

The Impact of Politics on the 19th Century Literary Discourse

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Abstract: *This article explains the impact of politics on the 19th century and demonstrates the significant effects of the political movement on 19th-century literature. Besides, it provides an extensive explanation on the numerous changes that these political issues bring to the conception of literary movement including the most famous and well-known literary production of that era. Moreover, it investigates the strong influence on the literary productions and how the literary movement was overshadowed by this new principle that was revolutionary and how politics was presented in the literary works. Furthermore, the description of these political influences is based on the novels, *Hard Times* and *Great Expectation* by Charles Dickens. The aftermaths of political issues are evident in these literary works as it is the case for multiple other works that dominated the literary scene of the 19th century. Lastly, these literary works embodied the pinnacle aspect of the relationship between literature and politics in the 19th century.*

Keywords: Great Expectation, Hard Times, Politics, Revolutionary, Social reforms

1. Introduction

Literature is regarded as the fundamental base of any human society, culture, ritual, and principles. It is the most inventive and authentic means the author uses to reflect the reality of his surroundings. Whatever occurs in society can be captured, demonstrated, and enlightened through the work of literature. Despite the different genres of literature, a work of literature provides perception, information, awareness, and a sense of emotion for the individual who partakes it entirely. Life is best explored in the form of literary expression. It is the best representation of words and other sources based on authentic human experiences such as agony and anxiety. It has a broad, never-ending field and has multiple dimensions. Literature has a massive contribution to shaping the world we live in modern history. Therefore, it has continually been present in civilization and ancient culture and even without the creation of language and words. Moreover, literature has always taken part in demonstrating the ancient human civilizations and societies.

Literature is considered a revolutionary tool to rebel against the traditional beliefs and the injustice in community, the author of a literary product is considered a fighter by resembling his power of writing and word as his ultimate weapon by creating a piece of literary work demonstrated the corruption of his society. Not necessarily all conflicts in the universe have to fight in blood and losing the lives of innocent people, but by using the ability to write as a tool to free and liberate himself and his fellow human beings from the oppression and corruption of the society. Literature in modern society is considered as a source of information and tool to ignite the flame of the imagination of individuals that eventually will steer the emotion of the individuals and forced them to take a stand against the issue presented.

As Lindberg claims "The relationship between literature and politics is a multilane freeway with traffic flowing freely in both directions: Any work of literature is in part a product of sociological and political factors, to the extent that the writer's personality has been shaped by the sociological and political environment of his time" (1). The nature of the

relationship between the two it has a multiple interpretation and explanation that differs from author to author based on the different societies and problems he faced, which help shape his perspective regarding his society's issues. Different times have different views and interpretation regarding this relationship. The relationship between the two depends on several factors, whether they are internal or external factors. He also suggests that social and political problems help create the majority of the literary work. It reaches the extent that the writer's personality is shaped mainly by the influence of the political and social surroundings of his era.

The most apparent element that draws attention when exploring 19th-century literature is the significant influence of political issues on approximately the majority of the writers' era. A large number of writers choose to address political issues in their literary work. As Lindberg suggests, "Conversely, important works of literature or whole literary movements have had profound effects on society by setting up or destroying taboos, conventions, and social prejudices, thus contributing to changes in values that have brought about social and political change." (2). That almost all the famous and well known literary genre include a political manner and help demonstrate a particular problem or multiple ones at the same time, by using this method it helps societies to come over the traditional and what so-called taboos in the society in order to break the mould of taboo issue. And that all the landmark literary work of any era had some changes and effects on society and the cultural feature of the time it was printed, causing tremendous or a slight change that will depend on the individuals.

The term "politics" can be described as the method that human beings living in groups make resolutions. Politics is also about making arrangements between individuals so that they can live together in categories such as countries, tribes, or cities. On a bigger scale, for instance, countries and a small number of people spend most of their time making such arrangements. These folks are typically named politicians. Politicians are the vital factor, the crucial element, and the fundamental core of any political system.

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In everyday life, the term "politics" is used to refer to the way that nations are ruled. The ordinary individual obtains importance from being connected with a part of a whole. In fact, in the views of politics, control is mostly gained through number, the collective counts for more, own a vital presence than the individual, using its size and thus able to affect the political results in the course of elections.

The political changes in the 19th century started in the year 1832 that was known for the creation reform act that permits the right to vote to the majority of the middle-class men. In 1833 witnessed the end of slavery also the adjustment of the child rights work in workshops. Also, in 1871 witnessed originating the union Act's that allows ordinary workers to protect and organize their rights legally. Multiple other movements in the Victorian era called for independence, justice as well as high moral values as opposed to, inequality and exploitation. A huge number of Victorian writers used their word as an instrument to highlight the oppression and social inequality in society.

In the words of Calvino "Literature is necessary to politics above all when it gives a voice to the one who doesn't have a voice when it gives a name to the one who doesn't have a name, and especially to all that political language excludes or tends to exclude. ... Literature is like an ear that can hear more than Politics: Literature is like an eye that can perceive beyond the chromatic scale to which Politics is sensitive"(2). There are essential relationships that were mentioned in this quotation. The main suggestion is that literature is significantly crucial to politics due to the fact it gives voice and name to the one who is unrepresented and anonymous in their attempt to represent themselves in the political scene and express their suffering.

2. Discussion

Calvino conception regarding literature is that literature is like "an ear that can hear more than politics," also an eye that can "perceive beyond the chromatic scale to which Politics is sensitive."(p. 2). This suggestion demonstrates to what point the primary essentials of literature to politics exist in representing the politically excluded. The main factors for which literature represent those who were lefts at the edge of politics, and also "give a voice to the one who doesn't have a voice". Literature, according to Calvino's, stands for the politically excluded individuals, and the representation of the ordinary people in society to shed light into their political problems.

Calvino refers in his quotation to the contribution of literature in playing a significant part to serve the ordinary individual: it gives "a voice to the one who does not have a voice, "Also "a name to the one who does not have a name." The primary focus here is that the ordinary individual puts at the very core of literature, though her or his power of speech may be missing to the ear of politics, according to Lindberg "That we are living in an age when literature threatens the very foundation of our society" (1). The importance of literature as the act of shaping any modern society and contributing to the constructing of the main features of society is apparent and undeniable. He also demonstrates the importance of literature in society and the considerable

ability to change the direction of any society. So, combining literature and politics will have a tremendous impact on society and its surroundings.

Literature had turned to a colossal machine of interpretation and self-explanation of any aspect of life, changing aspects of everyday life into an indication of history. The concept of using politics in literature help increase the dream of establishing a new world that would give voice to the helpless and oppressed people that will eventually their voice will be heard. The main attention of the literature is that the individual regularly forms the main subject of literature. The authors have continually intended to describe persons of all kind regardless of their race, religion and gender; it is maybe one of the central originalities of literature to portray humanity in all its infinite diversity. Moreover, literature aims to demonstrate those at the edge of society who never find their place entirely in the community; those who are the author always tried to portray.

"Like an ear that can hear more than politics." In the case of politics, the individual voice often tends to be neglected by the louder voice of the collective. Literature, on the opposite side, continuously listens to the individual's voice, the ordinary individual to be specific their voice is never silenced in the crowd. This is one of the fundamental difference mindset between literature and politics. Although the politics conception tends to see the individual as a part of a collective, the literature emphasizes the conception of authentic representation and individuality of the single person. As proposed by Mohammadi that" Individuality is treated as a threat to the government. Conformity is a means for the government to maintain power; books are a threat because they encourage people to consider ideas and question their culture; the government prefers obedient populations that it can control through media rather than people who define themselves" (830).Literature intended to describe humanity in all its countless variations. It highly celebrates uniqueness and diversity in human beings. The concept of individuality was one of the most valuable contributions that literature provided to the individual in 19th century.

Literature is seeking continually to describe and perceive human reality in all its different aspect. By using such a method, it is enabled to illuminate political issues, highlighting the ambiguities that politics may overlook and neglect occasionally. It has attempted to give a voice to the excluded individuals by providing emotional significant to hypothetical intellectual apprehension. The reason why the literary representation of the excluded individuals is vital above all to the term of politics is that it urges the individual to take action against these political manners. Literature tends to affect the individual conduct by providing him images to political descriptions, bringing the problem of the relegated firmly into sight in the most authentically and creatively way possible, and exposing it to the public atmosphere and making it almost impossible to remove it from the individual memory, causing the necessary change in the society eventually.

According to Lucas that "Politics and literature. The subject is a daunting one relationship between the two so problematic, elusive, and uncertain. Nevertheless, it is these difficulties which make the subject fascinating and deserving of attention"(1). Numerous factors governed the relationship between the two, and affect with the explanation of the relationship. Moreover, his suggestion regarding the relationship between the two is wholly accurate. However, one thing for sure is that. Literature is a contributor to politics because of the way it tends to increase the awareness of the engagement with the world. Then it will increase our distinct sense of belonging. In addition, literature serves as a tool to free our minds from political oppression.

The genre of political novels was thrived in 19th century due to the multiple problems that were surfacing to the public eyes and the numerous social circumstances that forced the writers of that era to address in their literary production. Writers of the 19th century were regarded as the representative of their community to write about political issues and the corruption of their community. Besides, it is the best way to demonstrate their point than using literature and especially in a novel because of the growing popularity of this genre to the public. Victorian society was in a transition time seeking social and political change desperately. This transition time was filled with problems and social changes. There were massive struggles to obtain the constancy and balance within Victorian society; however, the individuals who suffered the most at that time was the low class who were paying tremendous sacrifice for this transition period. During that time that witnesses the struggle and political instability, some authors dared to tackle the manners of the suffering of the unrepresented ordinary individuals who cannot speak for themselves and claims their rights. This article would shed light on that particular point to demonstrate how the political atmosphere and problems generate such a literary work.

Charles Dickens is a well-known famous English novelist in the Victorian era. As a critical author, his literary production not merely restricted to reflect the accurate aspect of life experience of an entire generation. However, Dickens demonstrates more comprehensively and intensively than any other novels that were produced in the Victorian era. His literary work help brings social awareness of England society throughout the 19th century.

Fredric Jameson once claims that political interpretation of literary work should not be merely apprehended as "an optional auxiliary to other interpretive methods," but it shall be considered as the "absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation" (17). Also, it can be suggested that this is where the political interpretation overlaps with the concept of literature. Charles Dickens's literary work *Hard Times* will be explained underneath the influence of political message. Two political issues will be inspected in this literary work. The First issue is the mistreatments of working-class people by the industrial revolution and the terrible condition of ordinary workers. And the Second issue is the devastating effect of the education system when the excessive emphasis is rested on merely facts and statics.

Before providing a detailed explanation of the literary text and the associated topic discussion, it is important to identify some related information regarding the author's background and his early life. Dickens was born into a low-class family. In other words, ordinary people with extremely low wage income, he used to work as a boot-blackening factory employee for almost six months when he was 12 years old. When he reflected on these early experiences of his child employment, he states that. "No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sank into this companionship. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame, I felt in my position...My whole nature was penetrated with grief and humiliation" (Watkin20).

Dickens previous words demonstrate the effect of oppression and political problems in shaping his life from a very early age and had the massive responsibility of delivering the voice of the oppressed individuals. Because he considered himself one of the oppressed individuals in his society, and the hardship of an early age and the difficult time of his childhood, all these factors help shape the features of the literary work *Hard Times*.

In the literary work *Hard Times*, the action of the novel occurs in a fictional industrial town in England named Coke town "a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of machinery and tall chimneys" (Dickens22). From the jump, the comprehensive description of the city signifies a massive effect of industrialization as the city is covered with imageries of the industrial revolution, such as chimneys is an indication to the continual movement of the city. The demonstration of the changing colour of the brick proposes the massive effect of industrialization as the colour has changed now to be black from the massive smoke of the workshops that now fill the whole city and leaving no space for fresh air. This demonstration also implies that the city is in a constant movement that relies entirely on the low salaries of the workers that have no other choice but to work for extremely long hours to provide for their living.

Almost all name in the novel would be the name of an individual or a place; this specific method implies some hidden suggestions. For example, the name of the city Coke town which is the name of the town where the story took place is a mixed word of "coke" and "town" with coke implying the meaning of reminder of coal and all the tremendous pollution was produced by coal. A fragmentation and alienation are some of the significant repetitive concepts when it comes to Dickens's portrayal of the persecution of the working class. When describing the workshop, the image is used to is "so many hundred Hands in this Mill; so many hundred horse Steam Power" (Dickens56). The continual portrayal of this working-class as "Hands" serves as an elaborated representative to elaborate how this description of fragmentation works, eventually, will only lead to alienation of labour, because the ordinary workers are not able even to enjoy the result of their hard work themselves and see the results of their works.

Dickens attack viciously in this literary work the modern industrialism and the cruelty aspect of this movement, he describes the working class was "all issued from an intense sympathy with the suffering of mankind and a strong desire to ameliorate the human condition" (Pollard 27). Dickens uses the path of confrontation against the bourgeoisie class by constructing trade unions. This suggestion is most apparent through the character Stephen Blackpool's in his denying to join the trade unions, "I'm th'one single Hand in Bounderby's mill, o' a' the men there as don't coom in wi'th' proposed reg'lations. I canna' coom in wi' 'em. My friends, I doubt their doin' yo onny good. Licker they'll do yo hurt" (Dickens, p.107). He did not obey the rules and refused to listen to Mr Bounderby in s betraying on his friends, answering Bounderby, "Not rebels, not yet rascals. Nowt o' the' kind, ma'am, as I know and feel... We're patient too, an' wants in general to do right. An' I canna think the fawt is aw wi'us" (112). Dickens attacked the bourgeois viciously while criticizing its bias against the unions, taking it for a severe warning against the threat of communism. For that main reason, he was respected for his "foresight in predicting the crippling of an economy through union power or the self-destruction of industrialism through greed" (Manning19).

Dickens addressed another significant issue in his era. He was evident throughout the literary work *Hard Times* in rejecting the education system that only emphasizes only on shreds of evidence and reason, which was against Dickens's dream regarding the educational system. For example, Thomas is labelled as "A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations... With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature" (Dickens 8). Dickens declared such a suggestion, "reason is the only faculty to which education should be addressed" (19). The characters Choakum child plus Bounderby embrace similar views concerning this issue, making them equally dull. The education which that was centred on rationalism and reason is nothing more than a complete failure. The children of Gradgrind are the finest illustration for such a suggestion because they received this kind of traditional education which leads them eventually to a tedious life and utterly miserable lifestyle.

On the other side, Louisa is experiencing an unpleasant lifestyle with her married life with Bounderby was eventually unsuccessful in expressing her inner emotion. In considering the circumstances of the industrial revolution with the bourgeoisie being controlled class, it is a rationale to assume that the main reason they adopt such an education system that refuses any kind of imagination element, moreover just with this sort of education system that will make certain that the working-class people such as Stephen to have no clue about how the capitalist system in practice carries rise to the oppression of ordinary individuals so that the working-class could not oppose and take action against the continual mistreatment of the upper class. At the same time, the bourgeoisie character such as Louisa lacks the ability to question about her miserable life because she lacks the essential knowledge for that.

Dickens uses the technique of informative tone all through the *Hard Times* to serve as a managing voice for average

readers to stop being deceived. In his literary work, Dickens made his perspective regarding political problems evident to the reader, which can be summarized. First, the upper class should stop the oppression of righteous working-class individuals. Second, they should stop educating people from an early age to deny their feelings and stop evaluating everything merely just on facts which sometimes be considered as a means to help the further oppression of their life but would eventually lead to complete failure.

Industrial Revolution was the main issue he tackled in his writing. In this novel, and the scientific development play an important part in that era "Technology, undoubtedly, has been an essential part of modern life; yet, its effects today could be more than meet the eyes." (Mohammadi, 2020, p. 826). Numerous political thoughts were presented to make the ordinary person aware of what was happening in society. Also, this novel help brings awareness to many political issues that were taken place in the 19th century and help to remove multiple misconceptions about the political aspect and made it evident to the ordinary person to make them take a stand against this problem. Charles Dickens was famously known for his genuine deception and criticisms writing throughout his literary works, which gives him the ability to present his idea and criticize the political issues in society.

The other literary work that was produced by Dickens is *Great Expectations* that grasped the social and political problem of the 19th century in an exciting approach through multiple events and different characters to exemplify his political opinion and social stands from these political manners that dominated his era. *Great Expectations* is established in Victorian England, an era when massive political problems overtook the whole nation. For instance, The Industrial Revolution that had an enormous impact on shaping the features of that era. It contributed to changing the social landscape dramatically for everyone, empowering manufacturers to obtain vast fortunes through the oppression of low class. Although the social class discrimination had slightly changed and it was no longer utterly reliant on the circumstances of the individual's birth, however, there is a significant problem that seems to exist, which is the massive social gap is between high and low class.

Throughout the literary work, there are various references to the massive corruption that these changes brought to the society, for instance, the description of London, as a packed city by an enormous number of people, and the portrayal of the city as it was lighted lamps through the evening and extremely dim by the smoke of the workshops in the rest of the day, causing a distinct difference with the nation's sparsely populated country areas. Another concept presented in the novel is a large number of people moved from the countryside to the big city in hunt of a more significant economic opportunity and financial prosperity.

Dickens uses a straightforward manner to present the conduct of high class, as antiquated, very inflexible, and cautious. Men and women were anticipated to go through traditional education to behave appropriately and politely manner on many social occasions. These critical factors help shape the arrogant conduct of the higher class. In addition,

this novel portrays self-discovery and maturation through multiple experiences as a protagonist confronted in his journey, which help transform him from childhood to maturity. Pip's unforeseen rise from the countryside to the city of high class forces him to change the scene from one social extreme to another while facing the complicated protocols and expectations that controlled Victorian England society of high class. It eventually causes him to change his conduct and perspectives.

"I thought how Joe and my sister were then sitting in the kitchen, and how I had come up to bed from the kitchen, and how Miss Havisham and Estella never sat in a kitchen, but were far above the level of such common doings" (Dickens94). Here Pip tastes an early glimpse about the life of high class after his awareness that only the servant eats in the kitchen and the master eat only in the dining rooms since he was raised in a low-class family that was strange to him, but now he starts to notice the massive differences between the two classes even in their eating habits. Dickens uses this concept to demonstrate the inequality between the high class and the low class to make the ordinary reader aware of this massive social gap between the two. This incident causes him to realize the cruelty aspect of a life controlled by the higher class and made him aware of the utterly different behaviour of the high and low class.

Various occurrences from Dickens's life are mentioned in *Great Expectation* because Dickens projected his journey in the novel is by using Pip. The similarity relies upon the fact that he survives the poor country, works at an occupation he hates and experiences financial success in London at an early age, precisely just like Dickens did in his trip which was reflected in his writings and his perspectives of interpreting political manners. Dickens use his literary work to project his life to the ordinary individuals and gives hopes specifically in *Great Expectations* to the typical readers of gaining financial success through hard work and determination that will eventually lead them to success.

During *Great Expectations*, Dickens demonstrates the different class system of Victorian England, embodied in multiple characters starting from the depressed convicts such as Magwitch to the superior class Miss Havisham to the middle-class Pumblechook, and the unfortunate farmers of the country Bidley and Joe. The concept of using social class discrimination is vital to the progression of the novel's intrigue and the fundamental moral theme of the novel. It is essential to establish the different characteristics of society to give the literary work a sense of reality and reliability to its authentic representation. Dickens intention was to attract the reader's attention because the ordinary reader will discover that these characters definitely exist in his society so that he will feel some kind of belonging and relevant to the literary work.

Satire is no stranger to Dickens because in the novel he used it to demonstrate the ignorance of the upper class "Both... had such a noticeable air of being in somebody else's hands, that I wondered who was in possession of the house... until I found this unknown power to be the servants" (DickensCh. 23). Moreover, the realizations of Pip, that servant are more aware and involved in controlling the work of their masters

more than the masters themselves. Using this technique, Dickens portrays the ignorance of the masters and the lack of integrity of high-class figures. On the other side, it demonstrates the oppression of the workers and the massive inequality of the low class and the denial of their contribution to society.

Pip apprehends that financial success and class prestige are less significant than loyalty and inner worth. During portraying the main character, Dickens provides clear disapproval against the material aspect of Victorian society, and a clear rejection of the discrimination based on social class practised upon the lower class. The most significant thing to consider about the clarification of the novel is the social class position because the class system it describes is founded on the Industrial Revolution model of Victorian England society. Dickens generally criticizes the high class in favour of characters whose achievement was obtained by hard work in this manner, associating the concept of social class discrimination to the concept of hard work and self-development. Dickens emphasizes on the concept of the importance of the individuals and the rejection of social discrimination.

3. Conclusion

The influence of the political issue is evident in the literary scene of the 19th century; nearly all the well-known and famous literary works of that era contains some political concept. 19th century witness massive changes in the secular states and various social reform movements due to the terrible condition of Victorian society. Moreover, literature had a massive presence in changing these conditions by addressing them and highlighted the main problem in society. By doing these, it shed light and brings awareness to such issues to solve them. The political influence in literature is apparent in the majority of 19th-century writers, due to the importance of these elements in changing the course of literature.

The use of political issues in literary works helps improve the social condition in a Victorian society that later affected the course of literature in history. The 19th-century witness one of the broader social reforms and political changes in history due to the importance of such events, literature most defiantly took part in these historical changes. Indeed, writers involved in constructing and development of such events by participating in these changes through their literary work and the power of words. The writers of 19th century are responsible for changing the course of history as multiple scholars suggest that the start of the changing condition in the living situation of Britain started in the 19th century due to the massive social problems in 19th-century deception from the Industrial Revolution to the oppression of women that finally urges writers to take a stance against all these oppression. The 19th century also witnesses the birth of social novels and poems. The concept of using politics in literature existed in the previous century but a very narrow description and use.

The social problems of the 19th century reached an unbearable point that writer's turn to literature to present their voice and present their problems. The dramatic changes

in the society of the 19th century happened for numerous reasons. However, one of the main reasons is the contribution of literature and especially by the literary contribution of 19th-century writers such as Charles Dickens that eventually bring changes to the political scene and help improve the condition of Victorian society. Despite the multiple suggestions by several scholars regarding the absence of the relationship between politics and literature in the 19th century, this research demonstrates the evident relationship between the two, which reject such a suggestion regarding the relationship between the two. By exploring and reading 19th-century literature, political influence is evident in the majority of 19th-century writers and their well-known literary works. Which eventually reject such suggestion by various scholars regarding the absence of the relationship between politics and literature.

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