EVEN IN THE PREFACE to the Charles Dickens Edition of *Oliver Twist*, published thirty years after the novel's first appearance, Dickens felt compelled to account for the dank and squalid scenes depicted therein.¹ Yet nothing he wrote in defense of his purpose can dispel the response of most readers, that the image of evil the book presents is far more forceful than that of the ostensibly triumphant good. Fagin's terrifying detachment during his trial, Nancy's fatal ambivalence toward Sikes, and Sikes's own suicidal guilt—these survive, complex and terrible, in our memory; while Mr. Brownlow's diligent charity and Rose's high-pitched honor dissipate into vapors. On the one side Dickens dramatized emotions, on the other he manipulated attitudes. Still, it is not simply the relative density with which the evil is portrayed that tips the scale so strongly in its direc-

¹London, 1867. Though his tone ("Once upon a time it was held to be a shocking circumstance . . .") suggests that the fires of outrage have died down, Dickens nevertheless reiterates his intention to "paint the criminals in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid misery of their lives . . . It appeared to me that to do this would be to attempt a something which was needed and which would be a service to society." Of the character of Nancy he says: "I am glad to have had it doubted, for in that circumstance I should find sufficient assurance (if I wanted any) that it needed to be told."
tion. It is a matter of proportion as well, for images of deprivation, misery, and malevolence extend across most of the novel, while goodness is subordinated until the book’s closing sections. Charity, solicitude, and good humor maintain a precarious existence through much of the novel and emerge at last somewhat breathless but triumphant. Yet for Oliver none of these virtues is enough in itself; what he seeks is a fixed position in the universe—a home and family. This very goal, however, is rendered distant by the ambiguity with which it is presented.

Oliver Twist is the story of an orphan’s search for a home and family. Yet, to examine the picture of family life that the novel presents is to discover a vast emptiness where the center of affirmation might be expected to be. Two striking circumstances can be noted which bear quite directly on Oliver’s search: that the households of Mr. Brownlow and Mrs. Maylie, his only contacts with gentleness and peace, provide no real antithesis to Oliver’s homeless condition; and that, although the family is founded on marriage, the only marriages dramatized in the book are acutely wretched.

We recognize at once the crucial role of Mr. Brownlow’s and Mrs. Maylie’s homes as havens in the uncompromisingly dichotomized world of the novel. Only here can Oliver breathe, only here does he know kindness and civility. The rest is viciousness. Graham Greene expresses it well: “We know that when Oliver leaves Mr. Brownlow’s house to walk a few hundred yards to the bookseller, his friends will wait in vain for his return. All London outside the quiet, shady street in Pentonville belongs to his pursuers.” For Greene, the world of Oliver Twist is “a world without God”; Arnold Kettle, whose interests in discussing the novel are less metaphysical, examines that same gulf between good and evil, and its effects on Dickens’ technique. He sees the book as a struggle between plot and pattern; yet the starting point of his discussion is that same haven provided by Mr. Brownlow. With a sure sense, Kettle singles out the scene of Oliver’s awakening there as “a central situation in the book—this emergence out of squalor into comfort and kindliness,” and calls attention to its repetition later when Oliver awakens at the Maylies’.

What each critic emphasizes here is that in a universe, if not Manichean, at least abundant in malice, the positive forces find symbolic expression in the two households into which Oliver passively drifts. These symbols are of course appropriate, since the essential movement of the book is Oliver’s quest for a home, a quest that grows out of his very identity as an orphan who, lacking an organic family, is reduced to an abstraction by the “philosophers” of the welfare system; and inducted into the no less organized army of crime that forays ceaselessly into the streets of London. What Oliver seeks, then, is the stability and security of an organic family relationship. Few serious readers, however, are willing to grant that Oliver comes convincingly to the fulfillment of that quest. The fact is that only the criminals exist with psychological solidity while Oliver’s helpers are absolutely pure, which is to say that they are absolutely transparent devices of salvation.

Yet if the positive forces do not have the power of the negative ones, it is not simply because the uncomplicated benevolence of the “good” characters is dramatically pallid. Those very havens that give Oliver his only notions of the happy home life he seeks provide no real antithesis to his misfortunes—they are disquietingly empty. If the image of Fagin, the false father, cooking sausages over the...
fire, is a parody of domestic life, the scenes in the homes of Oliver's benefactors are unfinished pictures of the happy home.

The dominant note in each of the houses is an uneasy silence. At Brownlow's Oliver spends most of his time recovering from his illness. "They were happy days, those of Oliver's recovery. Everything was so quiet, and neat, and orderly—everybody was kind and gentle—that after the noise and turbulence in the midst of which he had always lived, it seemed like Heaven itself" (Chap. 14). Only Grimwig's deceptively hostile bluster breaks the hushed tone. And on the day that Oliver leaves the house in Pentonville our last view of the place is a tableau of Brownlow and Grimwig "sit[ting] in silence, with the watch between them" (Chap. 14). Mrs. Maylie's residences in Chertsey and in the country are no less silent. Here we have not one but two invalids. Rose, who is soon to fall sick herself, describes the cottage to Oliver: "The quiet place, the pure air, and all the pleasures and beauties of spring, will restore you in a few days" (Chap. 32). In the country Oliver is more active, picking flowers, reading the Bible. Yet the three months of Oliver's domestication are reported in panoramic fashion by the narrator, so that they become an idyllic blur. Even here, however, Oliver finds a "little churchyard" whither he may repair to think of his mother and "sob unseen" (Chap. 32).

His benefactors, then, provide retreats, hospitals, and places of meditation, but not homes. It is not only illness that silences them. Rather, each of the households is truncated, each lacks the elements of completeness. Mr. Brownlow is a bachelor, Mrs. Maylie is a widow. Indeed, the entire assemblage of Oliver's friends comprises bachelors, widows, and an orphan. One of the overriding ironies of the novel is that whereas, from the opening scenes in the workhouse, family life is implied as one of the highest goods, Oliver never encounters a complete, happy family; indeed, the family, in so far as it inescapably rests on marriage, seems doomed from the beginning, for the grim fact is that marriage in the book produces not blissful union but strife. The happy family exists only as an ideal, visible for instance in the quivering ethereal nubility of Rose: "The very intelligence that shone in her deep blue eye, and was stamped upon her noble head, seemed scarcely of her age, or of the world; and yet the changing expression of sweetness and good humour, the thousand lights that played about her face and left no shadow there; above all, the smile, the cheerful, happy smile—were made for Home, and fireside peace and happiness" (Chap. 29). How far off, though, are such ends from the world of the book. Oliver knows only fragmentation; he must find solace in partial relationships. The nun-like devotion of Mrs. Bedwin, the eccentricities of Grimwig and Losberne are called upon to fill the void that exists in the homes of Oliver's protectors. The integral domestic bliss which is implied as an end is never dramatized in the novel. If the ultimate union between Harry and Rose is put aside for the moment, the striking fact is that, for a book crowded with characters, Oliver Twist presents a panorama singularly deficient in married people, and totally devoid of happy ones.

If Oliver finds only fragmented families among the "good" people, he experiences domestic life quite early in the book during his stay at the Sowerberrys'. Their relationship has a ritualistic quality, the undertaker addressing his wife in terms of endearment and she responding "Ugh, you brute," on occasion accompanying her answers with "an hysterical laugh which threatened violent consequences" (Chap. 5).

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6 Because of the availability of good editions, I have not thought it necessary to provide page references, and cite the chapters instead.
Mrs. Sowerberry is of course a witch in a fairy tale. The "short, thin, squeezed-up woman, with a vixenish countenance" treats Oliver even worse than her husband: "There! Get downstairs, little bag o' bones!" she says, pushing him down a flight of stairs into the cellar where she will give him the dog's scraps to eat. Later, she shows him to his bed: "You don't mind sleeping among the coffins, I suppose?" (Chap. 4). This is Oliver's first experience of domestic life, and it's no wonder he runs away.

But the Sowerberrys are not the only married people in the book. The middle section of the novel contains Mr. Bumble's courting and winning of Mrs. Corney, an episode which parodies the romance of domestic life that so delighted Dickens elsewhere. The beadle, who is detached from the monolith of Oliver's oppressors by virtue of his foolishness, has human qualities, and his response to Mrs. Corney's "cheerful fire" are natural and understandable. Coming in from the bitter cold, Bumble is intoxicated by the warmth and coziness of the apartment. His instincts towards security, if less intense, are as sincere as Oliver's. The difference, of course, is that Mr. Bumble is the servant of mercenary instincts, though they move him to comic not demonic action. The comedy of the situation springs in part from his blending of romance and business: "Oh! Mrs. Corney what a prospect this opens! What a opportunity for a jining of hearts and housekeepings!" (Chap. 27). Though the coziness of the scene is juxtaposed against the misery of the paupers outside, the irony is not driven home harshly—Bumble remains a foolish, not a vicious character.

Yet Dickens has heard the cries of the poor and before the book is over he has ruthlessly administered poetic justice to the pompous beadle, chiefly through the agency of his marriage. Chapter 37 is described thus: "In which the reader may perceive a contrast not uncommon in matrimonial cases." We now see Mr. Bumble musing lugubriously on the loss of his cocked hat, his gold-laced coat and his bachelor's freedom. He reflects, with the lucidity of hindsight: "I sold myself... for six teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a milk-pot, with a small quantity of second-hand furniture and twenty pounds in money. I went very reasonable. Cheap, dirt cheap!" (Chap. 37). The new Mrs. Bumble systematically strips the former beadle of his power, experimenting half-heartedly with tears and at last resigning herself to brute physical violence, with which she is completely successful. Marriage has brought a remarkable change of fortune to Mr. Bumble: "Two months! No more than two months ago, I was not only my own master, but everyone else's, so far as the porochial workhouse was concerned, and now!—" (Chap. 37). In short, he is thoroughly miserable and begins to feel "that men who ran away from their wives, leaving them chargeable to the parish, ought, in justice, to be visited with no punishment at all, but rather rewarded as meritorious individuals who had suffered much" (Chap. 37). But the worst is still to come. Mrs. Bumble takes the lead in the sinister dealings with Monks and eventually brings ruin upon the family. In the final chapter their wretchedness is complete: "Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, deprived of her situations, were gradually reduced to great indigence and misery, and finally became paupers in that very same workhouse in which they had once lorded it over others. Mr. Bumble has been heard to say that in this reverse and degradation, he has not even spirits to be thankful for being separated from his wife." It is ironically apt that the very last words we hear of Mr. Bumble before he disappears into groan-filled oblivion, are "his wife," the nemesis that has driven him there.

So much for domestic bliss as it is actually dramatized in Oliver Twist, no matter how persistently it may hover over the action as an ideal. A convales-
cent serenity prevails in the foreshortened families of Oliver's protectors, but the only operative unions depicted are full of strife.

The marital blight is not only visited upon the wicked, however. One must remember that the ultimate reason for all of Oliver's troubles is the affair of his mother and father, precipitated by the wreck of the latter's home life. Mr. Brownlow recalls "the slow torture, the protracted anguish of that ill-assorted union. I know how listlessly and wearily each of that wretched pair dragged on their heavy chain through a world that was poisoned to them both" (Chap. 49). As Monks says of Mrs. Leeford and Oliver's father, "she had no great affection for him, nor he for her" (Chap. 51). Thus the panorama of domestic wretchedness extends even into the past. Against this background Oliver's search for a happy home seems a desperately hopeful notion. All his experience seems to confirm the view of the world Oliver learned when working for Sowerberry: "Husbands... bore the loss of their wives with the most heroic calmness. Wives, again, put on weeds for their husbands as if, so far from grieving in the garb of sorrow, they had made up their minds to render it as becoming and attractive as possible" (Chap. 6).

One would not like to make too much of a small point. All that can be confidently asserted of the depiction of family life in the novel is that it sharpens the outlines of a world in which evil runs rampant and good is on the defensive, poised for retreat. In a book whose structure is based on an orphan's search for a home and family, the heavily shadowed picture of family life casts considerable doubt on the attainability of this goal. Yet there is a final point to be made which can help us appreciate some of the tensions that are suppressed in the ostensibly resolution of Oliver's problem and his achievement of a happy home.

In a world where the family unit seems to be crumbling from within, an outside threat would seem to be superfluous, yet the final irony of this situation is that such a threat exists and is, in fact, embodied in the person of Oliver himself. He is, after all, illegitimate, as his overseers at the workhouse never fail to make clear to him. Passive and feeble, Oliver is time after time reviled by "respectable" members of society. His treatment at the workhouse, the recurrent prophecies of hanging, the taunts of Noah Claypole, "who could trace his genealogy all the way back to his parents" (Chap. 5) are all predicated on the notion that the circumstances of his birth have marked Oliver's character irrevocably for the bad. He is the product of an anti-social act, the rupture of the sacred family unit, and in this role, represents a threat to society itself.

Oliver, the bastard, is naturally good whereas his half-brother Monks, whose credentials are quite legitimate, is depicted in diabolical terms. This reversal of conventional values reverberates throughout the novel in so far as it implicates much of the "respectable" society in the evil that is frankly practiced by the likes of Fagin; and it poses a dilemma: if society itself is corrupt, and that suggestion is strong, where is the outcast of society to turn in his quest for a fixed place? It is in facing this question that one comes to appreciate the importance, perhaps the absolute necessity to Dickens, of Mr. Brownlow and Mrs. Maylie, whose connections with society are so tenuous that they are able to withdraw completely in order to preside over the triumph of the good.

The only possible resolution to Oliver's difficulties is to escape society, to destroy the old family relationships, to create a new society based upon another kind of...
family. Thus in the eschatological dimension that obtains at the book's close, Oliver and his friends realign society's relationships and reconstruct a family on the basis of love rather than law or blood. The first step is the complete revelation and acceptance of all the socially disgraceful facts about Oliver's (and Rose's) family, and then a conscious, willed transposition of relations. Oliver the bastard is accepted by Mr. Brownlow as his son. Oliver himself changes Rose's status: "I'll never call her aunt-sister, my own dear sister, that something has taught my heart to love so dearly from the first" (Chap. 51). Rose, herself an orphan with a "stain" upon her name, achieves a further relation. Mrs. Maylie, upon hearing her story, affirms that Rose is "not the less my niece . . . not the less my dearest child . . . my own dear girl" (Chap. 51). As for Harry, since Rose has considered her family history an impediment to their marriage, he cuts himself off from much of his family; he renounces the world for a country parish. We may be sure that their marriage will work, for it has been purged of the two elements that have caused evil in the other ones: Harry's retirement in the country has removed him from economic competition; and his willingness to choose the "disreputable" Rose at the cost of his political aspirations demonstrates that he is not excessively concerned with his family name—he has no false sense of respectability. Greed had certainly been one of the strongest passions in the homes of Sowerberry and Bumble, and it was "family pride" that forced Oliver's father into the unfortunate marriage that produced all the troubles. Of course, this is a moral and not an artistic victory: the existence of the poor and the wretched in London has not been negated by this idyll, which is simply a turning away from the problem.

Almost all the good people undertake the same symbolic withdrawal from that part of the world of the novel which is most vivid, chiefly symbolized by what Dr. Losberne calls "this confounded London" (Chap. 32). The "good" characters gravitate toward the country retreat, and eventually all of them live there except the eccentric Mr. Grimwig, who nonetheless makes frequent visits. Even Oliver's erring mother is given a posthumous place of honor here. Having totally overturned the world's judgments and relations, Oliver and his friends have created a "little society whose condition approached as nearly to one of perfect happiness as can ever be known in this changing world" (Chap. 53). They constitute, in fact, one happy family.

Dr. Jekyll and the Emergence of Mr. Hyde

MASAO MIYOSHI

We recall him with pleasure as a fine story teller, the author of those classics of juvenile literature, Kidnapped and Treasure Island. Probably very few who loved those books will have occasion to read him again, but even the scholars whose business he is neglect the novels these days. Robert Louis Stevenson: he is himself so much the biographer's novelist, the fascinating "life" to be read, that his work is almost incidental. Some, it is true, regard him as a superb craftsman assistant professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley, Mr. Miyoshi has published several articles in Victorian literature. He is currently working on a book dealing with the divided self in nineteenth-century English literature.