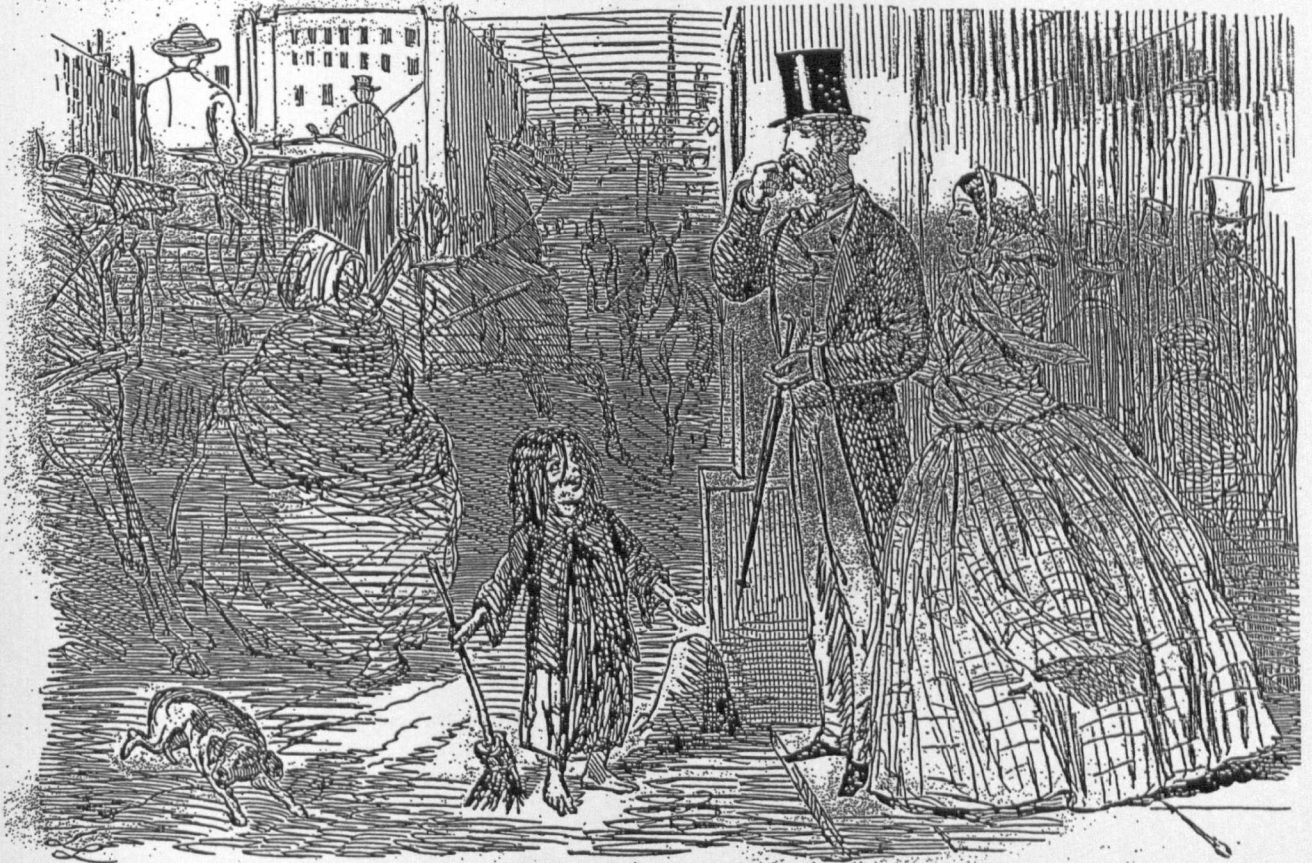
While underneath the eaves
 The brooding swallows sing,
 As if to show me their sunny backs
 And twit me with the spring.

'Oh! but to breathe the breath
 Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
 With the grass above my head,
 And the sky beneath my feet,
 For only one short hour
 To feel as I used to feel,
 Before I knew the woe of want
 And the walk that costs a meal!

'Oh but for one short hour!
 A respite, however brief,
 No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
 But only time for Grief!
 A little weeping would ease my heart,
 But in their briny bed
 My tears must stop, for every drop
 Hinders a needle and thread!'

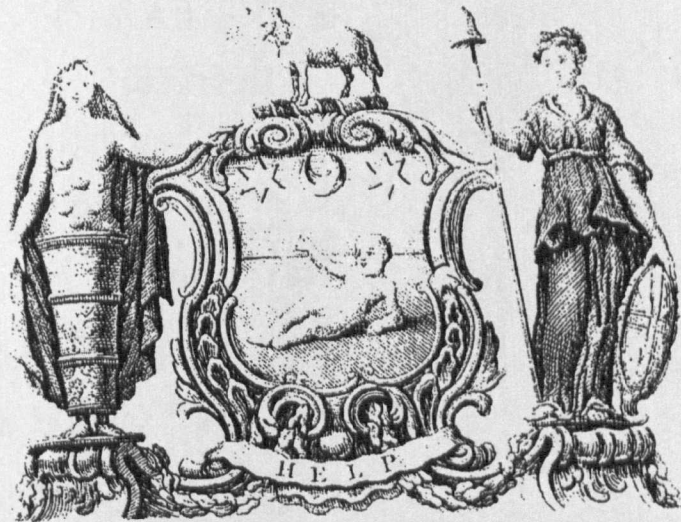
With fingers weary and worn,
 With eyelids heavy and red,
 A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
 Plying her needle and thread—
 Stitch! stitch! stitch!
 In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
 And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,
 Would that its tone could reach the Rich!
 She sang this 'Song of the Shirt!'

FROM THE COLLECTION OF MR. PUNCH.—THIRD SERIES

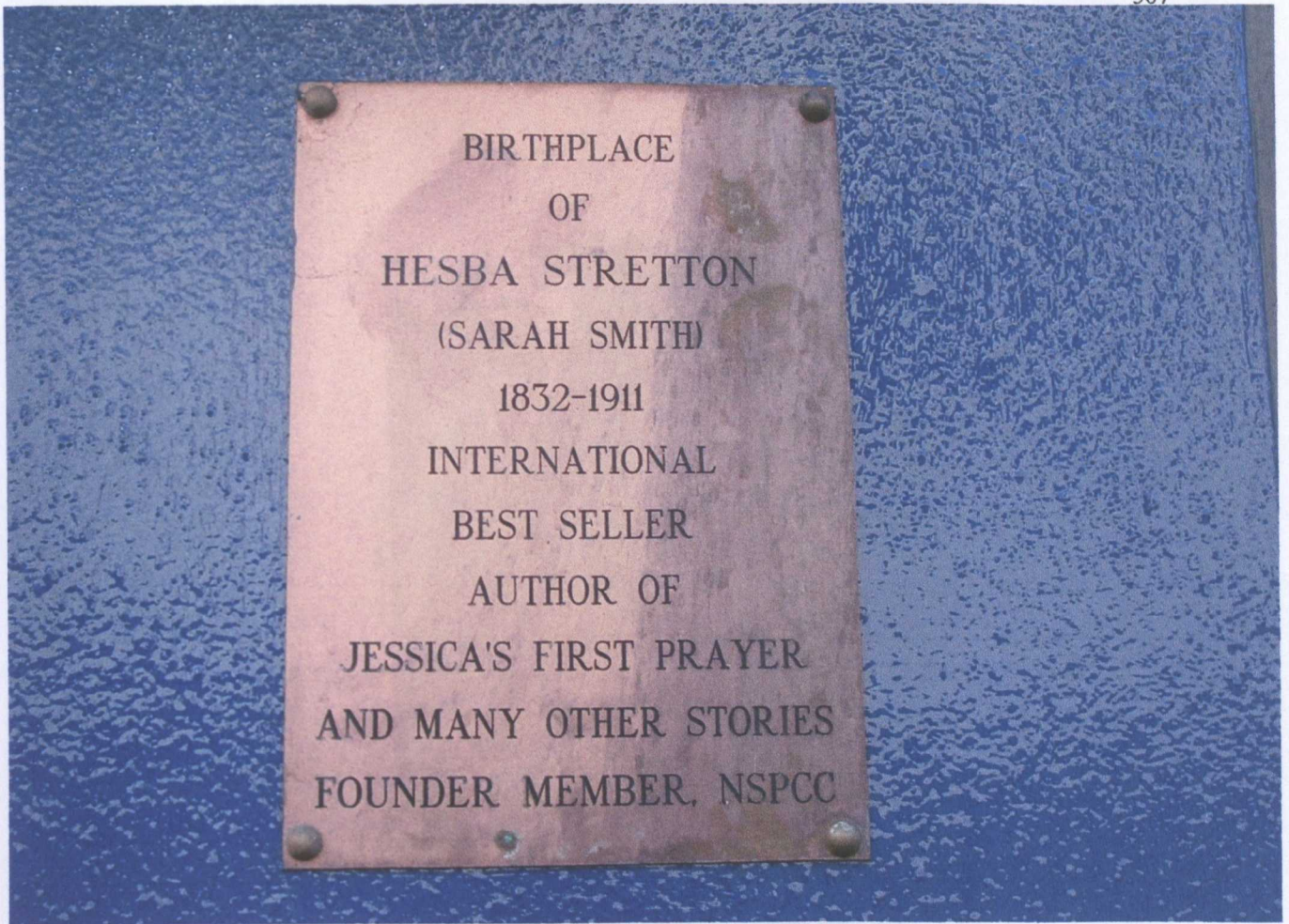


Small Sweeper (to Crimsan Hero). "NOW, CAPTAIN, GIVE US A COPPER, AND I'LL SEE YER SAFE OVER THE CROSSING!"

Appendix 10. A chirpy crossing-sweeper offering to take a Crimean hero safely over the muddy patch. It is, of course, designed to amuse but, in fact, their lot was a hard one as Mayhew, 1851-52 indicates. Leech, J., *John Leech's Pictures of Life and Characters*, (London: Bradbury & Evans, undated edn.), vol.3, p.69.



Appendix 11. The Arms of the Foundling Hospital. Engraving. See Taylor, J.B., ‘“Received a Blank Child”, John Brownlow, Charles Dickens and the London Foundling Hospital’ – Archives and Fictions, 2001, ‘*Nineteenth Century Literature*’, vol. 56, No.3, p.317. Note the lamb representing innocent children supported by a multi-breasted Mother Nature and Britannia representing the State.



THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME
 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
 1872
 By His Grace The Archbishop of Canterbury
 PRAYERS FOR THE YEAR OF THE LORD 1972
 PRAYERS FOR THE YEAR OF THE LORD 1972
 PRAYERS FOR THE YEAR OF THE LORD 1972
 PRAYERS FOR THE YEAR OF THE LORD 1972

Appendix 12. In tribute to her work for children the NSPCC in 1997 placed a plaque on the house in Wellington, Shropshire where she was born. Photograph taken by the present writer.

1872



THE CONSERVATIVE PROGRAMME.

DEPUTATION BELOW, SIR.—WANT TO KNOW THE CONSERVATIVE PROGRAMME."

RT. HON. BEN. DIZ. "EH?—OH!—AH!—YES!—QUITE SO! TELL THEM, MY GOOD ABERCORN, WITH MY COMPLIMENTS, THAT WE PROPOSE TO RELY ON THE SUBLIME INSTINCTS OF AN ANCIENT PEOPLE!!"

[See Speech at Crystal Palace.

Punch, 6 July 1872.

Appendix 13. Disraeli, B. prevaricating in debate, '*Punch*' 6th July, 1872.



Appendix 14. In Memoriam bookmark of watered silk put out by the Primrose League after his death, shows Disraeli as a handsome man of considerable gravitas. Bookmark in the ownership of the thesis writer.



Appendix 15. Oil painting, **Sickness and Health**, Thomas Webster, 1843, Victoria and Albert Museum. See Lambourne, L., *Victorian Painting*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), p.176.

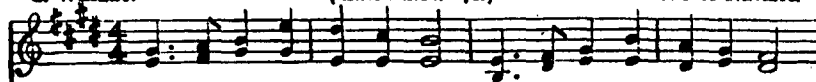
No. 1149. (S.S.) Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild.

"Suffer the little children to come unto Me."—MARK X. 14.

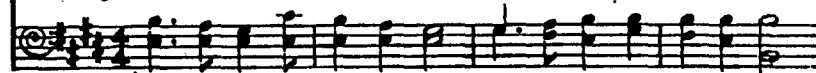

C. WESLEY.

(INNOCENTS. 7a.)

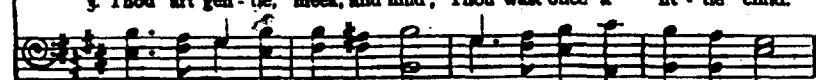
KING THIBAUT of Navarre.



1. Gen - te Je - sus, meek and mild, Look up - on a lit - tle child;
 2. Fain I would to Thee be brought; Bless - ed Lord, for - bid it not;
 3. Lamb of God, I look to Thee; Thou shalt my ex - am - ple be;

1. Pi - ty my sim - pli - ci - ty, Suf - fer me to come to Thee.
 2. In the Kingdom of Thy grace Give a lit - tle child a place.
 3. Thou art gen - tle, meek, and mild; Thou wast once a lit - tle child.



4. Fain I would be as Thou art;
 Give me Thy obedient heart;
 Thou art pitiful and kind,
 Let me have Thy loving mind.

5. Loving Jesus, gentle Lamb,
 In Thy gracious hands I am;
 Make me, Saviour, what Thou art,
 Live Thyself within my heart.



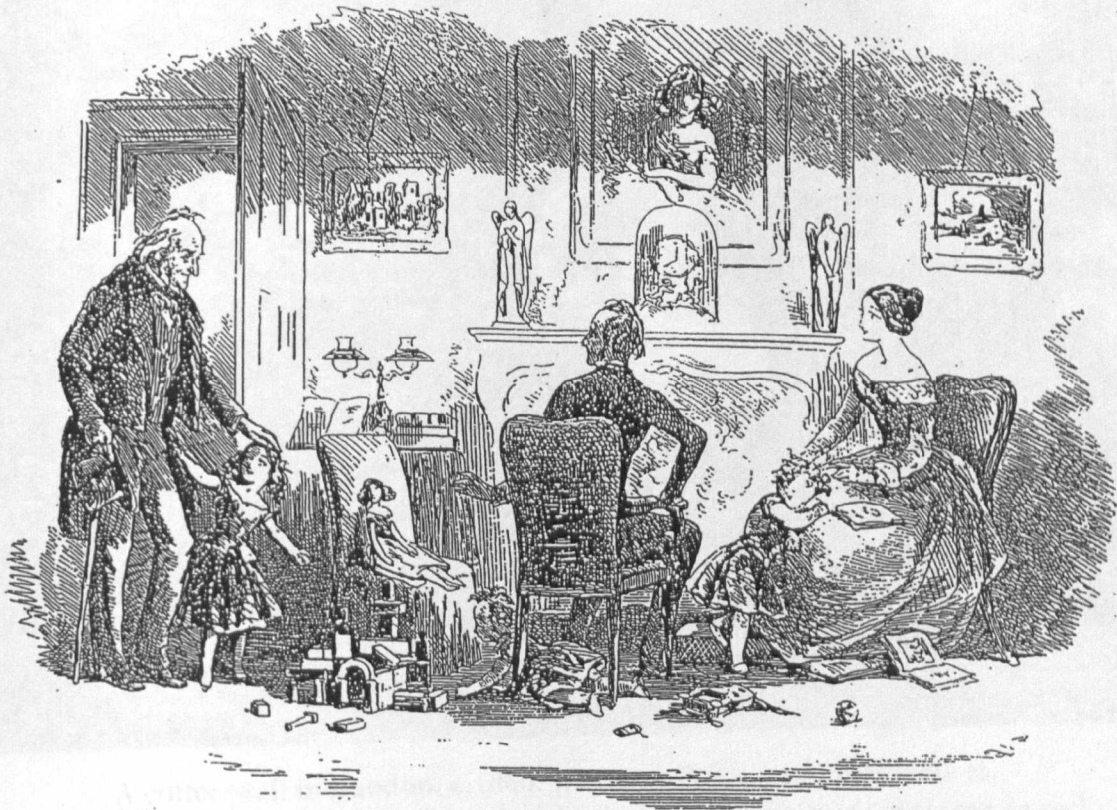
THE NEAREST WAY HOME

LADY.—“Where do you live, my dear?”

CHILD (*crying*).—“Dun’now, M’m—dun’now!”

BYSTANDER.—“Ask of her where she gits the beer, Mum.”

377 From *Will o’ the Wisp*, iii (1870), 283.



(1,507)

Appendix 21. The brilliant original illustration by Hablot K. Browne, 'Phiz', shows a portrait of Dora smiling down in approval on Copperfield, Agnes and their children; a wonderful example of a picture within a picture which consolidates what the text has already informed readers.

Appendices: Chapter Four



"Foundling Boy" by Harold Copping,
in the collection of Thomas Coram Foundation.



"Foundling Girl" by Harold Copping,
in the collection of Thomas Coram Foundation.

Appendices 1 & 2. Paintings by Harold Copping of The Foundling Hospital children in uniform. Postcards from the Thomas Coram Foundation Museum.



Oliver asking for more

Appendix 3. George Cruikshank's illustration, 'Oliver asking for more', *OT*, opp. p.12.

THE HARP OF THE HEBREW MINSTREL.

A Romance.

Of a little man with a large hooked nose
 Chance made me the beholder;
 And he bore a bag of cast-off clothes:
 He had slung it o'er his shoulder.
 And he sang: "The Divorce Bill's law at last,
 That is something like progression!
 But the Oaths Bill overboard was cast:
 We are slaves until next Session!"
 He shook his head, and he heaved a sigh,
 Then another mood came o'er him:
 And he winked one bright black almond eye

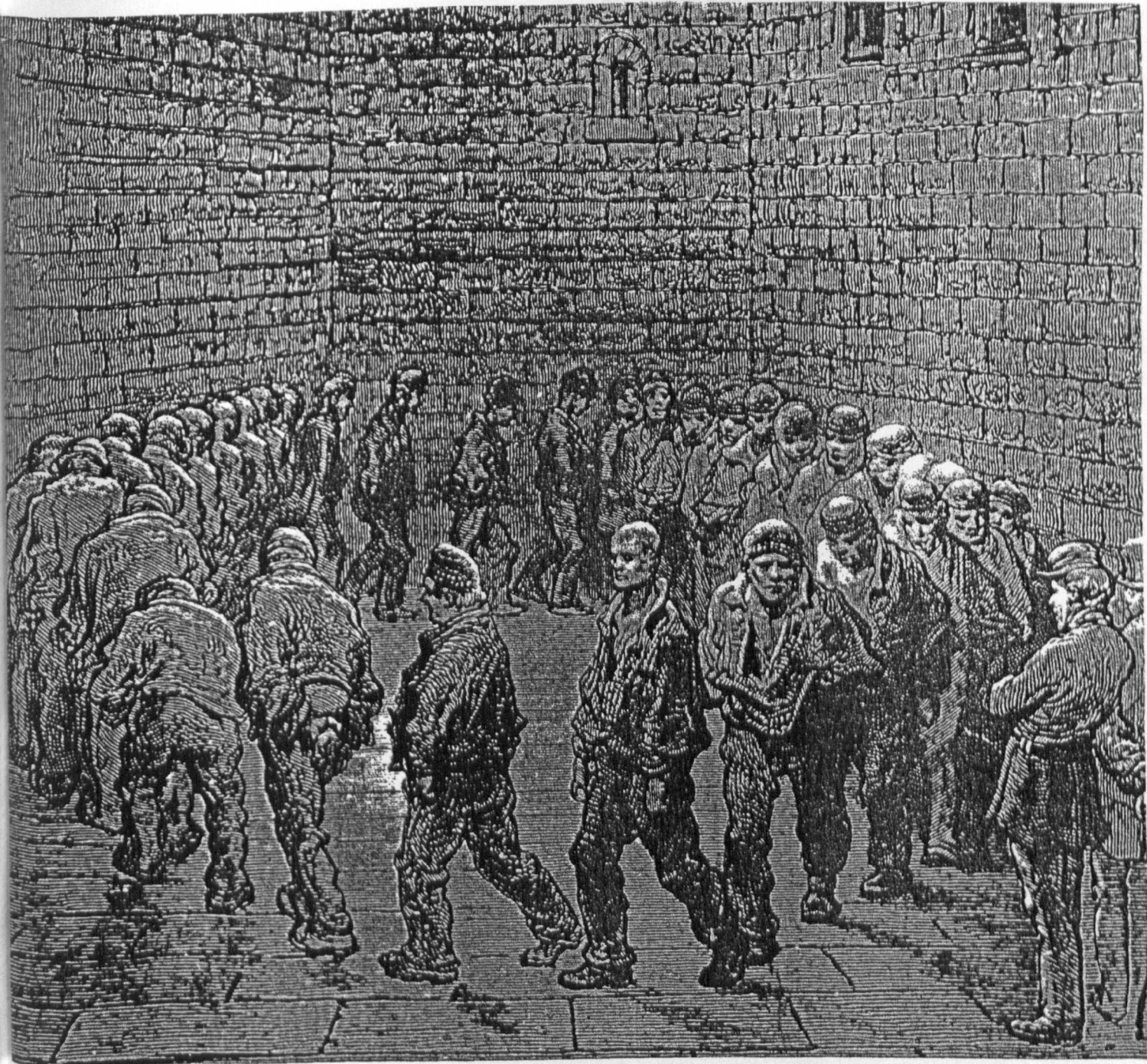


At the world that passed before him.
 There was a curl upon that lip,
 Where scorn for ever lingers,
 And he put his thumb to his nose's tip,
 And he vibrated his fingers.

Thus he took a sight at the thoughtless crowd,
 Then he felt in his waistcoat pocket.
 His spirit, though his head was bowed,
 Soared loftier than a rocket.
 And his little harp from his vest he drew,
 And between his teeth he stuck it;
 And the street boys all cried, "Go it, Jew!"
 When the Hebrew Minstrel struck it.

Punch, 12 September 1857.

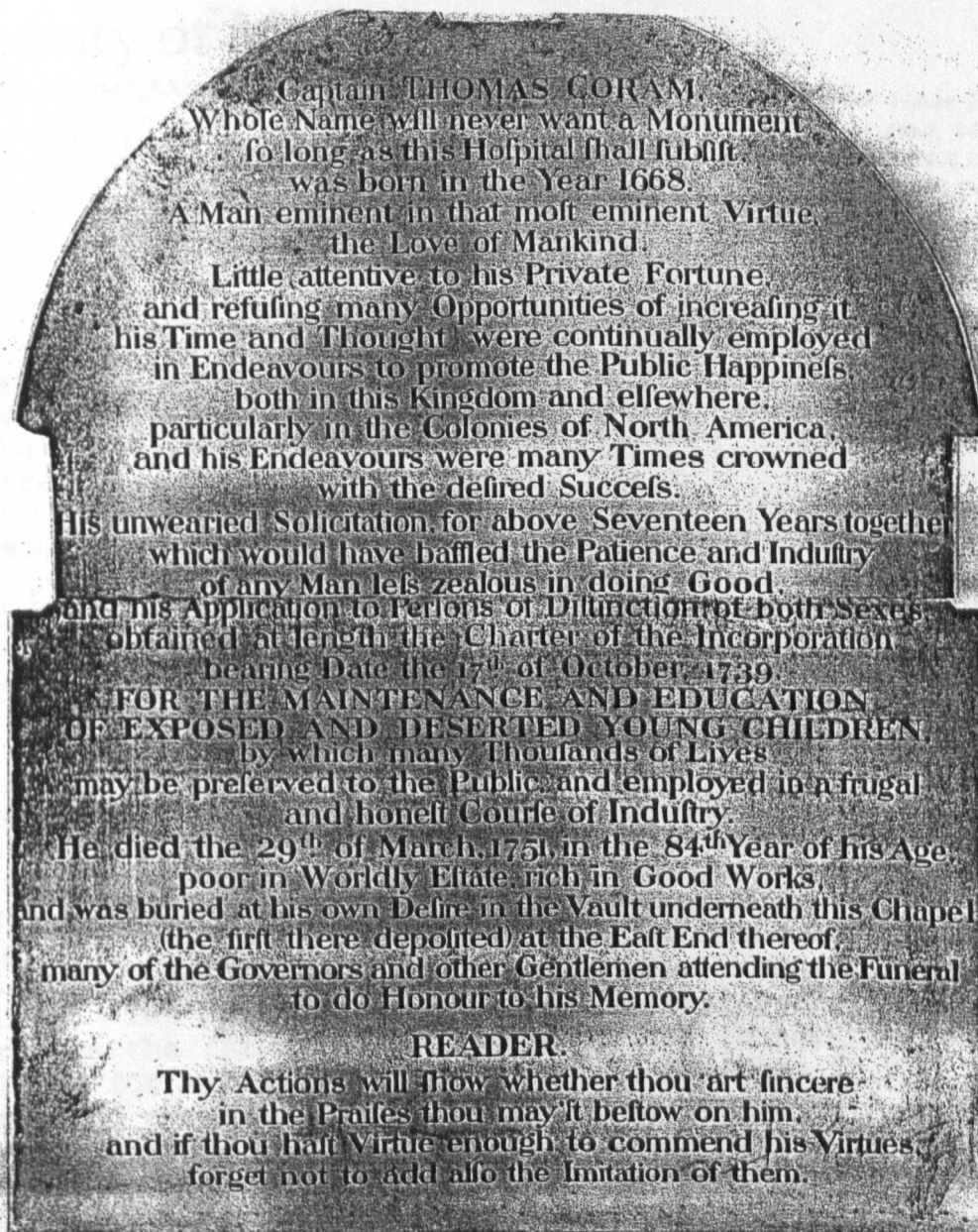
Appendix 4. The Harp of the Hebrew Minstrel, '*Punch*', 12th
 September, 1857.



Exercise Yard, Newgate Gustave Doré, 1872, (Radio Times Hulton Picture Library)

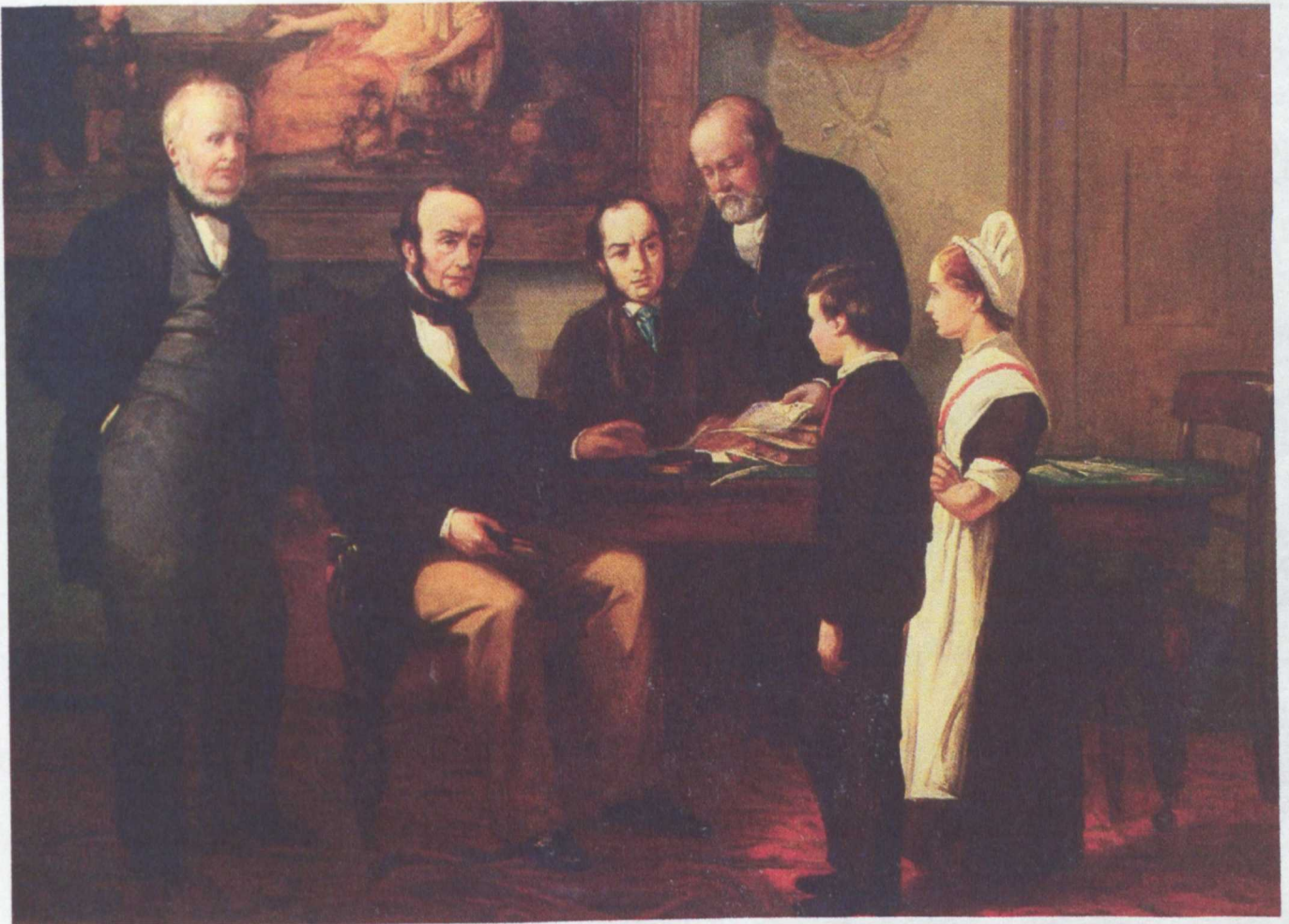
Appendix 5. **Exercise Yard at Newgate**, Gustave Doré, 1872, Radio Times Hulton Picture Library.

Appendices: Summary



MEMORIAL TO CAPTAIN THOMAS CORAM

Appendix 1 Memorial to Captain Thomas Coram housed in the
 Chapel of the Coram Foundation for Children.



Taking Leave

Oil painting by Mrs. Emma Brownlow King.
In the collection of the Thomas Coram Foundation.

Endpiece