

**AN ASSESSMENT OF CHARLES DICKENS'S GREAT EXPECTATIONS  
AND HALİT ZİYA UŞAKLIĞIL'S AŞK-I MEMNU**

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***Abstract***

A writer of a novel is naturally to reflect the social forces of his own age in his work of art. Characterization, setting and the language are the major tools of an author with which he creates his work. The study in hand consists of a comparative study of two well-known authors; Charles Dickens and Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's two master pieces: Great Expectations and Aşk-ı Memnu. The way how the authors deal with the tools of characterization, setting and the language so as to illuminate the social forces of their time is the main purpose of this study.

***Öz***

Bir roman yazarı, eserinde, doğal olarak çağının toplumsal değerlerini yansıtmak zorundadır. Karakter çizimi, eserin yazım düzeni ve dil bir yazarın eserini oluştururken kullandığı en önemli araçlardır. Bu çalışmada iki ünlü yazarın esen karşılaştırılmaktadır. Charles Dickens'm Büyük Umudlar, ve Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil'in Aşk-ı Memnu adlı eserleri ele alınmıştır. Bu çalışmada, sözkonusu yazarların çağlarının toplumsal değerlerini yansıtmak için karakter çizimini, yazım düzenini ve dili nasıl kullandıklarını göstermek amaçlanmıştır.

As it is partly valid for Uşaklıgil's novels "many people still read Dickens for his records and criticism of social abuses as if he were a great historian" (House, 9). Uşaklıgil is read in Turkey in the sense Dickens is in England.

Thus, I would try to compare the two novelists in relation to their famous novels; Dickens's Great Expectation and Uşaklıgil's Aşk-ı Memnu. While Aşk-ı Memnu reflects implicitly the major social, and economical characteristics of the late 19 century Turkish society, Dickens's Great Expectations both implicitly and explicitly depicts the similar characteristics with a wider manner which covers various social classes of that time in England. Here, the hard business is that, Uşaklıgil limits his picture with a microcosmic environment of two well-to-do families.

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For the sake of clarity within the comparison I am at fulfilling, I would start with a brief account of the social and political background of the period in which the novels are created both in the Ottoman Empire and in England.

#### SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

##### **The Ottoman period and the Westernizing Movement:**

The Ottoman empire avoided the western cultural innovations for a long time. It is known that the period of regression was due to the avoidance of the application of the new discoveries in Europe. The mistake which was committed with the avoidance was realized at the beginning of the 18 century. From that time onwards, some reforms were declared, but in practice the reforms remained limited. Şükran Kurdakul, considering the limited attempts finds the 19 century as a period in which Europe had the power of controlling the economy and the social values of not only the Middle Eastern countries but also the Ottoman Empire as well. After the industrial Revolution, both the factories in short of raw materials and, the increasing financial demands of the laboring classes directed the administrators to make profit by the on and underground natural resources of the undeveloped countries(86). Meanwhile, a nationalistic movement started to bud in the Ottoman Empire due to the French Revolution and to that of the Industrial Revolution. Moreover, this nationalistic movement caused the declaration of the independence of some new countries such as; "Greece," "Romania," "Bulgaria" and the like. Thus, the Ottoman empire collapsed.

Later, some attempts for the reshaping of the country became urgent. It was agreed that some definite innovations were crucial for the cultural and administrative system of the country. Some believed in the application of the European system, some believed in the validity of the Ottoman system along with some reformations, and the others defended the Islamic Radicalism(Yörük,74). The changes and reshaping of the culture and politics of the community during the fall of the Ottoman Empire naturally influenced Turkish literature. Literature also imitated the movement of Westernization. The first literary example in the Western

manner appeared with the attempts of the Tanzimat Edebiyatı, 1860-1895) and Servet-i Fiinun Edebiyatı in between 1895-1901.

Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil is the far most well-known writer of the literature of "Servet-i Fiinun" period that defended the Westernizing movement. He is agreed to be the contributor and innovator of the modern novel in Turkish Literature. Briefly speaking, he introduced an artistic idiom and a clear observation of the inner and outer worlds of his characters. Uşaklıgil was influenced by the French Realists and Naturalists such as Zola, Stendhal, Flaubert, Balzac, Deudet and the like. Thus, his practice on the French Realists and Naturalists took him to the point of writing novels based on "realistic and psychological" subject-matter. The result of one of his attempts is Aşk-ı Memnu. The novel from the point of content and form is referred as a document and modern literary criterion by both Turkish historians and literary critics.

#### **England and Dickens:**

The Dickens's world is an older one than that of Uşaklıgil's. The world Dickens depicts in Great Expectations is the picture of England in the first half of the 19 century. Yet, Uşaklıgil's picture covers the last decades of the century.

England faced the French and the Industrial Revolutions one after one. From the second decade of the 19 century onwards "suffering was largely confined to the poor, however, for all this while the landed classes, the industrialists and many of the merchants prospered"(Abrams,4). Thus, in the early 19 century class differences were still present, the laboring class was working under bad conditions. The working women and children were destroyed physically and psychologically because of hard and long hours of works. New machines were introduced. The factors in question caused technological unemployment. All these conflicts required new reforms, yet the first Reform Bill was carried in 1832. This provided some social rights to the individuals and to the whole society. But, still, some of the Middle class, the laboring class and all the women had no right of voting *nt* all. Thus, briefly speaking, Dickens's England either in social rights or

education or economy or politics had come face to face with new conflicts because of the new atmosphere French and Industrial Revolutions originated.

Thus, Dickens depicts England of that time. One critic of Dickens Humphry House argues that "a great writer is a product of the social forces of the time in which he lives, and that he also reflects and modifies them in his work"(15). Well, House is right in his argument. Because Dickens tries to reflect whatever present around him in relation to his subject-matter in accordance with the values of his society. Another critic Dyson sums up Dickens's achievement briefly:

The extraordinary achievement of Dickens was to go as far as he did toward social realism in the early Victorian climate without becoming feverish, and without giving widespread offense. It was his remarkable and unusual gift to be able to depict the most warped and criminal people in a manner horrifyingly vivid to sensitive adult, but unlikely to harm a young person, or a reader only partly engaged with book(14).

The vividness of Dickens's narration which Dyson points out is also a dominant quality in Uşaklıgil's Aşk-ı Memnu. Perhaps this is the most obvious point Dickens and Uşaklıgil share in common. Moreover, they both create the world of their times, yet Uşaklıgil's is a narrower one. Dickens describes the social life of the common world of England keeping in mind the function of art to be a tool to convey messages to the community. Whereas Uşaklıgil does the contrary, he deals just only with the world of the rich wing of his country keeping in mind the idea "art for art's sake" which urges him to spend time and energy on the form of his novel more than the content.

## AŞK-I MEMNU AND GREAT EXPECTATIONS

### **The Major Characters and the Development of the Characters**

#### **Throughout the Novels:**

Aşk-1 Memnu deals with two families. The first family is:

Mr. Adnan : He is an old widower.

Nihal : She is Mr. Adnan's daughter.

Bülent : He is Mr. Adnan's son.

Behlül : He is Mr. Adnan's nephew.

Habeş : Mr. Adnan's servant.

The second family Mr. Melih's Team:is

Lady Firdevs : An attractive beautiful widow.

Bihter : Firdevs's pure young daughter.

Peyker : Firdevs's old daughter.

Mr. Nihat : Peyker's husband

Great expectation deals with a poor little boy's expectation in relation to various colorful figures:

Pip : A little boy with no parents. He struggles to become a gentleman, but

: corrupted by great expectation.

Estella : A little girl with no parents. She is the core of Pip's motive to become a gentleman.

Mr. Blacksmith : The husband of Pip's sister.

Mrs. Blacksmith : Pip's sister

Magwitch : A convict; Pip's benefactor.

Miss. Havisham : A jilted old girl who is after revenge from the males.

Uşaklıgü's characters are not exactly copied from the actual world. But they are created in such a manner that they fit the actual life in the long run. For example Behliil is a young man who is a synthesis of three even four different persons living in the actual world. He does not only hold a typical characteristic of the common man, but also some other characteristics borrowed from few different persons and reshaped in him as a character to fit peculiar purposes in the novel. "And the rest of my characters in Aşk-ı Memnu are created with the same manner" the author of the novel says (Uşaklıgil, xvi).

On the other hand, Dickens's characters are exactly copied from the actual life. They are some of us. But, in a very few characters such as Miss. Havisham and Magwitch we realize some elements of exaggeration. They hold a tone of a fairy-tale. For the point in question Calder states that:

Great Expectation lies in the elements that Dickens takes over from the fairy-tales which he never forgets. It is a kind of inverted Cinderella, where the ugly sister, Joe and Magwitch, are in the right, the fairy godmother, Miss. Havisham, is a witch after all, and the princess, Estella, is a gleaming fake(17).

Together with this Dorothy van Ghent regards Pip as a universal figure:

Pip, after all, the ordinary mixed human being, one more Every man in the long Succession of them that literature has represented, but we see this Every man as he develops from a child; and his destiny is directed by the ideals of his world-toward "great expectation" which involve the making of Magwitch-which involve, that is murder(255).

Shortly, Dickens's characters are more realistic and more humane. They are more concrete figures than Uşaklıgü's characters when they are compared in

accordance with their times. A brief account of each character may help to clear up the development of the characters together with the development of the plot.

Let us start with Uşakhgü's characters in Aşk-ı Memnu: Mr. Adnan is a well-built dignified widower. He has plans to get married. But he is very careful for the marriage business. Because he has a very sensitive young daughter named Nihal. He is strongly bound to the family moral values. That is why he very hardly cares the love affair which exists very close to turn between his second wife Bihter and his nephew Behlül. Moreover, the moral values he is carrying in turn do not permit him to face a love affair easily. In a sense, he is obliged to live with his daughter alone in his mansion. Thus, his marriage period with Bihter is like an artificial scene with an obvious beginning and an ending attached to a play.

Miss. Nihal is a pure and sentimental young girl. The death of her mother causes the purity and sentimentality in her. She knows that she will marry Behlül, but she seems to be unaware of that matter. In other words, a married life means to her a rule to be followed. The next character is Behlül. He is the creator of the forbidden love affair and the destructor of the organised world. It is clear that, exclusion of Behlül from the novel would not profit the inharmonious marriage of Mr. Adnan to Bihter; anyhow, it would result in their separation. But with his forbidden love affair he appears to be the originator of the major climax and conflict in the novel. Behlül is a typical "snob" of the period. He does not adopt the cultural values of his society (on the contrary he scorns them) and he does not behave in a Western mode, except for his outlook. He never cares the actual life. He does everything for the sake of amusement. And he even does not avoid a sexual affair with his uncle's wife. He is not a loyal lover in his affair. The most distinguished character of the second family "Mr. Melih's team" is Lady Firdevs. she fits neither the social criterions of the present society nor the past. She is the chief of her family. She is an extremely free type of woman. She does not behave in accordance with her age and society. She is addicted to the males more than her daughters. First she thinks her bridegroom Mr. Adnan to be close to a love affair with her. Later, she controls herself involuntarily. This behavior of her causes a negative impression

upon the people around her. That is why her daughters can hardly find a chance of good marriage. With the simple sense of the world, Lady Firdevs becomes the symbol of conflict and irregularity in that family. The next character who needs clarification is Bihter. She is a beautiful young girl in her twenties. Because of her mother Firdev's free training, Bihter is also a free but ignorant short of person to outside troubles. She is leading a dreamy life which has nothing to do with the troubles of finance. That is why she easily persuades herself to get married with the widower Mr. Adnan. In other words, She marries money not Mr. Adnan. Moreover, She marries Mr. Adnan for he has children of her age. First she thinks marriage to mean, only money, luxury, enjoyment, travelling and being the center of everybody's attention. But not so much later, she discovers her misinterpretation of a married life. Everything she dreams becomes true except for happiness. Mr. Adnan can not keep up with the energetic lusty but pure young woman Bihter, Thus, Mr. Adnan's nephew Behlül tends to originate a love affair with Bihter. Bihter expects something new with her forbidden love affair. On the contrary she is insulted and exposed to desperation. Then she kills herself.

As for Dickens's characters in Great Expectations Miss. Havisham and Magwitch are the power with which they use Pip and Estella as tools for the shake of their passions and revenge on the society. Pip's sister and her husband Mr. and Mrs. Blacksmiths remain in a somewhat second category. Then, let us start with Pip. Pip is a parentless little boy who leads an unbearable life in the country with his married sister Mrs. Joe Gargary. He is ill-treated by his sister Mrs. Joe and by all the visitors to the house. He hates living in such condition. Then, the scorns of the little girl of his age Estella originates in him the wish to get on and willingness to spend his time and pocket-money on learning to read and to write so as to be a gentleman. He bears in him a gradual expectations. He is afforded by an known benefactor. From now on he leads a new life in London. Very short time before the end of his education in London, he discovers that Magwitch, the convict is his benefactor. He is disappointed with this discovery. He rejects all the snobbish elements he acquired in London. He returns back and with his return the writer twists the ending. So,

Dickens brings Estella and Pip together though Estella is married to someone else. Thus, Pip is a tool in the hand of Magwitch. He becomes mature in the long run.

Another character who is treated as a tool is Estella. She is misled by Miss Havisham as Pip is by Magwitch. She is a pure parentless little girl who is looked after by Miss Havisham. Estella and Pip are brought together for the sake of envy. Then Pip desires to prove himself. The unhappy jilted old girl Miss Havisham plots the life of the little girl and the boy with the hope of revenge on the males. Magwitch is a male character almost in the same psychology with Miss Havisham. He is an old dirty and ugly faced convict who desires a revenge not on the individuals but on the society as a whole. Magwitch wants to achieve his purpose through money. He tries to transform Pip into a gentleman by money.

Dickens's Pip does not have similarity to be compared with Uşaklıgü's characters. But Pip as a symbol of hope may be similar to the hope of Turkish Westernization which is implied in the novel though Uşaklıgü's is an artificial one. Estella shares some similarities with the pure young girl Bihter. They both suffer from the lack of parents. They are sentimental and (Estella partly is) pure females who face married life twice. The first one is not the ideal one for Estella it is also the same with Bihter's marriage to Mr. Adnan. Mr. Adnan and Estella's first husbands are rich ones, but the second ones Pip and Behlül are the ones they desired to be with. Estella's company with Pip is a conscious plot. Yet, Behlül and Bihter's company is a forbidden secret love affair. Moreover Magwitch can be compared with Behlül. They both destroy the values of the society. Where they differ is that, Magwitch's destruction is a sort of revenge whereas Behlül's is the destruction of society for the sake of his sexual satisfaction. Miss Havisham and Lady Firdevs also share some similarities. They are both unhappy. They are both after the males. Miss Havisham is after the males to destruct them not to love them as Firdevs desires. But, Lady Firdevs with her desires, in a sense, stands against the values of the society. Uşaklıgil, through Firdevs, aims at implying the hard situation of the females who try to violate the artificial social rules. He also aims at emphasising the necessity of the females' independence against the unbearable and artificial rules in

the social life. What they share in common is that: Miss Havisham wastes her life due to her passions and Lady Frrdevs wastes her life and desires due to the artificial rules of the society.

Uşaklıgil's characters in Aşk-ı Memnu are far-fetched. The more they are developed the more abstract they become. They are extremely indulged in the so-called European life style. In Great Expectations we notice Pip's expectation as a so-called sort of attitude. He wishes to acquire qualities of a gentleman. But, he fails in his attempt. In Aşk-ı Memnu all characters are depicted with the hope of drawing a picture of the modern world, but it also ends up with a failure. Because the characters do not acquire any valid standards in accordance with the movement of Westernization. Another failure in Uşaklıgil's is that: while he tries to illustrate the wrong way of life and behaviors, he does not try to offer the right way. Whereas Dickens offers the right way. He guides his characters to give up their attempt when they fail as it is illustrated with Pip. Thus, Dickens's characters develop in the course of event; Miss Havisham, frightful and powerful as a witch, is at last scene pathetic old woman who repents. Magwitch changes from "hungry dog" of his first appearance to the man who to die with moral beauty.

Technically speaking, Uşaklıgil's characters appear sometimes as abstractions. Uşaklıgil introduces his characters and then lets them lead their own way; this quality makes them in this sense to be concrete. Moreover, Uşaklıgil manages to deal with the inner worlds of his characters. Here, Bihter is a typical example of that sort. Firdevs also shares the similar qualities. They act according to their inner world's motives. This is the point what makes the novel a psychological analysis as Berna Moran states(86). Dickens also implies the inner worlds of his characters, but with a different manner than Uşaklıgil does. He interferes in his characters so as to direct them. This a point where Dickens fails in regard with the standards of objectivity, but Uşaklıgil succeeds. In Aşk-ı Memnu the characters attitudes and purposes determine the course of the events in the novel. Yet in Great Expectations the author himself is the determiner. Perhaps this technical quality adds surprise and excitement with the unexpected happenings(such as Pip's

unexpected benefactor) to the novel but it also keeps it far from objectivity. In *Aşk-ı Memnu* the events develop in accordance with the nature of the characters introduced. For example, the relation between Mr. Adnan and Bihter does not last long, because they are the characters of different worlds both in age and in taste. But in Dickens's *Great Expectations* the unexpected becomes the expected. In *Pip*, Estella and Magwitch the point in question is highly committed. For example; Pip's unexpected changes in his world, Estella's unexpected parents, Magwitch is not expected to be the benefactor, Miss Havisham is expected to be according to the course of the events. Moreover, Nihal is an oppressed young girl because she has no mother. This defect causes a strong attachment to her father. Her father fills the gap. The love affair between Bihter and Behliil though not accepted, is a natural one, for Bihter is an unhappy woman with her marriage to Mr. Adnan. Besides, Behliil is right in his misbehavior, because he is introduced as a selfish young man who bears almost no morality at all.

Bihter and Behliil are the most developed characters in *Aşk-ı Memnu*. The major love theme develops around their love affair. Uşaklıgil concentrates on Bihter. Instead of saving her he describes the situation that causes her desperation. That is why, in a sense Uşaklıgil tends to act in favour of Bihter. She wants to lead a happy life, far from her mother's (Firdevs) bad fame, but her love story ends up with the commitment of suicide. Together with the love theme "jealousy" is also a major theme in the novel. Nihal is jealous of her father Mr. Adnan. Mr. Adnan is jealous of Bihter. Bihter is jealous of Behliil. Moreover *Great Expectations* consists of various themes such as; "love," "jealousy," "fear," "passion," "moral," "revenge," "class distinction," and "betterment". The themes in question are developed in the novels.

#### **The Quality of the Settings:**

The events in *Aşk-ı Memnu* take place in a luxurious environment in Istanbul. Uşaklıgil is highly attacked for his choice of setting in *Aşk-ı Memnu*, because he tends to depict just one aspect of Istanbul which keeps him far from

objectivity. This restricted world of Uşaklıgil sounds inadequate to represent Istanbul or the whole country. On the other hand, it only represents the well to do family life style of the second half of the 19 century. Whereas Dickens's setting in Great Expectations helps him to deal with the class distinction and criticises the educational system applied by the families in the private life and the one arranged officially. That is why Dickens handles two different settings; the first one is the country life setting, and the second one is the city life setting. The country is depicted vividly with all its trivialities; the muddy and foggy environment represents the bad life conditions of the country. The second setting scene is the foggy and filthy atmosphere covering London. The physical environment of London is untidy and exposed to rubbish. In a sense- it represents the bad condition which the sudden changes of the Industrial Revolution caused. The third setting which is interpreted as a gothic atmosphere is Miss Havisham's "nightmarish stage-setting". This three different setting in Great Expectations create the process where Dickens would direct his characters to experience life in various stages. Together with Dickens's wide and various settings, Uşaklıgil's setting of his two rich families in Aşk-ı Memnu remains poor, but consistent enough to fit the subject-matter of the novel. Moreover, the world depicted in Aşk-ı Memnu does not deal with the common man outside. If you omit some peculiar descriptions from the novel, you can very hardly support the setting to be an Istanbul environment. One of Uşaklıgil's critics Berna Moran finds the limited setting as a proper one in case the novel is regarded as a "dramatic" attempt. She adds "the dramatic limited actions require a dramatical setting"(87). Berna Moran's interpretation is valid if we regard the novel with a critical eye of the 20 century.

#### **Use of Language and Conclusion:**

The literary movement of "Servet-i Fünun" circle follows the idea "art for art's sake ". Ahmet Mithat Efendi in his essay "Dekedanlar" (The Decadence) suggests the idea "art for art's sake" to be a far-fetched struggle which destroys the language and appeals very little to the common man. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın who is

supposed to be the spokesman of the "Servet-i Fiinun" movement in his essay "Biraz Daha Hakikat" (A Little More Reality) gives an answer to Mithat Efendi's suggestions. They believe art not to appeal to the society, they are not after betterment of the society through art. Whereas Dickens is after. In Great Expectation Dickens wants to convey:

two major social messages. One is, that in a class society there is justice for the rich, but none for the poor; so that in the absolute sense there is no "justice" at all. The other is that class divisions sustained by wealth destroys the bonds of fellowship which should exist between man and man, and can condition even a morally sensitive person such as Pip to act badly(Calder,24).

Though Uşaklıgil does not aim at conveying a message like Dickens, he also tries to imply the so-called European life style in his novel.

For the point of language, Dickens uses a simpler language than Uşaklıgil. Dickens's language bears some poetical elements whereas Uşaklıgil's language is based on complex and descriptive quality. Dickens both with his use of language and various themes "could now combine bitterness with laughter, pathos with savage anger, so delicately that we may forget the guilt-ridden atmosphere of the novel "(Calder,16). Dickens is so much realistic in his use of language that, his novels are regarded as historical documents. For the point in question Humphry House argues that:

he(Dickens) is quoted often as indicating the trend of opinion and taste, but also on matters of fact, not merely because his familiar words will give extra point to an illustration from another source, but because his words so often the best illustration to be had"(9).

Dickens's language is simple, clear and vivid, so that is why it functions for the historians' quotations. House sums up what usually the historians quote from Dickens's novels. They are documents about:

debtors, prisons, child-labour, street-boys, work-houses, gaslighting, London-traffic, and fogs, the new police force, the courts of Law, Government offices, country carts, stage-coaches, urns, nursing, railway, parliamentary elections, and education (10).

Dickens's language permits him to draw his picture as wide as needed. The power of the language revivifies the scenes with their actual sense in the mind of the reader when the text is read.

Uşaklıgil's novel Aşk-ı Memnu may naturally be regarded by the historians as documents, but not in the sense Dickens is regarded. Yet, those historians and literary critics regard Uşaklıgil's Aşk-ı Memnu as a crucial document for it handles the subject-matter which is hoped to reformulate the culture of the society and improve the country, that is, the "Westernising Movement." From the point of Westernization, Aşk-ı Memnu is not a real source. Because, while Usaklıgil tries to introduce a new life style and sentimentality, he is unable to avoid artificiality. Moreover, he draws a limited picture which covers very few well-to-do people along with their love affairs. Thus, through this picture, Usaklıgil tries to imply the European life style. This is the main defect in the novel. But, if the novel is regarded as a dramatic novel as Bema Moran's quotation suggests above p. 11) which deals with the individual's psychology then Uşaklıgil's achievement is at its peak, otherwise, it is nothing more than an excellent practice in choice of words and use of language which introduces an innovation in the syntactic and semantic quality of Turkish language. Yet, Dickens's achievement with Great Expectations is at its peak both from the point of content and structure.

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