‘BRASS CAN DO BETTER:’ THE ARCHETYPAL JOURNEY OF OLIVER TWIST’S NANCY THROUGH THE LENS OF JUNGIAN REVISIONIST THEORY

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SUMMER 2019

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for baccalaureate degrees in English and Humanities with Honors in English and Humanities

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ABSTRACT

*Oliver Twist*’s Nancy, a young woman of sixteen whom Charles Dickens reveals to be a prostitute, is a unique female heroine who challenges the notions of biological-based sex roles. I will argue that through Nancy, Dickens effectively calls into question the validity of biological essentialism and Victorian class prejudices by demonstrating that it is possible for even fallen women to combine both stereotypically “masculine” and “feminine” qualities. I will also demonstrate how the personal development of Nancy throughout the text represents the archetypal journey which is pivotal to Carl Jung’s notion of individuation. While gender roles, and the biological justifications for them, are intended to help men and women identify his or her role in society, I am convinced that they instead act to reinforce already prevalent binary ways of thinking. Gender roles act to keep both sexes in bondage to rigid stereotypes that are both unhealthy and limiting. The historical and contemporary dominance of patriarchy in Western society has also meant that the roles prescribed to women are often defined solely by men who have fashioned such roles in such a way as to facilitate their continued dominance over the opposite sex. While Jung laid the groundwork for a new way of approaching not only the psyche but gender, it is apparent that his tendency to overlook the tremendous influence of various cultural forces in shaping his understanding of the anima ultimately poses significant challenges for women who seek to embark on their individuation journeys. Jung’s notion of the syzygy, (the union of the masculine element “animus” with the feminine element “anima”) also represents an important step in the individuation process, and will be further explored in the context of a broader evaluation of androgyny.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Dr. Glen Mazis for the many hours he has contributed towards this project, and to Dr. Patricia Johnson for her assistance in developing my original conference paper on Nancy which inspired this thesis.
Introduction

Since at least the 1980’s, literary scholars have contended that Dickens’ portrayal of women, as presented through his female characters, was based on stereotypes and even, at times, revealed his own intense hatred of women. Many of these interpretations invoked Freudian psychology as a way to bolster their argument that Dickens’ repressed anger towards his mother and other female figures in his life often led him to unconsciously play out these feelings in his writings. According to this understanding, his female characters either represent the ideal image of womanhood and motherhood, or they embody monstrous distortions of this ideal. While these Freudian interpretations have been influential in the realm of Dickens scholarship, they are also challenged by several academics who propose a more nuanced reading of his novels and characters. Together, the latter form a body of work that pushes back against the former.

The interpretations that resist Freudian influence have tended to treat his characters not as pattern types, but as dynamic human beings. Furthermore, because their perspective is informed by women’s studies and cultural studies, they have been careful to situate the novels within the complex (and often dysfunctional) interplay of gender and culture that characterized the Victorian era. Barickman et al.’s *Corrupt Relations: Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Collins and the Victorian Sexual System* makes a significant contribution to this effort by re-evaluating the presentation of gender within the novels of four Victorian male authors. In this book, Barickman et al. argues convincingly that Dickens’ novels work to reveal the corruption inherent to the patriarchal social system of Victorian England. Wherever Dickens uses female stereotypes in his writings, he is careful to link them to “the corrupt system of values that produced them” (Barickman et al. 110), thus their inclusion does not constitute an endorsement. While Dickens is at times conflicted about gender roles, his frequent disruption of them through his male and female characters provide powerful re-workings of these stereotypes.
Brenda Ayres also provides valuable insight into Nancy’s role within *Oliver Twist* in her book, *Dissenting Women in Dickens’ Novels: The Subversion of Domestic Ideology*. Ayres argues that Nancy, a prostitute, is the true heroine of Oliver Twist, not her Angel-in-the-House counterpart Rose Maylie. As we will see later, Ayres uses the remark that “Brass can do better than the gold what has stood the fire” (*Oliver Twist* 262) as a way to prove that Nancy’s strength is more useful than the delicacy and innocence of Rose. Sonia Bicancic’s perceptive analysis of Nancy’s speech patterns in “The Function of Language in our Experience of Oliver Twist and Nancy” acts to bolster the argument that Nancy is the hero of the novel. Bicancic notes that Nancy’s direct speech throughout the novel conveys not only Nancy’s strength, but the progression of her growth.

As we closely examine *Oliver Twist* in Chapter Two, it is evident that Nancy’s place in the novel becomes increasingly significant to the degree that the centrality of Oliver’s role is often displaced. The evolution of *Oliver Twist* is explored through an examination of Dickens writing process in “The Text and Plan of Oliver Twist” by Burton Wheeler. Here Wheeler establishes the convincing argument that Dickens decided to shift the novel’s focus to Nancy, instead of continuing with his pointed critique of the New Poor Law.

Nancy’s inherent strength and the attention to her development in the text cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, Nancy’s complexity demands our attention. We cannot simply categorize her as ideal or monstrous, thus the interpretative framework that would have us write her off as one or the other and assign some sort of Freudian rationale for Dickens’ treatment of her does not work here. Instead, we must acknowledge that Nancy possesses both “masculine” and “feminine” qualities, and that the evolution of her as an individual is integral to the novel’s ultimate positioning of her as a hero. For this reason, I believe that this novel is deeply psychological in its treatment of Nancy, and that we can best understand her development through Carl Jung’s notion of the archetypes.

While Carl Jung’s work borrows several key concepts from Freud and thus can be said to build upon it, he also deviated significantly from him. One of the key differences in Jung’s approach to the
psyche that distinguishes him from Freud, is Jung’s belief that repressed content is not always sexual in nature. Jung asserted that the unconscious is very complex, and he felt that in order to understand its influence on human behavior, it must be thoroughly studied. In Chapter One, I will provide a thorough overview and analysis of Jung’s theories, however for now it is important to recognize the distinction between Freudian and Jungian understandings of the psyche. In Jung’s exploration of the unconscious, he identifies material that is inherited from an ancestral and cultural past. This material, he argues makes up the collective unconscious. He also asserts that the collective unconscious contains the sex-based archetypes, or what he calls the anima and animus. These two concepts will prove significant in my analysis of Nancy, who I believe embodies androgyny as an interplay of the anima and the animus. In his writings, Jung also discusses the hero’s journey which is one way through which a person can achieve individuation (one’s differentiation from the “herd” through the establishment of an individual sense of self). Because Jung’s conception of the hero’s journey relied heavily upon ancient mythology in which the hero is usually male, the journey may perhaps not seem readily accessible to women. However, Carol Pearson, inspired by Jung’s notion of the archetypes, worked to address the tendency to view the hero’s journey as belonging solely to men. In her book, The Hero Within, Pearson not only demonstrates how an individual can make use of these archetypes in contemporary society, but she also successfully reclaims them for women. Pearson’s text will prove integral as we examine Nancy’s individuation process and her heroism.

While Jung’s notion of individuation and the archetypes which embody the hero’s journey are clearly displayed in Nancy, and hold enormous potential for each of us, Jung’s anima and animus remain complicated and potentially stultifying archetypes. The problematic aspects of these archetypes (and the concept of their union as expressed by the syzygy: Jung’s notion of union of opposites) will be explored in Chapter Three. While Jung believes that each woman inherently possesses the “masculine” animus element, and each man inherently possesses the “feminine” anima side, his approach to gender is marred by his tendency to embrace essentialism. He also tends to overlook the enormous impact of cultural forces
in shaping a society’s understanding of gender, and thus takes some aspects of these cultural constructs as
givens. I will examine some of what I believe are essentialist and structuralist elements at work within
Jung’s writing about the anima and animus. This chapter will also include an exploration of the various
interpretations of androgyny which I will compare to Jung’s androgynous vision represented through the
syzygy.

Demaris Wehr’s article “Religious and Social Dimensions of Jung’s concept of the Archetype: A
Feminist Perspective” employs the sociology of knowledge to point to the influence of social forces in
shaping Jung’s anima and the animus. While Wehr does not specifically mention essentialism or
structuralism, her article makes readily apparent how both could have influenced Jung. While I do not
agree with some of her conclusions about Jung, Frances Gray provides ample evidence for Jung’s
essentialist inclinations in her book *Jung, Irigaray, Individuation: Philosophy, Analytical Psychology,
and the Question of the Feminine*. In “Spinning Among Fields: Jung, Frye, Levi-Strauss, and Feminist
Archetypal Theory” Annis Pratt argues that there are many similarities between Jung’s archetypes and the
Structural Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss’ mythemes. She also notes that like Levi-Strauss, Jung
believed that by examining structures, he could arrive at a code which could be applied universally across
cultures. Lastly, Marilyn Farwell distinguishes between two different interpretations of androgyny then
moves on to discuss how they relate to Virginia Woolf in her article “Virginia Woolf and Androgyny.”
While Virginia Woolf’s notion of androgyny is beyond the scope of this chapter, Farwell’s concise
explanation of the two distinct versions of androgyny provides an excellent framework from which to
examine Jung’s notion of the syzygy.

Ultimately, I will show that Nancy’s character in Oliver Twist not only demonstrates the power of
harnessing the heroic archetypes but proves that an androgynous unity of the “masculine” and “feminine”
elements can be achieved through individuation. Furthermore, while Nancy may be a fictional character, I
believe that her example provides valuable insight into many of the concepts that Jung has introduced. In
this way, Nancy’s individuation journey can serve to inspire each of us to embark on our own individuation journeys.
Carl Gustav Jung is best known for his theory of the collective unconscious and its accompanying archetypes. According to Jung, the collective unconscious is distinguished from the personal unconscious, which he views primarily as the superficial level of the unconscious associated with Freud’s notion of repressed memories. Instead, he argues that there is a “deeper layer” which “does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn” (The Archetypes 3). The collective unconscious is therefore universal, and contains what Jung refers to as archetypes. Jung’s writings which relate to the archetypes, specifically the anima and animus will prove essential later on, however, first I must provide context by briefly explaining the framework from which Jung develops the language and concepts necessary to discuss the archetypes.

According to Jung, the psyche is the totality of all psychic processes, including both the conscious and the unconscious (Jungian Psychology 32). Thus, the psyche represents an individual’s psychological reality as a whole. The psyche embraces conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the individual. It also contains different regions which interact in a complex psychology. These include consciousness, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious (Psychological Types 463).

Consciousness in Jungian terms, is the relation of one’s psychic awareness of the world to the ego (Psychological Types 421). The ego is defined by Jung as a complex of ideas which combine to create the center of one’s consciousness. While I will discuss complexes in greater detail later on, for now it is helpful to understand that a complex represents a grouping of feelings, thoughts, and memories that make sense of one’s experience. The ego-complex does not contain the entirety of the psyche, however, instead it is simply one of many complexes. Nonetheless, the ego-complex is important because it is the vehicle through which a psychic element can be made accessible to consciousness (Psychological Types 425). In particular, consciousness characterizes those elements which are available to the ego. Consciousness
therefore serves the important function of transferring psychic contents to the ego. However, it is important to note that not all elements of the psyche bear a particular relation to the ego (Psychological Types 422).

In fact, those elements which are not connected to the ego (and therefore are not made conscious) constitute the unconscious. Jung writes “The concept of the unconscious is for me an exclusively psychological concept, and not a philosophical concept of a metaphysical nature” (Psychological Types 483). While the unconscious is often represented as a mystical, unknown realm within the psyche, Jung also made it clear that it is possible to make sense of its content. Often, as Jung points out, the artistic process and the interpretation of dreams can aid in one’s understanding of one’s unconscious and can assist in the integration of it. However, until the unconscious contents are made accessible to consciousness, they often act as mysterious yet powerful motivators within individuals.

Jung cites experience—both his own in the practice of therapy as well as that of other practitioners— as evidence for the existence of the unconscious.

My justification for speaking of the existence of unconscious processes at all is derived simply and solely from experience, and in particular, from psychopathological experience, where we have undoubted proof that, in a case of hysterical amnesia, for example, the ego knows nothing of the existence of numerous psychic complexes, and the next moment a simple hypnotic procedure is sufficient to bring the lost contents back to memory. (Psychological Types 483).

Such examples not only prove that the unconscious exists, but also demonstrate that conscious contents can slip out of consciousness and into the realm of the unconscious. However, as Jung explains, the content can be transferred back to consciousness. For those with hysterical amnesia hypnosis is effective in achieving this aim, however this is one several methods that an individual can utilize to facilitate the transfer of unconscious content. While hysterical amnesia represents an extreme example of
the transition of conscious contents to the unconscious, Jung also makes it clear that this process occurs through the common practice of forgetting. Although many instances of forgetting are accidental, Jung is primarily interested in intentionally forgotten thoughts or experiences. According to Jung, “conscious contents can fall below the threshold of consciousness through ‘intentional forgetting’ or what Freud calls the repression of a painful content” (*Psychological Types* 484). For Jung, the psyche (especially in its collective dimension) is our way of apprehending the world and it always has greater depths than we initially suspect.

Jung also argues that our own experiences prove to us that there are “unconscious psychic associations” (*Psychological Types* 484) which can be manifested as mythological images. Since these images are not contained within our consciousness, they must therefore find their origin in the unconscious (484). It is also important to distinguish not only between the conscious and unconscious, but between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. According to Jung,

> We can distinguish a **personal unconscious**, comprising all of the acquisitions of personal life, everything forgotten, repressed, subliminally perceived, thought, felt. But, in addition to these personal unconscious contents, there are other contents which do not originate in personal acquisitions but in the inherited possibility of psychic functioning in general, i.e., in the inherited structure of the brain. These are the mythological associations, the motifs and images that can spring up anew anytime, anywhere, independently of historical tradition or migration. I call these contents the **collective unconscious**. (485)

Therefore, the personal unconscious is unique and belongs to the individual psyche. Contrarily, by collective unconscious, Jung refers to the psychic contents not of one individual, but those of a society, a people group, or more generally, humankind. Thus, the collective unconscious represents a plethora of inherited experiences and universal apprehensions from human history.
These experiences present themselves as *primordial images* according to Jung. Primordial images are the “first” or “original” images of humankind which harken back to the beginning of the psyche (Hall and Norby 39).

Man inherits these images from his ancestral past, a past that includes all of his human ancestors as well as his pre-human or animal ancestors. These racial images are not inherited in the sense that a person consciously remembers or has images that his human ancestors had. Rather, they are predispositions or potentialities for experiencing and responding to the world in the same ways that his ancestors did. (39)

While the experiences recorded in the personal unconscious influence one’s interaction with the world, the experiences of humans since antiquity (which form the collective unconscious) also impact the way in which one apprehends and therefore reacts to new experiences. For instance, a fear of snakes is an example of primordial material from the collective unconscious can act to incite terror within the individual who encounters them. This example demonstrates that “We inherit predispositions to fear snakes and the dark because our primitive ancestors experienced these fears for countless generations. They became engraved upon the brain” (Hall and Norby 40). However, Jung also makes it clear that something like a fear of snakes may not prove very influential for an individual living in a culture that does not embrace Western culture’s vilification of snakes. What the primordial images point to is a larger history that has not dissolved into antiquity, yet still remains alive in the collective unconscious. Thus, it is apparent that the collected knowledge of humans throughout history can be an influential force within the psyche of each person.

However, it is also important to note that while the collective unconscious establishes predispositions for human behavior, “the development and expression of these predispositions depends entirely upon the individual’s experiences” (41). Thus, the individual’s personal unconscious can supersede the influence of the collective unconscious. For example, if an individual who has been culturally conditioned to fear snakes has had many positive encounters with snakes, the primordial
knowledge regarding snakes which is passed down to that individual via the collective unconscious (as translated through the lens of his or her particular culture) may not inspire a fear of snakes within this person. Nonetheless, the collective unconscious is a layer of meaning that usually emerges through symbol. For the individual in this example, repeated exposure to snakes over time (or perhaps some other personal history) enabled this person to shape the archetypal perception to have other forms and depths.

Another distinction between the personal unconscious and collective unconscious is that the former is characterized primarily by complexes, while the latter consists mainly of the archetypes. Regarding this term Jung writes, “The concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate to the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere” (The Archetypes 42). Furthermore, “the archetype is a symbolic formula which always begins to function when there are no conscious ideas present, or when conscious ideas are inhibited for internal or external reasons” (Psychological Types 377). Thus, archetypes find expression not only in the human psyche, but in literature as well. Myths and fairytales communicate archetypes through story, which resonate with the archetypal constructions present within each person’s collective unconscious. From an empirical perspective, Jung claims that the shadow, the anima, and the animus represent archetypes which have the “most disturbing influence on the ego” (Aion 8).

According to Jung, the shadow contains elements from both the personal unconscious and collective unconscious. He believes that the shadow is a reaction to the personal unconscious and that the latter acts to mask the former. For this reason, Jung believes that the shadow presents is very difficult to recognize and understand. In his writing, he also asserts that it contains an important moral component which should not be overlooked. “The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real” (Aion 8). Few not only want to come to terms with the negative aspects of one’s personality, but most really cannot even fathom its content. However, doing so is the only way to apprehend the shadow, and is in
fact, the only way to achieve self-knowledge. The “dark” elements of the personality referred to here are one’s own inferiorities which act as stumbling blocks to self-expression and growth. (8). According to Jung, “the shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself yet is always thrusting itself directly upon him or indirectly—for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies” (*The Archetypes* 284-285). As we see in this excerpt, contradiction is a key aspect of the shadow. The dark characteristics have an emotional nature according to Jung, which makes them extraordinarily powerful within the individual (*Aion* 8-9). While Jung believes that “with insight and goodwill” the shadow can be assimilated into consciousness, there are aspects which are impervious to moral influence and seemingly cannot be transferred to the conscious personality (9). “While some traits peculiar to the shadow can be recognized without too much difficulty as one’s own personal qualities, in this case both insight and good will prove unavailing because the cause of the emotion appears to lie, beyond all possibility of doubt, within the other person” (9). Thus, while some aspects of the shadow can be recognized as one’s own, there are other aspects which are assumed to find their origin in other people. Jung refers to the aspects which appear to belong not to oneself, but to another as projections. In other words, one resists seeing these traits in oneself.

Projection, simply stated, is the expulsion of subjective content onto an object. An individual dissociates with painful or unintegrated contents by unconsciously projecting them onto another person (*Psychological Types* 457). Therefore, the subjective content from an individual is seemingly banished from the psyche, and instead this individual (subject) views another person (object) as embodying this content.

Projection is an unconscious, automatic process whereby a content that is unconscious to the subject transfers itself to an object, so that it seems to belong to that object. The projection ceases the moment it becomes conscious, that is to say when it is seen as belonging to the subject (*The Archetypes* 60).
It is important to bear in mind that projection represents an attempt on the part of the unconscious to deal with distressing psychic content. On the surface, projection appears to create a safe place for the subject, because it isolates them from troubling material. However, it becomes clear upon further examination that the process of projection is inherently dysfunctional. By projecting undesirable content onto an object, the subject establishes an illusory relation to the material through the creation of a “safe place”. But this safe space ultimately represents a false sort of reality, according to Jung (Aion 9). For this reason, Jung remarks that “Projections change the world into the replica of one’s own unknown face” (Psychological Types 457) meaning that projections simply create further disillusionment. Thus, while projection may appear to successfully mediate conflict within the subject, it is merely an act of self-deception wherein the subject generates an alternate reality in which he or she is not personally responsible for disturbing or unintegrated psychic content. This false reality not only prevents the subject from achieving wholeness by integrating this content, but it also places the object in a disadvantaged position. Ultimately, where projections are involved, one is not realizing how one sees the world or how one is acting.

Indeed, it is impossible to overlook the masking of the true relationship to others that projection creates. The process itself clearly privileges the interests of the subject over the object, for the interests of the subject are pursued without consideration of the potential consequences for the object. Actually, one is not really even encountering the other person, but is playing out a drama with oneself through the other person or group. Clearly the object’s use as a “receptacle” for the distressing or unintegrated psychic content of another person distorts the perception of the other, and may deny the object’s selfhood or even render the object susceptible to abusive treatment at the hand of the subject. The mistreatment of another person or group is made possible through projection because it facilitates the objectification and subsequent dehumanization of these individuals by the subject who can only view them through the lens of those characteristics that the subject finds objectionable. Thus, as previously established, projection...
proves not only unhelpful for the subject, who doesn’t deal with his or her own shortcomings, but can be immensely harmful for others if the person acts out on the basis of their projections.

Projections also bring about a great deal of harm when they originate from unintegrated anima or animus content. Jung explains that while the shadow can act as a cause of some projections, they can also be brought about by a contrasexual figure. While the content of the shadow always matches one’s sex, the contrasexual represents the opposite sex (*Aion* 10). According to Jung, “Here we meet the animus of a woman and the anima of a man, two corresponding archetypes whose autonomy and unconsciousness explain the stubbornness of their projections” (10). Because the shadow resides in the personal unconscious it is easier to transfer to the conscious mind, however the anima and animus, which are property of the collective unconscious, are nearly impossible to transfer to consciousness (10). The history of “animosity” that has plagued gender relations in so many cultures is a result of this sort of projection, according to Jung, for it is a kind of psychic blindness. While it is clear that the anima and animus pose challenges to the psyche, yet there remains much to discuss regarding these integral Jungian theories.

The anima and animus are Jung’s most controversial archetypes, and these archetypes demand thorough examination to understand his notion of the masculine and feminine elements. In examining Jung’s writings which deal with these archetypes, it is integral to situate them within the context of his place in time and his culture to so that one can understand how the cultural constructions of gender present during his lifetime and throughout history may have influences his own work. To do this, I will provide a brief history of the perennial notion that reason belongs to men, and emotion belongs to women.

By the time of Jung’s birth in 1875, a long history of theories regarding men’s alleged rationality and women’s alleged lack of rationality had already existed. In approximately 200 CE, Philo claimed that “the rational which belongs to mind and reason is of the masculine gender.” (*Special Laws* 200-201). Because of this, he argued that women (whom he associated with passion) had to become men in order to obtain reason (Tuana 58). In the Seventeenth century, Descartes posited that all humans are capable of
reason, even women. The implication, however, was that reason was much more accessible to men than to women (Tuana 63). As Nancy Tuana notes,

> An important lesson to be learned from…Descartes’s theory is that an attempt to offer a non-sexist model of rationality of which both and woman and man are equally capable will be unsuccessful if the abilities and faculties constituting rationality stress traits perceived as masculine and exclude traits perceived as feminine. Nor will it do to simply reverse this ordering and stress traits perceived as feminine and exclude traits accepted as masculine…. A truly nonsexist model of rationality must either include a mixture of feminine and masculine traits with no privileging of either gender, or must occur in a social context in which the concepts of masculine and feminine do not exist” (180).

Here Tuana provides not just a critique of Descartes’s theory, but explains what an equitable system would look like. The notion that reason belonged to the male sex, was also advanced in the Nineteenth-century by Austrian theorist Otto Weininger. According to Weininger, “woman is without logic” (Sex and Character 148). While these are only a few historical examples of key figures who have advanced the claim that reason is associated with men, they provide a sense of the enduring discourse surrounding women’s deficiencies. Women’s lack of reason and her other failings—including her inability to control her passion (as argued by Plato) -- combine together to show that “…women’s inferior moral sense for centuries had been grounded in what theorists perceived to be her biological and psychological role in the family” (Tuana 88). Indeed, we can see that all of these theories would have no basis if it were not for biological essentialism (the belief that there are stark differences between men and women due to the biological differences between the sexes).

Beyond the matter of biological essentialism, it is also important to acknowledge that Western culture during Jung’s lifetime was markedly more patriarchal than it is in the Twenty-First Century. In fact, many of the patriarchal elements that we associate with Victorian culture were also endemic throughout Europe and continued to act as dominant social forces well into the Twentieth Century. While
women’s rights movements gained traction in the late nineteenth century throughout Europe, eventually
giving way to changes in legislation which enabled women to move closer to the goal of equality, women
were often still viewed as inferior to men during Jung’s lifetime. Mary Goegg, who was involved in
leading the woman’s movement in late Nineteenth-century Switzerland, noted that the tutelage of women
in the Swiss cantons was not completely abolished until 1881. As she writes,

…the law of the tutelage of women, assuming without the question their intellectual and
moral inferiority, kept them all their life, no matter what their intelligence, education, and
social position might be, under a masculine protectorate of some sort….In a word, it was
a mark of degradation put upon women from the cradle to the grave, not to speak of the
danger with which this law threatened their material interests, the guardian of their
fortune being thus legally tempted to use what was not his own—so that the numerous
examples of women ruined by the very persons appointed to protect them, long ago
proved the injustice of this state of things (Woman Question in Europe 376-377).

While Goegg notes that Geneva was quite progressive, “Switzerland, taken as a whole, has been one of
the least disposed of European countries to accept the idea of the civil emancipation of women, and much
less the conferring upon them of political rights” (Woman Question in Europe 376).

One must bear in mind the impact of both the broader history of gender and the specific culture to
which Jung belonged when approaching his work, because in developing his theories of the anima and
animus it would have been very challenging for him to deviate entirely from what his culture claimed
were the innate differences between men and women. Because of these influences, Jung’s language may
at times strike a Twenty-First century reader as sexist. His tendency to associate “masculinity” with men
and “femininity” with women also seems overly reductive when compared to contemporary views of
gender which tend to deviate from essentialist notions. Today, many societies are in the process of moving
away (or have already moved away) from biological essentialism, and in Western culture many have
begun to assert that
Femininity and Masculinity are rooted in the social…rather than the biological. Societal members decide what being male or female means (e.g., dominant or passive, brave or emotional), and males will generally respond by defining themselves as masculine, and females will generally define themselves as feminine. Because these are social definitions, however, it is possible for a person to be female and see herself as masculine or male and see himself as feminine (Femininity/Masculinity).

Thus, when we speak of “masculinity” we typically mean those traits commonly assigned to men, including aggression, competitiveness, reason, and when we speak of “femininity,” we mean those traits commonly assigned to women, including passivity, cooperation, emotion. Because both of these terms represent cultural constructs, not fact, I use quotations when including them to demonstrate their arbitrary nature. While I do not believe that we should ignore aspects of Jung’s writings which might seem troubling, it would be unjust of me not to acknowledge that Jung’s approach to gender was quite progressive in his time.

In fact, Jung also offers a radical view of men and women in which he argues that both inherently possess some degree of androgyny.

“…in the unconscious of every man there is hidden a feminine personality, and in that of every woman a masculine personality. It is a well-known fact that sex is determined by a majority of male or female genes, as the case may be. But the minority of genes belonging to the other sex does not simply disappear. A man therefore has within him a feminine side, an unconscious feminine figure—a fact of which he is generally quite unaware. I may take it as a known fact that I have called this element the “anima” and its counterpart in a woman the “animus.” (The Archetypes 284)

To Jung, the reality that man still possesses female genes means that the anima element is an intrinsic part of his makeup. Similarly, since women have male genes, the animus element is also found to
be an important factor in the female psyche. This means that by nature there is potential for androgyny within each person if the contrasexual element is acknowledged and fully embraced. However, it becomes clear that an interchange of the elements within the psyche is not always desired, even if it represents an ideal state.

Jung asserts that men often attempt to deny the existence of their own anima. “No man is so entirely masculine that he has nothing feminine in him. The fact is, rather, that very masculine men have—carefully guarded and hidden—a very soft emotional life…(Aspects of the Feminine 78).” Furthermore, “A man counts it as a virtue to repress his feminine traits as much as possible, just as a woman, at least until recently, considered it unbecoming to be ‘mannish’” (78). Here we see that according to Jung, men in particular struggle to acknowledge their “feminine side.” The feminine aspect is something that men would like to pretend does not exist within them so that they can fit neatly into the “masculine persona” revered within Western, patriarchal cultures. It is also evident that men believe women should similarly seek to repress the contrasexual element within themselves, since they find it distasteful when women display masculine qualities, which contravened with the prevailing cultural norms of the time. Both men and women face distress not only because they are not sure how to come to terms with the duality of gender archetypes within themselves, but also because they find themselves subjected to criticism when the contrasexual element they possess is evidenced by others. In the not-so-distant past gender roles were not to be questioned or loosened, thus demonstrating aspects typically associated with the opposite sex would have been viewed as a violation of these norms and could lead to a variety of negative consequences. Therefore, it is apparent that there are several motivations for both sexes to minimize the influence of these elements.

However, repression is not effective in entirely removing psychic material, as the archetypes are only made unconscious. As a result, they will take the form of an anima or animus projection, which is expressed more consciously. “The repression of feminine traits and inclinations naturally causes these contrasexual demands to accumulate in the unconscious. No less naturally, the imago of woman (the soul-
image) becomes a receptacle for these demands” (*Aspects of the Feminine* 78). As previously stated, projections represent an unconscious attempt to distance oneself from the contrasexual element and thus appear to restore the psyche to a state of stability and calm. Instead, they facilitate further psychic imbalance within the projection-making subject. If, as Jung purports, both men and women possess the contrasexual element as an in-born part of their psyche and one of the goals of the individual is to integrate both the anima and animus within oneself, then it is apparent that projection disrupts the pursuit of this goal because represents an attempt to remove the content of the contrasexual element from one’s own psyche, rather than coming to terms with it and aiming for integration. Thus, both repression and projection of the contrasexual element are antithetical to the integration of these elements, which is the key to individuation for Jung. It cannot be overlooked that Jung’s imperative to integrate the contrasexual element within oneself was certainly a challenge to his culture. His willingness to advocate for this undertaking was not only enlightened, but commendable.

Projections also prove to be harmful to both the subject and the object, because the content of the contrasexual element becomes distorted through the act of projection. Jung makes it clear that anima projections result in confining the anima to a specific definition. He writes, “When projected, the anima always has a feminine form and definite characteristics. This empirical finding does not mean that the archetype is constituted like that in itself” (*The Archetypes* 69-70). Moreover, “most of what men say about feminine eroticism, and particularly about the emotional life of women, is derived from their own anima projections and distorted accordingly” (*Aspects of the Feminine* 50). Thus, projections of the anima bolster existing gender roles and act to blind men from seeing the complexity and androgyny present within women. In fact, the attributes that men claim to see are actually restrictions and distortions of the broader anima archetype.

Projections also serve to further the agenda of essentialism by taking on many existing negative stereotypes about the opposite sex from the subject’s own culture. This is because when both men and women project the contrasexual element, their lack of knowledge regarding the element itself is often
supplemented by what they have been taught to believe about the opposite sex. Yet, while the bias inherent in one’s projections may be evident to observers, the subject remains ignorant of these biases, because projection is not a conscious process, but an unconscious one.

A blindness to the biases of one’s projections, is commonplace, and as I will argue, can at times be evidenced by Jung himself within his writings. Furthermore, because men come to know the anima through projections, Jung’s writings about the anima are to some degree influenced by his own projections. Therefore, we must accept that there are elements of cultural and personal distortion infused into Jung’s notion of the anima since it is an element which he knows primarily through projections. Yet, it is to his credit that he is wont to admit to this on occasion, and more importantly, that he sought to capture the positive aspects of the feminine through his notion of the anima. This at the very least demonstrates that he believed there to be something very admirable and valuable inherent to a woman’s nature.

The anima is the “soul-image” attributed to women, and animus is the element assigned to men. Yet, there remains much to be discussed regarding the basis of both elements, including the meanings inherent in the terms “anima” and “animus”. Jung makes it clear in his essay, “Concerning the Archetypes, with Special Reference to the Anima Concept” that the anima is an empirical concept, meaning that his basis for developing it sprang from experience rather than from scientific methodology. He claims that it is not a “theoretical invention” (The Archetypes 56) or “sheer mythology” (56) as some had remarked. Instead, its

“…sole purpose is to give name to a group of related or analogous psychic phenomena.

The concept [of the anima] does no more and means no more than, shall we say, the concept of ‘arthropods,’ which includes all animals with limbs and so gives a name to this phenomenological group” (The Archetypes 56).

Thus, Jung intends for the anima to act as a general grouping of qualities which have been widely evidenced in women. It is important to bear in mind that because Jung uses empirical methods to name
this element, this means that he pulls from his own experiences of women and from the experiences of his culture from within its own context. While Jung seeks to capture the breadth and depth of the feminine element, he is mainly limited to relying upon his own relationships with women as a point-of-reference. However, he is not exempt from the influence of his culture’s distorted and narrow perceptions of the anima. Jung also utilizes mythology and literature to supplement his own knowledge as he works to outline the content of the anima. This acts to widen the cultural basis which informs the anima image, by enabling for the inclusion of additional historical material. As Jung emphasizes, the archetypes can only be accessed through their varied expressions.

Although Jung faced a great deal of criticism for his use of empirical methods, he remained insistent that while imperfect, this method was a suitable approach for capturing the essence of the archetypes, and in fact, it is the only way by which they can be made available to us. Regarding the benefits of using an empirical approach, he writes,

The empirical reality summed up under the concept of the anima forms an extremely dramatic content of the unconscious. It is possible to describe this content in rational, scientific language, but in this way one entirely fails to express its living character. Therefore, in describing the living processes of the psyche, I deliberately and consciously give preference to a dramatic, mythological way of thinking and speaking, because this is not only more expressive but also more exact than an abstract scientific terminology, which is wont to toy with the notion that its theoretic formulations may one fine day be resolved into algebraic equations. (Aion 13)

Thus, Jung believes that to approach the anima from a scientific point of view is a mistake because this method comes with the impetus to employ a formulaic strategy. To Jung, any attempt to create a “type” even through empirical means, ultimately proves inadequate due to the vastness of the psychic material itself:
Empirically speaking, we are dealing all the time with ‘types,’ definite forms that can be named and distinguished. But as soon as you divest these types of the phenomenology presented by the case material, and try to examine them in relation to other archetypal forms, they branch out into such far-reaching ramifications in the history of symbols that one comes to the conclusion that the basic psychic elements are infinitely varied and ever changing, so as utterly to defy our powers of imagination. The empiricist must therefore content himself with a theoretical ‘as if.’ In this respect he is no worse off than the atomic physicist, even though his method is not based on qualitative measurement but is a morphologically descriptive one (The Archetypes 70).

Thus, according to Jung, the archetypes (including the anima and animus) cannot be contained within a rigid system of classification, since each archetype possesses a great deal of variation and is subject to change over time. Jung admits that any attempts on his part to create “types” for the various psychic elements will inevitably produce inexact definitions. Nonetheless, Jung argues that an attempt to at least capture the essence of the archetypes should be made, yet we should be aware that a specific definition of the anima and animus will evade us.

In creating the framework for these types, Jung finds that using the language and themes of mythology help to capture the life of the psyche as it exists within individuals as well as broader humankind. Jung is interested in the images of the anima that humanity has put forth since antiquity, as well as individual experiences of the anima. These anima images, however, contain both personal biases and cultural biases, and while Jung is effective in taking them beyond merely stereotypical representations of women, evidence of these biases can yet be seen through his definition of the masculine and feminine elements. Yet, because he asserts that the psychic elements are subject to variation and change, I believe that we should acknowledge that his efforts to define the anima and animus represent understandings of these elements which span from antiquity to his own time. Jung was able to concede that the archetypal expression can be influenced by cultural forces and our own
limitations. Thus, the archetypes are not in stasis, instead they will continue to evolve over time in tandem with evolutions in culture. This detail holds important implications for Twenty-First century readers of Jung who find that Jung’s notion of the anima and animus do not align with contemporary understandings of gender, for it suggests that it is necessary to periodically revise our archetypal images.

The anima is seen most frequently throughout history in the “divine syzygies, the male-female pairs of deities” (The Archetypes 59). These syzygies can be found in primitive mythology, Gnosticism, and Chinese philosophy where yang represents the masculine, and yin the feminine (59). While these are the most prominent examples of the male-female pairing, both of these archetypes exist everywhere. As Jung writes, “We can safely assume that these syzygies are as universal as the existence of man and woman” (59) which demonstrates that they are not tied to particular cultures, but can be identified by all.

According to Jung,

“The animus corresponds to the paternal Logos just as the anima corresponds to the maternal Eros. But I do not wish or intend to give these two intuitive concepts too specific a definition. I use Eros and Logos merely as conceptual aids to describe the fact that woman’s consciousness is characterized more by the connective quality of Eros, than by the discrimination and cognition associated with Logos. In men, Eros, the function of relationship, is usually less developed than Logos. In women, on the other hand, Eros is an expression of their true nature, while their Logos is only a regrettable accident.” (Aion 14)

Thus, Jung uses Eros to convey the “connective” quality. This understanding represents the classical definition of the term. More broadly, I believe that based on this passage from the text, we can conclude that Eros has an emotional and relational meaning when applied to the anima. The anima connects through relationship and through feelings. Contrarily, Logos, which is attributed to the animus, represents the ability to use reason to distinguish what is logical or illogical, a process which by nature, involves
discriminating between different ideas. Logos does not by nature involve emotion but is instead primarily cerebral and is a process of separation and distanced consideration.

Jung also writes at length about the symbolic importance of the term anima. “Anima means soul and should designate something very wonderful and immortal” (The Archetypes 26). However, the anima is really not the soul from a strict philosophical point of view. “I have suggested the term ‘anima,’ [instead of ‘My Lady Soul’] as indicating something specific, for which the expression ‘soul’ is too general and too vague” writes Jung (Aion 13). It is apparent that the anima is a vast collection of psychic material, for he also defines the anima as “a natural archetype that satisfactorily sums up all of the statements of the unconscious, of the primitive mind, of the history of language and religion” (The Archetypes 27). Yet, as Jung’s trip to Africa taught him, there is a soulfulness in connection to the earth and its creatures which he felt modern cultures had repressed to their detriment.

This understanding of the anima also points to the “connective” quality of Eros which acts to unite universal experience. Jung considers it a “‘factor’ in the proper sense” since men cannot create it, yet it is always an “a priori element in his moods, reactions, impulses, and whatever else is spontaneous in psychic life” (The Archetypes 27). Jung even goes as far as to claim that the anima is a sort of life force which propels us forward. “It is something that lives of itself, that makes us live; it is a life behind consciousness that cannot be completely integrated with it, but from which, on the contrary, consciousness arises” (27). Therefore, much of the psyche depends upon the anima even though the anima is one of many archetypes.

Just as the anima proves to be a force which men can never evade and is essential to their psyche, so also do women find it is impossible to avoid interaction with the animus. Because the content of the contrasexual element is not understood as well as the element innate to one’s own sex, these interactions often prove bewildering. When the anima and animus meet, they often war against each other rather than join forces to increase their strength. While there is both an internal psychic struggle to come to terms with the contrasexual element within oneself, there is also an equally challenging battle to deal with the
contrasexual element as it appears externally in human form. Jung notes this conflict writing, “Through the opposing Logos/Eros natures, both the good aspects and bad aspects of the anima and animus form a relationship [that is] is always full of animosity”

Yet, while the contrasexual element often brings conflict into the lives of both men and women, the struggle to manage this conflict does not negate the importance of the elements. Jung firmly believes that the contrasexual element offers balance to the individual as we see in this passage:

Just as the anima becomes, through integration, the Eros of consciousness, so the animus becomes a Logos; and in the same way the anima gives relationship and relatedness to a man’s consciousness, the animus gives to a woman’s consciousness a capacity for reflection, deliberation, and self-knowledge. (Aion 16).

Jung’s insistence that the contrasexual element can have a positive impact when paired with the element inherent to one’s own sex serves to advance his notion of an ideal androgynous state. However, the achievement of this ideal state requires a great deal of effort. The individual striving towards integration of the contrasexual element innate to one’s own psyche is an integral aspect of what Jung calls the individuation process.

Jung defines individuation as “the process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as being distinct from the general, collective psychology” (Psychological Types 448). Thus, the goal of individuation is the development of the individual personality and a distinctively formed psyche that draws upon the richness of its world. Elsewhere, Jung also categorizes individuation as “natural transformation” and views it as a form of rebirth. The process can be initiated through dreams, in which a series of symbols connected with rebirth act to awaken the individual to the process. In one such case, “there was a long-drawn out process of inner transformation and rebirth into another being. This ‘other being’ is the other person in ourselves—that larger and greater personality maturing within us, whom we have already met as the inner
friend of the soul (*The Archetypes* 130-131). However, these paths require a great deal of work in order to express their unconsciousness meaning and “befriend” them.

Jung also notes that “individuation is closely connected with the transcendent function” (*Psychological Types* 449), so it is also important to understand what the transcendent function is and how it operates. One important term which Jung employs in explaining the transcendent function is Mediatory Content. Mediatory content, Jung explains, forms “the middle ground on which the opposites can be united” within the psyche (*Psychological Types* 479). It is “constellated by thesis and antithesis in equal measure and standing in a compensatory relation to both” (*Psychological Types* 479). If the psyche is divided and does not lean towards one side more than the other, then the mediatory content is extremely useful in mitigating the conflicts that arise between opposites. While it does not prevent tensions from arising between thesis and antithesis, as long as the ego does not side with one of the opposites yet remains caught between them, it will continue to exist and act as a middle ground.

If the mediatory product remains intact, it forms the raw material for a process not of dissolution but of construction, in which thesis and antithesis both play their part. In this way it becomes a new content that governs the whole attitude, putting an end to the division and forcing the energy of the opposites into a common channel. The standstill is overcome and life can flow on with renewed power towards new goals (*Psychological Types* 480).

This process outlines what Jung calls the transcendent function. Jung adds that we should not view this “function” as something simple and straightforward, but instead must recognize that it represents “a complex function made up of other functions” (*Psychological Types* 480). And “transcendent” is not used to refer to the metaphysical, but instead “the transition from one attitude to another” (*Psychological Types* 480).
While on the surface, the transcendent function, and the individuation process more broadly, require a great deal of introspection and expression (through writing, painting, active imagining, etc.), the aim is not to achieve individuation and pursue a hermetic way of life, nor is total isolation from others required to facilitate the individuation process. In many ways, doing so would be counter-intuitive, since the journey of self-discovery and personal development should also lead to improved relationships with others and engagement with society. Furthermore, the individuation process is often stimulated through dialogue with others. According to Jung,

> As the individual is not just a single, separate being, but by his very existence presupposes a collective relationship, it follows that the process of individuation must lead to more intense and broader collective relationships and not to isolation.  
>  
> (*Psychological Types* 448)

While the process of becoming an individual does not require one to disengage with others, it does require one to disengage from the herd mentality. This is needed in order to seek out more personally meaningful modes of living, since the end goal of this process is to enable each person to develop an authentic self which in turn, will be capable of interacting with the world in deeper, more meaningful ways. Jung argues that when we look at the transcendent function we can see that it “creates individual lines of development which could never be reached by keeping to the path prescribed by collective norms” (*Psychological Types* 449). Jung writes at length explaining individuation and its relation to collective norms.

Individuation is always to some extent opposed to collective norms, since it means separation and differentiation from the general and a building up of the particular—not a particularity that is *sought out*, but one that is already imagined in the psychic constitution. The opposition to the collective norm, however, is only apparent, since closer examination shows that the individual standpoint is not antagonistic to it, but only *differently oriented* (*Psychological Types* 449).
Thus, the individuated person may not seem to fully align with what is accepted as a collective norm, however this not the result of a willful decision to defy the norm (as one might see in someone who is a non-conformist). Instead, the individuated person seems capable of envisioning ways of interacting with the world which often differ from the norm. Furthermore, this means that to some extent, the individuated person will stand apart from the crowd. This is, after all, what differentiation entails.

The individuated person does not see things as many others do, because he or she is not enslaved by the ego. Through the persistence of the mediatory content, such persons are able to see with greater clarity the complexities not only within one’s own psyche, but in the larger world itself. A greater understanding of these complexities leads to the avoidance of black-and white thinking, and thus, individuation persons are more likely to acknowledge that in many cases, the truth lies somewhere in the middle rather than at the extreme of either position. This is fitting since the individuation process entails the pursuit of balance and unity—a joining with the “other being” which is already inside of us. The individuated person’s understanding that life must be lived between the extremes means that such individuals will undoubtedly blend both anima and animus elements in pursuit of the balance that androgyny provides. I believe that we can see the “other being” that Jung refers to as representing the contrasexual element, and the mediatory content as negotiating between the anima and animus.

It is important to note that the transcendent function demonstrates that it is possible for an individual to move beyond gender stereotypes and biases. The individuated person is one who is “differently oriented” to the contrasexual element, because rather than value one opposite over the other, they are able to see that both have legitimacy and value. Because of this, an individuated man will not feel the need to create a hierarchical relationship between the animus and anima. Such men are able to see the anima more clearly as it presents itself in women, because the process of individuation changes their relationship to cultural attitudes, so that the established rhetoric in one’s culture is not blindly accepted as truth. This ability to interact with women as they really are not merely through projections, enables men to see the positive elements of the anima and therefore transforms their attitudes about women. An
individuated man is unlikely to hold sexist views about women, because he does not base his knowledge of the anima on stereotypes, but rather on authentic experiences with the anima. The same also holds true for women who are compelled to confront their own distortions of the animus through the process of individuation.

It is therefore apparent that to counter the sexist attitudes which often affix themselves to the anima, one must allow the mediatory content to arbitrate conflicts between the anima and the animus. This begins the process of individuation, which will provide men with the means to come to terms with the anima. It is apparent that the process of individuation can be seen as opposed to the efforts of projection. Instead of acting to “other” the contrasexual element and detach it from the psyche through projecting it, the process of individuation compels one to deal with the discomfort caused by the contrasexual element by striving to better understand its content. Thus, we can see that the damage created by projecting the anima can be combatted through individuation.

It may, therefore, seem that the solution to the issue of sexism is for everyone to simply become individuated. Yet, for many reasons, there are multitudes of people who do not undergo the process of individuation. For one thing, it takes a lot of effort, and means facing those elements inside oneself and outside in the world that one finds threatening to one’s being. Perhaps as was mentioned earlier, they do not have stable egos and thus are not able to allow the transcendent function to do its work. But it is also possible that not everyone is capable of becoming individuated. Even while Jung discusses the path of individuation, he is aware that it is not achievable for all. Perhaps this explains why Jung devotes more time to discussing dysfunctional psychic states than to the process of individuation itself.

The dysfunctional states Jung speaks about most are that of the complexes. While Jung’s methodology for developing the archetypes may have seemed unorthodox or unscientific to his contemporaries, his method for demonstrating the existence of the complexes was far more conventional. In this case, Jung conducted experiments in word association. The participants in this study (all of whom were Jung’s colleagues) were asked to respond to a list of words with the first word that came to mind in
response. The list consisted of 100 questions in total, and each word from the list was read individually, so that the participants would respond to each word before moving on to the next. It contained simple words such as water, head, table, dog, lamp, etc. After the subjects had responded to all 100 words, he asked them to recall their responses. Jung noted their responses and the amount of time it took them to respond, in addition to their emotional and physiological responses (this was done by way of a device called a psychogalvanometer, which measured the electrical conductivity of the participant’s skin) (“Complexes and Archetypes”). “If the response time was particularly long, or the associated word was uncommon, nonsense, not remembered on recall, or accompanied by particular emotions, Jung considered this a ‘complex indicator’ and a sign of an unconscious psychological conflict” (“Complexes and Archetypes”).

According to Jung, complexes often originate from “a so-called trauma, an emotional shock or some such thing, that splits off a bit of the psyche” (Memories, Dreams, Reflections 8, para 204). This splitting off of the psyche creates division within the individual psyche, and such complexes often prove to be immensely powerful. In Jung’s writings, complexes are sometimes referred to as “emotionally charged complexes” or “feeling-toned complexes” in some instances, however it should be noted that all complexes have an emotional aspect to them. According to Jung, the ‘feeling-toned complex’ … is the image of a certain psychic situation which is strongly accentuated emotionally and is, moreover, incompatible with the habitual attitude of consciousness. … it has a relatively high degree of autonomy, so that it is subject to the control of the mind to only a limited extent, and therefore behaves like an animated foreign body in the sphere of consciousness (Memories, Dreams, Reflections 8, para 201).

Thus, it is clear that in certain situations the complexes can surface and disrupt the normal conscious state. Yet, as Jung states, many people do not realize that they can take almost total control of a person.
Everyone knows nowadays that people ‘have complexes’. What is not so well known, though far more important theoretically, is that complexes can have us. The existence of complexes throws serious doubt on the naïve assumption of the unity of consciousness, which is equated with ‘psyche’, and on the supremacy of the will. Every constellation of a complex postulates a disturbed state of consciousness …. The complex must therefore be a psychic factor which, in terms of energy, possesses a value that sometimes exceeds that of our conscious intentions … And in fact, an active complex puts us momentarily under a state of duress, of compulsive thinking and acting, for which under certain conditions the only appropriate term would be the judicial concept of diminished responsibility. (CW 8, para 200)

It is also apparent that individuals can become dominated by their complexes to the degree that they are no longer in control and are instead guided only by the complex. By referring to the concept of diminished responsibility, Jung further asserts the unassailable strength which the complexes demonstrate.

Because the complexes bring about a great deal of psychic disturbance, it is no surprise that we often encounter “trigger warnings” preceding the introduction of disturbing visual or audio content. After reviewing Jung’s description of complexes and their basis in trauma, it is easy to see the importance of trigger warnings and how they can help those who have been victims of widely recognized forms of trauma and abuse to avoid content which would otherwise cause their complexes to be “activated” and take over. Although trigger warnings prove helpful to those suffering from PTSD or those who are victims of rape, child abuse, domestic abuse, etc. such warnings are not all-encompassing, and many people still find that they have to contend with their complexes. For this reason, we cannot escape complexes in real life or in Jung’s writings.

While the concept of complexes is fascinating in and of itself, I believe that it is important not to view these passages in isolation, but to connect them to other concepts in Jung’s writings. In particular, I find that it is essential to relate Jung’s aforementioned passages about complexes to his other writings.
which discuss the animus-ridden and animus-possessed woman. If this connection is not made, it becomes far too easy to simply write off Jung as a misogynist when one encounters his descriptions of women who are controlled by the animus complex. It is therefore integral to see how his theories relate to one another and contextualize his writings about women within his theory of complexes and individuation. This helps us see the cultural context of what Jung is articulating, and that such complexes, for example, are not innate, but the result of child abuse, rape, or other forms of abuse which are rife in the culture.

First, it is important to examine possession, a concept which is based in Jung’s notion of the complexes. Jung explains that the “phenomenon of possession” takes place when “some content, an idea or a part of the personality, obtains mastery of the individual for one reason or another. The contents which thus take possession “appear as peculiar convictions, idiosyncrasies, stubborn plans, and so forth. As a rule, they are not open to correction” (The Archetypes 122). He also goes on to relate both concepts writing, “possession can be formulated as identity of the ego-personality with a complex” (The Archetypes 122). Since in possession the ego-personality bases its identity in a complex, it seems possible that unlike other complexes (which generally last for a brief period of time) that possession represents a state which is not intermittent, but almost constant.

Jung also goes on to discuss how possession of the anima and animus appear in men and women respectively.

This transformation of personality [possession] gives prominence to those traits which are characteristic of the opposite sex; in man the feminine traits, and in woman the masculine. In the state of possession both figures lose their charm and their values; they retain them only when they are turned away from the world, in the introverted state, when they serve as bridges to the unconscious. Turned towards the world, the anima is fickle, capricious, moody, uncontrolled and emotional, untruthful, bitchy, double-faced, and mystical. The animus is obstinate, harping on principles, laying down the law, dogmatic,
world-reforming, theoretic, word-mongering, argumentative, and domineering. Both have bad taste: the anima surrounds herself with inferior people, and the animus lets himself be taken in by second-rate thinking. (*The Archetypes* 124).

Rather than focus primarily on animus possession as he is wont to do, here we see that Jung places equal emphasis on the negative manifestations of both the anima and animus. It is also important to note that Jung is careful not to villainize the contrasexual element or dismiss its importance, instead he makes it clear that the contrasexual element has an integral role to play in the development of the self (individuation). The contrasexual elements being “turned towards the world” is thought to be negative, since rather than focusing on integrating the content of the contrasexual element, the ego-personality appropriates the anima or animus complex for its own ends. Whenever complexes are granted greater control, individuation becomes more difficult to achieve, since complexes always stand in opposition to the process of psychic integration.

In the following passage, Jung first explains the ideal function of the animus and anima in the individual, then shifts to discuss how they can become “split off” through complexes.

The autonomy of the collective unconscious expresses itself in the figures of anima and animus. They personify those of its content which, when withdrawn from projection, can be integrated into consciousness. To this extent, both figures represent functions which filter the contents of the collective unconscious through to the conscious mind. They appear or behave as such, however only so long as the tendencies of the conscious and unconscious to not diverge too greatly. Should any tension arise, these functions, harmless until then, confront the conscious mind in personified form and behave rather like systems split off from the personality, or like part souls. (*Aion* 20)

As we see here, the anima and animus can create splits in the personality when consciousness and unconsciousness are odds with one another. These splits are caused by complexes, and while not all
complexes lead to possession, both cause divisions in the individual personality which impact interpersonal interactions. While at times Jung differentiates between possession and the influence of a complex, I find that it sometimes useful for the sake of brevity to group the two so that women’s control by the animus is the “animus complex” and men’s control by the anima the “anima complex. Thus, when I refer to the animus complex, I refer more broadly to the group of complexes represented by animus-driven or animus-possessed women, as well as women who are expressing animus opinions or are under the control of complex based in the animus.

While making the link between complexes and Jung’s notion of the animus-ridden or animus-possessed woman does work to resolve some of the issues in Jung’s writings, one of the problematic aspects which remain is the fact that Jung does not discuss the anima complex and the animus complex in equal proportion. While Jung mentions negative incarnations of the anima in men, these passages are few and far between when compared to the innumerable passages devoted to describing women who are under the control of an animus complex. Thus, I often get the impression that he is seemingly obsessed with negative expressions of the animus in women.

However, while Jung does seem to be fascinated by the animus complex, it is unclear what is the basis for his fascination. Although there is no definitive answer to account for why Jung writes at greater length about the animus, it is nonetheless helpful to consider several possible explanations which could provide greater insight into this aspect of his work. Because Jung’s writings about the animus complex concern women, it is helpful to implement a feminist perspective to better understand the inherent difficulties of a man writing about women’s experience. Cultural theory also proves important in this process not only because of its many intersections with feminist thought, but because the beliefs and value systems of Jung’s culture can be seen to influence his own perspective. For these reasons, I have implemented aspects from both cultural and feminist theory in my attempt to understand not only why Jung is fascinated by the animus complex, but what implications may be derived from his fascination, which is evidenced through the large body of writings on the subject.
Many feminist scholars view Jung’s writings about animus-ridden women and animus possession in women as sexist, not only because of the sheer volume of space devoted to discussing these dysfunctions, but because the language which Jung employs is emotionally-charged and sometimes condescending in tone. While I think that it is impossible to deny that there are certain passages in Jung’s writings which do strike one as being sexist, I think one should also be careful not to assume that Jung represents his own views in such instances. In many cases, Jung speaks as a representative of men and his cultural context, meaning that his words are meant to convey what the majority of men believe to be true. Yet, this approach is itself wrought with complications, because it is often unclear whether Jung also agrees with these views or is merely presenting a generic male point-of-view. Furthermore, questions of complicity come into play, because one could argue that since Jung does not distinguish himself from such views, nor openly denounce them as sexist, he is in agreement with them.

Although one might also argue that whether this was Jung’s intent or not, the preponderance of such passages serve to highlight the difficult position women are in when they live within a patriarchal society. This interpretation allows us to look at such passages and see that women are not solely responsible for their dysfunctional relationship to the animus, but instead, the perpetuation of rigid gender roles and lack of power afforded to women under the patriarchy work to create these imbalances. In fact, if we consider that complexes arise due to trauma, we must therefore inquire as to the trauma which leads to the development of the animus complex. I would argue that we need not look far to find the source of the trauma, because in patriarchal societies women are routinely treated as less intelligent, less capable, and less emotionally stable than men. Because of their purported inadequacies, women have historically been unable to enter the “male sphere” (public life) and instead have been relegated to the “female sphere” (domestic life). While women are increasingly breaking free from these constraints, they still face inequalities and are yet subjected to the limitations imposed by gender roles. What cannot be ignored when we read Jung’s writings is that women have been and continue to be subjected to oppression and subsequent trauma, which leaves an indelible mark on the female psyche. Women who have animus
complexes are therefore women who have been subjected to trauma, and it is this content which finds its way to the forefront when they are exposed to triggering stimuli.

Thus, if we connect Jung’s writings about complexes with his writings about complexes as they appear in women, we might instead view him as a commenting on the state of affairs in his culture and in other cultures rather than as demonstrating the true essence of women. This is key to a balanced interpretation of his work, for when we approach his work from this perspective we are less inclined to direct our frustration specifically towards Jung, and more inclined to direct these feelings toward the social and cultural forces which have brought about the oppression of women.

Nonetheless, it is important to see that while the oppression is perpetuated on a wide scale within society, it also relies upon individual actors. While at times women are traumatized by physical or sexual violence at the hand of strangers, acquaintances, or lovers, many women who have never been victims of violence have been traumatized by forms of verbal, emotional, or psychological abuse. The content of such abuse often finds its basis in the negative stereotypes about women which are aimed at maintaining the notion that women are inferior to men. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that women’s trauma can be caused by physical and non-physical acts of abuse and is often perpetrated by men who believe that maintaining patriarchal control is in their best interest or continue to do unconsciously through cultural paradigms.

In Jung’s writings, women’s trauma seems to be specifically tied to patriarchal notions of excessive emotionality and intellectual inferiority in females. While Jung explains how women act when they are under the control of the animus complex, he does not explain the events which triggered the complex to make an appearance. However, based on his work on complexes, we can assume that something that was said or seen must have corresponded to a traumatic memory, thus causing the complex to surface. Not only is it likely that many of the complexes that women develop can be attributed to trauma originating in sexism, but it is also important to note that this trauma may not merely be a thing
of the past, but could also be chronic, thus potentially causing the complex to become even more powerful.

Furthermore, it also seems possible that the complexes which Jung observes in women are so disturbing because of the intensity of the trauma and the likelihood that the trauma is ongoing. Yet, while Jung is clearly distressed by women who are under the control of complexes, it is important to acknowledge that trauma research as well as feminist understandings of the impact of patriarchal oppression were not readily available to Jung, nor if they had been would they align neatly with Twentieth-First century work on these topics. Nonetheless, his articulation of the complexes and the attention he gives to women’s complexes were an important point-of-reference for further developments in both fields.

Thus, with the context and foundation of Jung’s work on complexes set, I will now turn to examining some of the passages which portray the animus complex as it appears in women. A woman who is under the control of this complex is often referred to an “animus-ridden woman” within Jung’s writings. An animus-ridden woman is unrelenting according to Jung. “No matter how friendly and obliging a woman’s Eros may be, no logic on earth can shake her if she is ridden by the animus. Often the man has the feeling—and he is not altogether wrong—that only seduction or a beating or rape would have the necessary power of persuasion” (Aion 15). While it is important to recognize that Jung is not calling for men to perform any of these acts towards the animus-ridden woman, it is nonetheless disturbing that he mentions seduction, beating, and rape as resolutions which might be conceived of in the male mind. I suspect that Jung goes to such extremes in this passage to demonstrate the immense power which women’s complexes hold. What is evident (even in contemporary society) is that women’s complexes are continually reinforced by the ongoing threat of these traumatic acts. In patriarchal cultures, the threat of abuse is scarcely absent, and even men who do not overtly agree with such acts often find themselves engaging in abusive or violent behaviors. As we see throughout these writings, Jung is intent on demonstrating that complexes are reinforced by the contrasexual ideational response. When discussing
complexes in general, Jung devotes much of his time to defending the notion that they can take control of a person, thus it is fitting that this aspect receives a great deal attention in his writings about the animus complex.

The animus is partial to argument (Aion 15), however this aspect is not negative in and of itself. Rather, the argumentative nature of the animus becomes destructive when it becomes isolated from the anima and the rest of the psyche, as is the case with women who are under the control of an anima complex. While Jung writes that the animus “gives to a woman’s consciousness a capacity for reflection, deliberation, and self-knowledge” (Aion 16), contrarily a woman who is under the control of the animus complex becomes highly argumentative and refuses to relent.

Jung is very interested in the way in which Logos functions in women, because according to him, it often acts to stir up dissension through argumentation.

It [Logos in women] gives rise to misunderstandings and annoying interpretations in the family circle and among friends. This is because it consists of opinions instead of reflections, and by opinions I mean a priori assumptions that lay claim to absolute truth. Such assumptions, as everyone knows, can be extremely irritating (Aion 15).

Jung also goes on to explain that men argue with similar stubbornness on occasion. “Men can argue in a very womanish way, too, when they are anima-possessed and have thus been transformed into the animus of their own anima” (Aion 15). However, the following sentence proves most important to understanding the origin of the animus complex.

With them [men] the question becomes one of personal vanity and touchiness (as if they were females); with women it is a question of power, whether of truth or justice or some other ‘ism’—for the dressmaker and hairdresser have already taken care of their vanity.

(Aion 15)
The fact that Jung acknowledges the role of power as it relates to the animus-ridden woman demonstrates that Jung is conscious of women’s desire for greater power. Although he does not discuss the reasons why a woman might seek power, I believe that we can infer that obtaining power is important to women, because they are often denied power under the patriarchy. It is also worth noting that Jung associates the animus with power, which itself points to a society in which males possess greater power than females. While Jung does not openly condemn patriarchal control, he does seem to acknowledge that a power imbalance exists between men and women, and that women desire to mitigate this imbalance. Furthermore, this recognition is also essential in linking power imbalances to the development of female complexes.

Within Jung’s writings, he sometimes refers to what he calls “animus opinions” which I believe are part of the animus complex. At times it seems to me that there may be degrees of severity within the animus complex, so that we might think of animus opinions as less extreme than being “animus-ridden.” The most extreme kind of complex seems to be possession by the animus, although Jung does not establish an obvious hierarchy of complexes in his writings, so any attempts on my part to impose such a system may ultimately be misguided. It is possible that Jung did not think that it was in fact necessary to distinguish these complexes from one another. Instead, the differences in wording might simply be just that. Thus, since it is unclear if such hierarchies are inherent or even relevant to Jung’s writings on the animus complex, it seems best to avoid imposing such a system.

What is very apparent in Jung’s writings is that the animus complex represents a state of psychic imbalance in women. Expounding upon the opinions of women who are under the influence of the animus complex, Jung writes,

Animus opinions very often have the character of solid convictions that are not lightly shaken, or of principles whose validity is seemingly unassailable. If we analyze these opinions, we immediately come upon unconscious assumptions whose existence must be inferred; that is to say, the opinions are apparently conceived as though such assumptions
existed. But in reality, the opinions are not thought out at all; they exist ready-made, and they are held so positively and with such conviction that the woman never has the shadow of a doubt about them. (*Aspects of the Feminine* 96)

While this passage may seem to present women as incapable of approaching an issue in a rational manner, it is important to remember that Jung is speaking of women who are influenced by a complex. If we refer back to his writings about the complexes in general, he explains that they are split-off parts of the psyche, which are inherently dysfunctional and disruptive to the whole of the personality. Complexes present themselves in the form of extreme behaviors, because they are, by nature intensely emotional and unconscious. They are not subject to reason, and are instead irrational, thus we can see that by nature, complexes stand in opposition to Logos. Yet Jung is not saying that all women are entirely incapable of making use of Logos. Unlike individuated women who are able to integrate the content of the animus and reap the benefits of Logos, this passage focuses on women who have not achieved this balanced state and are psychically divided due to complexes.

Jung also wants to make it clear that many different women can be controlled by the animus complex. While one might easily assume that intellect and education would provide protection against becoming animus-driven, Jung instead finds that the complex is often more pronounced in intellectual women.

In intellectual women the animus encourages a critical disputatiousness and would-be highbrowism, which, however, consists essentially in harping on some irrelevant weak point and nonsensically making it the main one. Or a perfectly lucid discussion gets tangled up in the most maddening way through the introduction of a quite different and if possible perverse point of view. Without knowing it, such women are solely intent upon exasperating the man and are, in consequence, the more completely at the mercy of the animus. ‘Unfortunately I am always right,’ one of these creatures once confessed to me. (*Aspects of the Feminine* 97)
I believe that this observation is important because it again seems to demonstrate that the animus complex can find its origin in the trauma of patriarchal notions of male superiority. In fact, it should not seem surprising that intellectual women would have very pronounced complexes, because they are the most likely of all women to be experience the brunt of patriarchal trauma, since their status as intellectuals transgresses both the separate sphere ideology and the notion of female inferiority. As Simone de Beauvoir powerfully articulated in *The Second Sex*, intellectual women in patriarchal society are increasingly the targets of the most severe forms of oppression and invalidation. Yet, since Jung does not acknowledge this point in the text, on the surface it does appear as if he is attacking intellectual women.

This passage also proves a bit problematic because in the last line Jung does not represent the widely-held views of men, but his own views when he refers to women as “creatures.” It is evident that anyone (male of female) who is under the control of a complex will be very difficult for others to deal with, yet this does not justify treating these individuals cruelly. Jung does not give any indication in his general writings about the complexes that those who fall under their control are undeserving of compassion, yet one finds that when it comes to women who are controlled by the animus complex that Jung is perhaps less forgiving than he should be. This lack of compassion is quite evident when Jung others such women by calling them “creatures” thereby acting to de-humanize them.

The question of Jung’s role in the text also comes into play in other passages which have typically been viewed as sexist by feminist scholars. It is important to bear in mind that as a man, Jung is unable to fully understand the experiences of women, just as a woman cannot fully understand the experiences of men. Thus, both are at a disadvantage when attempting to comprehend what it is like to live as a member of the opposite sex. For this reason, one cannot expect Jung to be intimately acquainted with women’s realities. However, it is important to maintain an empathetic attitude when dealing with others whose experiences we cannot fully understand, and I believe that we should also hold Jung to this standard.
Not only is Jung (or any man) at a disadvantage when attempting to articulate the psychic life of a woman, but I would also argue that it is impossible for him to separate himself entirely from his privileged position as a man in a patriarchal society. While Jung was able to distance himself from many of the prejudices of his time, the fact remains that total separation from these influences was not achievable for him, nor is it possible for anyone else. For this reason, when Jung takes on the role of observer in his writings, it is impossible for him to remain entirely objective, since he is after all, human. While Jung does at times acknowledge that his attempts at apprehending the anima are imperfect, it is when he loses sight of his own inadequacies and prejudices (as he does when he refers to women as “creatures”) that his words prove harmful to women.

Nonetheless, in many instances, Jung’s writings about the animus complex serve to reveal the inner-workings and power dynamics integral to maintaining patriarchal control. Such passages prove immensely beneficial to advancing a feminist understanding of the ways in which men exert power over women in social, relational, and professional realms, and the strategies they devise to maintain that control. Jung provides an inside look into a world which men; as the holders of power often dictate what women should do, think, and say. As Jung reveals here, the standards of feminine conduct vary depending on a woman’s attractiveness:

If the woman happens to be pretty, these animus opinions have for the man something rather touching and childlike about them, which makes him adopt a benevolent, fatherly, professorial manner. But if the woman does not stir his sentimental side, and competence is expected of her rather than appealing helplessness and stupidity, then her animus opinions irritate the man to death, chiefly because they are based on nothing but opinion for opinion’s sake, and ‘everybody has a right to own his own opinions.’ (Aspects of the Feminine 97)
While this passage can be viewed as commentary on the way in which men deal with attractive women who are under the control of the animus complex, it is apparent that it reveals a great deal more than that.

The notion that men can tolerate women’s animus opinions if a woman is pretty fits neatly into the patriarchal mindset, in which women are primarily valued for their beauty not their intelligence. Yet, men do not dismiss the animus opinions of unattractive women as cute, because there is a different set of expectations for such women. This suggests that men believe that they possess the authority to force women into different categories, each of which are designed to meet their various needs. It is apparent that attractive women “stir a man’s sentimental side” and are put into the category of potential romantic partners, wherein their intelligence is often irrelevant. It is even suggested here that if an attractive woman is not very intelligent or capable that this is part of her appeal. Yet, it should come as no surprise that men steeped in patriarchal tradition would find less-intelligent women appealing, because such a pairing enables men to maintain the upper hand in the relationship. Contrarily, intellectual women threaten to dismantle male control, since they challenge the notion that women are intellectually inferior.

While men’s privileging of attractive women is certainly problematic, the creation of a category for women who are not attractive enough to be considered as possible romantic partners also warrants further examination. Since these women are seen to be lacking in physical charms, they must therefore prove useful to men in some other way. While stupidity and helplessness may seem appealing in a pretty woman, they are unacceptable in an unattractive woman since instead competency is expected of them. The unattractive woman brings to mind the trope of the plain, yet highly competent female librarian. Such women are typically restricted from transitioning to the role of romantic interest under patriarchal rule and are instead destined to spend their lives serving the public, eventually becoming known as “old maids.” To avoid the wrath of men, the unattractive woman must humbly resign herself to her lot in life and focus on making herself useful.
In either role, women are at a disadvantage. This is, of course, because women (not unlike men) are multi-dimensional and cannot easily be pushed into the categories which patriarchal cultures devise. There are conventionally attractive women who are also intelligent and capable, yet this system necessitates that women conform to one role, since men have need of one or the other, not a woman who embodies both characteristics.

While Jung provides a valuable (albeit disturbing) insight into the control mechanisms of patriarchal culture through this passage, it is unfortunate that he does not condemn such practices. In this case, Jung’s choice not to provide us with his own views leaves the reader to wonder if he finds fault with such a system or not. While there are instances in Jung’s work where he admits that he was mistaken about something or has changed his position on a particular matter, like many of us, Jung is not inclined to admit to all of his own shortcomings. What is more commonly observed with Jung and other thinkers like him, is the gradual evolution of their theories and views. Just as individuation is a continual journey, so also do we witness a similar journey of discovery in Jung’s own work.

One example of the evolution of Jung’s views is seen in his writings about intellectual and career women. Jung’s 1950 essay titled “A Study in the Process of Individuation” represents Jung’s later attitude towards woman of this kind. The essay concerns a woman whom Jung calls “Miss X”; an intellectual who had spent nine years studying psychology and was up-to-date on all the current literature in the field (The Archetypes 290).

…the daughter of an exceptional father… she had varied interests, was extremely cultured, and possessed a lively turn of mind. She was unmarried but lived with the unconscious equivalent of a human partner, namely the animus (the personification of everything masculine in a woman), in that characteristic liaison so often met with in women with an academic education…her animus was not of the kind to give her cranky ideas. She was protected from this by her natural intelligence and by a remarkable readiness to tolerate the opinions of other people. This good quality, by no means to be
expected in the presence of an animus, had, in conjunction with some difficult experiences that could not be avoided, enabled her to realize that she had reached a limit and “got stuck,” and this made it urgently necessary for her to look around for ways that might lead her out of the impasse. (*The Archetypes* 290-291)

It is apparent in this passage that Jung esteems “Miss X” and does not disparage her for being an intellectual. Importantly, she also acts an example of an intellectual woman who is not ruled by the animus. This is worth noting, since Jung devoted much of his time to writing about the animus complex in women, leading one to assume that there are very few women who can find balance between the anima and animus. Instead, in this essay, we find that Miss X sought out Jung’s guidance when she realized that her personal growth had come to a halt. Her desire for further development coupled with her ability to discern a need for change enabled Miss X to initiate the individuation process. Jung assisted her on this journey by encouraging the use of painting as a way to delve into her unconscious and come to terms with integrated aspects of her psyche. Eventually, Miss X (whose real name was Kristine Mann) would go on to become one of the leading psychoanalysts in the United States.

Interestingly, Jung noted in his initial impressions of Miss X that she “lived with the unconscious equivalent of a human partner” which is the animus. It is important that Jung acknowledged that a person can benefit from the contrasexual element without needing a romantic partner, since in at least one other instance he suggests that to understand the anima and animus one must be in a romantic relationship. Although he writes elsewhere that the “anima and animus can only be realized through relation to a partner, because only in such a relation do their projections become operative” (*Aion* 22) it becomes clear in the passage on Miss X that this “partner” need not be a physical human being.

Yet, while Jung demonstrates a high level of respect for Miss X as an intelligent individual, his views on with women intellectual and professional aspirations were not always so progressive. In his earlier writings, his reluctance to accept women’s entrance into the professions appeared to be tied to his belief in the “separate spheres” notion. It is worth again noting that in Jung’s time the idea that there was
a feminine sphere and a masculine sphere was widely accepted in conjunction with biological essentialism. Thus, it is not surprising that Jung (particularly earlier on in his career) was very clear about what the man’s realm consists of, and likewise what the woman’s realm consisted of in his writing.

Regarding these separate spheres Jung writes,

> The conscious attitude of woman is in general far more exclusively personal than that of man. Her world is made up of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, husbands and children…the man’s world is the nation, the state, business concerns, etc. His family is simply a means to an end, one of the foundations of the state, and his wife is not necessarily the woman for him (at any rate not as the woman means it when she says ‘my man’). The general means more to him than the personal; his world consists of a multitude of coordinated factors, whereas her world, outside of her husband, terminates in a sort of cosmic mist (*Aspects of the Feminine* 99).

Thus, he asserts that the woman’s world is limited to the relational realm, while a man’s world consists of all matters outside of the home and family. It should therefore come as no surprise that Jung was reluctant to see women enter the workforce alongside men. Furthermore, this passage not only demonstrates that Jung believed that women should focus on domestic matters, but it reveals a rather disturbing perspective on marriage and family from a male point-of-view.

According to Jung, men see their families as a “means to an end” which are established in accordance with the expectations of the nation and society. Additionally, while a woman refers to her husband as “my man” meaning that she views him as the only man for her, to her husband she is perhaps not his “soul mate” and may in fact not be the only woman he is involved with romantically. Jung seems to imply here that men are by nature not inclined towards fidelity, thus if engaging in affairs is in accordance with their nature, then it follows that they simply cannot avoid doing so. Even if I am mistaken in my interpretation of this aspect, the attitude of men towards their wives and families which Jung details is thoroughly objectifying and positions women and children merely as pawns.
In Jung’s 1927 essay, “Woman in Europe” he deals with modern women who have challenged the notion of separate, gendered worlds. While the purpose of the essay is to argue that women should be willing to overlook their husband’s infidelities because the benefits of marriage are worth maintaining the relationship, Jung also addresses a variety of issues which impact modern marriage. It is interesting to note that Jung begins this essay with a great deal of reluctance and humility.

To write about woman in Europe today is such a hazardous undertaking that I would scarcely have ventured to do so without a pressing invitation. Have we anything of fundamental importance to say about Europe? Is anyone sufficiently detached? Are we not all involved in some programme or experiment, or caught up in some critical retrospect that clouds our judgement? And in regard to woman, cannot the same questions be asked? Moreover, what can man say about woman, his opposite? I mean of course something sensible, that is outside the sexual programme, free of resentment, illusion, and theory. Where is man to be found capable of such superiority? Woman always stands just where the man’s shadow falls, so that he is only too liable to confuse the two. Then, when he tries to repair this misunderstanding, he overvalues her and believes her the most desirable thing in the world. Thus it is with the greatest misgivings that I set out to treat this theme. (Aspects of the Feminine 55-56)

Jung is clearly aware of his own limitations in attempting to discuss the concerns and experiences of European women, although it becomes clear later on in this essay that Jung has many opinions and views on what women should do.

One of the resoundingly positive aspects of this essay is Jung’s willingness to acknowledge that society was undergoing a process of change which had important ramifications not only for men, but for women.
All the problems of the present form a tangled knot, and it is hardly possible to single out one particular problem and treat it independently of the others. Thus, there is no problem of ‘woman in Europe’ without man and his world…In numerous ways woman is indissolubly bound up with man’s world and is therefore just as exposed to all the shocks of his world. The war, for instance, has affected woman just as profoundly as it has man, and she has to adapt to its consequences as he must. (*Aspects of the Feminine* 58)

However, Jung still believed very strongly in the notion of separate spheres and while women and men may have lived through the same events, this does not mean that these events have had the same impact on both sexes. “What the upheavals of the last twenty or thirty years mean for a man’s world is apparent to everyone; we can read about it every day in the newspapers. But what it means for women is not so evident” (*Aspects of the Feminine* 58). This is because women were mainly kept outside of the male sphere.

Neither politically, nor economically, nor spiritually is she a factor of visible importance. If she were, she would loom more largely in a man’s field of vision and would have to be considered a rival. Sometimes, she is seen in this role, but only as a man, so to speak, who is accidentally a woman. (*Aspects of the Feminine* 58)

While this passage does provide another interesting glimpse into the mechanisms of patriarchal culture specifically in terms of how the separate spheres act to keep women subordinate to men, it is unclear if Jung views these realities as injustices which need to be corrected. In the last line, Jung appears to disparage women who attempt to force their way into the male sphere by adopting masculine characteristics.

A few paragraphs later, Jung gives the impression that he advocates for the loosening of the separate spheres system and the empowerment of women.
When we observe the way in which women, since the second half of the nineteenth century, have begun to take up masculine professions, to become active in politics, to sit on committees, etc., we can see that woman is in the process of breaking with the purely feminine sexual pattern or unconsciousness and passivity, and has made a concession to masculine psychology by establishing herself as a visible member of society. She no longer hides behind a mask of Mrs. So-and-so, with the obliging intention of having all her wishes fulfilled by the man, or to make him pay for it if things do not go as she wishes. This step towards social independence is a necessary response to economic and other factors, but in itself it is only a symptom of and not the thing about which we are most concerned. Certainly, the courage and capacity for self-sacrifice of such women is admirable, and only the blind could fail to see the good that has come out of all of these efforts. (*Aspects of the Feminine* 59)

Astoundingly, Jung openly supports women stepping outside of the domestic realm and empowering themselves to make their own money and their own choices. Contradicting his earlier remarks in this essay, Jung here advocates for women’s relinquishment of passive tendencies and, in effect, gaining agency over their own lives, rather than relying on male agency through a husband or father. Yet, it is apparent in this essay that Jung was very conflicted about modern women and their place in society. At one moment he appears to disparage women for attempting to step into the man’s world, and then at another seems to insist that the separate spheres mentality must be revised to adapt to the conditions posed by modernity. In this text we see that whenever Jung seems to take one step forward, he counters this progress by taking two steps back. Thus, in conclusion to his earlier remarks he writes:

But no one can get round the fact that in taking up a masculine profession, studying and working like a man, woman is doing something not wholly in accord with, if not directly injurious to, her feminine nature. (*Aspects of the Feminine* 59)
Thus, Jung reverses the progress he made towards advocating for the relaxation of the separate spheres system by claiming that women’s entrance into academia and the professions is unsuitable on account of their “feminine nature.” While Jung would later position Miss X as a positive example of a learned woman who was not tainted through work which might be viewed as masculine, it is apparent that Jung did not always feel this way about intellectual and career women. At the time of writing “Woman in Europe” he believed that as a rule, women who go on to advanced study and pursue careers do something which violates their nature and causes harm.

Thus it can happen—indeed is almost the rule—that the mind of a woman who takes up a masculine profession is influenced by her unconscious masculinity in a way not noticeable to herself but quite obvious to everybody in her environment. She develops a kind of rigid intellectuality based on so-called principles, and backs them up with a whole host of arguments which always just miss the mark in the most irritating way, and always inject a little something into the problem that is not really there. Unconscious assumptions or opinions are the worst enemy of woman; they can even grow into a positively demonic passion that exasperates and disgusts men, and does the woman herself the greatest injury by gradually smothering the charm and meaning of her femininity and driving it into the background. Such a development naturally ends in profound psychological disunion, in short, a neurosis. (Aspects of the Feminine 61).

The description of masculinized women which Jung provides in this passage aligns with the description of the women who have an animus complex, yet these behaviors are not caused by what we might think of as trauma, but instead are the result of women entering into “masculine professions.” While Jung does not use the term “complex” here, he suggests that intellectual and career-oriented woman are susceptible to developing neuroses; a state of dis-union which can be manifested as a complex.
By positioning study and work as harmful to women, separate sphere boundaries are reinforced, and women are discouraged from entering the public (male) sphere. If one can keep women from pursuing further education and careers, then this serves to keep them reliant upon men. Furthermore, women who are unable to earn a living are more likely to view marriage as the only option available to them. Such women are not only very eager to marry but are also likely to remain married even if their spouse is abusive or unfaithful, simply because they lack viable alternatives.

While I cannot be sure precisely what Jung’s intentions were, it seems possible that he might have made such assertions with the ulterior motive to ensure that women would remain reliant upon men. Even though most of the evidence that Jung cites seems to suggest that women want to step into the public sphere and become independent, he instead insists that this is not what women truly desire. “The modern woman has become conscious of the undeniable fact that only in the state of love can she attain the highest and best of which she is capable, and this knowledge drives her to the other realization that love is beyond the law” (Aspects of the Feminine 71). Here Jung refers to marriage when he speaks of the “state of love” and marriage vows where he uses the word “law.” Thus, Jung suggests that women have come to see that only marriage will bring out the best in them, and that the promise of fidelity contained within the marriage vow is insignificant since the love relationship supersedes any man-made vow. Yet, it does not seem that this is what women truly believe, but instead represents the position that Jung would like them to take. While Jung is at times very empathetic towards women in this essay, he also appears loses sight of his own limitations and purports to know what they think and what is advantageous for them.

Indeed, it is Jung’s ambivalence towards women in this essay which leaves the reader with a series of seemingly incongruous views. While it seems expedient to make sense of these parts and see how they relate to the larger goal of this essay, this task proves rather difficult. One could argue that perhaps he is partially blind to the influence of his own anima projections which here act to reinforce notions of female inferiority, and what we glimpse in this essay is a series of moments in which he is able
to set aside his own biases coupled with those in which he is gripped by them. His reluctance to enter into a discussion of the challenges facing modern European women can be seen as an admission of the power which his anima projections hold over him. While one hopes that this was the case, it also seems possible that Jung had other motives in advising women against entering the male sphere.

If we look at this essay more closely, we also find that it is rather misleading in nature, since at first glance it purports to address the challenges and opportunities which modern European women face, yet in fact, Jung’s primary aim is to discuss men’s marital infidelities and how they relate to women. Certainly, it is fitting that the topic of marriage be included in a discussion of women’s experience, yet it seems that from the outset, Jung is merely setting the stage to introduce the notion that marital infidelity is not a sufficient reason for divorce. He is willing to make concessions to the impact of the war and political turmoil on women, yet he still ultimately believes that women should not attempt to enter the public (male) sphere. By arguing that doing so is “injurious” to women, he reassures men that they will not have to compete with women in the workplace and that their wives will continue to remain in the female sphere where their primary role is to care for the home and family. Furthermore, it also acts to discourage women from pursuing further study and work opportunities, since doing so might lead to neurosis. While it is unclear if this effect was intentional on the part of Jung, this rhetoric certainly does serve to keep women reliant upon men, which in turn, reduces the likelihood that they will seek divorce in the event of infidelity on the part of the husband.

When viewed in comparison with his writings about Miss X, one can see that his views about intellectual and career women may have changed over time. While some of his earlier writings (such as his Women in Europe essay) present a Jung who is strongly influenced by patriarchal forces, it is important not to overlook his moments of insight within these same texts. For through such instances, we learn not to see Jung as a misogynist, but as a man who longed to know women as they truly are. Jung’s unwillingness to whole-heartedly embrace the patriarchal view of women through continual confrontation with his own anima projections, eventually led him to an appreciation of women such as Miss X. While
Jung seems to have found it impossible to entirely abandon his former notions and still viewed women such as Miss X as exceptional case, his attitude towards intellectual women and career women clearly underwent a series of changes over time.

Furthermore, as we see in Jung’s autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, when looks back on his life and his work, he seems to hint at aspects of his work with which he no longer fully agreed. Jung remarks “I have come to the conclusion that before we settle upon any theories in regard to the unconscious, we require many, many, more experiences of it” (*Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* 287). Here it seems Jung is questioning some of what he has written about the unconscious. He also seems to recognize his work’s place in history, and begins to see that which would follow it and perhaps challenge or exceed it. As Aniela Jaffe writes in her introduction to the book, “During the years in which the book was taking shape a process of transformation seemed to take place in Jung. With each succeeding chapter he moved, as it were, farther from himself, until at last he was able to see himself as well as the significance of his life and work from a distance” (*Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* xii). From this perspective, Jung remarks “If I ask the value of my life, I can only measure myself against the centuries and then must say, Yes, it means something. Measured by the ideas of today, it means nothing” (*Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* xii). While Jung does not radically alter his theory of the anima and the animus in this text, and does yet make some negative remarks about “masculine” women, he speaks with fondness of his own anima here. It is clear that in his old age Jung is able to see both the strengths and weaknesses of his theories, and leans more towards an attitude of wonder than definition or criticism.

This evolution suggests that when approaching Jung’s writings about women that perhaps it would be more accurate to distinguish between his early and late writings. While many of Jung’s critics have focused primarily on his early writings about women, it also seems integral to acknowledge the ways in which he deviates from this content in his later work. Additionally, while the progression in Jung’s thinking about women represents a step in the right direction, his work yet bears the mark of essentialism which is now a largely outmoded system. For this reason, further revisions of his writings on
the anima and animus are needed in order to more accurately depict women’s realities in the Twenty-First Century.
Chapter 2 An Archetypal Reading of *Oliver Twist*'s Nancy

While there is little doubt in my mind that Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist* was intended as a critique of the New Poor Laws which were rooted in Benthamite Utilitarianism, I believe that it is misguided to simply label this novel as such without exploring the other themes which emerge later in the narrative. While the opening chapters of this novel are concerned primarily with offering a critique of the corrupt and inhumane inner workings of the workhouse system, as the novel progresses Nancy becomes a figure of increasing significance. In fact, I purport that there is evidence to suggest that Dickens becomes fascinated with the idea of Nancy--not merely as a prostitute who demonstrates inherent goodness--but as a woman who embarks on a journey of self-development. Furthermore, it is apparent that Dickens is also interested in exploring an alternative to biological essentialism and thus employs Nancy--a character who embodies both masculine and feminine qualities--as an exploration of the notion of androgyny. Ultimately, Dickens not only focuses on Nancy’s personal development, but elevates her to the role of heroine, and in doing so, enable her to act as a powerful, female embodiment of Jung’s concept of individuation and the archetypal journey.

*Oliver Twist* is often viewed by Dickensian scholars as a perplexing and seemingly disjointed novel. In the beginning of the text, it is apparent that Dickens is intensely focused on providing a critique of the New Poor Laws and the subsequent corruption and abuse of England’s poorest citizens. As readers, we are compelled to view the world through Oliver’s eyes, since he acts as the protagonist in the opening chapters of the book. However, as the story progresses, attention shifts to Nancy and over time, Oliver is largely displaced. According to Burton Wheeler, this alteration makes sense because (like many of his novels) Dickens originally produced the narrative not in a complete, ready-to-publish manuscript, but in a series of installments, which were featured in Bentley’s Miscellany. Initially intended to serve only as a short serial, which was featured under the title “The Adventures of Oliver Twist, or, The Parish Boy’s
Dickens decided to adapt the story into a novel after he had already released four parts in Bentley’s publication. Because of this, Wheeler believes that Dickens had not yet determined the course of the narrative at the time of writing the first four parts but was obligated to think critically about the plot and intent of the work when it was decided that it could be published as a novel (Wheeler 41).

Accordingly, he concludes that “Dickens decided to rescue Oliver from a representative ‘Parish Boy’s Progress’ that is, from workhouse to criminal associates to deportation to the gallows. He then settled upon Nancy as the character who, replacing Oliver as the central focus of the work, could sustain the theme that private benevolence must rescue children from the corruptive forces of society” (Wheeler 41).

To substantiate his claims, Wheeler relies upon archival documents (primarily letters written by Dickens and sent to his publishers) in which Dickens frankly admits (at least once) that he did not know exactly how the story would conclude (Wheeler 44). In November 1837, after receiving positive feedback from Forster on Chapters XVI and XVII, Dickens wrote “I hope to do great things with Nancy. If I can only work out the idea I have formed of her” (Wheeler 44). However, it seems that while Dickens was uncertain how to employ Nancy or resolve the novel’s main conflicts, the figure of Nancy and the experiences of Oliver Twist had long been on his mind. It is likely that both characters were in fact based on his experiences as a reporter. Kathleen Tillotson (who edited the 1966 Clarendon Press version of the novel) believes that the material, which eventually found expression in the fictional characters in the book, may have been in Dicken’s mind as early as 1833.

There are certain other references that indicate a long incubation for the novel. In chapter XV he speaks, not necessarily ironically, of his ‘long-considered intention and plans regarding this prose epic’; and in the introduction of 1841 claims that the ‘conduct and character’ of Nancy has been ‘suggested to [his] mind long ago—long before I dealt in fiction—by what I often saw and read of, in actual life around me’ (Wheeler 50).

Furthermore, as George Watt argues, Dicken’s treatment of Nancy closely mirrors his earlier work, Sketches by Boz, in which he handled non-fictional and fictional material in a manner which
encouraged the reader to empathize with the social outcasts depicted in the text. In “A Visit to Newgate” Dickens provides a description of a long-time prostitute who was clearly more of a victim than a criminal. The girl belonged to a class—unhappily but too extensive—the very existence of which should make men’s hearts bleed. Barely past her childhood, it required but a glance to discover that she was one of those children, born and bred in neglect and vice, who have never known what childhood is: who have never been taught to love and court a parent’s smile, or to dread a parent’s frown…they have entered at once upon the stern realities and miseries of life, and to their better nature it is almost hopeless to appeal…. (Watt 12)

Another sketch from this same work titled “The Hospital Patient” depicts a battered woman who testifies to the court of her lover’s innocence despite the overwhelming evidence of his guilt (Sketches by Boz 213). The text captures the same sense of fear which haunts Nancy and informs her interactions with Sikes.

The similarities between the characters (real or fictional) in Sketches by Boz and Oliver Twist’s Nancy work to reinforce the theory that at some point (perhaps in November 1837), Dickens felt compelled to shift the focus from Oliver to Nancy. That said, it is also important to acknowledge that Dickens was admittedly “flying by the seat of his pants” when it came to this particular work. In Mid-March 1838, in a letter to Frederick Yates which was aimed at easing his fears concerning the theft of his material, Dickens wrote “I am quite satisfied that nobody can have heard what I mean to do with the characters in the end, inasmuch as at present, I don’t quite know, myself” (Wheeler 44). It seems possible to conjecture that perhaps some event or individual brought back into his consciousness the aforementioned sketches during the course of writing the serialized version of Oliver Twist; however, it remains impossible to confirm or deny this hypothesis. Whatever the reason for changing the focus of the text, it must have been of great import and immediacy to Dickens as this dramatic shift in the story created a daunting task for him as a writer.
Nevertheless, we see that in chapter XVI Nancy saves Oliver and attention shifts to her as the principal character of the story. At this point, it appears that Dickens lost interest in further developing Oliver’s character (Wheeler 57). As Wheeler purports, it seems reasonable to conclude that this choice connects with Dickens’ purpose for the book: “Dickens turned his attention from Oliver to Nancy because she alone could exhibit what Dickens was later to call, in the Preface to the 1841 edition, ‘the principal of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance’” (Oliver Twist [1966] 1xii). It is this moral imperative which serves to render the character of Nancy particularly impactful. As James R. Kincaid notes, the text leaves the reader “with the suspicion that the book is powerful despite all that Dickens could do to make it conventional and safe, that it represents a triumph of unconscious forces over conscious intentions” (Kincaid 63).

While Dicken’s move to radically alter the story after several serials had been released certainly went against his instincts as an author, I believe it is mistaken to believe that Dickens’ choice to direct his attention to Nancy was not facilitated strictly by unconscious forces. Instead, I am convinced upon close examination of the text that Dickens had a specific and revolutionary message, which he sought to convey through Nancy. I am inclined to believe that K.J. Fielding was correct when, writing about Dickens work, he noted: “It seems that almost everything is to be found within the work itself, and we are to draw our own inferences and make our own connections” (Fielding 49). Yet, this does not mean that the author does not communicate a distinct message. Fielding continues, adding: “But it does not follow that the novel will not suggest ‘ideas’ in its imaginative presentation of life that have sprung from strong initial conceptions.” (Fielding 49). While Fielding approaches this novel almost exclusively in light of Benthamite Utilitarianism, his insightful commentary still resonates with me as I seek to examine the text through a different lens. In fact, it is these very lines, which I believe, can be used to justify an archetypal and feminist reading of this text which I champion throughout this thesis. It is my assertion that the implementation of a lens, which merges the best of both critical approaches, allows the often-overlooked deeper meanings (consciously or unconsciously) intended by Dickens to be exposed.
In my literary analysis of the text, I will rely heavily on Barickman, MacDonald, and Stark’s *Corrupt Relations: Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Collins, and the Victorian Sexual System* which presents Dickens as a writer whose employment of unconventional female characters calls into question the legitimacy and accuracy of the female stereotypes of his time. Barickman et al.’s text is concerned with Dickens and other Victorian male writers who exhibit an ambivalent attitude towards women. It is their belief that Dickens (and others like him) did not fully agree with the Victorian understanding of women and sought to challenge the rigid mold cast by thinkers of the time. Nonetheless, due to their own unconscious biases and projections, they often struggled to diverge entirely from the worldview of their time, which was heavily influenced by biological essentialism.

In my archetypal analysis of the text, I will rely primarily on the writings of Carol S. Pearson, whose work is inspired by Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, and James Hillman. Pearson’s work is primarily concerned with the practical application of the archetypes and the notion of the hero’s journey—both of which were first introduced by Jung. Pearson believes strongly in the power of archetypes to transform lives and facilitate the individuation process. While she is careful never to deride Jung, she is intent on reclaiming all of the archetypes for both men and women; whereas Jung’s *Man and His Symbols* assigns heroic roles to men and subservient, muse-like roles to women. Pearson acknowledges the impact of patriarchy and asserts that while the archetypes are eternal, that they do not exist in a vacuum and are, at times, subject to the influence of cultural forces and ideologies. Working from this paradigm, it also becomes rather impossible for her to draw firm lines between what constitutes “femininity” and what constitutes “masculinity,” as these concepts are culturally constructions. Thus, she is not prone to view the anima and animus as distinct gender binaries. Her ultimate goal is to reclaim for women the archetypes that have historically been viewed as the sole property of men; thereby enabling each woman to take her rightful place as the protagonist of her own story.

Chapter XIII of *Oliver Twist* marks the entrance of Nancy into the text. It is worth noting that Dickens had to be a bit creative in devising a way to insert Nancy into the text at this point in the story.
He achieves this by noting that two women (whom Oliver was already familiar with) enter the room during one of the discussions between the criminals. During this conference, Fagin attempts to convince Nancy (one of the females whom Oliver had already seen previously) to aid in Oliver’s capture. Prior to asking Nancy, Fagin had presented the request to another woman in their company who elicited an unenthusiastic response, which the narrator suggests was a polite way of declining his offer. Nancy, however, is not so timid when asked if she will take on the task.

‘Nancy, my dear,’ said the Jew in a soothing manner, ‘what do you say?’

‘That it won’t do; so it’s no use a-trying it on, Fagin’ replied Nancy.

‘What do you mean by that?’ said Mr. Sikes, looking up in a surly manner.

‘What I say, Bill,’ replied the lady collectedly.

‘Why, you’re just the very person for it,’ reasoned Mr. Sikes; ‘nobody around here knows anything of you.’

‘And I don’t want ‘em to, neither,’ replied Nancy in the same composed manner, ‘it’s rather more no than yes with me, Bill.’

‘She’ll go, Fagin,’ said Sikes.

‘No, she won’t, Fagin,’ said Nancy.

‘Yes, she will, Fagin,’ said Sikes.

And Mr. Sikes was right. By dint of alternative threats, promises, and bribes, the lady in question was ultimately prevailed upon to undertake the commission (Oliver Twist 80-81)

This exchange reveals the power dynamics between the group of criminals: Fagin is a sleazy, manipulative man who attempts to sweet-talk Nancy into doing his bidding, while Sikes silences Nancy by speaking for her. Coercion is a matter of course in their dealings with Nancy. However, it is not coercion, which depends upon her a lack of intellect or discernment. Contrarily, Nancy is fully cognizant of their schemes and in many cases, yet at this point, the self-preservation instinct trumps all other considerations for Nancy. Nancy does not easily give in to Sikes’ attempts to deny her agency, yet in the
end, Sikes’ is too much of a brute to go against. Nancy elects to put her physical well-being ahead of her own desire to avoid being used as a pawn in one of Fagin’s schemes.

Nancy’s pattern of speech in this exchange also tells the reader much about her character. According to Bicancic “Nancy uses the real, colloquial speech of argument, or decision and moral conviction” (Bicancic 279). Bicancic explains that in fiction “character may be realized through four different language functions.” The four functions Bicancic identifies include:

i. The speech of the character concerned;

ii. Interchange between him [or her] and the other characters;

iii. Authorial voice and physical or psychological accompaniment to action—the kind of information that would be received in real life through paralinguistic perception;

iv. Authorial voice as narrator supplying information which in real life would not be directly or immediately apprehended and making comments on character or situation.

(Bicancic 279)

With Nancy, Dickens uses a combination of each of the four functions. Bicancic is particularly interested in how Nancy’s speech (as presented in the text) contrasts with Oliver. As she notes, Oliver rarely speaks. For most of the text, the reader is aware that he is present through implication or explicit mention. This stands in stark contrast to Nancy, who speaks frequently in the chapters in which she is featured. And not only does Nancy speak often, but her speech is notably direct and decisive (Bicancic 279). This is because Oliver is a purely symbolic character, while “Nancy is one of Dickens rarely well presented realistic or representational characters, who matures through experience (Oliver never changes), who comes to perceive reality, and who guides her subsequent actions by that perception (Bicancic 277).

From the first scene in which she appears, “Nancy uses the real, colloquial speech of argument, of decision, and of moral conviction” (Bicancic 279). Phrases like “It’s no use trying,” “It won’t do,” “It’s more no than yes with me,” “She [referring to herself] won’t go” are uncomplicated, concise, and unambiguous forms of speech, which enable the reader to gain immense insight into her nature.
The events which unfold in this chapter also act to reveal the pervasiveness of male domination which was endemic to the Victorian era. The source of much of women’s suffering lies in the distorted anima images men projected onto women. As Barickman et al. notes, “[In most of Victorian fiction] the oppressive force of male desires intensifies even as the patriarchal system of values comes under attack. Like barroom bravado, rigid authoritarianism nearly always conceals massive insecurity and anxiety—however repressed” (Barickman et al. 11).

Sikes’s attempts to deny Nancy’s agency are undoubtedly an example of such “rigid authoritarianism.” The “force of male desires” expresses itself via Sikes’s and Fagin’s perverted anima images which they direct towards Nancy. Regarding distorted anima images, Simone de Beauvoir notes: “This, then, is the reason why woman has a double and deceptive visage: She is all that man desires and all that he does not attain…He projects upon her what he desires and what he fears, what he loves and what he hates” (Barickman et al. 10-11). This system hinges on the belief that women can be coerced into “act[ing] as repositories of a whole culture’s values” (Barickman et al. 10). Consequently, it also necessitates that they “endure a passivity that verges on paralysis” (Barickman et al. 10). The notion of a “passivity that verges on paralysis” is one that Barickman et al. returns to repeatedly throughout *Corrupt Relations*. While Nancy is not passive as we see in her exchange with Sikes, the expectation of Sikes and Fagin is that she take on passivity. By denying her agency and forcing her to comply, they seek to enforce the culturally derived expectations governing appropriate female behavior.

It is also worth acknowledging that Nancy’s instant refusal of Fagin’s request is not contextualized in such a way as to overtly communicate to the reader why she is so quick to do so. However, we should be careful not to assume that this is sloppy writing on the part of Dickens. Contrarily, such instances of women’s seemingly unaccountable behavior were likely employed by Dickens to support his critique the Victorian sexual system. As Barickman et al. writes

…the behavior prompted by a character’s unconscious motivation may at first seem excrescent. But it can be compelling even before we discover the hidden structures that
make it intelligible. In fact, this symbolic behavior usually arouses a more immediate and convincing sense of psychological complexity than the narrators’ direct assessments.

(Barickman et al. 47)

Because Dicken’s narrator doesn’t provide an explanation as to why Nancy responded in such a resolute manner, it is possible to label her as a “shrew” who simply enjoys saying no. Yet, Dickens continually pushes the reader to go beyond simplistic conclusions.

In *Oliver Twist*, he employs a narrator who vacillates between calling into question the treatment of women and accepting at face-value the realities of the Victorian sexual system. This may seem odd or ill-formed, but this strategy has a powerful effect on the reader. As the reader attempts to make sense of the narrator’s position, he or she is likely to also be confronted with the necessity of determining his or her own position in regard to the characters and material.

The quote from Barickman’s text also highlights the ways in which a textual event like Nancy’s refusal acts to force the reader to go beyond conscious intent; delving deeper into motivation and the world of the unconscious brings to light the psychological material and symbolic motifs embedded within the text itself. Dickens does not merely want the reader to declare Nancy a usurping shrew, instead he implores the reader to uncover the deeper meaning behind her behavior.

Consciousness in these novels is a partial, imperfect register of conflicts whose psychological depth and social range can only be represented through symbolic configurations of plot and character….Events both psychological and physical, are effected very little by conscious insights and will…The compelling forces in these worlds are primarily unconscious, even obsessive—complex sexual roles so internalized that they seem instinct with personal desire. Consciousness can be adroit in its local manipulations of the social world…but it is nearly always subordinate to the unconscious forces that largely shape the lives of individuals and the society they inhabit. (Barickman et al. 21)
Because of the primacy of the unconscious in Dicken’s novels, any interpretation, which remains strictly at the level of consciousness, surely represents an incomplete view of Dicken’s work and vision. Thus, it is advisable to probe not only the unconscious motivations of the characters and the narrator but even those of Dickens himself. And as the novel (or more accurately, the characters) shift back and forth between conscious and unconscious modes, we must be careful to note these transitions as well as their effects. For example, in the beginning of this chapter, Nancy’s immediate refusal to aid Sikes and Fagin seems to derive from an unconscious origin. When Nancy is threatened with violence, however, these unconscious desires become suppressed, and instead concern for her own well-being ultimately dominates her conscious awareness.

After Nancy has submitted to Sikes and Fagin, she rehearses the act she will put on to snatch back Oliver, with the gang of criminals as her audience. It delights Fagin and Sikes who readily offer not only their approval but their praise.

‘Ah, she’s a clever girl my dears,’ said the Jew….’She’s an honor to her sex,’ said Mr. Sikes, filling his glass, and smiting the table with his enormous fist.

‘Here’s to her health, and wishing they was all like her!’ (Oliver Twist 81)

Here Nancy enjoys receiving positive attention from the men, and perhaps even fancies herself to be a bit of an actress. This sudden, jarring transition from a state of obstinacy to delighted complicity seems confounding, but ultimately points back to Dicken’s plan for the novel. As Barickman et al. explains

Once we are alerted to the presence of psychological and thematic material that the narrators cannot acknowledge directly, the motifs of this counterplot proliferate and begin to form symbolic structures. Perhaps the symbolic effect most likely to arouse the reader’s awareness of announced complexities in these novels is behavior that expresses an individual character’s unarticulated emotions. In these novels, it often takes the form of sudden, unexplained shifts in mood, puzzling or even bizarre physical mannerisms, or
some impulsive/compulsive behavior that is recorded but not adequately accounted for by the narrators. (Barickman et al. 46)

It is also significant that Dickens’ does seem to directly critique not only Fagin and Sikes, but corrupt patriarchs in general. While the men continue to heap praises upon her, Nancy leaves to complete her mission. “…Nancy, that young lady made the best of her way to the police-office, whither, notwithstanding a little natural timidity, consequent upon walking through the streets alone and unprotected, she arrived in perfect safety shortly afterwards” (Oliver Twist 82). Here Dickens makes apparent the men’s lack of concern for Nancy’s wellbeing by sending her out alone and unprotected while they sit idly at home. The mention of this detail acts to further demonstrate the neglect and abuse Nancy suffers under Fagin’s and Sikes’s control. When she discovers that Oliver is not at the police station, the narrator notes that her state of mind is quickly disturbed. “In a dreadful state of doubt and uncertainty the agonized young woman staggered to the gate, and then, exchanging her faltering walk for a good, swift, steady run, returned by the most devious and complicated route she could think of to the domicile of the Jew [Fagin]” (Oliver Twist 82-83). Nancy is bewildered and panicked when she realizes that she cannot accomplish the mission Fagin and Sikes have demanded that she perform. In this moment, their threats come back to her mind and she is scared of returning home without Oliver. Her choice to begin running and take circuitous route back to Fagin’s residence can be explained by her troubled emotional state but could also be seen as safety measures to evade being followed or harmed. Either way, both interpretations act to present Nancy as a victim of corrupt patriarchal forces--a message which appears to be consciously intended by Dickens.

In archetypal terms, Nancy displays elements of the orphan in this chapter. According to Pearson, “Orphans seek safety and fear exploitation and abandonment” (The Hero Within 5). For someone like Nancy, these fears are not irrational since she is frequently taken advantage of by the men in her life. In fact, later in the novel, Dickens reveals that Nancy has been continually traumatized since childhood. Thus, it is not surprising that Nancy is characterized as an orphan, since this archetype is “activated by all
of the experiences in which the child in us feels abandoned, betrayed, victimized, neglected, or disillusioned” (*Awakening the Heroes* 83). The orphan’s fear of powerlessness and abandonment is so intense that it typically not fully realized. Instead, “the more apparent emotion is anger—either turned inward…or else turned outward toward….anything or anyone who that can be identified as not properly taking care of them” (*The Hero Within* 29). In this chapter, the reader only gets a small glimpse of the source of Nancy’s anger, as there is much that has not been revealed. Yet, she is not the only individual who is prone to anger.

Sikes’s anger, as we discover here, expresses itself as a violent rage. As Pearson notes, “In a patriarchy, this rage [which stems from a fear of powerlessness and abandonment] is habitually projected onto women” (*The Hero Within* 29). She continues adding, “The kind of rage often leveled at women seeking independence is evidenced any time narcissistic people are forced to confront assertions of independent humanity from people they previously assumed were there only for their convenience” (*The Hero Within* 29). Sikes fears that Nancy will take on power to the extent that he will no longer be able to control her, or that perhaps she will decide that she decide not to remain in a relationship with him. Both Sikes and Fagin are only pleased with Nancy when she quietly submits to their every request—especially those that directly benefit them. Furthermore, to acknowledge her autonomy as a human being would require that he respect her rights and ability to choose. Clearly, Sikes is not ready or willing to do this.

As an orphan, the main problem one faces is despair, thus to move beyond this stage, one must latch onto hope (*The Hero Within* 33). Unfortunately, at this point in Nancy’s development, she is not able to see beyond her misery or fully acknowledge her fears. Instead, she rapidly brushes aside her pain and settles for whatever praise she can receive.

However much the orphans might want to sacrifice unselfishly for their children, the movement, the church, etc., or however much they want to fight battles that actually make a difference in the world, they cannot do so. Their pain will mandate that they be almost totally self-absorbed. Their entire drama will center
around themselves. Not truly believing they can either have love and gentleness or make a real difference, they will settle for controlling the terms of their own unhappiness. *(The Hero Within* 31)

Nonetheless, the determination she exhibits at the beginning of their exchange is remarkable in its boldness. She is, at times, unafraid of pushing back against the gender stereotypes, which men project onto her, and acts in a manner that especially in her time, would be labeled “masculine.” Her strong-willed nature demonstrates that she will not forever remain an orphan and suggests that she will continue to subvert gender roles. In fact, we have reason to suspect here that there are glimpses of the wanderer within Nancy, for although she ultimately cedes to the men’s wishes, her initial resistance demonstrates that within her psyche, change is underway. “For many people, alienation within captivity is the initial stage of wandering” *(The Hero Within* 59). While Nancy’s fear of Sikes and Fagin still exerts significant control over her, she is beginning to reject their authority, which demonstrates that an unconscious process is at work within her.

Nancy appears again in Chapter XV where the issue of Oliver’s seizure remains of utmost importance to Fagin and Sikes. The criminals have gathered in a public house and Sikes suddenly thinks of Nancy.

‘Nancy! exclaimed Sikes. ‘Where? Strike me blind, if I don’t honour that ‘ere girl for her native talents’

‘She’d bid havid a plate of boiled beef id the bar,’ replied Barney.

‘Send her here,’ said Sikes, pouring a glass of liquor. ‘Send her here.’ *(Oliver Twist* 94)

While it comes as no surprise that Sikes doesn’t think about Nancy until he has some purpose in mind for her, what is notable about this passage is the mention of what Nancy is eating. While Dickens did not explicitly state in the preface that Nancy was a prostitute until the 1841 edition *(Forms of Speech* 114), there is evidence throughout the text, which suggests Nancy’s occupation. The mention of Nancy eating boiled beef is meant to communicate to Victorian readers that she not a chaste woman. As Helena Michie
notes, “Sex manuals [from the Victorian era] consistently equate food, especially certain types of food, with lust” (16). According to Michie, meat was one such food. “In the century’s most influential and most reprinted sex manual,” Aristotle’s Master-piece, the author describes “green sickness” a disease common to virgins which manifests itself in a “loathing of meat” and of “raw or burnt flesh” (Michie 16). While the author explains that this condition can be overcome for women who are to marry, it is quite apparent that the condition itself can act as a test of one’s virginity (Michie 16). As Dickens implies, Nancy cannot pass this test. However, in the text, as we will later see, Dickens does not subscribe to the notion that fallen women such as Nancy are inherently bad or incapable of goodness.

In this chapter, the chatter of the crooks and the setting of the public-house act to immerse the reader further into Dicken’s criminal underworld. Not only the criminal world, but its intersection with the respectable element of society is of particular interest to Dickens as Barickman et al. notes. By basing many of his plots around this very intersection, Dickens implies that “an elaborate criminal intrigue is the truest analogue to respectable society” (Barickman 26). This device enables Dickens to covertly parody “respectable” Victorian society by revealing the fraud, which characterizes not only the criminal world, but the upper echelons of society. “…sexual roles, values, and power relations in Victorian society are fraudulent in some basic way. The disorder is so widespread and yet so suppressed from individual consciousness and public acknowledgement that it can be expressed in covert, symbolic form” (Barickman et al. 26).

Nancy and Sikes depart from the public house some time later, and on their way encounter Oliver. Nancy then pretends to be Oliver’s sister and successfully manages to reclaim him. In the following chapter, (XVI) the trio pass a prison, which incites Nancy’s sympathy for the male prisoners inside who will be hung soon.

‘Poor fellows!’ Said Nancy, who still had her face turned towards the quarter in which the bell had sounded. ‘Oh, Bill, such fine young chaps as them!’
‘Yes; that’s all you women think of,’ answered Sikes. ‘Fine young chaps! Well, they’re as good as dead, so it don’t much matter.’

With this consolation, Mr. Sikes appeared to repress a rising tendency to jealously; and clasping Oliver’s wrist more firmly, told him to step out again.

‘Wait a minute!’ said the girl. ‘I wouldn’t hurry by, if it was you that was coming out to be hung the next time eight o’clock struck, Bill. I’d walk round and round the place till I dropped, if the snow was on the ground, and I hadn’t a shawl to cover me.’

‘And what good would that do?’ inquired the unsentimental Mr. Sikes. ‘Unless you could pitch over a file and twenty yards of good stout rope, you might as well be walking fifty mile off, or not walking at all, for all the good it would do me. Come on, will you, and don’t stand preaching there.’

The girls burst into a laugh, drew her shawl more closely round her, and they walked away. But Oliver felt her hand tremble, and looking up in her face as they passed a gas-lamp, saw that it had turned a deadly white. (Oliver Twist 99)

This interaction enables the reader to “begin to apprehend her [Nancy] as having depths of emotion until then unsuspected” (Bicancic 280), but also reveals much about Sikes. From this exchange, we gather that Sikes and Nancy are in a relationship. However, their relationship is far from ideal, as Sikes’ brutal, uncaring nature renders him unable to return the affection Nancy heaps upon him. Here Dicken’s uses omniscient authorial intervention (iv) to convey that Sikes is made jealous by Nancy’s compassion towards the inmates (Bicancic 280). While his tendency towards jealously is telling in terms of his personal character, the focus in more so on how Sikes’s behavior impacts Nancy. After Sikes expresses the pointlessness of Nancy’s hypothetical despair, she is shaken because her projection has suddenly been revealed to be the falsehood that it always was. Her love is not merely unrequited but is openly mocked by Sikes—making it readily apparent that he does not care about her feelings. The impact of his words are so profound that Oliver feels Nancy tremble, and sees her face turns “deadly white.”
Dicken’s use of this authorial intervention in conjunction with this precise wording can be seen as a foreshadowing of Nancy’s death at the hand of Sikes, and it is apparent that of all the wounding Nancy has been subjected to, none cut as deep as those which Sikes inflicts. However, while Nancy is hurt deeply by Sikes dismissiveness, her earlier use of the subjunctive mood through phrases such as “if” and “I wonder” in this scene demonstrate that Nancy is beginning think beyond the present. While Nancy was thoroughly stuck in a state of hopelessness in the first chapter, here we begin to see glimpses of a woman who is forward-thinking and in whom we witness an “awakening of new feeling” (Bicancic 281).

Later on in this chapter when Fagin and Nancy take Oliver to Fagin, Nancy’s words also show that she is deeply concerned with Oliver’s wellbeing. Sikes’s dog suddenly runs about wildly, and Nancy jumps into action:

‘Keep the dog back, Bill!’ cried Nancy, springing before the door, and closing it, as the Jew and his two pupils darted out in pursuit- ‘keep back the dog; he’ll tear the boy to pieces.’

‘Serve him right!’ cried Sikes, struggling to disengage himself from the girl’s grasp.

‘Stand off from me, or I’ll split your head against the wall.’

‘I don’t care for that, Bill; I don’t care for that,” screamed the girl, struggling violently with the man; “the child shan’t be torn down by the dog, unless you kill me first.’

‘Shan’t he!’ said Sikes, setting his teeth fiercely. ‘I’ll soon do that, if you don’t keep off.’

The housebreaker flung the girl from him to the farther end of the room, just as the Jew and the two boys returned, dragging Oliver among them.

‘What’s the matter here?’ said Fagin, looking round.

‘The girl’s gone mad, I think,’ replied Sikes savagely.

‘No, she hasn’t,’ said Nancy, pale and breathless from the scuffle—‘no, she hasn’t Fagin; don’t think it.’

‘Then keep quiet, will you?’ said the Jew with a threatening look.
No, I won’t do that neither,’ replied Nancy, speaking very loud. ‘Come! What do you think of that?’

Mr. Fagin was sufficiently well acquainted with the manners and customs of the particular species of humanity to which Nancy belonged to feel tolerably certain that it would be rather unsafe to prolong any conversation with her at present. (Oliver Twist 103)

In this passage, we witness Nancy standing up to Sikes, even in the face of violent threats. It is clear that she is entering into a new sort of awareness and understanding of herself. Her language conveys her consistent no-nonsense attitude through “short, terse commands and imperatives” (Bicancic 281) such as “Keep back the dog!” and “Stand off from me!” which are quite bold considering the constant danger that looms around her. Nancy is clearly no stranger to such threats, nor the fact that Sikes will act on them, as he does here. Nancy’s speech also matches with that of the virago, or heroic maiden, according to Chapman. “The virago in the true sense is not simply an angry woman but one who takes the characteristics of aggression and hard speaking traditionally associated with men. What is said of Dickens’ dialogue is true for Victorian fiction as a whole” (Chapman 154). What makes Nancy’s speech stand out, is that it is not stereotypically “feminine.” As Brook notes, “When a woman talks like a woman, no one is conscious of special characteristics, but when she uses expressions that are more often used by men, the reader realizes that these are not expressions that a woman would normally use” (Brook 60).

For the first time, Sikes calls Nancy “mad:” a title works to his advantage in that it, enables him to shirk responsibility for any wrongdoing. If Nancy is mad, then surely there is no valid reason for her to become angry or make demands of him. Control is essential to Sikes, and in his mind, Nancy is his to rule over. It is important to note that Sikes’s inability to relinquish control points to the broader issue of control as a function to reinforce systemic male domination. “As with any system that elevates one group
by oppressing another, control is an essential part of patriarchy: men maintain their privilege by
controlling women and anyone else who might threaten it” (Johnson 14). Johnson continues, writing

Under patriarchy, control shapes not only the broad outlines of social life but also men’s
inner lives. The more men see control as central to their sense of self, the more driven
they feel to go after it and to organize their inner and outer lives around it. This takes men
away from connection to others and themselves and toward disconnection. This is
because control involves a relationship between the controller and the controlled, and
disconnection is an essential part of that relationship. In order to control something, we
have to see it as a separate “other”…if we’re controlling other people, we have to justify
the control and protect ourselves from an awareness of how our control affects them. As a
result, controllers come to see themselves as subjects who intend and decide what will
happen, and to see others as objects to act upon. The controlled are seen without the
fullness and complexity that define them as human beings. They have no history, no
dimensions to give them depth or command the controllers’ attention or understanding
except by interfering with control. (Johnson 14-15)

Indeed, Sikes is unable to see Nancy’s humanity; instead she is merely an object (a thing) which
threatens the grip of his control. She is an obstacle that he must simply move out of the way in order to
proceed with his agenda.

It is also worth noting that declaring a woman “mad” was an effective means to silence,
invalidate, and institutionalize women during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. Madness was itself
viewed as an almost exclusively female condition, because women were the predominant recipients of
this diagnosis (Showalter 3). Contemporary critics, theorists, and philosophers have also noted that
“madness” and “women” are often inextricably linked. Together “They have shown how women, within
our dualistic system of language and representation, are situated on the side of irrationality, silence,
nature, and body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, and mind. They have analyzed
and illuminated a cultural tradition that represents “woman” as madness…” (Showalter 4). It is important to note that without the assistance of biological essentialism, it would have been much more difficult to directly connect madness to women. Sadly, this is just one of many instances throughout history in which biological essentialism is employed as a weapon against women. By declaring Nancy “mad”—as Sikes and Fagin do repeatedly throughout the text—they weaponize this title to reinforce their control over her and summarily dismiss whatever she has to say.

While Nancy is not insane, her reactions in this excerpt strongly suggest that she is under the influence of what Jung called a complex. Because Nancy has been exposed to a great deal of trauma, a piece of her psyche has been split off. The appearance of this complex is precipitated by an event that is in some way reminiscent of the trauma she has undergone. The victimization of Oliver seems to activate a complex within her, and it exerts immense power over her, as complexes often do. In this case, Jung would probably identify this as an animus complex. The dominance of the complex within her psyche accounts for her distressed mental state and uncharacteristic behavior in this chapter. Interestingly, the complex does not fuel her desire for self-preservation: an instinct that seems most natural considering the abuse to which it is attached. Rather than remain focus on her own interests, Nancy is able to put herself in Oliver’s position and act in his defense. While Nancy’s complexes prove to be extremely powerful throughout the text, it is never the complex alone, which guides her. She is instead governed by an inherent sense of right and wrong and her ability to empathize and advocate for others is a clear indicator of her psychic development.

The narrator’s commentary in the final paragraph does imply that women of “the particular species of humanity to which Nancy belonged” are prone to being violent. Ayres explains that the association between out-of-control behavior and sexually aberrant women was well established at the time. “In the Victorian canon, passion and sex are closely related and they equate to insanity and animalism, so that Nancy’s wild behavior would be understood as the natural result of her failure to control her passion. A twentieth-century reader, however, might understand Nancy’s hysteria and neurotic
behavior as the reaction to violent domination of the male over the female” (Ayres 135). While Dickens inclusion of this narratorial comment may strike us as ignorant or insensitive when we consider that it is the male characters (Sikes and Fagin) who commit acts of violence in this chapter, it is essential to bear in mind that the narratorial voice Dickens uses in this novel is intentionally inconsistent and at times, seemingly offensive. “The errors and excesses of these narrators do not obliterate the more pervasive values in these novels; instead they help, by establishing a sharp contrast, to orient us toward the novels primary value systems and themes” (Barickman et al. 34). Dickens employs a variety of strategies in the text to accomplish this aim. Sometimes he communicates his own personal views through the narrator, thus rousing Victorians to consciousness and imploring them to observe the corruption of society. Yet, at other times, he does just the opposite, and instead uses the narrator to convey the unenlightened views of some contemporary Victorians. As Barickman et al. notes, this is simply a part of Dickens masterful writing which draws us in deeper into the underlying meanings of the narratorial commentary.

For, as with the other novelists, our frustration at the narrator’s obtuseness serves to draw us into the ‘counterplot’ of the novel, impelling us to make the connections the narrators do not make. Their very fallibility establishes them as real personalities, convincing us in their imperfections. Now this may well be a narrative method that infuriates some readers, but it can be remarkably effective in disclosing counterplots of sexual oppression, in allying us with the heroines’ plight, and in arousing the reader’s personal involvement with this substratum of the novel (Barickman et al. 43).

Indeed, the reader’s outrage at the narrator’s comments encourage rallying around Nancy, instead of standing in judgement over her. Thus, Dickens is able to achieve his intended outcome via indirect, covert means. In fact, his methods are often so hidden that the reader is unaware of these tactics or how powerful they can be in encouraging the integration of unconscious content within their own psyches. At this stage of the novel, Dickens is aware that many Victorian readers would summarily dismiss the notion that a prostitute could be good. Thus, he offers hints of her goodness yet counters those with narratorial
commentary, which supports the popular notion that all of those of the criminal variety were incapable of
good. Like his contemporaries, Dickens was careful to not to explicitly denounce those values which were
sacred to Victorian society—at least not immediately. In order for Nancy’s story to have a lasting impact,
he had to gradually ease readers into an understanding of her nature that would eventually lead them to
challenge their own beliefs and presuppositions, while simultaneously managing to keep the readers from
realizing that they were doing just this.

It also becomes apparent that there is a great deal of irony in the narrator’s commentary as the
scene continues. While it was noted previously that Fagin is fearful of Nancy’s alleged propensity to
violence, it is he, not Nancy, who commits an act of violence.

The Jew inflicted a smart blow on Oliver’s shoulder with the club, and was raising it for a
second when the girl, rushing forward, wrested it from his hand. She flung it into the fire
with a force that brought some of the glowing coals whirling into the room.

‘I won’t stand by and see it done, Fagin!’ cried the girl. ‘You’ve got the boy, and what
more would you have? Let him be—let him be, or I shall put that mark on some of you
who bring me to the gallows before my time.’

The girl stamped her foot violently on the floor as she vented this threat; and with her lips
compressed, and her hands clenched, looked alternately at the Jew and the other robber,
herself.

‘Why, Nancy!’ said the Jew, in a soothing tone, after a pause, during which he and Mr.
Sikes had stared at one another in a disconcerted manner, ‘you—you’re more clever than
ever tonight. Ha! ha! My dear, you are acting beautifully.’

‘Am I?’ said the girl. ‘Take care I don’t overdo it. You will be the worse for it, Fagin, if I
do; and so I tell you in good time to keep clear of me.’
There is something about a roused woman, especially if she add to all her other strong passions the fierce impulses of recklessness and despair, which few men like to provoke.

The Jew saw that it would be hopeless to affect any further mistake regarding the reality of Miss Nancy’s rage; and shrinking involuntarily back a few paces, casts a glance, half-imploring and half-cowardly, at Sikes, as if to hint that he was the fittest person to pursue the dialogue. \(\textit{Oliver Twist}\ 103-104\)

Nancy is a force to be reckoned with: intervening on Oliver’s behalf and physically shielding him from the abuse of Fagin. To get what she wants she employs the men’s tactics—hurling threats in a terrifying manner. Nancy is full of rage, but it is not the ego-driven rage of Sikes and Fagin. Her anger comes from an entirely different source, for it is self-less, not selfish. Her righteous anger must be manifested as rage; otherwise, it is impotent and cannot stand against the cruelty of Fagin and Sikes. While Dickens text does not overtly support women’s anger…it does covertly provide reasons why women should be angry, and it inscribes their rebellion. After all, Nancy has submitted to the only father she has known (Fagin) and to the only ‘husband’ she has known (Bill), demonstrating a prime virtue of womanhood through obedience to male authority, only to be abused and exploited. \(\text{Ayres 136}\)

Yet, Nancy does not decide to squelch all of her “womanly” instincts, instead she directs them towards a worthier subject. In this scene, Nancy proves to be just as “heroic” as any man who is acting in defense of those who are being attacked by evil forces, and clearly embodies the warrior archetype.

In addition to this heroic cast, Nancy also demonstrates the kind of compassion that is often attributed to “the feminine.” Because of this, both her anima and animus characteristics are made evident in this scene. As Patricia Ingham notes,

[It is striking to observe] Nancy’s conversion to womanly compassion when she comes to feel Oliver’s innocence and vulnerability. This is still described in terms of an unwomanly ‘passion of rage’ potentiated by ‘recklessness and despair,’ traditional
enough words to apply to a prostitute but here relating to the passionate rages of an unexpected and long sustained womanly virtue. The rewriting of her as not totally evil, while still using these familiar terms, eases the transition obviously felt by the narrator to be a difficult one. (Ingham 46)

Here Ingham not only points not only to Dickens’ use of narratorial intervention (as discussed previously), but also to his use of terminology typically ascribed to prostitutes. He subtly subverts the reader’s presuppositions about Nancy, a prostitute, by revealing her virtue, not merely her vice. Her passion is not a negative thing in this context but is instead one that can be used for good. In this way, Dickens also seems to be undermining the “feminine” stereotype of helplessness. It is evident that Dickens intends to portray Nancy as heroic, because she puts herself in danger in order to prevent harm from coming to Oliver.

However, Nancy’s passion can also be interpreted as pointing to sexual themes. As Brenda Ayres argues, “In Dickens’ text, dominating a woman, especially a strong woman, takes on erotic tones” (Ayres 134). She continues adding,

A description of the ‘roused’ Nancy intimidates the most ignoble of scoundrels and ruffians but also seems to excite Bill. The text seems to be ambiguous about Nancy’s passion, sending out mixed signals of both repulsion and attraction. It seems even more ambiguous as to which reaction it would evoke from the reader. This is a revealing gap in didactic literature, especially when dealing with such a socially significant issues as women’s sexuality. (Ayres 134)

Thus, it is possible that Dickens is conveying to the reader that Nancy’s frenzied state acts to arouse Sikes. This does not seem altogether unlikely, as Dickens obviously desires to portray Sikes as utterly depraved and villainous. In this way, Dickens inverts the reader’s assumptions by demonstrating that it is ultimately not the prostitute Nancy who is sexually aberrant, but Sikes.

The tense encounter is far from over, however. In fact, Sikes is just getting started.
Mr. Sikes, thus mutely appealed to, and possibly feeling his personal pride and influence interested in the immediate reduction of Miss Nancy to reason, gave utterance to about a couple of curses and threats, the rapid production of which reflected a great credit on the fertility of his invention. As they produced no visible effect on the object against whom they were discharged, however, he resorted to more tangible arguments.

‘What do you mean by this?’ said Sikes…What do you mean by it? Burn my body! Do you know who you are, and what you are?’

‘Oh, yes, I know all about it,’ replied the girl, laughing hysterically, and shaking her head from side to side, with a poor assumption of indifference.

‘Well, then, keep quiet,’ rejoined Sikes, with a growl like that he was accustomed to use when addressing his dog, ‘or I’ll quiet you for a good long time to come.’

The girl laughed again, even less composedly than before; and darting a hasty look at Sikes, turned her face aside, and bit her lip till the blood came.

‘You’re a nice one,’ added Sikes, as he surveyed her with a contemptuous air, ‘to take up the humane and genteel side! A pretty subject for the child, as you call him, to make a friend of!’ (Oliver Twist 104-105)

The narratorial voice here does not portray Sikes in a positive light but does seem to sympathize with him (and other men) who face the challenge of dealing with irrational women. Sikes is intent on the bringing about the “immediate reduction of Miss Nancy to reason” as the narrator notes. This is clearly a reference to biological essentialism and the notion that men are governed by reason, while women are not. The belief that reason was often beyond a woman’s grasp was commonly accepted as fact during this time and persisted well beyond the Victorian era, eventually influencing Jung’s writings about the anima and animus. Biological Essentialism also leads to very strict gender roles, and causes harm to both genders, especially women. While the notion that men are endowed with reason while women can only ever merely dabble in it is largely seen as offensive, sexist, and antiquated in the twenty first century,
Victorians could scarcely conceive of a different paradigm. Nonetheless, Dickens uses Nancy to push back against strict gender roles throughout the text. As Barickman et al. notes,

> Because they [Dickens and the other ambivalent novelists] participate in the conflict of sexual values that pervades their culture and to some extent share the patriarchal values they satirize, these novelists are able to present the workings of Victorian society with remarkable subtly and accuracy. (Barickman et al. 31)

Sikes decision to resort to “tangible” arguments further paints him as the misogynist and villain that he is. It also immerses the reader in the thoroughly patriarchal and stratified world of the Victorians. By reminding Nancy that she is a prostitute, Sikes is not only prompting her to recall her vocation, but to consider how her work defines her place in society. To Dickens, the details of Nancy’s work are of little practical interest, largely because he does not seem convinced that prostitutes such as Nancy do what they do because they possess uncontrollable sexual urges. “…Sexuality is, for them [Dickens and his counterparts] not simply a matter of libidinal urges. It is a complex web of desires, attitudes, roles, and norms that is virtually coextensive with all of social life” (Barickman et al. 31). Thus, as Barickman et al. confirms, it is the meaning and symbolism that sexuality holds in Victorian society that is worth directing our attention towards. Of course, these meanings are derived directly from the culture, which means that any expressions of sexuality are determined to be acceptable or unacceptable primarily by the most influential segments of society. Thus, they are arbitrary, but are rarely experienced as such. “The way an individual’s sexuality is defined, by self and by others, is a critical and even a determining factor in areas of economic and political life that seem to have little to do with sexuality” (Barickman et al. 31).

While Sikes does succeed in further enraging Nancy, he is not able to achieve his desired goal of gaining control over her. Nancy laughs “hysterically” and shakes her head back and forth, yet the passage makes it clear that she is not overdramatizing the situation; her actions are justified in light of the cruel treatment she receives from Sikes and Fagin. While in Jungian terms, Nancy might appear to be an “animus possessed woman,” Jung himself would likely have recognized that her behavior is largely the
result of the control of a complex. As noted previously, a complex is activated within Nancy early on in this chapter and it continues to influence her behavior throughout the ensuing dialogue. The complex does not seem to take total control her until Sikes reminds her of her work and her place in society. It is readily apparent that her state of distress becomes instantly heightened, and her laughter and increased rage are evidence of this. Unable to find a release for her anger and pain, the complex instead leads her to self-harm by biting her own lip. Sikes does not take a step back, but pushes her even further, mocking her empathy for Oliver and her genteel attitudes. Nancy speaks at length for the first time, decrying Fagin and the havoc he has wreaked in her life.

‘God Almighty help me, I am!’ cried the girl passionately; ‘and wish I had been struck dead in the street, or had changed places with them we passed so near tonight, before I had lent a hand in bringing him here. He’s a thief, he’s a liar, a devil! All that’s bad, from this night forth. Isn’t that enough for the old wretch without blows?’ (Oliver Twist 105)

Fagin tries to assuage her yet again, but it is to no avail.

‘Come, come, Sikes,’ said the Jew, appealing to him in a remonstratory tone, and motioning towards the boys, who were eagerly attentive to all that passed; ‘we must have civil words—civil words, Bill.’

‘Civil words!’ cried the girl, whose passion was frightful to see. ‘Civil words, you villain! Yes; you deserve ‘em from me. I thieved for you when I was a child not half as old as this! pointing to Oliver. ‘I have been in the same trade and in the same service for twelve years since. Don’t you know it? Speak out! Don’t you know it?’

‘Well, well,’ replied the Jew, with an attempt at pacification; ‘and, if you have, it’s your living!’

‘Ay, it is!’ returned the girl, not speaking but pouring out the words in one continuous and vehement stream. ‘It is my living; and the cold, wet, dirty streets are my home; and
you are the wretch that drove me to them long ago, and that’ll keep me there, day and
tight, day and night, till I die!’ (Oliver Twist 105)

Through these few lines, Dickens is able to convey not only Nancy’s trauma, but provide her history as it relates to Fagin. Fagin attempts to remind her that her work provides her with income to live on, yet this is nothing more than a vain attempt to portray himself as a benevolent figure. With contempt, Nancy admits that indeed, she is a prostitute. She then employs vivid imagery to convey the miserable life that this vocation affords her. This description alone serves to elicit empathy in the reader, justify Nancy’s rage, and portray the hopelessness of her situation. Significantly, Nancy manages to name her truth: that Fagin and men like him have made her life what it is. Watt, too confirms this understanding, writing: “Nancy lives as she does not because of innate depravity, but because Fagin’s craft is too much to withstand. Corruption in Oliver Twist is male-engendered” (Barickman 14). Pearson notes that individuals, who are in the warrior stage or are transitioning into it, are reluctant to engage in “honest naming.” This is true in terms of culturally denied realities, as well as the individual’s own repressed and denied aspects (The Hero Within 123). This moment of “honest naming” thus represents an important change in consciousness for Nancy, and shows that she is moving towards her own individuation.

Nancy has frustrated the efforts of the men in containing her, and Fagin borrows from Sikes’s example by switching to threats as a means of re-asserting control.

‘I shall do you a mischief,’ interposed the Jew, goaded by these reproaches- ‘a mischief worse than that, if you say much more!’

The girl said nothing more; but tearing her hair and dress in a transport of frenzy, made such a rush at the Jew as would probably have left signal marks of her revenge upon him, had not her wrists been seized by Sikes at the right moment, upon which she made a few ineffectual struggles, and fainted.

‘She’s all right now,’ said Sikes, laying her down in a corner. ‘She’s uncommon strong in the arms when she’s up in this way.’
The Jew wiped his forehead, and smiled, as if it were a relief to have the disturbance over; but neither he, nor Sikes, nor the dog, nor the boys, seemed to consider it in any other light than a common occurrence incidental to business.

‘It’s the worst of having to do with women,’ said the Jew, replacing his club; ‘but they’re clever, and we can’t get on, in our line, without ‘em. Charley, show Oliver to bed.’

(Oliver Twist 106)

Finding that her words cannot inspire human sympathy in the men, Nancy--acting under the control of a complex--tries to physically attack Fagin. Sikes intervenes and prevents this from happening, and in the scuffle, Nancy faints. Sikes then remarks about the fact that Nancy takes on a physical strength in her arms that is “uncommon.” It seems that Sikes is pointing to the fact that upper body strength (such as that which Nancy exhibited) is not typical of women. The implication seems to be that Nancy becomes “masculinized” when she speaks her mind and expresses anger. The men react ambivalently, for as they seem to disparage her, they also fear her, and admire her display of strength. Nancy’s behavior clearly violates Victorian standards of conduct which dictated that passion was viewed as appropriate only for men.

Passion is a masculine prerogative and is identified with a distinctly non-feminine emotion operative in intellect and through sexuality. Intellectual passion motivates achievement and combativeness, and is the source of the capacity to conquer new frontiers. At its most spiritual, passion enables transcendence and the experience of the sublime. Thus, to construe women [as the Victorians did] as merely emotional obviates the possibility of their being effectively passionate. (Shields 82)

Women were considered emotional, but were never supposed to permit their emotions to push them towards passion. This was another crippling aspect of Victorian gender roles, which worked to enforce women’s silent submission to male authority. While men were able to effect change in the world and
achieve spiritual and personal growth, biological essentialism dictated that women not even consider such endeavors. Here, Dickens is working from that assumption.

Through this, Dickens reveals this system as corrupt and instead actively works to prove that women can and do bring about change when they violate gender norms.

Far from being apologists for Victorian sexual orthodoxy…Dickens [and the other Ambivalent Male Novelists] challenge one of its most significant creeds: that the virtuous woman has nearly sacred social power. By placing ‘bad’ or even criminal characters…in positions of power, they imply—however circumspectly—the radical idea that the ‘good’ woman has little real independence or power. And by presenting the ‘bad’ woman as a victim of a cruelly oppressive sexual system, they undermine the orthodox position still further. (Barickman et al. 9)

Thus, it is through transgressing social codes that women can have agency; however, upsetting the status quo often comes with consequences. “In a paradox that points up the sexual dilemmas of the whole system, only those women who seize some form of ‘masculine’ aggression for themselves can hope to exert control over their own lives” (Barickman et al. 69). Clearly, remaining in these culturally oppressive roles does not lead to a good result, nor does pushing back against them.

While Dickens creates “bad” female characters of all classes in his novels, it is perhaps easier to imagine that a working-class woman would be much likelier to assert her authority than a middle or upper class woman. This is because women from the upper classes had much more to lose than working class women who were already presumed to be “criminal and dangerous” (Nead 76). As a working woman in a dangerous profession, Nancy has already developed a sort of toughness as a survival mechanism. As she begins to believe in her own power, Nancy develops physical and moral and strength that is almost superhuman. While Sikes can only see the physical strength she exhibits, Dickens seems to be directing the reader to observe not merely the power her body holds, but her strength of character.
The authorial voice as commentator is also used in this excerpt to show that Sikes and Fagin are exhausted yet satisfied that they succeeded in subduing Nancy. Dickens’ mention of Fagin smiling after all that had transpired further acts to impress upon the reader the despicable nature Fagin possesses. Nancy’s loss of consciousness is a relief to these men, who view her as nothing more than a pawn. By mentioning that this incident was “a common occurrence incidental to business” the upside-down world of the lawbreakers is again brought to the forefront. Yet, Dickens is not just directing an indictment towards the criminal segment of society. Instead, he directs blame toward Victorian society as whole for allowing the mistreatment of women of all classes to persist. While it is not permissible for Dickens to point to middle and upper-class male figures who treat women as if they were not human, the Victorian (and contemporary) reader is compelled to ask oneself if similar injustices exist elsewhere. And if the reader still had any doubt about the men’s dehumanization of Nancy, Fagin’s complaint that “it’s the worst” dealing with women should serve to resolve that matter. Fagin’s portrayal of himself as a martyr who must endure the unjustified rages of women in order to earn a living is nothing short of sickening to most readers, and firmly cements him as a narcissist.

This chapter also reveals a great deal about Nancy’s archetypal journey. While Nancy was predominantly in the orphan stage when we first encountered her in the novel, in this chapter we begin to see her moving beyond her pain to access other archetypes. It seems that Sikes’s rejection of her affection and devotion is a catalyst for change within her. While this moment is crushing for Nancy, she does not become paralyzed.

Suffering is the leveler that reminds us of our common mortality, that none of us is exempt from the difficulties of human life. When suffering and despair come together, they provide us with the opportunity to affirm hope, love ourselves, and to say, against all odds, ‘And yet I will love, and yet I will hope.’ It is then that we learn transcendence.\textit{(The Hero Within 47)
For Nancy, the intense moment of hurt she experiences actually helps to propel her growth. While Nancy’s suffering is indeed horrific, it also spurs flashes of insight and determination, which aid her on her journey. As Pearson notes, “…it is suffering that helps us face our worst fears and thus frees us from the paralysis of the Orphan hopelessly seeking ways to stay safe” (*The Hero Within* 47). It is also “…the identification of the villain as a real threat that motivates the journey” (*The Hero Within* 65). In Nancy’s story, the villains she identifies include both people (Fagin and Sikes) and social hierarchies and roles, which attempt to reduce her to something that is scarcely human. Rather than allowing Sikes’s cruelty to crush her, she instead comes to realize that he is incapable of returning her love, and thus determines to direct her energies and affections towards Oliver, who is a victim not a perpetrator. Her choice not to scorn the notion of love and abandon it altogether demonstrate not only her strength but her insightfulness. Perhaps most importantly, Nancy does not allow herself to become “stuck” even though doing so requires her to risk harm.

While Nancy has demonstrated elements of the Wanderer archetype throughout the text so far, this archetype becomes very apparent here because she blatantly violates Victorian sex roles in her interactions with Fagin and Sikes. In order to venture into the Wanderer archetype, one has to “make a leap of faith to discard the old social roles, which they have worn to please and ensure safety, and try instead to discover who they are and what they want” (*The Hero Within* 51). Instead of giving in to the men’s threats and doing whatever is required to avoid physical harm, Nancy refuses to surrender her power, and stands firm in her identity as a person of good moral character. She refuses to believe the lie that she is a bad person because she is a prostitute, and rejects notion that women are completely powerless. Wanderers define themselves in opposition to the status quo, which is in large part due to the fact that their identity is based in being outsiders (*The Hero Within* 51-52). As Pearson notes, conformity is a powerful force, which yields tremendous influence over women in particular. “The pressure to conform, to do one’s duty, to do what others want is strong for both men and women, but it is strongest for women because women’s role has been defined in terms of nurturance and duty” (*The Hero Within* 51-52).
Nancy, however, sees that it is not her duty to remain in a socially sanctioned passive “feminine” role. Her duty is instead to follow her convictions, which tell her that she simply cannot stand to let harm befall Oliver. She may not have been able to prevent her own victimization, but she is intent on keeping Oliver from being victimized by Fagin and his gang. After entering into this phase of individuation, one realizes that “The process of listening to our own desires and acting to fulfill them is fundamental to building an identity” (The Hero Within 62). As we see in the text, Nancy does just this.

What we also witness in this chapter, is the “bubbling over” of Nancy’s long suppressed animosity towards the men for their refusal to respect her basic rights. “Usually…[wanderers] have gone along with someone else, over their own wishes, too long, so that their resentment is deep by the time they act in their own interest. The result is that they choose themselves in the middle of a veritable explosion or rage” (The Hero Within 64). This also accounts for Nancy’s attempted attack of Fagin.

Violence is caused in large part by the repression of assertiveness. We learn to be nice, to give in, that we do not have a right to ask for what we want…. Consequently, emotions build up, like an internal time bomb. The result is an explosion—anger and perhaps emotional or even physical violence inflicted upon ourselves or another person.

Paradoxically, the antidote to violence is not self-control and repression, but self-knowledge and skills for self-expression and assertion (The Hero Within 121).

As we see throughout the novel, Nancy is prone to use force to get her way, mainly because these are the behaviors that she has observed throughout her life, but also because she has years of pent up rage within her. While Dickens always contextualizes her forceful language and actions, accounting for their existence in a way that does not pin all of the responsibility on Nancy, it also seems that if her behavior was something that he encountered in real life, would frighten him. Chapman suggests that “…the negative and positive side of the virago [heroic maiden], reflect Dicken’s own ambivalence” (Chapman 156). Indeed, there is a part of Dickens that very much believes that women should conduct themselves in ladylike manner, yet he also knows that Nancy’s situation necessitates a different approach. Nonetheless,
he does not abandon the struggle to reconcile the truth of reality with his own beliefs and assumptions; instead he dives headlong into this psychological conflict in this novel.

It would also be a serious oversight not to mention Nancy’s embodiment the warrior archetype in this chapter. By deciding not to abide by restrictive social norms and roles in the wandering phase, it is possible to move into the warrior phase of individuation. The warrior “…helps teach us to claim our power and to assert our identity in the world. This power can be physical, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual” (The Hero Within 77). They bring about change within their own worlds by “asserting their will and their image of a better world upon them” (The Hero Within 76). The warrior also declares his or her right to exist and to be treated with dignity and respect by others. As Nancy manifests the warrior, she pairs it with caring, and this leads her to not only fight for herself but Oliver. In fact, it is the element of care that helps her break out of the orphan stage. “For some people, the movement from gratuitous suffering to sacrifice in the name of care provides a major sense of pride and self-esteem and is the transition point out of the orphan stage” (The Hero Within 103). When care and the warrior archetype are married in a healthy way, “…warrioring (like sacrificing) becomes a healthy, useful, positive human process. It is the basic process of taking action to protect themselves and those they love from harm” (The Hero Within 82). The warrior has to confront fear and “learn to trust their own truths and act on them with absolute conviction in the face of danger” (The Hero Within 84). This is precisely what Nancy does when she confronts Sikes and Fagin. “To identity oneself as a warrior is to say, ‘I am responsible for what happens here,” and “I must do what I can to make this a better world for myself and others.’ It also requires Warriors to claim authority that they have a right to assert what they want for themselves and others. Warriors learn to trust their own judgment about what is harmful and, perhaps most important, they develop the courage to fight for what they want or believe in, even when doing so requires great risk—the loss of a job, a mate, friends, social regard, or even their very lives” (The Hero Within 85).

While Nancy’s situation is already abysmal prior to this chapter, it is worth noting that in pushing back against Fagin and Bill, she risks worsening an already intolerable existence. There is a looming
threat of an increase in beatings from Sikes, not to mention the fact that he might banish her and end their “relationship” entirely. Also, her pimp, Fagin, could make life even more difficult for her by forcing her to work under even more dangerous conditions. But the greatest threat is death: a reality which could not have evaded Nancy as she was well aware of Sikes’s violent streak. Nevertheless, she persists. As Pearson notes, “Warriors learn to force themselves to do things that they are afraid of doing and they struggle against all odds” (*The Hero Within* 118).

Nancy’s warrioring, while effective in preventing Oliver from being mauled by the dog, also takes its toll on her. She is new to the warrior role, and she leaps headfirst into things.

The first few times Warriors try asserting their own wishes they inevitably will engage in overkill and therefore will not get very good results. However, at the next stage, they learn to be more subtle and politic and get what they want more often. Ultimately, however, warriors give over control of the outcome and assert themselves as part of the dance of life. The process of assertion then becomes its own reward because it makes them daily more themselves. (*The Hero Within* 97)

As we continue to observe Nancy’s development as the text progresses is will become apparent that her warrioring involves fewer hasty reactions and more thought out plans. Ultimately, it is an ongoing and messy process to master the archetypes and implement them fully. This is why the focus is not on the content but on the process of development itself. As Pearson remarks “The process begins with an awareness of suffering, then moves to telling the story and an acknowledgement to oneself and to others that something is painful. Then comes the identification of the cause of that pain and taking appropriate steps to stop it” (*The Hero Within* 84). In this chapter, Nancy is able to not only see her own pain, but Oliver’s. She names her pain to the criminal gang as her audience, but not because she believes it will move them towards compassion, but so that she can speak the truth that has likely gone unspoken for many years. For Nancy, this is an act of releasing the pain—of placing guilt not on herself, but on Fagin, whose schemes brought her into her trade. Nancy cannot stop Fagin from misusing her, but she is
determined not to give him more power over her than he already possesses. And while she cannot end once-and-for-all her own suffering, she will put a stop to Oliver’s suffering, seemingly at any cost.

Nancy appears again in Chapter XIX in a scene at Sikes’s house where Fagin and the rest of their crew are gathered. Nancy is in no mood for Fagin’s antics on this particular night and she sits quietly while Fagin makes sexist remarks, because, as the narrator notes, “Nancy, apparently fearful of irritating the housebreaker, sat with her eyes fixed upon the fire, as if she had been deaf to all that passed” (Oliver Twist 124). Nancy is becoming increasingly frustrated in this scene, because she senses from their discussion of an upcoming robbery that Oliver’s help will be required, and that she will be expected to play a part in ensuring that this he complies. Fagin notices her growing irritation and looks to Sikes.

The Jew nodded his head towards Nancy, who was still gazing at the fire, and intimated, by a sign, that he would have told her to leave the room. Sikes shrugged his shoulders, impatiently, as if he thought the precaution unnecessary; but complied, nevertheless, by requesting Miss Nancy to fetch him a jug of beer.

‘You don’t want any beer,’ said Nancy, folding her arms, and retaining her seat very composedly.

‘I tell you I do! Replied Sikes.

‘Nonsense,” rejoined the girl, coolly. ‘Go on, Fagin. I know what he’s going to say, Bill; he needn’t mind me.’

The Jew still hesitated. Sikes looked from one to the other in some surprise.

‘Why, you don’t mind the old girl, do you, Fagin?’ he asked at length.

‘You’ve known her long enough to trust her, or the devil’s in it. She ain’t one to blab. Are you, Nancy?’

‘I should think not!’ replied the young lady, drawing her chair up to the table, and putting her elbows upon it.

‘No, my dear, I know you’re not,’ said the Jew; ‘but—‘and again the old man paused.
‘But wot?’ inquired Sikes.

‘I didn’t know whether she mightn’t p’r’aps be out of sorts, you know, my dear, as she was the other night’ replied the Jew.

At the confession, Miss Nancy burst into a loud laugh; and swallowing a glass of brandy, shook her head with an air of defiance, and burst into sundry exclamations of ‘Keep the game a-going!’ ‘Never say die!’ and the like. There seemed at once to have the effect of reassuring both gentlemen; for the Jew nodded his head with a satisfied air, and resumed his seat, as did Mr. Sikes likewise.

‘Now, Fagin,’ said Nancy with a laugh, ‘tell Bill at once about Oliver!’

‘Ha! You’re a clever one, my dear; the sharpest girl I ever saw!’ said the Jew, patting her on the neck. ‘It was about Oliver I was going to speak, sure enough! Ha!Ha!Ha!’ (Oliver Twist 126)

In this chapter, we witness two versions of Nancy: one who seeks to keep Oliver from harm, and another who sees Oliver as a pawn. What appears to be happening in this scene is a battle between these two conflicting versions of Nancy, in which the less developed version wins out. In Jungian terms, it is Nancy’s shadow side which appears and results in her worst qualities overtaking the rest of her psyche. Through his use of authorial voice as narrator, Dickens mentions her drinking so as to suggest that there is a relationship between the brandy and her sudden change in character; however, from a Jungian perspective, we know that there is a great deal more here at work. Her laughter and remarks here signal this rapid change, and instead of her complex compelling her to act rashly at the mention of her mood, she sarcastically goads them. She falls back into the approval-seeking role that she ultimately decided on at the end of chapter XIII. Nancy’s desire to be part of the gang, and for community more broadly, overcomes her better aspects.

It is important to bear in mind, that as Pearson notes, the archetypal journey of individuation is messy and at times, an individual may inhabit different stages, with their mastery of each stage wavering...
slightly from time to time. She also explains that “The journey…is more circular or spiral than linear” (The Hero Within xxvi). As we witness with Nancy, the journey of individuation is not clearly outlined, consistent, or predictable. In this chapter for instance, we witness Nancy shift back to the orphan stage as she plays the role which she knows will keep her in the men’s good graces. Ultimately, Nancy makes this decision because her loneliness and need for validation drive her to act against her own moral code.

If we choose intimacy instead of independence, we cannot be fully ourselves in a relationship, because we have too much invested in keeping it; we ‘play it safe,’ play a role, and wonder why we feel so alone. If on the one hand, we choose independence, our need for intimacy does not go away. Indeed, because it is repressed and therefore unacknowledged and unexamined, it manifests itself in compulsive urges and activities. (The Hero Within 56)

For Nancy, the struggle to choose between maintaining the abusive relationships in her life or to follow her own moral compass is one that she encounters repeatedly throughout the text. At times, Nancy overcomes this urge, and at others she gives in to it fully. However, Nancy is certainly not alone in this battle and to cast harsh judgement upon her for her choices is unfair. The impact of one’s environment is significant as Pearson notes here “When people have grown up in an environment that glorifies martyrdom, being good, and making others happy, their desire for autonomy and independence will be interpreted, even by themselves, as wrong” (The Hero Within 64). The power of cultural conditioning and oppression, as well as one’s personal history, are significant forces to encounter.

This discussion between the criminal gang ends with Fagin and Nancy saying good night to each other, followed by several significant remarks from the narrator. After exchanging these words, the authorial voice as commentator adds: “Their eyes met, and the Jew scrutinized her narrowly. There was no flinching about the girl. She was as true and earnest in the matter as Toby Crackit himself could be” (Oliver Twist 127). This commentary is then followed by Fagin’s personal thoughts: “‘Always the way!’ muttered Fagin to himself as he turned homewards. ‘The worst of these women is, that a very little thing
serves to call up some long forgotten feeling; the best of them is, that it never lasts. Ha! ha! the man against the child for a bag of gold!” (*Oliver Twist* 127). Here Fagin is initially concerned that Nancy will go back on the promise she made during their discussion to assist in delivering Oliver to himself. Fagin believes that she is just as resolute as Toby Crackit (one of the children Fagin has corrupted) and will not go back on her word. He delights in the fact that Nancy has acted against her conscience, for he believes that women like Nancy will always listen to their ego-driven desires instead of considering the welfare of others. However, it is Dickens not Fagin who has the final word on Nancy’s character.

In Chapter XX, Oliver has just finished his bedtime prayer at Fagin’s residence when hears a sound:

‘What’s that?’ he cried, starting up, and catching sight of a figure standing by the door.

‘Who’s there?’

‘Me—only me,’ replied a tremulous voice.

Oliver raised the candle above his head, and looked towards the door. It was Nancy.

‘Put down the light,’ said the girl, turning away her head. ‘It hurts my eyes.’

Oliver saw that she was very pale, and gently inquired if she were ill.

The girl threw herself into a chair, with her back towards him, and wrung her hands, but made no reply. (*Oliver Twist* 130)

In this excerpt, Nancy appears in Oliver’s room to ensure his transfer to Sikes’s residence for the impending burglary. As Dickens’ conveys, it is with timidly and reluctance that she approaches this task. In the last chapter, we observed a great deal of conflict within Nancy’s psyche which manifested itself in a series of disparate reactions and behaviors. Here the same conflict continue between conscious and unconscious forces rages inside her, causing her to appeal physically ill. It is also highly symbolic that Nancy cannot tolerate the light, as her shadow personality represents darkness, and the light acts to expose the immoral nature of what she is about it do. It is as if the light from Oliver’s lamp throws her into even greater turmoil.
‘God forgive me!’ she cried after a while; “I never thought of this.’

‘Has anything happened?’ asked Oliver. ‘Can I help you? I will if I can. I will, indeed.’

She rocked herself to and fro, caught her throat, and, uttering a gurgling sound, struggled and gasped for breath.

‘Nancy!’ cried Oliver, ‘What is it?’

The girl beat her hands upon her knees, and her feet upon the ground, and, suddenly stopping, drew her shawl close around her, and shivered with cold.

Oliver stirred the fire. Drawing her chair close to it, she sat there, for a little time, without speaking; but at length she raised her head, and looked round.

‘I don’t know what comes over me sometimes,’ said she, affecting to busy herself in arranging her dress; ‘it’s this damp, dirty room, I think. Now, Nolly, dear, are you ready?’ (Oliver Twist 130)

Oliver has not forgotten that Nancy put herself in harm’s way to protect him, and he feels genuine compassion for her now, even though he does not understand precisely what is happening. He even offers to help her whatever way he can, which is notable because Oliver is otherwise entirely passive throughout the novel. It is also evident that Nancy has become ill due to the conflict that rages within her. Pearson notes that when a person is stuck and is ignoring the call to engage in the journey toward individuation, illness is likely to follow. “We may become sick as an unconscious way to stop the cycle we are in” (The Hero Within 64). Nancy’s body is itself crying out for her not to ignore her unconscious as it commands her instead to tap into the strength she demonstrated before and certainly possesses, even now. Sadly, Nancy tries her best to ignore it, and even lies to herself about the source of her pain, telling Oliver that it is something in the room that is causing her to act so oddly. Pearson acknowledges that “Orphans’ denial mechanisms protect them from full awareness of how powerless they really are” (The Hero Within 36) which seems to be the case with Nancy. Her shadow side (the negative version of the orphan archetype)
incites her to follow through with her task. While unsure what precisely is about to happen, Oliver’s sense of foreboding grows stronger.

‘Am I to go with you?’ asked Oliver.

‘Yes; I have come from Bill,’ replied the girl. ‘You are to go with me.’

‘What for?’ said Oliver, recoiling.

‘What for?’ echoed the girl, raising her eyes, and averting them again the moment they encountered the boy’s face. ‘Oh, for no harm.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ said Oliver, who had watched her closely.

‘Have it your own way,’ rejoined the girl, affecting to laugh. ‘For no good then.’ (Oliver Twist 130)

Nancy no longer lies only to herself, but Oliver, speaking the truth only when he detects her falsehood.

Yet, Oliver cannot shake the notion that perhaps he can prevent what is about to take place.

Oliver could see that he had some power over the girl’s better feelings and, for an instant, thought of appealing to her compassion for his helpless state. But then, the thought darted across his mind that it was barely 11 o’clock, and that many people were out in the streets, of whom surely some might be found to give credence to his tale. As the reflection occurred to him, he stepped forward and said, somewhat hastily, that he was ready.

Neither his brief consideration, nor its purport, was lost on his companion. She eyed him narrowly while he spoke, and cast upon him a look of intelligence, which sufficiently showed that she guessed what had been passing in his thoughts.

‘Hush!’ said the girl, stooping over him, and pointing to the door as she looked cautiously round. ‘You can’t help yourself. I have tried hard for you, but all to no purpose. You are hedges round and round; and if ever you are to get loose from here, this is not the time.’
Struck by her manner, Oliver looked up in her face with great surprise. She seemed to speak the truth; her countenance was white and agitated, and she trembled with very earnestness.

‘I have saved you from being ill-used once, and I will again, and I do now,” continued the girl aloud; ‘for those who would have fetched you, if I had not, would have been far rougher than me. I have promised for your being quiet and silent: if you are not, you will only do harm to yourself and me too; and perhaps be my death. See here! I have borne all this for you already, as true as God sees me to show it.’

She pointed, hastily, to some livid bruises on her neck and arms, and continued with great rapidity:--

‘Remember this! And don’t let me suffer more for you just now. If I could help you I would; but I have not the power. They don’t mean to harm you; and whatever they make you do is no fault of yours. Hush! Every word from you is a blow to me. Give me your hand. Make haste! Your hand!’ (Oliver Twist 131)

It is apparent here that Nancy is conscious of her choice to temporarily refuse her role as warrior, but she also knows that she must take it up again in the future. She pleads for Oliver’s compliance, as she simply cannot muster the strength to put on her armor and go to battle. For the first time, she speaks of the beatings she experiences at the hand of Sikes—even going so far as to show Oliver her bruises from the last time she tried to save him. And while Nancy ultimately chooses to act in favor of her immediate concerns, the call of her unconscious to engage in her journey is strong. This moment of clarity—of being able to own that what she is doing is a violation of herself, demonstrates that she has not abandoned her path of individuation, but merely postponed it.

Nancy then takes Oliver’s hand, leading him into a hackney carriage. In order to ensure that both of them go unharmed, she must do what she must to keep Oliver calm and compliant.
The girl still held Oliver fast by the hand, and continued to pour into his ear the warnings and assurances she had already imparted. All was so quick and hurried that he had scarcely time to recollect where he was, or how he came there, when the carriage stopped at the house to which the Jew’s steps had been directed on the previous evening.

For one brief moment Oliver cast a hurried glance along the empty street, and a cry for help hung on his lips. But the girl’s voice was in his ear, beseeching him in such tones of agony to remember her, that he had not the heart to utter it. While he hesitated, the opportunity was gone, for he was already in the house, and the door was shut. (*Oliver Twist* 132)

While it is Nancy’s intent to keep Oliver safe, she is fully aware that the promises she utters are empty, as he will be in great danger during the robbery. Oliver is unsure how to reconcile the two versions of Nancy he knows, and thus is unable to act. But Nancy does not let him remain frozen for long.

‘This way,’ said the girl, releasing her hold for the first time. ‘Bill!’

‘Hallo!’ replied Sikes, appearing at the head of the stairs with a candle. ‘Oh! That’s the time of day. Come on!’

This was a very strong expression of approbation, an uncommonly hearty welcome, from a person of Mr. Sikes’s temperament. Nancy, appearing much gratified thereby, saluted him cordially. (*Oliver Twist* 130)

Nancy’s conflicted psyche seems to settle when she receives praise from Sikes, but the reader knows that Nancy will not be able to excuse her own actions. This is merely another instance of Nancy refusing to answer the call and follow her convictions, and as we witnessed previously, she will come to regret this choice rather quickly. These moments of cheap validation are in fact not so cheap, as they come at high price for Nancy (as most ego-driven decisions usually do). As is always the case, Sikes’s good mood and showering of appreciation expire all too soon. “…Mr. Sikes disposed of a few glasses of spirits and water, and threw himself on the bed, ordering Nancy, with many imprecations in case of failure, to call him at
five precisely…the girl, mending the fire, sat before it, in readiness to rouse them at the appointed time” (Oliver Twist 133). Sikes’s praise has ceased and he persists in using her for his own selfish gain. While she should be sleeping, she is instead acting as a human alarm clock. “For a long time Oliver lay awake, thinking it not impossible that Nancy might seek that opportunity of whispering some further advice; but the girl sat brooding over the fire, without moving, save now and then to trim the light…” (Oliver Twist 133). Regret has set in for Nancy, and she falls into a trance-like state. The following morning, she is “busily engaged in preparing breakfast” (Oliver Twist 134) and when Sikes indicates it is time to leave, “Nancy, scarcely looking at the boy, threw him a handkerchief to tie round his throat…” (Oliver Twist 134). Oliver keeps looking to her for some sign that she will do something, desperate to rouse her from her robotic state. “Oliver turned, for an instant, when they reached the door, in the hope of meeting a look from the girl. But she had resumed her old seat in front of the fire, and sat perfectly motionless before it” (Oliver Twist 134).

While Dickens has thus far demonstrated the surrogate family dynamic amongst Fagin and they children in his employ, in this chapter, it becomes increasingly apparent that Nancy is herself becoming more enmeshed in that role. She has come to view herself as a sort of surrogate mother to Oliver, which is also what makes it challenging for her to put him in harm’s way. The notion of surrogate families is a common theme in Dickens novels, as Barickman et al. notes.

Most often…one parent is either dead or replaced by a surrogate figure, so attention is focused even more directly on a primary relationship between parent [Nancy] and child [Oliver]. And these relations are also subjected to unusual emotional demands, displacements or reversals of supposedly normal roles, fusions of conflicting roles, and so forth. (Barickman et al. 60)

This certainly holds true for Oliver Twist, in that the novel extensively chronicles the many parental figures Oliver encounters in his life. Fagin represents the “bad” surrogate parent, and Brownlow the “good” surrogate parent, while Nancy’s role as parent at this stage of the novel is a mix of both. This is
largely because a woman in Nancy’s position faces much greater limitations in power than any male surrogate parent does. Nancy’s attitude to the parental role she has taken up is very ambivalent at this stage of the novel. Her desire to act as the “good” parent figure in Oliver’s life is also openly mocked by Sikes and Fagin, largely because a prostitute was not thought to possess a caretaking instinct. As Barickman et al. notes, Dickens places his characters in unusual (and often ill-fitting) roles as a way to demonstrate the destructive influence of Victorian patriarchy.

…Dickens’ perception [is] that the patriarchal social system of Victorian England is thoroughly corrupt; that it is once immensely powerful in its abuse of individuals and impotent in its ability to bring anyone lasting security or fulfillment….But Dickens special preoccupation, his most profound insight, concerns the multitude of ways in which corrupt patriarchal values have infiltrated basic family relations, so that their oppressive effect on parent and child alike persists throughout each individual’s life. In every Dickens novel this crisis in family relations is the matrix for the developments in plot, theme, and character. (Barickman et al. 60)

In the mixed-up world created by the Victorian social system, it becomes impossible to find normal, healthy families. This is, of course, because individuals themselves often cannot find any lasting happiness or peace in their own lives. This leads to abusive environments in which children are frequently victimized. “The typical family is adequate at best, vicious at worst; and the figure who absolutely haunts his [Dickens’] fiction is the abandoned, orphaned, abused child. Almost no family group includes both an adequate mother and father. Potentially loving parents have died or have disappeared…” (Barickman et al. 62). This certainly holds true for Oliver Twist, who is not only an orphan, but has been forced into the horrible “family” which Fagin has created. While Nancy attempts to make Oliver’s life better, it is difficult because there are many corrupt male patriarchs who lord over her.

Dickens is always careful to demonstrate that the perversion of the loving family is systemic, not isolated.
The abuse of children by the oppressive or absent family forms the primary analogue to massive institutional corruption and the most powerful stimulus to the narrators’ outrage. These two forms of abuse always dominate the novel’s themes, and each novel works to show that the abuse of the child in the home is intimately and necessarily related to the abuse of everyone in the society at large. (Barickman et al. 63)

Barickman et al. also notes that mock patriarchs, such as Bumble, are used to express Dicken’s assertion that institutional corruption often appears as thinly veiled as paternalism. This is certainly the case with Victorian workhouses and debtors’ prisons--both of which Dickens abhors. A paternalistic mentality is even adopted by Fagin as means to justify his exploitation of children. Ultimately, through his novels, Dickens reveals that “The claims to any real personal authority are fatuous. But the symbolic accuracy of the patriarchal parody is deadly. All of the massive institutions satirized by the novels have been modeled on a bloated version of the father’s role in a family” (Barickman et al. 63-64).

Corruption of power from the highest levels to the lowest is easily justified by the Victorian social system, which ultimately ensures its survival. Only through attacking the system of beliefs that prop up such abuses, can Dickens hope to morally convict his readers. He does this by showing readers the impact that this system has upon individuals. As he reveals, it is women and children who suffer the most under this system as we observe with Nancy and Oliver in the novel. That the experience of oppression often causes victims to victimize others as an attempt to earn favor with powerful men in the hope of improving their lot in life, is just another example of the pervasiveness of the system itself. Nonetheless, as Dickens demonstrates, it is always important to keep the focus on the source from which the oppression itself originates, be that individual actors, or the system as a whole.

In each novel, we can distinguish oppressors who manipulate others to their own advantage, whatever torments they unintentionally inflict upon themselves in the process, or however they respond to the oppressive forces of their own psychological
environment. And we can distinguish victims who struggle to make a humane or moral response to the forces that cause them so much anguish. (Barickman et al. 88)

What makes the evil male patriarchs different from Nancy is not only the disparity in gender which provides them with the opportunity to oppress without the threat of intervention, but their psychological development. It is clear that Sikes and Fagin are entirely unwilling to move beyond their own ego interests, and thus will continue to use and abuse others. Nancy, however, consistently makes strides towards more thoroughly integrating her unconscious, so that she does not ever remain stuck for long. So far in the text, it is clear that her “…intense, inconsistent desires and moods reflect a profound unconscious resistance to settling for a surrogate identity” (Barickman et al. 24).

Several chapters pass before Nancy is mentioned in the text again. It is worth noting that before providing an update on Nancy in chapter XXVI, in this same chapter Dickens takes the reader into the Three Cripples Pub, where he provides a detailed description of other women who have been impacted by poverty and crime.

Cunning, ferocity, and drunkenness in all its stages, were there, in their strongest aspect; and women-- some with the last lingering tinge of their early freshness almost fading as you looked; others with every mark and stamp of their sex utterly beaten out, and presenting but one loathsome blank of profligacy and crime; some mere girls, others but young women, and none past the prime of life--formed the darkest and saddest portion of this dreary picture. (Oliver Twist 163)

While it is not entirely clear if the women mentioned here are prostitutes like Nancy (since mention of this term is avoided in the text) his description here strongly suggests that is indeed the case. The picture Dickens paints here is of women who have nearly had the humanity wiped out of them by those who refuse to acknowledge their inherent worth. The toll these women are forced to pay in Victorian society is one which has a direct impact upon them physically, psychologically, and spiritually. This is morally repugnant to Dickens.
As the text progresses, it is apparent that Dickens becomes increasingly fascinated by the impact of the Victorian patriarchy on women who inhabit the lowest levels of society. In general, he demonstrates this by shifting the novel’s attention to Nancy. In this passage, it is made apparent through his choice to provide only a detailed, lengthy characterization of the women—something which he does not do for the men at the pub. Dickens had enormous compassion for abused and exploited women—many of whom were prostitutes.

Prostitution was endemic in Victorian society, although estimates vary widely as to how many women were engaged in it at any one time. Much of this is due to the fact that at the time, “Prostitution” as a term was widely disputed. While some claimed that “literally every woman who yields to her [sexual] passions and loses her virtue is a prostitute” (Mayhew 215), others held that a woman who was not a sex worker was instead “fallen.” As George Watt notes, “From a twentieth-century perspective there is a difference, and a distinct one, between a prostitute and a girl who makes one mistake. An element of Victorian society would not allow for such distinction” (Watt 2). This binary way of thinking resulted in the establishment of two categories for women: pure or fallen. The fallen woman was essentially cast off as morally corrupt and “as a result many [of these women] suffered—the fallen woman had no power to assert herself; she had few rights, if any (Watt 6). William Acton was one of the few Victorian figures who made at least some attempts to revise public perceptions of fallen women. He wrote “It is no more a necessary consequence that the loss of her virtue should divest one woman of the other feminine attributes than that another who has preserved it should in all other respects perfect and complete” (Acton 4). This point is significant, as Dickens seems to approach fallen women from this perspective throughout not only *Oliver Twist*, but in all of his work. In the 1840’s, Dickens would actually go on to make significant contributions to the cause of fallen women through charitable work. Clearly, the suffering of such women had been on his mind over the course of many years, and his compassion never seemed to waver. Dickens consistently gives fallen women the benefit of the doubt; assuming that they have not willingly chosen their fall, but were coerced. “Without exception, all of the Dickensian prostitutes are ashamed of their
unchastity and are treated badly by men. Dickens just could not seem to think of women as being inherently bad” (Ayres 131). Indeed, “What Dickens challenges through Nancy’s presence in *Oliver Twist* is the mistaken idea that a woman is either fallen or not, either totally corrupt or pure….Nancy might be a harlot, the companion of murderers and thieves, but she can still be essentially good (Watt 12). It is this understanding of Nancy that Dickens extends to other women in here situation, establishing an empathetic approach that encourages the reader to follow suit.

After some time, Fagin decides to leave The Three Cripples pub, and makes his way to Sikes’s house.

Fagin crept softly upstairs, and entered it without any previous ceremony. The girl was alone, lying with her head upon the table, and her hair straggling over it.

'She has been drinking,' thought the Jew, coolly, 'or perhaps she is only miserable.'

The old man turned to close the door, as he made this reflection, the noise thus occasioned roused the girl. She eyed his crafty face narrowly, as she inquired whether there was any news, and listened to his recital of Toby Crackit's story. When it was concluded, she sank into her former attitude, but spoke not a word. She pushed the candle impatiently away; and once or twice as she feverishly changed her position, shuffled her feet upon the ground; but this was all. (*Oliver Twist* 164-165)

Fagin ascertains early on that Nancy is not interested in seeing him or engaging in conversation, yet Fagin seems committed to forcing her to entertain him as a guest.

During the silence, the Jew looked restlessly about the room, as if to assure himself that there were no appearances of Sikes having covertly returned. Apparently satisfied with his inspection, he coughed twice or thrice, and made as many efforts to open a conversation; but the girl heeded him no more than if he had been made of stone. At length he made another attempt; and rubbing his hands together, said, in his most conciliatory tone,
'And where should you think Bill was now, my dear?'

The girl moaned out some half intelligible reply, that she could not tell; and seemed, from the smothered noise that escaped her, to be crying.

'And the boy, too,' said the Jew, straining his eyes to catch a glimpse of her face. 'Poor leettle child! Left in a ditch, Nance; only think!'

'The child,' said the girl, suddenly looking up, 'is better where he is, than among us; and if no harm comes to Bill from it, I hope he lies dead in the ditch and that his young bones may rot there.'

'What!' cried the Jew, in amazement.

'Ay, I do,' returned the girl, meeting his gaze. 'I shall be glad to have him away from my eyes, and to know that the worst is over. I can't bear to have him about me. The sight of him turns me against myself, and all of you.'

'Pooh!' said the Jew, scornfully. 'You're drunk.'

'Am I?' cried the girl bitterly. 'It's no fault of yours, if I am not! You'd never have me anything else, if you had your will, except now;--the humour doesn't suit you, doesn't it?'

'No!' rejoined the Jew, furiously. 'It does not.'

'Change it, then!' responded the girl, with a laugh. (Oliver Twist 165)

The impact of her complicity in delivering Oliver to Fagin is still very powerful as we see here. Nancy is indeed miserable, and there is little she can do to relieve her overwhelming sense of grief. Because Nancy feels powerless over her own life and the fate of Oliver’s, she has chosen instead to deny reality and pretend that she does not care about Oliver’s wellbeing. Fagin taunts her for her sudden change in attitude towards Oliver, but Dickens does not seem to cast judgement on Nancy. “We are urged to see virtue and victimization as precariously akin…” (Barickman et al. 77) and are forced to ask to what degree a victim like Nancy can be held accountable for her behavior. Dickens is careful to ensure that the reader not
forget that Nancy’s pain is intensified because everything that Oliver endures reminds her of her own suffering, and in this way, she is continually re-traumatized. The wounded shadow orphan side of Nancy and the oppressive environment she is in hold her captive in this painful state.

The dialogue continues and Fagin explodes, because he does not know where Sikes is and fears that perhaps Oliver may have gotten away yet again. Fagin is only concerned with ensuring that his property (Oliver) can be returned to him. In response to his rant, Nancy asks “What is all this?” (*Oliver Twist* 165) which only seems to spur him on. After more ranting, Fagin turns back to Nancy, saying,

‘Nancy, dear!’ croaked the Jew, in his usual voice. ‘Did you mind me, dear?’

'Don't worry me now, Fagin!' replied the girl, raising her head languidly. 'If Bill has not done it this time, he will another. He has done many a good job for you, and will do many more when he can; and when he can't he won't; so no more about that.'

'Regarding this boy, my dear?' said the Jew, rubbing the palms of his hands nervously together.

'The boy must take his chance with the rest,' interrupted Nancy, hastily; 'and I say again, I hope he is dead, and out of harm's way, and out of yours,—that is, if Bill comes to no harm. And if Toby got clear off, Bill's pretty sure to be safe; for Bill's worth two of Toby any time.' (*Oliver Twist* 166)

Fagin sadistically taunts Nancy to again declare that she wishes Oliver were dead. It is only the dead who are safe in the world in which Nancy inhabits. Here it is clear that she wishes that she were dead, and that wishing death upon Oliver is a projection of her own desires.

‘And about what I was saying, my dear?’ observed the Jew, keeping his glistening eye steadily upon her.

'You must say it all over again, if it's anything you want me to do,’ rejoined Nancy; 'and if it is, you had better wait till to-morrow. You put me up for a minute; but now I'm stupid again.'
Fagin put several other questions: all with the same drift of ascertaining whether the girl had profited by his unguarded hints; but, she answered them so readily, and was withal so utterly unmoved by his searching looks, that his original impression of her being more than a trifle in liquor, was confirmed. Nancy, indeed, was not exempt from a failing which was very common among the Jew's female pupils; and in which, in their tenderer years, they were rather encouraged than checked. Her disordered appearance, and a wholesale perfume of Geneva which pervaded the apartment, afforded strong confirmatory evidence of the justice of the Jew's supposition; and when, after indulging in the temporary display of violence above described, she subsided, first into dullness, and afterwards into a compound of feelings: under the influence of which she shed tears one minute, and in the next gave utterance to various exclamations of 'Never say die!' and divers calculations as to what might be the amount of the odds so long as a lady or gentleman was happy, Mr. Fagin, who had had considerable experience of such matters in his time, saw, with great satisfaction, that she was very far gone indeed. (Oliver Twist 166-167)

Nancy’s drunkenness is handled in the same way by Dickens as the women’s drunkenness at the Three Cripples: with empathy. Dickens again foregoes making a judgement about Nancy, and uses authorial voice as commentator to reveal the desperate circumstances that drive oppressed women to substance abuse. The narrator also reveals here that it is pimps like Fagin who actually encourage drinking in young prostitutes. It is clear that the narrator mentions this here to imply that Nancy’s tendency towards drunkenness was not a reflection of her nature, but was instead a consequence of Fagin’s conditioning, and the hopelessness of her circumstances.

Nearly 100 pages of text pass before we again encounter Nancy. In chapter XXXIX, we find that Nancy yet remains tormented.
Seated by the window, busily engaged in patching an old waistcoat which formed a portion of the robber's ordinary dress, was a female: so pale and reduced with watching and privation, that there would have been considerable difficulty in recognising her as the same Nancy who has already figured in this tale, but for the voice in which she replied to Mr. Sikes's question. 'Not long gone seven,' said the girl. 'How do you feel to-night, Bill?'

'As weak as water,' replied Mr. Sikes, with an imprecation on his eyes and limbs. 'Here; lend us a hand, and let me get off this thundering bed anyhow.'

Illness had not improved Mr. Sikes's temper; for, as the girl raised him up and led him to a chair, he muttered various curses on her awkwardness, and struck her. (*Oliver Twist* 251)

While the narrator mentions that Sikes is ill, it is also very apparent that Nancy is also doing very poorly. As we witnessed in the prior chapter, her emotional state was in disarray, which combined with her tireless care of Sikes, has left her extremely worn down. Through authorial voice as narrator we learn that Nancy that Sikes shows no gratitude for her assistance, and instead hurls insults at her and physically abuses her. Nancy responds calmly and rationally to Sikes nonetheless.

'Such a number of nights,' said the girl, with a touch of woman's tenderness, which communicated something like sweetness of tone, even to her voice: 'such a number of nights as I've been patient with you, nursing and caring for you, as if you had been a child: and this the first that I've seen you like yourself; you wouldn't have served me as you did just now, if you'd thought of that, would you? Come, come; say you wouldn't.'

'Well, then,' rejoined Mr. Sikes, 'I wouldn't. Why, damme, now, the girl's whining again!' 'It's nothing,' said the girl, throwing herself into a chair. 'Don't you seem to mind me. It'll soon be over.'
‘What'll be over?’ demanded Mr. Sikes in a savage voice. ‘What foolery are you up to, now, again? Get up and bustle about, and don't come over me with your woman's nonsense.’

At any other time, this remonstrance, and the tone in which it was delivered, would have had the desired effect; but the girl being really weak and exhausted, dropped her head over the back of the chair, and fainted, before Mr. Sikes could get out a few of the appropriate oaths with which, on similar occasions, he was accustomed to garnish his threats. Not knowing, very well, what to do, in this uncommon emergency; for Miss Nancy's hysterics were usually of that violent kind which the patient fights and struggles out of, without much assistance; Mr. Sikes tried a little blasphemy: and finding that mode of treatment wholly ineffectual, called for assistance. (*Oliver Twist* 251)

Here Nancy is forced to confront the truth about Sikes yet again, and rather than act out in anger, she is calm and collected and tries to explain her feelings of hurt to him. Nancy’s efforts are in vain, because Sikes, continually guided by his ego, is emotionally crippled and selfish. Nancy, needing to have some hope to hold onto, convinces herself that somewhere deep within Sikes, there is a man capable of loving her. This is merely a projection of her own desire, not a reality.

In Dickens’ *Sketches by Boz*, there is a story titled “The Hospital Patient” in which a similar pattern is observed. In this sketch, Dickens accompanied a magistrate who was required to try a man accused of committing acts of brutality. The woman he brutalized was hospitalized and could not present for the hearing. In order to question her, the court met her in the hospital, where it became apparent that she did not want to pursue criminal charges against her assailant. Indeed, she attempted to disguise her injuries, and insisted on the innocence of the man who had battered her.

‘Oh, no gentlemen’, said the girl, raising herself once more, and folding her hands together, ‘no gentlemen, for God’s sake! I did it to myself—it was nobody’s fault—it was an accident… (*Sketches by Boz* 213)
Even after informing her that the man would be convicted without her testimony, accompanied by the tangible fear of a perjury charge, the woman insisted on his guiltlessness.

‘Jack’, murmured the girl, laying her hand upon his arm, ‘they shall not persuade me to swear your life away. He didn’t do it, gentlemen. He never hurt me.’ She grasped his arm tightly, and added, in a broken whisper, ‘I hope God Almighty will forgive me all the wrong I have done, and the life I have led. God bless you, Jack. Some kind gentlemen take my love to my poor old father. Five years ago, he said he wished I has died a child…

(Sketches by Boz 213)

This battered woman’s projections are so strong that they have rendered her unable to accept that her lover, Jack has beaten her. While Nancy’s projection onto Sikes is not this extreme (as witnessed by her previously showing Oliver her bruises and mentioning the abuse she endured) it does influence her behavior significantly.

Nancy is still dominated by the shadow orphan archetype, and as Pearson notes, individuals in this phase tend to latch onto anyone who seems willing to love them. They often remain so committed that they would rather face death than leave their partner, even if the relationship is toxic (The Hero Within 36). This occurs, Pearson explains, because an orphan’s understanding of the world around them is predominantly based in projection. Their own insecurities and woundedness make it hard for them to love and accept themselves, and as a result, they tend to settle for whatever they can get, even if that love is counterfeit and rife with manipulation. Nancy is so overcome by sorrow and the shock of being forced to confront her projection that she passes out.

This passage also demonstrates Nancy’s inherent gentleness and kindness, however. In her care of Sikes, she exhibits the stereotypically feminine ideal of the “Angel in the House”: an anima image inspired by a poem from Coventry Patmore which necessitated that women take on a caretaking role. The distillation of this anima image into a gender role was effective because it purported to express women’s true nature, which was opposite to that of men. “The epistemological term woman could guarantee men’s
identity only if the difference was fixed” (Poovey). While “...an absolute opposition between male and female was a social necessity for the construction of family in mid-nineteenth century terms” as Ingham asserts, “opposition turns out not to be absolute in Dickens’ novels” (Ingham 126-127). Indeed, Nancy does exhibit what would have been considered “feminine goodness” (Williams 76) to the Victorians, but she also exhibits stereotypically “masculine” qualities throughout the text as well. Brenda Ayres says it best when she writes, “Nancy is a curious mix of woman” (Ayres 130). Dickens is not content to force her into any stereotype, and instead presents her as mixture of both “feminine” and “masculine” qualities. This, we can conclude, is a part of his attack on the Victorian sexual system itself, which acts to place women in bondage to culturally sanction sex roles. In Nancy, however, we see both the anima and animus elements embodied. Jung’s notion that one the aims of individuation is for the “masculine” and “feminine” elements to work together to create balance is manifested through Nancy’s androgynous character.

The men manage to eventually revive Nancy, and Sikes—in a singular moment of clarity—remarks that without Nancy’s care, he would have died. But Fagin cannot tolerate Nancy receiving credit, and instead reminds Sikes that it is he who deserves appreciation.

'There now, Bill,' remonstrated Fagin, eagerly catching at the word. 'If it hadn't been for the girl! Who but poor old Fagin was the means of your having such a handy girl about you?'

'He says true enough there!' said Nancy, coming hastily forward. 'Let him be; let him be.

( Oliver Twist 254)

Nancy is clearly upset by Fagin’s comment, as she undoubtedly hoped that she might yet receive some expression of thanks from Sikes. Furthermore, the reminder that she is Fagin’s property is not only deeply painful, but agitating. Nonetheless, Nancy seems content to receive at least an acknowledgement from Sikes that it was her nursing, which kept him from death.
This scene is a reminder of the struggle for power among men in Victorian society—a battle in which women are often the commodity for which the battle is waged. “In one of the most profound ironies of Dickens’ fiction—an irony that reflects not on Dickens, as many have assumed, but on the nature of the society he portrays—the condition of women can be approached accurately only by presenting them as objects manipulated in a continual struggle for power waged among men” (Barickman et al. 101). The notion of men’s constant struggle to assert power over others is one aspect of what Ann Wilson Schaef calls “The White Male System.” As she notes, “In the White Male System, relationships are conceived of as being either one-up or one-down. In other words, when two people come together or encounter each other, the White Male System assumption is that one of them must be superior and the other inferior. There are no other possibilities for interaction” (Schaef 108). This power differential is at the heart of the patriarchy.

Concerned that he may have aroused Nancy’s anger, Fagin employs what we can assume is one of his old strategies for keeping Nancy in a passive state. As the narrator reveals, “Nancy's appearance gave a new turn to the conversation; for the boys, receiving a sly wink from the wary old Jew, began to ply her with liquor: of which, however, she took very sparingly…”(Oliver Twist 254). Fagin’s manipulations do not work on Nancy this time, for she has decided it is in her best interest to remain clear-headed.

After some time was spent attempting to ply her with liquor, Fagin remarks that he will fetch the cash that Sikes’ has demanded from him. His lies continue as he remarks, “I never lock up my money, for I've got none to lock up, my dear—ha! ha! ha!—none to lock up. It's a poor trade, Nancy, and no thanks; but I'm fond of seeing the young people about me; and I bear it all, I bear it all” (Oliver Twist 256). This undoubtedly sickens Nancy, but she chooses to ignore it. It is apparent that Nancy refuses to remain stuck feeling sorry for herself, and this demonstrates that the grip of the shadow orphan upon her is loosening.

A guest arrives, and Nancy shows no interest until she hears the man speak. “The instant she caught the sound, she tore off her bonnet and shawl, with the rapidity of lightning, and thrust them under
the table” (Oliver Twist 257). The text reveals that this individual is Monks. Nancy studies Monks intently but covertly as Dickens’ narrator discloses. “The girl drew closer to the table, and glancing at Monks with an air of careless levity, withdrew her eyes; but as he turned towards Fagin, she stole another look; so keen and searching, and full of purpose, that if there had been any bystander to observe the change, he could hardly have believed the two looks to have proceeded from the same person” (Oliver Twist 257).

It is significant that prior to this scene, Dickens establishes that Nancy is under the influence of neither alcohol nor her complex. He does this to show that Nancy is not irrational or paranoid in her reaction to Monks. It is as if Nancy’s intuition is so strong that she has a sixth sense. It should come as no surprise, however that after many years of being surrounded by evil men, Nancy has developed a keen sense of bad character. It is worth noting that intuition was something that Jung attributes to women in his writings. “Woman… is and always has been a source of information about things for which a man has no eyes. She can be his inspiration; her intuitive capacity, often superior to man’s, can give him timely warning…” (Two Essays on Analytical Psychology 186). While Jung’s implication is that a woman’s intuition can be used to aid men, in Nancy we observe a different situation—one in which intuition is something which she does not allow the men around her to use to for their own benefit.

Dickens also shows Nancy’s wisdom and cleverness through her calculated way of examining Monks. She ensures that Monks is not looking in her direction when she scrutinizes his face intently. In Jungian terms, this represents the presence of the “masculine” animus within her, which endows her consciousness with “a capacity for reflection, deliberation, and self-knowledge” (Aion 16). Her shrewd approach reveals not only profound intelligence, but hints at greater psychic depths.

Monks begins to act uneasy around Nancy, and Fagin instructs him to go upstairs to continue their conversation. But Nancy’s terrible sense of foreboding will not leave her.

Before the sound of their footsteps had ceased to echo through the house, the girl had slipped off her shoes; and drawing her gown loosely over her head, and muffling her
arms in it, stood at the door, listening with breathless interest. The moment the noise ceased, she glided from the room; ascended the stairs with incredible softness and silence; and was lost in the gloom above. (*Oliver Twist* 257)

What she learns from her eavesdropping is intentionally kept hidden from the reader, as Dickens works to build suspense. However, when Fagin returns to give her the money, her appearance conveys her upset.

‘Why, Nance!’ exclaimed the Jew, starting back as he put down the candle, 'how pale you are!'

'Pale!' echoed the girl, shading her eyes with her hands, as if to look steadily at him.

'Quite horrible. What have you been doing to yourself?'

'Nothing that I know of, except sitting in this close place for I don't know how long and all,' replied the girl carelessly. 'Come! Let me get back; that's a dear.'

With a sigh for every piece of money, Fagin told the amount into her hand. They parted without more conversation, merely interchanging a 'good-night.' (*Oliver Twist* 258)

While Fagin realizes that something is wrong with Nancy, he does not press the matter further, and she manages to conceal any suggestion of what has disturbed her. However, she quickly casts off this role once he has gone.

When the girl got into the open street, she sat down upon a doorstep; and seemed, for a few moments, wholly bewildered and unable to pursue her way. Suddenly she arose; and hurrying on, in a direction quite opposite to that in which Sikes was awaiting her returned, quickened her pace, until it gradually resolved into a violent run. After completely exhausting herself, she stopped to take breath: and, as if suddenly recollecting herself, and deploring her inability to do something she was bent upon, wrung her hands, and burst into tears.
It might be that her tears relieved her, or that she felt the full hopelessness of her condition; but she turned back; and hurrying with nearly as great rapidity in the contrary direction; partly to recover lost time, and partly to keep pace with the violent current of her own thoughts: soon reached the dwelling where she had left the housebreaker. (*Oliver Twist* 258)

Dickens masterfully combines both authorial voice as commentator and authorial voice as narrator to convey to the reader both the physical movements and psychological state of Nancy. This scene presents an integral moment in Nancy’s journey as conflicts between her unconscious and conscious come to a head. Her unconscious suddenly prompts her to run out of the house to save Oliver, seemingly in absence of a plan of action. Her conscious mind, however, reminds her that she must get back to Sikes to avoid his wrath as it communicates to her what is on the line for intervening on behalf of Oliver. Yet, what we find soon enough, is that she does not give in to her ego.

Nancy returns home, and Sikes does not notice her distressed state. Instead, he seems to care only that the money has been secured.

That she had all the abstracted and nervous manner of one who is on the eve of some bold and hazardous step, which it has required no common struggle to resolve upon, would have been obvious to the lynx-eyed Fagin, who would most probably have taken the alarm at once; but Mr. Sikes lacking the niceties of discrimination, and being troubled with no more subtle misgivings than those which resolve themselves into a dogged roughness of behaviour towards everybody…[Sikes] troubled himself so little about her, that, had her agitation been far more perceptible than it was, it would have been very unlikely to have awakened his suspicions. (*Oliver Twist* 258)

The narrator here re-emphasizes that Sikes is driven solely by ego desires, and does not care for Nancy. In this instance, Sikes lack of concern actually has a good result, as it enables Nancy to develop a plan of action without disturbance.
As that day closed in, the girl's excitement increased; and, when night came on, and she sat by, watching until the housebreaker should drink himself asleep, there was an unusual paleness in her cheek, and a fire in her eye, that even Sikes observed with astonishment….

Why, burn my body!' said the man, raising himself on his hands as he stared the girl in the face. 'You look like a corpse come to life again. What's the matter?'

'Matter!' replied the girl. 'Nothing. What do you look at me so hard for?

'What foolery is this?' demanded Sikes, grasping her by the arm, and shaking her roughly.

'What is it? What do you mean? What are you thinking of?

'Of many things, Bill,' replied the girl, shivering, and as she did so, pressing her hands upon her eyes. 'But, Lord! What odds in that?'

The tone of forced gaiety in which the last words were spoken, seemed to produce a deeper impression on Sikes than the wild and rigid look, which had preceded them.

I tell you wot it is,' said Sikes; 'if you haven't caught the fever, and got it comin' on, now, there's something more than usual in the wind, and something dangerous too. You're not a-going to--. No, damme! you wouldn't do that!'

'Do what?' asked the girl.

'There ain't,' said Sikes, fixing his eyes upon her, and muttering the words to himself; 'there ain't a stauncher-hearted gal going, or I'd have cut her throat three months ago. She's got the fever coming on; that's it.'

Fortifying himself with this assurance, Sikes drained the glass to the bottom, and then, with many grumbling oaths, called for his physic. The girl jumped up, with great alacrity; poured it quickly out, but with her back towards him; and held the vessel to his lips, while he drank off the contents.
'Now,' said the robber, 'come and sit aside of me, and put on your own face; or I'll alter it so, that you won't know it again when you do want it.' (Oliver Twist 259)

Here Sikes finally notices that something is amiss. His direct speech and the narrator’s commentary reveal that Sikes has a sense of foreboding, which he tries to ignore by telling himself that she is just sick.

Nancy’s comment that she is thinking of many things, is another example of her pushing back against sexist notions that women are less intelligent. This is another example of her asserting her truth. Nancy’s “masculine” animus side enables her to approach the matter at hand logically and rationally. Her complex remains dormant, and she uses role-playing here not to feed her ego, but to facilitate her mission.

The girl obeyed. Sikes, locking her hand in his, fell back upon the pillow: turning his eyes upon her face. They closed; opened again; closed once more; again opened. He shifted his position restlessly; and, after dozing again, and again, for two or three minutes, and as often springing up with a look of terror, and gazing vacantly about him, was suddenly stricken, as it were, while in the very attitude of rising, into a deep and heavy sleep. The grasp of his hand relaxed; the upraised arm fell languidly by his side; and he lay like one in a profound trance.

'The laudanum has taken effect at last,' murmured the girl, as she rose from the bedside. 'I may be too late, even now.'

She hastily dressed herself in her bonnet and shawl: looking fearfully round, from time to time, as if, despite the sleeping draught, she expected every moment to feel the pressure of Sikes's heavy hand upon her shoulder; then, stooping softly over the bed, she kissed the robber's lips; and then opening and closing the room-door with noiseless touch, hurried from the house. (Oliver Twist 259-260)

Nancy has drugged Sikes, but even while in an intoxicated stupor his sense of foreboding remains strong. While she still fears what may happen to her if he awakes, she is not paralyzed by this concern. She ventures out into the night, with determination, not panic:
Many of the shops were already closing in the back lanes and avenues through which she tracked her way, in making from Spitalfields towards the West-End of London. The clock struck ten, increasing her impatience. She tore along the narrow pavement: elbowing the passengers from side to side; and darting almost under the horses' heads, crossed crowded streets, where clusters of persons were eagerly watching their opportunity to do the like.

'The woman is mad!' said the people, turning to look after her as she rushed away. (Oliver Twist 260)

Again, Nancy is proclaimed “mad” by others because of her assertiveness. At this point, Dickens has not yet revealed what Nancy knows or what she intends to do, yet the implication here is not that Nancy is mad, but is only deemed to be so because she has violated gender expectations by claiming her own power. Clearly what she is doing is unusual, because as she proceeds to an affluent area of the city, people trail behind her, curious as to what she is doing. “Some quickened their pace behind, as though to see whither she was hastening at such an unusual rate; and a few made head upon her, and looked back, surprised at her undiminished speed; but they fell off one by one; and when she neared her place of destination, she was alone” (Oliver Twist 260). Dickens here relays that Nancy has taken on almost superhuman speed, outpacing all of those who followed her. And when she finally arrives at her intended destination, she is indeed, alone, just as she is in life. Without true support and care, Nancy has learned that the only person she can rely on is herself, and this has led her to become fiercely independent. Her aloneness, however, is actually what has enabled her to access the archetypes and begin her journey towards individuation. While being alone with herself, has been hard for Nancy when she strays from her purpose, it has ultimately proven necessary. Without ample opportunity for self-reflection, Nancy’s psychic development would have happened at a much slower pace.

Counter to expectation, Nancy has a deep, abiding sense of peace within her that enables her to press on towards her goal. This does not mean that she is not fearful, but instead that she is able to acknowledge her fear without it dominating her. She pauses for a moment outside of what we will soon
discover is a hotel where Rose Maylie is staying, but does not turn back. The battle she must fight will not be easy, but she refuses to yield. Moving into the martyr archetype, Nancy knows that in order to save Oliver, she will have to endure a great deal of hardship. But, as Pearson notes, “Martyrs have learned that more is required of life than waiting passively for rescue. They believe that salvation must be earned by suffering and hard work” (The Hero Within 101) Indeed, as Ayres notes, “By rising above her station…Nancy does the right thing literally at cost to her life” (Ayres 122).

‘Now, young woman!’ said a smartly-dressed female, looking out from a door behind her, ‘who do you want here?’

‘A lady who is stopping in this house,’ answered the girl.

‘A lady!’ was the reply, accompanied with a scornful look. ‘What lady?’

‘Miss Maylie,’ said Nancy.

The young woman, who had by this time, noted her appearance, replied only by a look of virtuous disdain; and summoned a man to answer her. To him, Nancy repeated her request. (Oliver Twist 261)

Nancy immediately faces judgment from a female hotel worker who is skeptical regarding what a woman of Nancy’s kind is doing at a reputable establishment. Nancy does not belong there, as this woman makes abundantly clear. She passes Nancy off to another member of staff who replies:

‘What name am I to say?’ asked the waiter.

‘It's of no use saying any,’ replied Nancy.

‘Nor business?’ said the man.

‘No, nor that neither,’ rejoined the girl. ‘I must see the lady.’

‘Come!’ said the man, pushing her towards the door. ‘None of this. Take yourself off.’

Nancy maintains a cool, respectful attitude in the midst of harsh judgement and dismissal, but finds that this does not work. Thus, she must apply more force—using a threat to get their attention.
'I shall be carried out if I go!' said the girl violently; 'and I can make that a job that two of you won't like to do. Isn't there anybody here,' she said, looking round, 'that will see a simple message carried for a poor wretch like me?'

This appeal produced an effect on a good-tempered-faced man-cook, who with some of the other servants was looking on, and who stepped forward to interfere.

'Take it up for her, Joe; can't you?' said this person.

'What's the good?' replied the man. 'You don't suppose the young lady will see such as her; do you?' (Oliver Twist 261-262)

While she attracts the sympathy of a kindly cook, he realizes that he will be unable to help her because she is a prostitute. Here Dickens uses this character to reveal the harsh reality of Victorian prejudice. His kind-heartedness and empathy toward the victims of oppression stands in direct opposition to a corrupt system of values, which denies the humanity of women like Nancy.

This allusion to Nancy's doubtful character, raised a vast quantity of chaste wrath in the bosoms of four housemaids, who remarked, with great fervour, that the creature was a disgrace to her sex; and strongly advocated her being thrown, ruthlessly, into the kennel.

'Do what you like with me,' said the girl, turning to the men again; 'but do what I ask you first, and I ask you to give this message for God Almighty's sake.'

The soft-hearted cook added his intercession, and the result was that the man who had first appeared undertook its delivery. (Oliver Twist 262)

Initially sensing that his better instincts could not overcome the judgement of others, he decides that he must act in accordance with his own conscience, even if it amounts to nothing. By having faith in Nancy, Dickens demonstrates that men, even those from the working class, can work to challenge the Victorian social system and its perverted sense of morality.

'What's it to be?' said the man, with one foot on the stairs.
'That a young woman earnestly asks to speak to Miss Maylie alone,' said Nancy; 'and that if the lady will only hear the first word she has to say, she will know whether to hear her business, or to have her turned out of doors as an impostor.'

'I say,' said the man, 'you're coming it strong!'

'You give the message,' said the girl firmly; ‘and let me hear the answer.’

The man ran upstairs. Nancy remained, pale and almost breathless, listening with quivering lip to the very audible expressions of scorn, of which the chaste housemaids were very prolific; and of which they became still more so, when the man returned, and said the young woman was to walk upstairs.

'It's no good being proper in this world,' said the first housemaid.

'Brass can do better than the gold what has stood the fire,' said the second.

The third contented herself with wondering 'what ladies was made of'; and the fourth took the first in a quartette of 'Shameful!' with which the Dianas concluded.

Regardless of all this: for she had weightier matters at heart: Nancy followed the man, with trembling limbs, to a small ante-chamber, lighted by a lamp from the ceiling. Here he left her, and retired. (Oliver Twist 262)

Throughout this scene, Nancy uses short, succinct phrases to express herself. “…All of her speech is vigorous with simple verbs of action and command: ‘I want a lady, ‘I must see her’, ‘I shall be carried out…’, ‘Do what I ask’, ‘Give her the message and let me hear the answer’ (Bicancic 281). Nancy does not waver, even when her determination is mocked, nor does she allow the sneering glances and comments of the servants to drive her to anger. This demonstrates that she has identified and gained control over her shadow side. Her ability to ignore these jests and instead turn her focus towards the “far weightier matters at heart” also demonstrates that she no longer accepts the claims of her worthlessness as true.
It is also worth noting that as the text progresses, Nancy’s speech also undergoes a transformation. Ingham details the historical significance of this change. “There was by the 1830’s a clear conviction, in relation to the speech of characters in novels, requiring that those ‘of dignity and moral worth’ speak ‘a language fit for heroes to speak’, free of lower class markers” (Ingham 97). Ingham continues, adding,

The flaws inherent in such novelistic convention are revealed whenever Dickens is making the point that virtue is independent of social status—in female characters…. They also surface in Nancy because she represents the two conflicting versions of the prostitute. Initially, since she is the female representative of the ‘dregs of life’, a ‘pupil’ of Fagin, a streetwalker and a thief, she shares the language of Sikes and Fagin…. Her rare early utterances are sprinkled with thieves’ cant, the mark of the criminal insider. With her adoption of a womanly, middle-class compassion Dickens comes up against the problem of how to make her speak a language fit for heroines…. Gradually, as she grows more voluble about her views on the cruelty of Sikes and Fagin towards the boy, the lower-class markers become fewer. And by the time of her encounters with Rose Maylie she is as articulate and middle-class in her speech as her auditor. (Ingham 50-51)

Dickens recognized that in order for readers to make the difficult transition to presenting Nancy as a morally upright woman, he would need to show that she, in a sense, “belonged” to that class. It also serves as a parallel to her psychic growth, regardless of whether it was Dickens’ conscious intent. It sets her apart from Sikes, Fagin, and the rest of the criminal underbelly of London, and points back to the truth of who she is. “What she is differs from what she is seen to be. That is why, I think, she is given a manner of speech in that belies her outer appearance” (Lucas 28). The modification of her speech, particularly in her upcoming exchange with Rose, acts to reveal the “fluctuating social lines” dividing Nancy, a prostitute, from Rose, an ideal vision of Victorian womanhood (Ayres 113).
The chaste housemaids were quick to dismiss Nancy and speak ill of her, but only one of them appears to maintain that attitude after observing that Nancy has gotten her way. As Watt notes, the initial ignorant comments of the housemaids are a nuisance, and Dickens depicts them as such. “They have no right to judge Nancy’s case, and their placing outside the room where Rose and the prostitute meet accentuates their inability to see the truth of the matter” (Watt 16). “It's no good being proper in this world” and “Brass can do better than the gold what has stood the fire” are both statements expressing the ability of women outside of the Victorian feminine ideal to “get things done.” These two women recognize that her life on the streets, while tarnishing her, has also given her an independence and determination that few other Victorian women possessed. The third woman who wondered “what ladies was made of” simply couldn’t make sense of a woman like Nancy. As Ayres notes,

> When a wise housemaid comments about Nancy, ‘Brass can do better than the gold that has stood the fire’, the text is putting forth a set of values that radically complicates a domestic ideological construction of womanhood. Where gold usually represents a higher value than brass, and the angel-in-the-house is estimated of greater social worth than a prostitute, the text in *Oliver Twist* sometimes inverts those values, and at other times, simply calls them into question. (Ayres 113)

Here again Dickens pushes back against restrictive gender stereotypes through the use of his narrator and minor characters who interrogate the values of the culture. Linguistically, the remarks of the housemaids are “on the borderline of direct authorial communication since they are designed to make a social point…Thus cast in the form of dialogue they are a kind of direct author-reader communication” (Bicancic 282). Dickens’ notion that “Brass is better than gold” is an analogy full of significance that will be more fully realized in the following chapters. Indeed, as we will discover, Nancy’s journey to the hotel and the dialogues that occur there, further act to support Dickens’ radical overthrow of the Victorian sexual system.
Nancy’s transition into the martyr archetype is combined with the strength of purpose she cultivated from her previous experiences with warrioring. Indeed, what we witness here in Nancy is a merging of the two archetypes. She has more fully developed her warrior side so that she can now utilize less forceful means for getting things done. Caring remains a central motivation for Nancy, and it is through these acts that Nancy learns to love herself and finally believe the truth about who she is. “The decision to care, even at the cost of self-sacrifice, is a choice here for life and against despair” (The Hero Within 103). While there is great danger involved in rescuing Oliver, it is this mission, which enables Nancy to access new depths of strength and resilience.

Chapter XL begins with the narrator further exploring Nancy’s social position in light of its stark contrast to Rose’s. Barickman et al. identifies Nancy and Rose as one of Dickens symbolic pairings, which he employed to challenge the Victorian social system. He writes,

> The symbolic pairings of female characters in Dickens’ novels—maiden and whore (Rose Maylie and Nancy)...suggest in themselves how close the supposed extremes of idealization and condemnation really are, and how sensitive Dickens was, despite his conscious biases to the forces that shaped women’s experiences in his culture. Almost invariably in Dickens the female characters who are established as moral and temperamental opposites in terms of the explicit commentary are secretly allied through the system of symbolic analogies. This analogical linking does not conflate all the moral, temperamental, and social distinctions between them; but it does insist on their common victimization. And it persistently questions the foundations of the respectable moral class values that would normally sequester, for example, a Rose Maylie from a Nancy, in ordinary life” (Barickman et al. 86).

It is from this perspective that Dickens begins this integral scene. As the narrator notes,

> The girl's life had been squandered in the streets, and among the most noisome of the stews and dens of London, but there was something of the woman's original nature left in
her still; and when she heard a light step approaching the door opposite to that by which she had entered, and thought of the wide contrast which the small room would in another moment contain, she felt burdened with the sense of her own deep shame, and shrunk as though she could scarcely bear the presence of her with whom she had sought this interview.

But struggling with these better feelings was pride,—the vice of the lowest and most debased creatures no less than of the high and self-assured. The miserable companion of thieves and ruffians, the fallen outcast of low haunts, the associate of the scourings of the jails and hulks, living within the shadow of the gallows itself,—even this degraded being felt too proud to betray a feeble gleam of the womanly feeling which she thought a weakness, but which alone connected her with that humanity, of which her wasting life had obliterated so many, many traces when a very child. (*Oliver Twist* 262)

The authorial voice as commentator here elucidates Nancy’s state of mind, which has shifted a bit from the last chapter. It seems that Nancy’s focus on the task at hand had thus far kept her from putting too much thought into the judgements of others, but now that her meeting with Rose is imminent, she is forced to confront this reality. It would not be unreasonable for Nancy to assume that Rose would react to her with disgust, as she is accustomed to receiving this sort of treatment from those outside of the criminal establishment.

What is also evident is that Nancy is struggling to express her feminine anima aspect. After relying so heavily upon her tough, stereotypically “masculine” side in order to get to the hotel, she is struggling to shift gears and express her softer side. Dickens is clearly working to establish Nancy’s goodness and reinforce that she possesses both “masculine” and “feminine” qualities. The “womanly feeling” within her is one that she views as a weakness because the dangers of her environment necessitate that she remain on guard at all times, never allowing her emotions to compromise her safety.
To be caring and gentle in Nancy’s world is to make oneself susceptible to the manipulations of others. However, with Rose she must be vulnerable, which is perhaps the scariest thing Nancy can conceive of. She raised her eyes sufficiently to observe that the figure, which presented itself, was that of a slight and beautiful girl; then, bending them on the ground, she tossed her head with affected carelessness as she said: “It's a hard matter to get to see you, lady. If I had taken offence, and gone away, as many would have done, you’d have been sorry for it one day, and not without reason either” (*Oliver Twist* 262).

Nancy keeps her eyes downcast, conscious of her inferior social position. Trying to keep her emotions in check and not appear too sentimental, she attempts to express the urgency and seriousness of the matter which they must discuss. In a terse tone, she seemingly demands Rose’s attention. Nancy’s class pride is an issue here, but “she is debased because of the way things are but she does not feel herself a lesser human being” (Bicancic 282).

To her surprise, Rose is very kind and compassionate towards Nancy in her speech and manner which are notably devoid of “any accent of haughtiness of displeasure” (*Oliver Twist* 265). This touches Nancy so much that she begins to cry. Rose reaches out to her as a friend, offering to help her in whatever way she can. Nancy asks if the door is shut, worried that someone may overhear what she says. Rose inquires as to why this is necessary, and Nancy’s growing fear and building emotion overflow into her honest speech.

ʻBecause,’ said the girl, ‘I am about to put my life and the lives of others in your hands. I am the girl that dragged little Oliver back to old Fagin's on the night he went out from the house in Pentonville.’

ʻYou!’ said Rose Maylie.

ʻI, lady!’ replied the girl. ‘I am the infamous creature you have heard of, that lives among the thieves, and that never from the first moment I can recollect my eyes and senses opening on London streets have known any better life, or kinder words than they have
given me, so help me God! Do not mind shrinking openly from me, lady. I am younger than you would think, to look at me, but I am well used to it. The poorest women fall back, as I make my way along the crowded pavement.'

'What dreadful things are these!' said Rose, involuntarily falling from her strange companion.

'Thank Heaven upon your knees, dear lady,' cried the girl, 'that you had friends to care for and keep you in your childhood, and that you were never in the midst of cold and hunger, and riot and drunkenness, and—and—something worse than all—as I have been from my cradle. I may use the word, for the alley and the gutter were mine, as they will be my deathbed.'

'I pity you!' said Rose, in a broken voice. 'It wrings my heart to hear you!'

'Heaven bless you for your goodness!' rejoined the girl. 'If you knew what I am sometimes, you would pity me, indeed. But I have stolen away from those who would surely murder me, if they knew I had been here, to tell you what I have overheard.

*(Oliver Twist 263)*

In spite of her anxiety, Nancy is articulate and paints such a vivid picture of her sad life that Rose responds with a mixture of disbelief and horror. It is evident here that Nancy was concerned not only that Rose would judge her harshly for her work, but her complicity in Oliver’s capture. As we examine Nancy’s story as she conveys it to Rose, we notice that she keeps the focus on the environment and individuals who have corrupted her. “From Nancy’s perspective, the only difference between women like her and Rose is entirely arbitrary and circumstantial” (Ayres 122). While Nancy feels tremendous guilt for what she has done, she also knows that she is not inherently evil. This recognition in the text, which undoubtedly expresses Dickens’ own view, is nothing short of shocking, however. “*Oliver Twist* has produced some rather radical statements that subvert the Victorian ideology of womanhood: there is no difference between the best woman in society (the angelic Rose) and the worst (Nancy)—other than what
is defined by social circumstances” (Ayres 122). This recognition of the cultural suppression of human possibility is shared by many writers and cultural critics, including Jung’s lament about the cultural constriction of possibilities for individuals.

Another aspect of Dickens’ mission in this novel was to demonstrate that nature can trump nurture which, in this specific context, means that one’s position in the social hierarchy does not determine one’s morality. While it was commonly accepted that the impoverished were simply morally deficient by nature, Dickens subverts this notion through Nancy. While her environment has impacted her psychologically, it has not bankrupted her morally, because her nature is essentially good. While Nancy previously stood up to Fagin and spoke this truth, it is notable that she speaks it boldly to Rose here. It is evident that this truth has been transformative for her and that she believes it wholeheartedly.

Nancy then proceeds to relay her revelations about Monks. She explains that he is Oliver’s brother, and that he is scheming to keep Oliver hidden so that Oliver cannot take claim of the inheritance he is entitled to. Monks has even made it clear that he will kill Oliver if he has to. While Nancy has known for some time that she will have to help Oliver escape, this discovery makes the matter one of great urgency. Nancy speaks purposefully, relaying all of this without becoming overcome by emotion, or stumbling over her words. Rose replies with statements of incredulity throughout this exchange, however. Her delicate sensibilities have been affronted by talk of criminals and murder, and she is in a state of shock. Nancy reassures her that what she is saying is true by responding with “Those were his words” (Oliver Twist 264). The narrator notes here that “[Nancy was] glancing uneasily round, as she had scarcely ceased to do since she began to speak, for a vision of Sikes haunted her perpetually” (Oliver Twist 264). Yet her legitimate fear does not dissuade her from her mission. As Ayres asserts, Angelic virtues and power notwithstanding, Rose is not the heroine of this story. When Nancy tells Rose that Oliver has a brother [Monks] who aims to kill him, Rose helplessly cries, “But what can I do?” and “What am I to do?” and “Of what use, then, is the communication you have made?” (Oliver Twist 255-256). As for Nancy, she does not
need a man to escort her through the crowd, even when she is on a dangerous mission. However, she does understand the mechanics of the middle-class system and advises the damsel in distress (Rose) to get a man to help. Nancy knows exactly what needs to be done in order to protect Oliver and her efforts to save him (Ayres 120).

Rose even says “To what use can I turn this communication without you?” (Oliver Twist 265) when she learns that Nancy is going to depart. She is utterly helpless without Nancy to guide her, which further emphasizes Nancy’s heroic status.

Rose cannot believe that Nancy will return to the horrible place from which she came. Nancy pleads to be released from Rose’s pointless questioning, stating:

'I wish to go back,' said the girl. 'I must go back, because—how can I tell such things to an innocent lady like you?—because among the men I have told you of, there is one: the most desperate among them all; that I can't leave: no, not even to be saved from the life I am leading now.'

'Your having interfered in this dear boy's behalf before,' said Rose; 'your coming here, at so great a risk, to tell me what you have heard; your manner, which convinces me of the truth of what you say; your evident contrition, and sense of shame; all lead me to believe that you might yet be reclaimed. Oh!' said the earnest girl, folding her hands as the tears cours ed down her face, 'do not turn a deaf ear to the entreaties of one of your own sex; the first—the first, I do believe, who ever appealed to you in the voice of pity and compassion. Do hear my words, and let me save you yet, for better things.'

'Lady,' cried the girl, sinking on her knees, 'dear, sweet, angel lady, you are the first that ever blessed me with such words as these, and if I had heard them years ago, they might have turned me from a life of sin and sorrow; but it is too late, it is too late!'

'It is never too late,' said Rose, 'for penitence and atonement.'
'It is,' cried the girl, writhing in agony of her mind; 'I cannot leave him now! I could not be his death.'

'Why should you be?' asked Rose.

'Nothing could save him,' cried the girl. 'If I told others what I have told you, and led to their being taken, he would be sure to die. He is the boldest, and has been so cruel!'

'Is it possible,' cried Rose, 'that for such a man as this, you can resign every future hope, and the certainty of immediate rescue? It is madness.'

'I don't know what it is,' answered the girl; 'I only know that it is so, and not with me alone, but with hundreds of others as bad and wretched as myself. I must go back.

Whether it is God's wrath for the wrong I have done, I do not know; but I am drawn back to him through every suffering and ill usage; and I should be, I believe, if I knew that I was to die by his hand at last.'

'What am I to do?' said Rose. 'I should not let you depart from me thus.'

'You should, lady, and I know you will,' rejoined the girl, rising. 'You will not stop my going because I have trusted in your goodness, and forced no promise from you, as I might have done.' (Oliver Twist 256-266)

As Bicancic notes, Nancy is also debased because of her commitment to Sikes, in spite of his brutality. “…the emotional and sexual bond with Sikes is something that comes out very strongly in Nancy’s speech, but could not have been underlined by authorial comment even had Dickens so wished, it was a daring innovation enough for the Victorian novel to include it at all…” (Bicancic 282). Nancy’s history of wounding (as witnessed in the orphan archetype) leads her to cling to a ‘protector,’ even though he is far from that in reality.

Rose, however, recognizes that there is another side within Nancy’s psyche, and continues to plead with Nancy, entreatin her to accept her assistance:
'Stay another moment,' interposed Rose, as the girl moved hurriedly towards the door.

'Think once again on your own condition, and the opportunity you have of escaping from it. You have a claim on me: not only as the voluntary bearer of this intelligence, but as a woman lost almost beyond redemption. Will you return to this gang of robbers, and to this man, when a word can save you? What fascination is it that can take you back, and make you cling to wickedness and misery? Oh! is there no chord in your heart that I can touch! Is there nothing left, to which I can appeal against this terrible infatuation!'

'When ladies as young, and good, and beautiful as you are,' replied the girl steadily, 'give away your hearts, love will carry you all lengths—even such as you, who have home, friends, other admirers, everything, to fill them. When such as I, who have no certain roof but the coffinlid, and no friend in sickness or death but the hospital nurse, set our rotten hearts on any man, and let him fill the place that has been a blank through all our wretched lives, who can hope to cure us? Pity us, lady—pity us for having only one feeling of the woman left, and for having that turned, by a heavy judgment, from a comfort and a pride, into a new means of violence and suffering.' (Oliver Twist 266)

As we see, Nancy makes it clear that Rose has no right to pass judgment on her, because she cannot possibly fathom the life that Nancy has known. “Nancy already knows that Bill Sikes is not the best man for her” (Ayres 129). The rationale for why she clings to him, is expressed through her comment about him filling a “blank” in her life. Nancy explains that women like herself who have lived such “wretched lives” will settle for whatever shreds of human emotion they can piece together in order to try to fill the “blank” (emptiness) that results from not having anyone upon whom they can rely or from whom they receive love. While Nancy has acknowledged that which she projects onto Sikes and can now see him for what he is, she also knows that it would be nearly impossible to leave him.

Here for the first time, Dickens communicates through Rose the “rehabilitation” options available to fallen women. Rose's urging to Nancy to “save her yet for better things” (265) was quite similar to the
plan which Dickens outlined in a letter titled, “An Appeal to Fallen Women,” which urged prostitutes and other fallen women to enter a rehabilitation center established in a London suburb. In this letter, Dickens speaks of a “great lady” who has taken compassion on the fallen women she has observed, and has elected to create a home for them where they can live free from the life of sin and shame that their indiscretions have brought upon them, essentially beginning life anew. While the intent behind such an institution seems unquestionably good, we must consider that the redemption of these women was to be achieved by making them fit the “Angel-in-the-House” Victorian ideal:

In this Home they will be taught all household work that would be useful to them in a home of their own, and enable them to make it comfortable and happy...And because it is not the lady's wish that these young women should be shut out from the world, after they have repented and have learned how to do their duty there, and because it is her wish and object that they may be restored to society...to go abroad, where, in a distant country, they may become the faithful wives of honest men, and live and die in peace. (“An Appeal to Fallen Women”)

While this home and others like it existed to assist the fallen women of England, it also served to restrict them to a culturally sanctioned role, that of marriage, thereby perpetuating the lack of choice and opportunity which plagued the lives of Victorian women. The fallen women of Victorian England were not presented with opportunities to further their education or learn skills for employment, rather they were instructed in how to transform into refurbished creatures to be married off to the men of the United States or Australia. Yet, in the remaking of the women into ideal wives, it is necessary that they conform to the very feminine ideal that he criticizes in the novel. In his letter, he explicitly encourages them to be meek and passive writing, “You must resolve to set a watch over yourself, and to be firm in your control over yourself, and to restrain yourself; to be patient, gentle, persevering, and good tempered.” Dickens was actively involved in the cause of helping fallen women, helping to set up a home of this sort for fallen women, yet at the same time, he failed to see the contradictions and complications of his approach. As
Holbrook remarks, “In his home for fallen women that he set up with Angela Coutts, the inmates had to accept their charity in penitence: they must be reeducated and then sent to emigrate—which was a kind of death” (175). While Holbrook seems to be exaggerating the situation for dramatic effect, the solution Dickens proposed in many ways propagated the rigid gender roles that he so thoroughly criticized throughout his writings. Nonetheless, it is important to consider the cultural context in which Dickens lived, and acknowledge that as much as Dickens wanted many Victorian ways of thinking to alter, there was a limit to what he could do to overthrow an entire system. Dickens’ compassion towards these women and the efforts he made to improve their lives demonstrate that Dickens was committed to practicing what he preached, however imperfect the execution of that commitment was.

In light of Dickens’s own beliefs, it is important not to overlook the significance of Rose’s compassionate stance towards Nancy. While Rose’s empathy cements her status as the stereotypical Victorian “angel” ideal, it also acts to support Dickens’ efforts regarding Nancy. Dickens must have felt that if Rose could react with empathy, then surely Victorian readers would also feel inclined to trust the discernment of a virginal, middle class lady. Dickens knew that his readers would be more inclined to ally with Rose and hoped that by promoting her in the text, it would also subtly encourage those same individuals to view Nancy through Rose’s eyes. In order to achieve this, however, he had to mold Rose into an embodiment of the ideal Victorian ideal young, middle class lady.

In *Dickens, Women, and Language*, Ingham notes that,

> At the time when he wrote and later in the nineteenth century there was a predictably sentimental response to ‘ideal’ figures like Rose Maylie. Some male critics, such as Samuel Phillips in 1861, praised him for his distillation of young womanhood into a transcendent ‘reality’: *(Collins 263)* his women…hold an eminence which women may and do reach in the world, and which mere purity and love do not suffice to attain.

*(Ingham 1)*
Phillips clearly worshipped at the altar of the young, innocent, refined young lady as so many other Victorians did. While Dickens was not immune from the powerful influence of an anima image of this sort, and to some extent also revered all that Rose represents, his choice to portray her as helpless appears to be a criticism of Victorian society for its tendency to shelter, disempower, and otherwise manipulate young women into exaggerated, hyper-feminine roles. “So, while Dickens uses the stereotypical image of the Angel-in-the-House, he almost always does so in a way that reflects the fault lines in the image” (McKnight 195). As Ingham suggests, the Angel-in-the-House was meant to find fulfillment through the nurturance of others. Thus, keeping these ladies from obtaining too much education or experiencing the outside world was in the best interests of the men who sought to preserve this role; indeed, as the saying goes, “ignorance is bliss.” By enforcing women’s ignorance under the guise of protecting their innocence, it made it much easier to ensure that women’s less favorable qualities—namely their “masculine” animus aspect—would remain suppressed. If this could be achieved, and women would buy into the belief that their role was to care for others, then the system of male dominance could surely continue. As history demonstrates, indoctrination is often more effective than brute force when it comes to keeping a subordinate population from rising up. Thus, with vigor, male Victorians set about their task of programming the minds of individuals.

Their constructions of “femininity” necessarily exhibited the qualities which best served their needs at the present, although in all fairness, what they were doing was repeating a pattern that stretches back thousands of years in time. Because middle-class Victorians had come to define masculinity as “success within the male sphere, the new arena of commerce and technology” (Sussman 4) men increasingly spent more time working. In their minds, since their realm was the public sphere, it was only natural that women’s domain should be that of the home. This is what is often referred to as the “separate sphere” ideology, around which Victorian society structured itself.

As we see with the separate sphere construct, the Victorians’ world was structured by dualities. Indeed, binary oppositions served them well: for by keeping things black and white, it left no room for
subtle subversions of these opposites. However, prostitutes and working women of all kinds, could not be
neatly contained this system, because they did not fit into either world. As Ingham notes,

[If] femininity was constructed around a moralized account of the maternal (not sexual)
instinct which supplied a structuring opposition to the competitive, aggressive, and
sexualized masculinity [then] crucial to this opposition was the containment of the
virtuous and sexless-middle class woman by the oppositional figure of her defining other,
the sexual and outcast fallen woman or prostitute…(6).

Thus, the task is not only to clearly delineate the “masculine” (male) realm from the “feminine” (female)
realm, but to create two distinct female images: the “good woman” and the “bad woman.” Good women
could be permitted entrance into polite society, while “bad” women were ostracized, and essentially de-
humanized. Because one’s status as a virgin and one’s propensity for care determined whether a woman
would qualify for angel status or not, no room was left for women who did not meet both of these criteria.
“Dickens lived in an age when shaded feminine virtue was not the thing. Women had to be white, or they
had to be black” (Lucas 706). However, in the hotel scene, it is clear that Dickens does not accept the
notion of the two categories of women as givens.

A look at the first meeting between Nancy and Rose Maylie gives an indication of the
comment Dickens makes about the two women. Some would see the meeting between
Rose and Nancy as a meeting of representatives of the two types of women. Instead of
stressing the virtue of one and the impurity of the other, he wonders at the self-sacrifice
of Nancy whose life had been ‘squandered in the streets and amongst the most noisome
of the stews [brothels] and dens of London’ (Oliver Twist 262). Whilst Dickens allows
for the power of the forces around her, Nancy does not. She understands the forces of
poverty and want but still feels a distinct sense of shame in front of Rose…. Nancy’s
shame and honesty make her more noble, and the errand of mercy she undertakes makes
her virtuous. The ‘two women’ become one—Nancy is both pure and corrupt at the same
time, although her corruption is a residue from the past. That Nancy sees herself as the opposite of Rose…is another irony which pleads for an acceptance of Nancy’s basic goodness” (Watt 16).

Here Dickens proposes a significant challenge to this binary thought process, by introducing Nancy, a woman who is not virginal, but demonstrates a strong capacity for caretaking and nurturing. Indeed, as Ingham argues Nancy “reveals characteristics proper to the womanly woman, from whom she is patently dissociated” (Ingham 46) which acts as a radical assault on Victorian ideals.

Another critic, Ayres, notes this duality and the way in which Dickens challenges the premise of it. She argues that

The text also bestows angelic qualities on Nancy (although a prostitute) and emphasizes her moral strength of character. It would appear that the text—in its ideological construction of the angel woman—does not remain consistent in defending domesticity because it entertains a positive regard for two fallen women. Agnes [Oliver’s mother] and Nancy, therefore, add to the ranks of Dickens’ dissenting women; they fall outside patriarchal confines and their characterization subverts domestic ideology (Ayres 129).

Ultimately, Dickens reveals a bias towards Nancy, by “depicting her strength in character and moral rectitude in contrast to the weak, insipid effectiveness of the angel Rose. The text seems to challenge the power of the angel to overcome evil with good, to protect a helpless child dependent on her…” (Ayres 111)

After instructing Rose to seek the assistance of a trustworthy male to assist them, Nancy tells her that she will walk London Bridge every Sunday night as long as she is still alive, so that Rose can meet her to devise a plan of salvation for Oliver. In Chapter XLIV, it is Sunday and we discover that since her last meeting with Rose, Nancy has been under great duress:

Adept as she was, in all the arts of cunning and dissimulation, the girl Nancy could not wholly conceal the effect which the knowledge of the step she had taken, wrought upon
her mind. She remembered that both the crafty Jew and the brutal Sikes had confided to her schemes, which had been hidden from all others: in the full confidence that she was trustworthy and beyond the reach of their suspicion. Vile as those schemes were, desperate as were their originators, and bitter as were her feelings towards Fagin, who had led her, step by step, deeper and deeper down into an abyss of crime and misery, whence was no escape; still, there were times when, even towards him, she felt some relenting, lest her disclosure should bring him within the iron grasp he had so long eluded, and he should fall at last—richly as he merited such a fate—by her hand.

But, these were the mere wanderings of a mind unable wholly to detach itself from old companions and associations, though enabled to fix itself steadily on one object, and resolved not to be turned aside by any consideration. Her fears for Sikes would have been more powerful inducements to recoil while there was yet time; but she had stipulated that her secret should be rigidly kept, she had dropped no clue which could lead to his discovery, she had refused, even for his sake, a refuge from all the guilt and wretchedness that encompasses her—and what more could she do! She was resolved. (Oliver Twist 292)

This chapter acts to further prove Dickens’ mastery not only of writing, but his thorough grasp of the psyche. While Nancy’s environment has led her to develop a talent for deception, the narrator makes it clear that even she cannot completely conceal the troubled state of her thoughts. Here Nancy is re-examining the history of her relationship with Sikes and Fagin, and is able to acknowledge that even though they both mistreat her horribly, she does not wish for either of them to be harmed, at least not at her hand. They have, however, committed egregious crimes, and as Nancy’s sense of justice and morality concedes, they deserve punishment. While Nancy has often understandably viewed herself as alone in the world, she increasingly begins to realize that her as dysfunctional as her “family” is, she is unable to entirely abandon it. Pearson suggests that contrary to the patriarchal system of thought that is represented
by the White Male System, there is separate worldview that women rely upon. In the “Female System”
which Schaef describes, relationships are of utmost importance, and rather than viewing the world
“hierarchically as a ladder, women re-envisioned it as a net or web of human connectedness” (The Hero
Within 88). While not all women may think in this way, what Schaef and Pearson describe seems to apply
here to Nancy. While Nancy is able to distinguish victim from perpetrator and has a strong sense of
justice, the situation is not as black and white to Nancy as it may appear to others like Rose who are
merely looking in on it as outsiders. In reaching out to Rose, and allying with her against the forces of
evil which Monks and Fagin represent, Nancy chooses for the first time to trust someone outside of her
world. Nancy has come to see that while she is surrounded by untrustworthy individuals, there are indeed
many good people in the world, and she chooses to reach out to them. Thus, we can see that she has
moved from dependence to independence, then to “an autonomy defined in the context of
interdependence” (The Hero Within 72). Nancy also resolves her conflict between her desire for Sikes’
“love” and her need for autonomy, by choosing to put her own need for integrity first, without denying
that she also still yearns for connection. While she does not want harm to befall Sikes, she knows that
there is a chance that he may have to face the consequences for his actions. In this way, it becomes clear
that is while she is unable to leave Sikes behind, she has chosen to make choices that align with her
convictions, thereby choosing herself. This is crucial, because while Nancy’s choice to help Oliver does
benefit him, it is first and foremost a choice that she makes for own sake, a choice to act in accordance
with her authentic self. Nancy has used role playing often throughout the novel, but it becomes
increasingly clear that Nancy is able to distinguish a self that exists separate from these roles. While this
was not an easy thing to overcome, it is vital to her individuation process.

Nancy now believes that she has the power to effect change in the world and that her efforts can
make a difference. If she did not believe this to be true, she would have no reason to put herself in harm’s
way. This way of approaching the world is represented by the Magician archetype. “[Magicians] know
that they are important, that their individual choices and acts accumulate to codesign the universe, and
like the martyr, they know that it is only in giving their unique gift that true happiness and satisfaction can be found” (*The Hero Within* 118). The magician accepts reality as it is, which requires the removal of projections and the acknowledgement that there may be consequences that result from one’s actions. As we see in Nancy’s exchange with Rose and also in this chapter, Nancy is conscious of her own imperfection, but is no longer is held down by it. “[As a Magician] She is not better than other people…she visualizes what she wants and takes action to get it…without falling into escapism or denial” (*The Hero Within* 138). Instead of viewing herself as superior to Rose in their interactions, she views her as a partner. And instead of writing herself off as “bad” she instead is able to “move past dualistic, static notions of good and bad to seeing life as a process” (*The Hero Within* 120).

Yet, none of this is easy for Nancy to do. She is “resolved” but this decision has caused her a great deal of distress. Dickens relays in the text that “She grew pale and thin, even within a few days”, “took no heed of what was passing before her”, “she sat silent and dejected”, and was “ill at ease.” (*Oliver Twist* 292). While Nancy is obviously wracked with worry, she does not retreat from her mission. Since, Rose does not know where Nancy lives or where to find her, Nancy could choose not to meet her, thus uninvolving herself with the matter. However, she does not.

Nancy notes that the appointed time of her meeting with Rose is approaching and prepares to leave. Sikes notices her attempt to slip out and asks where she is going. She lies and says that she doesn’t know where. “Then I do,” said Sikes, more in the spirit of obstinacy than because he had any real objection to the girl going where she listed. “Nowhere. Sit down.” (*Oliver Twist* 293). Sikes locks the door so she cannot leave, yet she pleads with him, asking if he knows what he’s doing.

’Know what I'm—Oh!’ cried Sikes, turning to Fagin, 'she's out of her senses, you know, or she daren't talk to me in that way.'

’You'll drive me on the something desperate,’ muttered the girl placing both hands upon her breast, as though to keep down by force some violent outbreak. 'Let me go, will you,—this minute—this instant.'
'No!' said Sikes.

'Tell him to let me go, Fagin. He had better. It'll be better for him. Do you hear me?' cried Nancy stamping her foot upon the ground.

'Hear you!' repeated Sikes turning round in his chair to confront her. 'Aye! And if I hear you for half a minute longer, the dog shall have such a grip on your throat as'll tear some of that screaming voice out. Wot has come over you, you jade! Wot is it?'

'Let me go,' said the girl with great earnestness; then sitting herself down on the floor, before the door, she said, 'Bill, let me go; you don't know what you are doing. You don't, indeed. For only one hour—do—do!'

'Cut my limbs off one by one!' cried Sikes, seizing her roughly by the arm, 'If I don't think the gal's stark raving mad. Get up.'

'Not till you let me go—not till you let me go—Never—never!' screamed the girl. Sikes looked on, for a minute, watching his opportunity, and suddenly pinioning her hands dragged her, struggling and wrestling with him by the way, into a small room adjoining, where he sat himself on a bench, and thrusting her into a chair, held her down by force. She struggled and implored by turns until twelve o'clock had struck, and then, wearied and exhausted, ceased to contest the point any further. With a caution, backed by many oaths, to make no more efforts to go out that night, Sikes left her to recover at leisure and rejoined Fagin. (Oliver Twist 294)

Nancy first attempts reasoning with Fagin in a calm, rational tone, but naturally she is not able to persuade Sikes using those tactics. As more and more time passes, she becomes more desperate to leave, and puts up a fight. The warrior archetype within Nancy’s psyche compels her to fight for the welfare of others, but is foiled by her circumstances.
It is all a game to Sikes, who, as the narrator mentioned previously, insists that she cannot leave simply out of obstinacy. When Nancy realizes that even if she were to escape, she would not be able to meet Rose on time, her resistance becomes needless, and thus ceases.

With Nancy out of the room, Fagin and Sikes mock her and make light of what has just occurred.

'Whew!' said the housebreaker wiping the perspiration from his face. 'Wot a precious strange gal that is!'

'You may say that, Bill,' replied Fagin thoughtfully. 'You may say that.'

'Wot did she take it into her head to go out to-night for, do you think?' asked Sikes.

'Come; you should know her better than me. Wot does it mean?'

'Obstinacy; woman's obstinacy, I suppose, my dear.'

'Well, I suppose it is,' growled Sikes. 'I thought I had tamed her, but she's as bad as ever.'

'Worse,' said Fagin thoughtfully. 'I never knew her like this, for such a little cause.'

(Oliver Twist 294-295)

In an ironic turn, Fagin claims that it is “woman’s obstinacy” that inspired Nancy, yet in fact, as the narrator revealed, it was Sikes who was obstinate. While a reader may possibly dismiss the narrators’ commentary, and focus instead on Fagin’s comment, reaching the conclusion that women are indeed obstinate, it is clear to me that Dickens is encouraging the reader to trust the narrator instead of Fagin. While the narratorial voice Dickens employs is not consistent (as I have demonstrated throughout the text thus far) here the narrator seems to act as a mouthpiece for Dickens own views. While it is still possible to read this excerpt through a misogynist lens, it seems clear to me that Dickens is instead encouraging readers to come to a very different conclusion. The existence of seemingly contradictory elements within the text are not an error on Dickens part, but one of his strategies for encoding subversive messages. As Barickman et al. reminds us, this not uncommon in the Victorian text. “What we should expect to see, and do see, in the greatest of Victorian novelists—women and men—is distortion, contradiction, evasion.
precisely where their perceptions are most radical, most critical of the culture’s values” (Barickman et al. 17).

Furthermore, the conditions under which this discussion takes place also encourage the reader to cast judgment on Fagin and Sikes, who are speaking ill of Nancy in her absence. As the passage continues, it becomes apparent that much of the content in this chapter is disturbingly misogynistic. In fact, acts of violence against Nancy are discussed next by the men.

‘...I think she's got a touch of that fever in her blood yet, and it won't come out—eh?’

'Like enough,' replied the Jew.

'I'll let her a little blood, without troubling the doctor, if she's took that way again,' said Sikes.

Fagin nodded an expressive approval of this mode of treatment.

'She was hanging about me all day, and night too, when I was stretched on my back; and you, like a blackhearted wolf as you are, kept yourself aloof,' said Sikes. 'We was poor too, all the time, and I think, one way or other, it's worried and fretted her; and that being shut up here so long has made her restless—eh?’ (Oliver Twist 295)

The rationales that Sikes provides to account for Nancy’s anger are revealed by Dickens to be consistently inaccurate throughout the text as we see here. Of course, this is because Sikes’s psychological development has long been arrested. As a narcissist, Sikes is unable to consider that he might be the cause of Nancy’s distress, because this would require him to entertain the notion that he might have made a mistake.

Instead of having responsible self-awareness, Sikes convinces himself that Nancy is upset because she was very worried about him during his illness and is tired of being stuck in the house. Fagin naturally agrees with this theory.

'That's it, my dear,' replied the Jew in a whisper. 'Hush!'
As he uttered these words, the girl herself appeared and resumed her former seat. Her eyes were swollen and red; she rocked herself to and fro; tossed her head; and, after a little time, burst out laughing.

'Why, now she's on the other tack!' exclaimed Sikes, turning a look of excessive surprise on his companion. (Oliver Twist 295)

Nancy is distraught as Dickens makes readily apparent in this passage through narratorial commentary. While they men were discussing Nancy in their typically degenerate way, she was in the other room, growing increasingly worried about her inability to meet Rose. After a few minutes, Nancy resumes her "usual demeanor", and "Whispering to Sikes that there was no fear of her relapsing, Fagin took his hat and bade him good-night" (Oliver Twist 295). Fagin decides that he would like to talk to Nancy however, and asks her to accompany him on his way to the street outside.

'What is it, Nancy, dear?'

'What do you mean?' replied the girl, in the same tone.

'The reason of all this,' replied Fagin. 'If he'—he pointed with his skinny fore-finger up the stairs—'is so hard with you (he's a brute, Nance, a brute-beast), why don't you—'

"Well?" said the girl, as Fagin paused, with his mouth almost touching her ear, and his eyes looking into hers.

'No matter just now. We'll talk of this again. You have a friend in me, Nance; a staunch friend. I have the means at hand, quiet and close. If you want revenge on those that treat you like a dog—like a dog! worse than his dog, for he humours him sometimes—come to me. I say, come to me. He is the mere hound of a day, but you know me of old, Nance.'

'I know you well,' replied the girl, without manifesting the least emotion. 'Good-night.' She shrank back, as Fagin offered to lay his hand on hers, but said good-night again, in a steady voice, and, answering his parting look with a nod of intelligence, closed the door between them. (Oliver Twist 295-296)
Here, Dickens exposes the extent of Fagin’s manipulations. The hypocrisy which Fagin espouses is undoubtedly meant to sicken the reader and further the image of Fagin as the devil. After encouraging Sikes to beat Nancy, he now turns to Nancy and affects an attitude of sympathy.

Nancy’s composure here can be seen to represent an almost sage-like level of indviduation, for she manages to remain emotionally detached from the situation. Dickens represents this as the only sane response to Fagin’s antics, since Nancy is ultimately unable to be free from him. Fagin has clearly underestimated Nancy’s intelligence and judgement, and his attempt is shown to be nothing short of ludicrous. However, as always, Fagin is up to some sort of scheme.

Fagin walked towards his home, intent upon the thoughts that were working within his brain. He had conceived the idea—not from what had just passed though that had tended to confirm him, but slowly and by degrees—that Nancy, wearied of the housebreaker’s brutality, had conceived an attachment for some new friend. Her altered manner, her repeated absences from home alone, her comparative indifference to the interests of the gang for which she had once been so zealous, and, added to these, her desperate impatience to leave home that night at a particular hour, all favoured the supposition, and rendered it, to him at least, almost matter of certainty. The object of this new liking was not among his myrmidons. He would be a valuable acquisition with such an assistant as Nancy, and must (thus Fagin argued) be secured without delay.

There was another, and a darker object, to be gained. Sikes knew too much, and his ruffian taunts had not galled Fagin the less, because the wounds were hidden. The girl must know, well, that if she shook him off, she could never be safe from his fury, and that it would be surely wreaked—to the maiming of limbs, or perhaps the loss of life—on the object of her more recent fancy.

‘With a little persuasion,’ thought Fagin, ‘what more likely than that she would consent to poison him? Women have done such things, and worse, to secure the same object before
now. There would be the dangerous villain: the man I hate: gone; another secured in his place; and my influence over the girl, with a knowledge of this crime to back it, unlimited.'

These things passed through the mind of Fagin, during the short time he sat alone, in the housebreaker's room; and with them uppermost in his thoughts, he had taken the opportunity afterwards afforded him, of sounding the girl in the broken hints he threw out at parting. There was no expression of surprise, no assumption of an inability to understand his meaning. The girl clearly comprehended it. Her glance at parting showed that.

But perhaps she would recoil from a plot to take the life of Sikes, and that was one of the chief ends to be attained. 'How,' thought Fagin, as he crept homeward, 'can I increase my influence with her? What new power can I acquire?'

Such brains are fertile in expedients. If, without extracting a confession from herself, he laid a watch, discovered the object of her altered regard, and threatened to reveal the whole history to Sikes (of whom she stood in no common fear) unless she entered into his designs, could he not secure her compliance?

'I can,' said Fagin, almost aloud. 'She durst not refuse me then. Not for her life, not for her life! I have it all. The means are ready, and shall be set to work. I shall have you yet!'

( Oliver Twist 296-297)

This time, Fagin’s machinations involve a murder plot to kill Sikes, with the help of Nancy. Fagin believes that Nancy has taken a new lover and he hopes to remove Sikes from the equation, replacing him with the man he assumes Nancy is sneaking around to see. At the heart of this is his desire to reassert his authority over her, which is here expressed through his thoughts. “What new power can I acquire?”

( Oliver Twist 296) is also Dickens way of pointing the reader back to the corrupt patriarchal forces at work throughout Victorian society. Indeed, while Fagin is emblematic of the corruption itself, what
Dickens is trying to show is that Fagin is one of many individual actors who keep the system of exploitation and oppression going. It is apparent that Nancy’s individuation is always hampered to some extent by her oppressive environment. However, I think the picture of Victorian society that Dickens paints is one in which we can see that achievement of full individuation is impossible for many because of their class and the extent to which their efforts will be suppressed by powerful patriarchs.

The disturbing content which rounds out this chapter, seems to be included not only to foreshadow the violence that is to come, but to test Nancy’s moral judgement. As Dickens reminds us, in the criminal world, everyone is looking out for only their own interests. The loyalty banter that men such as Fagin and Sikes offer up is nothing more than a sham, although at times, it was able to produce the desired effect in Nancy. However, it is clear that while Nancy does not wish to cause harm to anyone, the reminder that true loyalty does not exist within her community, acts to release her from any feelings of guilt about the potential ramifications of her rescue plan. Perhaps the darker theme suggested by Dickens in this chapter is that Nancy is perpetually in danger regardless of whether she embarks on her mission or not. This is important because it underscores that her act of saving Oliver is significant not so much because it involves sacrifice, but because it is an act that is possible only because she has reclaimed her agency and developed a sense of self as an individual.

Fagin, fixated on the plan he has devised, employs a boy within the criminal fold to spy on Nancy in the next chapter. By Chapter XLVI it is Sunday and Nancy must depart to meet Rose. Nancy leaves, carefully looking around her to ensure that no one is following her. Unfortunately, she is unaware that Noah Claypole, the youth whom Fagin has hired, is tracking her every move. The narrator sets an eerie mood, noting that “It was a very dark night” (Oliver Twist 300).

A mist hung over the river, deepening the red glare of the fires that burnt upon the small craft moored off the different wharfs, and rendering darker and more indistinct the murky buildings on the banks. The old smoke-stained storehouses on either side, rose heavy and dull from the dense mass of roofs and gables, and frowned sternly upon water too black
to reflect even their lumbering shapes. The tower of old Saint Saviour's Church, and the
spire of Saint Magnus, so long the giant-warders of the ancient bridge, were visible in the
gloom; but the forest of shipping below bridge, and the thickly scattered spires of
churches above, were nearly all hidden from sight (*Oliver Twist* 300).

While the mist and red glare are cause enough for concern, they are ultimately significant here because both conceal the church spires from view. In a part of the city where there are few hints of goodness, on this particular evening there seem to be none-- for not even a glimpse of the churches is visible to provide some comfort.

Nancy spots Rose and Mr. Brownlow, and immediately requests to speak in a less visible location.

'This is far enough,' said a voice, which was evidently that of the gentleman.

'I will not suffer the young lady to go any farther. Many people would have distrusted you too much to have come even so far, but you see I am willing to humour you.'

'To humour me!' cried the voice of the girl whom he had followed. 'You're considerate, indeed, sir. To humour me! Well, well, it's no matter' (*Oliver Twist* 302)

As we see here, Brownlow displays distrust toward Nancy who he assumes is untrustworthy because of her class background. While his caution is understandable, his snobbery is shown to be excessive. Nancy, however, does not ignore it, and makes a sarcastic remark in response.

'Why, for what,' said the gentleman in a kinder tone, 'for what purpose can you have brought us to this strange place? Why not have let me speak to you, above there, where it is light, and there is something stirring, instead of bringing us to this dark and dismal hole?'

'I told you before,' replied Nancy, 'that I was afraid to speak to you there. I don't know why it is,' said the girl, shuddering, 'but I have such a fear and dread upon me to-night that I can hardly stand.'
'A fear of what?' asked the gentleman, who seemed to pity her.

'I scarcely know of what,' replied the girl. 'I wish I did. Horrible thoughts of death, and shrouds with blood upon them, and a fear that has made me burn as if I was on fire, have been upon me all day. I was reading a book to-night, to wile the time away, and the same things came into the print.'

'Imagination,' said the gentleman, soothing her.

'No imagination,' replied the girl in a hoarse voice. 'I'll swear I saw "coffin" written in every page of the book in large black letters,—aye, and they carried one close to me, in the streets to-night.'

'There is nothing unusual in that,' said the gentleman. 'They have passed me often.'

'Real ones,' rejoined the girl. 'This was not.' (Oliver Twist 302)

While these lines reveal Nancy’s premonition of danger and contribute to the overall sense of foreboding, they also reveal the sexist attitudes, which Brownlow espouses. While Dickens paints Brownlow as a benevolent patriarch, he also reveals that Brownlow, like many middle-class men, embrace the prejudices and stereotypes of his time. Brownlow’s dualistic way of thinking causes him to conclude that Nancy must be not only bad but mad—for she is clearly not acting in the prescribed “feminine” manner that every woman must strive towards. He dismisses her fears as exaggerations, believing that she is responding irrationally to normal, everyday events. In this way, he is not so different from Sikes and Fagin in his attitude towards Nancy. Indeed, it seems he would agree that Nancy is displaying a touch of the “woman’s nonsense” that Sikes speaks of with so much contempt. By revealing Brownlow’s attitudes to be morally questionable, he directs an attack at the corrupt system of values at work within Victorian culture. Nancy’s ability to maintain her composure while simultaneously pushing back against Brownlow’s trivialization of her concerns, demonstrates her capabilities as a magician. According to Ayres “The text seems to outline a woman as victim while alluding to woman as a powerful agent that not only can define herself, but also transform men into better people” (120). Indeed, while Nancy cannot
singlehandedly overthrow the Victorian patriarchy, she believes that through her interactions with Rose and Brownlow, she can dispel many of the unjustified prejudices and myths that are projected onto fallen women.

Continuing Dickens targeted critique of Brownlow’s character, the narrator adds: “There was something so uncommon in her manner, that the flesh of the concealed listener crept as he heard the girl utter these words, and the blood chilled within him. He had never experienced a greater relief than in hearing the sweet voice of the young lady as she begged her to be calm, and not allow herself to become the prey of such fearful fancies” (Oliver Twist 302).

This seems to be yet another of Dickens gender inversions, for while Brownlow puts on an air of toughness, he is actually more terrified than Nancy is. It seems that if Brownlow would have been left with his thoughts for much longer, he would have become utterly paralyzed by fear. This again reinforces Nancy’s strength, and shows that often behind the male façade of reason and emotional detachment, lurks a deep, overwhelming sense of fear. Furthermore, it is also ironic that while the assistance of a male is allegedly needed to accomplish this mission, Brownlow’s part is limited. There is the sense that Nancy (with the assistance of Rose) could carry out this task without Brownlow, and that he is needed because patriarchal society will only recognize the legitimacy of men.

Rose actively works to persuade Brownlow to soften his heart towards Nancy. “Speak to her kindly,” said the young lady to her companion. “Poor creature! She seems to need it” (Oliver Twist 304). Rose’s efforts prove to gradually alter Brownlow’s attitude toward Nancy, but this shift does take some time to manifest. Nancy, however, has become very frustrated with Brownlow’s mistreatment of her, and can no longer remain silent.

Your haughty religious people would have held their heads up to see me as I am to-night, and preached of flames and vengeance,’ cried the girl. ‘Oh, dear lady, why ar’n’t those who claim to be God’s own folks as gentle and as kind to us poor wretches as you, who,
having youth, and beauty, and all that they have lost, might be a little proud instead of so much humbler? (Oliver Twist 303-304).

Here Dickens uses Nancy as a mouthpiece to convey his rage toward the hypocrisy of those who claim to be Christian but would deny her humanity and cast judgment upon her. Her appeal is directed primarily towards Brownlow, for she has already seen that Rose is capable of compassion. It is evident that Dickens is not content to vaguely criticize the Victorian gender system, instead he dares to launch a full-scale attack on the worst offenders of all: those who claim to represent grace and goodness but offer up condemnation. Speaking through Nancy’s voice, Dickens reminds his readers that it is not just the Fagin’s and Sikes’s of the world who are morally bankrupt, but the religious people who society upholds as unquestionably good. Virtue, as Dickens understands it, is something quite different from that which seemed to govern Victorian society. “Contrary to what must have been a commonly held belief, virtue, according to the Dickensian text, is not codified in the genes and propagated through the proper state of matrimony. Neither is virtue the monopoly of the socially conforming, church-sanctioned sexually correct” (Ayres 124).

Brownlow is still skeptical of Nancy, and demands to know why she did not appear the previous Sunday as she had promised. It is as if he has suddenly remembered that he is the one with authority, and acts to arrest control from Nancy. In this way, his actions clearly demonstrate that he has embraced the “one-up-one-down” mentality that Schaef uses to describe the patriarchal tendency towards hierarchy. He will help Nancy, as long as she is willing to submit to his male authority. His speech to her conveys this clearly, as he commands, “Now listen to me” (Oliver Twist 304). His need to exert authority over both women is evident, and he asserts it as if it were his God-given right. What Dickens reveals through these dialogues is that all women are at the mercy of the male patriarchs. “Both kinds of women [Nancy and Rose] are imprisoned inside a gendered enclosure where they can be managed and dominated, and their usefulness to society prescribed” (Langbauer 131-132).
Having assured himself that he is now in control of Nancy, he proceeds to tell Nancy that he will try to get Monks to admit to the plot he hatched with Fagin, but that if this proves impossible, Nancy must lead him to Fagin. Nancy refuses to aid in Fagin’s capture, which reinforces her goodness by showing that she is not tempted by vengeance. Brownlow asks her why she will not betray Fagin, and she responds “…bad life as he has led, I have led a bad life too; there are many of us who have kept the same courses together, and I'll not turn upon them, who might—any of them—have turned upon me, but didn't, bad as they are’ (Oliver Twist 305). It is apparent here that Nancy’s departure from a dualistic mindset enables her to find some good in everyone— even in Fagin and Sikes. Nancy does not believe that she should cause harm to come to them, in spite of all they have done to her. Instead, she is incredibly gracious towards the men who have made her life so unbearable. Nancy accepts them as they are, and somehow finds a way to be grateful for the little they have given her. As the magician character, Sparrowhawk in The Farthest Shore states, “The only power worth having…is not “power over” but “power to” accept life, to allow it in” (The Hero Within 122). Nancy does not participate in the corrupt system of patriarchal values, which glorifies the manipulation of other people for personal gain. Instead, she claims her power by accepting reality as it is, and choosing not to disparage herself for what others might perceive as weakness. Her awareness as a magician enables her trust Brownlow, in spite of her history. As Pearson notes, “Having learned to trust the self, the Magician comes full circle and…finds that it is safe to trust” (The Hero Within 5). From this perspective, Nancy declares: 'I have been a liar, and among liars from a little child,' said the girl after another interval of silence, 'but I will take your words.' (Oliver Twist 305). Here again, we witness Nancy’s almost sage-like detachment and non-judgmental attitude which is what Jung argued is the final wisdom of individuation.

While Brownlow still exudes an authoritarian attitude throughout the course of their conversation, he has softened towards Nancy, and would like to use his influence to help her.
Now,' he said, returning: so it seemed by the sound: to the spot where he had stood before, 'you have given us most valuable assistance, young woman, and I wish you to be the better for it. What can I do to serve you?'

'Nothing,' replied Nancy.

'You will not persist in saying that,' rejoined the gentleman, with a voice and emphasis of kindness that might have touched a much harder and more obdurate heart. 'Think now. Tell me.'

'Nothing, sir,' rejoined the girl, weeping. 'You can do nothing to help me. I am past all hope, indeed.'

'You put yourself beyond its pale,' said the gentleman. 'The past has been a dreary waste with you, of youthful energies mis-spent, and such priceless treasures lavished, as the Creator bestows but once and never grants again, but, for the future, you may hope. I do not say that it is in our power to offer you peace of heart and mind, for that must come as you seek it; but a quiet asylum, either in England, or, if you fear to remain here, in some foreign country, it is not only within the compass of our ability but our most anxious wish to secure you. Before the dawn of morning, before this river wakes to the first glimpse of day-light, you shall be placed as entirely beyond the reach of your former associates, and leave as utter an absence of all trace behind you, as if you were to disappear from the earth this moment. Come! I would not have you go back to exchange one word with any old companion, or take one look at any old haunt, or breathe the very air which is pestilence and death to you. Quit them all, while there is time and opportunity!'

'She will be persuaded now,' cried the young lady. 'She hesitates, I am sure.'

'I fear not, my dear,' said the gentleman.

'No sir, I do not,' replied the girl, after a short struggle. 'I am chained to my old life. I loathe and hate it now, but I cannot leave it. I must have gone too far to turn back,—and
yet I don't know, for if you had spoken to me so, some time ago, I should have laughed it
off. But,' she said, looking hastily round, 'this fear comes over me again. I must go home.'

'Home!' repeated the young lady, with great stress upon the word.

'Home, lady,' rejoined the girl. 'To such a home as I have raised for myself with the work of my whole life. Let us part. I shall be watched or seen. Go! Go! If I have done you any service all I ask is, that you leave me, and let me go my way alone.'

'It is useless,' said the gentleman, with a sigh. 'We compromise her safety, perhaps, by staying here. We may have detained her longer than she expected already.'

'Yes, yes,' urged the girl. 'You have.' (Oliver Twist 306-307)

Brownlow tries to persuade Nancy to take his assistance and start over, but Nancy refuses. She seems determined to do what she can in her current situation and avoid fleeing.

Ayres elaborates on the reform plans mentioned by Brownlow. As she notes,

The text suggests that if Nancy had gone to America, she would have enjoyed a life comparable to Rose’s, but in the New World. It appears that fallen women are considered victims of their environments and that, given the chance to reform, they would, and society would stand to benefit from their reformation…They are the brass that ‘can do better than the gold’ because they have ‘stood the fire’ (Ayres 124).

Her comment here that she is “past all hope” seems her to represent not an assessment of herself, but society’s view of her. Nancy does not seem to believe that society will willingly allow her to become a respectable lady, which, in spite of the reform efforts taking place, was likely still true in many respects.

While Brownlow mentions that Nancy could find asylum in England, it is “suggested is that such opportunities are not possible in English society, which still has not learned that “all that glitters is not gold” (Ayres 124). Furthermore, Nancy knows that Fagin and Sikes would likely hunt her down and capture her if she tried to escape. Both men would rather kill her than let her get away from their grip. And Brownlow and Rose would be in grave danger as well for assisting her. Seeing as Nancy does not
wish anyone to come to harm—even Sikes and Fagin—this concern is itself enough to cause her to dismiss the idea of it altogether. Although Nancy is not proud of what she does, the ability to earn her own money is one of the few sources of fulfillment in Nancy’s life, and is one that few Victorian women (including Rose) will ever know. While her home may not be acceptable to Rose, Nancy refuses to allow her to deride it.

Saddened by her refusal of their aid, Rose tries to again convince Nancy to take money from them, which is often an offered diversion from the work of individuation.

'This purse,' cried the young lady. 'Take it for my sake, that you may have some resource in an hour of need and trouble.'

'No!' replied the girl. 'I have not done this for money. Let me have that to think of. And yet—give me something that you have worn: I should like to have something—no, no, not a ring—your gloves or handkerchief—anything that I can keep, as having belonged to you, sweet lady. There. Bless you! God bless you. Good-night, good-night!'

The violent agitation of the girl, and the apprehension of some discovery which would subject her to ill-usage and violence, seemed to determine the gentleman to leave her, as she requested. (*Oliver Twist* 307)

Regarding the role of money in the text, Ayres notes, “Evident throughout *Oliver Twist* is the barter of women’s sexuality for social survival…” (Ayres 128). This is most apparent through Nancy’s work as a prostitute, but it is also true of Rose, who needs to maintain her chastity in order to be eligible for marriage, which was the Victorian middle class woman’s means of survival. For both women, their sexuality is not their own, but is something to be exchanged to ensure that their basic needs are met. Nancy’s refusal to accept a token of monetary value not only demonstrates the purity of her intentions, but is her way of refusing to be bought. As Ayres confirms, “When Rose offers a reward for Nancy’s information about Oliver, Nancy will not exchange her integrity and goodness for either money or a
ring….She stops the sale of herself, and even more significantly, the text stops the barter of women’s sexuality, a commodity often exploited in the world of *Oliver Twist*” (*Oliver Twist* 307).

As the magician, Nancy knows that she has the power to make her own choices. As Pearson explains, this means being able to decide for ourselves whether or not to accept the gifts offered to us. “Sometimes we want to say no to what someone else may intend to be a gift to us. Sometimes people give us a gift as a way of manipulating us, or they give to us out of a sense of duty when it does not genuinely fit for them to do so. Or it may fit for them to give to us, but not for us to receive it” (*The Hero Within* 140).

Nancy accepts Rose’s gift of the handkerchief as a token of her friendship, so that she can remember the kindness and goodness she has shown her. It is to serve as a reminder that there is goodness in the world, and that Nancy has a part in cultivating that goodness.

It is difficult for Rose to accept that Nancy will not take Brownlow’s offer to help her leave her current life, and she lingers, believing that she will change Nancy’s mind. However, she does not. Nancy stealthily hurries home, expressing the “anguish of her heart in bitter tears” (*Oliver Twist* 308). This anguish seems to be derived not so much from Nancy’s choice, but her sadness about the misfortunate circumstances of her life, and more broadly, the misfortune of being female in this cultural and social milieu. While Nancy does not want to inhabit the criminal world, it seems that she also does not want to live the life of a middle-class woman like Rose. Indeed, Nancy can see that both worlds are heavily dominated by male control, and this realization leaves her without a space in which she can truly express herself as an individual. The choice is not between two lives: one bad, the other good, for as she now realizes, both worlds are riddled with inequality and exploitation. While Nancy has not ceded power to any person, she has wisely decided that there is a limit to what she can control. No longer believing herself to be a helpless victim, she has thus overcome her shadow orphan, and gained a realistic sense of what is possible. As Pearson notes, “Most critical is a resolution of the Orphan dilemma, which allows Magicians to trust in and submit to a power greater than themselves, saying, “Thy will be done” (*The Hero Within* 119). It is here that Nancy submits to a higher power, entrusting both her own fate and that
of Oliver to a force beyond them. Certainly it is not easy, nor is does it mean that the world around her will change overnight, and there is a sadness in that. As the character, Shevek says in *The Dispossessed*, “You cannot make the revolution. You can only be the revolution” (Le Guin 242).

In Chapter XLVII, Noah Claypole reports back to Fagin after spying on Nancy and tells all that he has seen and heard during Nancy’s meeting with Brownlow and Rose. Fagin and Noah relay these contents to Sikes, leaving out the fact that Nancy has promised to ensure that none of them are discovered for their complicity in the plot. Sikes becomes livid and bolts for the door. It is locked, and Fagin quickly approaches Sikes before he takes off, crying “Bill, Bill!...'A word. Only a word.”’

Let me out,’ said Sikes. 'Don't speak to me; it's not safe. Let me out, I say!'  
'Hear me speak a word,' rejoined Fagin, laying his hand upon the lock. 'You won't be—'

'Well,' replied the other.  
'You won't be—too—violent, Bill?'

The day was breaking, and there was light enough for the men to see each other’s faces. They exchanged one brief glance; there was a fire in the eyes of both, which could not be mistaken.

'I mean,' said Fagin, showing that he felt all disguise was now useless, 'not too violent for safety. Be crafty, Bill, and not too bold.'  
Sikes made no reply; but, pulling open the door, of which Fagin had turned the lock, dashed into the silent streets. *(Oliver Twist* 312)

Fagin’s warning is worthless, and seems to be issued only for the purpose of absolving himself of any guilt for the harm that will befall Nancy. Sikes storms home and enters the bedroom where Nancy lay on the bed.

The girl was lying, half-dressed, upon it. He had roused her from her sleep, for she raised herself with a hurried and startled look.

'Get up!' said the man.
'It is you, Bill!' said the girl, with an expression of pleasure at his return.

'It is,' was the reply. 'Get up.'

There was a candle burning, but the man hastily drew it from the candlestick, and hurled it under the grate. Seeing the faint light of early day without, the girl rose to undraw the curtain.

'Let it be,' said Sikes, thrusting his hand before her. 'There's enough light for wot I've got to do.'

'Bill,' said the girl, in the low voice of alarm, 'why do you look like that at me!'

The robber sat regarding her, for a few seconds, with dilated nostrils and heaving breast; and then, grasping her by the head and throat, dragged her into the middle of the room, and looking once towards the door, placed his heavy hand upon her mouth.

'Bill, Bill!' gasped the girl, wrestling with the strength of mortal fear,—'I—I won't scream or cry—not once—hear me—speak to me—tell me what I have done!'

'You know, you she devil!' returned the robber, suppressing his breath. 'You were watched to-night; every word you said was heard.'

'Then spare my life for the love of Heaven, as I spared yours,' rejoined the girl, clinging to him. 'Bill, dear Bill, you cannot have the heart to kill me. Oh! think of all I have given up, only this one night, for you. You shall have time to think, and save yourself this crime; I will not loose my hold, you cannot throw me off. Bill, Bill, for dear God's sake, for your own, for mine, stop before you spill my blood! I have been true to you, upon my guilty soul I have!'

The man struggled violently, to release his arms; but those of the girl were clasped round his, and tear her as he would, he could not tear them away.

'Bill,' cried the girl, striving to lay her head upon his breast, 'the gentleman and that dear lady, told me to-night of a home in some foreign country where I could end my days in
solitude and peace. Let me see them again, and beg them, on my knees, to show the same mercy and goodness to you; and let us both leave this dreadful place, and far apart lead better lives, and forget how we have lived, except in prayers, and never see each other more. It is never too late to repent. They told me so—I feel it now—but we must have time—a little, little time!"

The housebreaker freed one arm, and grasped his pistol. The certainty of immediate detection if he fired, flashed across his mind even in the midst of his fury; and he beat it twice with all the force he could summon, upon the upturned face that almost touched his own.

She staggered and fell: nearly blinded with the blood that rained down from a deep gash in her forehead; but raising herself, with difficulty, on her knees, drew from her bosom a white handkerchief—Rose Maylie's own—and holding it up, in her folded hands, as high towards Heaven as her feeble strength would allow, breathed one prayer for mercy to her Maker.

It was a ghastly figure to look upon. The murderer staggering backward to the wall, and shutting out the sight with his hand, seized a heavy club and struck her down. (Oliver Twist 312-313).

Nancy’s resistance to Sikes, even as he beats her, is persistent. Nancy uses reason to try to get through to him, but as we see here (as well as throughout the rest of the novel), Sikes’s powers of reason are inferior to Nancy’s. This acts as yet another example of Dickens’ gender inversions which challenge the separate sphere construct.

Nancy’s death itself demonstrates the extremes to which Dickens will go to grab the public’s attention, forcing them to confront the corrupt system of values that many had not only accepted, but praised. At this point in the novel, Dickens’ growing anger towards the Victorian sexual system comes to a boiling point. As we observed in the last few chapters, Dickens assault on this system of value becomes
increasingly pointed and less subtle. He is no longer just content to point a finger towards the male criminals, but dares to criticize even upstanding, middle-class men like Brownlow. As Dickens reveals, “The abuse of patriarchal power is so virulent that it perplexes ordinary Victorian sentiment and morality” (Barickman et al. 92). Here Barickman et al. gets at that the root of Nancy’s murder, and the intention behind Dickens inclusion of it in the text. Her death is not just a random act of violence, nor a way of punishing Nancy for her sin, as many critics have suggested. While on the surface, Sikes kills Nancy because he believes that she has betrayed him, this act represents much more to Dickens.

As Ann Federico notes, “The murder of *Oliver Twist* is a defining moment in Dicken’s writing; after 1837, violence and death are always present, central to Dickens’ method and to his humanism, and carrying diverse and complex significations” (Federico 364). In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens comes to terms with the “unavoidable necessity of looking at a world of suffering and injustice where human beings are opposed and estranged: a world of dark motives and death, cruelty and sanguinary acts” (Federico 364). While Dickens focuses a great deal on dark forces within this novel, it is clear that he does not believe in the simply duality of good vs. evil, as he reveals through Nancy. Through his observations as a reporter, Dickens learned that things are not always as they seem. In fact, he knew that many of the things that society calls “good” are in fact evil, and many of those whom society deems inherently “evil” may actually be good. While Dickens is more perceptive than most, he was not alone in his concerns about society’s misplaced values. In fact, “Victorian intellectuals feared that this sense of each life’s inviolability was being eroded by an industrial-capitalist society’s misplaced values, philosophical or political disregard for the lives of marginalized classes, laissez-faire economies, and utilitarian theory—that is on having instead of being” (Trilling 122). Indeed, it is the commodification of human beings and the pursuit of wealth at the expense of others that result from a focus on having rather than on being, as Dickens demonstrates. As the power of the patriarchs grew stronger in the ever-expanding economy, women and children (particularly the most vulnerable among them) were not merely overlooked, but actively exploited and oppressed. Furthermore, while the Victorians were confident that the separate
sphere system was not only a suitable, satisfactory arrangement, but was ordained by God and nature, what Dickens saw told him otherwise. As Barickman et al. notes one crucial theme throughout Dickens’ work is “…the crippling distortions of sexual and familial roles by the oppression patriarchy and the extension of corrupted sexual patterns into every major institution of Victorian society” (Barickman et al. 110). It seems that with Nancy, the only sure way to ensure that his audience would receive this message was to show through her murder, just how warped his society had become. As Federico notes, “For the Victorians, murder was totemic, exposing chilling truths about modern society. Dickens purposefully uses the focusing power of violence to address a political, moral, and psychological situation…” (Federico 382). As Ayres tries to make sense of Nancy’s murder scene, her ponderings connect the dots between Nancy’s death and Dickens’ broader message.

…The narrative denounces her murder as one of the ‘foulest and most cruel’ deeds. Then is Bill’s club an instrument of judgement? And if so, is the judgement on Nancy as an uncontrollable woman, or on a system that usurped patriarchal authority over her? Because the club (as a patriarchal symbol) destroys a good woman, does it not judge itself through the very act of committing injustice? (Ayres 138)

It seems to me that judgment is directed towards both the individual actors who perpetuate corrupt patriarchal values, and the system, which sanctions their authority. The call is for men to put down their clubs, and acknowledge women’s humanity.

However, Nancy’s death also has a particularized meaning. As Nancy develops an individual sense of self throughout the text, the conflict between her and Sikes only deepens. Sikes does not acknowledge Nancy’s agency, because he sees Nancy as his possession, and enjoys the challenge of dominating her. As Ayres notes,

…Women like the fiery Nancy pose a threat to men intent upon holding their superior position of authority within domesticity. Nevertheless, to dominate a woman of such passion, also poses an exciting challenge and a way to reassert masculine supremacy. The
victor must explicitly feel power because he has had to flex it, whereas otherwise his power is assumed and unchallenged at the hearth (Ayres 134).

While Sikes repeatedly attempts to reinforce his authority over Nancy, his threats and beatings gradually lose their effect, as she no longer chooses to cede her power to avoid physical harm. Ultimately, he is powerless to control the change that occurs within her psyche, and this is what bothers him the most.

“Nancy’s autonomy causes Sikes to lose his identity and thus to lose meaning because he loses the object (Nancy) on which his meaning is based” (Tatum 256). Sikes launches his attack, but

...just as Nancy has fought back in order to protect Oliver from Sikes’ dog, she fights back her in order to preserve her own life ‘wrestling with the strength of mortal fear.’ Nancy clings to her life as fiercely as Sikes clings to her death. She tries to convince him to spare her life ‘for the love of Heaven,’ forgetting that Sikes’ only consciousness at this point is not of God, sin, or conventional morality, but ‘the certainty of immediate detection if he fired’ his pistol at her (Tatum 252)

Yet, the more she resists, the more violent Sikes becomes, because he cannot stand that she has claimed her power. Her offer for them to live separate and more respectable lives infuriates Sikes even more, because he sees her pleas as a further threat to leave him, which would remove the object on which his identity is based and thus destroy him” (Tatum 252).

The significance of Sikes’s role as a robber is also emphasized here. ‘Sikes is referred to as a robber in the last scene and Nancy as the girl. He is stealing her right to her anger and resistance to his power, and she is helpless to prevent the theft’ (Ayres 135). Indeed, Sikes is not content until he can arrest Nancy’s agency from her. Yet, Nancy fights until the end. While Sikes is able to overcome her physically, he cannot crush her sense of self. “In all of the episodes in which she figures she is always the strongest person in all but physical strength and finally she is killed because of her opposition” (Bicancic 284). Nancy does not apologize for what she has done, nor try to take it back, even as a desperate attempt to save herself. As Pearson notes, “The wanderer, the warrior, and the magician learn increasingly...
sophisticated lessons about ways to control their lives and destinies. Ironically, it is only when this control is achieved that the hero can let it go and learn the final lesson of martyrdom—the acceptance of mortality” (The Hero Within 114). Therefore, while one’s circumstances cannot not be altered, one can still pursue the development of one’s own psyche.

The narrators’ comment that “It [Nancy] was a ghastly figure to look upon” (Oliver Twist 313) may strike the reader as odd, but I believe that here the narrator is taking on Sikes’ perspective. Sikes has consistently objectified Nancy and treated her as if she is not human throughout the text. Indeed, he does not really know Nancy as a person, because his projections prevent him from seeing her as she is. Sikes is only happy as long as Nancy is an “it”, and it her refusal to be objectified that leads Sikes to murder her. His assault on Nancy is so brutal that she is unrecognizable. As Federico notes, her body is so mutilated that when Bet (another prostitute) is asked to identify it, the horror of the image is so profound that she must be put in a straightjacket (Federico 374). While the image of her body is horrible, in a sense, by rendering her unrecognizable, she becomes the ultimate object for Sikes. Furthermore, Nancy becomes a blank slate upon which he can project whatever he pleases.

When Chapter XLVIII opens, it is morning and the sun is shining brightly. The transition is from dark to light, which reveals Fagin’s heinous deeds.

Of all bad deeds that, under cover of the darkness, had been committed within wide London's bounds since night hung over it, that was the worst. Of all the horrors that rose with an ill scent upon the morning air, that was the foulest and most cruel. The sun—the bright sun, that brings back, not light alone, but new life, and hope, and freshness to man—burst upon the crowded city in clear and radiant glory. Through costly-coloured glass and paper-mended window, through cathedral dome and rotten crevice, it shed its equal ray. It lighted up the room where the murdered woman lay. It did. He tried to shut it out, but it would stream in. If the sight had been a ghastly one in the dull morning, what was it, now, in all that brilliant light!
He had not moved; he had been afraid to stir. There had been a moan and motion of the hand; and, with terror added to rage, he had struck and struck again. Once he threw a rug over it; but it was worse to fancy the eyes, and imagine them moving towards him, than to see them glaring upward, as if watching the reflection of the pool of gore that quivered and danced in the sunlight on the ceiling. He had plucked it off again. And there was the body—mere flesh and blood, no more—but such flesh, and so much blood! (Oliver Twist 313-314)

Her body is still portrayed as an “it” here, although it is clear that this delights Sikes no more. While Sikes tries to cover it up, he catches a glimpse of her eyes, which are one of the few identifiable features that are yet distinguishable. Seeing Nancy’s eyes forces him to acknowledge her humanity, and the realization of what he has done horrifies him. He has tried his best to reduce her to just blood and flesh, and though he has succeeded, this, as it turns out this is not what he wants. Sikes destroys the club and flees from the house.

The image of Nancy’s eyes will haunt Sikes night and day while he is on the run. Several chapters later, while using a rope to climb atop a roof, Sikes accidentally hangs himself with a rope. Immediately before his death, Sikes is again haunted by them. In fact, “The eyes again!” (Oliver Twist 337) are Sikes’ last words. According to Tatum, “Seeing Nancy’s eyes before dying is Dickens’ way of revealing to the reader that the threat of his ego, the flaw in his psyche, which he has projected onto Nancy, and defended that projection to the point of her bloody murder, has been within himself all this time” (Tatum 256).

Unfortunately, for Sikes (and Nancy) the recognition of his projection comes too late. Tragically, it is only after Nancy’s murder that Sikes begins to tap into his emotions. According to Gary Wills, Nancy’s death “stirs the inert stuff of Sikes [a] belated recognition of his love for her[…]. The wrench of Nancy’s loss leaves Sikes bewildered by the beginnings of human feeling in him”(Wills 66-67). It is here that “Sikes appears most human, effecting a reverse transformation from a monster into a trapped and
terrified man” (Federico 375). Sikes has come to see glimpses of his shadow and as Jung says, this is a terrifying encounter.

Interestingly, it is not only Sikes who was haunted by the memory Nancy’s murder, for Dickens himself could not seem to put it behind him. While it seems that Dickens was fascinated by death (as were many Victorians), “the obsession with the murder of Nancy seems to reveal something more” (Holbrook 165). Decades after writing *Oliver Twist*, Dickens decided that he wanted to perform the scene in public. “I have been trying, alone by myself, the *Oliver Twist* murder, but have got something so horrible out of it that I am afraid to try it in public” (quoted in Mackenzie 373). Five years later, Dickens is still toying with it, noting, “It is horrible but very dramatic” (Mackenzie 373). Even though he worried that it might be too shocking, he obsessed over the scene. “I have no doubt that I could perfectly petrify an audience by carrying out the notion I have of the way of rendering it…But whether the impression would not be so horrible as to keep them away another time, is what I cannot satisfy myself upon. What do you think?” (Quoted in Mackenzie 374).

Eventually, Dickens began performing the act in public, and while the crowds were “astonished by his versatility and genius” (Mackenzie 374) these performances were taking a toll on his health. “He admitted that the murder scene drove all the breath out of his body—and Dickens at this time was suffering from sleeplessness and sickness” (Holbrook 165). His performance also took a toll on his listeners as well. At one point, he observed that the audience members had turned “unmistakably pale and had horror stricken faces” (Holbrook 165). Nonetheless, Dickens continued to act out the scene. At the first public reading, Dickens mentioned to the painter W.P. Frith, “It is horribly like, I am afraid… I have a vague sense of being ‘wanted’ as I walk about the streets” (Mackenzie 375). By this time, he had also added both the search for Sikes and Sikes’ hanging to his performance (Holbrook 166). As Mackenzie notes, ‘These reading tours were making Dickens seriously ill; yet when Dolby urged him to choose ‘less stressful items,’ Dickens became angry, smashing a plate and shouting at his agent for his “infernal caution,” (Mackenzie 377). But then Dickens’ had a sudden change of attitude, and tearfully embraced
Dolby saying, “there was a little too much ‘murder’ in our arrangement” (377). However, Dickens “looked desperately aged and worn; the lines in his cheeks were now deep furrows; there was a weariness in his gaze and a general air of fatigue and depression about him:” (377) and his “extraordinary elasticity of spirits” seemed to have left him” (377).

While it is impossible to know why he became obsessed with this scene in his old age, it seems that Dickens must have felt that the symbolism behind Nancy’s death was still relevant. It seems to me that that in Nancy, he attempted to confront not only society’s understanding of gender, but his own. Perhaps, in the Jungian sense, Dickens is also confronting his shadow side here.

According to Peter Ackroyd, it is well documented that Dickens had a dominant “feminine” side. He believes that this side is made evident through his novel *Dombey and Son*. “There is a sense in which Dickens seems to wish to separate himself from the world of men, the solid world…to describe and celebrate those specifically female virtues that he longed for— the absence of which had so disheartened him in his own struggles with the commercial men who owned the Daily News” (Ackroyd 501).

Ackroyd is careful to acknowledge that the “feminine” qualities he refers to are those which were considered “feminine” in Dickens’ time. As we see here, Dickens desire to move away from the business world that inhabited the male sphere was one such example of how he deviated from the norms established by Victorian gender roles.

It was also said by more than one contemporaneous critic that Dickens did indeed possess a ‘feminine’ sense of dirtiness or ugliness in men, and although of course his sensitivity to mood and atmosphere, marked him as being ‘feminine’ by his contemporaries, would not be so treated today, it is still worth noting that passive component of his vocabulary in which, especially in his correspondence, describes the way in which things ‘master’ or ‘take possession’ of him. It is worth recognizing, too, how in his fiction characters must relinquish oppressively male qualities in order to attain some state of grace or quietus. Certainly this feminine quality within his writing partly explains why he is so ambivalent
about money, about power, about the nature of ‘progress’…. Again and again he asserts the importance of gentleness, kindness, sympathy, generosity; at the same time these were seen as specifically feminine characteristics, at least in their purest state, although Dickens understood better than many of his mid-Victorian contemporaries that they were the proper attributes of all human beings. (Ackroyd 502)

While Dickens does not seem to embody the ideals of the middle-class, Victorian male, what is also apparent is that there is nothing so irregular as to suggest that Dickens was in fact “feminine.” Instead, it seems to me, that Dickens instead had a well-integrated anima, which served to balance his more “masculine” animus side. It also seems that Dickens believed that the androgynous individual was in many ways, fully human, while the Rose’s and Sikes’s of the world were mere caricatures. That is not to say that he believed that “masculinity” or “femininity” were bad in and of themselves, but that they should not be taken to extremes. “He thought he was part of his age, and yet he was creating a large, echoic, mythic structure out of it. He saw beyond the conventional stereotypes of ‘male’ and ‘female’; he saw more permanent and enduring characteristics” (Ackroyd 503). Here Ackroyd gets to the root of his efforts with Nancy and so many of his characters. While Dickens often explored gender inversions in his writing, it is possible that this, as Ackroyd suggests, was not somethings that he was conscious of at times. Dickens’ outlook was sensitive and compassionate, but also probing and critical. In many ways, he masterfully blended these aspects of his personality into a cohesive whole. While “…he lived in an age in which increasingly was creating a divide between the sexes” (Ackroyd 503) Dickens continually confronted the separate spheres system in his writing, and actively worked to undermine it. By merging the “masculine” and “feminine” elements within himself and infusing them into his writing, he paved the way for a healthier, more balanced understanding of gender.

However, as Dickens reveals through Nancy, Victorian society did not quite know what to make of such individuals. Nonetheless, Nancy determines to claim her power and embark on her journey. By the end of the novel, it is clear that Nancy is a woman who can no longer fit either the world of Sikes and
Fagin, or the world of Rose and Mr. Brownlow, for she is a being unlike others: an individual in a society founded on conformity. With Nancy, stereotypes and gender roles no longer apply, because she has transcended them. Ultimately, Dickens’ characterization of Nancy emphasizes the transformative power of the archetypal journey, and the androgynous union of the anima and animus elements within the psyche.
Chapter 3 Revisiting Jung’s Archetypes

As I consider the writings of Jung in regard to the archetypes, it becomes increasingly apparent to me that finding balance between Western culture’s positioning of the two gender role extremes, namely “masculinity” and “femininity,” is essential to personal growth and psychic stability. As demonstrated through the work of Carol Pearson, the archetypes associated with the hero’s journey can facilitate transformative experiences for both men and women which are integral to the individuation process. While historically many of these archetypes have been viewed as available only to men, Pearson successfully reclaims them for women, thereby making a significant contribution to both feminist and Post-Jungian domains. Pearson’s efforts in this regard thus enable both sexes to work towards an androgynous state of wholeness. However, Jung’s gender-based archetypes, the anima and the animus, are yet in need of similar revision. The issue with these archetypes remains the fact that Jung does not adequately account for the social forces which shape them, including the influence of biological essentialism. Thus, I argue that the anima and animus must be deconstructed and deontologized so that the structuralist and biological essentialist foundation upon which they rest is can be examined and revised, properly placing both the female and male elements within the realm of the social and cultural context from which they derive. Only after this is achieved, I believe, is it possible to get a sense of what androgyny can and should look like within the individual.

It is important to acknowledge that many Post-Jungian and Jungian Revisionist theorists have contributed significantly to this effort by pointing out Jung’s tendency to overlook social context and social influences in his notion of the anima and animus. Among these are the feminists Demaris Wehr and Annis Pratt. While I will primarily explore the issues surrounding Jung’s vision of the feminine, I will also stress the importance of androgyny for both sexes. By expanding upon the historical and theoretical frameworks which informed Jung’s writing on the gender-based archetypes, my intention is consider how we might interpret the syzygy in a more tangible way.
One of the primary problems with Jung’s work as it pertains to gender, is his tendency to minimize the importance of social influences and their part in molding and shaping our idea of the “masculine” and the “feminine.” While this is an inclination that Jung exhibits in regard to all of the archetypes, it becomes especially problematic where in concerns men and women. While Demaris Wehr recognizes Jung’s emphasis on social context as it relates to his writings about spirituality, she notes that it is often absent in his writings about the archetypes. According to Wehr, “…Jung ontologizes what is more accurately and more usefully seen as socially constructed reality” (“Religious and Social Dimensions” 23). While the archetypes are described as being propensities or predispositions to act in a particular manner, “…the category of archetype is often used as a category of Being itself” (23). This becomes extremely problematic as the archetypes themselves take on a sort of divine authority. “…Jungian theory can function as a quasi-religious or scientific legitimation of the status quo in society, reinforcing social roles, constricting growth, and limiting options for women” (“Religious and Social Dimensions” 23). While I believe that men also suffer as a result of socially-enforced limitations, in Jung’s writings, there is a great deal of encouragement for them to broaden their experiences, while, contrarily, when addressing women’s identity and roles, Jung does not offer nearly as much support for women to move beyond these barriers.

Wehr suggests that Peter Berger’s work on the sociology of knowledge is extremely useful in demonstrating the way in which social forces shape our understanding of reality. She defines the sociology of knowledge as

…a subfield of sociology that emphasizes the role of institutions (religious, psychological, scientific, and others) in molding human behavior and emotions. It also stresses the enormous human need for the ordering principles that institutions provide and the seemingly exorbitant price paid by individuals who defy those boundaries. Although human beings have created these institutions, the institutions have acquired an objective character, hiding the fact that they were created in the first place. People collude with
these structures because of the suffering they would incur if they did not and also, more importantly, because the very structures of consciousness itself come to be isomorphic with the social structures. (“Religious and Social Dimensions” 24)

Berger also asserts that “society is nothing but a human product.” (“Religious and Social Dimensions” 24) The product which society has created collectively gains an objective status, thereby acting upon those who have produced it (“Religious and Social Dimensions” 24). What is also important to note is that each individual is a product of the society. This, as Wehr notes is not benign, because “society is not only an objective reality but also a coercive force in the lives of individuals” (24). Over time, these institutions come to exert control over them, yet they begin to forget that they were responsible for their creation, and in turn, “their relationship to institutions is thus characterized as one of alienation or even self-deception” (24). The socialization process contains three phases—externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Here, Berger explains each phase:

Externalization is the ongoing outpouring of the human being into the world, both in the physical and mental activity of men. Objectivation is the attainment by the products of this activity (again both physical and mental) of a reality that confronts its original producers as a facticity external to and other to themselves. Internalization is the reappropriation by men of this same reality, transforming it once again from structures of the objective world into structures of the subjective consciousness (Sacred Canopy 4).

As Wehr notes, externalization occurs almost as an instinct. In Objectivation, the objects in the human produced world seem to take on a life of their own and can act in ways that defy what the producer intends. In Internalization, human beings reabsorb that which they created and have come to see as objective. Thus, it is no longer simply objective to them, but becomes subjective through incorporation into consciousness. “In other words, society produces people with structures of thought that coincide with the social institutions people created in the first place” (“Religious and Social Dimensions” 24).
Because the socialization process is a kind of cyclical exchange, Berger views it as a conversation. “World maintenance,” as Berger points out, “is a precarious affair and depends on this ongoing conversation with other people who live within the social structures and institutions and take them for granted, thereby giving them legitimacy” (Sacred Canopy 17). The continuation of this conversation is not so much a conscious choice but is almost an instinctual act which we perform in order to keep society running. We often do not question the existing social order, because we are too caught up in it to do so. Furthermore, we do not do so because we need a way of ordering the world. This ordering is essential as Berger notes. “The socially constructed world is, above all, an ordering of experience. A meaningful order, or nomos, is imposed upon the discrete experiences and meanings of individuals” (Sacred Canopy 17). Both language and religion are the dominant forces which shape society and our experiences in it. “Language becomes a strong reinforcer of social reality because it bestows an objective and apparently permanent status on humanly produced institutions, making them resistant to change. Descriptive language becomes prescriptive and helps ward off change, thus maintaining and protecting our fragile social existence” (“Religious and Social Dimensions” 26).

It is my view that Berger’s sociology of knowledge is intimately tied with structuralism and biological essentialism both within Jung’s work and within the broader, historical constructions of gender which informed his work. It is through deconstructing these influences that we can begin to apprehend the complexities of male and female experience as they present themselves in reality. As we move beyond the binary oppositions represented by “masculinity” and “femininity”, or as Jung thought of them, the animus and the anima, it becomes possible to see how more nuanced interpretations would prove beneficial for both men and women and could allow for androgynous unity. However, first, I must define essentialism, structuralism, and deconstruction.

According to Elizabeth Grosz, essentialism “refers to the existence of fixed characteristics, given attributes, and ahistorical functions which limit the possibilities of change and thus social reorganization” (Grosz 334). Essentialists believe that a thing’s characteristics make something what it is. This
philosophical approach is also concerned with essence, which it asserts precedes existence. Biological essentialism, then, asserts that males and females are not only biologically different, but that this difference in biology points to a difference in essence. Not only do males (men) and women (females) have different essences, but these essences are unchanging. The dissimilarities in the essence of women and men is demonstrated through the corresponding terms “femininity” and “masculinity” which represent a series of characteristics (many of which are polar opposites).

Structuralism is a theory which asserts that cultural meaning is the product of fundamental, yet often unrecognized structures (Rowland 98). Structuralists believe that the human brain is drawn to ordering things and that through studying the structures that our brains create, we can understand what lies behind the surface phenomena we observe. All surface phenomena, according to Structuralism, belong to a structural system (Tyson 199-200). Although Structuralism is utilized in a variety of fields, here I will focus primarily on how it was implemented in Anthropology.

In the mid-Twentieth century the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss sought to uncover the underlying structures that account for the similarities between people of vastly different cultures (Tyson 203). He noted that in spite of the variations in surface phenomena in different cultures, things like bartering and marriage were largely the same, which suggested to him that there was an underlying structure at work. “By figuring out the organization common to a variety of activities in a given culture, he arrives at a model or basic pattern of organization” (Pratt 119). The activities that he observed in a given culture he called “bundles of relations” and concluded that they were not random but reflected the “substructure of the group’s behavior” (Pratt 119). He then linked the “bundles of relations” of various groups together, and noted that there were many commonalities, which he felt suggested a deeper structure or overarching model which could be applied to all societies. “Levi-Strauss thus arrives at an ‘ultimate code,’ a hypothesis applicable to the whole range of human behavior based on certain invariant elements in a wide variety of cultures” (Pratt 119). Levi-Strauss also observed that there were many common elements in the myths of the various cultures he studied. “His goal was to discover when
‘different’ myths are actually different versions of the same myth in order to show that human beings from very different cultures share structures of consciousness that project themselves in the formation of structurally similar myths” (Tyson 204). In the end, he was able to achieve this by reducing a multitude of myths into a few mythemes, which were what he considered to be the fundamental groupings of myths.

As we see here, Levi-Stauss’s notion of mythemes is very similar to Jung’s understanding of the archetypes. It also seems that Jung’s method relied heavily on sorting these myths into a universal structure, which he believed surpassed cultural boundaries. While Jung does analyze the archetypes in detail, he seems to sometimes take for granted the way in which they vary between cultures and are informed by those cultures. Here again his tendency to view the archetypes as sacred seems to blind him to the frequently androcentric nature of the hero myths. Joseph Campbell’s discussion of mother-goddess culture in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* helps to show that not all of history was strictly patriarchal, and in fact, reveals a history of matriarchy within Western culture that is often overlooked. Ultimately, however, it seems that it was not until Carol Pearson tackled the archetypes of the hero’s journey in her writings were they able to be transferred out of the male sphere.

Tyson also notes that another key aspect of Structuralism is its emphasis on opposites. “According to structuralism, the human mind perceives difference most readily in terms of opposites, which structuralists call binary oppositions: two ideas, directly opposed, each of which we understand by means of its opposition to the other” (Tyson 202). However, it is important to note that this approach not only sets two things (or people) as complete opposites, but establishes one as primary, and the other as secondary, or as subject and object, respectively. The establishment of another individual as “object” is an act of “othering” which creates difference between the two individuals. However, as we observe with the subject/object relationship, they not only enable us to distinguish between things, but cause us to understand one as better than the other. The tendency of binary oppositions to establish a hierarchy is something that Jacques Derrida noted and which became integral to his notion of Deconstruction. In this system “…language has two important characteristics: (1) its play of signifiers continually defers, or
postpones, meaning, and (2) the meaning it seems to have is the result of the differences by which we distinguish the two signifiers” (Tyson 239). Through Deconstruction, Derrida revealed that the configurations of language which structuralists believed could be used to ensure the stability of meaning and cultural codes, were in fact unstable and finite (239).

As history reveals, the imperative to order things into a binary system has held a pivotal role in human understandings of gender. Through outlining a variety of writings about the “masculine/feminine” binary and demonstrating its relation to historical and current understandings of androgyny, it is possible to get a sense of the long history of difference which has plagued notions of gender. Farwell provides a summary of Linda Thurston’s arguments from her essay, “On Male and Female Principle” which acts as the basis upon which Farwell interrogates different understandings of androgyny, including Virginia Woolf’s. As Farwell notes, “the metaphysical principles like good and evil, light and dark,…male and female can either be opposed or juxtaposed” (437). However, the prevailing construct of gender in our culture is “based on the idea of the opposition of ‘opposites.’ There is one and there is Other which embodies all the opposite characteristics of One. Each is seen as isolated and separate from its Other…In this view the goal of life is the victory of One triumphing over its Other (Good over Evil). Here Linda Thurston not only points directly back to biological essentialism through her reference to the binary opposition of “opposites” but also demonstrates that this approach to gender is inherently hierarchical through mention of the “victory” of the one over them. Male and Female are not therefore just different, but one is superior to the other, and is given free rein to dominate the inferior. It is not a mere difference, but rather a marked difference. As Falwell notes, “When ontological and epistemological validity in invested in one side of the dualism, the two elements of the dualism are not on equal footing….The principle of the One opposed to the Other is, in much of Western thought, a principle of the One transforming and incorporating the Other” (Farwell 438). Furthermore, “When the one is defined as male, the female is allotted all the concomitant characteristics which Western thought attributes to the other” (Farwell 438). Therefore, what women (or “the feminine”) represents is whatever man is not, and is
marked as lower. This hierarchical binary is evident even in the ancient myths and texts which utilize allegedly androgynous figures. As Kari Weil notes,

Many of the earliest Western cosmogonies posit an androgynous or hermaphroditic being as a vision of man's original, primordial nature, before a Fall from Divine Unity into alterity and difference. Such ‘first principles’ have become the object of scrutiny for post-structuralist theories derived from Derridean philosophy. As Terry Eagleton writes, ‘first principles of this kind are commonly defined by what they exclude: they are part of the sort of ‘binary opposition’ beloved of structuralism.’ Eagleton's point is that the whole metaphysical system depends upon the logic and hierarchy of opposition, on the possibility of firmly drawing and maintaining the spatial and chronological dividing line between a first and second identity (Weil).

If we look to Plato’s *Symposium*, Aristophanes claims that man’s original nature consisted of two bodies which together formed a being that was spherically shaped. The beings were represented by the union of two males, two females, or one of each sex. The latter was the androgyne. Zeus became angry with the androgyne for their insolence, and forced them into two separate bodies which could allow for them to be more easily managed. Out of this splitting, grew desire and love, as each person ventured out in search of “their other half.” Weil points out that while this story has been used as template for androgyny and has been perceived to represent ideal unity, it also reveals a hierarchy in which women are ultimately defined as inferior. This is because Aristophenes tended glorify the same-sex pairs over the androgyne. Furthermore, it is also evident through Aristophanes’ contention that women limit love to base physical desire and procreation (Weil).

Women’s “dark” qualities were often expressed through symbolism in the ancient myths, as Farwell notes. “The male is usually represented by light, reason, and the sun, the female by darkness, flesh, and the moon” (Farwell 439). These “dark” characteristics certainly hold true in many accounts of the Judeo-Christian creation myth. In the *Zohar*, Male and female are merged within Adam. The text
explains how this state of androgyny came about and also how it was broken. “The female was fastened to the side of the male, and God cast the male into a deep slumber, and he lay on the site of the Temple. God then cut the female from him and decked her as a bride and then led her to him” (Zohar 32). Here, as in all of these myths, “Adam is the One, and the female is an appendage of this basic unit. She is the Other” (Farwell 438). Furthermore, since in many versions of the creation myth, the woman is cited as the cause of the fall, her presence as a corrupting force is made clear. “When male and female are united, the female is the emotional and darker side of the androgyne; when the two are separated, the female retains those qualities and becomes the nemesis which must be controlled” (Farwell). This observation closely mirror’s Jung’s notion of the animosity that exists between the sexes, although Jung does not make one superior to the other and also says this friction between them is necessary for growth and individuation. Farwell, however, contends:

> Although man and woman unite, they nevertheless represent irreconcilable opposites which, when activated, degenerate into deadly hostility. This primordial pair of opposites symbolizes every conceivable pair of opposites that may occur: hot and cold, light and dark, north and south, dry and damp, good and bad, conscious and unconscious.

(Psychological Reflections 94)

Here, we see an example of Jung’s tendency to rely on of binary oppositions to characterize the differences between men and women. While Jung argues that the opposites help to push us toward awareness of the contrasexual element, and therefore enable us to begin the individuation process, I feel that these stark dichotomies instead impede much of one’s own growth. I do not see the value in his dualistic approach and instead see how it often leads to the establishment of constructs like the Victorian notion of the “separate spheres.” While the “Genesis account allows for three different readings: woman and man as equals, woman as superior to man, and man as superior to women” it is largely the latter interpretation which was appropriated by men as a way to maintain control (Tuana 8). While her position as helper can either present her as equal to man or as the lesser being, this role has instead been used to
show that “man is the primary creation” (Tuana 9). This interpretation acts to portray women as secondary, and attempts to reinforce woman’s dependence upon man. It also demonstrates the fact that “women in masculine culture become vehicles or useable objects rather than agents in their own right” (Pratt 123).

Together, these myths often act to reinforce not only gender difference, but gender inequality. As Barry Rutland notes in his introduction to Gender and Narrativity, “…western culture seems to be trapped within the circuit of a founding narrative which author-izes a binary gender difference which, in turn, author-izes corollary differences of power and esteem” (Rutland 7). Indeed, in both the Zohar’s creation story and Aristophanes’ telling of the split of the androgyne, it is clear that

The identification of the male with the androgyne brings with it the identification of traditional male qualities and symbols with the universal, and it is this structure for androgyne that is detrimental to the self-image of a woman… for even when Western thought attempts to include the female in its concept of the ideal, it can do so only by negating those qualities traditionally equated with the female. (Farwell 441)

Thus, women are inevitably relegated to whatever definitions men feel do not properly represent them. Furthermore, when we rely on these founding myths and the distortions they contain as a way to understand the true essence of men and women, we are led down a dangerous path. “As many scholars have noted, images of women in fairy tales, myths, and religious stories tend to be extreme rather than balanced, fragmented rather than holistic” (“Religious and Social Dimensions 35”). That said, Jung makes it clear that the archetypes of the collective unconscious (which include Jung’s understanding of The Feminine as presented in the anima) are informed by mythology. It should come as no surprise then, that the anima and animus “…are lopsided concepts given that the cultural positions of men and women differ, with men generally having and women generally lacking, power and respect” (“Religious and Social Dimensions” 34). Unfortunately, this power imbalance is one which Jung never adequately addresses.
Returning to Plato, it is important to note that in the *Republic*, he not only reinforced the notion of women’s “darker” qualities, but created an ontological system dividing men and women. According to Plato, men are the primary being. While Plato asserts that the gods created all people as equals, this was not maintained because some of the people were not able to control their passions (Tuana 53). When passion cannot be controlled, it makes a person “rebellious against the divine element within” which leads to a rebirth in a lower state of being, and consequently an equally reduced soul (*Timaeus* 73a). “As human nature was of two kinds, the superior race...would thereafter be called man” (*Timaeus* 42a). Thus, we see here that Plato’s dichotomy posits that women are the inferior sex. However, Plato did not believe that it was the biological distinctions between the sexes that made women inferior. Instead, it was woman’s soul that accounted for the disparity. According to Plato, the soul is “divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, and ever self-consistent and invariable” contrarily, the body was “mortal, multiform, unintelligible, dissoluble, and never self-consistent” (*Phaedo* 80b). As Nancy Tuana notes, “For Plato, the soul is the source of true knowledge, of eternal truths. But one is capable of such ‘divine thoughts’ only if the senses and the passions are under the mind’s control (53). Because women were born from men who could not control their passions, they possessed inferior souls which made it more difficult for them to know the eternal truths, and thus gain control over their appetites. It was easier for men to learn, because Plato asserted that there is no area in which “...the masculine sex does not surpass the female...” (*Republic* 455b-c).

Plato was also very clear that men should not imitate women, nor should they take on aspects of a woman’s nature that might be seen as unmanly. Men who wanted to be rulers were not able to play the parts of women, slaves, or madmen on stage because each of these does not have mastery over their passions (*Republic* 455b-c). Furthermore, a man who displayed cowardice in battle deserved to be turned into a woman, since he did not act like a man (*Laws* 944d-945a). However, Plato did acknowledge that some women had souls that made them worthy of the role of guardian. While Plato did posit that women were inferior to men, if we look at the system Plato sets up in the Republic, it is also apparent that a
person’s place in society and the quality of his or her soul was very much tied to class. Nonetheless, even the female guardians were still viewed as inferior to the male guardians by Plato (Tuana 54).

One of the problems with Plato and Jung’s way of approaching gender (and the feminine is particular) is that the differences they observe between men and women are accounted for by some sort of deficiency in feminine essence. However, they do not have solid evidence to show that what they are describing is indeed an essence. Instead, it appears that they pull primarily from female stereotypes or projections.

…Plato and Jung in their use of the term ‘woman’ are indeed invoking the stereotype ‘woman’ and that is why we can understand them, know what they mean in the first place. Unfortunately, however, their use not only harnesses what needs to be implicitly acknowledged but reiterates some pejorative, devalorising and divisive opinions about women. My contention is that the content of such stereotypes is neither essential nor necessary to woman-ness” (Gray 145). Frances Gray believes that we should not dismiss stereotypes, but instead should examine them closely to decipher what truths we can pull out of them, and how we can work to reverse the counterproductive behaviors that they advance. Unfortunately, in Jung and Plato’s writing, she observes that the stereotypes they employ do not communicate helpful or accurate truths which women can make use of. Instead, they are more so just recycled versions of widely held derogatory views of women. Gray continues writing ‘Anima’ picks out a set of stereotypical properties implicit in which is either an ideal or its opposite. The anima feminine who ‘intensifies, exaggerates, falsifies and mythologizes all emotional relations’ embodies a stereotype which indeed no woman has to satisfy even though some women may and certainly not all women will. And the actual women onto whom such an image is projected will bear the soul image because they are always already understood to be women; ‘woman’, recall, requires stereotypical content in order to be understood. Furthermore, the misappropriation of a stereotype involving
malice and wild inaccuracy is possible; for perhaps the psyche will tend to continue
structuring, through its archetypes, the material it receives as if it were the case. (Gray
146-147)

Here she points to the fact that Jung’s anima represents the opposite of what the animus stands for. More importantly, however, she directs us to the fact that Jung’s notion of the anima contains content does not represent all women. It should be noted that Gray’s description of the anima feminine refers to a passage in which Jung discusses women’s complexes. As noted in Chapter One, Jung’s dramatic descriptions of women who are under the control of complexes often appear as disparaging on the surface. While it does seem that Jung finds such behavior distasteful, I believe these passages also provide great insight into women’s internalized oppression. In this way, these passages can be useful as we examine the reasons why the complexes can have such tremendous impact upon women. However, Jung’s discussion of career-oriented women, or “mannish” women is difficult to dismiss, as it is very derogatory and is not constructive.

As Gray notes, women’s psyches will often internalize the stereotyped elements of the anima image, and will thus act in accordance with it, usually without conscious awareness that they are doing so. “What we can see here, too, is that stereotypes are conveyers of value and potentially conveyers of what seem like timeless truths…the pedagogical transference of such stereotypes through praise or blame (the good/bad woman dichotomy for instance) occurs by promotion of images which we are meant to imitate” (Gray 147). Therefore, the anima as an image can be very destructive to women, because it communicates to them via the collective unconscious who they are and how they should act.

The second problem with the approach of Jung and Plato, is that they rely too heavily on binary oppositions, and value fitting the sexes into tidy categories, instead of seeing that there is a great deal of overlap in terms of men and women’s innate constitutions. In “Spinning Among Fields: Jung, Frye, Levi-Strauss, and Feminist Archetypal Theory” Annis Pratt explores the impact of ontology in the work of these three theorists. She notes that
As theoreticians, we often assume that data can be arranged according to traditionally agreed upon patterns or *a priori* formulations. For example, we tend to assume that all items can be sorted into one of two categories, and we set the categories up as poles in a dualistic, either/or formulation. We frequently go on to identify one category as superior and the other as inferior. Likewise, we find it difficult to entertain two contradictory ideas in the mind simultaneously, and we shy away from both/and reasoning. This tendency to think about ideas in dualistic, hierarchical terms makes us uncomfortable with fields of inquiry that bring a variety of theories and methods to bear upon a problem. (Pratt 93)

As she points out, the urge towards a dualism is one that also plagues Jung’s writings. While Jung prized a certain image of the feminine as well as the unconscious, he placed both concepts “on one side of a dualistic value system along with things ‘cold,’ ‘dark,’ ‘south,’ ‘damp,’ and ‘bad,’ and this categorizing undermined his integrative goals” (Pratt 97).

At times, Jung stated that though the anima is technically a type, it cannot fully act as such because it cannot be tied down to a simple definition:

> The empirical reality summed up under the concept of the anima forms an extremely dramatic content of the unconscious. It is possible to describe this content in rational, scientific language, but in this way one entirely fails to express its living character. Therefore, in describing the living processes of the psyche, I deliberately and consciously give preference to a dramatic, mythological way of thinking and speaking, because this is not only more expressive but also more exact than an abstract scientific terminology, which is wont to toy with the notion that its theoretic formulations may one fine day be resolved into algebraic equations (*Aion* 13)

However, while Jung claims here that it is impossible to define the anima, in other passages he seems to relate the anima type quite clearly to the reader. Indeed, his division of anima into eros and animus into logos is itself a very distinct binary. Furthermore, he seems to be able to elaborate at length both the
positive and negative manifestations of the anima. Jung seems committed, though to showing that he is
not establishing types, even when it is seemingly undeniable.

“…sole purpose is to give name to a group of related or analogous psychic phenomena.

The concept [of the anima] does no more and means no more than, shall we say, than the
concept of ‘arthropods,’ which includes all animals with limbs and so gives a name to
this phenomenological group” (The Archetypes 56).

This is a rather confounding explanation for his methods, for Jung claims that the title “anima” and what
it represents is simply that--a representation. However, he does this while referring to the system of
taxonomy in the animal kingdom, which is a rigid system of categorization, and is indeed is based upon
biological essences. His assertion that it “does no more and means no more harm” is not persuasive,
particularly when looking at the negative impact that his definition has furthered in the lives of women
who do not feel that his notion of “the feminine” represents them.

Jung’s interest in structuring material and concepts is perhaps most apparent in Psychological Types. As Jung notes at the beginning of the chapter titled “Psychological Typology:” “Ever since the
eyearly days of science, it has been an endeavor of the reflective intellect to interpose gradations between
the two poles of the absolute similarity and dissimilarity of human beings” (Psychological Types 542). Jung seems to feel that “If a definition can be given, then it acts as a clarification, reference point, and
measure of whether or not something is an instance of the definition” (Gray 131). While it is easy to see
why developing types would be helpful in communicating Jung’s message, it is also clear for many
reasons why any types that are created have to be very fluid. Gray continues, writing, “In spite of his
protests that he was a not philosopher, Jung follows the philosophers’ stead in numerous places, and his
‘Definitions in Psychological Types is a good example” (131). He also argues in this volume that “The
provision of fixity, precision and meaning in definitions captures the ‘essential and fundamental
phenomena’ that characterize concepts and terms” (Psychological Types 673). This, as Gray argues,
...reveals Jung’s place among theorists who in general seem to be committed to the idea of essential and fundamental phenomena as the marker of any concept, idea, or indeed, any thing. What makes something what it is, in other words, is revealed in definition and definition therefore serves to point to the essence or the essential properties of any concept, idea, or thing. An essence is necessary to something in order that it be what it is.

(Gray 131)

While Jung could have introduced the elements of eros and logos as gender-neutral concepts he does not. Instead, he calls eros anima, and logos animus. While both elements exist within both men and women, and technically should not belong to either, he nonetheless associates these concepts with masculinity and femininity, and makes it clear that the anima represents what makes a woman a woman. This, I believe, encourages women to feel that they must remain true to their anima identity, and can only venture so far into the realm of the animus. While men would also then face the same conundrum, Jung seems to provide ample encouragement for them to integrate the anima as much as possible. It is unfortunate that Jung does not provide nearly as much encouragement to women in this regard, and his frequent praise of the anima may also send the message to women that they should try to mold themselves to match Jung’s anima image.

While Jung allows for the presence of the contrasexual element within men and women, he frequently seems unable to accept women who most strongly represent the animus. While in the example of Miss X in Chapter One, it is clear that Jung worked closely with several female psychologists, and encouraged their intellectual pursuits, these were often relationships that were more than strictly professional. The story of Toni Wolff acts as an example of this. Toni, a former student and patient of Jung, was another intellectual woman in Jung’s life. While Wolff worked as Jung’s assistant, she also focused on further developing the anima concept. Unfortunately, her vision of the anima was ultimately not very liberating either. However, as Tessa Adams notes, it seems that Jung viewed Wolff primarily as his muse (Adams 9). According to Anthony Stevens, “Jung believed that there existed two types of
women: the wife and mother, and the ‘femme inspiratrice,’ which bolstered Jung’s justification for unconventional associations” (Stevens 160). Wolff, he argues, fell into the latter category. Thus, while Jung did encourage some women to study and develop careers, it seems that in general, his attitude towards career women was overall quite negative, as observed in his writings about “mannish” women. It is also clear that in many cases, his interest in mentoring women like Wolff was driven by his attraction for them.

Jung’s anima images were very powerful and exerted great control over him, not only in his relationships with women but in his experiences as well. The anima is a very inspiring force for Jung, but it also seems to contain a strong erotic element as well, and when Jung encountered women such as Wolff, he was often led into romantic relationships with them. There is certainly evidence that Jung could become captivated by the “femme inspiratrice” which represented perhaps his most influential anima image, and often acted as an anima projection.

While we have established that Jung’s system of categorization in *Psychological Types* tends towards essentialism, Gray argues that the bigger concern is how he uses this strategy in his development of the anima and animus:

> His uncritical adoption of stereotypical characterizations of women and men, couched in terms of collective unconscious pre-figuring, opens the door to reading him as ahistorical and apparently essentializing when it comes to women and the feminine. Because of the ethical and political implications which ensue, this latter is not a simple matter of outmoded theorization. (Gray 131)

Thus, according to Gray, we cannot simply dismiss Jung’s appropriation of stereotypes as simply and benignly outdated. The allegation that Jung employs essentialism is a serious one, but it is one that I nonetheless believe to be true—at least in terms of the anima and animus.

What is also evident through Jung’s approach to the archetypes is that his methods closely mirror those of Levi-Strauss, the founder of Structural Anthropology. Levi-Strauss’s “deep structure,” as
elucidated by his cultural studies and represented through the mythemes, is “analogous to the collective unconscious in Jung’s system” (Pratt 119). Pratt notes that “…like Jung…Levi-Strauss posits a static set of contraries as a constant not only in human experience but in the ultimate code or deep structure of thought by which that experience is shaped” (Pratt 121). As a Structuralist, Levi-Strauss was not interested in exploring the cause of this phenomena he observed, but instead he was invested only in deciphering the structure of what he observed. As Pratt deduces, his goal was to logically order that which he observed. “Levi-Strauss’s goal of creating a ‘science of the concrete’ and ‘logic of totemic classifications’ out of totemistic belief systems means that logic overwhelms nature, imperialistically subsuming phenomena by translating them into abstract essences” (Pratt 123). The creation of hierarchies and binaries was, he assumed, simply the way the human mind worked (Pratt 122).

Levi-Strauss…tends to see each culture he describes as nonevolutionary, frozen in historical time. He describes the primitive, mainly non-Western societies from which he gathers his data as being structured according to dualistic patterns. So each with its own set of symbols and activities antithetically related to the symbols and activities of the other, that he concludes that dualistic, or ‘binary’ patterning is the most typical attribute of all cultures (Pratt 121).

As Pratt implies here, Levi-Strauss projected many Western ways of thinking onto people who likely were not familiar with and did not embrace Western mindsets. His assumptions were thus quite ethnocentric, and he seemed to be rather blind to how these cultures differed from one another. It does not seem unlikely that his single-minded agenda to sort people, traditions, and myths into separate containers, could have led him to manipulate the data with which he worked. At the very least, it seems he would have needed to overlook the nuances in the “bundles of relations” he studied. According to Pratt, “…we will not be surprised to find that Levi-Strauss’s ahistorical bundles of relations derive some of their rigidity from a priori assumptions about men, women, and nature, assumptions which derive as much from Western European thought processes as from the data he studied (Pratt 122). Indeed, Levi-Strauss’s
method is suspect at the very least. While he remained committed to the notion that the relationship between nature and culture was timeless, and claimed that his analysis of the two suspended judgement, this is not realistic, since “ideas about nature and culture are not value free…”(Nature, Culture, and Gender 6). Lastly, his belief that “Mythical thought always works from the awareness of oppositions toward their progressive mediation” (“The Structural Study of Myth” 188) sounds very much like Jung’s approach to the union of the male/female opposites, and the ideal union of them through the syzygy. However, while “Rituals, mythic narratives, and cultural practices mediate by combining opposites…the balance is only temporary and the sets of opposites occur eternally” (Pratt 121). While Jung posits that the two can be joined, I remain skeptical that a balanced merger of the two can really be achieved according to Jung’s model

I base this skepticism on Jung’s initial positioning of the anima and animus as binary opposites which makes their union very difficult because it works to establish a strong sense of more than distinction as almost separate faculties, not only between the two elements, but between men and women, whose essence is represented by these concepts. Therefore, while each possesses the contrasexual element, it is always seen as “other” in his or her mind, since Jung makes it clear that these elements are only the full, true property of the sex to which he ascribes them. What is implied, I believe, is that one must be careful not to go too far in one’s embrace of the contrasexual element, for this would be a violation of what Jung seems to posit as one’s essence

How to achieve this balanced merger is taken up by Farwell: “Androgyny appears to be either an interplay of separate and unique elements or a fusion of one into the other; and while most critics implicitly choose one side or the other, they do not see the distinction as crucial, and as a result, tend to equivocate” (Farwell 434). She continues, adding, “If androgyny is a balance of male and female principles…knowing by apartness and knowing by togetherness—then the male and female sides of the brain would interact without either side subsuming the other. Intuition [the feminine side] would be as valid a way of knowledge as rationality [the male side]…”(Bazin 3). This version of androgyny, as we
can see, represents the “interplay of separate and unique elements.” In this understanding, “…the androgynous mind would be free from the confining sex stereotypes which society now imposes but would not therefore be asexual or unisexual” (Bardwick 61). In contrast to this “masculine” and “feminine” interplay, however, is the “fusion” kind of variety which we observed in the Zohar creation myth.

The notion that androgyny is a union, usually mystical, of two people, or two principles, however, leads to a radically different critical tool. Width and breadth of perception are no longer the criteria, but rather a single mode of response and knowing is validated. In this case, androgyny would be identified with one supposedly asexual evaluative quality, usually one which has subsumed and defined its opposite. In critical terms, either intuition of reason could become the dominant critical quality. (Farwell 435)

Farwell also goes on to add that with fusion, it is often the male element that becomes the dominant force within the individual, due to the influence of patriarchy. Yet, in the interplay model, we observe that:

The validity of each approach is assumed, and neither need be subsumed by a more universal, all-encompassing quality. The rational is not the sole arbiter of reality, nor is unqualified intuition or emotion a sole source of truth. The androgynous individual will be able to use both without destroying the other and at the same time break down the barriers which keep emotion and reason separated. (Farwell 442)

This distinction is important, I believe, because what Jung envisions in the syzygy seems to imply a union either of two individuals (one male, one female) or a mixture of the anima and animus within the individual in which the element inherent to one’s sex still holds dominance. Furthermore, it also appears to me that Jung positions the syzygy as a sort of mythical possibility. The fact that it does not feature in many of his writings (or at least rather infrequently in comparison to the anima and animus) suggests to me that the application of the concept itself is not fully worked out by Jung. While Jung also describes the
syzygy as the yin and the yang, I believe that Thurston more thoroughly explains the relationship between both aspects here:

In this view what we call opposites (dualities) are not static states, but processes, each defining the other. The ancient symbol of this view is the Yin/Yang. Yin and Yang are the dualities within the One which is called the Tao. The relation between the dualities is not one of antagonism, but of interdependence for each transforms itself into the other. Light and dark are defined by the other and are part of a whole for which our culture has no word. In this view the goal of life is to achieve harmony in a balance of complimentary qualities unrestricted in their flow of change from one to the other. (“On Male and Female Principle” 38)

In order for both women and men to work towards the androgynous state that Thurston describes, we first have to be willing to challenge the binary view of gender that have plagued Western culture for millennia. This is far from easy, however, especially for women who have often been perceived as inferior to men. Certainly, integrating the animus element will aid us in this task, but the fact remains that Jung’s path to individuation for women must be revised in order to enable more women to fully claim this journey for themselves. As Wehr notes, women must first de-ontologize “the feminine,” so that it no longer possesses an almost religious authority. This will enable “the feminine” to be freed from its position as nomos in Western society. Because nomos is the ordering principle of society, Berger argues that to remove it would be to risk anomy, or loss of order. The absence of nomos can bring “disintegration, fragmentation, and chaos; on an individual level this can mean mental illness, suicide, or extreme anguish” (“Religious and Social Dimensions” 43). Nonetheless, the risk is one which must be taken if women are to loosen the control of the anima archetype upon them in order to fully pursue the possibility of androgyny.

While I strongly believe that much of what has come to constitute Jung’s anima and animus (and more broadly “femininity” and masculinity”) are not based in inherent biological differences, and would
like to see these structures dissolved entirely, I think that it is clear that this is ultimately unattainable—at least at this point in time. As Barry Rutland asserts “…binary gender distinction, both masculine/feminine and gendered/non-gendered (neuter), are basic to the linguistic mapping of the world of objects and states in order to construct a knowable, workable reality. In other words, gender is a constitutive, adliminal cognitive category” (3). Because the gender binary (and binaries in general) have become ingrained patterns of thinking it becomes nearly impossible to conceive of a world in which they do not exist. While it seems to me we must continue to use these terms, I believe that both men and women must actively work to re-define the gendered terms so that they do not represent stereotypes, but instead lived experience. It seems that Derrida presents the best way forward in terms of distancing these terms from their former associations, thereby enabling them to take on new meanings.

One of the strategies that Derrida employs to destabilize the meaning of a particular word is bricolage. In French, bricolage refers to using whatever materials are available and combining them into a new creation. While bricolage frequently takes on the form of mixed-media artwork, it is a concept that translates nicely into Derrida’s work. Because we have established that a word like “femininity” does not have the stable meaning that it was once assumed to hold, we can pull apart the various aspects of that meaning, add new understandings, and then decide what to merge together. In this way, we can think of each new version of a word as representing a sort of collage (Tyson 239).

Another process which enables us to stretch the meaning of a word is putting a word under erasure. This involves writing a word and then crossing it out by placing a large X over it. If one writes femininity and then cross it out, one is showing that while the word is being used to communicate femininity, it should not be read according to the old meaning, but in light of a new meaning (Tyson 239). In many ways, my use of quotations when I refer to “femininity” and “masculinity” is my own version of erasure, for by it, I show that what is traditionally meant by the term, not my own understanding of these concepts.
While it may be true that “How we perceive and understand ourselves and the world is thus governed by the language with which we are taught to perceive them,” (Tyson 239) Deconstruction provides a way to push back against those meanings and thus work to change our worldview and knowledge of self. Because language consists of innumerable conflicting and diverse ideologies that play out over the course of time, to the Deconstructionist, language is entirely ideological. However, because the meanings that are based in ideologies are not innate, unchanging truths, it is possible to examine them and figure out whether the underlying assumption imbedded an ideology is an accurate representation of reality. This is particularly useful when it comes to the duality posed by “masculinity” and “femininity.”

The underlying assumption, (as I have demonstrated) is that whatever is lacking (or opposite) from the one, is therefore the property of the other. Thus, if men are rational, then women are emotional, because the assumption is that rationality and emotionality are binary oppositions. However, Derrida would ask whether emotion and rationality are truly opposed. If we conclude (as I have) that they are not diametrically opposed but are instead often merged in the behavior of both men and women, then this suggests that emotion and rationality cannot be neatly divided and distributed to each sex prospectively. This is significant because it allows for us to not only question and perhaps reject that which we understand to be “feminine” or “masculine” but it enables us to see androgyny as a real possibility. Thus, deconstructing and then reconstructing the images of the masculine and the feminine through language can help to mitigate what is lacking in the anima and animus elements.

By recognizing the ways in which language and culture have acted to define us or enforce systems of oppression throughout history and in the present, it becomes possible to discover ways to subvert those forces, and reclaim the ability to name. While Jung has provided a useful template, it is necessary to supplement and reinterpret his understanding of gender. For women in particular, it is essential to resist the compulsion to conform to the anima archetype which represents historical and modern man’s image of the feminine, not the lived experience of women. Ultimately, men and women
must dare to step outside of social-sanctioned roles, thereby risking anomy to claim wholeness, androgyny, and individuation as his or her own.
Conclusion

While many literary scholars have suggested that Nancy’s death was a punishment—that Dickens simply had to kill her because she was a prostitute—I believe that when read through the lens of the hero archetypes, the conclusion one reaches is quite opposite. Instead, by the end of the novel, Nancy’s individuation reaches its pinnacle, and this simply cannot be tolerated by Sikes. In fact, as Nancy becomes more and more individuated, Sikes’s mistreatment of her only intensifies. While it is true that Dickens does this to show that Sikes and (Victorian society more broadly) simply could not conceive of an androgynous woman like Nancy and thus attempted to thwart her progress at every turn, I also believe that when read from a Jungian standpoint, Sikes’s troubled psyche holds important significance.

*Oliver Twist* presents the reader with Sikes and Nancy: a pair which seem to represent polar opposites. While it may be assumed that Sikes is the way he is because he possesses an inherently bad nature, this is not Dickens’ final message to the reader. Therefore, what we are dealing with is not a binary opposition—this is not a simple distinction between good and bad. It is not that Nancy is wholly good, and that Sikes is wholly bad, for we know that this is not the case, because Nancy herself is not painted in such binary terms. Furthermore, the withdrawal of Sikes’s projection at the end of the novel is followed by his ability to finally experience his own emotions and see more clearly Nancy’s value as a human being. Through this, Dickens clearly communicates to the reader that Sikes was not simply bad by nature, but was trapped by his unwillingness to recognize his own faults and actively work to address them.

From a Jungian perspective, we can see that Sikes was never able to move beyond an infantile understanding of himself and the world. His shadow side kept him at the lowest level of the orphan archetype, and he consistently viewed himself as the injured party—lashing out to assert the control that he felt had been robbed from him. What I suggest then, is that through Nancy and Sikes, we are presented with two possible paths: one in which we can work to identify integrate the contents of the unconscious through the individuation process, and another in which we remain blind to the world of the unconscious
and therefore do not begin the individuation process. Jung makes it clear in his discussion of
individuation, that not all will be able to enter into it, and that, I believe can be witnessed through Sikes’s
psychological stagnation. In fact, it is not so much stagnation as it is further deterioration that we witness
in Sikes as his shadow side increasingly dominates the whole of his psyche.

For this reason, I believe that when read through a Jungian lens, *Oliver Twist* can act as a
cautionary tale regarding the danger of an unintegrated unconscious. While we risk anomy (and in
Nancy’s case, death) by violating our society’s gender roles and working to merge the anima and animus
into a unified whole within our individual psyches—the alternative that we are presented with is far worse.
Indeed, avoiding the call to individuate is no guarantee of safety or happiness, as Sikes’s fate attests.
Thus, what this novel ultimately impresses upon us is the necessity of embarking on our individuation
journeys.
WORKS CITED


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Supervised the implementation of each student's academic program, administered diagnostic and interim testing, graded student tests, recorded student hours, communicated with potential enrollees.
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Facilitated one of the children's programs referred to as "Lego Night". For this program, I read a picture book to the children, then joined them in crafting Lego creations inspired by the characters or theme of the book. Offered general library support at circulation desk utilizing Polaris system.

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Assisted the department’s administrative assistant in The School of Nursing academic office. File retention/file organization and various office duties. Offered support to nursing faculty members. Tasks included coursework related duties, such as developing pre-exam study games, and formatting exams in Angel. Implemented an inventory system for the Nursing Simulation lab and establishing an ordering list with vendor information.

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