

THE MIMETIC CRITICISM IN CHARLES DICKENS' *DAVID COPPERFIELD* AND CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

Supriyatno¹

Universitas Islam Darul 'Ulum (UNISDA) Lamongan¹

mizazuhadizavala@yahoo.com¹

Abstrak

Kritik mimesis digunakan untuk menghubungkan imitasi, refleksi, dan representasi kehidupan manusia terhadap karya sastra. Charles Dickens dan Achebe merupakan penulis novel handal yang juga sangat peduli terhadap masalah sosial dalam kehidupan manusia. *David Copperfield* sebagai salah satu karya Dickens, menangkap fenomena sosial di London selama Revolusi Industri. Sementara itu, Achebe dengan *Things Fall Apart* nya menangkap kehidupan sengsara dari Igbo masyarakat dalam mempertahankan keyakinan mereka. Artikel ini bertujuan menyelidiki kritik mimesis dari David Copperfield dan Things Fall Apart berkaitan dengan cara penulis dalam menentukan karakter, penokohan, dan karakter utama dari kedua novel.

kata kunci: kritik mimesis (mimetic criticism), refleksi (reflection), masalah social (social problem)

Abstract

Criticism is used to connect the mimetic imitation, reflection, and the representation of human life to literature. Charles Dickens and Achebe is a novelist who is also a reliable very concerned about social issues in human life. *David Copperfield* is one of the works of Dickens. This novel reveals the social phenomena captured in London during the Industrial Revolution. Meanwhile, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe captured his miserable life of the Igbo people in defending their beliefs. This article aims to investigate the mimetic criticism of David Copperfield and Things Fall Apart deals with the way the author in determining the characters, characterizations, and the main characters of the novel.

key words: mimetic criticism, reflection, social problems

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is simply the list of book's that people think always be rewarding to the imagination. No people agree where that list starts and stops, since everyone's reading experience is different. It is a particular historical period of movement, which may often be

cross-culture, it may be found in the literature of number of different cultures; for examples, Renaissance Literature, Romantic Literature, Surrealism Literature, Colonial Literature, the Literature of Independent Africa, and so on. In the broadest definition, the word ‘ literature ‘ refers to anybody of written materials which have a lasting appeal and which is highly regarded and widely accepted by the readers. Usually this acceptance and regards are based on the expression of universal emotion or ideas in an attractive and appealing form. It is said a work of literature is a text that is valued by the culture which uses special language, and that effects people with emotions which are valued for their own benefit. Literature in daily life is quite familiar to human being. It is inseparable aspect of human’s life and represents as it is regarded as the mirror of social life. Literature is also the one form of man’s expression needs the word to express the special idea, vision of life, and interest in human being life, and the poets’ work offer the readers about kinds of the description of life, they may provide problems that must be faced by human beings. So the author needs to use a deep thinking in solving them, the solution of the problems.

The authors can increase a new insight and a new experience for the readers, and a mirror of the real life, literature definitely contains thing happening in the life of human being and their surrounding, for literature creates its own world based on the real world.

Literature is classified in two groups: (1) literature of knowledge or informative literature. It deals with facts, real people’s life, and history. The function of this kind of literature is to present information to reach, and to offer knowledge, and example of informative literature: history books, philosophical works, scientific, articles, dictionaries, directories, instructional manuals, travel brochures, magazines, school text books, etc, (2) literature of power or imaginative literature, this deals with thoughts and feelings for examples: novels, poetry, short stories, plays, drama, etc.

Reading literature has many purposes, reading literature attentively and imaginatively promises further pleasure, the enjoyment of how the writer uses the language to create work of art, this way of reading brings us close to understand the achievement of the story and its writer. Reading literature is not merely aimed and giving an entertainment but it is also expected that the readers can use their intelligence in obtaining information in literature, beside that, literature adds the readers understanding of life in the world around them, and the readers can learn and find many aspects of life and characters because it is the reflection and representation of human life.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. The Theoretical Background of Literary Criticism

The general description of criticism dealing with the overall term for studies concerned with defining, classifying, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating the works of literature.

- *Theoretical criticism* proposes a theory of literature, in the sense of general principles, together with a set of terms, distinction, and categories, to be applied to identifying and analyzing works of literature, as well as the criteria (the standards, or norms) by which these works and their writers are to be evaluated.
- *Practical criticism*, or *applied criticism*, concerns itself with the discussion of particular works and writers; in an applied critique, the theoretical principles controlling the mode of the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation are often left implicit, or brought in only as the occasion demands.
- *Impressionistic criticism* attempt to represent in words the felt qualities of a particular passage or work, and to express the responses (the impression) that the directly evokes from the critic.
- *Judicial criticism*, attempts not merely to communicate, but to analyze and explain the effects of a work by reference to its subject, organization, techniques, and style, and to base the critic's individual judgments on general standards of literary excellence.
- *Mimetic criticism* views the literary work as an imitation, or reflection, or representation of the world and human life, and the primary criterion applied to a work is that of the 'truth 'of its representation of the world and human life.
- *Expressive criticism* treats a literary work as an expression, or overflow, or utterance of feelings, or as the product of the poet's or the writer's imagination operating on his or her perceptions, thoughts, and feelings; it tends to judge the work by its sincerity, or its adequacy to the poet's individual vision or state of mind; and it often looks in the work for evidences of the particular temperament and experiences of the author who, consciously or unconsciously, has revealed himself in it.
- *Pragmatic criticism* views the work as something which is constructed in order to achieve its aims due to the author's strategis and certain effect on the audience, and

it tends to judge the value of the work according to its success in achieving that aim. This criticism is also dealing with the strategies of the author in creating the literary work, such as the ways in character or characterization, plot, conflict etc.

Meanwhile, *textual criticism* aims to establish an accurate uncorrupted original text identical with what the author intended. This may involve collating manuscripts and printed versions, deciding on the validity of rediscovered versions or chapters, deciphering damaged manuscripts and illegible handwriting.

This paper only limits to the mimetic criticism of *David Copperfield* and *Things Fall Apart* dealing with the author's creation in conducting the characters, characterizations, and main characters of this novel.

2.2. The Synopsis of the Novel

2.2.1. Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*

The story deals with the life of David Copperfield since he was a child up to the maturity. He is born in England in 1820. His father has died six months before he is born. Seven years later, his mother marries Mr. Edward Murdstone. David is given good reason to dislike his stepfather. Mr. Murdstone thrashes David for falling behind with his studies. Following one of these thrashings, David bites him and is sent away to a boarding school, Salem House, with a ruthless headmaster. His name is Mr. Creakle. Here he befriends James Steerforth and Tommy Traddles, both of whom he meets again later on.

David returns home for the holidays to find out that his mother has had a baby boy. Soon after, he goes back to Salem House, his mother and her baby die and he has to return home immediately. Mr. Murdstone sends him to work in a factory in London, of which Murdstone is a joint owner. His landlord, Mr. Wilkins Micawber, is sent to a debtor's prison after going bankrupt, and is there for several months before being released and moving to Plymouth. David now has nobody left to care for him in London and decides to run away. He walks all the way from London to Dover, only to find his relative, his aunt Miss Betsey. Betsey Trotwood agrees to bring him up, despite Mr. Murdstone visiting in a bid to regain custody of David. Betsey renames him Trotwood Copperfield; soon it is shortened to "Trot".

The story goes on David as he grows to adulthood, and is enlivened by the many well-known characters that enter, leave and re-enter his life. These include Peggotty, his faithful former housekeeper for his mother, her family, and their orphaned niece Little

Em'ly who lives with them and charms the young David. The major characters get some measure of what they deserve. Dan Peggotty safely transports Little Em'ly to a new life in Australia; accompanying these two central characters are Mrs. Gummidge and the Micawbers. Everybody involved finally finds security and happiness in their new life in Australia. David first marries the beautiful but naive Dora Spenlow, but she dies after failing to recover from a miscarriage early in their marriage. Then, David does some soul-searching and eventually marries and finds true happiness with the sensible Agnes Wickfield, who had secretly always loved him. They have several children, including a daughter named in honour of Betsey Trotwood.

2.2.2. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* explores colonial Africa and one man's struggle to survive in a changing society. This story begins with the protagonist Okonkwo, a wealthy and respected member of the Umuofia tribe. His elevated status begins in his youth when he defeats Amalinze the Cat in a wrestling match. Okonkwo's father's is a lazy, irresponsible man. He hates his father and does everything he can to be nothing like him. As a young man, he begins building his social status by defeating a great wrestler, driving him into good society's eye. He is a hard-worker and shows no weakness – emotional or otherwise – to anyone.

Although he is coarse with his family and neighbours, he is wealthy, courageous, and powerful among the people of his village. He is a leader of his village and his place in that society is what he has striven for his entire life. So, Okonkwo is selected by the elders to be the guardian of Ikemefuna, a boy taken prisoner by the village as a peace settlement between two villages after his father kills an Umuofian woman. Ikemefuna stays with Okonkwo until the Oracle instructs the elders on what to do with the boy. For three years, the boy lives with Okonkwo's family and he grows fond of him, he even considers Okonkwo his father. Then the elders decide that the boy must be killed, and the oldest man in the village warns Okonkwo to have nothing to do with the murder because it will be like killing his own child. Rather than it seems weak and feminine to the other men of the village, Okonkwo helps to kill the boy despite the warning from the old man. In fact, Okonkwo himself strikes the killing blow as Ikemefuna begs him for protection.

Shortly after Ikemefuna's death, things begin to go wrong for Okonkwo. When he accidentally kills someone at a ritual funeral ceremony when his gun explodes, he and his

family are sent into exile for seven years to appease the gods he has offended with the murder. While Okonkwo is away in exile, white men begin coming to Umuofia and they peacefully introduce their religion. As the number of converts' increases, the foothold of the white people grows beyond their religion and a new government is introduced.

Okonkwo returns to his village after his exile to find it a changed place because of the presence of the white man. He and other tribal leaders try to reclaim their hold on their native land by destroying a local Christian church that has insulted their gods and religion. In return, the leader of the white government takes them prisoner and holds them for ransom for a short while, further humiliating and insulting the native leaders. As a result, the people of Umuofia finally gather for what could be a great uprising.

Okonkwo is adamant over following Umuofian custom and tradition, despises any form of cowardice and advocates for war against the white men. When messengers of the white government try to stop the meeting, Okonkwo kills one of them. He realizes with despair that the people of Umuofia are not going to fight to protect themselves because they let the other messengers escape and so all is lost for the village. When the local leader of the white government comes to Okonkwo's house to take him to court, he finds that Okonkwo has hanged himself, ruining his great reputation as it is strictly against the custom of the Ibo to kill oneself.

2.3. Characters and the Characterizations

2.3.1. Characters and the Characterizations in Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*

- a. David Copperfield** – An optimistic, diligent, and preserving character, he is the protagonist. He is later called Trotwood Copperfield.
- b. Clara Copperfield** – David's kind mother, described as being innocently childish, who dies while David is at Salem House. She dies just after the birth of her second child (a son, Edward Murdstone), who dies along with her.
- c. Peggotty** – The faithful servant of the Copperfield family and a lifelong companion to David. After her husband's death, Peggoty helps to put David's rooms in order, and then returns to Yarmouth to keep house for her nephew Ham Peggoty.

- d. **Betsey Trotwood** – David’s eccentric and temperamental yet kindhearted great-aunt; she becomes his guardian after he runs away from Grinby and Murdstone’s warehouse in Blackfriars.
- e. **Mr. Chillip** - A shy, elderly, doctor who assists at David’s birth and faces the wrath of Betsey Trotwood after he informs her that Clara’s baby is a boy instead of a girl.
- f. **Mr. Barkis** – An aloof carter who declares his intention to marry Peggoty.
- g. **Edward Murdstone** – Young David’s cruel stepfather, who beats him for falling behind in his studies.
- h. **Jane Murdstone** – Mr. Murdstone’s equally cruel spinster sister, who moves into the Copperfield house after Mr. Murdstone marries Clara Copperfield.
- i. **Daniel Peggoty** – Peggoty’s brother; a humble but generous Yarmouth fisherman who takes his nephew Ham and niece Emily into his custody after each of them has been orphaned.
- j. **Emily (Little Em’ly)** – A niece of Mr. Peggoty. She is a childhood friend of David Copperfield who loves her in his childhood days.
- k. **Ham Peggoty** – A good-natured nephew of Mr. Peggoty and the fiance of Emily before she leaves him for Steerforth.
- l. **Mrs. Gummidge** – The widow of Daniel Peggoty’s partner in a boat. She is a self-described “lone, lorn creetur” who spends much of her time pining for “the old ‘un” (her late husband).
- m. **Martha Endhell** – A young woman of a bad reputation who helps Daniel Peggoty find his niece after she returns to London. She has worked as a prostitute, and been victim to the idea of suicide.
- n. **Mr. Creakle** – The harsh headmaster of young David’s boarding school, who is assisted by Tungay. Mr. Creakle is a friend of Mr. Murdstone. He singles out David for extra torment.
- o. **James Steerforth** – A close friend of David, he is of a romantic and charming disposition and has known David ever since his first days at Salem House.
- p. **Tommy Traddles** – David’s friend from Salem House. They meet again later and become eventual lifelong friends. Traddles works hard but faces great obstacles because of his lack of money and connections. He eventually succeeds in making a name and a career for himself.

- q. **Wilkins Micawber** – A gentle man who befriends David as a young boy. He suffers from much financial difficulty and even has to spend time in a debtor's prison, before moving to Plymouth.
- r. **Mr. Dick (Richard Babley)** – A slightly deranged, rather childish but amiable man who lives with Betsey Trotwood; they are distant relatives.
- s. **Dr. Strong** – The headmaster of David's Canterbury school, whom he visits on various occasions.
- t. **Anne Strong** – The young wife of Dr. Strong. Although she remains loyal to him, she fears that he suspects that she is involved in an affair with Jack Maldon.
- u. **Jack Maldon** – A cousin and childhood sweetheart of Anne Strong. He continues to bear affection for her and tries to seduce her into leaving Dr. Strong.
- v. **Mr. Wickfield** – The widower father of Agnes Wickfield and lawyer to Betsey Trotwood. He is prone to alcoholism.
- w. **Agnes Wickfield** – Mr. Wickfield's mature and lovely daughter and close friend of David since childhood. She later becomes David's second wife and mother of their children.
- x. **Uriah Heep** – A wicked young man who serves first as secretary, and then as partner to Mr. Wickfield.
- y. **Mrs. Steerforth** – The wealthy widowed mother of James Steerforth. She herself is incredibly like her son.
- z. **Miss Dartle** – A strange, vitriolic, spinster woman who lives with Mrs. Steerforth. She has a secret love for Steerforth.
- aa. **Mr. Spenlow** – An employer of David's during his days as a proctor and the father of Dora Spenlow. He dies suddenly of a heart attack while driving his phaeton home.
- bb. **Dora Spenlow** – The adorable but foolish daughter of Mr. Spenlow who becomes David's first wife. She dies after a long illness on the same day as her ageing dog, Jip.
- cc. **Mr. Sharp** – He was the chief teacher of Salem House and had more authority than Mr. Mell. He looks weak, both in health and character. He had a big nose.
- dd. **Mr. Mell** – A tall, thin young man with hollow cheeks. His hair was dusty and dry too, with rather short sleeves and legs.

2.3.2. Characters and Characterizations in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

- a. **Okonkwo** – An influential clan leader. Okonkwo's hard work and prowess in war have earned him a position of high status in his clan, and he attains sufficient wealth to support three wives and their nine children. His tragic flaw is that he is terrified of being weak or 'womanly' like his father. As a result, he behaves rashly, bringing a great deal of trouble and sorrow upon himself and his family.
- b. **Nwoye (later known as Isaac)** – Okonkwo's oldest son who he believes is weak and lazy. He maintains doubts about some of the laws and rules of his village and eventually converts to Christianity, an act that Okonkwo criticizes as " effeminate ", and beats him for, after which he leaves.
- c. **Ezinma** – The only child of Okonkwo's second wife, Ekwefi. As the only one of Ekwefi's ten children to survive past infancy, Ezinma is the center of her mother's world.
- d. **Ikemefuna** – A boy given to Okonkwo by a neighbouring village. Ikemefuna lives in the hut of Okonkwo's first wife and quickly becomes popular with his children.
- e. **Mr. Brown** – The first white missionary to travel to Umuofia. He institutes a policy of compromise, understanding, and non-aggression between his flock and the clan.
- f. **Reverend James Smith** – The missionary who replaces Mr. Brown. Unlike Mr. Brown, he is uncompromising and strict. He is the stereotypical white colonialist, and his behavior epitomizes the problems of colonialism.
- g. **Uchendu** – The younger brother of Okonkwo's mother. Uchendu receives Okonkwo and his family warmly when they travel to Mbanta, and he advises Okonkwo to be grateful for the comfort that his motherland offers him. He is a peaceful, compromising man and functions as a foil, acts impetuously and without thinking.
- h. **The District Commissioner** – An authority figure in the white colonial government in Nigeria. The prototypical racist colonialist, the District Commissioner thinks that he understands everything about native African customs and cultures.
- i. **Unoka** – Okonkwo's father, of whom Okonkwo has been ashamed since childhood. Unoka is a coward and a spendthrift. He never becomes a warrior because he fears the sight of blood.

- j. **Obierika** – Okonkwo’s close friend, whose daughter’s wedding provides cause for festivity early in the novel. Like Nwoye, Obierika questions some of the Igbo traditional structures.
- k. **Ekwefi** – Okonkwo’s second wife. She runs away from her first husband to live with Okonkwo. She is good friends with Chielo, the priestess of the goddess Agbala.
- l. **Enoch** – A fanatical convert to the Christian church in Umuofia.
- m. **Ogbuefi Ezeudu** – The oldest man in the village and one of the most important clan elders and leaders. He is a great warrior in his youth.
- n. **Chielo** – A priestess in Umuofia who is dedicated to the Oracle of the goddess Agbala. Chielo is a widow with two children.
- o. **Akunna** – A clan leader of Umuofia. Akunna and Mr. Brown discuss their religious beliefs peacefully, and Akunna’s influence on the missionary advances Mr. Brown’s strategy for converting the largest number of clansmen by working with, rather than against, their beliefs.
- p. **Nwakibie** – A wealthy clansman who takes a chance on Okonkwo by lending him 800 seed yams, twice the number for which Okonkwo asks. Nwakibie thereby helps Okonkwo build up the beginnings of his personal wealth, status, and independence.
- q. **Mr. Kiaga** – The native-turned-Christian missionary who arrives in Mbanta and converts Nwoye and many others.
- r. **Okagbue** – A famous medicine man whom Okonkwo summons for help in dealing with Ezinma’s health problems.
- s. **Maduka** – Obierika’s son. Maduka wins a wrestling contest in his mid-teens.
- t. **Obiageli** – The daughter of Okonkwo’s first wife. Although Obiageli is close to Ezinma in age, Ezinma has a great deal of influence over her.
- u. **Ojiugo** – Okonkwo’s third and youngest wife, and the mother of Nkechi.

III. ANALYSIS

3.1. The Analysis of the Mimetic Criticism

3.1.1. The Mimetic Criticism in Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*

Mimetic criticism of the literary works relate to the imitation, reflection, and representation of human life. The literary works are in the forms of fictions, but the fictions

are the reflection of human life or human emotion which are described in the plot of the story of the novels, drama, or poems. We can see the phenomenon which happens in the community. But sometimes we can not understand for the whole. Through the literary works, the phenomenon can be expressed, can be represented. The community life can not get rid of what we call of virtue and vice because these are the characterization of human being. Virtue and vice color the aspects of human life. It depends on what they do or they make. The community, therefore, can read and comprehend the virtue and vice through the literary works as the moral teaching, contemplation for the best life in the future.

In Charles Dicken's *David Copperfield*, he tries to reflect one side of human life which is characterized and told by almost entirely from the point of view of the first person narrator, David Copperfield. He is the main character. He plays the role as a man in this novel, according to general views of the mimetic criticism, i.e., imitation of human life, the reflection of human life, and the representation of human emotion, the stories of this novel tend to "a sheer imitation" means that the novel describes us a story dealing with the personal history, adventures of life, experience and observation of David Copperfield, and many elements within the novel follow events in Dicken's own life, and this is also an autobiographical of all of his novels.

David Copperfield is imitation of his own life, how to struggle for life, how to survive in life, how to solve many problems in life. This is clear that the first person point of view is reflected in the writer of the novel. Imitation and reflection of life is much conveyed in it, for example, how he has to live with his stepfather, how to work in a factory in London, how to experience when his mother and her baby die.

All are expressed in this story as the imitation and reflection of human life aimed to the readers that life is reflection before men do everything or after men have done everything. In the representation of human emotion, how David Copperfield feels against many problems in his life, what he feels the thrashings, how nobody leaves to care for him in London until he runs away, walks all the way from London to Dover, and survives for the life. The narration of the novel does not only emphasize on the distress, struggle, sacrifice, or fighting for life, but also the representation of his love when David Copperfield is in soul-searching and then finds true happiness and marries the sensible Agnes Wickfield, who is in love with him.

3.1.2. The Mimetic Criticism in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

In contacts between other cultures, beliefs about superiority or inferiority, due to limited and partial world view are sometimes wrong-headed and destructive. When new cultures and religion meet, there is likely to be a struggle for dominance. For example, the Christians and Okonkwo's people have a limited view of each other, and have a very difficult time understanding and accepting one another's customs and beliefs, resulting in violence as with the destruction of a local church and the killing of Okonkwo's messenger. In spite of the opportunities for understanding, people must strive to communicate. For example, Okonkwo and his son, Nwoye have a difficult time understanding one another because they hold different values. On the other hand, Okonkwo spends more time with Ikemefuna and develops a deeper relationship that seems to go beyond cultural restraints.

A social value—such as individual ambition—which is constructive when balanced by other values can become destructive when overemphasized at the expense of other values. For instance, Okonkwo values tradition are so high that he can not accept change. It may be more accurate to say the values tradition because of the high cost he has paid to uphold it, i.e., killing Ikemefuna and moving to Mbanta. The Christian teachings render these large sacrifices on his meaningful parts.

The distress of loss of tradition, whether driven by his love of the tradition or the meaning of his sacrifices can be seen as the main reasons for his suicide. There is no such thing as a static culture; change is continual, and flexibility is necessary for successful adaptation because Okonkwo can not accept the changes of Christian teachings, and he can not adapt it.

The struggle between change and tradition is constant, however, this only appears to do to Okonkwo. Change can very well be accepted, as evidenced by how the people of Umuofia refused to join Okonkwo as he struck down the white man at the end. Perhaps he is not so much bothered by change, but the ideas of losing everything he has built up – his fortune, fame, title, etc., that will be replaced by new customs. The suicide can be seen as a final attempt to show to the people of Umuofia the results of a clash between cultures and as a means for the Igbo community and culture to be upheld.

In mimetic criticism, the roles of Okonkwo take the very important behaviour in societal life, through the imitation, reflection, or representation of his life. The life covers the acts of virtue or the vice, the success or the failure in life or the roles for his community. The notion of failure correlates with the idea of change in Umuofia and a shift in cultural values. Failure, for Okonkwo, is societal reform, and individuals derive strength

from their society, and societies derive strength from the individuals who belong to them. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo builds his fortune and strength with the help of his society's customs. Okonkwo's society benefits from their hard work and determination.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mimetic criticism is one of the literary criticisms which deals with the imitation, reflection, and representation of human life. In these two novels, the natures of the mimetic criticism have been written. These are reflected in the main characters of the novels which takes their roles in imitating, reflecting, and representing human life and human emotion. Eventhough these are fictive as the literary works but these can be the moral teachings or values in community life.

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