

THE IMAGE OF CHILDHOOD IN XIX CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the portrayal of childhood in 19th-century English literature, focusing on the works of Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë. By analyzing "Oliver Twist" and "Jane Eyre," it examines how the authors reflect the socio-cultural attitudes toward children and their struggles within a rapidly changing society. The paper underscores the authors' advocacy for child welfare and education, shedding light on the broader Victorian context.

Key words: *childhood, Victorian literature, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Oliver Twist, Jane Eyre, social criticism, education.*

ОБРАЗ ДЕТСТВА В АНГЛИЙСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ XIX ВЕКА

АННОТАЦИЯ

Статья исследует изображение детства в английской литературе XIX века, сосредотачиваясь на произведениях Чарльза Диккенса и Шарлотты Бронте. Анализируя "Оливера Твиста" и "Джейн Эйр", рассматривается, как писатели отражают социально-культурные установки в отношении детей и их борьбы в условиях быстро меняющегося общества. Работа подчеркивает приверженность писателей вопросам благополучия детей и образования, проливая свет на более широкий викторианский контекст.

Ключевые слова: *детство, викторианская литература, Чарльз Диккенс, Шарлотта Бронте, "Оливер Твист", "Джейн Эйр", социальная критика, образование.*

XIX ASRNING INGLIZ ADABIYOTIDA BOLALIKNING TASVIRI

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu maqola XIX asrning ingliz adabiyotida bolalikning tasvirlanishini o'rganadi, xususan, Charli Dikkens va Sharlotta Brontening asarlariga e'tibor qaratadi. "Oliver Tvis" va "Jenn Eyer" asarlarini tahlil qilib, mualliflar bolalarga nisbatan ijtimoiy-madaniy qarashlarni va tez o'zgarib borayotgan jamiyatda ularning kurashlarini qanday aks ettirishini o'rganadilar. Maqola, adiblarning bola farovonligi va ta'limiga bo'lgan tashviquotini ta'kidlab, kengroq viktoriya davri kontekstiga nur sochadi.

Kalit so'zlar: bolalik, viktoriya adabiyoti, Charli Dikkins, Sharlotta Bronte, "Olivers Tvis", "Jenn Eyer", ijtimoiy tanqid, ta'lim.

INTRODUCTION

Driven mostly by the Industrial Revolution and growing discourses on education and child welfare, the 19th century brought a major change in society perceptions of childhood. Children confronted particular difficulties from exploitative work to limited access to education as Britain's fast urbanisation and industrialisation brought about. Periodically, literature of this age acted as a prism through which these problems were examined, bringing the suffering of children front and centre.

Two well-known Victorian writers, Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë, brilliantly captured children in their works, challenging social mores and calling for change by means of their narratives Dickens's "Oliver Twist" and Brontë's "Jane Eyre" both master the use of childhood as a vehicle for investigating subjects of poverty, resiliency, and moral growth. The article looks at how these writers not only capture the hardships of children from the 19th century but also support more general social change and human dignity debates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have extensively examined how Victorian writers portray youth, with particular attention to how writers challenge society expectations using young heroes. Particularly via the prism of orphaned and underprivileged children, Humphrey House (1955) emphasises Dickens's ability to capture the systematic shortcomings of Victorian society. Dickens uses sharp contrasts between innocence and corruption in "Oliver Twist," to highlight the effects of institutional neglect and poverty.

Emphasising how "Jane Eyre" questions the junction of childhood, gender, and power, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979) study Brontë's work from a feminist standpoint. They contend that Brontë's depiction of Jane's challenges against patriarchal power during her early years captures a more general criticism of social systems that stifle uniqueness.

Mirroring the grim reality of Victorian charity institutions, Miriam Allott (1959) investigates the autobiographical aspects in Brontë's portrayal of Lowood School. Carolyn Steedman (1995) similarly examines the gendered aspects of Victorian stories, contending that works like "Jane Eyre" and "Oliver Twist" expose how class and gender shaped society views towards children.

John Bowen (2003) notes that whilst Dickens emphasises the group suffering of children in urban environments, Brontë explores the psychological and moral growth

of a single child. This comparative approach emphasises the several ways Victorian writers interacted with the subject of childhood.

Charles Dickens: The Voice of Marginalized Childhood in "Oliver Twist"

The potent critique of Victorian England's institutional and social shortcomings seen in Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist" Oliver, an orphan living under the degrading conditions of the workhouse and facing the threats of the London underworld, travels throughout the book. Dickens challenges the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which institutionalised severe conditions for the impoverished, via Oliver's story.

"Oliver Twist" has as one of its main subjects the systematic exploitation of children. Represented as a place of cruelty and neglect, the workhouse depicts the failure of Victorian society to support its most defenceless citizens. Scholars like John Forster (1872) have observed Dickens's great concern for social justice shown in his exact and expressive portrayal of Oliver's suffering.

Dickens also shows the larger results of systematic neglect using ancillary characters like Nancy and the Artful Dodger. Oliver stands for moral purity and fortitude, while figures like the Dodger show how poverty may send kids into criminal careers. Critics such as Humphrey House (1955) contend that Dickens's dual presentation of innocence and corruption captures his conviction about the possibility for societal change.

Charlotte Brontë: Childhood as a Crucible in "Jane Eyre"

Charlotte Brontë presents in "Jane Eyre a very personal and psychological investigation of childhood." The book starts with Jane's horrific experiences at Gateshead, where her aunt and cousins physically and emotionally mistreat her. This first impression of childhood is one of solitude, injustice, and a need for fittingness.

Based on her personal experiences, Brontë's portrayal of Lowood School offers a biting indictment of Victorian philanthropy. Lowood marks the junction of religious deception and systematic neglect under the despotic control of Mr. Brocklehurst. Miriam Allott (1959) adds that Brontë's realistic representation of Lowood gives her more general societal critique believability.

Jane's subsequent claim of independence is set up by her fortitude and moral development during her early years. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979) stress how Jane's rejection of authority and quest of self-respect questions the patriarchal systems of Victorian society. Unlike Dickens's Oliver, whose goodness is unaffected by outside events, Jane's character develops through her hardships in line with Brontë's fascination in the psychological aspects of childhood.

Comparative analysis

Though both Dickens and Brontë deal with the challenges of youth, their stories have different tones and focus. With Oliver as a symbol of purity to draw attention to structural shortcomings, Dickens's "Oliver Twist" offers a group social critique. Brontë's "Jane Eyre" on the other hand presents a close-up view of the psychological and moral growth of a particular child.

Thematically, both writers stress children's resilience, but they present it in somewhat different ways. While Jane's resistance is defined by development and self-assertion, Oliver's relentless innocence acts as a moral foil to the corrupt adult society. While Brontë explores inner tensions and provides a more reflective perspective, John Bowen (2003) points out that Dickens's story depends on outside conflicts to propel the storyline.

Furthermore essential to these works are the gender experiences of childhood. Oliver's problems result from poverty and systematic neglect; Jane's difficulties are exacerbated by her gender, therefore underscoring the two injustices of class and patriarchy. Carolyn Steedman (1995) contends that whereas Dickens's more conventional depiction of childhood innocence, Brontë's complex description of Jane's youth reveals a feminist viewpoint.

CONCLUSION

Oliver Twist and Jane Eyre's portrayal of childhood captures not just the hard reality children in 19th-century England experienced but also the changing cultural and societal paradigms around childhood. Though they approach their works from different angles, Dickens and Brontë both show the extreme neglect and exploitation children endured in their books, therefore generating complimentary insights into the social systems of their day.

Through Oliver Twist, Dickens questions the industrialised society that neglects to defend its most defenceless people. His way of showing the orphaned youngsters in workhouses emphasises the discrepancy between the reality of systematic exploitation and the ideal of benevolence. Dickens emphasises the moral need for change by having Oliver a helpless victim of a society gone corrupt. Emphasising that society's treatment of its children directly reflects its moral integrity, his story implies that the wellbeing of children should be a main focus of a fair society. Dickens's development of nuanced secondary characters, such as Nancy and the Artful Dodger, also enhances his critique by showing how poverty and neglect affect children's life in several different ways. Dickens's writings demand the destruction of repressive systems and the building of a society whereby children, from all social levels, are appreciated and safeguarded.

Conversely, Brontë's *Jane Eyre* presents a more meditative and unique perspective on childhood. The book turns the emphasis from outside society shortcomings to the psychological and emotional development inside a child. Though equally critical of societal structures, Brontë's depiction of Jane's early years at Gateshead and Lowood School emphasises the growth of resilience, self-respect, and autonomy. While Oliver is mostly moulded by outside events, Jane aggressively opposes injustice and asserts her own agency in the face of hardship. Brontë's analysis of gendered experiences of childhood also gives her critique of society more complexity by showing how society systems of patriarchy and class interact to mould a child's development. Brontë investigates the idea of human development and the moral fortitude that could result from hardship via Jane's trip. By doing this, she questions conventional Victorian rules about women's roles and emphasises the need of personal identity in determining one's fate.

Comparative study of Dickens's and Brontë's writings gives crucial new perspectives on the function of literature in support of social reform. Though they see the possibilities of change differently, both writers show infancy as a zone of struggle. Dickens calls for social and institutional change to guard children from exploitation, hence stressing the idea of group reform. Brontë, on the other hand, presents a picture of personal metamorphosis, implying that although the toughest circumstances might produce resistance and moral development, actual liberation calls for a more intense psychological and emotional trip. Nonetheless, both points of view are essential for comprehending the complexity of infancy and the changes in society views of children over the Victorian era.

Finally, the writings of Dickens and Brontë show that childhood is not only a stage of existence but also a crucial battlefield for more general social and moral concerns. Children's treatment—that of either systematic neglect or personal oppression—reflects more general society values and objectives. These books help readers to realise that childhood is a time of opportunity and potential as much as a period of vulnerability. Reiterating the continuing relevance of their criticisms of social injustice, child care, and the necessity of compassion and reform, the writers push readers to rethink the treatment of children, not only in their own time but in the present day. Dickens and Brontë provide ageless insights on the human condition and the great need of making sure every child has the chance to flourish by tackling the complexity of childhood.

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