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## ANGELS OF THE HOUSE: DICKENS' VICTORIAN WOMEN

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### **Abstract**

*This article explores Charles Dickens' view of Victorian women and the effect of his perception of women on his creation of female characters in his novels. To this end, the gender issues in the Victorian era are presented along with the social reforms and industrial revolution in terms of their impact on the status of women in 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian England. The role of actual female figures in Dickens' personal life is also examined in order to provide an insight into the motives and inspirations behind his creation of female characters. In view of the detailed account given as to the time period and background information provided, the main issue discussed in the article is the extent of Dickens' conformity with the Victorian ideology of women in his novels. Through the insight provided in the article, it is concluded that despite Dickens' overall faith in the 'Angel of the House' concept, his fiction does not strictly follow the gender codes of the period.*

**Keywords:** Victorian Ideology of Women, Charles Dickens' Female Characters, Social Reforms, Industrial Revolution, Gender Issues in the Victorian Era.

## EV MELEKLERİ: DICKENS'İN VİKTORYEN KADINLARI

### **Öz**

*Bu makalenin amacı, Charles Dickens'in Viktoryen kadınına bakışını ve kadına dair algısının romanlarındaki kadın karakterlerin yaratılma sürecine etkisini incelemektir. Bu amaçla, Viktoryen dönemdeki cinsiyet meselelerinin yanı sıra sosyal reformların ve sanayi devriminin 19. yy. Viktoryen İngiltere'sinde kadının statüsüne etkileri tartışılmaktadır. Dickens'in kadın karakterlerini oluşturma sürecindeki itkileri ve ilham kaynakları konusunda bir içgörü sağlaması amacıyla gerçek kadın figürlerin Dickens'in özel hayatındaki rolü de irdelenmiştir. Döneme ilişkin olarak sunulan ayrıntılı tanımların ve artalan bilgisinin ışığında makalede tartışılan temel konu Dickens'in romanlarının Viktoryen kadın ideolojisiyle ne derece örtüştüğüdür. Makalede sağlanan içgörü sonuç olarak göstermektedir ki Dickens her ne kadar Viktoryen kadın ideolojisine genel anlamda bağlı olsa da eserlerine dönemin cinsiyet kurallarını katı şekilde yansıtmamıştır.*

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Viktoryen Kadın İdeolojisi, Charles Dickens'in Kadın Karakterleri, Sosyal Reformlar, Sanayi Devrimi, Viktoryen Dönemde Cinsiyet Meseleleri.

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## INTRODUCTION

‘Angel in the House’, the Victorian feminine ideology, was coined by Coventry Patmore in his epic that portrayed an idealised image of the Victorian woman. Charles Dickens, the great social activist, reformist, moralist and writer of the Victorian era, is believed to have created most of his female characters under the strong influence of this notion denoting the strict Victorian gender codes. As well as the norms and traditions of Victorian social structure, Dickens’ personal experience with women also played a major role in the formation of his female characters. Thus, in order to properly understand Dickens’ view of Victorian women and to be able to analyze a female character created by Dickens, it is important to have an insight about both the status of women in the Victorian period and the roles played by actual women in the course of Dickens’ life and career.

## WOMEN IN DICKENS’ LIFE AND FICTION

Probably, the most dreadful experience that Dickens had in his life took place in Warren’s Blacking Factory where he was put to work after his father was sent to Marshalsea Debtor’s Prison, which was later used by Dickens as a setting in *Little Dorrit*. During his father’s imprisonment with the company of the rest of the family except Charles, then only twelve years old, Dickens was first made to stay with a friend of his family, Elizabeth Roylance, in Camden Town. Mrs Roylance was a poor old lady with whom Dickens resided for a short time. Nevertheless, like many other women in Dickens’ life, she took her place in his fictional world as Mrs. Pipchin, in *Dombey and Son*. The cruel, dire working conditions in Warren’s Blacking Warehouse that he had to endure during this period set the grounds for Dickens’ battle against the social-ills of Victorian England, particularly those regarding labour, law, education and socio-economic injustices. After his release, his father wanted Charles to go back to school, which met the opposition of his mother, who insisted that the twelve-year-old child should keep on working in the Warehouse to support the family finances. Her attitude came as a great disappointment for the young Dickens, who later used his mother as the foolish and comic wife of Nicholas Nickleby, one who cannot see the true evil her children encounter (Hawes, 1998: 164).

The first true love of Dickens was Maria Beadnell, whom he met in 1830 and fell in love with at first sight. However, Maria’s wealthy family did not approve of the relationship on the grounds that the young Dickens was lacking in prospects. The beautiful Maria was later the source of inspiration for the character of Dora (Hawes, 1998: 6) in *David Copperfield*:

I don't remember who was there, except Dora. I have not the least idea what we had for dinner, besides Dora. My impression is, that I dined off Dora, entirely, and sent away half-a-dozen plates untouched. I sat next to her. I talked to her. She had the most

delightful little voice, the gayest little laugh, the pleasantest and most fascinating little ways that ever led a lost youth into hopeless slavery. She was rather diminutive altogether. So much the more precious, I thought (Dickens, 1999: 473).

In 1833, the relationship of Maria and Charles was over. Maria married and became Mrs Henry Winter. Dickens went his own way. Nearly twenty- four years later, when both were married, the two met again. The beautiful Maria was already gone. The radical change in her appearance reminded Dickens of the humiliation he faced at the time he was deeply in love with her. This encounter was the source of the character of Flora Finching (Hawes, 1998: 6) in *Little Dorrit*: “Flora, always tall, had grown to be very broad too, and short of breath; but that was not much. Flora, whom he had left a lily, had become a peony; but that was not much. Flora, who had seemed enchanting in all she said and thought, was diffuse and silly. That was much. Flora, who had been spoiled and artless long ago, was determined to be spoiled and artless now. That was a fatal blow” (Dickens, 2000: 150).

Dickens married the attractive young Catherine Hogarth in 1836 while he was forging a career as a journalist in London. The first of their ten children was born in 1837. However, in the same year, Catherine’s younger sister Mary Hogarth, who lived with them, died suddenly. Dickens was devastated. He was so deeply attached to his beloved sister-in-law and felt such a grief after her death that it caused some speculations about the nature of his feelings for her. After Mary’s sudden death, Georgina, another of Catherine’s sisters, moved in to help with the household. During the early years of their marriage Catherine and Charles seemed to be quite happy, but in time their marriage started to collapse. In 1857, Dickens met and started a relationship with Ellen Ternan, a young actress. After 22 years of marriage, Catherine and Charles were legally separated in 1858. Because of the rumours regarding his relationship with Ellen being the cause of the breakup, Dickens had to publish a notice in the London Times and Household Words explaining the separation to the public in which he stated, “Some domestic trouble of mine, of long-standing, on which I will make no further remark than that it claims to be respected, as being of a sacredly private nature, has lately been brought to an arrangement, which involves no anger or ill-will of any kind, and the whole origin, progress, and surrounding circumstances of which have been, throughout, within the knowledge of my children. It is amicably composed, and its details have now to be forgotten by those concerned in it<sup>1</sup>” (Nayder, 2011: 264).

After the separation, Georgina stayed with Dickens to help with the household. Catherine was given the custody of their eldest son, Charley while Dickens kept the custody of the rest of the children. In her *Dickens’ Women*,

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<sup>1</sup> This statement by Charles Dickens announcing and explaining the breakup of his marriage was published on the front page of Household Words on June 12, 1858.

Miriam Margolyes gives an account of what his daughter Kate felt about her father's bitter and indifferent demeanour towards her mother who couldn't attend her wedding ceremony. Kate said: "My father was a wicked man - a very wicked man ... My father was not a gentleman - he was too mixed to be a gentleman ... My father did not understand women ... he was not a good man, but he was not a fast man, but he was wonderful" (Margolyes and Fraser, 2012: 29).

Dickens had conflicting emotional desires and needs which complicated his personal life and relationships. His intense desires brought about passionate but stormy relationships. Though he may be criticised for being unstable, even selfish and cruel at times in his relationships with women, it would be too harsh to classify him as an ill-natured tyrant. It is true that his Victorian disposition in gender matters precluded him from making a sufficient contribution to the condition of women in Victorian era, but he was not totally indifferent.

In 1846, with the insistence and financial support of his millionaire friend Angela Burdett Coutts, a deeply religious woman, Dickens was involved in the foundation of a house for the homeless women or the so called 'Fallen Women'<sup>2</sup>. The house, Urania Cottage, was mainly for prostitutes and Dickens stressed the need for support saying, "She is degraded and fallen, but not lost, having the shelter; and that the means of Return to Happiness, (note the rather literary style of the capitals), are now about to be put into her own hands . . ." (Tillotson, 1977: 533).

The main philosophy of the project was to protect the unfortunate women from the dangers in the streets, provide shelter and enable their emigration to the colonies for a new life. Dickens pursued and personally organized this cause for 12 years. As Jenny Hartley states, "this home for fallen women would be another total world for him to control. Here he could create and run everything according to his rules" (Hartley, 2008: 108). He devoted considerable time and energy to help these women. Despite the fluctuations and flows in his personal life with women, he did care about the plight of socially-disadvantaged women.

In general, it may be correct to say, as Michael Slater maintains, Dickens' "beliefs and attitudes were typical of the age in which he lived" (Slater, 1983: 301). Though not in the extreme, like most of the Victorians, Dickens believed that a woman needed to be the 'Angel of the House', devoting her life to housekeeping and child rearing. Hence, the analysis of Dickens' female characters should be based on the guidelines concerning the social standing and perception of women's role in society throughout the Victorian era including the advent of the industrial revolution on the basis of the changes it brought about.

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'Fallen Women' was used to refer to the ones fallen from the grace of God. In 19th century Britain, the term was generally associated with Prostitution.

### **DICKENS' FEMALE CHARACTERS: THE VICTORIAN INFLUENCE**

The Victorian ideology of women is perhaps best represented by Queen Victoria herself, when she described marriage as a "great happiness... in devoting oneself to another who is worthy of one's affection; still, men are very selfish and the woman's devotion is always one of submission which makes our poor sex so very unenviable... it cannot be otherwise as God has willed it so" (Abrahams, 1993: 1540). This is exactly what the ideal Victorian woman was expected to be like. Her main mission was supposed to be to serve others with a complete moral superiority and integrity. In order for a woman to be regarded as a lady, it was essential that she follow the norms and manners inflicted upon her by the society. In the Victorian social pyramid, regardless of her origins, a woman was always considered secondary both in the family and society. A woman's virtues received praise as long as she conformed to the prescribed roles of a loving and loyal servant for her husband and children.

The angel in the house was supposed to pay great attention to her manners and keep the home a sacred place where high moral standards were expected. She was to symbolize purity and domesticity. Any attempt to break the code, such as neglecting duties as a mother or wife, was unacceptable. One of the Dickens' female characters in *Great Expectations* stands as a case in point. Through Mrs Joe Gargery, primarily by making use of her defects, Dickens gives a clear account of moral standards expected from a Victorian woman, the antithesis of Mrs Joe, whose physical appearance is no better than her character:

My sister, Mrs. Joe, with black hair and eyes, had such a prevailing redness of skin that I sometimes used to wonder whether it was possible she washed herself with a nutmeg – grater instead of soap. She was tall and bony, and almost always wore a coarse apron, fastened over her figure behind with two loops, and having a square impregnable bib in front, that was stuck full of pins and needles (Dickens, 1978: 16).

Her repudiation of the role of wifehood and motherhood along with her antagonistic nature lacking gracefulness and courtesy of a Victorian woman are just the opposites of the norm. The apron she persistently wears represents her discontent and protest. She explains her disgust saying, "I may truly say I've never had this apron of mine off, since born you were. It's bad enough to be a blacksmith's wife (and him a Gargery), without being your mother" (Dickens, 1978: 17).

Within the boundaries of Pater Families<sup>3</sup> concept dominant in Victorian social structure, a woman's function as the obedient and devoted wife and the caring mother committed to raising her children properly was believed to have a

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<sup>3</sup> The term Pater Families comes from Latin *pater familias* meaning 'father of the family'.

key role in the welfare and order of the society as a whole. The women who attempted to go beyond the confines of this patriarchal system were not only criticised harshly but also marginalized. As long as a woman accepted that her place was in the home, she had less trouble and conflict and would be regarded as more virtuous.

Mrs Joe denies all traditional roles prescribed by the society. Dickens deliberately assigns her masculine traits as she has the violent and aggressive nature of a man. This is a violation and deserves punishment. As an unrespectable woman in Victorian terms, she is punished and rehabilitated. After the assault she is exposed to, she asks for forgiveness of Joe and Pip on her deathbed.

The traditional belief was that tenderness and simplicity were the basic features of a woman who was responsible for domestic matters under the complete autonomy of men. The only career that was deemed as appropriate for a woman was marriage. As the social constraints did not allow women to earn a living, there was an inevitable dependence on men's income, "Barred by law and custom from entering trades and professions by which they could support themselves, and restricted in the possession of property, woman had only one means of livelihood, that of marriage" (Kent, 1990: 86). Thus, a young Victorian woman was brought up to find the most suitable partner through courtship. Besides the ones concerning physical attraction, the only means necessary to achieve this end were the ability to sing, play an instrument and speak a little Italian or French. No other intellectual activity was required or expected from a Victorian woman whose role was bitterly criticised by Alfred Tennyson in his poem *The Princess*, "Full of weak poison, turnspits for the clown,/ The drunkard's football, laughing-stocks of Time,/ Whose brains are in their hands and in their heels / But fit to flaunt, to dress, to dance, to thrum,/ To tramp, to scream, to burnish, and to scour,/ Forever slaves at home and fools abroad" (Tennyson, 2007: 43).

Tennyson's is a call for equality for women who are trapped in the dictated vision of a strictly patriarchal rule. He draws attention to polarized gender roles which elevate man, praising his capacity for reason, independence and action, yet humiliating woman as the symbol of femininity, submission, emotion and dependence. The main criticism centers around the Victorian conception that regards women as objects of sexuality and reproduction along with a dutiful and unsuspecting compliance.

In the Victorian era, marriage was far different from the romantic affairs often delineated in many novels of the time. Love actually had little or nothing to do in the majority of matrimones that took place. Instead, there were generally accepted rules and guidelines to follow. Women did not have any say in the marriage. They were forced to marry because there were no other options. Women deprived of education and career opportunities were completely dependent upon their husbands. They were urged to find a suitable partner and get married as soon as possible. Louisa Gradgrind in *Hard Times* is the victim of such a loveless

marriage and has an adulterous affair with James Harthouse. Holmes points out that in Victorian England “While a wife’s adultery was sufficient cause to end a marriage, a woman could divorce her husband only if his adultery had been compounded by another matrimonial offense, such as cruelty or desertion” (Holmes, 1995: 601). Louisa, like many other Dickens’ female characters breaks the code and she pays the price by losing her husband and being disinherited by her father. Her moral degradation results in personal ruin. Adultery and immorality, if committed by a woman, are intolerable in Victorian society.

Victorian women had to suffer greatly under the strict gender stratifications, conservative cultural and legal restrictions of the time period. Victorian gender view imprisoned women to the realm of physical attraction and an object of the house. Although she was often praised as the symbol of beauty and moral purity, this approach was hypocritical in many respects. R. J. Cruickshank draws attention to this contradiction as to the role of women in the Victorian society: “The Victorians, who tackled many big problems successfully, made a fearful hash of the problem of woman. Their moral dualism, their besetting weakness of dreaming of one thing and doing another, might be amusing in architecture or painting, but it involved endless cruelty towards flesh and blood. Woman in the abstract was as radiant as an angel, as dainty as a fairy - she was a picture on the wall, a statue in a temple, a being whose physical processes were an inscrutable mystery” (Cruikshank, 1949: 87).

One of the most striking social reflections of the moral dualism criticised by Cruickshank was prostitution. In Victorian England, there were a large number of prostitutes, the so called ‘Fallen Women’: “In a society that forced women into a position of economic dependence upon men, only an accident of birth prevented women of the middle classes from resorting to prostitution to support themselves and their children” (Kent, 1990: 68). Although it was seen as a serious social problem, there was no real effort to make it illegal, as the majority of men had the belief that prostitution was “the necessary evil to protect the pure, who otherwise might unwittingly provoke the male to rape them” (Kent, 1990: 62). Ironically, Victorian society that condemned and humiliated women seeking a career outside home was not so harsh against prostitution.

In several of his novels, Dickens deals with the theme of fallen woman notably in Alice Marwood in *Dombey and Son*, Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, Little Em’ly and Martha Endell in *David Copperfield*. In Victorian England, particularly in London, prostitution was endemic. There were a huge number of women trying to make a living through prostitution. At the time, some argued that they must be condemned while some others like Dickens suggested that they must be reformed. His active involvement in the Urania Cottage project clearly indicates his standpoint. That is why he offers a second chance to his fictional characters Nancy and Martha just as he did for the actual fallen women in Urania Cottage.

The advent of the industrial revolution and the rise of market economy shook the foundations of deeply embedded Victorian gender constraints. Women soon proved to be an immense source of labour for the industry. Thus, they took part in the workforce in increasing numbers. The grueling working conditions, long hours and poor wages did not stop women from taking the chance to earn their living and go beyond their traditional image as the homemaker. However, the impact of the industrial revolution did not eliminate the Victorian view that a working woman would have a tendency to become an irresponsible wife and mother. Dickens designates this patriarchal approach in the *Bleak House*, through the character Mrs. Jellyby, who is obsessed with the colonization in Africa. Nevertheless, she neglects her children and her household.

The influx of women to the working life led to the spread of feminist ideas and accelerated women's suffrage movement towards the end of the Victorian era. According to Frederick Engels, women's involvement in industry had a positive effect on women's emancipation:

Since large-scale industry has transferred the woman from the house to the labour market and the factory, and makes her, often enough, the bread-winner of the family, the last remnants of male domination in the proletarian home have lost all foundation - except, perhaps, for some of that brutality towards women which became firmly rooted with the establishment of monogamy . . . It will then become evidence that the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry (Marx and Engels, 1986: 508).

Along with the rapid shift from an agricultural to a manufacturing economy fuelled by the scientific and technological advances, the rise of capitalism began to change the face of Victorian England at all levels of society. The massive transforming process under the appalling conditions of rapid urbanization and commercialization penetrated into the Victorian social structure, leading to dramatic changes. Industrial Revolution altered the long-standing gender roles in the Victorian era. Even though women had the chance to step out of their traditional roles and duties, discrimination of all sorts were still in action. Women who were praised for their endurance and docility by the employers were exploited and exposed to occupational discrimination. They still had to perform the duties at home and because of the widespread poverty, marriage was still an attractive alternative. In this respect, it must be noted that women's legal and economic gains did not so easily lead to the reformation of their social standing. Despite his overall loyalty to the 'Angel of the House' concept, Dickens was not indifferent to women's emancipation and the difficulties they faced as workers. Through the characters Mrs Sairey Gamp, a monthly nurse, in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and Jenny Wren, a dolls' dressmaker, in *Our Mutual Friend*, he depicts the determination of independent women workers and by calling attention to the struggles of working

class women, Dickens unfolds not only his awareness of the socio-economic diversity in Victorian London but also demonstrates his empathy for women who must work in order to survive.

### **THE EXTENT OF CONFORMITY**

Under the influence of the social context of the Victorian era Dickens created basically two types of female characters in his novels: the rewarded and the defeated. The rewarded ones are usually those who conform to the traditional roles of women, and the defeated are the ones who dare to trespass the boundaries of culturally determined roles. Sherry Ortner notes that male writers like Charles Dickens create two types of women in their novels, the “subversive feminine symbols” and “the feminine symbols of transcendence” (Ortner, 1974: 86). Therefore, “the woman is denied the autonomy, the subjectivity that the pen represents, she is not only excluded from culture, but she also becomes herself an embodiment of just those extremes of mysteries and intransigent “otherness” which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing” (Ortner, 1974: 86). Although Dickens seems to be a supporter of the Victorian notion ‘Angels of the House’, by depicting the plight of unconventional women in his novels, whether intentionally or just as a means of expression, he attracted attention to the hardships of those who suffered from the Victorian gender conflict. Brenda Ayres refers to this fact by arguing that “Dickens both advocated and resisted patriarchy, overtly promoting the ideology of domesticity while covertly subverting that ideology, especially through his presentation of atypical women” (Ayres, 1998: 66). Despite Dickens’ loyalty to the Victorian ideology as to the importance of patriarchy and domesticity, in his novels, he emphasizes “the power of Victorian patriarchal society to distort and complicate sexual relations” (Barickman, Macdonald and Stark, 1982: 18). Like other male novelists of the period such as Trollope and Thackeray, Dickens refers to the “corruption of basic sexual identities and roles as the chief abuse of the patriarchal social system” (Barickman, Macdonald and Stark, 1982: 60). Dickens’ agreement with the ‘Angels of the House’ concept is not presented as a single point of view but rather he chose to portray the clashing poles. The respectable, the motherly and the fallen all took their places in the fictional world of Dickens.

As mentioned earlier, Nancy, the major female character in *Oliver Twist* is a prostitute who represents the notion that the line between virtue and vice is not so impermeable. Her evil deeds do not prevent her from sacrificing her life for Oliver. The River Thames was associated with the problem of prostitution in the Victorian era as the place where the dead bodies of the fallen floated in water. Nancy expresses her fear over her destiny by saying "Look at that dark water. How many times do you read of such as I who spring into the tide, and leave no living thing, to care for, or bewail them. It may be years hence, or it may be only months. But I shall come to that at last" (Dickens, 1962: 389). Dickens’ concern for the ‘Fallen

Women' of Victorian England later became evident in his involvement and organization of the Urania Cottage founded for the redemption and welfare of these women. Dickens' depiction of Nancy in *Oliver Twist* clearly demonstrates that he was not the sort of Victorian male who strictly favoured the virtuous and condemned the rest.

In *Oliver Twist*, another character Dickens introduces is Mrs Corney. Though a minor character in the novel, she appears to be the representative of a corrupted female. On the surface, she seems to be a socially respectable and well-regarded character. However, her true personality is revealed through her harsh behavior towards children. Her social standing and popularity do not reflect her true unrespectable nature. Her hypocritical and materialistic attitude brings about unhappiness in her marriage with Mr Bumble.

In *David Copperfield*, we meet two respectable Dickens' women. Clara Peggotty, David's nanny and caretaker, is a kind-hearted and loving female character just the opposite of cruel and unloving Miss Murdstone. The other virtuous figure is David's mother, Clara Copperfield, a caring and kindhearted character. On the other hand, little Em'ly is a disgrace to her family. She is a fallen character just like Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, but with a better fate as she gets the chance to go to Australia for a new start, which reminds us of the mission pursued by Dickens in Urania Cottage. Finally, we have beautiful Agnes, the symbol of purity. She is one of Dickens' angels who embodies all the features of the ideal woman. David describes her charms in admiration: "I cannot call to mind where or when, in my childhood, I had seen a stained-glass window in a church [...] But I know that when I saw her turn around, in the grave light of the old staircase, and wait for us, above, I thought of that window; and that I associated something of its tranquil brightness with Agnes Wickfield ever afterwards" (Dickens, 1999: 271).

In *Bleak House*, Ester Summerson with her tenderness and motherly nature appears as one of Dickens' ideal women in spite of her disgraced background. Her eagerness to serve others and modest manners are obvious reflections of the Victorian female image. Lady Dedlock, on the other hand, is haunted by the secrets of her past. The fear of losing her social standing and being a disgrace for her loving husband finally destroys her. Obviously, she is one of the many losers of Dickens who is defeated by her own faults.

In *Great Expectations*, Dickens once again presents his view that one's social status does not ensure a happy and fulfilling life. In Dickens' novels, there are many characters who move upwards and downwards in the social pyramid regardless of their origins. Some of them fall victim to their shortcomings while others are able to escape ill fate despite their humble, even dark backgrounds. Estella Havisham is a character who learns from her painful experiences and gradually comes to realize her faults. However, despite her evolution, she has a terrible marriage and lives miserably throughout her life.

Estella's guardian, Miss Havisham, who, on her wedding day, was left at the altar by her fiancé, lives under the shadow of this tragic event. Herbert explains that Estella is "hard and haughty and capricious to the last degree, and has been brought up by Miss Havisham to wreak revenge on all the male sex" (Dickens, 1978: 86). Havisham's obsession to take her revenge hurts not only herself but others and results in her destruction in the end. Bidly, Pip's first teacher, is the example of Dickens' ideal woman in *Great Expectations*. Throughout the novel, Bidly appears as the opposite of Estella as the moral and virtuous country girl.

## CONCLUSION

In the world of Dickens' female characters, there exist his beliefs and convictions all embedded skillfully in his rich and absorbing stories. Even though there are striking similarities between the female characters he created, one can easily see that he never sticks to a single path. While his Victorian side praises the virtuous, his social awareness does not always let him victimize the fallen. He embraces diversity without ignoring the readers' expectations as to the fate of the wicked and the rebellious. Thus, Dickens' 'Angels of the House' concept does not equally match the strict gender bias of the Victorian era. His approach when determining the fate of the rewarded and the defeated in his novels often reflects the traditions of his age, but the implications and underlying motives that bear the stamp of a reformist mind are not strictly Victorian.

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