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THE DILEMMA OF MARRIAGE IN DICKENS' DAVID COPPERFIELD

DICKENS'İN DAVID COPPERFIELD ESERİNDEKİ EVLİLİK İKİLEMİ

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Abstract

Marriage and divorce are two principal subjects and events which pervade into *David Copperfield* (1850) by Charles Dickens. The panic of divorce that haunted the minds of Victorian people and penetrates into the novel is the key element underlying incompatible and miserable marriages, in which spouses are condemned to complex lives going between loyalty, sacrifice, submission and helplessness and most of the time death is a way of escape or relief from an oppressive marriage for spouses in the novel. This paper aims to expose the main reasons behind failed marriages in *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens by questioning the seeming impossibility of divorce which was both celebrated and condemned in the nineteenth century. Associated with separation, disappointment and regret, the marriages in *David Copperfield* have a negative, pessimistic tone rather than a positive and hopeful one. It is a novel which sacrifices failed marriages for the sake of isolation, divorce and second marriages. Therefore this paper will discuss whether *David Copperfield* celebrates or reacts against divorce by considering the anxieties of Betsey Trotwood, Dora and Emma Micawber, as wives who wants to leave their husbands, and try to demonstrate how the novel is obsessed with desertion, separation and dissolution of a marriage, rather than its maintenance.

Key Words: Marriage, Separation, Patriarchy, Incompatible, Undisciplined Heart

Özet

Evlilik ve boşanma, Charles Dickens'ın *David Copperfield* eserine nüfuz eden iki ana konu ve olaydır. Viktorya dönemi insanların zihninden çıkmayan ve romana derinlemesine işleyen boşanma konusundaki panik, eşlerin, sadakat, fedakârlık, boyun eğme ve çaresizlik arasında gidip gelen karmaşık hayatlara mahkûm edildiği uyumsuz ve mutsuz evliliklerin altında yatan temel unsurdur ve çoğu zaman ölüm, romandaki eşler için, boğucu evliliklerden bir kaçış ya da rahatlama yoludur. Bu yazı, on dokuzuncu yüzyılda hem kutlanan hem kınanan boşanmanın sözde imkânsızlığını

sorgulayarak, Charles Dickens'in *David Copperfield* eserindeki başarısız evliliklerin arkasındaki ana nedenleri ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrılık, hayalkırıklığı ve pişmanlıkla ilişkilendirilen, *David Copperfield*'teki evlilikler pozitif ve umut verici olmaktan ziyade negative ve karamsar bir tona sahiptir. Bu, ayrılık, boşanma ve ikinci evlilikler uğruna, başarısız evlilikleri feda eden bir romandır. Bundan dolayı bu yazı, eşlerinden ayrılmak isteyen kadınlar olarak, Betsey Trotwood, Dora ve Emma Micawber'in endişelerini göz önünde bulundurarak, *David Copperfield* romanının boşanmayı kutlayıp kutlamadığını ya da boşanmaya karşı çıkıp çıkmadığını tartışacak ve romanın nasıl terkedilme, ayrılık ve evliliğin devamından ziyade bozulması gibi konularla yoğunlaştığını göstermeye çalışacak.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Evlilik, Ayrılma, Patriyarki, Uyumsuz, Dizginlenemez Kalp

The Dilemma of Marriage in Dickens' *David Copperfield*

Marriage and divorce are two principal subjects and events which pervade into *David Copperfield* (1850) by Charles Dickens. Victorian society witnessed that the Marriage Act of 1753 - intended to prevent clandestine marriages - in fact led to the events of 'self-divorce'¹, accidentally despite the fact that divorce did not start to be legalized until 1857. A product of a period when people resort to self-divorce inevitably as a result of their failed marriages, irrespective of whether divorce is made legal or not, *David Copperfield* reflects the black and white aspects of the institution of marriage by questioning the seeming impossibility of divorce which was both celebrated and condemned in the nineteenth century. The panic of divorce that haunted the minds of Victorian people and penetrates into the novel is the key element underlying incompatible and miserable marriages, in which spouses are condemned to complex lives going between loyalty, sacrifice, submission and helplessness and most of the time death is a way of escape or relief from an oppressive marriage for spouses in the novel.

In *David Copperfield* the concept of marriage inhabits divorce in itself and so it is controversial whether it is always a solution to personal problems or brings happiness to spouses. In the novel the deceitfulness of appearance, undisciplined hearts and wayward feelings of individuals alienate them from the real unshakable love relations through the brink of repentance stemming from the inequality and incompatibility of partners. As Hilary Schor describes, "*David Copperfield* also tells a complicated story of gender, identity, and writing, one in which coming-to-identity, successfully traversing the marriage plot, and becoming an author are one" (Schor 1999:7). The marriages established happily at first can result in disappointments in the end as the case with Dora and David, Clara and Murdstone, Betsey Trotwood and her husband. The equity of partners is not related with class, status or any physical features but with the suitability of their mind and aims in life. In this respect the marriage of Annie and Dr. Strong is a good model. Despite the age and class differences between them, they are

¹ Note separation by mutual consent, not by legal ways

equal mentally with their tolerant, understanding, trustful and respectful manners towards each other. They do not give place to any doubt in their relations and this makes their marriage stronger and indestructible, but their marriage is still shadowed by dark forces of undisciplined hearts. On the other hand, however much the marriage of Wilkins and Emma Micawber is representative of absolute loyalty, patience and submission between spouses under the effect of conditions fraught with helplessness, misery, anxiety and destitution, the feeling of separation invades their family life. Therefore in my paper I will discuss whether *David Copperfield* celebrates or reacts against divorce by considering the anxieties of Betsey Trotwood, Dora and Emma Micawber, as wives who want to leave their husbands, and I will try to demonstrate how the novel is obsessed with desertion, separation and dissolution of a marriage, rather than its maintenance.

Experiencing a second marriage in the novel, Clara represents the sacrificial woman figure oppressed by patriarchy and subjected to lose her identity and naturally forced to lead a vain life managed by others. Her only plight in life is her feeble nature exposed to abuse and exploitation by others and her happiness as a wife lies in tolerance, understanding, mental equity and emotional compatibility. She experiences two different kinds of marriages in both of which she was managed by her husbands. In her marriage with David Copperfield, she leads a happy life thanks to a helpful, tolerant and kind-hearted husband, who is more active than herself in domestic sphere, despite the difference of status between each other, but this turn out to be to her disadvantage. Being accustomed to David Copperfield's presence, control and spirit in every work, she feels at a loss after his death. She feels helpless and weak on her own and needs a complementary partner to herself at home. Her first marriage blinds her and draws her to the brink of a wrong second marriage.

Supposing that she will play by her own rules in her house after her second marriage, Clara is disappointed and depressed by her new husband's authoritative and oppressive manner towards her. She is completely mistaken about Murdstone, who shows his real face after marriage, which shows Clara's inability to make a good judgement and evaluation about prospective decisions, and her inexperience and naivety. Murdstone commands her like a child and makes her aloof from her only child as he and his sister start to take everything under their control at home, including Clara's own emotions and Copperfield's future. Clara defends herself against their insults like this: "it is very hard that in your own house I may not have a word to say about domestic matters. I am sure I managed very well before we were married." (*Copperfield* 60-1) In time Clara becomes so mentally broken by their atrocities that she is convinced that she is the mistaken and the responsible for all distressing conditions. She is like a guest in her own house, writhing pitifully. This vicious husband sows the seeds of enmity between the mother and the son, but David can empathise with his mother in spite of all seditious efforts by Murdstone. The hellish environment of the

house and her anxiety about divorce condemn her to the benevolent agency of death in that helpless condition.

Clara suffers from the result of her own feebleness against dominant patriarchal values. She is victimized by patriarchy and sacrificed in a way to justify her wrong choice of marriage. Even Miss Betsey Trotwood spares her affection and love from her after the death of her first husband although she is described as “the strongest character” in the novel and it is claimed that there is “no contradiction in this woman that she could snap at doctors and lawyers and at the same time brim over with human sympathy” (Woollen 1940: 178). As a mother, Clara cannot stand David’s being beaten by his step-father unfairly, but each time she is repressed. The unproductivity of her second marriage reveals itself in Clara’s abortion through the end of her life. When we compare her first marriage with the second, we see clearly that the mental incompatibility between spouses stipulates the dissolution of marriage emotionally, though not formally. Factors such as status, class, physicality are important only to a certain extent. A love in the real sense is possible with the suitability of people in mind, intellect, and view of life as well as mutual emotions. As Dabney observes, “In *Copperfield* most of the bad marriages are disinterested, innocent, and impulsive, while the good marriages-Peggoty’s to Barkis, Annie’s to Dr Strong, David’s to Agnes-are passionless and carefully weighed”(Dabney 1967: 66-7). Passion and uncontrolled impulsive emotions drive people to wrong marriages, while marriages are solid and unshakeable as far as maturity and intellectual equity are concerned in *David Copperfield*.

Another epitome of complexities, failures and wrong decisions in marriage is David’s marriage with Dora as a result of an undisciplined heart, blinding love magic, and giving privilege to physicality over reason and mind. Love at first sight misleads David through an unequal marriage partner. David only adores Dora’s beauty, without questioning or considering her shortcomings or insufficiencies in domestic life or her inability to accompany him intellectually. Soon after they get married, David is decided to turn Dora into the ideal woman in his imagination, but his efforts to reform her mind are in vain. David’s compelling manner towards her makes Dora feel as afflicted and distressed as his mother, Clara felt. David’s authoritative behaviour at home resembles Murdstone’s manner in this respect. David has no other alternatives than accept Dora as she is. In fact Dora is innocent, as she is the victim of hypocritical patriarchy like Clara, since in the gendered Victorian world the private sphere was “viewed as a female domain concerned with home and family” (Digby 1992: 195), while the man was responsible for paid work in the public sphere and interested in national politics. In the same way David wants to deal with his academic career and go on his life with a wife to support and complete him intellectually as well as to have domestic skill and control. Indeed, “David’s dissatisfaction with Dora’s housekeeping, for instance, is very plainly characteristic of both his sex and age, an expectation and a need that it never occurs to him to question or criticize” (Hardy 1983: 64). Dora is loved, flattered and adored physically and emotionally by David and then she is found

guilty, since she could not answer again to the needs and expectations of the same man, changing as he matures. As Slater notes, "Dora's innocence is seen to stem from an immaturity that will wring David's heart but it is not a culpable immaturity" (Slater 1983: 64). Her conditions and the manners of people around her prevent her from reaching a satisfying level of maturity in life and she is expected to play the role of a skillful wife abruptly, which is challenging and compelling for her. Slater pictures Dora's helplessness in this way:

In *Copperfield* Dora's story dramatizes the plight of motherless middle-class girl[...]being married is supposed to change into a competent and responsible wife and housekeeper, providing her husband with both inspiration and practical support as he struggles to make his way in the world. (Slater 1983: 243)

Aware of the fact that she is incapable of satisfying David's ideal of marriage, Dora resorts to playing the stupid woman and calling herself his "child-bride". After encountering Agnes, she rightly wonders why David is married to her, rather than wise, skillful, clever and beautiful Agnes, more deserving of him. In fact Dora tries to open David's eyes to the reality that Agnes is more compatible for him, but still David rejects to accept this fact by going on treating her like a plaything. David deceives himself in a world of illusions for a long time even if Dora is aware of her condition broad-mindedly. She is tortured by her missing features in her remorse and maybe foresees that Agnes is the only perfect person to make David happy as a wife rather than herself, considering her call to Agnes on her deathbed and her desire for both to marry after her death. She foresees "as years went on, my dear boy would have wearied of his child-wife. She would have been less and less a companion for him. He would have been more and more sensible of what was wanting in his home. She would not have improved. It is better as it is" (*Copperfield* 773). Otherwise, life is unbearable for her in this condition and death seems the only solution for both her and their sake, as "divorce is a taboo subject" (Hager 1996: 993) in that period. She sacrifices herself for their happiness. Marriage is again pregnant to separation and disunity between these incompatible people by leading to another second marriage between David and Agnes.

Dora's death makes David realize that there was something missing or wrong in their marriage that cannot be filled in any way. As in every depressive condition, he looks for Agnes's support and accompaniment in his emotional destitution after Dora's death. "I loved my wife dearly, and I was happy; but the happiness I had vaguely anticipated, once, was not the happiness I enjoyed, and there was always something wanting", (*Copperfield* 703) he confesses. As a result of deep meditation he realizes he made the greatest mistake in his life by taking Agnes as a sister rather than as a wife who will complete him in every respect. He expresses his inner regretful feelings like this: "So near Agnes, without the revival of those regrets [...] teaching me what I had failed to learn when my younger life was all before me, but not the less regrets. 'Oh, Trot,' I seemed to hear my aunt say once more; and I understood her better now-'Blind,

blind, blind!" (*Copperfield* 841-2) As Kelly Hager claims 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, as the string of marriages with which are presented in this novel illustrates" (Hager 1996: 990-1). Agnes is so indispensable for David that even Dora's death does not afflict him so much as Agnes's absence. David is repentant for having ignored Agnes for such a long time for nothing. Dora's death becomes an excuse for him to recapture his ideal love, but this time he cannot dare to express his love to Agnes, since he cannot be sure of her feelings. Even Mr Micawber realizes David's love for Agnes outweighs his love to Dora such as: "If you had not assured us, my dear Copperfield, on the occasion of that agreeable afternoon we had the happiness of passing with you, that D was your favourite letter, I should unquestionably have supposed that A had been so" (*Copperfield* 572). When we look at the outcome, we see that everything cooperates for the union of David and Agnes as if it were for the sake of the celebration of a second marriage in the novel after the first failed marriage. Considering David's union with Agnes later, we can conclude that *David Copperfield* is a novel which supports second marriages by creating an atmosphere loaded with disunity, separation and desertion.

On the other hand, Betsey Trotwood's marriage has a corporal feature like David's. She falls in love with her husband because he is very handsome, just as David adores Dora's haircurls or generally her physical beauty, but the later process of their marriage does not justify their first feelings. Betsey is beaten and forced to jump out of a window by her husband, whom she loves feverishly, therefore she prefers the self-divorce as the best way for herself. She even goes on paying money to her husband from time to time, because of the separation by mutual consent. At that period "a separated wife was in an even more unfavourable position like the woman starting a business to keep both her house and income intact and whose husband returned demanding funds from his wife, money which was his by legal right" (Davidoff & Hall 1987: 277.) Betsey's life is also surrounded by this law. Nonetheless, Betsey Trotwood does not give up loving her husband, however wildly her husband treated her. This case stemmed from the marriage laws before the nineteenth century under the effect of patriarchal values. In *Road to Divorce* Lawrence Stone depicts the enacted law about a married woman like this:

A married woman was the nearest approximation in a free society to a slave. Her person, her property both real and personal, her earnings, and her children all passed on marriage into the absolute control of her husband. The latter could use her sexually as and when he wished, and beat her (within reason) or confine her to disobedience to any orders. (Stone 1990: 13)

As seen in these lines, the property and marital rights of a Victorian woman confine her to the domain of the man. On the other side, in Hornback's view "the basic unit of love and order, the family is almost non-existent in *David Copperfield* [...] the only unbroken family unit in the novel is that of the Micawbers, which struggle against its

own chaotic social incompetence and chronic moral ineptitude to stay whole" (Homback 1968: 654). Mrs Micawber is another important woman character in the novel who is often obsessed with the ideas of separation, considering her frequent reading of her vows of marriage and her repeated words as "I will never leave him." She experiences such difficult financial problems that it is inevitable for her to think about separating from her husband. Because of the debts incurred upon them, they cannot lead a secure and comfortable life. However, Mrs Micawber does not stop supporting her husband spiritually, maybe because of her helplessness as a destitute woman who does not have a financial prospect or maybe because of her religious views. Generally her loyalty to Mr Micawber can be attributed to religious and situational reasons, as their marriage does not promise a solid future and Mrs Micawber conditions herself not to leave him as if she were urged to stay with Wilkins by force. "Between myself and Mr Micawber (whom I will never desert), there has always been preserved a spirit of mutual confidence", (*Copperfield* 630) Mrs Micawber says. Even these words reflect the bright and dark side of their marriage, loaded with hesitations in the face of mutual confidence and loyalty. As far as absolute loyalty is concerned in marriage, Mrs Peggotty's marriage to Mr. Barkis can be used as an exceptional example of solid and ideal marriage, granting Mrs Peggotty's devotion to Mr Barkis until his last breath, but the general insight into the marriages in *David Copperfield* denies the maintenance of marriages and puts divorce and second marriages into the first ground.

When we look at Emily's condition, again we come across the idea of separation. Her escape with Steertforth by abandoning Ham creates a crisis and a fracturing mode in the novel in terms of the maintenance of marriages or strong relations, as "we may feel that the treatment of Emily's seduction suffers from being part of a generalized case about fallen women" (Hardy 1961: 64). Everybody is startled by this event, as they cannot imagine Emily will abandon his uncle, Mr Peggoty and the other family members bringing up her and doting on her by being carried away by her undisciplined heart. With Emily's escape, all plans and expectations fall through. This unexpected separation before marriage reinforces the claim that *David Copperfield* draws a portrait of desertion and separation, rather than reacting against them. On the other hand Martha, with whom Emily worked once, is a great example of fallen women, as one of whom Emily is associated because of her being seduced by Steerforth. Mr Peggoty did not want Emily to see or talk to Martha because of her notoriety; nevertheless, his own niece was exposed to the same condition like Martha in society. At this point it is very evident that society and its view of these kinds of fallen women have a great influence on the improvement or aggravation of their condition. Even if Martha wants to get rid of her miserable condition, she can't overcome it because of societal prejudices and so she wants to move to another world, another society in which she can reach anonymity. Her simile of the river is really thought-provoking: "Oh, the river! I know that I belong to it [...] it creeps through the

dismal streets, defiled and miserable-and it goes away, like my life, to a great sea, that is always troubled" (*Copperfield* 687). These words portray Martha's helplessness as a fallen woman and her tendency to suicide as the only way of escape from this hellish world. However, "it is Martha, moved by the plight of Emily after her seduction by Steerforth, who devotes herself to the 'woman's mission' of saving one of the fallen" (Ingham 1992: 47). Therefore, Emily is much luckier than Martha, as she also has a very devoted and affectionate uncle who accepts her although she falls into the status of a fallen woman later in the novel. He is so fond of Emily that he continues to look for her for a long time patiently and steadfastly until he finds her. Collins comments that "Emily is never allowed to enjoy one moment of her fallen life and, when rescued and exported, she is not allowed to marry, though she has many offers" (Collins 1977: 54). She is raised to a high point by her uncle though she was victimized by patriarchy. She has to bear the results of her undisciplined heart by migration to another world with her uncle.

On the other hand, Dr Strong and Annie's marriage is representative of an ideal family life despite all social prejudices in the Victorian period. They repress all gossips or speculations about themselves with the strength of their absolute faith, trust and respect to each other. They have age and class differences, but this case does not restrict their happiness or strong family relations. For instance, John Maldon attacks their marriage with disgusting and insulting words. However, Annie's profound love and respect for her husband refute all kinds of reactions against their marriage, as seen in her own words: "Oh, hold me to your heart, my husband! Never cast me out! Do not think or speak of disparity between us, for there is none, except in all my many imperfections. Every succeeding year [...] I have esteemed you more and more" (*Copperfield* 671). Annie's love for Dr Strong is so ingrained that nothing seems able to destroy it, as seen in the simile of 'rock': "Oh, take me to your heart, my husband, for my love was founded on a rock and it endures" (*Copperfield* 671). However, it is not easy for Annie to discover this truth in her life until she learns how to discipline her wayward heart. Her marriage goes through vital crises, owing to the disclosure of her former intimacy with John Maldon under the effect of her passionate feelings for him before her marital life. Her confrontation with her husband to prove her love again indicates that the novel creates or follows a disuniting policy and fragmentary mode by reflecting the ebbs and flows in marriage.

The heart of all failed marriages in *David Copperfield* lies in a phrase uttered by Annie, which dominates the novel from the beginning to the end dramatically: "the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart", which is "the phrase in which Annie Strong sums up her youthful, irrational, and amoral feeling, and which stirs David to self-recognition and diagnosis" (Hardy 1961: 65-6). She confesses that her undisciplined heart led her astray with John Maldon before her marriage and this frank expression influences David's mind very deeply, as he identifies Annie's once undisciplined heart with his unstable and undisciplined heart which falls for Dora at first sight. Annie's decisive judgements about her family life like "there can be no disparity in marriage

like unsuitability of mind and purpose" (*Copperfield* 668) and "my love was founded on a rock" (*Copperfield* 671) represent the gist of the novel, by attracting our attention to what is missing in incompatible marriages in *David Copperfield*. For instance, "embittered by 'the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart', Aunt Betsey renounced mankind, developed a fixation against marriage, and became an eccentric recluse" (Nedham 1954: 88). Because of her former emotional mistakes or wrong choices about the man whom she would marry, she was exposed to mistreatment by her husband. She could not act with her reason and she cared about physical features more than morality, and so she was driven to the way of mutual separation. The great gap between her emotions and the reality of her life makes Miss Betsey confused, depressed, aggressive and hostile to the outer world. She points out she aims to look after the girl baby to be born with prudence and precaution, by assuming a didactic role in her education when Mrs Murdstone is pregnant. To forget the misery of her undisciplined heart, she aims to guide the future of the baby with her own experience: "there must be no mistakes in life with this Betsey Trotwood. There must be no trifling with her affections, poor dear. She must be well brought up, and well guarded from reposing any foolish confidences where they are not deserved" (*Copperfield* 19). These words mirror how important it is for a person to control and discipline his heart before going through many challenges or mistakes in life. Most of the time this uncontrolled heart causes regret, sadness and costs irreversible moments or years, as Dabney determines "the problem in David's world is to protect men and women from their own imprudent impulses and foolish dreams" (Dabney 1967: 76).

In Dora's inability to become a companion to David in every sense it is influential how she was brought up or how the people around her treat her. She is not very mature, since she is treated as a child. Although David complains about this situation, he also realizes that he treats Dora as if she were a plaything from time to time. "With his love of orderliness and insistence on bourgeois comfort, Dickens demanded a well-run household" (Rose 1983: 500) and so David also tries to make up for Dora's shortcomings and making her equal to himself, but he fails. On the surface he seems to love Dora very much and there is no problem in their marriage, but in his secret feelings and ideas he feels his fault that his undisciplined heart led to. "For I knew, now that my own heart was undisciplined when it first loved Dora; and that if it had been disciplined, it never could have felt, when we were married, what it had felt in its secret experience." (*Copperfield* 704) This undisciplined heart accounts very clearly for what the answer is to David's great mistake in marriage as well as to other characters' regretful lives in the novel, as David questions it in his remorse dramatically as in the following lines:

I sat down by the fire, thinking with a blind remorse of all those secret feelings I have nourished since my marriage.[...]Would it, indeed, have been better if we had loved each other as a boy and girl, and forgotten it? Undisciplined heart, reply! (*Copperfield* 773)

It is very clear from these lines that David feels regret from his marriage to Dora very profoundly and wishes he had not legalized his love for Dora with the institution of marriage, but they had remained only lovers. On the other hand, as Alexander points out, "Agnes Wickfield is the embodiment of love and truth, but in this story of blunders in love it is only through errors and suffering that David can see that she is and find his way to her" (Alexander 1991: 77). It is very strange and complex that David feels a void in his life even if he claims he loves Dora. He cannot help missing or needing the advice, support and guidance of Agnes in every part of his life. When he looks back in retrospect, he reflects on his marriage with Dora: "when I loved her-even then, my love would have been incomplete, without your sympathy. I had it, and it was perfected. And it was perfected. And when I lost her, Agnes, what should I have been without you, still!" (*Copperfield* 867) David is so attached to Agnes with an everlasting love and passion that distance does not matter for him to feel her presence and soul everywhere. The fixed, passionate and persistent love of David to Agnes appears very distinctly in these sentences: "I went away, dear Agnes, loving you. I stayed away, loving you. I returned home, loving you!" "I have loved you all my life!" (*Copperfield* 868) Moreover, it indicates that David has finally reached the real love he desired in his ideals as a result of his matured heart, not vulnerable to any distraction or fallibility any longer. Elizabeth Langland argues that "far more important than grace, sympathy, and love are the household keys Agnes carries at her side: symbol of her authority, tool of her management, and sign of her regulatory power and control" (Langland 1995: 88). Dora's inability to manage her house and her inexperience in practical life overpowers David's love to her under the effect of ingrained domestic rules of Victorian life. Thus Agnes symbolizes the goddess of real love and happiness in life both for David and Dickens, as "it was precisely Catherine's lack of Agnes Wickfield's managerial talents that first made Dickens consciously dissatisfied with her" (Rose 1983: 499) in real life.

It is drawn from all kinds of marriages and relations in *David Copperfield* that the "undisciplined heart", as Annie rightly describes, underlies all the difficulties, problems and regrets experienced throughout married life and "the good heart must learn the nature of real truth and love in order to overcome evil and misfortune in this world" (Needham 1954: 86). Granting that individuals suffer from grief, regret, sadness and confusion in their failed marriages, it is inevitable to think that *David Copperfield* celebrates the dissolution of marriage and it shows that a marriage does not always bring solutions to personal problems or guarantee happiness, but, as Schor writes, "bad marriages discipline the heart" (Schor 1999: 9). Unable to be divorced legally in that period, Clara and Dora leave the world by death so not to suffer any longer due to their unhappy, oppressive marriages. Death becomes the only way of relief. On the other hand, Betsey Trotwood and David Copperfield suffer from the punishment of their undisciplined heart. Betsey was deceived by the physical appearance of her husband and became the victim of her emotions in the end. Driven into partial separation, Betsey always feels the regret of her marriage however much she loves her

husband emotionally. In the same way, adoring Dora's beauty, rather than her soul, David realizes he made a wrong choice by marrying Dora instead of Agnes and steps through a second marriage with Agnes for the sake of his real happiness by listening to the voice of his maturing heart despite the lateness of time. "David's process is only briefly one of discipline, and then the artist's wish-fulfillment disposes of Dora and what remains is less a stern moral test than the slow discovery that Agnes is the rock on which he should found his love" (Hardy 1961: 59). No matter how loyally Mrs Micawber follows Mr Micawber forever, she cannot help being obsessed with the idea of leaving her husband in the times of crisis. Eloping with Steerforth mysteriously, Emily is also defeated by her undisciplined heart and victimized by her emotions. Identified with separation, disappointment and regret, the marriages in *David Copperfield* have a negative, pessimistic tone rather than a positive and hopeful one. Therefore we can conclude that *David Copperfield* is a novel which sacrifices failed marriages for the sake of isolation, divorce and second marriages.

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