

## A Psychoanalytical Study of William Dorrit's Character Based on Mark Elin's Theory of Personality Disorder

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### Abstract

This interdisciplinary, descriptive, library based research adopts Mark Elin's theory of "Personality Disorder" to study William Dorrit's character, whose title in the novel is the "Father of Marshalsea". Elin's theory of personality disorder is based upon the functions of "self-memory", of which "Reality Testing" is an important one. Applying this theory, the research shows that in the first book of the novel, William Dorrit's personality disorder vacillates between Narcissism and inferiority complex. In the second book, however, his personality disorder turns into "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" which is caused by the overwhelming events of the past. Reality-testing, does not operate properly in William Dorrit's mind. Consequently, he is not capable of making distinctions between memory and reality. The final outcome of this incapability is his complete mental breakdown. The other finding of this research is the existence of a structural symmetry between chapters nineteen of both books of the novel, in which the major themes are William Dorrit's mental and psychological agitations.

**Keywords:** *Little Dorrit*, Mark Elin, personality disorder, self-memory, postrauma

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## Introduction

The study of literature through a psychological framework has a rather long and familiar history. Nowadays, however the umbrella term 'interdisciplinary study' is more appealing and reasonable to be applied to such studies. That is, as Moran (2002) states the flexibility and indeterminacy are the two features based on which the value of the term 'interdisciplinary' is based. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to state that this paper provides an interdisciplinary outlook to study a Victorian novel in which there are opportunities for the application of various and more challenging disciplines among which psychology is not unique. On the other hand, Victorian novels in general and those of Dickens in particular have been suitable sources for interdisciplinary studies with specific attention to the presentation of psychology in literature.

Davis (2008) believes that the studies and the interest the Victorians had in phrenology, the pseudo-science of studying bumps on the head, show that they wanted to map the brain, to try to see from outside what was happening within. Therefore, he emphasizes that the experience of Victorian literature always matters.

That "Victorian literature still matters" is the notion on which this research has been done. That is, the significance of the literary texts of the period with emphasis on Dickens' works are the points that have motivated the writer of this paper to see whether a new reading of *Little Dorrit* can give us a different understanding of this novel and its characters' mentality. In other words, the mapping of the brain of William Dorrit is the major concern of this study. While the very title of the novel justifiably creates the impression that *Little Dorrit* (Amy) is the protagonist, the central position of William Dorrit in the novel is so evident that a study that focuses on this character seems worthy enough.

Reconsidering William Dorrit's speeches, actions and reactions in the context of the novel is fruitful in providing us with a new opportunity of analyzing the novel and its psychological implications. As Sutherland states, "Dickens represents society as a shifting system of texts and contexts, in terms of which all readings are partial and open to reformulation" (Sutherland 1990: 306). Therefore, this article intends to reformulate some psychological notions about William Dorrit's character and such an intention is logical to put it under the banner of the interdisciplinary studies because as Moran believes, "Psychoanalysis inevitably encompasses an interest in literature, art and culture" (Moran 2002: 97).

*Little Dorrit* has been studied from various psychological perspectives. The bulk of psycho-analytical research on this novel and the other novels by Dickens is too well-known a topic to be introduced here; however, this paper intends to re-evaluate the mentality of William Dorrit (the Father of Marshalsea) so as to suggest that his failure in coping with his situation in the second book of the novel is due to some reasons that might be presented from a different perspective.

As Dames emphasizes, "The importance of psychology to a study of the novel

lies in the simultaneous emergence of both as discrete forms of intellectual and artistic activity and their mutual implication: their shared formal concerns (ways of writing, or narrating the self)” (Dames 2005: 93). The significance of the Victorian novels, especially those of Dickens, in our time has been confirmed ,

Foreshadowing of ‘the stream of consciousness’ has been recognized in early novels of Dickens, particularly in his studies of fear and guilt in such criminals as Bill Sikes and Jonas Chuzzlewit. Another recent critic has pointed out an affinity between Molly Bloom’s drowsy reverie at the end of *Ulysses* and Flora Finching’s scatterbrained conversation in *Little Dorrit*. (Stevenson 2004: 51)

Moreover, Crees believes that “Dickens’s characters depend upon the presence of the past” (Crees 2002: 13). He also considers memory as one of Dickens’s most crucial themes. Those who are familiar with the novel and William Dorrit’s fate remember well how his memories of the past so severely impinge upon his present that they leave him mentally deranged. The novel itself is basically divided into two books. That is, Book the First, Poverty and Book the Second, Riches. Besides, William Dorrit’s mental breakdown takes place in the second book of the novel. Therefore, for our purpose we call the first book, “the past”, and the second book, “the present”, so as to see how the tremendous shift in Dorrit’s fortune from the first book (the past) to the second book (the present) brings about the change in the personality disorder.

In other words, the assumption of this paper is that William Dorrit suffers from personality disorder. As Sperry (1999) in the preface of his book mentions, the research data and the clinical experience suggest that personality and personality disorders are better conceptualized in both temperament and character terms. Therefore, through a study of William’s change of temperament through the novel the changes in his personality disorder are documented. In other words, his temperament through the novel verifies the change in his personality disorder. That is, in the first book his personality disorder vacillates between Narcissism and inferiority complex; however, in the second book the disorder turns into ‘post-traumatic stress disorder’. Quoting from Cathy Caruth, Wyatt refers to the syndrome known as post-traumatic stress disorder in which “overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess, in intrusive images and thoughts, the one who has lived through them” (Wyatt 1996: 444). Therefore, through close reading of *Little Dorrit*, the writer of this article hopes to clarify how this process of changing personality disorders is observable within the two books of the novel mentioned above.

## **Literature Review**

There are many articles that have discussed the conscious or the unconscious reactions of Mr. Dorrit and stated that his speech or behavior is tremendously influenced by his long-term imprisonment and experiences in the Marshalsea. This paper, however, suggests that the main problem with Mr. Dorrit is that he suffers from a personality disorder. It is under the pressure of such a disorder that Mr. Dorrit

perceives his own identity in two different versions. The double identity, suggested here, has already been discussed by other researchers with various nomenclatures. Andrew Bedford (2010), for example, refers to 'ambivalent individual', Dames (2005) borrows E. S. Dallas's 'hidden soul', Justman (2002) characterizes Mr. Dorrit both as 'imposter and as a figure of pathos', and Librach (1975) introduces the theme of 'escape from the self or personality'. While the terms they have used to describe William Dorrit's character seem different, the fact remains that in the novel we face a character whose personality deserves to be studied from a new psychological perspective.

Edgecombe states, "Dickens anticipates so much of the twentieth century in *Little Dorrit* (Joycean stream of consciousness in Flora's monologues, the Kafkaesque absurd of Mr. F's aunt)" (Edgecombe 1997: 376). Vrettos also mentions, "Together over the course of the century, Victorian psychology and Victorian fiction challenged the unity and stability of the self and the coherence of consciousness. Both attempted to map the intricate structures and capacities of the psyche" (Vrettos 2005: 82).

Holoch believes, "*Little Dorrit* provides the most complete development in Dickens's works of the relationship between the individual consciousness and the social system" (Holoch 1987: 336). Moreover, Kuskey (2014) in her essay comparatively studies math and the mechanical mind presented by Charles Babbage and what she calls mental labor in *Little Dorrit*. Crees (2002) in his article on the novel mentions that Dickens sketches people who are doomed to break, they are on the road to insanity and he refers to William Dorrit as one of those characters. Besides, he states that William Dorrit has never been able to face who he really is and the consequence is the crumbling of his mental foundations.

William Dorrit's collapse at Mrs. Merdle's banquet and its 'conventions of condign punishment' is discussed by Bennett (1995). She also refers to the fact that Mr. Dorrit as the erring father, Lear figure, a Macbeth type of personality at Mrs. Merdle's dinner in Rome has been referred to by critics who found some echoes from Shakespearean tragedy in *Little Dorrit*.

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This study relies on a combination of psychology and literature which inevitably produce inherently interdisciplinary research. Moran believes, "The value of the term 'interdisciplinary' lies in its flexibility and indeterminacy, and that there are potentially as many forms of interdisciplinary as there are disciplines" (Moran 2002: 15). He also adds, "Within the broadest possible sense of the term, I take interdisciplinary to mean any form of dialogue or interaction between two or more disciplines: the level, type, purpose and effect of this interaction remains to be examined" (16).

Therefore, the first thing to emphasis is the interdisciplinary nature of this study because we are going to apply a psychological theory to a literary text. According to Elin,

Memory is at the heart of personality. Under normal developmental conditions self-memory works with a person's cognitive and affective systems to make meaning of the world...without self-memory there would be no I, it, or other. Self-memory is so magnetic a force that writers, artists, and philosophers have for centuries speculated about the relationships among the self, cognition, and affect. (Elin 2004: 443)

The way one's personality is shaped has been discussed variously by different theorists. However, for our purpose the definition of 'schema' by Sperry is helpful. In his opinion schema refers to the basic beliefs individuals use to organize their view of self, the world, and the future (Elin 2004). William Dorrit, as a case study, has that 'schema' in viewing himself as a very important or a completely insignificant person in the first book of the novel. The schema by which he defines his own self, the world and the future is a different one in the second book. In other words, his schema in the first book is shaped by a combination of personality disorders of Narcissism and inferiority complex while in the second book the schema by which he defines himself, the world and the future is shaped by a posttraumatic stress disorder. Such a change in the schema or the way this character evaluates everything is caused by the malfunction of reality testing which is an important element in the self-memory.

Based on Elin's theory this paper is going to illuminate the role that self-memory plays in causing a new personality disorder in William Dorrit's character. In other words, borrowing Monster Frankenstein's sentence that "memory brought madness with it", Elin defines memory as a meaning making system, which memorializes the self and gives it a sense of existence and meaning...one of self-memory's most important functions is reality testing" (Elin 2004: 445). Through close reading of the novel, this paper shows how the malfunction of reality testing turns the personality disorder of the first book (Narcissism and inferiority complex) into the different personality disorder of (post-traumatic stress disorder) of the second book. In order to apply our interdisciplinary approach to the text of the novel, a close reading of the text with specific attention to the parts in which William Dorrit is involved is followed. That is, we follow the character's speech, thought and reactions to trace the change of one type of personality disorder to another one.

Close reading of the text and applying the psychological notions of Elin to those parts in which William is concerned constitute the qualitative, analytical and interdisciplinary approach of this study. As Moran (2002) states, psychoanalysis helps us to study the manifestations of conscious and unconscious. A novel as a text is the proper field for studying such manifestations.

## **Discussion**

Keeping Elin's notions in mind, we read the past and the present to see how the personality disorders reveal themselves in our analysis of the character. In chapter

nineteen of the first book William along with his brother is presented to the readers in the following lines:” Fredrick the free, was humble, bowed, withered, and faded, William the bond, was so courtly, condescending, and benevolently conscious of a position; that in this regard, if in no other, the brothers were a spectacle to wonder at” (Dickens 1999: 185). He also adds, “William the bond looked about him to receive salutes, returned them by graciously lifting off his hat, and, with an engaging air” (186).

The above lines clearly show the seemingly aristocratic mood that William cherishes. Moreover, in the same chapter his conceited speech to his brother well reveals his own self-admiration: “Do you think your habits are as precise and methodical as –shall I say as mine are? Consider my case, Fredrick. I am a kind of example” (187).

William’s attitude towards his own brother, while saying goodbye, is another telling example, “The father of Marshalsea showed the amiable solicitude of a superior being that he should come to no harm” (188).

In addition to the above-mentioned quotations that help us grasp William’s high self-estimation more explicitly, there are some other parts that present his self-assessment implicitly. That is, addressing his audience he says,

It must be remembered that to support and existence there [in the prison] during many years, required a certain combination of qualities...Gentlemen, whoever came to that college, to remain there a length of time, must have strength of character to go through a good deal and to come out of a good deal. (189)

His speech shows that the strength, to which he refers, in his opinion, exists in his own character. In other words, he considers himself as the one who has the strength of character to go through and to come out a good deal. The attitude he shows towards himself and the way he brags of his strength may convince us that he is a rather Narcissist character. However, we are shocked when in the same chapter he says:

What does it matter whether I eat or starve? What does it matter whether such a blighted life as mine comes to an end, now, next week, or next year? What am I worth to anyone? A poor prisoner, fed on alms and broken victuals; a squalid, disgraced wretch? (191)

If we put the question at the beginning of the above quotation (What does it matter?) next to the part we have already mentioned, “I must have my meals punctually...the importance of these arrangements” )187), we easily find it out that personality disorder is the problem from which William suffers. The problem he has, basically deals with the issue of ‘self’. That is, we face a character who shows

Narcissism and inferiority complex simultaneously. According to Elin, “Personality disorders are not static, they are not just a list of symptoms in the DSM-IV but are dynamic and multidimensional” (Elin 2004: 461).

The fact that in the first pages of the same chapter he primarily brags of his situation and manner, shortly after that he demeans himself and again, he boasts in the next lines, certainly convinces us that there is something wrong with him. He says, “And I have some respect here...I am not quite trodden down. Go out and ask who is the chief person in the place...Go out and ask who is never trifled with, and who is always treated with some delicacy” (Dickens 1999: 191).

In addition to the above parts, his self-fascinating notions sometimes become so absurd that they sound ridiculous to the readers. That is, in anticipating his own death and funeral, he states,

Go out and ask what funeral here (it must be here, I know it can be nowhere else) will make more talk, and perhaps more grief, than any that has ever gone out of the gate. They will say your father’s” (191).

Chapter nineteen is filled with passages that show his mental vacillations over his own position- an ambivalent self-esteem that is based on contradictory statements. While he predicts his unique funeral and its great grief, he addresses his listeners through these words,

Oh despise me, despise me! Look away from me, don’t listen to me, stop me, blush for me, cry for me. Even you Amy! Do it, do it! I do it to myself. I am hardened now; I have sunk too low to care long even for that. (191)

The extreme oppositions of self-evaluation causes him, as the narrator observes, “To burst into tears of maudlin pity for himself, and at length suffering her [Amy] to embrace him and take charge of him...and [she]bewailed his wretchedness” (192).

Elin’s notions of the “relationships among the self, cognition, and affect” encourage us to read the following lines more attentively to see how William Dorrit resorts to the memories to cope with his present condition:

Then he reverted to himself, and weakly told her about how much better she would have loved him if she had known him in his vanished character, and how he would have married her to a gentleman who should have been proud of her as his daughter. (192)

‘His vanished character’ to which he refers certainly exists in his memory and we will see in the next pages of the novel how this ‘vanished character’ gets reformulated and creates other personalities of which William makes us gradually

aware; however, at the moment we limit ourselves to chapter nineteen of the first book.

Having passed that 'maudlin' mood, William

now sat in his black velvet cap and old gray gown, magnanimous again; and would have comported himself towards any Collegian who might have looked in to ask his advice, like a great moral Lord Chesterfield, or Master of the ethical ceremonies of the Marshalsea. (192)

The above shift in his self-evaluation gives him a chance to create another self for himself. He says, "I am in the twenty- third year of my life here...with a catch in his breath that was not so much a sob as an irrepressible sound of self-approval, the momentary outburst of a noble consciousness" (193). Whatever happens in the first book of the novel, as it was mentioned, confirms the idea that Mr. Dorrit's self-assessment reveals various personalities that range from 'a superior being', 'an example some might be like if they choose', 'a person of qualities', 'a character of strength', 'a magnanimous advisor', 'a great moral Lord Chesterfield', 'Master of the ethical ceremonies' to that 'trodden down', 'blighted life', 'poor prisoner fed on alms', 'disgraced wretch', 'sunk too low' who confesses, "I am unfortunately dependent on these men for something, every hour in the day" (190).

Therefore, from the very first book of the novel William's personality disorder is a major theme. While Grove in his study of the novel asserts, "In the character of Clennam, Dickens presents a more intensive psychological study of personality than was his custom" (Grove 1973: 751), this paper suggests that William's case is even more intensively presented than that of Clennam. It also strongly agrees with Grove that this novel "reveals a Dickens capable of something close to modern psychoanalysis" (Grove 1973: 752).

The second book of the novel provides the Dorrits with a new social status. The world of the Marshalsea belongs to the past and the second book takes us to what we have already suggested to be called the present for our own purpose. If we recall Sperry's idea that "Schema refers to the basic beliefs individuals use to organize their view of self, the world, and the future" (Sperry 1999: 6), we can recognize Mr. Dorrit's inability to organize his view of self, the world, and the future from the first chapters of the second book. In other words, that 'characterological component of personality' that is supposed to be defined by schema in order to organize Mr. Dorrit's view of 'self' in his new situation is assailed by worries and fears of his own memory.

Elin's notion of the influence of self-memory on "a person's cognitive and affective systems to make meaning of the world" (Elin 2004: 443) is helpful in analyzing the following lines. That is, they explicitly reveal the incongruity of the new position with the memories of the previous one. The incongruous past and present potentially worsen the personality disorder that we have traced in the first



book of the novel. In book II, chapter twelve, we read:

Mr. Dorrit looked severely at him [Tinkler the Valet], and also kept a jealous eye upon him until he went out at the door, mistrusting that he might have something in his mind prejudicial to the family dignity; that he might have even got wind of some Collegiate joke before he came into the service, and might be derisively reviving its remembrance at the present moment. If Tinkler had happened to smile, however faintly and innocently, nothing would have persuaded Mr. Dorrit, to the hour of his death, but that this was the case. (Dickens 1999: 397)

As the extract above shows, Mr. Dorrit has the anxiety that [Tinkler the Valet] might have some knowledge of the period in which he was a prisoner and such a knowledge reduces the dignity of his family.

The mental agony of Mr. Dorrit is somehow apparent to Amy and the narrator reads her mind for the readers in the following lines, “She felt, that in what he had just now said to her, and in his whole bearing towards her, there was the well-known shadow of the Marshalsea wall. It took a new shape, but it was the old sad shadow” (398).

Considering the above lines, Mr. Dorrit’s personality disorder that revealed itself in the various forms of self-fascination and self-negation, discussed in the close reading of the first book, takes a new form in the second book; a form which is certainly more deteriorating than the previous one. In the second book William Dorrit unconsciously entangles himself in memories of the past so tremendously that even Amy’s normal behavior in their new situation becomes agonizing to him. That is, he intends to remove the past but every person or action reminds him of what he used to be. Tinkler the Valet is not the only person whose presence intensifies that agony. Surprisingly, even Amy’s actions disturb him. He addresses her in this way:

I was there all those years. I was –ha-universally acknowledged as the head of the place. I- hum-I caused you to be respected there, Amy. I –ha hum-I gave my family a position there. I deserve a return. I claim a return. I say, sweep it off the face of the earth and begin afresh. Is that much? I ask, is that much? (399)

Mr. Dorrit’s mental agony gradually gets more complicated and habitual. That is, even in Book II, chapter sixteen, when he visits Mr. Merdle’s bank and hears ‘the frequent exclamation as he rolled glibly along’ that it is ‘A wonderful man to be Mr. Merdle’s friend!’, the narrator informs us that even those compliments could not relieve William’s mental pains. According to the narrator,

Only one thing sat otherwise than auriferously, and at the same time lightly, on

Mr. Dorrit's mind. It was the Chief Butler. That stupendous character looked at him, in the course of his official looking at the dinners in a manner that Mr. Dorrit considered questionable. He looked at him...with a glazed fixedness that Mr. Dorrit did not like. Seated at table in the act of drinking, Mr. Dorrit still saw him through his wine glass, regarding him with a cold and ghostly eye. It misgave him that the Chief Butler must have known a Collegian, and must have seen him in the College- perhaps had been presented to him. He looked as closely at the Chief Butler as such a man could be looked at, and yet he did not recall that he had ever seen him elsewhere. Ultimately he was inclined to think that there was no reverence in the man...The Chief Butler had him in his supercilious eye, even when that eye was on the plate and the other table garniture, and he never let him out of it. (518)

The presence of the Chief Butler creates misgivings for William Dorrit. That is, he feels doubtful and apprehensive that the man may have seen him in the Marshalsea and possibly is aware of his past life. Besides, he feels that the "supercilious eye" of the butler is on him even when apparently his eyes are on some other table garniture.

Mr. Dorrit's mental anxiety of the revelation of the past once again shows itself in chapter seventeen of the Second Book when Flora Finching demands visiting him. We are informed that, "He had reflected in his momentary pause, that unless she were admitted she might leave some message, or might say something below, having a disgraceful reference to that former state of existence. Hence the concession, and hence the appearance of Flora, piloted in by the man, man" (519).

The fact that Mr. Dorrit consciously attempts on 'sweeping the past off the face of the earth and begin afresh' and everybody's presence or action forces him back into the past is a warning that such a character may soon lose the track of time and may show more obvious symptoms of what we have already mentioned as 'posttraumatic stress disorder'. To provide another example of his potentially dangerous situation we refer to chapter eighteen that begins by "Manifold are the cares of wealth and state" (527). The opening passage of the chapter refers to Mr. Dorrit's "debate that arouse within him whether or no he should take the Marshalsea in his way back, and look at the old gate. He had decided not to do so" (527).

The above passage well clarifies that among all the manifold cares of wealth and state, Mr. Dorrit's major concern is avoiding the direction that makes revisiting the old gate inevitable. That is, he does not want to have a single glance at the gate of the prison. Therefore, he fiercely asks the astonished coachman "to go over London Bridge and re-cross the river by Waterloo Bridge – a course which would have taken him almost within sight of his old quarters" (527).

In spite of his efforts to avoid even the sight of Marshalsea or any person, speech, situation or action that may remind him of his former self within those walls, Mr. Dorrit has the 'conflict in his breast'. The narrator tells us:

Even at the Merdle's dinner table next day, he was so out of sorts about it, that he continued at intervals to turn it over and over...It made him hot to think what the Chief Butler's opinion of him would have been, if that illustrious personage, could have plumbed with that heavy eye of the stream of his meditations. (527)

William's fear of the revelation of his past increases when John Chivery appears. Mr. Dorrit who leads him into his own room, seizes John by the collar when they are safely alone. He furiously tells him, "How dare you do this? How do you presume to come here? How dare you insult me...Your coming here is an affront, an impertinence, an audacity. You are not wanted here. Who sent you here? What –ha-the Devil do you do here?" (529).

The short and interrogative sentences confirm the speaker's outrageous mood; however, John's frank reaction and his ignorance of what Mr. Dorrit feels at the moment leaves the latter one ashamed, and he addresses John by these words, "Young John, I am very sorry to have been hasty with you but-ha-some remembrances are not happy remembrances and –hum-you shouldn't have come" (529).

We have already referred to some parts of the novel in which Mr. Dorrit's apprehensions are mentioned. Those parts reminded him of his former self; however; John's presence can be the worst of those experiences because it not only recalls the 'unhappy remembrances' but it also refreshes the character's mind of the implied suggestion to his own daughter in chapter nineteen of the First Book. That is, the part in which he asks Amy to behave in a way that pleases the Chiverys; the kind of behavior that "shows the moment at which the corruptions of the prison have reached their lowest point, for he is suggesting that she engages in a polite form of prostitution" (Holotch 1978: 334).

The burden of the recalled memories on Dorrit's mind is so devastating that he addresses John in the following way: "I hope we-ha-agree that we have spoken together in confidence; and that you will abstain, in going out, from saying anything to anyone that might-hum-suggest that –ha- once I-----" (Dickens 1999: 531). The pause in articulating the last sentence of the utterance presents the amount of the horror he feels about the revelation of his concealed self. On the same page, after remaining alone for an hour, Mr. Dorrit rings for the Courier and gives him the bundle of cigars that John has already presented to him as a gift. He tells the Courier, "Ha – brought by-hum-little offering from-ha-son of old tenant of mine". In other words, he resorts to telling lies so as to hide his other self. As Carlisle suggests, "He [Dickens] develops a correlation between the fictions, the lies, that the characters tell each other or themselves and the novel he is writing" (Carlisle 1975: 196).

Although Mr. Dorrit tells a lie in this part of the novel, he is not mentally relieved yet. It is the next day, as the narrator observes, that brings a better mental relief; "Another day's sun saw him at Calais. And having now got the Channel

between himself and John Chivery, he began to feel safe, and to find that the foreign air was lighter to breath than the air of England” (Dickens 1999: 531). Mr. Dorrit escapes England supposedly to ‘breath the lighter foreign air’, but his agony does not let him alone. That is, in chapter nineteen of the Second Book we find him in Italy. As the narrator says,

Mr. Dorrit, though he had his castle –building to engage his mind, could not be quite easy in that desolate place...The Valet on the box evidently quaked. The Courier in the rumble was not altogether comfortable in his mind...As soon as Mr. Dorrit let down the glass, and looked back at him (which was very often), he saw him ...generally standing up the while and looking about him, like a man who had his suspicions, and kept upon his guard. Then would Mr. Dorrit, pulling up the glass again, reflect that those postilions were cut –throat looking fellows, and that he would have done better to have slept in Civita Vecchia, and have started betimes in the morning. (533)

That William Dorrit does not feel quite easy in that desolate place, that the Courier seems suspicious and keeping on guard, that those postilions are cut-throat looking fellows all reveal the agonized mentality of the character.

The whole extract reminds us of Carlisle’s idea that “*Little Dorrit* is peopled with characters...who constantly entertain paranoid suspicions” (Carlisle 1975: 206). It was already documented that Mr. Dorrit himself is the one whose paranoid suspicions are sequentially depicted in the parts he is faced with Tinkler the Valet, the Chief Butler, Flora Finching, John Chivery, the postilions and even his own daughter and brother. That is, his return to Rome (chapter nineteen), at that time of the night is unexpected by his own people, as the narrator informs us. Therefore, no one appears to receive him except the porter. He, then, decides to find Amy himself. “Looking in unseen” he finds his brother and daughter engaged in a conversation. As the lines read, “The figures were much the same as of old, his brother being sufficiently like himself to represent himself for a moment, in the composition” (Dickens 1999: 534).

His unexpected arrival, his observation of the intimate conversation between the two dear and near ones could be sufficient reasons for him to take the situation as it is; however, he becomes ‘a little impatient, and a little querulous’. He observes, “I am glad to find you at last, Amy...Ha. Really I am glad to find –hum-anyone to receive me at last. I appear to have been-ha-so little unexpected, that upon my word I began-ha hum-to think it must be right to offer an apology for –ha-taking the liberty of coming back at all” (535).

The tone of his speech, the words he utters and the conclusion he comes to are helpful in convincing us that his personality disorder has become more complicated. This paper has traced some symptoms of the personality disorder in chapter nineteen of the First Book and has found some different symptoms in chapter nineteen of the

Second Book. The symmetrical arrangement of the chapters in depicting William Dorrit's gradual mental derangement is structurally noticeable. However, the personality disorder has gained a different form. In other words, in the Second Book of the novel we find out that William is even suspicious of his own family members. He suspects that his own brother might be replacing him. Therefore, the narrator reports his reaction in these lines: "I am stronger than you, dear Fredrick," returned his brother, with an elaboration of fraternity in which there was severity; "I hope I can travel without detriment at –ha-any hour I choose" (535).

Moreover, his changed attitude towards Amy is observable in these lines:

I can do it without assistance. I –ha- need not trouble you, Amy. Could I have a morsel of bread and a glass of wine, or –hum-would it cause too much inconvenience? Thank you, my love" said Mr. Dorrit, with a reproachful frost upon him; I-ha- am afraid I am causing inconvenience." It would seem as though he had a changed or worn appearance in her eyes, and he perceived and resented it; for, he said, with renewed peevishness "Amy what are you looking at? What do you see in me that causes you to –ha-concentrate your solicitude on me in that –hum-very particular manner? (536)

While Amy's answer for the above questions is "It gladdens my eyes to see you again; that's all", he responds, "Don't say that's all, because –ha-that's not all. You –hum-you think", said Mr. Dorrit, with an accusatory emphasis, "that I am not looking well" (536). The narrator also informs us that he was so inclined to be angry that Amy said nothing more in her justification.

That the nature or the form of Dorrit's personality disorder has changed can be observed by making a comparison between the above scene in which he directly and 'peevishly' asks his daughter what causes her to concentrate on him in that particular manner and the scenes with Tinkler the Valet and the Chief Butler in which he does not express his 'paranoid suspicions'. In other words, from the First Book of the novel (the past), chapter nineteen, through the Second Book (the present), chapter nineteen, the overwhelming burden of memories on William Dorrit's mind has been so devastating that he does not distinguish the past from the present. That is, he mixes them together because the reality testing of his mind does not function properly.

As Gagnier asserts, "Many psychologists and philosophers used Dickens's characters as examples of the presence of the past" (Gagnier 2011: 335). In William Dorrit's case many of those who studied the novel psychologically stated that his mental breakdown is the side effect of his imprisonment for a long time. Gagnier quotes from Carpenter who cited Dickens on the consequences to personal identity of a lack of agreement between present and past mental experiences. Gagnier also adds, "While individual human psyches cannot annihilate the past, whole societies can alter, irredeemably leaving them behind" (Gagnier 2011: 340).

In other words, it seems that these psychological studies of the novel most of the time conclude that the past is the element that affects the present of the character. This paper, however, tried to show the personality disorder that existed in the psyche of the character from the beginning of the novel developed into a different type during the character's life.

### **Conclusion**

While many researchers have studied *Little Dorrit* from psychological approaches and illuminated various mentalities of the characters of this novel, the present research, inspired by Elin's words that "Self-memory is a driving force for survival, that one of self-memory's most important functions is reality testing" (Elin 2004: 445), concludes that Mr. Dorrit's personality disorder the symptoms of which were studied in the First Book of the novel, changes into a different and more destructive one in the Second Book. This 'post-traumatic stress disorder' does not allow him to cope with the memories of the past and the events of the present separately. That is, the memories and the present events merge into each other and 'reality testing' as the important function of self-memory does not operate properly.

According to Elin (2004), under normal conditions self-memory works with a person's cognitive and affective systems to make meaning of the world. However, William Dorrit, whose mind is incapable of taking advantage of these systems comes into a complete breakdown in Mrs. Merdle's dinner party. Unable to distinguish where he is, Mr. Dorrit asks his daughter to fetch Bob, the turnkey. Moreover, he addresses the people in the party in the following way, "Ladies and gentlemen, the duty-ha-devolves upon me of-hum-welcoming you to the Marshalsea. Welcome to the Marshalsea!" (Dickens 1999: 542).

Finally, his tragic fate, as Elin also mentioned, reminds us of Mary Shelley's words in *Frankenstein* that "Memory brought madness with it, and when I thought of what had passed, a real insanity possessed me; sometimes I was furious and burned with rage; sometimes low and despondent" (Shelley 2003: 180).

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