



THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN WILKIE COLLINS' WORKS

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ARTICLE INFO

Qabul qilindi: 20- July 2023 yil

Ma'qullandi: 22- July 2023 yil

Nashr qilindi: 25-July 2023 yil

KEY WORDS

Globalization, literary criticism, birth to new literary works, women's state in society.

ABSTRACT

In today's era of globalization, the study of world literature, the study of the spiritual and national characteristics of the people, especially women, leading to a high level of art, are becoming one of the main tasks of modern science. Hence, the study of the works of Wilkie Collins, his literary activity has always provoked an intense interest, especially, his interpretation of the women's state in society and creating strong heroines is highly appreciated among writers and scholars and his novels have their own remarkable place in the history of English literature.

Today there is a huge amount of fundamental research by domestic and foreign scientists in the field of literary criticism. The author's works and his contribution to the English literature have been learned and analyzed by a number of scientists and critics such as Dr Nathan Benjulia, Patricia Murphy, Steve Farmer and others as well as a number of articles. Furthermore, Charles Dickens, who has been friends with Wilkie Collins not in literature but on the stage though, have helped to give birth to new literary works and both writers contributed to the formation of one of the most fruitful and enlightening artistic partnerships of the modern age, having produced some of their best works in close friendship with each other.

Based on what we know of Collins, he appears to be an odd character to advocate for a more compassionate view of women's roles in society — at least on the surface. According to several contemporaneous reports, he led a hedonistic bachelor lifestyle, much of it centered on the male-dominated world of London's clubland. In his ideas on women's duties, goals, and responsibilities, he could be paradoxical - at times progressive, at times regressive. For example, in 'Bold Words by a Bachelor,' published just before the Matrimonial Causes.

Wilkie Collins was a major sensationalist of the Victorian era, known for introducing the novel into detective fiction. His novels feature intense social criticism and dynamic, multidimensional characters, many of whom are women, which makes his novels rich material for exploring gender norms, power dynamics, and differences in Victorian society. His major works include *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868). Previous critics have focused on the anxious male narrators in these novels and their attempts to establish positions of authority by controlling the story. A necessary consequence of this eclipse is the violent destruction of the women's voices in this text because they were ignored

or rewritten. While it is clear that it is difficult to hear in a patriarchal society that rejects women's experiences and perspectives, the use of silence in Wilkie Collins' novels is much more complex.

There is no need to silence women in these novels; they often choose silence as a means of controlling their lives. In contrast to the explicit narrative, the chosen silence allows women to establish their own authority within the patriarchal system, but is distinct from it. They can then use this power to protect those who have been removed from the patriarchy and to ensure justice that the legal system cannot do.

In Victorian times, the ideology of segregation portrayed men as part of the public world of politics and law, while women were sequestered in the private world of the home and family. Men achieved their participation in the public world through hard work and consequently their contribution to the nation; and women are "private, not public". This division deprived women of active participation in public affairs; instead, they were to exercise power by exerting a positive moral influence on the men in their lives. This belief in the spiritual guidance of women is not only to justify their falling into the realm of housing because they have the right to power and representation, but also to protect women from subtle and moral weakness, harshness also served to make. However, this separation was only ideological. This is defined in the legal system, which denies the legality of married women as individuals. Although single women have the right to own property and enter into contracts, once married, the woman is subject to her husband, who is the sole legal representative of the two.

Many English writers received a legal education, including Charles Dickens, which gave them a huge material for artistic creativity. Extremely outdated, confusing, based on precedents, English jurisprudence pushed people to think about the imperfection of social relations. It is likely that it was in law school that Collins found his topic - he was especially interested in the topic of a woman in law, to whom he, one way or another, addressed in all his novels. Here and bigamy, and a violent relationship with an unloved person, and the unfortunate fate of children deprived of a name. Collins was worried about the material insecurity of women, whose fortune and income unconditionally belonged to her husband, their physical insecurity (it was almost impossible to escape from a husband who beat his wife or mocked her). Frequent tragedies were generated by the inconsistency and disorder of various types of marital relations in Britain (English marriage, Scottish marriage, recognized in England with reservations, and, finally, the Catholic Irish marriage, burdened for the English subject by various exceptions and restrictions, making it possible for tragic incidents to appear). Collins developed each of these collisions to perfection and brought them to extreme dramatic severity. It is this aspect of reflection, constantly present in the first, then somewhat veiled, in the background, that will give Collins' novels a social significance.

An important event that influenced the rest of his life was a meeting with Charles Dickens (1851). The two novelists met and quickly hit it off through their passion for amateur theatre. Both were good playwrights, each of them had a stage appearance, both were good actors and friends. Playing together in the theater, Dickens and Collins were often co-authors of plays. They were also brought together by their love of traveling together. Fluent in French and Italian, connoisseur of the arts and local customs, Collins was an indispensable guide. Memoir literature keeps curious memories of their road adventures.

Dickens helped Collins find himself in literature and become one of the original writers of England. Collins was a regular contributor to Family Reading and Year Round magazines. A number of his best novels, including *The Woman in White*, appeared in Dickens's magazines.

Collins owes a lot to Dickens - a recognized master could give a lot of valuable advice to his friend and co-author. Dickens' influence manifested itself not so much in the group of novel collisions that Collins could borrow from Dickens without personal contacts with an older colleague (for example, from *Oliver Twist*), but above all in a sharp increase in kindness and philanthropy, in a feeling of sincere compassion for the unfortunate, for the victims of social discomfort, whoever they may be (a poor girl who has stumbled, once in her life she has committed theft from hunger, or a worthy woman, a servant in a rich family, deceived a stupid scoundrel, a London craftswoman, a victim of a drunken husband, a young lady from a wealthy family who barely saved her life and mind in a cunning intrigue around her dowry) - all this makes Collins and Dickens related. This is a distinct philanthropic attitude, which is felt in the mature novels of Collins, the goodness that illuminates the often sad and terrible world, the breadth of the humane perception of the world, the functions of humor. It is precisely the Dickensian manner that can be traced in the butler Betteridge and Miss Clack.

But to say that Collins is a "little Dickens", following the opinion that has long prevailed in world literary criticism, would be reckless. Having met Dickens, Collins himself had literary experience, he already had his own name and, having learned a lot from Dickens, he nevertheless remained himself. Moreover, Dickens, as they say, "a student of his students", did not hide the fact that he tried to learn from Collins the skill of building a plot, the ability to build an exciting narrative. Examples of Collins' influence on Dickens are "*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*" and "*Our Mutual Friend*".

Collins is a "middle class" writer. This factor was one of the reasons for the wide popularity of his novels. Readers, usually middle-class themselves, were able to empathize with the characters and immerse themselves in their adventures, looking at everything from their familiar positions. This allowed the writer not only to focus the attention of readers, but also to focus it on certain problems. This will be discussed in more detail when describing the third period of creativity, where this peculiarity of it will be expressed more clearly.

The writer showed extraordinary skill, preparing the mood of gloom and mystery thanks to anonymous letters, allusions, warnings that something terrible will happen at the masquerade. Using the motif of "revenge from the other world", Collins has a rational attitude to mysticism: all incomprehensible incidents are explained by real facts.

As a little-known author, Collins fought for success with the public. To do this, it was necessary to take into account the expectations of readers, to use the traditions of popular novels - gothic, exotic and "sensational" (which was done in their time by such famous writers as L. Tick and Balzac).

For this purpose, the author turns to the stamps of a fashionable Gothic novel: the villain (Catholic priest), the wealthy noble aristocrat; a French milliner (an insidious temptress), a noble, highly moral girl; mystical secret (appearance of the Yellow Mask). The action takes place in fashionable exotic Italy at the end of the novel the villains are punished. The novel is defiantly romantically conventional.

However, along with spectacular conventionality, the reader feels the national flavor of Italy, the real features of this country, unusual for England. Already here you can find the

prototypes of the characters he created later in *The Woman in White*, *The Moonstone*, *The Law and the Lady*.

During the Victorian era, there was no end to the debate about the role of women. During this period, writers defined women as angelic stereotypes – pure, naïve, weaker than the men and primitive. True valid indication to them can be Wilkie Collins' numerous works, most of whose main heroes are females. In his works the author could show the place of the women in the society clearly. Women were inferior to the men, mostly, because of their sex only but in his works women were able to prove that they were worth being even superior to the men according to their deeds and courage that lacked in some of the male characters.

In England, unlike in continental countries, prosperous Englishwomen, possessed of time and weight in society, "voted on equal terms with men in all municipal elections to the Public Charity Committees and school boards, county and parish councils ... They themselves could be elected to charitable and school boards and do figure in most of them, representing in them mainly dissident sects, radicalism, and sometimes socialism". Collins repeatedly mentioned such activities of his heroines, and this was considered one of the indicators of their respectability (participation in the committees of Miss Clack from *Moonstone*, teaching and patronage of the local school of the mother Laura Furley from *The Woman in White*). In the case of Miss Clack, Collins did not consider it necessary to hide his ironic attitude towards the "ladies' trinkets of public life", but he respectfully described the activities of the mother of Laura Furley.

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