

DISCOURSE ON FEMALE IMAGES IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE

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Abstract

This article examines characters of Charles Dickens's works. Charles Dickens described different women characters in his novels, in our point of view women, who clearly played an important role in his emotional history. Whole series of female characters play a dominant role in his novels' development. In 'Dombey and Son' the author shows us the painfulness of Florence position as a daughter in the house of great capitalist. According to the typology we analyze features of Dickens's female characters and divide them into types.

Keywords: analysis, novel, character, women, typology, literature, work.

Introduction

In the past people used to find their roads for reaching their destinations according to the stars in the sky. We may compare great talented people to those stars. The intellects of great people help the world to build a good future. Famous people of science, the arts, and literature become leaders of their fields, and identify possible ways for development. In the history of English literature one of the writers who contributed to its development was the English writer, Charles Dickens. It has been almost two centuries and the works of Charles Dickens still draw the attention of critics, scholars and readers. In 2012 the 200th anniversary of Dickens was widely celebrated. The themes of the writer's novels are different and scholars in their works state the themes as the actual problems. One of those problems is the formation of woman characters in Charles Dickens's novels and their social role in the English society.

The "code" of the main element is woman which is the focus of the following article. The actuality of the topic of women and women characters in the works of the writer is that there is always interest in exploring women characters and in literature it is considered as one of the "attractive" themes. In our point of view there have been different approaches and views in studying women characters in the works of different writers and this reinforces the topic as a timely one.

The study and analysis of women's world in the writer's works in turn demonstrates the views of numerous English critics on Dickens. The first time this theme was noted was in 1913 in B. Mozes's work "Charles Dickens and His Girl Heroines". This problem drew the attention of western scholars during 1950-70. Literary critics such as A. Francis, V. H. Bowen, J. A. Banks, A. Michael, D. Paroyse, A. Arthur, H. Mihiy, and V. Kathrin studied Dickens and his attitude towards family. In 1972 M. Kotzin published his work entitled "Dickens and Tale". In this study Kotzin claims that Dickens's woman who poses a strong character is appropriate only to the fairy-tale quality of "Cinderella". Kotzin states that they

are Cinderellas who have carried all hardships and stand on humiliation and contempt. This type of person tried to suffer hardship.

Another critic G. Chesterton considers them as “little mothers – wunderkinds with good qualities”, and believes that they are very attractive but they lack the beauty of childhood. Another critic F. Donovan agrees with the views of G. Chesterton and calls them little mothers even in their tender years (Donovan. 1968, 20).

This type of character heroines did not appear in Dickens’s novels suddenly. In the novels that belong to the first period of Dickens’s creativity, there are heroines of 17 old girls who possess the qualities of “housekeeper”.

If we see kindness and innocence found only in children, in heroine Rose Mayli in the novel of “Oliver Twist” we can witness the devoted love of Nancy towards the killer Sayks. In “The Life and Adventure of Nicholas Nickleby” this quality feature is changed into devotion towards the drunkard father. Dickensian scholars claim that “housekeeper” heroines are the “favorite” character of the author. In his types of woman characters there is the humanistic feature of an ideal person. Dickens rewards his “housekeepers” with the best humanistic features such as a kind heart, devotion, innocence and fascination.

A Russian critic M.Tugusheva relates the appearance of that type of woman in Dickens’s novels with Victorian age. According to her point of view an ideal woman is considered the “angel” of the family due to her kindness, shyness, and gentleness and she deserves praise: however, she is weak in nature, and she needs man’s sponsorship, she does not need freedom, but family is her duty and responsibility. The nuclear nature of the “housekeeper” character is founded by the life of a main heroine and it shows that the life of a main heroine started very early in the novel. We analyze her character through that her fate.

According to critic R. Pearsal, this type of character is found in the Victorian cult of the little girl. We can observe this type of heroine in the novels of other writers and even in the titles of some works expressing particular features of the main heroines.

By 1840 the character type that belongs to secondary protagonists can be found in the heroine of 13 year old Nelly Trent in “The Old Curiosity Shop” (without the critics considering the rules of existing society). The creation of this type of character in the novel of Dickens gave a start to the critics searching for the different sources of that protagonist. German critic Dibelius says that there is similarity between Madlleen and Nell and states that those two protagonists remind one of the heroes of S. Richardson. Another critic T. Silman commenting on Nell says that the novel finishes with the great death of “love for nature, intelligence not found in child and the age of adolescence”, Nell is the prototype of Goethe’s “Wilhelm Meister”. H. Pearson, basing on writer’s words “I’m not a follower of S. Richardson”, thinks that Nell is the ideal prototype of Mary Hogarth (Pearson 1963, p 104). A. Wilson states that we live in the little listeners’ world in “The Old Curiosity Shop” (A. Wilson. 1975, 155).

Not considering the results of investigations about scholars’ views on the similarities of characters, we can argue that Nell is a new type of character in the works of the writer, her growth happens in front of the eyes of the reader. The readers can observe the ways in which she grows. While listening to the story of Mister Humphrey, a reader unconsciously gets

interested in Nell's life. Her blue eyes and light brown curly hair remind us to compare her to an angel. The often repetition of phrases such as "gently", "slight figure", "pretty little girl" and comparing her to a "so very young, so spiritual, so slight and fairy like creature" shown for readers as an adolescent girl.

This young and attractive girl looks older than her age. She experiences as unusually hard life from her early age. There are no people of her age around her as if she lives in the prison. The atmosphere in her house is dark and silent as the "grave" and we can see unusual, old things everywhere in the room. This exaggerated description of fantastic atmosphere shows the appearance of a new type of woman character. Nell becomes an adult very early. In spite of being a young girl she takes responsibility of taking care of her grandfather and her life. Her will of bringing back her happy moments becomes stronger when they are looking for a new house. Full of hope and happiness, even without knowing where they are going, they start their way along the road. In the novel the road helps not only to explore the character of the main heroine, but also expresses metaphorically the difficult situation in her life. The road is described as limitless and it symbolizes the never-ending love of Nell towards her grandfather and is expressed in the following way: "I always find a way to be with you, I have found my back to you , in order to find food we work in open roads".

According to A. Wilson's opinion from the first pages of the novel Nell is a lifeless memory statue of the Victorian period. (Wilson. 1975)

In our point of view Nell has witnessed the hardships of a difficult life and as a result in her we can see the formation of an angel type character. We could see in the face that there is something in her soul, gentle, open-hearted and patient girl. The name of the main heroine, Nell, is suitable for her and it expresses the sound of the bell. This name was chosen for the main heroine symbolically and thus sound of the bell influences positively the atmosphere around her. Another type of "housekeeper" character which is found in this novel is the servant woman of Mrs. Sally Brass. For the reader it is natural to see the usual devotion and in the face of this little servant woman. Dickens calls her Barbara, in the development of plot she is called Markiza, later she is mentioned with the name of Caphronia Sphinx. Typologically Nell and Markiza look like each other and critic P. Ackroyd states that in reality this servant girl has a relation with Dickens family.(P.Ackroyd 1991). Though there are many similarities between Nell and Markiza, it is possible to explore her character based on existing reasons. The author created the character of this girl specific to the type of "housekeeper" by expressing the plot of the fairy tale "Cinderella".

In our article the approaches about similarities of women characters created in the novels written by Dickens in different years and their inner attitudes shown demonstrate similar tendencies, which are observed in the social function of objects and their general types.

The signs, relations, functions that are important in the comparative study of the systematic division of objects and their general types make objects on the level of attitude. This method of investigation helps to identify the similarity and difference between them. Characters and the protagonist's character, the structure of description in Dicken's novels are all being studied.

From this we can identify the aspects of dividing into the types the characters and the character features which were chosen by the writer. The most important thing is that the great ideology of the writer, the clarity of the specific features of the heroines will be described in relation to their places. Besides it a Russian critic M. B. Khrapchenko commented that the typology of characters forms the nuclear of the writer's literary system. In our point of view especially the method of typology deeply and widely analyzes features of each character that were created in various periods of writer's life. From typological point of view the inner logic of characterization of particular writers thinking is used in the study of characters in literature and it is effectively applied by many critics.

Virginia Woolf, who considered that women in Dickens's novels are "wise enough to achieve", stated that "woman and womanhood is the deep feeling in Dickensian heart" and with this heart we should see the world. The social psychology and reality of women characters are expressed with the help of the writer's ideology and the main features of writer's ideology is the love of humanity.

A Russian critic A. A. Yakimenko states that "woman and the concept of the women in Dickens novels are made of structured with biblical illusion". That's why another Russian critic M. Tugusheva comments that a woman for Dickens is not only a mother or a sister, but one of important and dearest "elements" in people's life. The women theme in literature gives an opportunity for a writer to fulfill his, her literary method: describing life fully, showing the lacks of society, and creating typical characters, and teaching people kindness and fairness. Dickens world of woman is big and precious and S. Stefan considers that the writer in his novels showed "the English patience".

The typology that consist of classification and systematization with the help of details, atmosphere and surrounded objects shows the attitudes between women and girl characters, and their behavior, particular features of their portraiture.

By using "often repeated character types and making variations of particular characters" we can observe in Dickens several types of characters that have women features, and they are type of an "ideal woman".

Classification of those types is based on existing modification and transformation that is observed in Dickens works. The typology characters of heroines are not seen as the chain linked with others though they do not belong to the same group; they are seen in the attitudes between particular colors that are different in specters according to their typology.

This method of typology gives us the possibility to "take" types of women characters from Dickens. The approach is observable in the work of the western Dickensian scholar M. Slater "Dickens and Woman". In his works Dickens tries to analyze the women character from different perspectives. We can see that the writer deeply investigated the world of women during the 3rd period (1846-1866) of writing career. We can see that in Dickens's first six novels only 85 out of a total of 280 characters or less than one-third, are female: *Nickelby* with its troupe of actresses, — (all but two of them very minor in importance), — is the only one in which women begin to approach the half-way mark. In the next five books (*Dombey*, *Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times* and *Little Dorrit*) — women account for 99 characters out of 214, or just under a half. In the last four novels that he wrote the proportion of female

characters sinks again to less than a third of 46 out of 127. Dickens not only brings more women onto his stage in the middle five novels, however: three of the five centre on a heroine rather than a hero and in this case of one of the exceptions, in *Copperfield*, a whole series of major female characters play a dominant role in the story's development. Many of the central concerns of these books, moreover, relate to dangers, frustrations and humiliations experienced by women in the male orientated world of Victorian England. In "*Dombey and Son*" Dickens presents the sensitive woman Florence, and the writer makes us to feel the painfulness of Florence's position as a daughter in the house of capitalist, he also wants us to feel the degradation of Edith, a woman who must catch a rich husband to ensure her social survival. In *Copperfield*, Dora's story, with its mingled comedy and pathos, dramatizes the plight of a motherless middle-class girl whose expensive "education" trains her for a purely decorative, 'fascinating' role but for whom the mere fact of being married is supposed to change her into a competent and responsible wife and housekeeper, providing her husband with both inspiration and practical support as he struggles to make his way in the world. This novel also features several other women who are the subjects of exploitation and betrayal – David's mother, Rose Dartle, Little Emily, Martha, Annie Strong, even the redoubtable Betsey Trotwood herself.

Critic Jenny Hartley in her book "*Charles Dickens and the House of Fallen Women*" states that "*The Urania Cottage*" was built in order to help homeless women in England and this Cottage contributed to the development of women characters in Dickens's works. Urania Cottage was the Home in Shepherd's Bush and he was involved with it for more than ten years, the "*Home for Homeless Women*" as he called it in his magazine "*Household Words*". Details of Urania Cottage, its personalities and its dramas survive in the treasure-trove of letters which Dickens wrote to the woman who put up the money for it, Angela Burdett Coutt. The importance of this cottage is also mentioned in the works of critics M. Slater, R. Bodenheimer and also biographers of Dickens. Dickens made it in his business to get to know the young women closely, who forgot the way in their lives. In return they win starring roles in his novels. Little Emily in *David Copperfield* is one of literature's most famous fallen women. These women also infiltrate themselves less directly, more insidiously and so to stunning effect, as they work their way into his imagination. The Urania years were the years of "*Dombey and Son*", "*David Copperfield*", "*Bleak House*", "*Hard Times*" and "*Little Dorrit*", some of the greatest novels Dickens ever wrote. From this point of view we can say that the Urania Cottage was very important for Dickens as it caused the birth of his many novels not only about women but also Victorian England.

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