

**INDUSTRIAL IMPACTS ON WOMEN OF VICTORIAN AGE: INVESTIGATING
FEMALE IDENTITY IN CHARLES DICKENS' WORKS****Bekmurodova Sevara Khasan kizi**

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ABSTRACT

This article inspects and discusses female characters of Charles Dickens' works and the factors contributing Victorian Age women identity through some selected works. It unfolds through the perceptions of women in Victorian period: their main role is society. The research mainly highlights the impacts of industrialization on British women's conditions. Furthermore, this paper shows the way the fictional works authored by Charles Dickens have depicted the social injustice happening in Great Britain during the period.

Keywords: *industrialization, Victorian Age, female identity*

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian era encompassed the reign of Queen Victoria, which lasted from 20 June 1837 to 22 January 1901. The era followed the Georgian period and preceded the Edwardian period, with its latter half coinciding with the beginning of the Belle Époque period in continental Europe. Nonconformist denominations, such as the Methodists, and the Evangelical wing of the established Church of England led a powerful religious movement for better moral standards. During this age, women had an inferior position after men, that's there was no equality between two genders in their social and political life. They eschew the public arena, which includes politics, paid employment, business, and public speaking. They should instead dominate domestic life, focusing on the care of the family, the husband, the children, the home, religion, and moral behavior. The realm of religion was dominated by women, and the Nonconformist churches offered new roles that women readily embraced. They taught at Sunday schools, visited the destitute and sick, distributed pamphlets, raised funds, supported missionaries, conducted Methodist class meetings, prayed with other women, and a few were permitted to preach to mixed audiences. One of the outstanding novelists of the time, Modern readers prefer to criticize Dickens' stereotypical portrayal of women in his works. Dickens is well-known for upholding the Victorian standard of femininity. There are many unforgettable female characters in Dickens' works : Agnes, the typical "angelic heroine" in David Copperfield; Estella, a heartless femme in Great Expectations; Sarah Gamp, the tipsy old midwife in Martin Chuzzlewit; Mrs. Bumble and Mrs. Mann, the fearsome viragoes in Oliver Twist and so on.

By imagining England, Charles Dickens asserts in his novel *Hard Times: Time went on in Coketown like its own machinery: so much power material wrought out up, so much fuel consumed, so many powers worn out, so much money made*¹ The Industrial Revolution conceals the social turmoil that many writers, including Gaskell, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens, experience on a daily basis. They conveyed the spirit of the age through all of their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. They reveal their answers to the societal schisms of the time and its effects on them. As a social writer, Charles Dickens has emphasized women's appropriate identity and advocated for education and the teaching of facts as follows: *Now, what I want is, Fact, Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, knowing that child care is a matter of both women and men*².

¹ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, p.93.

² Jacqueline Russ, *Dictionnaire de Philosophie (Mémo Références)*, p. 132.

Men have traditionally occupied the center of the household sphere, whereas women have always occupied the periphery. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the depiction of women in a selection of Charles Dickens's novels against the background of these ideas. Dickens, like most Victorians, believes that a woman should be "*the angel of the house, "devoting her life to housework and childrearing*"³.

Influences of Industrial revolution on Victorian women's identity

Prior to the development of industrialization in the United Kingdom, women's identities were evident in the family, social, and economic realms. On the family ground, women play a vital role in maintaining the home, caring for the husband and children, and guaranteeing the preservation of moral norms and standards within the household, particularly for girls. At the societal level, women's identities were elevated and valued based on their names and accomplishments. Women were revered or considered since they were not involved in social scourges such as committing crimes, prostitution, child trafficking, firearms and ammunitions trafficking, armed robberies, piracy, and gangsterism. At the level of the economic realm, women have been actively participating in a variety of activities to support their family and society as a whole. These activities include, to name a few, seamstress, agricultural, trading, housemaid servant, and weaving loom. All of these jobs were allocated for women. They were proud of their jobs because they allowed them to demonstrate their expertise, knowledge, identity, and emotions. They did not belong to any such official political movement. In other words, they were not concerned with political matters. In the mid-18th century, Great Britain was known as the cradle of the industrial revolution in Europe. Therefore, England was the first place where the industrial revolution could germinate and sprout. From there, it expands throughout Europe and reaches the United States, bringing with it numerous changes spanning numerous sectors. This article examines the economic, social, and political implications of globalization on women.

Female characters of Charles Dickens portrayed in way of his social time

In *Hard Times*, Dickens distinguishes between two types of women based on their educational backgrounds: the rascal fallen and the dove angels. In this regard, he depicts Rachael as a simple, sincere, and gorgeous woman who demonstrates genuine affection for Stephen Blackpool, for whom she embodies his domestic contentment and moral purity. As for the rascally women with twisted minds, these are the ladies who have lost complete control of their life due to the industrial revolution-imposed abysmal poverty and hard living conditions. Women have resorted to domestic confinement because, despite their power and authority, Victorian-era British society appears to consistently marginalize and sideline women. Dickens' portrayal of Mrs. Joe Gargery and Molly as victims of an exploitative society in *Great Expectations*, for instance, is expressive. These characters recognize that their social identity is diminished and undervalued in the society to which they belong, while their conventional role has been transformed. In this context, Dickens identifies Mrs. Joe Gargery and Molly as damaging women upon whom the importance of Victorian patriarchy and domesticity should be placed. In fact, Mrs. Joe Gargery physically challenges her husband Joe, demonstrating that women are fed up with their Victorian servitude and are seeking liberation and independence. She has no desire to assume any potentially destructive identity that could be ascribed to her. In fact, she opposes parenthood and housewifery since she considers them

³ <http://www.dickens-and-london.com/Women.htm>

to be less significant roles. This is what ultimately resulted in her receiving the punishment she suffered for ignoring her mandated roles as a wife and mother. In addition, Dickens emphasizes in *Great Expectations* that women's despotism and domestic violence have become common occurrences as a result of industrialization. His character Georgiana, often known as Mrs. Joe, shows this perfectly:

By this time, my sister was quite desperate, so she pounced on Joe, and, taking him by the two whiskers, knocked his head for a little while against the wall behind him: while I sat in the corner, looking guiltily on. „Now, perhaps you“ll mention what“s the matter,“ said my sister, out of breath, „you staring great stuck pig.“ Joe looked at her in a helpless way; then took a helpless bite, and looked at me again. „You know, Pip,“ said Joe, solemnly⁴,

This is a dramatic example of women's anger throughout the industrial revolution as a result of the sufferings, unfairness, and prejudice they endured. In the quoted passage, Mrs. Joe asserts her identity. The idea is that they have been displaced in the workplace by men and machines. In contrast to this, their response has not been delayed. As an act of vengeance and retaliation for their extreme poverty, they have chosen to engage in identity-tarnishing behaviors such as prostitution, criminal activity, corruption, armed robberies, and theft. They are no longer virtuous ladies, but rather criminal, corrupt, prostitutes, and thieves. In *Hard Times*, Dickens not only shows Mrs. Joe as a fallen lady, but he also depicts Mrs. Stephen Blackpool as a female who assumes a masculine position. Mrs. Stephen Blackpool is portrayed as "A *handicapped, alcoholic beast... A woman so nasty to look at, in her shreds, stains, and splashes, but even more foul in her moral infamy.*"⁵ Dickens describes her as a monster and a drunkard, two adjectives that nineteenth-century women did not merit. In his writings, Dickens often addresses prostitutes who have fallen on hard times. Nancy, a member of Fagin's criminal gang, exemplifies this societal malady in *Oliver Twist*. As a member of the syndicate, Nancy is obligated to commit crime and engage in prostitution to pay her financial obligations. On the opposite side of Dickens's Fallen women are the "Angel in the house" characters. In addition to the society's canker carriers, some women have been portrayed as having gotten a decent and real education. In *Hard Time*, Gradgrind's daughter, subsequently known as Bounderby's bride, is unorganized due to the fact that her schooling does not correspond with her cultural background. Louisa is perceived by her clan to be estranged from and separated from her people. However, she surprisingly admits that her father's educational style rather deprived her childhood of joy. It is important to remember that women's education in the 19th century was based on tyranny and subordination, as Dickens asserted: "To hear is to obey"⁶ In truth, "Angel in the house" has been depicted repeatedly in the majority of 19th-century literature. Dickens ranges among these authors in his focalization, thematization, and characterization. Biddy is one of the most admired characters developed by Dickens in *Great Expectations* because she manages her household so efficiently.

⁴ Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, p.11.

⁵ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, p.72.

⁶ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, p202

CONCLUSION

This article aims the exploration of women's identity in some Charles Dickens' selected works and the factors impacting Victorian women's role in their life spheres. As a result of the industrial revolution, Dickens' representation of the Victorian-era treatment of British women through narratological tactics such as characterisation and thematisation as a result of the industrial revolution has been widely examined. Indeed, industrialization has resulted in the emancipation and liberty of British women, who have since established their capacities, skills, and competencies in numerous socioeconomic fields. In addition, this era has opened the eyes of women in terms of empowerment and emancipation, participation in politics, and contribution to the nation's economy through their various income-generating activities, despite their victimization and social discrimination, which ultimately led to their abandonment of their employments and jobs. This social environment has not failed to produce its severe effects, including prostitution, women's participation in illegal activities, and social cankers. Globally, women face formidable social, economic, and political obstacles. To provide for their constituents, democratic administrations must adhere to the idea of representativeness. In other words, even if equal representation cannot be guaranteed, women must be represented at all levels of decision-making as equal development partners. In order to achieve this, many women participate in associational life as advocates for women's rights. Such a measure would considerably aid in putting an end to the injustice perpetuated against women, who constitute more than half of the world's population.

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