

Comparative realism and satirical voices: Charles Dickens and Gafur Gulom

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Abstract: This article explores the satirical and realist literary traditions represented by Charles Dickens in Victorian England and Gafur Gulom in Soviet Uzbekistan. Both authors utilise satire as a means of social critique; nonetheless, their contexts vary considerably. The research employs a comparative literary approach, placing both authors within the wider realist tradition and examining their perspectives on bureaucracy, law, hypocrisy, and collective mentalities.

Keywords: satire, realism, bureaucracy, hypocrisy, Victorian literature, Soviet literature, national character

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries generated literary traditions significantly influenced by social turmoil, industrialization, ideological transformations, and the demands of modernization. Charles Dickens (1812-1870), an archetypal Victorian author, and Gafur Gulom (1903-1966), a pivotal character in Uzbek Soviet literature, exemplify two disparate yet analogous instances in the annals of realist and satirical fiction. Both authors utilize humor to reveal hypocrisy, incompetence, and injustice. Their cultural and ideological settings simultaneously influenced the scope, tone, and thematic direction of their works.

The books of Dickens - including *Bleak House* (1853), *Little Dorrit* (1857), and *Hard Times* (1854) - represent critiques of bureaucratic inertia, the exploitation of the poor, and the moral myopia of a society fixated on riches and position. His storytelling techniques amalgamate sadness with incisive irony, depicting a reality where legal structures stifle justice, the state apparatus fosters corruption, and social injustice erodes human dignity. Dickens's satire arises from his personal encounters with poverty and debt, and it encompasses an ethical imperative: literature ought to both entertain and reform.

Conversely, Gafur Gulom, an Uzbek poet, prose writer, and public intellectual from the Soviet era, developed a form of satire intricately rooted in national mythology and quotidian comedy. Under a communist government where explicit criticism of the state posed significant risks, Gulom adeptly navigated his satire, maintaining ideological fidelity while subtly revealing bureaucratic follies. His sarcastic poetry, short narratives, and journalistic novels frequently depict regular individuals grappling with the discrepancies between Soviet ideals and realistic realities. The humor is

grounded in oral traditions, proverbs, and colloquial idioms, imparting a uniquely national character to his satire.

This article's primary research focus is to examine how two authors, positioned within vastly different socio-political contexts, employed satire and realism as instruments of social critique.

Literature review

The scholarly tradition on Charles Dickens is vast and multifaceted. Academics have consistently highlighted his dual function as both performer and reformist. Forster (1872), Dickens's initial biographer, emphasized the author's humanitarian interests and his unwavering opposition of societal injustices. Subsequent scholars, like Stone (1979) and Jordan (2001), have examined Dickens's storytelling techniques, illustrating the interplay of sentimentality and sarcasm in formulating a moral critique of industrial England.

A persistent motif in Dickens scholarship is the depiction of law and bureaucracy. Bleak House has garnered significant scrutiny for its depiction of the Chancery Court, symbolizing the inefficacy, corruption, and self-interest inherent in the legal system (Bentley, 2018). The "Circumlocution Office" in Little Dorrit is viewed as Dickens's incisive parody of governmental bureaucracy and red tape, a critique that continues to resonate in modern discourse about administrative inefficiencies (Ledger, 2020).

Recent academic research has analyzed Dickens's satire concerning class and ideology. Ledger (2020) highlights the inconsistencies in Dickens's moral perspective: although he critiques capitalist exploitation, he frequently endorses middle-class ideals of respectability and self-discipline. Consequently, Dickens's satire fluctuates between radical critique and conservative reinforcement, illustrating the intricacies of Victorian liberalism.

The body of scholarship on Gafur Gulom is rather sparse and frequently restricted to Central Asian or Soviet literary critique. Soviet-era critics often highlighted Gulom's fidelity to socialist principles, depicting him as an exemplary "people's poet." For example, Karimov (1985) emphasizes Gulom's capacity to express the tenets of collectivism and patriotism during World War II. Conversely, more nuanced examinations, such as those by Allworth (1990) and Kamp (2015), reveal how Gulom subtly incorporated critiques of Soviet bureaucracy and inefficiency within his comedic writings.

Gulom's satire is frequently associated with his incorporation of folk traditions. His narratives and verses are deeply rooted in Uzbek oral tradition, integrating proverbs, riddles, and anecdotes. This stylistic decision not only anchored his work in national culture but also enabled him to obscure criticism beneath the pretense of fun. In contrast to Dickens, whose satire targets a capitalist ruling elite, Gulom's critique is frequently more equivocal; while endorsing socialist goals, he ridicules the petty

officials, indolent workers, and disingenuous bureaucrats who subvert those objectives in practice.

Satire and realism are frequently examined as intersecting yet separate literary styles. Realism, as Auerbach (1953) illustrates in *Mimesis*, pertains to the accurate depiction of quotidian life and the intricacies of social existence. Satire is a critical mode that use humor, irony, and exaggeration to reveal societal deficiencies (Griffin, 1994). When amalgamated, as exemplified in the works of Dickens and Gafur Gulom, satire and realism constitute a formidable apparatus for depicting and contesting prevailing power structures.

Scholars of comparative literature, including Bassnett (2014) and Damrosch (2003), contend that examining authors across cultural and linguistic barriers facilitates a more thorough comprehension of literary universals and local particularities. Although Dickens and Gulom originate from disparate literary traditions-Victorian England and Soviet Uzbekistan, respectively-both authors exemplify what Bakhtin (1981) refers to as the “carnavalesque”: the subversion of power structures by humor and satire. Their creations undermine the legitimacy of legal, institutional, and ideological frameworks by exposing their absurdity.

Methodology

This study employs a comparative literary analysis methodology, utilizing both meticulous examination of main texts and contextual analysis within their socio-political settings. The approach comprises three interconnected stages:

Textual Examination

The books of Dickens chosen for analysis are *Bleak House* (1853), *Little Dorrit* (1857), and *Hard Times* (1854). These novels were selected for their clear exploration of bureaucracy, law, and social hypocrisy in Dickens’s work.

The corpus of Gafur Gulom include his sarcastic poetry, journalistic novels, and short stories, notably those compiled in *Selected Works* (1965) and Soviet-era anthologies. These works exemplify his techniques of integrating folk comedy inside socialist realist frameworks.

Thematic Coding analysis concentrates on four theme categories:

1. Bureaucracy and administrative ineffectiveness.
2. Political and institutional equity.
3. Hypocrisy and ethical degradation.
4. Humor, cultural customs, and national identity.

Excerpts from both authors are categorized and analyzed for similarities and differences.

Contextual Analysis

The works of Dickens are analyzed through the lens of Victorian capitalism, industrialization, and the developing liberal middle-class ideology. Secondary work on Victorian social history offers contextual foundation (Hobsbawm, 1999; Briggs, 2010).

The works of Gulom are analyzed within the ideological and cultural context of Soviet Uzbekistan. This encompasses an examination of socialist realism, Soviet nationalities policy, and Uzbek oral traditions (Clark, 2000; Kamp, 2015).

This study seeks to integrate textual and contextual analysis to prevent outdated interpretations, while highlighting satire's role as both a literary device and a socio-political action. The comparative methodology emphasizes both thematic similarities and differences influenced by capitalism versus socialism, as well as Victorian England against Soviet Central Asia.

Results

This comparative study's findings are categorized under four themes: (1) bureaucracy and administrative inefficiency, (2) law and institutional justice, (3) hypocrisy and moral corruption, and (4) humor, folk traditions, and national character. Themes derived from the thematic coding of primary texts are examined here through meticulous textual analysis.

Bureaucracy and Administrative Inefficiency

One of Dickens's most notable satirical creations is the "Circumlocution Office" in *Little Dorrit* (1857). The Office serves as a satire of governmental entities, intended not to resolve issues but to sustain perpetual procrastination and confusion. Dickens illustrates how "the department of How Not to Do It" evolved into an art form, with bureaucrats taking pride in their ability to accomplish nothing with efficiency. This institution epitomizes bureaucratic inertia: it expends resources, generates documentation, and provides no concrete advantages to society.

Academics like Ledger (2020) perceive this satire as Dickens's condemnation of a governmental apparatus that has become progressively intricate and disconnected from the requirements of everyday individuals. The Circumlocution Office represents the Victorian exasperation with bureaucratic obstacles that impeded commerce, suppressed reform, and hindered invention.

In Gafur Gulom's satirical poetry and prose, bureaucrats often manifest as indolent, self-interested, or ludicrously inept characters. In contrast to Dickens's extensive structural critique, Gulom frequently depicts bureaucracy at the micro-level: the village clerk who misfiles documents, the official who solicits bribes disguised as "gifts," or the chairman who recites slogans without comprehending their significance.

In a satirical poem, Gulom depicts a local official who prioritizes talking about his allegiance to socialism over engaging in productive labor. The humor derives from traditional idioms and proverbs that convert the official's ineptitude into a familiar

archetype. In this context, satire serves more as a moral instruction than as a systemic critique, addressing quotidian inefficiency.

While Dickens employs humor to reveal fundamental deficiencies in capitalist administration, Gulom critiques the quotidian shortcomings of officials within the Soviet system. The distinction resides in scale and scope: Dickens constructs extensive allegories of bureaucratic failure, whereas Gulom employs folk comedy to underscore the absurdity of individuals within the system. Both methodologies, however, bolster the realist objective of depicting society as it is perceived by everyday individuals.

Legal Framework and Institutional Equity

The most renowned legal satire in Dickens's body of work is the Chancery Court in *Bleak House* (1853). The Jarndyce and Jarndyce litigation persists for centuries, depleting the lives and wealth of everyone participants. Dickens's portrayal of court paperwork accumulating in interminable stacks, attorneys benefiting from procrastination, and plaintiffs succumbing to despair has been interpreted as a scathing indictment of the English legal system.

This satire is both comedic and profoundly depressing. Characters like Richard Carstone, who squanders his youth and health in the quest for a settlement, exemplify the detrimental effects of a court system that favors procedure above justice. Critics like Bentley (2018) contend that Dickens reveals how legislation, instead of guaranteeing equity, transforms into a tool of exploitation inside capitalist society.

Gafur Gulom and Soviet Jurisprudence

The legal system in the Soviet Union was officially portrayed as an instrument of socialist equality. Nonetheless, Gulom's satire intermittently alludes to the discrepancies between legal theory and practical application. His comedic sketches frequently depict rural issues where justice is obstructed by inept or prejudiced officials.

In one narrative, Gulom depicts a local magistrate who continuously cites Lenin yet is incapable of adjudicating even the most straightforward issue. The comedy does not explicitly criticize the Soviet court system but underscores the disparity between ideological rhetoric and actual justice. The humor originates from the disparity between elevated ideals and mundane realities - a prevalent motif in Soviet satire at large (Clark, 2000).

Dickens explicitly condemns the law as an institution tainted by capitalist motivations, while Gulom critiques the human agents of law who pervert socialist ideals. Both, however, employ humor to illustrate the inadequacies of the law in serving regular individuals. Dickens highlights systemic injustice, whereas Gulom accentuates the oddities of local execution.

Hypocrisy and Ethical Degradation

Dickens's writings are replete with characters that exemplify hypocrisy, especially those in positions of power. Mr. Bumble, the parish beadle in *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), espouses virtue while exploiting orphans and the impoverished. Mr. Podsnap in *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) exemplifies middle-class complacency and self-satisfaction, a concept Dickens termed "Podsnappery."

Through grotesque exaggeration, Dickens reveals the ethical shortcomings of persons who support authoritarian institutions. Critics like Collins (2010) observe that Dickens's satire frequently employs caricature, depicting hypocrites as flat characters whose dialogue, behaviors, and names indicate their moral decay. These caricatures connect as they embody authentic societal archetypes acknowledged by Victorian readers.

Gulom critiques hypocrisy, focusing on lesser instances: the neighbor who professes patriotism yet hoards resources, the worker who asserts socialist allegiance while shirking labor, or the official who extols equality while indulging in privileges.

In a humorous article, Gulom ridicules a bureaucrat who perpetually cites Marxist-Leninist beliefs yet neglects to assist villages with fundamental necessities. The humor resides in the disparity between ideological rhetoric and pragmatic conduct. Through the utilization of traditional comedy, Gulom guarantees that his critique remains approachable and circumvents direct confrontation with the Soviet regime.

Both Dickens and Gulom underscore hypocrisy as a pervasive social sin, however their methodologies diverge. Dickens constructs grand symbolic representations of hypocrisy grounded in systemic critique, whereas Gulom depicts commonplace hypocrites whose actions subvert socialist principles. Collectively, they illustrate that hypocrisy remains a perennial subject of satire, adaptable to various political circumstances.

Humor, Cultural Traditions, and National Identity

The humor in Dickens's work frequently stems from outrageous exaggeration, linguistic play, and caricature. Characters like Mrs. Jellyby (*Bleak House*), fixated on remote altruism at the expense of her own children, and Mr. Micawber (*David Copperfield*), perpetually hopeful despite financial despair, offer comedic relief while simultaneously serving as vehicles for social critique. Dickens's humor is profoundly urban, mirroring the peculiarities of London society and the follies of contemporary existence.

In contrast, Gulom's comedy is rooted in oral traditions. Proverbs, riddles, and anecdotes constitute the foundation of his satire. A bureaucrat's incompetence might be illustrated by the saying, "The one who cannot tie his donkey speaks of tying the world." This humor appeals to Uzbek readers as it relies on common cultural references.

Gulom's comedy also reinforces national identification within the Soviet context. Through the incorporation of sarcasm inside folk idioms, he concurrently condemns inefficiencies while honoring the endurance of Uzbek culture. This amalgamation of sarcasm with national identity sets him apart from Dickens, whose humor embodies the cosmopolitan and industrial essence of Victorian England.

Both authors employ humor to mitigate their concerns and render them approachable to a broad audience. Dickens used urban caricature, but Gulom utilizes folk idioms. In both instances, humor functions as a form of resistance: against capitalist dehumanization in Dickensian England and against bureaucratic incompetence in Gulom's Uzbekistan.

Discussion

The comparative analysis of Dickens and Gafur Gulom uncovers notable similarities and significant differences. Both authors employ satire as a mechanism for social critique; yet, the social systems they addressed - Victorian capitalism and Soviet socialism - influenced not just the structure of their satire but also its objectives, methodologies, and impacts.

Both Dickens and Gulom are strongly entrenched in the realist tradition. Auerbach (1953) underscored that realism is characterized by its emphasis on quotidian existence, its concentration on social frameworks, and its endeavor to depict the world in all its complexities. Dickens's focus on the urban impoverished, bureaucratic systems, and hypocritical elites exemplifies this perspective. Gulom's narratives of common peasants, local officials, and the interaction between Soviet goals and national traditions illustrate realism within a Soviet framework.

In Dickens, satire frequently targets systemic issues, revealing the inherent corruption inside capitalist institutions like the Chancery Court and the Circumlocution Office. In Gulom, satire is contextualized, frequently targeting minor officials or commonplace hypocrites. This disparity illustrates the risks and limitations of their respective contexts: Dickens, operating inside a more free press, could openly criticize institutions, but Gulom, constrained by Soviet censorship, had to incorporate his satire into folk comedy and personal caricatures.

Both authors illustrate bureaucracy as a hindrance to justice and efficiency. However, Dickens depicts bureaucracy as a pervasive affliction of industrial society, whereas Gulom characterizes it as a mundane inconvenience under socialism. Likewise, Dickens's Chancery Court illustrates how law serves as a tool of exploitation within capitalism, whereas Gulom's municipal judges and clerks underscore the disparity between socialist principles and their imperfect execution.

A common motif is hypocrisy. The hypocrites in Dickens's works, exemplified by Mr. Bumble and Mr. Podsnap, represent society moral deficiencies, whereas Gulom's hypocrites expose the inconsistencies inherent in socialist discourse. In both

instances, hypocrisy subverts communal principles - benevolence in Dickens and equality in Gulom - and functions as a perennial subject of comedy.

Humor serves as both amusement and defiance. Dickens's grotesque exaggerations of urban archetypes satirize the absurdity of capitalist life. Gulom's employment of folk humor, in contrast, reinforces Uzbek cultural identity while also challenging Soviet bureaucracy. Humor functions as a defensive mechanism: in Dickens, it protects readers from despair, while in Gulom, it safeguards the writer from censure.

Conclusion

This study has analyzed the humorous and realism traditions of Charles Dickens and Gafur Gulom within a comparative literary framework. Although originating from disparate ages, civilizations, and political systems, both authors utilize satire to illuminate bureaucracy, legalism, hypocrisy, and inefficiency within their society.

Principal findings encompass:

- Realism as a common foundation: Both authors are dedicated to depicting quotidian realities and societal conflicts.
- Satire is context-dependent: Dickens explicitly critiques capitalist institutions, whereas Gulom obliquely critiques individuals under socialism.
- Hypocrisy as a perennial theme: Both reveal hypocrisy as a deleterious force that subverts communal aspirations.
- Humor as a mechanism of resilience: Both employ humor to mitigate criticism; yet, Gulom's folk comedy further safeguards national identity within the confines of Soviet limitations.

The comparative research reveals that satire is a universal literary device, however its form and purpose are influenced by historical and political contexts. Dickens's critique of capitalist bureaucracy reflects worldwide apprehensions over administrative inefficiencies, but Gulom's satire illustrates the adaptation of national culture and humor under ideological constraints.

The study enhances comparative literature by juxtaposing these two personalities, transcending Eurocentric paradigms, and positioning Central Asian authors within global literary discourse. Subsequent research may broaden this comparison to encompass additional satirists functioning within ideological limitations, thus enhancing our comprehension of satire as both a literary genre and a means of social opposition.

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