



The Specific Types of Female Images in Victorian Novels

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ABSTRACT

The following article focuses on the description of women characters in Charles Dickens novels. It is known that the literature of critical Realisms closely connected with the name of Queen Victoria, who governed the country in the XIX century. While developing the gallery of women characters the writer also describes the English culture of that period.

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Realist writers of an English literature are Charles Dickens, Sister Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot and etc. They lived in XIX century in Victorian age and they were the greatest novelist of their age. Charles Dickens created a new type of novel – a social novel. The great contrast between rich and poor Dickens, Sister Bronte, E. Gaskell, G. Eliot considered abnormal in a civilized society. They put all his hopes in good qualities of human nature. Their novels introduced us with different characters of people and the life of Victorian England. In Dickens's first six novels only 85 out of a total of 280 characters, or less than one-third, are female. In the next five books – “Dombey and Son”, “David Copperfield”, “Bleak house”, “Hard Times”, “Little Dorrit” women account for 99 characters out of 214, or just under a half. In the last four novels he wrote the proportion of female characters sinks again to less than a third.

Charles Dickens novels focused on various social, economic and political issues of his time, XIX century. Moreover his books helped us to see, notice how his thinking was wide and multi faceted. In this article we will look at other important topic that we can depict from his novels. The “women question” is the issue that worried him than other writers of his period. In all his more novels Ch. Dickens raises the problems related to women's life. His attention to women theme made the writer develop various characters of women in his novels and as a result he formed his own way of description of women characters that stands out in English literature. And it is related to how well Dickens could create different woman characters of Victorian England in his books. English critics are highly interested to the problem of Dickens's women. David Holbrook in “Charles Dickens and image of Women” writes in a fascinating way of how Dickens used the women in his life as a basis of his characters. Based on the character of his mother the writer created Mrs. Nickleby and Mrs. Micowber, his sister Fanny for became a prototype for fanny Dorrit who works as dancer in a theatre, Maria Bidnell as Dora and Flora Finching, Mary as Rose Maylie and so on. The most interesting fact is his women tend to be Fairy or Angel, the good sister or the kitten or fully adult women is missing.

One of his books “Oliver Twist” could show us the XIX century life of England and the life of young generation of England. While reading this novel we could come across with people of different characters and

life style. Through Oliver Twist, Nancy, Rose Maylie we can see kindness, and generosity of English people. The characters like Monks, Sikes and Fagin show us the life of mannered people in England. After the publication of “Oliver Twist” in 1839, though the writer was accused in “false description of poor people life¹” and in “choosing his heroes from low level of society²”, the writer could respond them appropriately.

Dickens not only brings more women on to his stage in the middle five novels, however, three of the five centre on a heroine rather than a hero and in the case of one of the exceptions, in “David Copperfield”, we can see a whole series of major female characters plays a dominant role in the stories development. “David Copperfield” is autobiographic novel of Charles Dickens. The main character of the novel is David Copperfield. David is a son of gentleman who was born after the father’s death. His mother married only thinking of son’s future. But the stepfather of David is a cruel man. Edward Murdstone’s character is very dispatcher, he never liked David. According Edward’s opinion he wanted that David should left the house. With David’s stepfather came Edward’s sister Jane Murdstone to this house. Jane’s character is also like to hers brother. When we speak about woman we imagine the portrait of kind women. But the Jane Murdstone is not a kind woman. She has a stone heart and she never liked David. This type of women was described in other novels of the writer. Mrs. Jane tried to punish David. Mr. Edward and Mrs. Jane created the new way of teaching. When David answered to Mr. and Mrs. Murdstone he was forget what he was learn. This condition Dickens describe in this way: *“He walked me up to my room slowly and gravely – I am certain he had and delights in that formal parade of executing justice and when we got there, suddenly twisted my head under his arm. He beat me then, as if he would have beaten me to death. Above all the noise we made, I heard them running up the stairs and crying out – I heard my mother crying out and Peggotty”*³.

This passage shows us how the child expresses his impressions about his stepfather and his teaching of lessons. In novel we can see how the author chooses the hero’s names. If we translate the word “murdstone” the word “murd” is meaning “kill illegally and intentionally” and the word “stone” is “fairly large piece of rock, or piece of hard material formed in an organ of the body”. David’s mother’s character by nature is very strong less. She could not protect son from the stepfather’s punishments. When we speak about the futures of our child every mother take care of hers child. But David’s mother is not this type of woman. She also agreed with hers husband’s opinion. From this condition Dickens wanted to show us the low of Victorian age. But according in our opinion the mother of child should protect hers child in every condition. We can tell that both Mrs. Copperfield were child-wife character. Charles Dickens described this type of characters in image of women. The author showed that child-wife character is a nuclear of women character. Character of child is made a map of destiny of women.

While reading Dickens’s novels we come across different type of women characters. It was described by a portrait of women. We can see specific features of characters. In “Great expectation” the main hero of the novel described his sister by a portrait. He draws a portrait of sister *“she was not good-looking women, she has black hair and eyes, had such a prevailing redness of skin that I sometimes used to wonder whether it was possible. She washed herself with a nutmeg-grater instead of soap. She was tall and bony and almost always wore a coarse apron that was stuck full of pins and needles”*⁴. According to his description his sister’s character is likes typical English housekeeper. While drawing portrait the author sighed features of housekeepers on this character. These specific features of character impress us about typical character of women in Victorian age.

In the fourth period of his literary life the protagonists of women character changed step-by step. In second and the third periods he described the characters of little housekeepers. They are his favorite heroines. In order to describe them he used a word “little creature”. This word was Dickens’ favorite expression. He highly used this word in order to describe the image of little housekeepers. The little housekeepers they are young and not married little girls who are at the age of 11-15. The most interesting fact is they are skillful in domestic life.

¹ Dever C. Death and the Mother from Dickens to Freud: Victorian Fiction and the anxiety of origins. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006. –P. 49.

² Uglow J. Elizabeth Gaskell. London: Routledge 1993. –P. 172.

³ Dickens Ch. David Copperfield. The Penn State Electronic Book. 2009. –P. 137

⁴ Dickens Ch. Great Expectations. The Penn State Electronic books. 2009. –P. 315

From this point of view it is difficult to believe that the girl who is at the age of 11 can be busy with a house life. It could be imagination of author and he highly idealized little girls as housekeepers. But the author described them not as the main characters, they become personage who helped us to understand clearly the main heroine's features. From the beginning of the novel Dickens gives them the duty of dealing with heavy household issues and a result become little housekeepers. They worked from morning till night for a piece of bread. In order to support the family they should be educated, but they never went to school and were educated. Despite of this, they are skillful in housework. In "Bleak House" he showed the real little housekeeper with the name Charley. Dickens gave this girl the name of a boy. While reading a novel we know that her real name is Charlotte not a Charley.

" – *Who has locked you up her alone?*" we naturally asked.

' – *Charley*' – said the boy.

' – *Is Charley your brother?*'

' – *No, She's my sister, Charlotte. Father called her Charley*'⁵

While studying the writer's biography we witnessed that he had close relationships with women that were always complex, often contradictory and sometimes hurtful and at the same time they were different from each other. Some of them were real ladies, some of them were housekeepers, and another type was housewives. The writer's daughter Kate Dickens in her biography mentioned that her father never understood women. While researchers on Dickens state that he could create various characters of women that show his understanding of female nature. In our opinion the writer had an ability to see the hardships in women's life and it made him to create various portrayals of women in his novels.

The list of used literature

1. Dever C. *Death and the Mother from Dickens to Freud: Victorian Fiction and the anxiety of origins.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006. –P. 49.
2. Dickens Ch. *David Copperfield.* The Penn State Electronic Book. 2009. –P. 137.
3. Dickens Ch. *Great Expectations.* The Penn State Electronic books. 2009. –P.
4. 315.
4. Dickens Ch. *Bleak House.* Penn State an Electronic Classics Series Publication. 2009. -P 251.
5. Uglow J. *Elizabeth Gaskell.* London: Routledge 1993. –P. 172.

⁵ Dickens Ch. *Bleak House.* Penn State an Electronic Classics Series Publication. 2009. -P 251.