

Realism in Dickens' Novels

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ABSTRACT

The present paper discusses the realism in the choice novels of Charles Dickens's- Oliver Twist, Great Expectations and David Copperfield. It has been conventionally and universally accepted that Charles Dickens is one of the most significant successful writers in the history of English novels, is a realistic writer. He is more compassionate and explicit in his creations insisting upon the pervasions of feeling as well as of thought and mixture of realism and fantasy is a major characteristic of his style. Dickens builds up his chapters and characters with his powerful imagination, fascinated by the details of social observation. The unique feature of Dickens imagination is on the multiple views of realism and fantasy, comic and pathetic.

Realism in 'Oliver Twist' is brought out with great sarcasm (e.g.) the greed, laziness and arrogance of charitable workers like Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Mann. The main themes of all Charles Dickens' novels were the worst treatment of the poor people in the society. The key theme in Oliver Twist, is the failure of the workhouse system that took less care of the poor and lonely orphans. Dickens's reputation mostly relies on fantastic fertility in character creation, the depiction of childhood and youth are clearly picturised in 'Great Expectations'. Pip is presented from childhood, going through a very complex process of growth in which he develops drastically, which is mainly because of the influence of his society. The character Pip attributes a psychological realism to the novel 'Great Expectation'.

The art of handling characters and the art of realism in words and in the use of a first person narrator, gives a realistic touch in the novel 'David Copperfield' which arises sympathy for the characters in the minds of readers. Dickens was not only the greatest Englishman of his generation as Swinburne calls him, but for all times.

Introduction

Realism an aesthetic movement was developed by the middle of the 19th century to show a true reflection of reality. To bring social reforms, Dickens depicted the world of his period exactly as it existed through the work to raise awareness among the readers (Ermarth, Elizabeth, 1998). Dickens's realism is a combination of ethical and aesthetic ideals. In England romanticism and realism took form concurrently. Therefore, the creation and progress of Charles Dickens realism took place under the three artistic systems – education,

romanticism and new realism with the supremacy of the realistic beginning that has distinct evolution on the carriers of evil.

Charles Dickens is one of the most renowned English authors of the 19th century. His use of realism is the reflection of the harsh life experienced in England during the Industrial Revolution. It was a dramatic shift from the exotic and poetic Romanticism that prevailed a decade's prior (Fletcher, Robert, 2007). It introduced a novel way of writing and as a result a new generation of authors influenced by it which still exists in American and English literature. Literary realism (Flibbert, Joseph, 1971) is a literary movement that represents exactly the real life experiences. It depicts the actual picture of the middle and lower classes of society and the way they were treated (Hauck, Richard, 1970). Literary realism portrays a story truthfully without dramatizing or romanticizing it.

It has been traditionally and universally accepted that Charles Dickens, one of the most important successful writers in the history of English novels, is a realistic writer. As far as literature is concerned the term Realism has two significant meanings (Jiang, Changsheng, 2006). One depicting things as they appear and the other is the art of making things that may be imagined to look real. There is a trace of mid-Victorian realism (i.e.) excess in stylistic and narrative of various kinds of sensational literature. He is more compassionate and explicit in his creations insisting upon the perversions of feeling as well as of thought and the mixture of realism and fantasy builds up his chapters and characters by the details of social aberration.

Dickens realism is peculiar like that of a child living in the real world always having its dreams and fantasies with the incorporation of facts and fiction, joy and sorrow, this world and the world beyond the material reality. He may not be a strict realist because he makes the things he deals with look like real and there are no dreamy or airy world or ghosts and fairies or supernatural things and Gods appearing in his works and the characters are human beings of flesh and blood made for his own delight with unconstrained fancy.

Review of Literature

A realist reading of Dickens' texts proves that he depicts the oppressive nature of the nineteenth century society and its subjection of the poor, children and women Pamela (Santoni, Angela, 2008). Dickens depicts the lower class to symbolize a high moral ground and discards the fake principles of the upper class through the character, Drummle, an upper-class lout and Magwitch, a persecuted convict, has a deep inner worth that is well developed with greater depth in the character of Joe.

Dickens shows as corrupt and materialistic through the character Joe who contrasts to the aspirations Pip who rejects the values of the society was represented by the essay writer (2020). Dickens describes London realistically as "a most dismal place; the skylight eccentrically patched like a broken head, and the distorted adjoining houses looking as if they had twisted themselves to peep down at me through it" in ukessays (2015).

The realism issue on a prominent aspect of two plots of the novel, in the second part of the novel (chapter 20-39) Dickens keeps alive in the chapter dominated by 'Havisham-plot' in the shape of Pip's conviction to facilitate that she is his benefactor, and by her support of his desperate love for Estella described in cram.com. In *Oliver Twist* the atmosphere of fear and desperation surrounds in the plight of Oliver menaced by Fagin's gang and Monk's persecution and Nancy by Fagin and Sikes.

Realism in Oliver Twist

Realism in *Oliver Twist* is brought out with great sarcasm (Richard Bentley, 1837). He took up the most glaring problem, that of the work-houses and to expose the ugliness of the under-world of London. With a purpose of mending the grim life in the work-houses has been unfolded to the public. Dickens deals the story of any child born in a work-house is shrouded in mystery.

He introduces the tragic injustice of such poor folks dramatically. what an excellent example of the power of dress, Young Oliver Twist was wrapped in the blanket which had hitherto formed his only covering, he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar;- a Parish child- the orphan of a work-house- the humble, half-starved drudge- to be cuffed and buffeted through the world- the despised by all, and pitied by none. Dickens clearly picturizes the class discrimination between a noble man and a beggar by the clothes they wear and how they are marked a place and rank in the world while they're only a baby permanently.

Dickens depicts with great sarcasm the greed, laziness, and the brutality of charitable workers like Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Mann. Considering the character Mrs. Mann a petty official of the words, "the elderly female was a woman of wisdom and experience, she know what was good for children, and she had a very accurate perception of what was good for herself.

So she appropriated the greater part of the weekly stipend to her own use, and consigned the rising generation to even a shorter allowance that was originally provided; there by finding in the lowest depth a deeper still, and providing herself a very great experimental philosopher". And the other character (Rosenberg, Brian, 1992) Mr. Bumble, a parish beadle, removes Oliver from the baby farm and puts him to work picking Oakum at the main work-house.

He is a person of- every-inch-a cruel-despot. He is sadist who takes pleasure in inflicting pains to others particularly orphans. His cruelty is seen when he presents Oliver to the board after giving him a tap on the head with his cane to wake him up and another on back to make him lively. He is the person called to control Oliver. He robs innocent orphans of their rightful claims. He utilized the work-house himself.

And the other character Fagin an inhuman brute is referred as a Jew and the only Jewish traits given to him is greed and avarice because of the time to which the story refers, that class of criminals almost invariably was- a Jew. Fagin the evil-incarnate corrupts the innocent minds of children in pick-pocketing and in robbery.

Realism in Great Expectations

Dickens's reputation mostly relies on fantastic fertility in character creation, the depiction of childhood and youth are clearly picturised in 'Great expectations.' Pip is presented from childhood to adulthood, going through a very complex process of growth in which he develops drastically, which is mainly because of the influence of his society. The character Pip attributes a psychological realism in great expectations (Chapman & Hall, July 1861).

The sensitive and sensible nature of children, their innocence and their spirit of realization are shown in the following utterance of Pip:

"I took the opportunity of being alone in the country- yard to look at my coarse hands and my common boots.... They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now, as vulgar appendages, I determined to ask Joe why he had ever taught me to call those picture- cards, Jacks, which ought to be called knaves, I wished Joe had been rather more genteelly brought up, and then I should have been so too."

The fears and doubts of the child in general and of Pip in special are depicted hereunder:

"I had sadly broken sleep when I go to bed, through thinking of the strange man taking aim at me with his invisible gun, and of the guiltily coarse and common thing it was; to be on secret terms of conspiracy with convicts a feature in my low career... A dread possessed me that when I least expected it... without seeing who held it, and I screamed myself awake."

The presumptions and suppositions of the child are reflected very realistically and intelligently (Wright, Brian, 2007). Pip says:

"Home had never been a very pleasant place to me, because of my sister's temper. But Joe had sanctified it, and I had believed in it, I had believed in the best parlour as a most elegant saloon; I had believed in the front door, as a mysterious portal of the temple of state whose solemn opening was attended with a sacrifice of roast fowls; I had believed in the forge as the glowing road to manhood and independence. Within a single year, all this was changed. Now, it was all coarse and common, and I would not have had Miss Havisham and Estella see it on any account."

Pip does not want to be poor, ignorant or immoral. Pip's idealism leads him to perceive the world rather narrowly. When he becomes a gentleman, for example, he immediately begins to act as he thinks a gentleman, is supposed to act, which leads him to treat Joe and Biddy snobbishly and coldly.

The appointment was for next day, the appointed hour approached and Joe reached Pip's room. When he came in Pip greeted him with great hesitation, "Joe, how are you, Joe?" "Pip, how are you, Pip?" said he. After receiving his mysterious fortune, his idealistic wishes seem to have been justified, and he gives himself over to a gentlemanly life of idleness.

People like Able Magwitch, Joe and Wemmick speak cockney English, which is grammatically incorrect and used by the low class people. For e.g.: "what she give," said Joe,

“she give” to his friends. In addition, by his friends, were her explanation, “I mean into the hands of his sister, Mrs.J.Gargery.”

This is a unique fiction, where Dickens does not deal about a specific social abuse but about civilization itself, in which he uses the language of the low class people of Victorian era characters.

Realism in David Copperfield

The art of handling characters and in the use of a first person narrator, gives a realistic touch in the novel David Copperfield that arises sympathy for the character in the minds of the readers (Yancey, Diane 1999). They were drawn from middle and lower- middle classes of Victorian age. He depicts the external features of his characters and never goes to the depth of their inner self. Therefore, he describes the physical appearance, dress, utterance, action and such other externals of personality of his characters (Bradbury & Evans, 1850).

David Copperfield is a slim boy, handsome in appearance and a very sensitive child. He describes the metallic ornaments of Miss Murdstone as a feature of her dress. Uriah Heep is an animal-like in appearance and has a red face like a fox, cunning, treacherous and deceitful and deceives everyone. While portraying Mr. Micawber, “a stoutest middle-aged person, in a brown shirt and black tights and shoes, with no more hair upon his head.

His clothes were shabby but he had an imposing shirt-collar on. He carried a showy sort of stick with a large pair of silk tassels to and a large eye-glass hung outside his coat for the sake of ornament.”

His art of characterization often suffers because of his social purposes, and his characters are often exaggerated, fantastic, and, in short, caricature-like. Pip's sufferings started when his mother married Mr. Murdstone, a dark man with moustaches. David could not learn anything in fear of Mr. Murdstone's cane. If he forgets, he was accused for his carelessness and Mr. Murdstone beat him. Once he bit his step-father in order to get out of his clutches, which created a great insult on his first day in the school with a placard reading ‘Take care of him, He bites’.

His love for Dora was not a young boy's fancy. It was deep and sincere.” If I may so express it, I was steeped in Dora. I was not merely over head and ears in love with her, but I was saturated through and through”. He was faithful and grateful to all those who helped him in difficulty. Adversity puts a man on his true merit. A diamond shines the brightest when rubbed hard. David was made by his trials and tribulations.

Conclusion

Dickens delights in delineating the external peculiarities of his characters. A vivid and precise picture of the externals like face, gesture and the dress is described are extremely natural and his fantastic imagination fastens on any oddity or peculiarity of his characters. The tone of the voice, the trick of utterance and each word spoken by the characters are real and they reveal themselves through the conversation, chapter after chapter. Dickens writings

points to specific institutions and realities of 19th century of England. He has created an enormous variety of caricatures, of eccentric and highly colored characters. He usually relies on rhetorical devices such as the effects of suspense, sympathy, pathos, the character's behavior, gestures, language that grips the reader's imagination and appeal to his fantasy. The characters are very lively and life-like. They impress us permanently by the way they are pictured. The characters are flat; they do not change and grow psychologically under the stress of circumstance. They are same from beginning till the end, but still they are the fantastic creations of a fertile imagination with a great deal of vigor and vitality. Dickens realism is peculiar that incorporates fact and fiction, joy and sorrow, this world and the world beyond the material reality. Hugh Walker considers Dickens more of an imaginative and romantic novelist than a realist.

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