



UNIVERSIDAD
COMPLUTENSE
MADRID

Dickensian Types in the World of Harry Potter

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Trabajo de Fin de Grado

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

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Convocatoria septiembre de 2018

Calificación: MH

ABSTRACT

British novelist J.K Rowling uses many Dickensian types in her most famous saga: Harry Potter. This paper aims to compare some of the characters found in that saga with other characters taken from some novels by Dickens, specifically *Oliver Twist* (1837), *Bleak House* (1852) and *David Copperfield* (1849). Dickens and Rowling share many connections, but maybe the most interesting one is how they portray those characters as living in the outskirts of the worlds they have created, specially servants, orphans and women. The orphans are the strongest bond between the authors as each one of them bases their stories on an orphan. Those orphans also have a very close relationship with death, which fosters the precarious conditions of their lives, with no parents to take care of them.

The servants take a crucial role in affecting the protagonist's fate and also the plot itself. Some of them even show a great love and care towards the heroes. These servants can also be self-sacrificing when the heroes need saving, like Dobby, Nancy and Jo show. To finish with, both authors seem to have contradictory portrayals of their women. They give a great deal of power to women that at first are passive and seem to be waiting for the protagonists to be in love with them.

Keywords: Dickens, Rowling, Victorian, heroes, orphans, power.

Palabras clave: Dickens, Rowling, Victoriana, héroes, huérfanos, poder.

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INTRODUCTION

J.K. Rowling once said in a BBC interview that the death of Charles Darnay in Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) had a great impact on her: "It is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known" (McGinty 17). Rowling's *Harry Potter* saga has become more and more popular since the publication of its last part in 2007. It all started in 1997 with the debut of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher Stone* and it was all wrapped up in 2007 with *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. There have been a large number of critics over the years who admit that one of the clearest influences that Rowling had is Charles Dickens. Starting with superficial acknowledgements of the saga "Dickensian, orphan-on-the-doorstep scene" (Thomas 4) as James W. Thomas wrote in his *Repotting Harry Potter*, Rowling's saga was later compared to novels like *Great Expectations* (Granger 18), *A Tale of Two Cities* (Granger 224) and *Our Mutual Friend* (Limbach 179), all of them written by Charles Dickens.

Two important critics also spot some similitudes between the Harry Potter saga and *Bleak House*, *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist* (the three main novels this paper will be focused on). Paige Byam states in her article "Children's Literature or Adult Classic? The Harry Potter Series and the British Novel Tradition" that the Harry Potter saga is just as good as some important titles from the British canon: "true, the character of Harry is an adolescent—but so are Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Charles Dicken's *Pip*, and Esther Summerson" (8). Roni Natov describes Harry as: "he becomes the child-hero of his own story, like Dickens's 'favorite child,' the orphan hero of *David Copperfield*" (126).

Even though most of the critics agree that both authors create their stories as if they were the *bildungsroman* of an orphan (a genre that focuses on the moral growth of the protagonist, usually from childhood to adulthood), the similarities that both Dickens and Rowling share go beyond their orphans.

J.K Rowling gave another interview back in 2005 for two fan sites (*The Leaky Cauldron* and *MuggleNet*) in which she states: “mine are very character-driver books” (Anelli/Spartz). This same concept can be applied to Charles Dickens, who was very successful thanks to his collection of short stories and his novels. Most of the characters that Dickens created are able to distinguish their role inside the plot, especially Dickens’s secondary characters. This paper defines these secondary characters as those coming from the periphery of the society (orphans, servants and women) and said characters start their lives with some disadvantages due to some kind of prejudice but are able to gather sympathy from the readership. It is actually Dickens’s characters who are at first stuck in the readers’ memory and not his complex narrative. No one can ever forget Dickens’s Fagin (*Oliver Twist*), Peggotty (*David Copperfield*) or Jo (*Bleak House*) after reading about them. This is something that can also be said about Rowling’s Hagrid, Snape or Dobby.

Dickens became popular for criticizing his own society, and his characters also helped him become so popular because it was through them that Dickens made his critique. This paper aims to describe some types of these characters from both authors and how Dickens and Rowling use them to keep the readers interested in said characters. Rowling’s characters also show us that contemporary England could be said to be suffering from a similar social struggle to that in Dickens’s era. Rowling builds on Dickens’s characters and tries to touch the readership by creating a contemporary society that also felt some social confinement (the Magical England that Rowling created mirrors Dickens’ England and it suffers from the same social struggles).

1. MUGGLE ENGLAND vs. VICTORIAN ENGLAND: BLOOD AND HERITAGE.

It is well known that both Charles Dickens and J.K Rowling created huge and complex worlds inside their novels and this paper aims to analyze how they created some specific parts of said worlds. On one hand we have Charles

Dickens, who took real, historical events, like the Victorian England era and how badly the lower classed were treated during it and managed to turn that into fictional stories. Rowling, on the other hand, managed to create two different worlds inside her most famous saga, *Harry Potter*: “Muggle” England (non-magical, normal people England) and magical England (that England in which we can find wizards and witches). The latter, magical England, shares many similitudes with the England in which Charles Dickens lived and the England that we can find portrayed in his work. Among those similitudes we can find a similar portrayal of social classes (aristocracy, middle classes, lower classes...) and the rejection by the higher social classes of the lower classes.

To help us contextualize the treatment of the social classes in the novels (both Dickens and Rowling’s) it must be said that, in the *Harry Potter* saga, Muggle England and Magical England got separated (in fictional terms, of course) in 1689 to protect the wizards from the muggles. If any muggle ended up having any knowledge about the existence of wizards, it could lead to great violence. Bathilda Bagshot, a fictional writer in Magical England, says this about the separation of both worlds in one of her works (*A History of Magic*), which helps to explain how wizards were forced to hide, to avoid any contact with non-magical people and create their own society:

Upon the signature of the International Statute of Secrecy in 1689, wizards went into hiding for good. It was natural, perhaps, that they formed their own small communities within a community. Many small villages and hamlets attracted several magical families, who banded together for mutual support and protection. (*The Order of the Phoenix* 101).

From this moment onwards, the two societies are going to have different developing paces. The magical one will be many years behind Muggle England in terms of technology (even though the wizards have the advantage of using magic, the mere fact of being able to use it makes them less fond of technology as everything they have to do in their everyday lives, they can do it with magic), but both societies will share similar social structures. And this is just what J.K

Rowling wanted; she depicted her magical world just the same way Dickens depicted his Victorian England. Rowling's Muggle England is Dickens's Victorian England. Rowling managed to create a Victorian England story (or at least create a story which society's background reminded the readers of Victorian England) inside a story set in the 90s.

In Rowling's Magical England society we can find aristocracy, middle classes and lower classes, just like the classes that we can find in Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, etc. In Victorian England, the rising middle classes threatened the people ruling the country because the Industrial Revolution changed the basis of the national economy. It was now based on industry instead of agriculture, and the aristocracy relied on this agriculture to gain wealth and power. Rowling depicts this very same battle, using half-bloods, pure-bloods, and mud-bloods (wizards or witches with no magical relatives). In her society we have these pure-bloods (those witches and wizards that are proud of not having any Muggle blood in their family tree) at the top of the social structure, thinking themselves superior to all other people (the Malfoys are a clear example of these pure-bloods), rejecting half-bloods (those wizards with some Muggle blood in their family) or those not born in a pure wizard family and also totally ignoring mud-bloods who, under their opinion, do not even deserve to exist. The half-bloods would be the middle classes and the mud-bloods the lower classes if we compare them to the social structure that can be found in Dickens's novels.

During the Victorian era, people's status was determined by blood (referring to how long a family has been important and wealthy). It would be almost impossible for the people of the lower classes to get out of that class if they were coming from poor families. In his work *Victorian People and Ideas*, Richard D. Altick gives us a clear definition of each social class. These Victorian classes were structured and based on "hereditary privilege" (Altick 18) and the only people situated atop the aristocracy were those who belonged to the royalty. Altick defines the aristocracy as "families with important name that gained power through intermarriage" (Altick 19). Aristocrats also gained a huge

amount of power by playing important roles in the society (company owners, bosses, etc). Also during the Victorian age the aristocracy felt threatened by the middle classes because of the Industrial Revolution, which changed society, making it more dependent on industry and less on agriculture. This was dangerous for the aristocrats because almost all their wealth came from owning the land and making profit from it. So if the agriculture was not important anymore, it could mean the end for many aristocrats, as all the money invested in the land was bound to be lost (along with their power and influence in the society).

The pure-bloods that Rowling depicted reflect the Victorian aristocracy (in terms of fearing the changes coming from the middle classes). These pure-blood families are among the oldest ones in the wizarding world and they are not related in any way with muggle blood. In Karen Brown's *Prejudice in Harry Potter's World*, we can find all the divisions in the wizarding society. Brown explains that these pure-blood families have "one of the strongest bounds to the elite and most famous organizations of the magical world, such as Hogwarts, Gringotts, the Ministry of Magic..." (Brown 41). However, also according to Brown, there are not many true pure-blood families left. This is mainly because the future of the magical world hugely depends on pure blood families being mixed with Muggle blood (because there are not many pure-blood families in the world). Most of these pure-blood families value blood (because blood is purity, it means race have not been stained by mixing with other non-magical people), wealth and name (having a well known name in the society, a name everyone knows about) above all things, but not all the families for this kind (pure-blood) are the same (the Weasleys, for example, they do not mind being related with Muggles). The Weasleys, unlike the Malfoys, are not rich, and the way they are dressed and how their house looks like tells us that they do not have much money. Maybe being like this, not being rich, not having enough resources is what makes them accept Muggle blood more easily.

On a lower level in Victorian England we have the middle classes. In these classes we can find people that share most of the privileges that the aristocracy

have and, according to Altick, “are often connected with them by marriage” (Altick 25). On this level of society we have characters like Sir Leicester Dedlock (from *Bleak House* (1852)) or people with no wealth or royal blood who went up the ranks thanks to the rising companies of the time (David Copperfield himself achieves success at the end of his novel).

Altick defines this middle class as the “moral heart of the Victorian society, a conviction assisted by the shift of the economic center of gravity in its direction” (Altick 29). There are certain characters in Dickens in which we can observe this moral heart (or center), such as Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies (*Oliver Twist*), who were willing to help Oliver long before they knew he was a relative of theirs. Altick also claims that “90% of the characters that we find in the Victorian fiction belong to the middle classes” (Altick 33). In this paper almost all the characters by Dickens discussed (except *Oliver Twist*) are from the middle classes so by discussing these characters this work aims to explain how they (Oliver, David, etc) fought during their lives, how they rose against the people threatening them and how they managed to succeed. As side information, and as Rodney Nilsen claims in his article “An Appreciation of Charles Dickens”, most of the Dickens’s regular readers were also from the middle class. This emphasizes even more the fact that Dickens was looking for a social reaction with his work: he wanted the middle classes to be aware of the injustices they were suffering and do something about it.

Finally at the bottom of the Victorian society, we have the lower class. Dickens gave much importance to the struggles of this class as they were usually treated like objects, no one cared about them. Within the lower class we can mainly find laborers that lived in extreme poverty. Both the laws and the social hierarchy itself ensured that they remained inside this class, for example giving them jobs so poorly paid that they could never earn enough to get out of it (they could not even get an education). Dickens was one of those writers who tried, with his work, to make the rest of the classes aware of the struggles of the lower class.

In Rowling's lower class we basically find people with no magical powers at all (muggles and squibs). Those who are born into a wizard family but have no powers at all were called squibs, and they are usually seen as disabled by the rest of the society. Karen Brown states that "it is as shameful thing for a witch or a wizard to produce non-magical offspring" (Brown, 43). In the Harry Potter novels we mainly see two squibs: Mrs. Figg, a cat lover living next to the Dursleys, who is part of the Order of the Phoenix, which in a way spares her from being mocked. Mr. Filch (Hogwarts's caretaker), the other squib, is indeed mocked and treated badly by society and by Hogwarts students.

Muggles can also be included in the lower class, as they have no powers at all and this is generally viewed as pathetic by the wizarding world. Some wizards consider themselves superior to Muggles. Other people, like Arthur Weasley, develop a great curiosity towards them, as seen in this quote from one of the books:

Mr. Weasley liked Harry to sit next to him at the dinner table so that he could bombard him with questions about life with muggles, asking him to explain how things like plugs and the postal service worked: "*Fascinating!*" he would say, as Harry talked him through using a telephone. "*Ingenious*, really, how many ways Muggles have found of getting along without magic" (*Chamber of the Secrets* 87).

Also, all the magical creatures that we find around the magical world, like goblins, centaurs, giants, ogres or werewolves, can be seen as part of the lower class because although they have magical powers, they are not human. Their relationship with the rest of the wizarding world is very precarious. Wizards and goblins, for example, do not get along very well, something that can also be extended to most of the magical creatures.

We are talking about a different breed of being. Dealings between wizards and goblins have been fraught for centuries ... There has been fault on both sides, I would never claim that wizards have been innocent. However, there

is a belief among some goblins, and those at Gringotts are perhaps most prone to it, that wizards cannot be trusted in matters of gold and treasure, that they have no respect for goblin ownership (*Deathly Hallows* 234).

In short, we can say that Rowling came up with a world which perfectly mimics the social hierarchy that we see in the Victorian England in which Dickens lived. This includes identical struggles and structures, with the aristocracy fearing their disappearance, the middle classes gaining ground and the lower classes remaining non-existent to the rest of the classes. In both authors we see a desire to fight for a different society, one in which the middle classes are the center (moral heart) and the precarious conditions of the lower classes are recognized.

Now that I have given an overall introduction to both social structures, I would like to discuss some type of characters that both worlds share, the problems they may face as well as how Rowling introduces and uses said characters:

1.1 First Type: the Orphaned Heroes.

Something that many people have wondered is why Rowling and Dickens's stories are so popular. John Granger explains this in his *Harry Potter's Bookshelf: The Great Book behind the Hogwarts Adventures*. Granger says "it is not about what Harry does, or says, it is about what Harry is; he is an orphan" (Granger, 14). The same can also be said about Dickens' characters. Granger also compares Rowling's success to Dickens';

A finalist in any 'greatest novelists of all time competition'—not one of whose books has ever gone out of print—Charles Dickens changed the English novel almost singlehandedly from gentry diversion to popular entertainment, agency for social change and personal transformation, and vehicle of profound meaning. And he did all that with orphan novels. (Granger 18)

Granger points out those other critics have also noted this connection between Dickens and Rowling regarding the orphan's role in their novels. Some of these critics (like Nicholas Lezard and Robert Girard) also see in both authors a desire to use their texts as a tool for a social change, but first both Dickens and Rowling need to make the reader feel invested in their novels, and they do so by the orphans' special sympathetic effects to draw some kind of response (mostly emotional) from the readers.

This part will analyze how Dickens' and Rowling's orphans are surrounded by death, and how that fact fosters even more the reader's sympathy. We will also see the power given to secondary orphans (orphans that do not take any crucial role in the novel but who are of some importance in certain parts) as the different plots unfold.

- Sympathetic characters and readership.

Rowling and Dickens are able to keep the readers intrigued by the way they narrate the orphans' stories. These orphans do not know anything about their parents, what happened to them, etc. and the reader also wants to find out about that mystery. We see as the novels unfold how they are little by little uncovering the fate of their parents. These mysteries will be mostly solved by the end of the novels and most of them will also know why they were left orphans. However, there are more mysteries among the pages than just these. If we take a look at the three novels by Dickens we will be discussing (*Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House* and *David Copperfield*) and to the Harry Potter series we can see how Esther, Oliver, David and Harry are victims of their social environment. It may seem obvious that this kind of individuals could never achieve personal success in life; being poor, with no family to support them, rejected by a society which is continually ignoring people from the lower classes. So that is why the reader actually wants them to overcome and leave those obstacles behind and to achieve that success of finally having a proper life, with a proper job that gives them enough money to have a house of their own or at least to live the life they want and not the life

they are forced to have. The reader feels pity for them for all the things they have to go through.

Graham Storey illustrates this idea in his book *David Copperfield: Interweaving Truth and Fiction*. He states: “the orphan as a child commands instant pity in his or her need of security and love; the achievement of both, by the end of the novel, thus becomes both more dramatic and more pleasure-giving” (Storey 78). The ultimate triumph of the characters and how the audience is emotionally involved in their stories is what Dickens’ audience appreciated the most. John Granger emphasizes the role of the reader by explaining that no one seems to care about the orphan in the novels, so sometimes it is the reader who needs to take that caring, embracing role. The reader needs to feel that they are responsible for the orphan.

Both Dickens and Rowling hugely depended on the readers feeling empathy with their characters, having some kind of feeling towards them. Both authors owe their committed readers a big part of their success; firstly for purchasing their books and secondly for their willingness to embrace the characters, stepping into the story and following the orphans’ tale until the very end.

Rowling and Dickens created heroes that have to face unfairness and cruelty from the very moment they start to emerge from the bottom of society, so that is one of the things that strengthen the readers’ connection to the story. The reader can feel emotions like pity and sadness for Harry even before we get to know about the Dursleys’ cruelty. This is thanks to the conversation between Dumbledore and McGonagall when they drop Harry at his aunt’s house. They say “They’re saying he tried to kill the Potter’s boy, Harry. But he couldn’t. He couldn’t kill that little boy” (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 15). We notice the emphasis McGonagall puts into “that little boy,” which helps us understand better Harry’s innocence and purity as the baby he still is. Out of the novels by Dickens that are analyzed, the one that shares more similitudes with Harry is *David Copperfield*. Upon birth David was not an orphan (unlike Oliver and

Esther, from *Oliver Twist* and *Bleak House*). He actually got to spend a few years with both his parents until his father died. He was then forced to live in a very small house with his mother and Peggotty (the housemaid). David still had his mother's love until she met Mr. Murdstone, who convinced Clara Copperfield to marry him, therefore becoming Clara Murdstone. Mr. Murdstone also managed to separate David from his mother, sending him to a boarding school. It is then that David starts getting the readers' sympathy, as he loses the rest of his family (his mother dies soon after he is sent to the school) leaving him a real orphan. Sometime later he is seen working in one of Mr. Murdstone's factories in such poor conditions that he soon finds himself with no money and no home. With all the misfortunes we have listed it is hard to imagine David Copperfield achieving any success, but the rest of the novel actually shows us that he will.

Little is known about Esther Summerson's (*Bleak House*) beginnings as they are hidden behind scandals and secrets. It is her godmother who raises her (she is actually her aunt, as revealed later) and she does not know any love or affection during her childhood. The only love she knows comes from her imagination, from her "dear faithful Dolly" (*Bleak House* 28). Esther also has to face cruelty coming from her aunt due to her being her mother's disgrace (she was born outside marriage and her father was a lover of her mother, not her husband). After some people call her names on her birthday, she laments and says:

I went up to my room, and crept to bed, and laid my doll's cheek against mine wet with tears and holding that solitary friend upon my bosom, cried myself to sleep. Imperfect as my understanding of my sorrow was, I knew that I had brought no joy, at any time, to anybody's heart, and that I was to no one upon earth what Dolly was to me (*Bleak House* 31).

We actually saw some love in David and Harry's early lives, but Esther lacks that love. The only thing she is told to do is work hard and not to expect any love

at all. She even buries her beloved Dolly because she thinks herself unworthy of any love, even the one coming from inanimate objects.

Oliver Twist is perhaps the one that has the most realistic upbringing of all (realistic in the sense that there is no magic involved, like we see in the Harry Potter saga: he is just a regular orphan, something we can find very easily in the reader's world). With this novel Dickens wanted to make the rest of the classes aware of how badly the lower classes were treated and how poor the conditions in which they lived were. Oliver's mother was not known at first (she was later revealed to be Agnes Fleming), she found herself on the streets and she died soon after arriving at a workhouse and giving birth. Oliver was then left in the streets, trying to survive on his own. Dickens illustrates this when he writes: "Oliver cried lustily. If he could have known that he was an orphan left to the tender mercies of church wardens and overseers, perhaps he would have cried the louder" (*Oliver Twist* 3). Oliver was sent to another workhouse where "twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor laws rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing" (*Oliver Twist* 3-4). With this quotation Dickens makes even clearer how bad the conditions in which the lower classes lived were. Many children died every day without the people of a different social class (in this case overseers and people in charge of these places, like orphanages) even lifting a finger. It was only pure luck that Oliver managed to survive in there, while kids around him died every day. He was later bought (it is worth mentioning that children are sold and bought like objects here) by Mr. Sowerberry (an undertaker), who used him in funeral processions. The situation in Rowling's world is not much different from the one we have just seen in Dickens's work.

The reason why Harry was left an orphan (unlike those in *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House* or *David Copperfield*) is presented to us at the very beginning. He was not abandoned by choice, nor did her mother give him up or lost the desire to look after him (like we see in *David Copperfield* in David's mother), nor would it be, as seen in *Bleak House*, "far better that he had never born" (*Bleak House* 30), nor was there any disgrace that happened to his mother, like we also

see in *Bleak House* in Esther's mother. Harry did not suffer from any of this, he was in fact a loved, wanted boy, but had the misfortune of someone murdering his family and taking it away. And even though his relatives, the Dursleys, were responsible for looking after him, he was only their servant, as seen in this part:

‘Are you up yet?’ She demanded.

‘Nearly,’ said Harry.

‘Well, get a move on, I want you to look after the bacon. And don't you dare let it burn, I want everything perfect on Duddy's birthday’ Harry groaned.

‘What did you say?’ his aunt snapped through the door.

‘Nothing, nothing...’ (*Philosopher Stone 2*)

There was neither love nor care for Harry in Number 4 Privet Drive, only cruelty and an old mattress in a cupboard. Actually, Harry's fame in the magic community for having survived when he was a baby could have granted him a life of compassion and love, but that life is kept away for him for eleven years. That is another thing that helps us see better that sympathetic effect that Harry has. The readers, again, feel pity for Harry. He is not only an orphan, but his parents were murdered and the people who are supposed to be responsible for him ignore him and they even treat him like a mere object, forcing him to sleep in a small cupboard.

We have seen how both authors, Rowling and Dickens, use these orphans in the same way. Opening up a novel using an orphan creates mystery about his past, about what the future holds in store for them, etc.) and in most of the cases said orphans gain the trust and sympathy of the readership. These orphans show a great parental influence (in the sense that they always have their parents on their minds: Harry is a great example of this, as his parents are the inspiration of almost everything he does) and a very strong relationship with death (mainly because their parents are all dead). All those orphans we have talked about are maybe the strongest bond that both Dickens and Rowling share, but more similarities will be revealed in upcoming sections.

1.2. Second Type: Loyalty to the Masters: Servants.

Many things can be said about how social hierarchies have a huge influence on both Rowling and Dickens' worlds. Those social divisions from both worlds are the main reason of conflict in the novels. The stories would lack impetus if not for the struggles that come from said social divisions; the battle between the lower classes and the upper classes is the origin of all the problems that we see arising in both authors' novels. Looking at the problems in each novel it can be seen that the Harry Potter novels are basically about why Harry was left an orphan and this fact essentially emphasizes the importance of blood status in his magical society: Voldemort killed his parents because he thought himself superior to them, and the "Death Eaters" (Voldemort's followers) kill many muggles throughout the novels because they have no magic blood. In both of these situations it can be seen that having non-magical blood puts the characters in a very dangerous position. Not only in Rowling's stories, but also in Dickens' Victorian England similar struggles can be noted. In Dickens' case the problems come from the social disadvantages that the middle and lower classes felt. Both authors excel at opening up the lives of the people from those classes to the reader. Their narratives center on the struggles that come from how their societies perceive the social classes.

Both authors use marginalized, isolated characters to emphasize all those issues (economic, social disadvantages, bad treatment from the upper classes...). In a way, it can be said that both Rowling and Dickens are social novelists, in the sense that they allow their voices to be into their stories through the narrators and their bereft poor class characters. They express their wishes in conflict with each society's hierarchies (they want to help the poor class people but their societies do not). The servants are a great way to show this conflict, as they are forced by society to take that role by class conditioning. However, the authors also care for them and make them fight against the social hierarchies and also the orphans' lives are of great importance in the plot.

Dickens is a social novelist because he uses his work to make people aware of how the poor were treated. The reader is sometimes forced to understand the conditions in which the lower classes lived, as sometimes Dickens himself uses his voice to emphasize said conditions. In *Bleak House* for example, after the sweeper Jo passes away, Dickens writes; “Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead. Men and women, born with Heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us, every day” (*Bleak House* 34). Dickens no longer uses the third person in that quoted part and uses his voice instead. By doing this, the narrator is forced to understand that Jo’s death is not only a part of the plot, but also something that happens every day, everywhere, in the novel’s world. Another example can be found in *Oliver Twist*. Dickens writes:

Oh if, when we oppress and grind our fellow-creatures, we bestowed but one thought on the dark evidences of human error, which, like dense and heavy clouds, are rising, slowly it is true, but not less surely, to Heaven, to pour their after-vengeance on our heads; if we heard but one instant, in imagination, the deep testimony of dead men’s voices, which no power can stifle, and no pride shut out; where would be the injury and injustice: the suffering, misery, cruelty, and wrong: that each day’s life brings with it! (*Oliver Twist* 182).

Once again it is shown how Dickens uses the “we” and not the “you” to put the burden on the reader’s shoulders (and on himself too). What Dickens wrote is what Carolyn Betensky calls social-problem stories. In her *Feeling for the Poor* she writes: “[social-problem stories] volunteer the experience of their own reading as a viable response to conflicts that seem daunting or irreconcilable. Encoded at multiple levels within the novels themselves, reading becomes something to do about the pain of others” (Betensky 1). This kind of novels is “a product of growing middle-class awareness of the poverty, displacement, and degradation of the victims of industrialization and unregulated

capitalism” (Betensky 3). Dickens wrote some novels, like *Bleak House* and *Oliver Twist*, which began to be popular because people felt society weakening around them and they wanted to reform it.

Rowling, however, is not as obvious in the sense of social awareness as Dickens. The critiques Rowling makes are more hidden, but she still makes them through certain characters and actions, like Hermione. Rowling makes Hermione create S.P.E.W (Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare), a society by which she wants to protect house-elves, free them and raise awareness about their role in society. Rowling does not put her voice inside the novel, but we still can find two situations in which she is close to it; Although it is not really Rowling’s voice, it is a different narrator than usual; it is not Harry, Ron, Hermione or any of the protagonists talking, so there is a high chance that it is actually Rowling herself making a point inside the book. It occurs when she describes the fountain inside the Ministry of Magic, before and after Voldemort himself takes over the ministry. In the first description the narrator wants to emphasize how important wizards and all magical creatures are for the society, making them all equal. Rowling writes: “Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin and a house-elf. The last three were all looking up adoringly at the witch and wizard” (*Order of the Phoenix* 117). This peace however is shattered when Voldemort enters the Ministry of Magic and takes control of it. The fountain is no longer the same; it now reflects the new horrors inside the Ministry. Rowling writes; “Now a gigantic statue of black stone dominated the scene. It was rather frightening, this vast sculpture of a witch and wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones, looking down at the Ministry workers toppling out of fireplaces below them. Engraved in foot-high letters at the base of the statue were the words: MAGIC IS MIGHT” (*Deathly Hallows*198).These two descriptions are the only moments when Rowling gets close to putting her own voice inside the story. All magical creatures are emphasized along with wizards and witches in the first description, reflecting peace among them all. In the second quotation there are no peace nor quietness portrayed, only hatred towards those who are not pure-blood. The social critique

in Rowling may be hidden behind all the fiction and all the magical creatures, but it is quite as strong as the one found in Dickens's work.

As analyzed in section one, both Rowling and Dickens's societies are built in such a way that blood status is everything. In both worlds the servants are placed at the very bottom of the hierarchy and their sole purpose in life is to serve people from upper classes.

One of the orphans in Dickens' work is Peggotty (*David Copperfield*). She is a character that shows some contradictions. She is seen as a love interest for the protagonist David, but even having such an important role, she is probably the most stereotyped character. Peggotty keeps being an important support for David even after she is no longer working neither with the Murdstones nor the Copperfields. David also feels much love for Peggotty, a love that can be seen here:

From that night here grew up in my breast, a feeling for Peggotty, which I cannot very well define. She did not replace my mother; no one could do that; but she came into a vacancy in my heart, which closed upon her, and I felt towards her something I have never felt for any other human being. It was a sort of comical affection too; and yet if she had died, I cannot think what I should have done, or how I should have acted out the tragedy it would have been to me. (*David Copperfield* 62)

David and Peggotty will end up having a mother-child relationship. Even though there is no doubt about the importance of Peggotty in the story, Dickens sometimes reminds the readers about her real status as a servant. Sometimes birds mistake Peggotty's face for apples, connecting her to the natural world and her fingers are described as "a pocket nutmeg grater" (*David Copperfield* 24) which connects her to the land. Dickens' goal is to give Peggotty's character some depth, but the way he describes her only fosters the fact that her real occupation is to serve. Apples and nutmegs are products that come from the land, where people from lower classes usually work.

They way Dickens uses Peggotty shows us that servants can actually be really close to their masters. Peggotty is so important to David that the readers feel affection for her. But even though she is important, Dickens reminds us of her true nature as a servant, creating some contradiction in her character.

Dickens' servants emphasize that people from lower classes are always bound to serve. What they do, their occupation, is connected to their social status, which is at the same time connected to how poor or rich they are. They are poor and that poverty is what makes them servants, and they are stuck in that role. Esther (*Bleak House*) is a strong example of how much the servants are always tied to do the same work: to serve. Esther is at first unaware of her true position in the society. Said position becomes clearer once she arrives at Bleak House and becomes Ada's companion and the new housekeeper. She is presented to us as an orphan, which makes her an ideal servant. However, Esther has a very high status as a servant, as she is loved by the rest of the house and they take her as one more member of their family. However, neither the love of the rest of the family for her nor this high status as a servant can spare her from being put in the lower class.

Esther's situation in the house is the same situation we find in the wizarding world with house-elves. These elves only live to serve just one magical family, as both the magical family and the house-elves family grow alongside. Harry sees this relationship between the family and the house-elves when he enters Grimmauld Place for the first time and observes "a row of shrunken heads mounted on plaques on the wall. A closer look showed Harry that the heads belonged to house-elves. All of them had the same rather snout-like nose" (*Order of the Phoenix* 60). Although Harry asks several people about it, this relationship between elves and the families is so rooted within the magical culture that no one questions it. Karen Brown explains this culture by writing:

They [house-elves] appear to have embraced slavery completely, as a social condition which suits their skills and intrinsic worth. They have also passed on the lifestyle and mindset of enslavement from generation to generation for many centuries, and now perform the slave's role without any strict enforcement from wizards. Wizards, in turn, have accepted the house-elves' enslavement as a way of life, to the point where they fully embrace the notion that the house-elf has certain intrinsic qualities that make him slavery-bound: Not only does he "like" being enslaved, but he is also only suited for enslavement. (Brown 90-1)

This relation that Karen Brown explains can be clearly seen in Dobby and Hermione. Dobby eventually becomes free after he is given a sock by Harry (one can free house-elves if they are given any clothes) and that freedom creates a way of life that is rejected by the house-elves at Hogwarts. Dobby proudly speaks of how he is the first paid elf but the rest of the house-elves see this as the ultimate betrayal to their culture, and as "rude and embarrassing" (*Goblet of Fire* 330). The "correct" way for a house-elf to react to freedom is seen in Winky, another house-elf that does not accept freedom after being given clothes. She even feels ashamed for not having fulfilled her duty correctly. Both Dobby and Winky show the reader how two different house-elves, servants, react to freedom. House elves have so internalized that their only duty is to serve their masters that they have reached a point in which they think freedom is wrong. Centuries and centuries of tradition made the house elves think that they cannot have freedom. A similar thing can be seen in almost all Dickens's novels, as the servants we encounter, protagonist or not, also think that being in the bottom class chains them there forever and makes them bound to serve. David, Oliver...they all thought at the beginning that serving their masters is the right thing to do.

Hermione, as stated in previous paragraphs, creates S.P.E.W to fight against the abuse of house-elves. She is constantly mocked by Ron for it because he believes that house-elves enjoy being what they are, and they would not know what to do if they were given freedom. It takes three more years (year seven of

the books) for Ron to finally understand that house-elves should be free and that they are going to die when Voldemort enters the castle because of the house-elves' deep connection to Hogwarts. Ron says: 'No,' said Ron seriously, 'I mean we should tell them to get out. We don't want any more Dobbys, do we? We can't order them to die for us—' (*Deathly Hallows* 502). Ron finally understands that they all were born free and were enslaved by wizards.

Dickens and Rowling use all these servants (Esther, Peggotty, Dobby, Winky) to show the reader how deeply the servants are conditioned by society (magical in Rowling, non-magical in Dickens) to take the role they are taking. Esther is given the servant status before she can really understand it. In Rowling's work the house-elves are so deeply conditioned by their status that they can even hurt themselves (hitting themselves, burning themselves, etc.) if they fail at following any order from their master. However, Rowling gives the reader hope through Dobby and Hermione; she uses both characters to show how wrong society is. Dickens also gives some hope when Ada, Mr. Jarndyce and Richard love and take Esther in as another family member and even when Alan Woodcourt decides to marry her despite her origins. Both Dickens and Rowling offer the reader small sparks of hope to convince them that social barriers can be overcome. They also make sure that the readership feels great empathy towards the servants and that the readers notice how important these characters are outside their occupation. Dickens and Rowling try to allow the reader to see and experience the servants's experience the same way their societies saw them. However, both authors took great care for the servants, support them and ultimately make them heroes willing to sacrifice themselves to save friends (like Dobby dying trying to save his friends at Malfoy's manor). Having discussed how Dickens and Rowling use and treat some of their servants in their work, let us proceed to the last type of this paper; the different types of women that both authors portray: passive and powerful. These women will serve as the final catalysts for social change in both authors.

1.3.Third Type: The Hidden Power: Women

Women in Victorian England were mostly seen as citizens one step below men, second to them. They usually depended on men to support them in all aspects (money, having to ask permission for everything they did...) and in very few situations were women able to sustain themselves. In Rowling's magical world women are different in the sense that they are more independent, still, some of them hold very important positions but they are always accompanied by their respective powerful men (for example, BellatrixLestrange always by Lord Voldemort's side or Dolores Umbridge always asking the Minister of Magic about new measures to put in Hogwarts). The latter seems to be just doing her job, but the Minister of Magic seems to be always in her mind every time she speaks in the books. It could be said that women are peripheral characters in both authors for the positions they hold (always the right hand of someone more important), but both authors play with the power that those positions give to said women. Dickens and Rowling portray women as the ultimate desired thing by the protagonist, as Victorian angels but also as characters with much power in the stories. This part aims to discuss where women are placed and what kind of power each of them have in their respective novels.

- Love interest:

Most of the young women portrayed by Rowling and Dickens mainly serve a romantic role, meaning that they take a passive role until it is time for the protagonist to fall in love with them. Each author has very clear examples of this, like Ginny and Cho Chang in Rowling and Dora and Agnes (*David Copperfield*) in Dickens. Gwendolyn Limbach wrote a very interesting article about this subject, called "Ginny Weasley, Girl Next-Doormat" in which she mainly describes how Rowling uses the characters of Cho and Ginny in her work. Limbach makes a strong argument that can also be applied to Dickens and his treatment of Dora and Agnes; both authors portray strong and independent women that remain passive until the hero falls in love. About Ginny, Limbach says that her characterization contains some discrepancies. She says:

Among the female characters in her age group, Ginny Weasley is one of the stronger girls we encounter throughout the Harry Potter series; however, her role as Harry's future and actual love interest limits her development. Ginny has shown herself to be a powerful witch, yet that power to fight is secondary, as in many gender-role-enforcing narratives, to her destiny to marry. (Limbach167)

Ginny is introduced to the readers before she is even fully developed as a character, as we hardly know anything about her when Rowling gives her a major role in the second book. She is seen as a very shy girl who is deeply in love with Harry during the first five books. Finally, in *The Order of the Phoenix*, Rowling allows the reader to see Ginny as someone else and not only as Ron's shy sister. She is now displayed as a very smart, funny character and also as a very brave girl who proves herself even during the Quidditch games. Limbach says: "Though Ginny has proven herself to be an active fighter and vivacious character, her appearance in the books, and her fate in the series, seem to be solely at Harry's discretion" (179). Ginny is given an immense power, but the reader does not see it until Harry finally falls in love with her.

The same things can be said about Agnes Wickfield (*David Copperfield*): She is portrayed as a very shy girl with a fair amount of hidden power. She is first presented to the reader as a child with an immense deal of responsibility; she is in charge of her father while at the same time being the housekeeper. Her character can be seen in David's description: "Although her face was quite bright and happy, there was a tranquility about it, and about her—a quiet, good, calm spirit—that I never have forgotten; that I never shall forget" (*David Copperfield* 194). Agnes is able to calm David throughout his life. Both of them grow up together (like Harry and Ginny) and it is very hard to see them separated. However, it takes some time for David to see Agnes the same way the readers see her. Dickens puts special care in emphasizing that Agnes is the woman that David should love but David does not see this until later in the story. Limbach explains this kind of blindness by giving some examples from Harry

Potter's world: "Rather than enabling Ginny to be an active agent of her desire for Harry, the author forces her to maintain an object position until the hero is ready to pursue her...To wit, Ginny only becomes a prominent character in the series when Harry sexually matures and gains experience through Cho Chang" (Limbach 179). This means that both authors keep the heroes away from Ginny and Agnes and do not let them reach said girls until the protagonists are mature enough.

Love triangles are also found in both stories. David has an initial relationship with Dora and with Agnes later and Harry is seen with Cho first and then he realizes that Ginny is the woman he should be with. The authors make Ginny and Agnes's attitudes and characters look better than Dora and Cho. Dora is clearly immature, disorganized and very emotional while Agnes is smart, strong and mature. Ginny has to calm Cho down when she gets angry during the trainings of Dumbledore's Army.

Both Dora and Cho are used later by Dickens and Rowling to keep the plot going until they have fulfilled their purpose, a point at which they are no longer developed. Dora dies when she does not add anything to the plot and Cho is taken away from the main plot and is dragged to the background of the story and does not ever really have a major role again.

David needs a calming spirit like Agnes. It is she who tells him to go home when he gets drunk at the theater. Agnes is a kind of compass for David. He explains it, "She put her hand—its touch was like no other hand—upon my arm for a moment; and I felt so befriended and comforted" (*David Copperfield* 311). Agnes is the moral guide for David and the one that comforts him and warns him when dangers are close (about James Steerforth for example and how bad his influence is for him).

Ginny provides Harry with the same comfort. Limbach says that "Harry fashions Ginny into the personification of peace time and normalcy" (Limbach 167). This is seen very clearly when a desperate Harry opens the Marauder's

Map and looks for Ginny, as the sole fact of seeing her name comforts him after Ron has left both Hermione and him. Rowling illustrates this: “Harry found himself taking it out simply to stare at Ginny’s name in the girls’ dormitory, wondering whether the intensity with which he gazed at it might break into her sleep, that she would somehow know he was thinking about her, hoping that she was all right” (*Deathly Hallows* 256).

However, Ginny and Agnes also take another role apart from being the comforters and the women that the heroes must love. A very clichéd one: that of damsels in distress. In *David Copperfield*, Uriah Heep threatens Agnes with marrying her and takes over the household. However, David does nothing to stop this and is left impotent. Later on, it is Tommy Troddles who saves Agnes and keep her safe from Uriah. At the end of the story, after some ups and downs in the plot, the reader does not really know who the ultimate savior is (David or Tommy) but one thing is made clear: Agnes is portrayed as a woman who needs someone to save her.

Rowling makes Ginny go through a similar process when she is possessed by Lord Voldemort in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Ginny is seen as a mere object in this novel. Limbach says:

Yet being the passive object of rescue is what Ginny has been set up to do throughout the book. When possessed by Riddle, Ginny (or rather, her body) must passively carry out his bidding; Ginny also remains silent throughout her ordeal [sic] and is silenced when she does try to ask for help. It should come as no surprise that, when Harry enters the Chamber of Secrets to rescue her, Ginny is unconscious. (Limbach 170)

The damsel in distress that is found in Rowling work makes Harry look like a more classic savior than David. By saving Ginny, Harry keeps Lord Voldemort from returning.

Both authors portrayed Agnes and Ginny almost in the same way. The only thing that is different is that Ginny is braver and more intense. This is an

understandable fact as the Harry Potter saga was produced two centuries after Dickens, and independent women should be something to be expected by Rowling's contemporary readership. They are also portrayed as independent women until the heroes show some romantic interest in them. From that moment onwards, they are characterized for what they can provide to the protagonists, Harry and David.

The reader is happy when they all get married, but maybe more details are needed as Ginny and Agnes stop being developed once they have fulfilled their role with the heroes. By creating Ginny, Cho, Agnes and Dora, Dickens and Rowling create very complex characters, as they all display a very passive role at the beginning, and some of them end up being powerful women (like Ginny or Agnes). The statement they try to make is clear; even though at the beginning both authors created passive women and in some parts said women are no more than mere objects, they managed at the end to turn them into powerful ones that can psychologically affect the heroes. Two different types of women (powerful and passive) can be seen inside the same character. Both authors could be showing us that characters can be developed in as much complexity as we want to add some intrigue to the plot. The more faces they show, the more interesting the plot gets. It may be worth pointing out that women especially are presented as complex, something not very common in literature.

2. CONCLUSIONS

J.K Rowling received a great amount of influence from Charles Dickens, sensed both in the excitement caused by the release of their books and in the way they created their characters. Dickensian stereotypes can be found all over Rowling's work. The major connection between the both of them is the use they make of the characters from the periphery of society and how they focus their

narratives on these characters. They ultimately rely on the readership to feel sympathy for said characters to help spread interest in the books and also for the social critiques they produce.

Both authors start their stories by introducing an orphan and rely on the readers to take on a caring role towards said orphans. They also emphasize how close these characters were to death. Dickens and Rowling also include other orphans in the novels to improve and even to counter the main plot, as seen in characters such as Tommy Traddles (*David Copperfield*) or Neville Longbottom or Tom Riddle in the Harry Potter saga. The protagonists ultimate triumphs, leaving behind the sad lives they had at the beginning.

Both authors also use another type of characters, servants, to describe how poor the conditions were in which the lower classes lived. However, even though they create them in such a way that the audience feels great empathy for them, both authors also constantly remind us of their true position as servants. The importance of these servants can be seen in how sometimes they sacrifice themselves in order to save the heroes.

To finish with, both Dickens and Rowling describe their women as if they were the angels in the house. They are mainly seen as a passive object waiting for the protagonist to fall in love with them. However, it could be said that their true power lies behind that passive character, as the same women that we see as a passive objects at the beginning, become extremely powerful at certain points. They become so powerful that the authors allow them to become, in a way, the creators of the narrative (meaning that sometimes they are the center of the plot), showing us that two different types of women, passive and powerful can coexist inside the same character.

Rowling and Dickens describe these characters in great detail because they, at some points in their lives, they also experienced that kind of atmosphere: Dickens worked in a factory as a child and his father stayed in prison for quite some time. Rowling, although coming from a middle-class family, struggled to

make ends meet when writing the first book, so both of them knew what it was to live in the periphery and most interestingly, the creation of those characters is a reflection of how one can escape poverty. They gave their societies some heroes from the lower classes and helped them overcome the obstacles, just as they did in their early lives. Also, by creating memorable characters they made sure that their humble, poor beginnings were remembered.

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