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978-0-521-04263-5 - Dickens and the Daughter of the House

Hilary M. Schor

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Feminist criticism has not been kind to Charles Dickens, scorning in particular what Orwell referred to as his “legless angels” – good daughters like Little Nell, Agnes Wickfield, Esther Summerson, and all their dutiful ilk. Such critics have turned instead to the dark, angry women whose path seems to cut across the ordered progress of the Dickens novel, but they have ignored the good daughter’s own wanderings outside the paternal house. Hilary M. Schor argues that in doing the necessary work of conveying value and meaning – dutifully carrying out her father’s will – the good daughter acquires many of the attributes of her dark sister. The more earnestly the good daughter struggles to transcribe her father’s story, the more she inscribes her own, overstepping the limits of domestic goodness, and claiming her own secret inheritance as a center of narrative authority in the Dickens novel.

HILARY M. SCHOR is Associate Professor of English at the University of Southern California. She is author of *Scheherezade in the Marketplace: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Novel* (1992).

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521440769

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First published 1999

This digitally printed version 2007

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Schor, Hilary Margo.

Dickens and the daughter of the house / Hilary M. Schor.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in nineteenth-century literature and culture: 25)

ISBN 0 521 44076 9 (hardback)

1. Dickens, Charles, 1812–1870 – Characters – Daughters.

2. Women and literature – England – History – 19th century.

3. Domestic fiction, English – History and criticism. 4. Dickens, Charles.

1812–1870 – Characters – Women. 5. Fathers and daughters in

literature. 6. Daughters in literature. I. Title. II. Series.

PR4592.D27S38 1999

823'.8 – dc21 99-11166 CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-44076-9 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-04263-5 paperback

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To acknowledge the debts I have incurred in the writing of this book would require a preface longer than a Dickens novel, and I only wish I could be as improvident with my thanks as others have been with their support. Fellowship support from the Graves Foundation and the Stanford Humanities Center, and travel money from the American Council of Learned Societies, made both research and writing possible. The University of Southern California also provided support and I wish to thank in particular Deans Marshall Cohen, Richard S. Ide, and Morton O. Schapiro, each of whom also engaged intellectually with this project at key moments. Among the many colleagues who read portions of this book are Rosemarie Bodenheimer, Leo Braudy, Joseph Allen Boone, Janice Carlisle, Edwin Eigner, Stephanie Jed, Donna Landry, Peter Manning, Tania Modleski, Arden Reed, Garrett Stewart, and Peggy Waller. Rob Polhemus in particular illuminated the process of writing. Jim Kincaid, whose intelligence and generosity are as genuine as they are legendary, contributed far more than readings to this book, and to me. Peter Starr and Nomi Stolzenberg, with whom I team-taught and from whom I have learned so much, are owed a deeper acknowledgment. My research assistants, Duncan Faherty, Richard Menke, and particularly Kris Deffenbacher and Ned Schantz, exceeded my vision of assistance by as much as I am sure my demands exceeded their expectations – to them, I owe the thanks due the closest of colleagues. For less material but no less valuable support, I must thank Murray Baumgarten, Joseph Childers, Carolyn Dever, Regenia Gagnier, John Glavin, Gerhard Joseph, Joe Litvak, Robert Patten, Meg Russett, Richard Stein, and with special thanks, Helena Michie and Sylvia Manning. The Dickens Project was a special home in the years I was writing this book, and I owe a particular debt (of labor and of love) to John Jordan. I must also thank Josie Dixon and Kevin Taylor of Cambridge University Press for all their support; my gratitude to Cathy Gallagher, who not only read

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this manuscript with imagination but inspired its most complicated thinking, goes beyond the rhetoric of any acknowledgment page.

For many gifts of friendship and intellectual community, I must thank Elinor Accampo, Alice Gambrell, Barry Glassner, Peggy Kamuf, Jayne Lewis, David Miller, Ellen Quandahl, and Robyn Warhol. My deepest thanks go, as always, to Eric Mallin, whose loyalty is almost as remarkable as his discernment; to Robert Newsom, whose clarity of thought made my murkiest moments turn bright; and to Laurie Novo, who remains my first, and my best, reader. To my dear family, Arthur Schor, Judith and Sylvan Silberg, and my much-loved sisters Barbara and Renée, I owe much, much more – something, I fear, for which there are not enough words, even in Dickens . . .