



CHARLES DICKENS AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CRITICAL REALISM

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Annotation: This article analyzes the role of Charles Dickens, a prominent figure in English literature, as a representative of critical realism and examines the key themes in his works. Writing in the critical realist style, Dickens sharply critiques the social, political, and economic issues of his time, highlighting the complex relationships between social structures and human lives. His novels, particularly “Oliver Twist”, “David Copperfield”, “A Tale of Two Cities”, “Great Expectations”, “Hard times” and “Little Dorrit” are considered some of the most important examples of realism in literature. This paper explores Dickens' contribution to the genre of critical realism and the way he portrayed social criticism in his works.

Keywords: Charles Dickens, Critical Realism, Social Criticism, Victorian Literature, Social Inequality, Realistic Portrayal, Character Development

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada ingliz adabiyoti tarixidagi muhim shaxs bo'lgan Charlz Dikkensning tanqidiy realizmdagi o'rni va uning asarlaridagi asosiy mavzular tahlil qilinadi. Tanqidiy realizm uslubida asarlar yozgan Dikkens, ularda jamiyatning ijtimoiy-siyosiy va iqtisodiy muammolarini o'tkir tanqid qiladi. Asosan asarlarida ijtimoiy tuzilma va inson hayoti bilan bog'liq murakkab munosabatlarini ko'rsatadi. Dikkensning romanlari, ayniqsa "Oliver Twist", "David Copperfield", "A Tale of Two Cities", "Great expectation", "Hard times", "Little Dorrit" adabiyotda realizmning eng muhim namunalaridan hisoblanadi.

Аннотация: В этой статье анализируется роль Чарльза Диккенса, выдающегося деятеля английской литературы, как представителя критического реализма, а также рассматриваются ключевые темы его



произведений. Пишущий в стиле критического реализма, Диккенс остро критикует социальные, политические и экономические проблемы своего времени, подчеркивая сложные отношения между социальными структурами и человеческими жизнями. Его романы, такие как Оливер Твист, Дэвид Конперфилд, История двух городов, Большие ожидания, Трудные времена и Маленькая Доррит, считаются одними из самых важных примеров реализма в литературе. В данной статье рассматривается вклад Диккенса в жанр критического реализма и то, как он изображал социальную критику в своих произведениях.

Introduction:

Charles Dickens is one of the most significant figures in 19th-century English literature. Particularly notable for his contributions to critical realism, Dickens' works offer a distinct portrayal of the social, political, and economic issues of his time. Critical realism, as a literary movement, is primarily concerned with the social issues and inequalities of the era, aiming to reveal the harsh realities of society. Dickens' novels serve as exemplary texts of this genre.¹

Critical realism emerged in the mid-19th century, challenging the idealized portrayals of life seen in Romanticism. In contrast to the works of authors like Byron and Keats, who emphasized beauty and imagination, critical realist writers such as Dickens, George Eliot, and Elizabeth Gaskell sought to depict life as it truly was, with all its harshness and complexity. For Dickens, this meant shining a light on poverty, child labor, the exploitation of women, the failure of the legal system, and the moral and social decay in industrial society. The aim of this article is to analyze the role of Charles Dickens in critical realism and to examine how social criticism is reflected in his works.²

Methods:

This paper employs thematic analysis and historical-contextual analysis to examine Dickens' works. Key themes, character development, and interactions with

¹ Dickens, C. (1837–1839). "The Pickwick Papers". Chapman & Hall.

² Hardy, T. (2010). "The Social Realism of Charles Dickens". Cambridge University Press.



social structures are analyzed in detail. Additionally, the paper explores how Dickens' works respond to the social and political climate of the Victorian era. The focus is on the portrayal of class differences, social inequality, and the impact of these issues on individual lives.

Additionally, understanding the historical and social context of Victorian England—such as the Industrial Revolution, the rise of capitalism, and the rapid urbanization of Britain—provides essential background for interpreting the critical realism in his novels.³

Another important aspect of the analysis is comparative analysis, particularly comparing Dickens with other authors of his time, such as Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot, who also explored social issues through a realist lens. This comparison helps highlight what makes Dickens's contributions unique, especially his use of humor, caricature, and serialized storytelling.⁴

Results:

Dickens' works not only portray the lives of individual characters but also critically examine societal systems, social classes, and the conflicts and contradictions within them. His novels emphasize class disparities, the plight of the working class, and the injustices they face. For instance, in **Oliver Twist**, he vividly depicts the hardships faced by impoverished children and the exploitation they suffer, highlighting the corrupt nature of society. In **David Copperfield**, Dickens explores personal growth alongside societal change, focusing on the tensions between individual development and social structures. And in “A tale of two cities” you can clearly see social inequality, the brutality of the French Revolution, and the corruption of both the aristocracy and the ruling class. “Great expectations” examines class mobility, the superficiality of wealth, and the impact of social status on one's identity. The “Hard times” Critiques industrialization, the dehumanization of workers, and the rigid, fact-based education system that stifles creativity. And “Little Dorrit” addresses

³ Johnson, M. (2015). “Social Criticism in Victorian Literature: The Case of Charles Dickens”. Routledge.

⁴ Carney, J. (2013). “The Social Criticism of Charles Dickens: An Analysis of His Major Works”. Palgrave Macmillan.



poverty, the injustice of the debtor's prison, and the inefficiency and corruption of bureaucratic systems.⁵

Discussion:

Dickens' critical realism is one of the most powerful lenses through which social and political issues of the Victorian era are explored. His works provide not only a representation of external events but also delve deeply into the inner worlds and emotions of his characters. This dual focus makes his works invaluable both as historical documents and as significant contributions to literary art. The social and moral critiques embedded in his novels engage with issues of social inequality, the abuse of power, and the oppressive nature of class structures, making his work relevant not only to his own time but also to contemporary readers.⁶

The portrayal of characters from diverse social classes—rich, poor, aristocratic, and criminal—gives Dickens's novels a rich texture and depth. His characters often serve as symbols of the larger social forces at play. For instance, in **Great Expectations**, the character of Pip represents the dangers of social ambition, while Miss Havisham symbolizes the corrosive effects of unrequited love and the obsession with revenge.

Dickens also had a unique ability to blend social criticism with a deep empathy for his characters. Even his most flawed characters, such as Fagin in *"Oliver Twist"* or the scheming Uriah Heep in *"David Copperfield"*, are depicted with a degree of human complexity, allowing readers to understand their motivations, even as they condemn their actions.⁷

Conclusion:

Charles Dickens, as a key representative of critical realism, explores the full spectrum of social classes in his novels, critiquing and revealing the flaws of the social systems of his time. His memorable characters, complex plots, and profound social insights have established him as one of the most influential writers in literary history.

⁵ Goldberg, H. (1999). *"The Political Economy of Charles Dickens: Realism, Ideology, and the Capitalist Novel"*. University of Chicago Press.

⁶ Tucker, M. (2017). *"Dickens and the Industrial Revolution: The Birth of Critical Realism"*. Oxford University Press.

⁷ Victorian Web (2023). Charles Dickens: A Social Critic. <https://victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/socialcritic.html>



Dickens' works continue to resonate today, as they remain an essential part of the discussion on social justice and human rights. His legacy within the realm of critical realism is both significant and enduring, providing valuable insight into the human condition and social change.

Moreover, his works are an essential part of the literary canon for understanding the interplay between literature and social change. Through Dickens, we see how literature can serve not only as a reflection of society but also as a tool for social criticism and reform. As such, the study of Dickens's novels offers valuable lessons in both historical and modern social issues, making them an enduring source of both literary and sociological inquiry.

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