



Victorian literature during the nineteenth century

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ASBTRACT:- *During the nineteenth century, English literature was at its highest because of the growth of literacy in the Victorian era. The novel genre in particular witnessed rapid development in authorship and readership because of its potential to treat a wide range of issues. So, in this topic, we will review the major features of at the Victorian literature focusing on its themes and styles. We shall also discuss women's writing in the 19th century England.*

KEY WORDS: Themes, Styles women, literary.

1. Victorian literature during the nineteenth century

The Victorian era is often regarded as a high point in English literature and it is the literature that coincides in extent with the reign of Queen Victoria, and covers the whole of the nineteenth century. It forms a link and between the writing of the romantic period and the very different modern literature in the 20th century.

It is a literature that speaks of an age which witnessed great change. It reflects the intellectual patterns of the Victorian age, dealing with the status question through on the examinations of society, the law, industrialism and historical ideals. It has one main mission: point the finger at social problems to raise people consciousness (Fletcher.2002)

The dominant genre in Victorian literature was the novel (Cuddon,1998). Significant Victorian novelists and poets include: Matthew Arnold, the Bronte sisters, Christina Rossetti, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Joseph Conrad, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, William Thackeray, Benjamin Disraeli, Thomas Carlyle, Oscar Wilde, Lewis Carroll and Elizabeth Gaskell —. They created legacy works which become ubiquitous with continuing appeal (Carter,McRae.2001)

1.1. Themes and Styles

Victorian literature has become a very important source for historical facts and the life style of the 19th century England mainly because it relies on a realist mode of representation. Thus, as known of Victorian era that was a time of development of science, Victorians explored issues related to their historical and social context such as industrialization, rural urban life and the condition of children and women. The later are present in many literary work in which their role and position were of interest of both female and male writers.

In this sense, Victorian literature was characterized by a powerful, political stance because it offers a critique of social circumstances related to power, the conflict between classes as well as the women's rights. It tends to be close to the daily life of people by reflecting their inner feelings and external conditions in the most realistic way. The nineteenth century associates Victorian period with a realist works attempt to represent the world and the mind, it strives to reflect the Victorian world with its social concerns and should aim to express the personal private emotions of the writer and define what would be real in literary fiction (Mulder, 2012). So, realism is a narrative technique in Victorian literature attempts to describe life without idealization of romantic subjects. Thus, some of the themes that treated in the literary achievement are the industrial revolution and its effect on the Victorian society that was the inspiration of many writers. It marked a turning point in the history and their works were closely bound up with this time. In addition to that, the social changes that resulted from the industrial development are as the essential for the development of literary realism (ibid). For example its effect on children who were forced to work in bad conditions for much lower pay. Also, women who mostly found jobs in domestic service, textile factories, and piece work shops long hours for a low salaries. Also, it affects the setting of many great works and strongly influences the plot. Although, the Industrial revolution primarily affected the economy and other areas as class, family life and so on. These reflected in works such as —Hard times by Charles Dickens that depicted life in Iron Mills, concerns the poor people working in mills to produce iron product. It goes into the poverty and bad conditions of the immigrants' works. He presents the setting of his story as an industrial city. Thus, this example is also corresponds with writers who stepped to express their concerns and ideas about the working class. This intellectual debate took place in the 19th century novels which addressed the problems and the conditions of the English working class and the poverty. In

addition to that, the conditions of women that were one of the major concerns of Charles Dickens. He presents women influenced by the Victorian ideology surrounding the role of women in society. He depicts the fallen women, the women who forced to endure exploitation and oppression and their quest for survival in an industrialized society.

All of these themes presents in a huge number of novels with different styles. Thus, Victorian novels tend to be idealized portraits of different norms such as the novels that shape character in their plot of fiction in which the title reflects the protagonist as Jane Eyre which Charlotte Bronte has portrayed as a depiction of a realist figure of Victorian society. reflecting the position of women in society and reflecting the writer's inner self. Also, the novel that shape a setting as the work of Charles Dickens ATale of two Cities mirrors and describe the industrial city in which places took huge part in the narrative.

1.2. The novel in the 19th century

In the romantic period, poetry was the most important literary form that had produced. In Victorian period, the novel become the most popular in England and the world (Carter, McRae, 2001). That means, the nineteenth century was the great age of the English novel (Ghazali, 2009), which is described by Henry James as —an intricately wrought aesthetic and psychological design, and a subtle balancing of formal and moral tensions (Makati, 2008). The term novel arise in the end of the eighteenth century, it was the ideal form to describe contemporary life and the basis for much of earlier Victorian fiction and the form of literature which mostly reflects the individualist with its society. This type of literary work flourished since there was an increase literacy as the increase in the position of the middle class. Industrial Revolution that Britain had seen and its effect mirrored in the novel that become the means of portraying life, its social and moral values.¹

Thus, the Victorian novel is greatly known for its concern for the problems of the day, and the principal form in Victorian age. (Carter, McRae. 2001)

Victorian writers tried to achieve their commitment though expressing the spirit of the age with all resources, imagination, feeling and thought, and spotting the light on the condition of England question (Pollard, 1993). They attempt to show the Victorian reader about the trouble behind the beautiful scene of their society (Carter, McRae. 2001). In addition to that, the nineteenth century regarded as a great age of literature and novel in particular by novelists as Bronte sisters

The Bronte sisters (Charlotte Emily and Anne), who introduce the female character. They depicted a picture about women and their struggles in Victorian England. Charlotte's Jane Eyre (1847) that depicts women's position in Victorian England struggling to achieve self fulfillment in a society known by its oppression and imbalance between social classes. Also, Anne wrote Agnes Grey (1847) the story of a rector's daughter who takes service as a governess, a position that unmarried women take as a teacher in Victorian society.

Charles Dickens is one of the greatest novelist, and one of the few authors whose works still the most popular and read of the time (Thornley, Robert. 1984). Most of his novels describe the hardships of life, also, his work Hard Times (1854) which described as a novel of his time. It shows the worst side of the new industrial society of England. It clearly reflects how the poor lived. Thus, in Oliver Twist (1837) Dickens writes of the social problems of young boys of the poor and working class, also, the problems of children in cities where poor people had no chance to share in the success of the nation. His novels depicting the problems of the Victorian society.

In addition to that, Thomas Hardy who is one of the eyes witnessed in the history of England. He depicts the conflicts between the individuals and society, and concerns about the problems of the Victorians. Also, the representation of women who took a huge part in Victorian works as oppressed member in society. (Carter, McRae. 2001).

Elizabeth Gaskell is one of the main literary figures of the nineteenth century, who encouraged by Dickens. Her novels were the mirror image of reality of the time. She wrote North and South (1855) which is known by their social concerns.

Jane Austen is one of the literary giant of the history of literature. Most of her writing, shared the same plot. It centers on women at that time. Her novel pride and prejudice 1813 illustrated this point this means that the novels are romantic. Her main interest was the moral, social and psychological behavior of her heroines. She wrote mainly about young heroines as they grew up and search for personal happiness. (Carter, McRae. 1997) Like other women novelists, Charlotte Bronte depicts women in Victorian England, also, criticizes the nineteenth century social structure in her finest novel Jane Eyre. It made a considerable critical acclaim (Carter, McRae. 1997). It had taken the literary world by storm when it published in (1847). Thus, a part of it is autobiography by Currer Bell. It revealed Victorian attitude toward women concentrating mainly on Victorian Britain. It traces women's progress in the

patriarchal society, also, tracing the historical, social, literary background of Victorian times through exploring Victorian women's status and the Victorian women writers who reflects the ideal Victorian women.

George Henry Lewes claimed that the function of women in literature are to reflect —women's view of life and experience, which was different from that of man. They should fulfill that function to be the ideal of women through their writing especially novels and this seen in Charlotte Brontë's novels especially Jane Eyre.

Thus, the novel in the nineteenth century was a tool which the writers used to deliver social criticism. It was the source that gave the reader a clear picture of what was happening during that period. Moreover, it was a realistic portrait of Britain during the industrialization. It was the new form that was developed from drama (Flecher.2002). In addition to that, Charlotte Brontë's novels which denounced the pitiful conditions by depicting the different issues of society and expresses her own view with regard to women conditions. They enable the reader to know the personalities of the characters in the texts and to understand the symbols in each character that reflect the nineteenth century English society.

1.3. English Women Novelists

The 19th century has known the emergence of many female writing in England. Female writing contributed to the growth of the novel and the promotion of the position of women, as in the case of Charlotte Brontë and her sisters, who did much to change the way in which women were viewed and represented. While some Victorian women writers published their works using their real names as a mark of authorship, other preferred to use male pseudonyms to sign their work because it was very difficult for women from lower and middle class to enter the male dominant literary world (Carter McRae.1997).

1.4. The Themes of Women's Literary Works

Throughout the history women's literary work, are very popular. They cover the bulk of the social issues and problems of a particular time. Thus, one of the most important subjects treated in women's works from centuries ago were women's situation, which were the first concern of women writers especially from the Victorian period.²

Moreover, it changed through the years and literature, as a look of life, reflects it. (ibid) So, women issues are important for women authors as a reflection of inner self, expressing views and evaluation toward certain objects related to women, as a result of their suffering through years and live incident, in which they have been neglected from social life, as well as, a matter of pride and victory (ibid). One of the best example in Jane Eyre, the protagonist of Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre, and in Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonist of Jane Austen's pride and prejudice, who is presented as a real characters and ideal qualities (Thornley, Robert.2003). Thus the major themes that treated in women's works are closest to reality of the time related to women as women's oppression, existentialism that means the individual existence in society which is known by the diversity of classes, also, women's hardships such as having a drunk husband and living in bad conditions, as well as, the theme of women's success, freedom in oppressed society and gender identity.

Those images depicted by female writers in their work. Their stories present a narrative that seemed to conform traditional role stereotype in relation to women. They are able to depict the impact of patriarchy on the lives of individual women, also they able to gain prominence in an age known for its patriarchal and dismissive attitude toward the abilities of women. (Muda,2011), concerning women's quest for recognition, power and authority beyond the confines of their patriarchal society. They struggled for equality and against the patriarchal ideology that women were to be subservient to men.

Conclusion

To sum up, Victorian literature produced in order to comment on the different norms; social, economy, and philosophical ideas of the time. It also criticized the industrial world of England. In addition to that, it produced for entertainment. In this chapter we have pointed out the literature during the Victorian period dealing with its characteristics and style also, the themes that has been addressed. Thus, focusing on a type of literary works which is the novel, English women writers and the themes that treated in their literary works.

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