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The Discursive Representation of Proletariat Subjectivity: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Working Class in Hard Times, and Oliver Twist

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Abstract: *This research is a social study of poverty and the way Charles Dickens's Hard Times (1992), and Oliver Twist (2003) specifically addressed the poor. This study will focus on socially disadvantaged members of Victorian society, including poor children and underprivileged adults. This critical analysis of Dickens' selected novels will demonstrate that Dickens was a realist and naturalist writer in some way; As a result, the subject of this research is the traces of bourgeois exploitation of the poor and working class through various means, most notably through language in his social novels in relation to Marxism. This study will also use Norman Fairclough three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis. This research concludes the analysis by presenting the gap between the higher class and lower class and its impact on the lower class.*

Key Words: Discourse Analysis, Representation, Proletariat, Oliver Twist, Hard Times,

Introduction

Poor and rich, lower and upper classes, the differential line between people of different walks of life has existed in human beings from the beginning of the history of the first individuals who came together and formed a society which we know as civilization (Hollows, 2003). The marginalization of people is based on sects, status, and capital which a line of successors inherit as time goes on. Such social classification eventually gives birth to a system in which the upper class, or as Karl Marx referred to them 'the bourgeois' creates certain channels, using which they

control the lower and working class in a rut just to be born poor, live poor, die poor, and most importantly to create their next generation to be the same as them. Many tactics are employed that are in numerable forms but the most frequent and substantial one is language and its use in developing crippled mentality and personalities (Gholami Y. B., 2014).

Language is practically the first instrument a new born child inherits from society. And the proper use of language can set the sails of a ship either on an adventure or on a local transport route that dwindles

through the narrow alleys of a walled castle. Language influences ideas, and it are these ideas that gives rise to the most crucial question of all time, it is that either you lived a life or you just spent your supposed time on this earth. (Al Ghammaz, 2022)

Set in an industrialized society, we find Charles Dickens novels a historic volume of the accounts from the 18th and 19th centuries especially describing the society that's been split in classes, mostly the upper and the working class. This research proposal aims to analyze the following works of Charles Dickens under the scope of a three-dimensional model of Norman Fairclough's that is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate that the dominant class imposes its ideology on the poor and keeps them subservient (Schlicke, 2022). The researcher will also use the Marxist theory as the theoretical framework. The works that are to act as primary data and will be analyzed are, *Hard Times*, and *Oliver Twist*. All these novels describe vividly the lives of both classes and the provisional gap between them (Schuster, 2014).

As a writer can never escape the clutches of his/her time, so is Charles Dickens depicting the society of his time. It is notable that not much has changed in the last two centuries but the gaps between the stratum have gotten worse (Collins, 1990). The ruling class has become much more organized oppressing the lower and working class, devising new policies and tantrums for pushing the working class off the cliff of consciousness, and turning people into machines who do not ask questions but follow orders. The poor and becoming poorer and the rich are becoming richer. Only about one percent of the people control all the world's wealth and economy, Rich peoples are helping each other to be rich so they do it by cutting each other taxes, and do pay for each other when they gamble and lose (James, 1981). The requirements of the lower class for healthcare and education are always

ignored by the bourgeois. Our media emerges to be free but is actually controlled by a specific group of people. The elections are rigged. About all the wars that are fought on terror are just a bunch of big lies, the goals were far more in the wellbeing of a specific of a group of people rather than the wellbeing of humanity. The prisons are filled with one particular class and unfortunately no one is complaining. The media is constantly trying to scare the public for supporting policies that are not of their interest. But it is now considered a normal phenomenon and people neither have the power nor the will to ask why (Elkhidir, 2021).

Such discriminating ideas and events are portrayed in the above novels using the characters and minor or major details that are mostly in the forms of dialogues and other discourses. The researcher will look into these discourses and analyze different passages and discourses accordingly.

Statement of the Problem

The issues lower and poor class faces based on status and capital in the novels *Hard Times*, and *Oliver Twist* are the focus of this study. The rambling portrayal of the lower and working class in the texts has been investigated through Norman Fairclough's three-layered model of description, interpretation, and explanation and working class activist basic talk investigation of Marxist Theory.

Research Objectives

- To discuss the role that language plays in the novel's ideological representation of the Proletariat.
- To highlight the problems of captivity and acclimatization that the poor faced in the novels.
- To explain

Research Questions

1. How do discursive tools play role in the subjectivity of the Proletariat?
2. What are the problems of captivity and acclimatization that the poor people faced in the novels?
3. To what extent the poor class's psyche developed to amalgamate in a rut, never to escape, never to evolve?

Significance of the Study

The researcher wants to bring attention to issues that are related to class and social status, particularly those that affect the poor and working class, and the researcher also wants to alter the rules and customs of society as they currently exist by giving authority and sovereignty to the repressed bourgeois. This study aims to highlight how all the working class characters in any social system coup up with the fact that they are not given much importance. And that they are neglected in every possible scenario. And what is the influence of the words directed towards them. In other words, what form and style of language is used by the upper class while communicating with the lower class people in a society.

Limitation of the Study

This investigation focuses solely on the novels of Charles Dickens that are, *Hard Times*, and *Oliver Twist* and the occurrences in these texts. For information, other authors' works related to these books will be observed.

Literature Review

Poverty has become a serious issues both socially and economically. It is a kind of burden on the English society of the late 19th century. This is the reason why Charles Dickens used poverty as the basic theme of the selected novels, named as *Hard Times* and *Oliver Twist* (Butwin, 1977). Charles

Dickens novels to a great extent are like a mirror that reflected the life of the people of England and also the personal life experience of Dickens himself. Certainly, the novels represent the society of the Victorian age which was full of stories of the poor class and a long lengthy comparison and contrasts are made between the two classes, the higher class and the lower class. The Victorian age was also considered as a society where spiritual richness was not considered but enormous wealth was always given priority, as mentioned in the novels by characters of social positions (Gholami & Joodaki, 2014).

An author, being a part of society, always writes things happening around him, such as the problems around him. De Bonald in Wellek and Warren (1956: 95) states that "literature is an expression of society". It is for sure that author will mostly represent society with its actual happenings. Thus, literature as being part of society can never be separated from it and all its problems happening at that time which was written. Literature actually can be said, is a form of creative writing that contain the ideology, feeling and perspective of an author (Aminah, 2018).

In the early 19th century in England, the novel was given great importance due to its readers who were actually addicted to its reading. This was also the reason of its popularity. Reading novels became a primary source for entertainment for the one who had money and were able to afford it (McDonnel, et.al., 1985: 361). The novel is also known as the social novel, it actually is a social novel because it depicts the social problems of society in the form of fictional situations and characters. It represents social problems such as the problems of gender inequalities, poverty, prejudice, child labour and much more. Charles Dickens's writing is one of the most famous writings of the traditional works (Fine, 1999). He is said to be a "realist" by many writers, because he presented real conditions of society. Furthermore, Charles Dickens's work as already said was

considered a social novel because he presented the true picture of society and its social problems related to poverty, crimes and exploitation basically. (Aminah, 2018)

Dickens declares in *A Tale of Two Cities* that he had to bear pains to put truth and historical facts into his novels. He could have made a lot of false statements and unrealistic stories, but he was so famous for his truth that he never added lies. His work was and is always known for the truth that society faced. There were a lot of possibilities for him to make it unrealistic but he made the novels with a larger truth presenting it with a series of fictional scenes and episodes. (Ami E. Stearns & Thomas J. Burns, 2011)

Dickens's famous opening line, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1) represents the duality present in his and Marx's belief systems and literature. The comparison Marx and Dickens considered in rural and urban, proletariat and bourgeoisie, the condemned and the virtuous, and capitalism and socialism reflect the opposition of good and evil existing in every society (Dickens, 1948). Marx defines the history of mankind by the past through their ownership and ways of production. Secondly, he defines it by the problems faced by the poor and the distinction between the proletariats the bourgeoisie: "as soon as the laborers are turned into proletarians, their means of labor into capital, as soon as the capitalist mode of production stands on its own feet, then the further socialization of labor and further transformation of the land and other means of production into socially exploited and, therefore, common means of production, as well as the further expropriation of private proprietors, takes a new form. That which is now to be expropriated is no longer the laborer working for himself, but the capitalist exploiting many laborers. This expropriation is accomplished by the action of the immanent laws of capitalistic production itself, by the centralization of capital. (Ami E. Stearns &

Thomas J. Burns, 2011)

One capitalist always kills many (Capital 836). Talking about the theme of good versus bad in *Great Expectations* "city is poised against the country, experience against innocence" (Stange 10). Pip lives life on marshes which are compared to the refined house (Poy, 2014). Further Charles Dickens makes a contrast by dualities: "the world of 'respectability' and the world of ignominy; of oppressors and of oppressed; of the living and of the dead" (Hegan, 1954)

"Victorian era refers to the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901)" (Radja, 2014, 18). At the time of Queen Victoria, Britain was altogether changed due to the impact of the Industrial Revolution, which also made it the strongest in the world. Queen's "character and moral standards restored the prestige of the British Monarch but gave the era a prudish reputation" (Gholami&Joodaki, 2014, 645). Charles Dickens writings were of the same era so that present Victorian society.

Due to the greater and fast changes in society because of the technological innovation in the country, society had altogether affected a lot. People were divided into three classes, the church, the middle class, and the lower class, also as "the Church and aristocracy, the middle class and the working class" (Taibi, 2008, as cited in Radja, 2014, 21). As there were three classes that caused the difference in economies and eventually the families were unhappy. "The workers in the Victorian period were members from the lower class. The conditions of working were bad" (Radja, 2014, 20). Not Even children were supposed to work at that time. The higher classes were on higher positions and made other as labors. These labors were governed by the higher class and were never given any chances to step up to the higher class. While the middle class was a group of merchants and farmers. Thus, they were "the people who were poor in previous times and become powerful and self-made men afterwards" (MyDowall, 2006,

as cited in, Radja, 2014, 22)

The novel of Charles Dickens presents the labors of Coketown's factories are called "Hands". Stephen Blackpool is one of those hands. He works in Mr. Bounderby's factory. He has a struggling life. He tries to get his love which is with a lady known as Rachael who is also a factory worker. He is unable to marry her because he is already married to drunken woman. He tries to divorce her but could not afford it. He learns that only a wealthy man is allowed to fulfill all his desires. He lives a life of poverty. One of the member in his friends' makes a union for a strike so that he can fight for his rights or just show their friends how miserable they are living. He thinks that the higher class are ruling them and not giving them any chances. They are used like machines and to stop this, a strike is necessary. They are alienated because they have no control over the labor or product they produce. But Stephen refuses to join this union because he knows that a strike can only increase their problems and cannot help them in any way. There starts a struggle and the working class wants to get rid of the higher classes but most likely they are going to fail. According to Marxists' the oppression of the working class leads to a mutiny by the workers and the establishment of a classless society (AŞCI, [2019](#)).

Research Methodology

Research Paradigm

The researcher will only collect qualitative data for analysis. This study will employ a qualitative approach.

Research Design

The research is going to incorporate both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be gathered out of the novels "*Hard Times, and Oliver Twist*." At the same time, secondary data will be gathered from other authors' works and publications on this book.

Theoretical Framework

The selected paragraphs related to gender discrimination will be analyzed in depth using the Norman Fairclough three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis and Marxist theory which will support the current research.

The three steps that make up the Fairclough (1989) model for critical discourse analysis are referred to as dimensions. The transcript is the primary dimension; Speeches, scripts, pictures, or a combination of the three can all be used as text; this is referred to as word-level inquiry. Discourse practice is the second factor; Text construction and composition are included. The examination in dimension two will take place at the next level. Social practice is Fairclough's third dimension; It is nearly the norm of society or, more accurately, the institute's social structure. The analysis will focus on the norm level in the third dimension. The three parts of the Norman Fairclough critical discourse analysis framework are description, interpretation, and explanation.

The procedure of Data Analysis

In order to highlight the suppression of the Proletariat in the novel, both directly and indirectly, the researcher will examine the primary and secondary data collected earlier through the lens of the Norman Fairclough model of critical discourse analysis.

Analysis and Discussion

Text

'You didn't take your wife for fast and for loose; but for better for worse'. Book *Hard Times* (Book 1, chapter 11)

Interpretation

This line interprets the feminine side of the novel, and how women were at that time. It also shows that there were laws for the lower

class and where unbreakable. Instead of benefits lower class people were always in trouble due to the law made by the upper class.

Explanation

Keeping in view Fairclough 3 dimensional modal the text is about the situation when a poor person wanted to take a divorce from his drunken wife. The conversation between Mr. Bounderby and Stephen gives a message about the law, one for the rich and one for the poor, in England. The text interprets an emphasis on the division of class and the helplessness of the proletariat. It shows how high class is facilitated when Mr. Bounderby reveal the cost of the proceedings of a divorce that is so high that it underscores how expensive divorce is, which is only affordable to the higher class. No doubt, the sum of 1500 pounds would have been an enormous fortune in 1854. Mr. Bounderby by saying that, "for better or worse", he make a moral judgment and says that Stephan has a moral and religions obligation to be with his wife. His opinion about Stephan's message is that his wife might have turned out a good woman, therefore he insinuate Stephan the reason of the downfall of his wife. Perhaps this is true that Stephan is the cause of the downfall but this situation does not go the same for the higher class. Such as the case of Mr. Bounderby who will have no hesitation for leaving his own wife, because she has emotional distress whereas, Stephan's wife is abusive and alcoholic but is not allowed leaving her according to the law.

Text

'...you had better tell us at once, that fellow Slack bridge is not in the town, stirring up the people to mutiny; and that he is not a regular qualified leader of the people: that is, a most confounded scoundrel. You had better tell us so at once; you can't deceive me...'Book Hard Times (Book 2, chapter 5, para 12)

Interpretation

Mr. Bounderby angrily asks Stephan to tell him what ever was said by the lower class while they were together. But Stephan refuses to reveal the secrets. This shows that the lower class was always thought to be used for spying purposes.

Explanation

Mr. Bounderby tries to coax Stephen by asking him what was going in the meeting of the union, but Stephen declines to be a secret agent for him. Eventually, he is dismissed from the factory and is not even allowed to stay in Coketown anymore. Regarding Fairclough's model, the interpretation of the text and the text itself shows the problems of captivity and acclimatization that the poor people faced in the novel. This also gives a representation to the Marxist theory.

Text

'When you leave work of a night, between this and you going away, just hang about the Bank an hour or so, will you? Don't take on, as if you meant anything if he should see you hanging about there; because I shan't put him up to speak to you, unless I find I can do you the service I want to do you. In that case, he'll have a note or a message for you, but not else. Now look here! You are sure you understand.' Book Hard Times (Book 2, chapter 6, para 80)

Interpretation

Tom from a higher class tries to use Stephan, who is a poor man, in such a way that he shows him as if Stephan is being helped. This was a perfect rule made by the upper class that they had the right to use poor people for their personal benefit.

Explanation

These lines play role in the subjectivity of the proletariat when Tom tries to use the poor for his personal benefit. Tom has taken to

gambling which made him into heavy debt. To tackle with his debt he wants to rob the Bank but tries to put blame on poor Stephan. The choice of vocabulary in these lines is so intense that clearly show how to mean the higher class is towards the lower class. Tom convinces Stephen to loiter outside the Bank for a few days so that he may be helped by him but this was only to put blame over Stephan for the Bank robbery. Stephen was seen outside the bank roaming around when the bank was robbed.

Text

'Please, sir, I want some more.' (Oliver Twist, chapter 2)

Interpretation

The line interprets the idea that how a poor person had to make a request for something even if he had the right to have it. The text also shows that the child was in hope of getting more of what he wanted.

Explanation

This line from the text shows a humble request according to Fairclough's model. This line is said by a poor orphan child who is starving and makes a request for more food. It answers the first question in a way that the poor always had to make a request for whatever they needed even if it was their right.

The words of Oliver made the master angry and as a result, a bill was passed outside, offering five pounds to anyone who would take Oliver with them. This was how an orphan was treated. Such problems of captivity were faced by the poor. Proletariats were treated exactly the same way in different situations; they were never given the opportunity to ask for their rights. These lower-class people were so addicted to these situations that they never wanted to take a stand for themselves. But if someone would speak a word then no other person would

support him for his sayings. Oliver was convinced by his other fellows to ask for more but eventually only Oliver had to suffer.

Text

'...so he at once gave him a drubbing, which satisfied even Mrs. Sowerberry herself..' (p.44) Book Oliver Twist

Interpretation

Here the text interprets the saddest situation ever, where a poor person had to suffer only for the satisfaction of middle class people. Due to the hatred for the poor the upper and middle class had very bad treatment towards the lower class.

Explanation

This is the situation when Oliver was handed to Mr. Sowerberry who took him but disliked him for no reason and treated him inhumanly. There was a boy Noah who said lie to Mr. Sowerberry about Oliver that he wanted to kill them. This gave them a perfect chance to punish Oliver. Mr. Sowerberry asked her husband to punish Oliver which is in the line above, how satisfying it was for them while treat the poor that way. This line answers to the first question and second questions. It perfectly represents the thoughts of people for the lower class or the orphan, who has no one at their back to look after, how inhumanly they were treated and considered as an unwanted existence.

Text

'...yer mother was a regular right-down bad'un.' (p.38) 24 Book Oliver Twist

Interpretation

Once again the women, who are never dominant in a patriarchal society, are living a suppressed life. They are never allowed to make a mistake because they will not be given any chance and will be an unwanted piece considered as a problem for the society.

Explanation

The line indicates that woman was not given much place in society because they were not given any chance after committing a sin. Noah, who helped Mr. Sowerberry, for making coffins, always liked insulting Oliver's mother by saying such words about her. This problem of captivity and acclimatization was faced by the poor class. The law that were made by the Victorian middle class were never suitable for the poor. Prostitute was of very low status in society, they were considered a problem not humans who were supposed to be given their social rights. Oliver mother got Oliver while she was unwed. This made her a fallen women, which not only made her in trouble but also Oliver because Oliver was not given space in society. People like Noah always insulted his mother by saying such words. This gives answer to both the second and third question. It clearly represents the thinking of society toward a woman like Oliver's mother. No name is given to her till the novel ends. Agnes is not married by keeps sexual relations with men, which puts her in the sphere of as a prostitute. To be sexually active but not married then she was never accepted to society. This treatment was only for a woman not a man, whereas Oliver's father was equally involved in the sin but he was excused only because he is a man and is unhappy with his marriage. This gives a message that women were considered weak and wrong while men were not considered wrong even if they had affairs unwed. It interprets the fact that it was a patriarchal society where woman had a very low status.

Text

While Oliver was taught robbery his friends ran away while stealing a handkerchief but the man noticed Oliver running and thought he was a thief. Only after they caught Oliver a bookseller said:

"The robbery was committed by other boys. I saw it done; and I saw that this boy was perfectly amazed and stupefied by it." (p.68)
Book Oliver Twist

Interpretation

The text clearly shows that a poor person is never right. They will be the first to be suspected of wrong. If they ever are caught innocent yet they were supposed to be questioned.

Explanation

Even after verifying that Oliver did not stole anything yet law forced him to be arrested. Here a new scenario was created for the poor, after getting an eye witness still the law was to arrest Oliver and question him. Society violated Oliver first by hitting him hard to stop him from running, without knowing the actual story they did violence to him and nobody questioned as if it was supposed to be done or it way the poor was treated, even if they were innocent. This depicts the fact that Oliver was poor and poor people were supposed to answer even if they did not commit a sin. Poor Oliver was never asked why he would learn robbery, want to be made him reach that stage but he was only judge by his actions and non for his poverty. It answers the second question.

Proletariats are not always wrong as a society have made them. They also want to help others and think good for them but unfortunately, they are never interpreted that way, they are always considered low class and are thought to be treated that way no matter what ever the situation is they will not be given due respect. This is explained in the text when Oliver asked the robbers to let him go but they compel him to help them in the robbery so Oliver thought to give a signal to the family. Before he could give a signal to the family, two men appear who finds out about the robbery. They shot Oliver in hand, and Skies (the robber) drags Oliver away from that house and leaves him there to die.

Once again when the poor Oliver tries to help someone he himself get in more trouble, this is not only that he was poor but he was unfortunate as well. The poor were never given importance and were always used for personal interest by anyone who could make use of them. Here the third question is answered. The poor class's psyche is developed to amalgamate in a rut, never to escape, never to evolve because their poor and miserable condition does not let them escape out of society or their lower class.

Mr. Bumble works at the house where Oliver had the beginning of his life. He played such a cruel role in the novel. He treated the orphan in such an inhuman manner that he would never give them an adequate amount of food which made Oliver asking for more. When he gave Oliver to the coffin maker's wife and after he is treated so badly there still Mr. Bumble blame them for giving him more food is the cause of Oliver's escape. He not for a single time thinks that it might have been someone else's mistake but Oliver was a poor orphan and it is definite that it would be his mistake and no one else could have been wrong.

Conclusion

Charles Dickens's novels, play a great role in society before and now. It shows the reality of the Victorian era and also removes the mask of the fake world. This research is also on the basic idea of Charles Dickens which is the lower class and the upper class.

This basically represents the poor class and its problems all around them. The novel is one of the biggest sources of finding out about an era. The researcher also made a clear picture of the law for poor and their life among the higher class by the novels of Charles Dickens. The novel depicts the problems in the life of the lower class.

Findings

- The findings suggest that in novels the poor class have been presented in different scenarios with different problems. The analysis and discussion shows that most of the novels of Charles Dickens are based upon poverty and its impact on the lower class.
- The novels discussed by the researcher, finds out how the discursive tools play role in the subjectivity of the proletariat by presenting different characters in the novel, such as the child in *Oliver Twist* who had a miserable life because he was poor and was born with an unmarried women. Everyone tried to misuse Oliver for their personal gains, no one ever thought for his life, his future or his carrier.
- In the same way, a character, in *Hard Times*, Stephen, also played the role of the proletariats. Stephen suffering was all due to his poor life, his life was so despondent that he never thought of having a life out of that situation. His sacrifices were never where given importance, but he was always targeted to be sacrificed.
- The problems of captivity and acclimatization that the poor people faced are also discussed in the novel. The poor classes were never out of problems, they always had to suffer even if they were innocent. The basic problem was their lack of money, like when Stephen wanted to divorce his wife which was his basic right, but he was not allowed to do so because he could not afford the cost of divorce.
- The researcher's findings also presented how the psyche of poor people has been developed in not changing or escaping for development. The poor classes are represented in the novel as they never

wanted to change their situation. They were so used to the suffering that they always thought to be in that situation.

- They considered themselves to be born for the purpose to be ruled and

governed by the higher classes. They also never tried to escape out of any scenario that they were put into, but they quietly accepted their sufferings and admitted to be poor all the time.

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