

THE DEPICTION OF ORIGINAL INNOCENCE IN THE NOVEL “OLIVER TWIST”

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Annotation: Charles Dickens, a prominent Victorian novelist, is known for his vivid portrayal of social injustices, particularly those inflicted upon children. In his works, Dickens masterfully depicts the harsh realities faced by children in a society that often neglects their well-being and exploits their vulnerability. One of the most striking examples of Dickens's artistic depiction of injustice to children can be found in his novel "Oliver Twist." Oliver's innocence is most evident in his interactions with other characters, such as the kind-hearted Mr. Brownlow and the compassionate Nancy. The themes of original sin and original innocence in Oliver Twist serve to highlight the moral complexities of human nature and the impact of environment on individual character. Through the character of Oliver, Dickens explores the enduring struggle between good and evil, innocence and corruption.

Key words: innocence, child, vulnerability, injustice, good and evil, society, human nature.

Аннотация. Чарльз Диккенс, выдающийся викторианский романист, известен своим ярким изображением социальной несправедливости, особенно той, которая причиняется детям. В своих произведениях Диккенс мастерски изображает суровую реальность, с которой сталкиваются дети в обществе, которое часто пренебрегает их благополучием и эксплуатирует их уязвимость. Один из самых ярких примеров художественного изображения Диккенсом несправедливости по отношению к детям можно найти в его романе «Оливер Твист». Невинность Оливера наиболее очевидна в его взаимодействии с другими персонажами, такими как добросердечный мистер Браунлоу и сострадательная Нэнси. Темы первородного греха и изначальной невинности в «Оливере Твисте» служат для того, чтобы подчеркнуть моральную сложность человеческой натуры и влияние окружающей среды на индивидуальный характер. Через характер Оливера Диккенс исследует непрекращающуюся борьбу между добром и злом, невинностью и коррупцией.

Ключевые слова: невинность, ребенок, уязвимость, несправедливость, добро и зло, общество, природа человека.

Anotatsiya. Viktoriya davrining taniqli yozuvchisi Charlz Dikpens ijtimoiy adolatsizlikni, ayniqsa, bolalarga qilingan adolatsizlikni kuchli tasvirlashi bilan mashhur. Dikpens o'z asarlarida bolalar ko'pincha ularning farovonligiga e'tibor bermay, zaifliklaridan foydalanadigan jamiyatda duch keladigan og'ir voqelikni mahorat bilan tasvirlaydi. Dikpens bolalarga nisbatan adolatsizlikni badiiy tasvirlashning eng yorqin misollaridan birini uning Oliver Twist romanida topish mumkin. Oliverning begunohligi uning mehribon janob Braunlou va rahmdil Nensi kabi boshqa personajlar bilan o'zaro munosabatlarida yaqqol namoyon bo'ladi. Oliver Twistdagi asl gunoh va asl aybsizlik mavzulari inson tabiatining axloqiy murakkabligini va atrof-muhitning individual xarakterga ta'sirini ta'kidlashga xizmat qiladi. Oliver obrazi orqali Dikpens yaxshilik va yovuzlik, begunohlik va korruptsiya o'rtasidagi davom etayotgan kurashni o'rganadi.

Kalit so'zlar: aybsizlik, bola, zaiflik, adolatsizlik, yaxshilik va yomonlik, jamiyat, inson tabiati.

Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist* is a classic work of literature that explores the harsh realities of 19th-century London society, particularly the plight of the poor and vulnerable. The novel reflects on the resilience of childhood purity in a society marred by poverty, crime, and exploitation. Golban stresses the paramount fact of this term as a Victorian literary device: '*The Victorian Bildungsroman in general presents the image of child as an archetype rendering the wholeness of human psyche, which is set up against the divisions of mind and feeling, excessive rationality and emotion, morality related to rationality and instinctive action*' (Golban 2003, 59). Through Oliver and the other young characters, Dickens portrays the vulnerability of children and critiques a system that strips away their innocence. One of the key themes in the novel is the concept of social innocence, which refers to the idea that individuals who are naive or inexperienced are often taken advantage of by those in positions of power. This theme is central to the story of *Oliver Twist*, a young orphan who is subjected to abuse and exploitation by the adults around him. Throughout the novel, Oliver is portrayed as a symbol of innocence and purity, a stark contrast to the corrupt and morally bankrupt characters that populate the world around him. Despite enduring immense suffering in the workhouse, the cruelty of adults, and the corrupting influence of Fagin's gang, Oliver retains his moral compass and innate goodness. His character stands in stark contrast to the grim environment he inhabits, serving as a reminder of the purity that can endure even in the darkest circumstances. From the moment he is born in a workhouse to his eventual rescue by the kind-hearted Mr. Brownlow and Nancy, Oliver is constantly at the mercy of those who seek to exploit his innocence for their own gain. These characters recognize Oliver's innate goodness and seek to protect him from the evils that threaten to corrupt him. From the workhouse to the criminal underworld, Oliver faces a series of injustices that highlight the harsh realities faced by many children in Victorian England. Dickens's portrayal of Oliver's struggles serves as a powerful critique of a society that fails to provide for its most vulnerable members. This is exemplified by characters such as Fagin, the leader of a gang of juvenile delinquents, and Bill Sikes, a violent criminal who uses Oliver as a pawn in his schemes. The influence of social innocence on the characters and events in *Oliver Twist* is profound, shaping the narrative and driving the plot forward. Dickens uses Oliver as a lens through which to explore the darker aspects of society, highlighting the ways in which innocence can be manipulated and corrupted by those in power. This theme is particularly relevant in the context of Victorian England, where poverty and inequality were rampant, and the most vulnerable members of society were often the most exploited. As an example, the pivotal scene where Oliver asks for more food occurs when he is in a workhouse. After being served his portion of gruel, Oliver, driven by hunger, approaches the master and famously says, "Please, sir, I want some more."⁽¹⁾ This request is met with shock and outrage, as it is considered unacceptable for a workhouse boy to ask for more food. As a consequence, Oliver is punished and eventually sent away to work as an apprentice to an undertaker. This scene is crucial as it highlights the harsh conditions and mistreatment faced by the poor in 19th-century London, serving as a critique of the Poor Law of 1834 and the workhouse system. Moreover, When Oliver is coerced into participating in a robbery, he is horrified by the act. His refusal to embrace a life of crime demonstrates his inner moral strength, despite his surroundings. Through Oliver, Dickens highlights the resilience of innocence and its capacity to survive against adversity. There was the fear of the loss of innocence in the innermost depths of Oliver. It was illustrated with the words '*The night was dark and foggy. The lights in the shops could scarcely struggle through the heavy mist, which thickened every moment and shrouded the streets in gloom; rendering the strange place still stranger in Oliver's eyes; and making his uncertainty the more dismal and depressing*' (Dickens 1994, 136). In the novel, a reader could also see good characters along with the negative roles. Mr. Brownlow plays a significant role in Oliver Twist's life in Charles Dickens' novel "*Oliver Twist*." Initially, Oliver

is mistakenly accused of pickpocketing Mr. Brownlow, an elderly gentleman, after witnessing the Artful Dodger and other boys steal from him. Despite this misunderstanding, Mr. Brownlow becomes a pivotal figure in Oliver's life. After realizing Oliver's innocence, Mr. Brownlow takes him into his home, offering him care and protection from the criminal elements that have surrounded him, such as Fagin and his gang of pickpockets. Mr. Brownlow's influence extends beyond providing shelter and safety. He becomes a father figure to Oliver, offering him kindness and stability that he has never experienced before. This relationship is crucial for Oliver's development, as it provides him with a sense of belonging and the opportunity to escape the cycle of crime and poverty that has plagued his early life. Throughout the story, Mr. Brownlow's relationship with Oliver evolves from one of suspicion to deep care and commitment. He plays a key role in uncovering Oliver's true identity and heritage, ultimately revealing that Oliver is entitled to a significant inheritance. This revelation not only secures Oliver's future but also allows him to live a life free from the dangers and hardships he previously faced. Mr. Brownlow's actions and support are instrumental in Oliver's journey towards a better life. The corruption of innocence was depicted with artistic style in the novel. While Oliver's innocence remains intact, other child characters illustrate how societal neglect and exploitation can destroy a child's purity. The Artful Dodger, for instance, is a sharp-witted and charismatic boy, but his confidence masks a tragic reality. Having been shaped by poverty and Fagin's manipulative influence, the Dodger has lost his childhood innocence and fully embraced a life of crime. Nancy, though not a child, reflects a similar theme. Her backstory suggests that she too was once innocent but was drawn into a life of crime and abuse. Her eventual decision to help Oliver, even at the cost of her own life, shows that traces of her lost purity remain. Dickens uses characters like the Dodger and Nancy to show how societal neglect and exploitation can erode a person's innocence over time. There was great role of society in protecting innocence too. Through his depiction of the harsh conditions faced by children, Dickens critiques Victorian society's failure to protect its most vulnerable members. The workhouse system, as seen in Oliver's early life, is a symbol of institutional neglect and cruelty. Rather than providing care and protection, it dehumanizes children and exposes them to suffering. Fagin's gang represents another form of societal failure. Dickens illustrates that children's loss of innocence is not their fault but rather the result of a society that prioritizes punishment over prevention and compassion. Dickens offers a hopeful resolution by showing that innocence, though vulnerable, can be preserved and even restored under the right circumstances. Oliver's rescue by Mr. Brownlow and his eventual adoption into a loving home symbolize the redemption and protection of childhood purity. Through this, Dickens emphasizes the importance of compassion and support in safeguarding innocence. Importantly, the core of the success of Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is that it awakens the human conscience. His suffering as a child has inspired him to draw attention to the suffering of those unfavorable children and that had violently shocked upper-class society. (Journal of Positive School Psychology, 2022, vol 6)

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens masterfully portrays the fragility of childhood innocence and its enduring strength in the face of adversity. By contrasting Oliver's unyielding purity with the corrupted innocence of characters like the Artful Dodger, Dickens critiques the societal systems that fail to nurture and protect children. The novel ultimately serves as a call for greater compassion and responsibility towards the young, advocating for a society that values and preserves the innocence of its children. The influence of social innocence is a central theme in Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*, shaping the characters and events in profound ways.

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