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THE INDIVIDUAL–SOCIETY CONFLICT IN REALIST NOVELS: INTERPRETATIONS OF HISTORICAL REALITY IN HARD TIMES AND NIGHT AND DAY

Khodjayeva Shoira Bekbergenovna
lecturer at Urgench Innovation University, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This thesis compares Charles Dickens's Hard Times (1854) and Abdulhamid Cholpon's Kecha va kunduz (Night and Day, 1936) as realist novels that interpret historical reality through the individual–society conflict. It argues that realism produces "truth" through narrative design—typified characters, symbolic spaces, and moral causality—so that industrial modernity in Dickens and uneven modernization in Cholpon become culturally memorable forms of national experience.

KEYWORDS

Realism; individual and society; historical reality; Dickens; Cho'lpon; industrial modernity; colonial modernity.

INTRODUCTION

Realism is frequently treated as a privileged form of historical knowledge, but its "historical truth" is made, not found. A realist novel selects social facts, arranges them into plot, and invites readers to judge a society through the destinies of individuals. Hard Times: For These Times, serialized in 1854, offers Dickens's compressed critique of industrial capitalism and the utilitarian belief that life can be governed by measurable "facts." Kecha va kunduz, completed in the 1930s and published in full in 1936, emerges from Turkestan's contested modernization, marked by reformist impulses, inherited hierarchies, and the pressures of empire and the early Soviet order. Despite distance in time and language, both texts ask what happens to personhood when social systems claim priority over moral and emotional life. This article compares how each novel renders that question as an interpretation of historical reality and, in doing so, contributes to national-cultural heritage.

The study uses comparative close reading with contextual interpretation. Close reading traces how narrative voice, imagery, and character construction encode social pressure. Comparative typology identifies equivalent "contact zones" where society confronts the individual, especially education, labor, family, and public reputation. Contextual reading situates Dickens in Victorian industrial debates and Cholpon in a landscape of uneven power, avoiding anachronistic equivalences while keeping the comparison focused on representational strategies.

In Hard Times, the conflict between individual and society is staged through the institutions that manufacture compliant subjects. Gradgrind's pedagogy elevates "facts" and trains children to distrust imagination, which the novel treats as a prerequisite for empathy. Louisa's emotional depletion and Tom's evasive pragmatism function as social outcomes: Dickens links private damage to public doctrine. Coketown extends this argument spatially. Its monotony and smoke are not background details but a model of how industrial production colonizes perception and time. Stephen Blackpool's plotline reveals historical reality as structural constraint: even modest dignity becomes unattainable when employer authority, legal rigidity, and communal suspicion converge. Dickens produces truth through satire and typification, turning complex history into a legible moral pattern.

Kecha va kunduz constructs the same conflict through different pressures. Here, historical reality appears as the dense texture of social transition, where reform, tradition, and coercive authority intersect in everyday life. The individual confronts society through reputation, gendered expectations, and the need to speak in competing moral and political languages. Cholpon often builds truth through psychological and social nuance, showing how agency is negotiated under surveillance and unequal power. In both novels, the plot demonstrates that inner life is not separate from history; it is one of history's primary sites.

The comparison clarifies that realist historical truth is explanatory: it aims to show how a society works on people. Dickens reconstructs industrial England by dramatizing utilitarian rationality as a moral technology that legitimizes exploitation while presenting itself as common sense. His compressed form creates durable symbols—Coketown and the "facts" school—that continue to shape cultural memory of mechanized modernity. Cholpon's realism, by contrast, turns modernization into a contested field where identity is made under pressure. Historical truth emerges from the costs of dignity and the fragility of ethical choice when authority is shifting and often indirect. Scholarship has emphasized the novel's capacity to critique colonial and early Soviet legitimations through subtle narrative means, suggesting that realism here must often speak through implication and social detail.

Across both traditions, the individual–society conflict is the engine of realist historicity. By tracing how institutions enter love, work, education, and honor, the novels convert private suffering into public meaning. That conversion makes them cultural heritage: they preserve an experiential understanding of

modernity—its promises, coercions, and human losses—within narrative forms that later readers can recognize as historically true.

Hard Times and Kecha va kunduz show that realism makes history intelligible by translating social forces into individual destinies. Dickens exposes how industrial-utilitarian doctrines deform emotional life and solidarity; Cholpon records uneven modernization as a web of constrained choices and negotiated agency. In both, the clash between personal integrity and social demand is the key device through which historical reality becomes culturally memorable.

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