

The Case of Marginalised Victorian Women: An Analysis of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times* through Kate Millett's Feminism

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Abstract

The present dissertation aims to analyse Victorian society and its reflection in the 19th-century novels such as *Hard Times* and *Oliver Twist* within the feminist framework. Discriminative attitudes in a patriarchal society and how females meet abuse from childhood are among the main concerns; therefore, these are also examined with a great emphasis and added to the research. Their miserable condition inspires the author of this study to shed light upon the women and children within their fictionalisation both in the Victorian novels and in different periods. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* is considered the secondary source to develop ideas and explain the quotes taken from the mentioned novels. She discusses the inequality between sexes stemming from the religious, psychological, and historical mistreatment of women. The research is mainly based on the analysis of deprived groups such as women and children; thus, Charles Dickens's masterpieces are used as evidence supporting the main idea of this work because he is one of the significant novelists of the Victorian Era for his realistic illustrations of society.

Keywords: Abuse; Feminism; Hard Times; Kate Millett; Oliver Twist; patriarchal society of Victorian Era

Introduction

Through the lens of Kate Millett's feminism, I aim to analyze two of Charles Dickens's works in my dissertation. In order to illustrate the thesis' major point and highlight how it negatively affects the target population, I emphasize the Victorian era and social structure. My academic work's theoretical basis is feminism, thus I put a lot of emphasis on the many forms of abuse that are forced on women and children using Millett's important notions that she recommends in *Sexual Politics*. I examine how women and children have been marginalized by the patriarchal society in depth using multiple instances from various eras.

Results

The findings for each chapter may be summed up as follows: For every problem addressed in this thesis, either by myself or by important writers and theorists, there is an illustration of a potential solution. Additionally, because it is a literary study, the representation of real life in novels is thoroughly investigated in connection to credible instances from real life. As a result, it is examined in a way that will employ literature to assist the audience in developing empathy and a sense of sympathy for others.

Discussion

Because women and children are marginalized and mistreated for a variety of reasons, the discussion of my dissertation is an important subject in the English Language and Literature department. When I decided to write on this subject, I was well-versed in the subject thanks to my schooling and the experiences I had as a woman in a patriarchal culture. As Millett explains, because our culture is still patriarchal, we are still familiar with male oppression, which is regrettably a widespread problem throughout the majority of the world. Because of this, I felt compelled to voice my opinions and make a statement about the injustice faced by women and children. I believe it is my responsibility as a woman, and more importantly as a person, to draw attention to an issue and work to find a solution. In academia, it is our responsibility as authors, researchers, and educated individuals to raise awareness to the problems.

Despite the fact that both women and children experience male oppression, I opted to focus on them together since, according to my humble observation, there are not many dissertations that look at them both. Finding solutions for oppressed people is the main goal of feminism, and

much like women, children face oppression from male-dominated institutions of power. Hopefully, the literary works will also address the difficulties that children encounter.

However, this does not imply that there are not any additional dissertations that discussed issues affecting women and children in society simultaneously. When conducting my research, I came across some really helpful and thorough books, and I included quotes from them in my thesis.

Conclusion

The thesis is concluded by Millett's suggestion of the significance of proper education, which entails that society must be educated to treat every citizen with equal rights and that both women and children must be treated equally to men; patriarchal societies, however, do not take into account women as well as children when they construct men. Women and children have always faced discrimination, and the equality of the sexes has long been overlooked, particularly in patriarchal nations. Given that equality has not been entirely attained even now, Millett argues that the necessary equality may be attained with the right education. She also encourages women to respond to oppression in their own ways. Women may achieve equality by protesting against male domination and demanding what they are due.

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