

# DICKENSIAN CONCEPT OF ANDROGYNY: GENDER RELATIONS IN DAVID COPPERFIELD

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## ABSTRACT

Dickens wrote in times when women were officially possessions of their husbands, fathers or of any male who was acknowledged as the head of the family. Families forbade their girls to read novels whose heroines were contentious such as Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Although Dickens is widely attacked for his feeble female characters in line with the angel in the house doctrine, according to his great granddaughter Lucinda Dickens Hawksley, he is the fruit of the able women in his life aside from the Victorian ideals. Elizabeth Dickens, his paternal grandmother, was a housekeeper who inspired him with her kind nature and storytelling. It was his mother, Elizabeth Barrow, who taught him mathematics, literacy and Latin. According to Dickens, to be a complete human being, the masculine sides of men should be harmonized with the feminine traits of women. Similar to the influential women in his life, Dickens' weak, angelic female characters are, at the same time, the women who complete a lack in men and enable them to become ideal human beings via their feminine characteristics. In this respect, a new type of androgyny, which the paper names as the Dickensian androgyny, might be observed in Dickens' male characters. Accordingly, this paper aims to dwell on Dickens' concept of androgyny to grow into a complete human being through the harmony of male and female characteristics as mirrored in his character David in *David Copperfield*.

**Keywords:** Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, Androgyny, Gender Relations.

## DICKENS'İN ANDROJENLİK KAVRAMI:

### DAVID COPPERFIELD'DA TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET İLİŞKİLERİ

#### ÖZ

Dickens kocaları, babaları veya resmi olarak ailenin başı olarak kabul edilen herhangi bir erkeğin kadınların sahipleri sayıldığı zamanlarda eserlerini verdi. Aileler kızlarının tartışmalı kadın karakterleri olan Anne Brontë'nin *Wildfell'in Kiracısı* ve Charlotte Brontë'nin *Jane Eyre* gibi eserlerini okumalarını yasaklardı. Dickens evdeki melek doktrini doğrultusunda çizdiği zayıf kadın karakterleri yüzünden genellikle eleştirilse de torununun çocuğu Lucinda Dickens Hawksley'e göre, Dickens Victoria dönemi ideallerinin yanı sıra hayatındaki güçlü kadınların eseri idi. Kâhya olan babaannesi Elizabeth Dickens ona iyi kalpli doğası ve anlattığı hikâyelerle ilham vermişti. Dickens'a matematik, okuma yazma ve Latinceyi öğreten kişi ise annesi Elizabeth Barrow'du. Dickens'a göre, bütün bir insan olabilmek için erkeklerin erkeklere özgün taraflarının kadınların kadınlara özgü özellikleriyle uyum içinde olması gerekliydi. Hayatındaki onu etkileyen kadınlara benzer bir şekilde, Dickens'ın zayıf ve meleşimsi kadın karakterleri aynı zamanda erkeklerdeki eksikleri tamamlayan ve kadına özgü özellikleriyle onların ideal insanlar olmasını sağlayan kadınlardı. Bu bağlamda, Dickens'ın erkek karakterlerinde, makalede Dickens'ın androjenisi olarak adlandırılan yeni bir tür androjeni kavramını gözlemlemek mümkündür. Bu doğrultuda, bu makale *David Copperfield*'daki David karakteri üzerinden kadın ve erkek özelliklerinin uyumlu bir şekilde bir araya gelmesiyle bütün bir insana dönüşmeyi içeren Dickens'ın androjenlik kavramını incelemeyi hedeflemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Charles Dickens, David Copperfeld, Androjenlik, Cinsiyet İlişkileri.

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### INTRODUCTION: THE CONCEPT OF ANDROGYNY, CHARLES DICKENS AND GENDER RELATIONS

The concept of androgyny has been widely treated in literature and underscored the merging of male and female characteristics to contribute to becoming a complete human being. The term has sometimes been used as a resistance against the patriarchal discourse as in the case of Virginia Woolf who is the very writer of the depiction of androgyny in literature. Unlike Woolf, in its traditional reading, androgyny seems to be a huge contrast to Dickens' writing since he is acknowledged as a masculine figure. Yet, this paper brings forward a new type of androgyny, which is termed as the Dickensian androgyny. In this new type of androgyny, the Victorian ideal woman type, the angel in the house, is of great importance because through her characteristics unique to women, as Dickens suggests, she completes the lack in man and provides him with an androgynous aspect. Thus, the paper aims to contribute to the studies on Dickens and to the studies of androgyny in literature along with its novel attitude towards this highly debated concept.

It is important to have some sense of what androgyny is in order to evaluate the Dickensian concept of androgyny. The word androgynous derives from the Latin word "androgynē" with a Greek origin. The Greek word was formed with the combination of two words, "andras" (man) and "gynē" (woman) referring to the mix of male and female physical characteristics (Stuart and Thatcher 113). Androgynous characters appear often in Greek mythology, personifying a blend of male and female features such as Tiresias, the blind Theban seer. According to *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, "androgynous" means "*having both male and female characteristics*" ("androgynous" def. 1a, 1995: 39). These characteristics might include outer appearance and physical look along with behaviour and personality. For Marilyn Farwell, androgyny refers to "*either an interplay of separate and unique elements or a fusion of one into the other*" (1975: 434) In this fusion, the masculine traditionally becomes the dominant part while the feminine is the subordinate. Aaron Shaheen describes androgyny as a psychological and spiritual quality exceeding the border of conscious (9). To Sakine Uçar, the concept of androgyny, rather than a sexual identity, is a kind of guide or a model to shed light on people's lives to create an ideal human being (3). Similarly, Carolyn Heilbrun claims that androgyny refers to a "*complete human being*" (146). Finally, according to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "*a great mind must be androgynous*" (51). Then, the concept of androgyny might be examined as a notion which enriches the individual mentally and paves the way to creativity and human completeness.

Regarding the history of androgyny, Plato occupies a very momentous place. The concept of androgyny was first used in Plato's *Symposium* in the part he talks to Aristophanes. In this part, Aristophanes talks about the first phase of humanity. To Aristophanes, the human race has three sexes rather than two. This third sex consists of the blend of the male and the female. Moreover, in the Golden Age, human figure was round with two heads, four arms, two sexes and four legs. According to the story of Aristophanes, the male was born from the sun, the female from the earth, and the androgyne from the moon. The third sex was so strong and mighty. One day, those of third sex irritated the gods and the gods cursed them and divided them into two. That is why, to Aristophanes, human beings are in a constant quest to find a partner to reach their missing other half. So they feel incomplete without the presence of the other (251). The story of Aristophanes also justifies the idea of completeness embodied in androgyny. Influenced by the notion of the third sex and the concept of androgyny, Sigmund Freud writes about Leonardo Da Vinci. According to Freud, Da Vinci was a homosexual who, raised without a mother, had to suppress his love to his mother and to replace her with something else (191). Da Vinci was also close to androgyny with his motherly affection since, as underlined by Freud, he was kind, elegant and full of love. Freud also associates Da Vinci's artistic talent with sexuality (153). Carl Gustav Jung also deals with the essence of individual and concept of androgyny. To Jung, individual reaches to completeness at the end of an individuation process. The indispensable elements of this process are two terms: "anima" and "animus". Jung continues that it is a fact that sexuality is largely determined by female and male genes. The genes belonging to the other sex are in minority, yet, they don't disappear. Therefore, in each male, there is a feminine aspect and in each female, there is a masculine aspect generally not recognized. Jung calls them "anima" and "animus" respectively (284).

Deliberating over androgyny in literature, Virginia Woolf comes to forth as she appears as an iconoclast with her concept of androgyny. Woolf discusses the concept of androgyny in her *A Room of One's Own* and states that "*it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman – manly or man – womanly*" (1981: 105). Therefore, she argues that the mind has two sexes which must be unified to attain a thorough fulfilment. That is how the mind becomes a whole and creative (Lockhart 1986: 4). Then, Woolf defines androgyny as a "*marriage of opposites*" (1981: 108) of masculine and feminine traits. In fact, to Woolf, as argued by Mina Urgan, "*to be androgynous is a must to be able to become a complete human being. Women and men are physically different from each other, yet, in reality, there are not certain boundaries between the two sexes on the*

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*psychological grounds*” [my translation] (2009: 152). Androgyny is at the very heart of Woolf’s fantastic novel *Orlando*. In *Orlando*, Woolf writes: “*Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above*” (2006: 189). Accordingly, Orlando violates the boundaries between male and female and halfway through the novel turns into a female. The novel begins in the sixteenth century when Orlando is a young nobleman fond of poetry. Running away from a lover, he comes to Turkey and one day after a several days long sleep, he wakes up and finds himself transformed into a woman. That is how Woolf’s concept of androgyny is fictionalized in *Orlando*. A female now Orlando does not lose his/her creativity and goes on writing her poems. Through the consolidation of male and female characteristics in one person, Woolf highlights the significance of androgynous mind for creativity and depicts how androgyny defies the separation between male and female sexes. In time, Orlando possesses an androgynous identity and harmoniously brings male and female characteristics together in him/herself.

Different from the androgyny embodied in one person in *Orlando*, in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf underlines androgyny by bringing masculine and feminine characteristics together in her two characters, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, rather than in one character. Whereas the former stands for rationality and reason, the latter embodies emotions and imagination. That is to say, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay encapsulate Woolf’s androgyny concept as the example of marriage or harmony of the opposites. In her article, “Virginia Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse*: The Concept of Androgyny”, Ana Lucia Gazolla defines this harmony as a kind of androgynous vision and states that similar to Mrs. Ramsay who keeps an androgynous vision, “*Mr. Ramsay, in spite of his presentation of a “masculine” approach to life, is another example of the androgynous vision. He is not as a character as Mrs. Ramsay. He remains too much a type, but in some moments we realize that there is an integration between him and Mrs. Ramsay*” (75). Gazolla completes her article by stating that “*a sense of oneness is achieved by the characters that undergo the androgynous experience*” (79) which points out the appreciation of both male and female traits by characters. In relation to Woolf’s use of androgyny in *To the Lighthouse*, X. P. Shang claims that through this type of androgyny, “*Woolf applies the idea of harmony to an ideal relationship between men and women, which is a state of harmony of the two genders, emphasizing different social division of labour according to different careers and different*

*temperament or characteristics*” (1) which is in line between the gender roles in the Victorian society.

This type of treatment of androgyny, similar to Woolf’s androgyny in her *To the Lighthouse*, can be traced in Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*. This type of androgyny combines the feminine and masculine traits in the fusion of two characters and it also features the sex-role stereotypes or social roles. Therefore, before discussing androgyny in *David Copperfield*, it seems proper to focus on the social roles of men and women in the Victorian period. The gender roles were strongly determined in the Victorian society. The main role of Victorian woman was to marry and perform the motherly and wifely duties and it was accepted as the best way to support her husband who was to deal with business matters in the professional life. Thus, before marriage, Victorian women needed to acquire housewife skills- weaving, cooking, washing, and cleaning- and had to live in their private spheres, at home. Contrary to Victorian women, Victorian men were supposed to take part in the public sphere and keep professions to look after their families. In line with the gender roles, Victorian women were expected to be gentle and nurturing, the feminine traits, whereas Victorian men were required to be tough, assertive and dominant, the masculine traits. The ideal Victorian woman possessing the mentioned traits was named as “the Angel in the house” and widely treated in literature. Due to the assigned roles to the males and females, Victorian man was active and dominant unlike Victorian woman who was passive and subordinate. Yet, women in the Victorian world still grew into guides and supporters for Victorian men with their feminine traits:

*[...] women were expected to deal with domestic affairs and serve as a moral guide. It was believed that women were protected against worldly evils and possessed a moral influence that can correct men’s missteps. Victorian society believed that a woman’s contribution to the masculine world is emotional and moral guidance which constitutes a woman’s responsibility as a wife or mother. They were seen as the divine guide, purifier, inspirer of man, and their mission was to help man to resist the evils and temptations of the world* (Gökçek 2021: 143).

The lack of these mentioned feminine characteristics in men was observed as a missing part and incompleteness by Charles Dickens on the way to become a complete and successful human being. In other words, as depicted in Jung’s terms, “anima” stands for the feminine other in men and “animus” for the masculine other in women. Within the Victorian context, it was so difficult for men to unveil their feminine aspect and for women to their masculine aspect as the gender roles were strongly determined. Dickens, however, notices this as a lack in men, similar to Aristophanes, extols the feminine qualities and supports that this lack can be eliminated by

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the feminine traits of women to lead to a complete human being. Therefore, to Dickens, not necessarily in one person, the masculine traits of men should be reconciled with the feminine traits of women of a typical type, the angel in the house. This combination brings out the Dickensian androgyny, which can be exemplified in his character David in *David Copperfield*. Of his unforgettable works, Dickens regards his *David Copperfield* as his favourite child (Dyson 1968: 16). *David Copperfield* is mostly taken as a novel about marriage. According to J. Hillis Miller, “*David Copperfield* is the first of [Dickens’] novels to organize itself around the complexities of romantic love. For the first time marriage, in a more than conventional way, is seen as offering a solution to the problem of solitude and dispossession” (qtd. in Dyson 1968: 16). On the contrary, Kelly Hager supports that “*Copperfield* presents us with a view of marriage as an institution that does not solve problems of identity and selfhood, but rather creates such problems” (1996: 990). No matter how marriage is reflected, with its ramifications or contributions, true marriage and devotion to the home are the main subjects of the novel. Portraying different kinds of marriage, Dickens tries to underline the significance of true marriage in *David Copperfield*. In fact, the theme of marriage is related to all of the characters of the novel, males and females: David, Dora and Agnes, Steerforth and Emily, Aunt Betsey and her mysterious husband, Peggotty and Barkis and the Micawbers which bring gender matters to the foreground of the novel. As stated, the androgyny depicted in *David Copperfield* is similar to that of *To The Lighthouse* and it is epitomized in the gender relationships in the novel, particularly through David and Agnes. Discussing the gender relationships in relation to androgyny in *David Copperfield*, it seems convenient to have some insights into Dickens’ attitudes towards women and the relationship between men and women. Although in his life time Dickens experienced the transformation of the traditional English woman from the *meek submissive model* of the 1830s to the more *self-aware* and *self-assertive* woman of the 1860s, it can be stated that Dickens’ beliefs were typical of his age [my emphasis]. As stated by Michael Slater, Dickens idealised the domestic Victorian woman, nursing, housekeeping, and he was devoted to the traditional attitudes of male towards her (1983: 301). Like many of his contemporaries, Dickens believed that nature and psychology of woman were entirely disparate from that of man and he was strictly bound to the traditional male role as reflected by Virginia Woolf: “[h]e has to perfection the virtues conventionally ascribed to the male: he is self-assertive, self-reliant, self-assured; energetic in the extreme” (qtd. in Slater 1983: 302). In a parallel way, in Dickens’ novels, the adjectives manly and womanly are frequently used and women are reflected as child, doll, angel, Magdalen and so on. Indeed, as discussed by Natalie

McKnight, Dickens' characterization of women was shaped by his relation to his mother and sister, sentimentalised women like in the conduct books (2008: 186) and his female characters reflect the gender expectations of young Victorian women. In sum, it can be supported that Dickens' heroines are shaped by dominant ideology of his time and they are women with a "true- angelic, domestic-nature" (John 2001: 199), weak and obedient which is presented in Patmore's *The Angel in the House* (1845-6) and Ruskin's *Of Queens' Gardens* (1865). However, as discussed throughout the paper, this type of angelic woman takes an active role in the Dickensian concept of androgyny by completing the lack in men.

### **Dickensian Concept of Androgyny in *David Copperfield***

Apart from his ideas on women emblematic of his age, Dickens, yet, also believed that womanliness was a matter of nature and was complementary to manliness in that each sex should try to obtain more of the virtues within the other (Slater 1983: 302); that is how he accentuates androgyny to become a complete human being. Furthermore, according to Dickens, woman was a kind of natural priest and she was closer to God than a man (Slater 1983: 302). Woman could be also a means for spiritual strength and encouragement especially in the case of death which was referred to as the Angel of Death in the Victorian age. Consoling David after his wife Dora's death, Agnes Wakefield of *David Copperfield*, David's second wife, is the most appropriate example of the Angel of Death whom David prays at the end of the novel: "[o]h Agnes, oh my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward!" (DC 745).<sup>†</sup> David, indeed, is about to be drown after Dora's death, but Agnes's letter gives him life when he is abroad. In other words, Agnes is the ideal woman, an angel in the house, who fills the missing part in men and makes them more mature through her feminine traits. Here in two examples, David tells how Agnes turns into his spiritual guide by her supportive feminine nature which enables David to become more conscious of himself:

*The very years she spoke of, were realities now, for my correction; and would have been, one day, a little later perhaps, though we had parted in our earliest folly. I endeavoured to convert what might have been between myself and Agnes, into a means of making me more self-denying, more resolved, more conscious of myself, and my defects and errors. (695)*  
*She was so true, she was so beautiful, she was so good,—I owed her so much gratitude, she was so dear to me, that I could find no utterance for what I felt.*

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<sup>†</sup> All Dickens quotations are taken from *David Copperfield* (2000). Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited.

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*I tried to bless her, tried to thank her, tried to tell her (as I had often done in letters) what an influence she had upon me. (712)*

Besides spiritual guidance, Dickens' ideal woman should also guide her husband morally and should be an uplifting wife like again Agnes does in *David Copperfield*. Unfortunately, as observed by Joseph Gold, to recognize the significance of Agnes, who is his better angel, David has to reach maturation (1972: 181). Dickens' ideal woman, moreover, is portrayed as a mother-protector who underlines the significance of religion, family, social responsibility and emotional attachments. Dickens also reflects women as both "*objects of beauty and as persons capable of intelligence, understanding, creativity, and sensitive inner beauty, who can make male characters find inspiration from [ . . . ]*" (McGuire 1995: 9) which again emphasizes human wholeness. The main reason behind this ideology was the belief that woman came from heaven "*to work wanders in the home*" (McGuire 1995: 10). Additionally, the ideal woman in Dickens' novel is the one who leaves her own desires aside to nurture others to create a complete community. Therefore, "*the non-competitive, non-aggressive, and self-aggressive and self-sacrificing economy of women- with its insider knowledge of birthing, nurturing and dying- mediated the competitive, aggressive, and acquisitive nature of male economy and its total dedication to work, success, and money*" (Houston 1994: 91). Employing Victorian gender-based codes of behaviour, Dickens shows that the void in man is to be filled through the female who is self-denying, nourishing mother and wife while the male is hungry child crying at night (Houston 1994: 92). Then, it can be supported that by affirming that the missing parts in the males should be completed by females through their opposite characteristics, Dickens highlights the significance of androgyny to become a creative and complete human being.

Dickens' attitudes towards women and the relationship between men and women mentioned above are all reflected in *David Copperfield*. Different from contemporary women writers-especially Charlotte Bronte, who portrays strong and active female characters like Jane of *Jane Eyre* (1847), or George Eliot, who presents courageous, determined and strong-willed Maggie Tulliver of *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Dickens idealizes the angelic woman. According to Patricia Ingham and Merryn Williams, Dickens' female characters can be easily categorised into three types that are dominant in Victorian literature: angels, fallen sisters, and eccentrics (qtd. in Gold 1972: 6). In *David Copperfield*, there are two of the mentioned types, the angel and the fallen woman. Agnes Wickfield ideally stands for the Victorian angel in the house, the ideal woman for Dickens and she is a prize for every man as well as for David. The



Dickensian angel symbolises a model of womanhood which was generally prevalent in the 1840s and 50s. Agnes performs a role substitute for wife to her father and sister to David, thus, exemplifies the traits of the angel in the house with her endurance, thoughtfulness and commitment. David's aunt states that Agnes is a role model for the young girls around her: "*If she trains the young girls whom she has about her, to be like herself, [...] 'Heaven knows, her life will be well employed! Useful and happy [...]*" (711). According to Doris Alexander, Agnes, in fact, is the heroine of the novel as she embodies love and truth and after many errors and great sufferings David could reach her (1991: 77) (beginning with his terrible childhood in the hands of his violent stepfather Mr. Murdstone, dying of his mother, his difficult times in school at Salem House to his wrong marriage to Dora and his wrong job choices along with financial difficulties).

Furthermore, the angelic Dickensian woman gives "*unconditional love and support to her less moral male counterpart even if he nearly ruins her life until he finally reforms*" (Gold 1972: 6), as in the case of Agnes. Not on the moral grounds, yet, Agnes still gives unconditional love and support to her father, Mr. Wickfield, and creates a heaven for him. Thereby, Dickens underlines the significance of the ideal womanhood to hearth and home and describes how Agnes "*set glasses for her father, and a decanter of port wine*" (DC 194), or how "*Agnes made the tea, and presided over it*" (DC 195). Acting her traditional gender role as the angel in the house, Agnes turns into a mother-protector figure mentioned before. That is how Agnes fills the void in his father. The ideal androgyny is defined by Farwell as such "*neither side is reduced to the other in defeat, but each contributes to dynamic tension which defines the unity*" (1975: 442). In the Dickensian androgyny, there is a unity between the sexes, however, compared to Woolf's androgyny which highlights equality of both sexes to use their full potential as human beings, in Dickens' androgyny shaped by the patriarchal Victorian society, the androgynous identity is dominated by the masculine and the feminine plays the subordinate role as women live in their private spheres.

In addition to the Angelic woman, Agnes Wickfield, *David Copperfield* portrays the failure of angel in the house through Dora Spenlow and in this respect Dora can be taken as a foil for Agnes. John McGowan points out that David's loss of his mother at the beginning of the novel is interpreted as he is expelled from a garden and his first marriage, with Dora, is an attempt to regain this lost paradise (1979: 12). In fact, later David realizes that the earlier happiness is impossible and the loss of his mother is inevitable: "*[w]hat I missed, I still regarded-I always regarded- as something that had been a dream of my youthful fancy; that*

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*was incapable of realisation; that I was now discovering to be so, with some natural pain, as all men did*" (DC 593). Thereby, David cannot regain his lost paradise since Dora represents the clashes within the domestic life at home. Dickens, indeed, is one of the few authors who depict the angel in the house with domestic chaos. When David marries his Victorian angel, Dora, he expects domestic bliss to follow in accordance with the Victorian myth which suggests that *"a woman by nature diffuses a charm and order that turn the home into a refuge from the capitalist competition of the marketplace"* (Langland 1992: 298). However, David's choice is wrong and he later refers to his unfortunate choice of a wife as the *"first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart"* (DC 594) which serves as the beginning point of David's journey to growth (Newey 2004: 111) in which he can analyse his past objectively (Needham 1954: 104). Dora's failure as an angel in the house might be traced in her housekeeping just by looking at the dinner time since nothing is ever on time in the home. The cook serves dinner after five when they were to have eaten at four; and David asks: *"[d]o you think Mary Anne has any idea of time?"* (DC 541). The food, when it finally arrives, is overcooked. While David's professional life progresses like clockwork -the household's clock regresses: *"Dora glanced wistfully at the clock, and hinted that she thought it was too fast. On the contrary, my love, said I, referring to my watch, it's a few minutes too slow"* (DC 541). Therefore, as Jennifer Ruth argues, the discordancy of the couple is also apparent in their diverse attitudes to time (323). As another example, one day David invites Traddles to dinner and asks Dora to prepare the meal, yet they encounter row oysters. David's words in relation to Dora's housekeeping summarize how a bad housewife Dora is: *"I doubt whether two young birds could have known less about keeping house, than I and my pretty Dora did"* (540).

David tries to achieve completeness as a human being and an agent is required to fill the void in him and to bring his household into line with his accomplishments in professional life. Yet, this agent is not Dora, but Agnes who is her father's housekeeper since her childhood. While the novel displays Dora's domestic failures which directly clash with the ideology of the angel in the house, it portrays Agnes as the domestic angel and David defines her as *"[his] guide, and best support"* and *"the source of every worthy aspiration [he] ever had; the centre of [himself], the circle of [his] life and [his] soul"* (DC 732, 734). In fact, Agnes's success in housekeeping is given as an aspect of her nature and she becomes, at home, a symbol of authority, power, control and a tool of management. Thus, through Agnes, Dickens presents the ideal woman who is powerful, fills the void in man and who helps the male to reach completeness in life. Treated as a *"pet"* (DC 347) by her family, unlike Agnes, Dora fails in

the role of angel in the house. Different from Dora, grown as her father's housekeeper, Agnes recognizes the significance of home for women. For example, when David goes after success in his academic life via schooling and examinations, Agnes never receives education, as she utters, "[my father's] housekeeper must be in his house, you know" (DC 198). Here again the male domination in androgyny comes forward along with the self-sacrifice of the female. Consequently, David's true angel is not Dora but Agnes since what is missing in Dora can be found in Agnes and what is missing in David can be found in Agnes. David learns from his experiences, gets matured and is rewarded with a woman, not only a "little housekeeper but who, instead of merely sharpening pens and copying the odd page of manuscripts as Dora does, is David's creative inspiration, beside him at the end as he writes his final words" (Gordery 2008: 372). Agnes becomes the inevitable part of David's life without whom he feels incomplete.

Apart from the angel in the house and the failure of the angel in the house, in *David Copperfield* Dickens introduces the fallen woman through Emily Peggotty. Unlike the angel in the house type, this type of woman, like Dora who stands for the failure of the angel in the house type, is not the woman who can complete the lack in men. For Fielding, Emily's "seduction or fall had been planned from the first number when she told David she wanted to be a lady and run to the sea" (1965: 133). The chapter titles alone can also indicate Dickens' scorn for Little Emily who rejects the love of the honest Ham Peggotty to run away with James Steerforth (DC 312) like in the chapter "Good and Bad Angels". Chapter XXX, "A Loss" describes the death of Peggotty's husband, Barkis, but Dickens entitles Chapter XXXI, describing Emily's fall and disgrace, "A Greater Loss" which underlines the position of the fallen woman in the eyes of Dickens. Running away with Steerforth, Emily leaves a letter behind her telling about the reason for her running away: "it will be never to come back, unless he brings me back a lady" (DC 386) which is consistent with the Victorian ideal for a woman whose ideal is to become a lady. Twenty-eight chapters earlier, Dickens foreshadows Emily's fall when David remembers how little Emily run dangerously to the sea:

*[t]here has been a time since-I do not say it lasted long, but it has been-when I have asked myself the question, would it have been better for little Emily to have had the waters close above her head that morning in my sight; and when I have answered Yes, it would have been (DC 381).*

Therefore, it can be stated that Emily cannot possess a room in Dickens' conservative realm and exile to Australia is the penalty for her wickedness. Furthermore, Dickens leaves no ground for Emily's marriage and for love of which Emily sadly states: "that's gone for ever"

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(DC 611). At the end of the novel, Dickens leaves Emily alive but remorseful, passing the time instructing children, caring for the patients, and for her ardent uncle. As K. J. Fielding argues, Dickens leaves Emily alone “as a wilting spinster” (1965: 26): “A slight figure, kiender worn; soft sorrowful blue eyes; a delicate face; a pretty head, leaning a little down . . . That’s Em’ly” (DC 738). Then, similar to the failure of the angel in the house type, Dora, the fallen woman type, Emily, is introduced as the foil to the angel in the house type, Agnes, who is the ideal woman to fill the lack in men.

What is more, in relation to women’s role to complete the void in men, Dickens believed the emotional and moral superiority of the female and was fascinated with the idea of sisterhood among women which is demonstrated in *David Copperfield* in the relationship between Agnes and Dora, and Agnes and Emily. Filled with admiration, Dickens wrote that women were “so much quicker to feel [. . .] all tenderness and pity [. . .] than the nature of men” which was central in Dickens’ portrayal of the feminine ideal in *David Copperfield* (McGuire 1995: 38). In this context, in *David Copperfield*, we witness the solidarity between the fallen woman and her angelic sister since Agnes eases Emily before her journey to Australia to find a safer world. The rapport between the fallen woman and her angelic sister in the novel pleases the woman readers, who glorify the ties of sisterhood bringing angelic and fallen woman together. The ties, however, are destroyed via exile which is the fate found suitable for the fallen woman. Dickens is not the only one to penalize the fallen woman, yet, according to Gold, Dickens’ treatment of the fallen woman is tougher than the punishments of George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy (1972: 12). Gold’s opinions are open to discussion since it can be also supported that Dickens has a modern attitude towards his fallen woman Emily since without judging her, he sends her Australia for a new beginning unlike in Eliot’s and Hardy’s novels where the fallen woman’s fate is death like Hetty Sorrel of *Adam Bede* and Tess of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*.

Besides the sisterhood between the fallen woman, Emily, and her angelic sister, Agnes, the sisterhood between the angelic woman, Agnes and her foil Dora is also depicted in *David Copperfield*. When David sees Agnes and Dora together, he utters the following words reflecting Dickens’ belief in sisterhood: “I never was so happy. I never was so pleased as when I saw those two sit down together, side by side. As when I saw my little darling looking up so naturally to those cordial eyes. As when I saw the tender, beautiful regard which Agnes cast upon her” (DC 520). With the same token, Slater points out that

*Agnes and Dora, the Angel/Sister and the Fairy/ Kitten, avatars of Mary Hogarth and Maria Beadnell, between them incorporate everything that*

*Dickens found exciting, loveable, fascinating, admirable and inspiring in woman; and their instant mutual affection [. . .] forms the crown of David's joy in them. (1983: 43)*

That is how Dickens presents his male protagonist, David, as the one who shapes his knowledge of life and masculinity while he goes through several stages of growth. David is at first an innocent boy, then he goes through life, becomes educated and experienced and tries to reach completeness as a human being through interactions with the women around him. While growing up, David questions the happenings around him and most importantly questions the expectations of masculinity, as Irina Strout phrases, “*where men are placed on the scale of masculinity and what is expected of them*” (2009: 31) and he evaluates his self. In fact, *David Copperfield*, a bildungsroman, a novel of individual growth to artistic and moral maturity, can be also read as a novel about the search for self. Searching for his self, David realises that his masculinity should be completed by femininity to achieve the completeness. Thus, David's attitudes towards masculinity and femininity also change throughout the novel when he reaches Agnes, the angel of the house, after Dora. This realization underlines the significance of androgyny in his journey to self-discovery. During the time he spent away from England, David survives through the support of Agnes, realizes the significance of her on his way to learn from his regrets and begins a new life by highlighting her feminine characteristics:

*Thoughtfully, for I could not be here once more, and so near Agnes, without the revival of those regrets with which I had so long been occupied. Softened regrets they might be, teaching me what I had failed to learn when my younger life was all before me [...] (710)*

*You will find her,' pursued my aunt, 'as good, as beautiful, as earnest, as disinterested, as she has always been. If I knew higher praise, Trot, I would bestow it on her.' There was no higher praise for her; no higher reproach for me. Oh, how had I strayed so far away! (711)*

Unlike Agnes, Dora is not the type of woman who helps David to reach an androgynous vision. At the beginning, David is so happy with Dora, yet later he realizes that his marriage is a failure and Dora is not the right woman for him. Indeed, Dora's father's death and his aunt's bankruptcy make him increase his efforts to win Dora and he turns into a chivalric knight saving Dora (Newey 2004: 143): “*woodman's axe [. . .] cutting at those trees in the forest of difficulty*” till he came to Dora. “*Great was the labour, priceless the reward. Dora was the reward, and Dora must be won*” (DC 443). Therefore, in his relationship with Dora, David plays his role as a masculine figure by having superiority over Dora whom he protects, teaches and regards as a doll, a child wife.

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Unlike Dora, Agnes is the woman who contributes to David's growth by playing her role completely as an angel in the house- nurturing, subordinate, devoted wife and housewife. Thus, although Dora symbolizes the domestic chaos at home, Agnes typifies domestic bliss at home. After Dora, David's attitudes towards femininity and masculinity change in his relationship with Agnes since she is the woman who fills the void in him. David's competitive and aggressive male nature is balanced by Agnes's nurturing, self-sacrificing character. Therefore, David, in Huoston's terms, the hungry child crying at night, is calmed down by the feminine traits of Agnes. As Myers argues, the adult David must rediscover and reintegrate into a coherent sense of self having the aspects of his male selfhood together with the feminine. Indeed, it is the state of androgyny completely achieved at the end of the novel. For example, David's artistic and moral impulses are identified as feminine which he loses in early adulthood when he adopts a strictly masculine identity. For him, his marriage to Agnes is a means of reclaiming the feminine aspects of his androgynous selfhood. Their marriage also symbolizes the reconciliation of the feminine with the masculine and the private with the public (1985: 120-122). Consequently, it can be argued that through Agnes, David discovers his androgynous aspect. Furthermore, after Dora's death, David stays in Europe which enables him to recover what he lost through Agnes. After Dora's death, David tells of his regrets, errors, predicament and undisciplined heart as such:

*It was a long and gloomy night that gathered on me, haunted by the ghosts of many hopes, of many dear remembrances, many errors, many unavailing sorrows and regrets. [...] As a man upon a field of battle will receive a mortal hurt, and scarcely know that he is struck, so I, when I was left alone with my undisciplined heart, had no conception of the wound with which it had to strive. (691)*

It can be suggested that the "undisciplined heart", which is repeated throughout the text for David, refers to his errors and regrets, accordingly sorrows of immature David and it is disciplined by Agnes's soft nature unique to women. David returns to life via Agnes's letters and support, leaves his regrets and errors behind and begins a new life as a more mature man which he underlines as impossible without Agnes:

*She gave me no advice; she urged no duty on me; she only told me, in her own fervent manner, what her trust in me was. She knew (she said) how such a nature as mine would turn affliction to good. [...] She knew that in me, sorrow could not be weakness, but must be strength [...] I read her letter many times.[...] I told her that I had been in sore need of her help; that without her I was not, and I never had been, what she thought me; but that she inspired me to be that, and I would try. (693)*

Hence, the novel features the loss of Agnes as the appropriate wife for David. Away from her in Europe, David recognizes the significance of Agnes in his life: *“I had always felt my weakness, in comparison with her constancy and fortitude; and now I felt it more and more. Whatever I might have been to her, or she to me, if I had been more worthy of her long ago, I was not now, and she was not. The time was past. I had let it go by, and had deservedly lost her”* (695). The characteristics David highlights for Agnes, constancy and fortitude, are the feminine traits which are missing in David. Moreover, many critics argue that Agnes represents the selfhood which David requires to discover and recover. For example, J. Hillis Miller sees Agnes as the creator of David’s selfhood *“without whom he would be nothing”* and according to the religious analogy of Miller, *“David has that relationship to Agnes which a devout Christian has to God”* (qtd. in Myers 1985: 125). Similarly, another critic Alexander Welsh states that the definition of self *“becomes crucial at death, after which he [the hero] will be nothing unless the heroine can save him”* (qtd. in Myers 1985: 126). All this argument is in parallel with Dickens’ choice of Agnes since his heroine acts as the agent of male perfection by contributing much to the growth of David by her female traits. In marriage, David and Agnes complete the concept of androgyny with their masculine and feminine traits respectively. Within the light of the given information, it can be supported that the novel reconciles the feminine aspect with the masculine character through the marriage of David and Agnes which is a kind of androgynous reunion revealing itself in David’s praise of Agnes’s feminine traits such as self-sacrificing and constancy. David also tells of the change in him through Agnes and how he reaches maturity:

*In the beginning of the change that gradually worked in me, when I tried to get a better understanding of myself and be a better man, I did glance, through some indefinite probation, to a period when I might possibly hope to cancel the mistaken past, and to be so blessed as to marry her. [...] I had reposed in her, her knowledge of my errant heart, the sacrifice she must have made to be my friend and sister, and the victory she had won. (695)*

Furthermore, Agnes calms down David with her “tranquillity” and “unerring instinct”, which can be also counted as feminine characteristics, and becomes his angel: *“With her own sweet tranquillity, she calmed my agitation [...] With the unerring instinct of her noble heart, she touched the chords of my memory so softly and harmoniously, that not one jarred within me; I could listen to the sorrowful, distant music, and desire to shrink from nothing it awoke. How could I, when, blended with it all, was her dear self, the better angel of my life? (713)*. In the same manner, David praises the gentle and soft nature of Agnes: *“More than that, Agnes, I knew, almost as if I had known this story, that there was something inexplicably gentle and*

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*softened, surrounding you”* (716). In another example, David calls Agnes as his guide, support, and second nature as he grows up together with Agnes and how she fills the gap in him: “*Agnes! Ever my guide, and best support! [...] we grew up here together [...] But you were so much better than I, so necessary to me in every boyish hope and disappointment, that to have you to confide in, and rely upon in everything, became a second nature, supplanting for the time the first and greater one of loving you as I do!*” (732). Finally, the novel ends with David’s words in which he describes Agnes as the one who lightens his life to recognise the world and find himself; without whom he is nothing and with whom he will always go further:

*And now, as I close my task, subduing my desire to linger yet, these faces fade away. But one face, shining on me like a Heavenly light by which I see all other objects, is above them and beyond them all. And that remains. I turn my head, and see it, in its beautiful serenity, beside me. My lamp burns low, and I have written far into the night; but the dear presence, without which I were nothing, bears me company. O Agnes, O my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me, like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward!* (745)

At the end of the novel, like in the case of Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* and *Orlando* in which the act of writing is accentuated to realise oneself, and androgyny as the requisite characteristic of a successful writer, David turns back to writing. Feeling complete by the presence of his angel in the house by his side, David becomes more secure and self-confident in his professional life. Through the feminine characteristics of Agnes, David fills the missing part in him, balances his masculine identity and reaches completeness.

### CONCLUSION

Dickens is known for his ideas on gender relations typical of his age and for his masculine character. Accordingly, his *David Copperfield* portrays the Victorian stereotypes, the angel in the house and the fallen woman. Yet, Dickens also believes that men have a lack in them which should be completed by the feminine characteristics of the ideal Victorian woman, the angel in the house. Therefore, in the novel, unlike the fallen woman, the angel in the house type woman is depicted as the one who completes the lack in man via her ideal feminine characteristics and forms the Dickensian androgyny. In this type of androgyny, similar to the androgyny in *To the Lighthouse*, the female and male characteristics come together not in one person, but in the harmony of the characteristics of a woman and man and their realization of the necessity of having the characteristics of each other to become a complete human being, which Gazolla names as “an androgynous vision” (75). In this type of vision or androgyny, unlike the traditional androgyny, the Victorian female and male stereotypes are still



in effect along with a fusion of these characteristics. Consequently, the male traits of David are harmonized with the feminine traits possessed by Agnes in *David Copperfield*. David's "undisciplined heart", thus, is disciplined through Agnes. David matures and finds his androgynous aspect by giving a room in himself for the feminine as well as for the masculine and achieves a happy marriage with his true angel Agnes. That is how Dickens idealises the domestic Victorian woman, who fills the void in man with her feminine characteristics and paves the way for a complete and successful human being as depicted in David's words for Agnes: "I have often thought since, you have ever been to me. Ever pointing upward, Agnes; ever leading me to something better; ever directing me to higher things!" (716). Similar to Mr and Mrs. Ramsay, David and Agnes embody the concept of androgyny as an example of the harmony of the opposites, of male and female characteristics. Questioning his male identity, David, at the end of the novel, finds the answer in the feminine identity to remove the lack in himself as a male and discovers his androgynous aspect with the fusion of his male traits with the feminine. That is to say, the feminine characteristics of David's angel in the house, Agnes, - domestic knowledge, tranquillity, endurance, fortitude, devotion, powerful instincts, self-sacrificing, nurturing and subordinating nature- are integrated into David's masculine identity and form an androgynous union. In the end, to use Aristophanes' terms, David finds his missing half as Agnes becomes the other half of him which grows him into a complete human being.

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