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A Panorama of Victorian Society Through Dickensian Minor Characters: *Bleak House*

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Abstract

This paper aims to show the use of social realism in *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens in terms of representing the Victorian sociocultural diversity, some corrupted sides of the Victorian community such as paralyzed law system, and bad conditions of the lower class. With this aim, the conditions which bring about realism will be discussed in the introduction. Introduction will be followed by the methodology of the study in which realism and social realism will be explained. Then, *Bleak House* will be examined with a focus on minor characters. Although minor characters in the novel are of great importance in terms of portraying the social events of their times, they are neglected most of the time by the critics. However, studying all the minor characters is beyond the scope of this paper as Dickens uses more than fifty minor characters in the novel. Thereupon, Mrs. Jellyby, Mr. Skimpole, Mr. George, Mr. and Mrs. Bagnet, and Mr. Turveydrop are chosen to reflect the Victorian sociocultural diversity in the novel. In terms of reflecting some corrupted sides of the Victorian community, especially law system and bad conditions of the lower class, Mr. Tulkinghorn, Mr. Gridley, Miss Flite and Mr. Krook, Jo and Jenny's husband are chosen. The paper concludes that *Bleak House* provides an insight to the readers about reflecting a panorama of Victorian society through the lens of social realism.

Keywords:

Charles Dickens,
Bleak House,
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Dickens'in Yan Karakterleri Aracılığıyla Viktorya Toplumunun Bir Panaroması: *Kasvetli Ev*

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Özet

Bu çalışma Charles Dickens tarafından yazılan *Kasvetli Ev* adlı romanda sosyal realizmin Viktorya toplumundaki sosyal çeşitliliği, paralize olmuş hukuk sistemi gibi çürümüş olan bazı kurumları ve alt sınıfın içinde bulunduğu kötü koşulları yansıtmada nasıl kullanıldığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu sebeple, realizmi doğuran sebepler giriş bölümünde ele alınacaktır. Ardından, realizm ve sosyal realizm çalışmanın metodolojisi kısmında açıklanacaktır. Sonrasında, *Kasvetli Ev* romanı yan karakterler üzerine yoğunlaşarak incelenecektir. Romandaki yan karakterler dönemlerine ait sosyal olayları yansıtmada çok önemli olmalarına rağmen çoğunlukla ihmal edilmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte Dickens sözü geçen romanında elliden fazla yan karakter kullandığı için tüm karakterleri incelemek bu çalışmanın kapsamını aşmaktadır. Bu sebeple, romanda yansıtılan Viktoryen sosyo kültürel çeşitliliği göstermek için Bayan Jellyby, Bay Skimpole, Bay George, Bay ve Bayan Bagnet, ve son olarak Bay Turveydrop seçilmiştir. Bay Tulkingshorn, Bay Gridley, Bayan Flite, Bay Krook, Jo ve Jenny'nin kocası da Viktoryen toplumdaki bozulan kurumları ve alt sınıfların yaşadığı kötü koşulları yansıtmak için seçilmiş yan karakterlerdir. Çalışma *Kasvetli Ev* adlı romanın sosyal realist bir okumayla okuyuculara Viktoryen toplumun bir panaromasını verebileceği görüşü ile sonuçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Charles Dickens,
Kasvetli Ev,
Sosyal Realizm.

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Introduction

The social conditions that are responsible for the birth of social realism can be explained with realism's becoming popular as a genre in nineteenth century. The dominant form in the nineteenth century English literature is realism. Georg Lukács explains the reason why realism is so popular in the nineteenth century fiction as follows: “Novelistic realism as a response to the upheavals of the industrial and political revolutions of the late eighteenth century and the rise of Napoleon, which prompted a new sense of history on a mass scale” (Lukacs, 1937, p. 86). Besides, the Industrial Revolution affects the lives of people dramatically. As a result of using steam power and cotton mills, there was a great increase in the economy of England. Thus, many factories were built, and people moved from countries to cities to find jobs in factories. All these things “transformed the society, swooping away old privileges and monopolies and offering new opportunities and changes to the lower, and middle classes” (Mulder, 2013, p. 10). As a result of these changes, the middle classes became more powerful. Thanks to the printing press, more and more people could read. In this regard, Mulder writes: “A new mass reading public came to be consisting for the most part of middle-class people” and this removes “the old equilibrium, in which the higher classes used literacy as a way to overpower the poorer classes” (Mulder, p. 11).

The middle classes preferred to read about “things like the question how to deal with the newly acquired amount of freedom and leisure time and the need for new guidelines in a time where the former social institutions providing security, like the church, the guild and the family, were no longer granted” (Mulder, p. 12). Thus, the realist novels became popular as they portrayed the realities of the society. In other words, the novelists reflected the realities of their times in their works “with a focus on the representation of class, gender, and labour relations, as well as on social unrest and the growing antagonism between the rich and the poor in England” (Diniejko, 2014, p. 1). These works were called as the “condition of England novels” or “social problem novels”, and they aimed to create awareness about the wrongdoings and unpleasant conditions in the society. As a consequence of this awareness in society, people could understand the hard conditions of the working-class people. To this end, these novels portray the plight of the poor in detail.

Theoretical Background (Method of the Study)

Realism in literature is defined as the representation of ordinary life as it is without idealizations. Levine (2013) gives a definition of realism by saying: “Realism reflects the observable world of lived experience by refusing allegory and symbol, romantic and sensational plots, supernatural explanations and idealized characters” (84). However, the definition of realism has changed over time. For instance, Khuman explains realism in literature as being “not a direct or

simple reproduction of reality (a ‘slice of life’) but a system of conventions producing a lifelike illusion of some ‘real’ world outside the text, by processes of selection, exclusion, description, and manners of addressing the reader” (Khuman, 2010, p. 79). Thus, realist novels include believable characters and events, which provide the reader a sense of reality. Nonetheless, these novels may also include allegory or supernatural elements and they still are realist novels. In this respect, Watt (1957) mentions the realist novel of Victorian period as follows

The premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms. (28)

As for social realism, it is used in order to show the unpleasant conditions under which poor people have to live and to criticize the causes of these conditions. According to Khuman (2010), social realism is used by writers in literature with the aim of showing the current situation of the society and, thus, to call for a change in the society (80). In this context, he explains the reason of the emergence of this movement in literature as being “the need to respond critically and in a denunciatory fashion to the various mechanisms of repression and the frustration of personal and collective aspirations” (Khuman, 2010, p. 82). Therefore, it can be claimed that Victorian novelists employ social realism as a style in their works which are based on social realities of their times. These novels show ordinary people with their ordinary lives by giving them proper names in a particular place and time. In addition, these novels give importance to the “causality: what sets off events, produces social change, instigates relationships?” (Levine, 2013, p.100). The lives of the middle class and the lower-class people are reflected as being oppressed by the upper class.

The Representation of the Victorian Sociocultural Diversity

The underlying reason of Charles Dickens’ productivity in creating wide range of characters in his novels may be related with both his outstanding capacity of imagination and his selective perception as a result of which he can monitor his environment in a very attentive way. It may this special ability of observation which gives him a chance to make up a new character in a very amazing way that it cannot be interesting for his readers to come across approximately forty characters in Dickens’ novels. Even the number of characters exceeds fifty in his ninth novel, *Bleak*

House which is also regarded as his masterpiece and includes lots of minor characters. Dickens achieves to depict each of these characters so realistically that any of them deserves an in-depth analysis. With the help of these characters, Dickens not only tries to reflect the Victorian sociocultural diversity but also aims at revealing some corrupted sides of the Victorian community such as paralyzed law system and the bad conditions of the lower class. It may be possible to analyze some of the minor characters in *Bleak House* with discussing how Dickens, by means of these characters, reflects the Victorian sociocultural diversity, and reveals the abovementioned corrupted sides of the Victorian community.

To begin with the characters reflecting the Victorian sociocultural diversity; Mrs. Jellyby, Mr. Skimpole, Mr. George, Mr. and Mrs. Bagnet, and Mr. Turveydrop can be taken into consideration. It can be said that Mrs. Jellyby is a character with which Dickens tries to criticize the situation of some philanthropists who neglect their families in order to help some needy people living in Africa. In his book, *Charles Dickens*, Brian Murray implies that “Dickens also ridicules, through Mrs. Jellyby, not the practise of philanthropy per se, but those unable to grasp the simple principle that it ought to start at home.” (Murray, 1994, p.138). Mrs. Jellyby becomes so wholly absorbed in the issues about Africa that she hardly shows an interest even in her daughter’s wedding. When her daughter, Caddy says that she will marry and she wants to introduce her boyfriend to Mrs. Jellyby, her reaction is very strange, and it shows how much Mrs. Jellyby ignores her family and gets lost in her philanthropy.

You won’t object to my bringing him to see you, Ma? ‘O dear me, Caddy’ cried Mrs. Jellyby, who had relapsed into that distant contemplation, ‘have you begun again? Bring whom?’ ‘Him Ma.’ ‘Caddy, Caddy’ said Mrs. Jellyby, quite weary of such little matters. ‘Then you must bring him some evening which is not a Parent Society night, or a Branch night, or a Ramification night. You must accommodate the visit to the demands upon my time (Dickens, 1993, p. 275).

An excessive sense of charity can be seen almost all of Mrs. Jellyby’s manners and this artificial kind of benevolence seems to be chosen intentionally by Dickens in order to bring out the factitious side of human relations in Victorian society. In this sense, in his book, *Dickens and Religion*, Dennis Walder indicates that the character, Mrs. Jellyby is not the product of Dickens’ imagination, but she is created by inspiration from a real personality living in that period.

It is now familiar knowledge that Mrs. Jellyby embodies several features of the woman whose Family Colonization Loan Society Dickens enthusiastically published in *Household Words*, Mrs Caroline Chisholm; and that the Jellyby project for settling families

in Borrioboola-Gha, on the left bank of the Niger, is probably derived from Fowell Buxton's ill-fated Niger expedition of 1841-42. (Walder, 2007, p. 161).

As to Mr. Skimpole, it may be easily claimed that he is one of the most extraordinary characters in the novel. Most of the critics perceive Mr. Skimpole as a selfish character who does not think of the people around him and wants to exploit them. For example, Murray claims that "through Skimpole, Dickens underscores the book's larger attack on parasitical individuals and institutions." (Murray, p.138). Apart from these kinds of interpretations, it may be possible to analyze Mr. Skimpole from another aspect that he may symbolize the man of Romantic Period who gives so much importance to the five senses through which he can observe and feel nature. Due to Industrial Revolution, this connection between man and nature becomes eroded and some new concepts such as productive usage of time, saving money, working hard gain importance. If you go for a walk to feel nature, it means you are idle and you do not spend your time productively in a Victorian sense. If you work hard in any institution of society and spend all your time in there, then you can save money. It may be claimed that through Mr. Skimpole, Dickens rejects this kind of time and money perception which are penetrated into people's lives as a result of Industrial Revolution. The fact that Mr. Skimpole does not have the idea of time and the idea of money instead he gives much importance to satisfy his senses signifies Dickens' aspiration to the Romantic Period in which the most significant thing for man is to discover nature. This situation is reflected in a very effective way by William Blake who is one of the most prominent Romantic poets. In the first stanza of his poem, *Auguries of Innocence*, he says: "To see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour."¹ Actually, there may be parallelism between these lines and Mr. Skimpole's character in a way that he has a different kind of time concept; he wants to seize the time, he wants to feel even each moment.

For he must confess to two of the oldest infirmities in the world: one was that he had no idea of time, the other that he had no idea of money. In consequence of which he never kept an appointment, never could transact any business, and never knew the value of anything! Well! So he had got on in life, and here he was! He was very fond of reading the papers, very fond of making fancy-sketches with a pencil, very fond of nature, very fond of art. All he asked of society was to let him live. THAT wasn't much. His wants were few. Give him the papers, conversation, music, mutton, coffee, landscape, fruit in the season, a few sheets of Bristol-board, and a little claret, and he asked no more. He was a mere child in the world, but he didn't cry for the moon. He said to the world, 'Go your several ways in peace! Wear red coats, blue coats, lawn sleeves; put pens behind your ears, wear aprons; go after glory, holiness, commerce, trade, any object you prefer; only—let Harold Skimpole

¹ <http://www.artofeurope.com/blake/bla3.htm>

live!' (Dickens, 1993, p.59).

In this quotation, when we look at the last sentence, it can easily be said that Mr. Skimpole makes a clear distinction between to live with sentimental motivations based on feelings and to live with pragmatic motivations. Saying that 'let Harold Skimpole live!', he underlines this kind of passion for sustaining his life. In this sense, there is a sharp contrast between Mrs. Jellyby, who spends most of her time with working hard for others, and Mr. Skimpole. Mr. Skimpole stresses this gap between himself and her with these words which are also the indicators of the differences between the man of Romantic and Victorian Period:

We have been mentioning Mrs. Jellyby. There is a bright-eyed woman, of a strong will and immense power of business detail, who throws herself into objects with surprising ardour! I don't regret that I have not a strong will and an immense power of business detail to throw myself into objects with surprising ardour. I can admire her without envy. I can sympathize with the objects. I can dream of them. I can lie down on the grass—in fine weather—and float along an African river, embracing all the natives I meet, as sensible of the deep silence and sketching the dense overhanging tropical growth as accurately as if I were there. I don't know that it's of any direct use my doing so, but it's all I can do, and I do it thoroughly. Then, for heaven's sake, having Harold Skimpole, a confiding child, petitioning you, the world, an agglomeration of practical people of business habits, to let him live and admire the human family, do it somehow or other, like good souls, and suffer him to ride his rocking-horse! (Dickens, 1993, p. 60).

About Mr. George, it can be said that he is the signifier of the soldier's incapability to handle the issues of civil life. Since the soldiers are accustomed to living in a very hierarchical structure in which they do whatever the superiors want them to do, they have a difficulty in adapting the civil life when they leave the army. Although he has a healthy, well-built body, he looks small while he requests something from Mr. Tulkinghorn with giving reference to his being soldier. With paying no attention to Mr. George's respectable standing as a soldier, Tulkinghorn responds his request in a very humiliating way by saying: "My friend, I don't care a pinch of snuff for the whole Royal Artillery establishment – officers, men, tumbrils, waggons, horses, guns, and ammunition." (Dickens, p.399). Through Mr. George, Dickens wants to reveal this helplessness of soldiers also with the help of the relationship between grandfather Smallweed and Mr. George. He fails to perceive grandfather Smallweed due to his insufficient capacity to form an efficient social relationship. Here is one of his unlucky attempts:

'That's just what I mean. As you say, Mr. Smallweed, here's Matthew Bagnet liable to be

fixed whether or no. Now, you see, that makes his good lady very uneasy in her mind, and me too, for whereas I'm a harum-scarum sort of a good-for-nought that more kicks than halfpence come natural to, why he's a steady family man, don't you see? Now, Mr. Smallweed,' says the trooper, gaining confidence as he proceeds in his soldierly mode of doing business, 'although you and I are good friends enough in a certain sort of a way, I am well aware that I can't ask you to let my friend Bagnet off entirely.' (Dickens, p. 396).

Other interesting characters of the novel are Mr. and Mrs. Bagnet who are used by Dickens both to make a sense of humour in the novel and to imply the presence of ideal, middle-class family in the Victorian society. Just like Mr. George, Mr. Bagnet is also a soldier who always consults his wife when he encounters a problem in his social life. He usually remains in her wife's shadow due to the fact that he relies on the abilities of his wife in solving any difficulties in daily life. In this sense, Mrs. Bagnet becomes one of the most remarkable characters through which Dickens tries to show the presence of female dominance in most of the middle-class families in contrast to the idea that there is a male dominance in these families. With the help of Bagnet family, Dickens may underline the fact that this seemingly male dominance is a superficial one rather than being an ultimate authority which makes all decisions about the family. Dickens reflects this situation in a very ridiculous way with his character, Mrs. Bagnet who does all the talking in the name of his husband seemingly not because of the fact that her husband has no idea about the issue but because of the fact that he wants her to do so. When Mr. George asks something to Mr. Bagnet, he gives some funny reactions such as: "Old girl,' says Mr. Bagnet, 'give him my opinion. You know it. Tell him what it is.' " (Dickens, p.320), " 'Old girl!' murmurs Mr. Bagnet , after a short silence, 'will you tell him my opinion?' " (Dickens, p. 392), " "The old girl' says Mr. Bagnet, 'is correct – in her way of giving my opinions – hear me out!' " (Dickens, p. 392). With these reactions, Dickens not only makes a sense of humour but also reveals the key role of the females in the decision-making process of the families. Even his husband expresses this role of her wife though he cannot confess it to her. With the help of this conversation quoted below, between Mr. George and Mr. Bagnet, it can be seen that both Mr. Bagnet and Mr. George accept Mrs. Bagnet's power to do everything with a great success:

'George,' says Mr. Bagnet. 'You know me. It's my old girl that advises. She has the head. But I never own to it before her. Discipline must be maintained. Wait till the greens is off her mind. Then we'll consult. Whatever the old girl says, do—do it!' 'I intend to, Mat,' replies the other. 'I would sooner take her opinion than that of a college.' 'College,' returns Mr. Bagnet in short sentences, bassoon-like. 'What college could you leave—in another quarter of the world—with nothing but a grey cloak and an umbrella—to make its way

home to Europe? The old girl would do it to-morrow. Did it once!' 'You are right,' says Mr. George. 'What college,' pursues Bagnet, 'could you set up in life—with two penn'orth of white lime—a penn'orth of fuller's earth—a ha'porth of sand—and the rest of the change out of sixpence in money? That's what the old girl started on. In the present business.' (Dickens, p.318).

As to Mr. Turveydrop, he is one of the most arrogant figures in the novel. He is always proud of his deportment and gives much importance to display gentlemanlike behaviours. He is also used as an element of humour in the novel whose pompous manners may amuse the reader. His snobbish attitudes and the way he exploits the efforts of his son make him an unattractive character. There is no integrity in his behaviours rather he behaves only for being perceived as a respectable person. He may be the only character that Esther seems to be disturbed from his deportment. Esther describes him in a way from which it can be easily deduced that through this character, Dickens tries to portrait the ridiculous position of this sort of people in the Victorian society:

He was a fat old gentleman with a false complexion, false teeth false whiskers, and a wig. He had a fur collar, and he had a padded breast to his coat, which only wanted a star or a broad blue ribbon to be complete. He was pinched in, and swelled out, and got up, and strapped down, as much as he could possibly bear. He had such a neckcloth on (puffing his very eyes out of their natural shape), and his chin and even his ears so sunk into it, that it seemed as though he must inevitably double up if it were cast loose. He had under his arm a hat of great size and weight, shelving downward from the crown to the brim, and in his hand a pair of white gloves with which he flapped it as he stood poised on one leg in a high-shouldered, round-elbowed state of elegance not to be surpassed. He had a cane, he had an eye-glass, he had a snuffbox, he had rings, he had wristbands, he had everything but any touch of nature; he was not like youth, he was not like age, he was not like anything in the world but a model of deportment. (Dickens, p. 158)

From this extract, it can be deduced that Mr. Turveydrop represents the other side of 'Victorian gentleman' whose typical characteristic is based on pretentious manners. From this perspective, it can be said that with his character, Turveydrop, Dickens tries to deconstruct the canonized behavioural patterns of Victorian gentleman. Therefore, the fact that Dickens puts excessive emphasis on Mr. Turveydrop's deportment may be explained by the myriad apparency of ostentations figures in Victorian society.

The Corruption of the Law System

After analyzing the characters reflecting the Victorian sociocultural diversity, now it may be applicable to discuss the characters revealing the corrupted sides of the Victorian society such as paralyzed law system and the bad conditions of the lower class. At first, it may be said that the paralyzed law system in the Victorian Period forms the main theme of the novel. There are four important minor characters with which Dickens depicts the evil sides of law system in that era. These characters are Mr. Tulkinghorn, Mr. Gridley, Miss Flite and Mr. Krook. While Mr. Tulkinghorn signifies the stony and savage sides of this inoperative law system, Mr. Gridley, Miss Flite and Mr. Krook may be regarded as the miserable victims of this system. As a character that is always serious and rigid, Tulkinghorn reflects the merciless sides of the court of Chancery whose suitors must wait long years to get favorable results. Yet, it is impossible to get these kinds of results in this corrupted system that is why there are several people suffering from this situation. The common feature of these three characters, Mr. Gridley, Miss Flite and Mr. Krook is that all of them are the sufferers of the Chancery. Mr. Gridley gets stuck in his lawsuit so passionate that he spends all his life for the sake of getting any result from it. Since he becomes identical with the court of Chancery, he is seen as a figure of fun by lots of people. He defines his pitiful situation with these words:

I have been dragged for five and twenty years over burning iron, and I have lost the habit of treading upon velvet. Go into the Court of Chancery yonder and ask what is one of the standing jokes that brighten up their business sometimes, and they will tell you that the best joke they have is the man from Shropshire. I," he said, beating one hand on the other passionately, "am the man from Shropshire." (Dickens, p.177).

While Mr. Gridley dies for the sake of his lawsuit at the end, the mysterious death of other character, Mr. Krook gives a chance to reader to form a relationship between decayed structure of law and Mr. Krook's putrid corpse. His spontaneous combustion and the offensive odor spreading from his body may be confronted with the foggy atmosphere of Chancery and its deteriorating effects on people. In his book, *The English Novel*, Walter Allen touches on this issue with saying: "Another instance of symbolism from *Bleak House* is the horrible and fantastic account of the death by spontaneous combustion of the gin-sodden rag-and-bottle collector Krook, who by virtue of his name symbolizes the whole Chancery system." (Allen, p.196). The death of Mr. Gridley and Mr. Krook may emphasize the idea that death is the only salvation for the people who become trapped after involved with the lawsuits in Chancery. (Richard Carstone, who also becomes obsessed with Jarndyce and Jarndyce and cannot give up struggling for it until he dies, may be seen another sample of this situation.) In the book, *Charles Dickens* edited by Steven Connor, the issue about the

deaths in the novel is interpreted with these words:

The deaths in *Bleak House* constitute only in a paradoxical way ‘ends’ which establish the destinies of those who die. Their deaths define them once and for all as people whose lives were unfinished, as people who never achieved the peace of a settlement. Their lives had meaning only in reference to the perpetually unsettled system of which they were part.” (Connor, 1985, p.74).

Miss Flite is another sufferer knowing that she cannot get any result from her lawsuit but still cannot help following it faithfully. Her remarkable collection of caged birds may symbolize her being taken captive by Chancery. She never stops expecting a judgement from the case though she knows that this pointless waiting process comes to an end on one condition, which is her death. She explains her deadlock with these words:

‘I was a ward myself. I was not mad at that time,’ curtsying low and smiling between every little sentence. I had youth and hope. I believe, beauty. It matters very little now. Neither of the three served or saved me. I have the honour to attend court regularly. With my documents. I expect a judgment. Shortly. On the Day of Judgment. I have discovered that the sixth seal mentioned in the Revelations is the Great Seal. It has been open a long time! (Dickens, p.29).

When it is looked at the victims of Victorian law system in the novel it is seen that it is quite difficult to encounter a case document which is worked out in a fair way. In this sense, when Chancery Court in the novel represents the ineffective legal order of Victorian society, the sufferers of this court like Miss Flite reveals the languished sides of Victorian law system.

Bad Conditions of the Lower Class

It can be asserted that it may be suitable to analyze the bad conditions of the lower class in the Victorian society through discussing two minor characters, who are Jo, and Jenny’s husband, and their living conditions. With these two characters, the bad conditions of the Victorian lower class are indicated so shockingly that this pathetic, but realist picture may freeze the reader’s blood. For example, with the help of the place, Tom-all-Alone’s where Jo lives, Dickens reveals this misery in a very striking way:

Jo lives—that is to say, Jo has not yet died—in a ruinous place known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-Alone’s. It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people, where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants who after establishing their own possession took to letting them out in lodgings.

Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. As on the ruined human wretch vermin parasites appear, so these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes, fetching and carrying fever and sowing more evil in its every footprint than Lord Coodle, and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the fine gentlemen in office, down to Zoodle, shall set right in five hundred years—though born expressly to do it. (Dickens, p.182).

With the last sentence, Dickens stresses how the upper class neglects the lower one in a satirical way by giving absurd names like Coodle, Doodle, Foodle, Zoodle to the members of aristocracy. The dwellers of this place have no expectancy from life as if they are not human beings. Jo is one of them and through him; Dickens shows us the futile position of these kinds of people in the Victorian society by making a comparison between Jo and a dog:

A band of music comes and plays. Jo listens to it. So does a dog — a drover's dog, waiting for his master outside a butcher's shop, and evidently thinking about those sheep he has had upon his mind for some hours and is happily rid of. He seems perplexed respecting three or four, can't remember where he left them, looks up and down the street as half expecting to see them astray, suddenly pricks up his ears and remembers all about it. A thoroughly vagabond dog, accustomed to low company and public-houses; a terrific dog to sheep, ready at a whistle to scamper over their backs and tear out mouthfuls of their wool; but an educated, improved, developed dog who has been taught his duties and knows how to discharge them. He and Jo listen to the music, probably with much the same amount of animal satisfaction; likewise as to awakened association, aspiration, or regret, melancholy or joyful reference to things beyond the senses, they are probably upon a par. But, otherwise, how far above the human listener is the brute! Turn that dog's descendants wild, like Jo, and in a very few years they will so degenerate that they will lose even their bark—but not their bite. (Dickens, p.184).

This extract indicates how a lower-class person is perceived in the Victorian society in a very impressive way with which Dickens emphasizes that the position of poor people in that period is even worse than an animal. The other character, Jenny's husband, who is a brickmaker, is also the indicator of this situation. With the chapter in which Mrs. Pardiggle, who is a rude and arrogant do-gooder, visits Jenny's house so as to help them by preaching, Dickens gives his readers a chance of conceiving the situation of lower class. Looking at the reaction of Jenny's husband to the Mrs. Pardiggle's nonsense efforts may be sufficient to clarify the issue:

‘Then make it easy for her!’ growled the man upon the floor. ‘I wants it done, and over. I wants a end of these liberties took with my place. I wants an end of being drawn like a badger. Now you’re agoing to poll-pry and question according to custom—I know what you’re a-going to be up to. Well! You haven’t got no occasion to be up to it. I’ll save you the trouble. Is my daughter a-washin? Yes, she IS awashin. Look at the water. Smell it! That’s wot we drinks. How do you like it, and what do you think of gin instead! An’t my place dirty? Yes, it is dirty— it’s nat’rally dirty, and it’s nat’rally onwholesome; and we’ve had five dirty and onwholesome children, as is all dead infants, and so much the better for them, and for us besides. Have I read the little book wot you left? No, I an’t read the little book wot you left. There an’t nobody here as knows how to read it; and if there wos, it wouldn’t be suitable to me. It’s a book fit for a babby, and I’m not a babby. If you was to leave me a doll, I shouldn’t nuss it. How have I been conducting of myself? Why, I’ve been drunk for three days; and I’d a been drunk four if I’d a had the money. Don’t I never mean for to go to church? No, I don’t never mean for to go to church. I shouldn’t be expected there, if I did; the beadle’s too gen-teel for me. And how did my wife get that black eye? Why, I give it her; and if she says I didn’t, she’s a lie!’ (Dickens, p. 90).

With his characters, Jo and Jenny’s husband, Dickens aims to mirror inadequate conditions of Victorian lower class not only from the economic perspective but also from psychological point of view. When it is looked at the dialogue between Mrs. Pardiggle and Jenny’s husband, it is easy to say that Mrs. Pardiggle has a difficulty in understanding psychological state of Jenny’s husband. It can be said that there is a cultural barrier between these characters as a result of which it is impossible to establish an effective communication. Therefore, we can say that stressing this kind of miscommunication between these two characters, Dickens tries to remark class distinctions in Victorian society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper aims to show how Dickens reflects the Victorian sociocultural diversity and reveals the corrupted sides of the Victorian community by means of minor characters in his outstanding novel, *Bleak House* through the lens of social realism. Before discussing the minor characters, the social conditions which lead to the emergence of realism in the genre of novel are explained. Then, the concept of realism and social realism are defined in the methodology of the study. After this background information about Victorian social conditions that bring about the rise of realism in nineteenth century fiction, the minor characters are analyzed.

To this end, the characters Mrs. Jellyby, who tries to help poor at the expense of neglecting her children, thus, is resembled Britain's colonial efforts abroad, Mr. Skimpole, who can be seen as the representative of Romantic period in the novel, Mr. George, who reveals the soldiers' incapacity to integrate into society, Mr. and Mrs. Bagnet, who expose the breakdown of Victorian happy family myth, and Mr. Turveydrop, who can be seen as the signifier of 'Victorian gentleman', are analyzed to show Victorian sociocultural diversity. The corruption of the law system is discussed with the help of the characters, Mr. Tulkinghorn, who represents the stony and savage sides of the inoperative legal order of Victorian society, Mr. Gridley, who dies for the sake of his lawsuit at the end, Miss Flite, who never stops expecting a judgement from the case although this pointless waiting process does not come to an end, and Mr. Krook, who may be considered as miserable victims of this system. Lastly, the characters Jo, homeless youngster who cleanses the streets surrounding the Chancery Court in exchange for a few cents from passers-by, and Jenny's husband, who is a brick maker and a sheer representative of lower class in the novel are analyzed to lay bare the bad conditions of lower class in Victorian society. Consequently, it can be said that in his novel *Bleak House*, through all these minor characters, Dickens presents a complete panorama of Victorian society.

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