



Realism through 21st Century Eyes

Sumedha Manhas

Presentation Convent Senior Secondary School, Jammu, India

Received: 10 Jul 2023; Received in revised form: 14 Aug 2023; Accepted: 22 Aug 2023; Available online: 31 Aug 2023

©2023 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract— Since the mid-19th century, a new form of literature took birth that rejected artificiality and presented the conventional in fresh yet insightful ways. Realist writers took inspiration from works of artists such as Gustave Courbet who approached the present realities of contemporary society and its social, economic, and political aspects. They aimed to portray their characters and circumstances that could be relatable to the reader, rather than relying on romanticized portrayals. This shift in literary representation aligned with Courbet's belief in presenting the unvarnished truth, devoid of any embellishment which paved the way for an unfiltered representation of reality in various artistic forms. These writers employed detailed observations and incorporated elements such as social customs, dialects, etc to provide a more authentic representation and enrich a reader's experience. Realist literature exposes social injustices and inequalities while championing the importance of individual perspectives and depicting nuanced human conditions. Through a more socially engaged form of storytelling, it allows subsequent generations of writers to delve into unexplored areas and find their stories. Through this study, I identify the message and societal settings of various years by understanding the theme of stories written by famous realist writers, unveiling the hidden metaphors, symbols and social questions that it raises. Along with addressing the significance of realism, this paper also elaborates upon how the movement catalyzed a change in narration techniques and theme dynamics. This paper accentuates the existing relevance of realism within the tapestry of literature.



Keywords— realism, romanticism, renaissance, victorian, society.

I. INTRODUCTION

The word realism has its roots in French *réalisme* or German *Realismus*; from Late Latin *realis* "real." Opposite of "idealism" which shows how things 'should be', realism in art reveals to true nature of people and shows them how 'things are'. While idealism usually focuses on themes of aestheticism, and beauty and endorses a utopian state of nature, realism often showcases the unpleasant details or the 'real thing'. The Renaissance transition in European societies in the 15th and 16th century characterised by an effort to surpass the ideas of classical antiquity. The feudal society till the late 13th century had forcefully controlled people's minds and ideas. The church believed the man to follow its path. However, with the gradual rise of "Illuminati" and more liberal and scientifically inclined theories, the church's control gradually started to collapse. Galileo was ordered to turn himself into the Holy Office to begin 'trial' for holding the belief that the Earth revolves

around the sun- which contradicted the church's view of Earth being the centre of the universe, Galileo's view was deemed dissenting by the Catholics. Progressively, the term 'Renaissance' came into existence, literally meaning 'rebirth'. This French word was first used by a Swiss scholar, Jacob Burckhardt, in 1860. During the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, Europe saw a new humanist culture popularising the idea that man is an individual, capable of having his own thoughts. Renaissance first began in Italy, followed by Rome, Venice and Florence. The term 'Renaissance Man' is often used to describe a person with many interests and skills, They were scholar-diplomat-theologian-artist combined in one. Renaissance aroused the spirit of equality among the people and attacked the superstitions and rituals prevailing in society. This new trend was a revival from the so-called 'dark ages'. The term 'humanism' was first used by Roman lawyer and essayist Cicero. Humanists believed that they were reviving a 'true

civilisation' after centuries of darkness. Soon, the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg revolutionised the spread of knowledge and produced readers from all around the globe. Then sooner enough, themes of 'science vs religion', 'romanticism vs religion', and 'virtue vs true nature' began to be popularised. However, the nineteenth century was the age of major changes. While European history was witnessing revolutionary changes, literature's sphere diverged its course from the pragmatic Victorian mindset to the metaphysical periphery of romanticism, drama, realism and criticism. With the abolition of slavery in the west, the rise of the working class and the diminishing of the church's control over society, through the widespread literacy in various groups, poetry and art took a new turn and became well appreciated and absorbed by the common masses. The works of art during this time give a spectacular review of the societies. The beginning stages of the 19th century welcomes romanticism, an artistic and intellectual movement which focused on a more emotive expression. As science became more prevalent, the 19th-century romantic writers stepped away from leisure and their focus shifted heavily to themes of nature, individualism, and the idea of the "common man". The common man was a reflection of everyday society through the eyes of a plain, working-class individual. Following the Romantic and more 'idealised' portrayal of day-to-day happenings, the 19th century shifted to the Realism Movement, which represents everyday situations, but in a way that is more aligned with reality. In simple words, realism allowed the ordinary class to meet with themselves, without the embellishments of lyricism, romantics and idealised effects. While the Renaissance surely 'rationalised' society, it was only after the intense age of romanticism that realism was birthed. Realism was a cultivation of works by romantic writers who often realised that romantic themes disregarded the miseries and plights of a common man. Realism showed a broader picture- the reality when the mask falls off when the curtains were closed. Realism stood at odds with the exaggerated drama of the Romantic movement. Instead, it portrayed real people and situations with truth and included even the sordid aspects of life.

II. MID-19TH CENTURY- THROUGH EDGAR ALLAN POE'S AND FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY'S LENS

THE TELL-TALE HEART (1843)

Psychological realism focuses on the motive of crime by a common man. Edgar Allan Poe- a master sorcerer of mystery and mania presents characters with layers which fall off stage by stage and in the climax- unrobe themselves to showcase their raw and corrupt moral state. It focuses on

the 'why?'. The characters are often in search of answers and untying intangible doubts which unfurl slowly and steadily only to disrupt a calm flow of thoughts. These questions however excite a rumble, the ultimate chase pulls the characters into deep chasms- forcing them to commit a misdeed. "It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night." The author never unveils his masked identity, however his constant claims of being nervous and not 'mad' rather reveal his disposition more definitively- as a man being pulled into a chasm of insanity as his screams hush progressively; diluting and rotting in his own blood. The narrator defends his stability by elaborating on his careful precision, and unmistakable judgment at the job he pursues. In this paranoia, the narrator reveals his ultimate motive- a cold-blood murder; for he fears and resents an old man's hauntingly pristine blue eyes. We, as readers, rely on an unreliable narrator as we see him descend into his own created pit. Emotions fluctuate from fraudulent hatred to absolute sadism for the eyes, with any reasonable cause for the abhorrence remaining unknown. Perhaps the man's blue eyes were the window to his 'soul'. Something which the narrator desperately wanted to be at peace with. Perhaps, the narrator's comfort in violence threatened him to kill the solace in the old man's magnificent eyes. With his intangible doubts and anxieties, epiphany illuminates with one look at the man's exquisite blue as the narrator is robbed of tranquillity which he already longed for, whose absence hauled him into a mirage of mania- unresolvable, complex and periphery of human comprehension. Poe leaves the reader in the grey area to figure out the psychological state of the narrator- his conflict between experiencing a single emotion at once; somehow making the mania relatable as well as absurd. The narrator wishes to 'release' the old man from the burden of the evil/vulture eye. It is thus the author's foolishness to be unable to distinguish between his obsession and envy which has resulted in the formation of a disharmony between his physical actions and conscience. The narrator confirms his conception of the old man's eye as separate from the man by ending the man altogether and dismembering him into multiple parts. This strategy however turns against him when his mind imagines other parts of the old man's body working against him, as he hears noises of a beating heart hallucinating. The narrator's newly accentuated sensitivity to sound overcomes him, as he loses his sense of reality and imagination. The narrator obsesses over the beats of the man's heart yet shows no concern when the man cries with pain upon being murdered. The narrator seems to enjoy the process of taking life out of the old man and fears the sound of a beating heart. The story shows various spheres of human disposition- the frenzy, the delusion and the aftermath of having committed a cold

blood murder on an apparently 'stable' mind. With a knock on the door- the police have come. The narrator flaunts his bravado and gets chatty as the police arrive. The narrator is comfortable with blood on his hands till he hears a faint pounding and takes it for the old man's heart. Driven mad by the idea that the police are mocking his agony, he confesses to the crime. Poe through this story reveals the faces of the failing stability of the mind. He serves the madness on a platter for the reader to absorb through the protagonist's gestures and lets us unravel the tale as we figure out the paradox breathing between the protagonist's plea for not being mad and finally accepting his committed misdeed. "I smiled,—for what had I to fear?" The narrator is an archetype of delusion saturated to a point of confirmed belief. However, the real irony of the story is that the narrator himself is afraid of the beating of his own heart. The thuds and beats grow louder with each second as he gets plunged into the pit of paranoia and suffers the abysmal guilt of the murder. He tries to keep his tears in his eyes and assures himself of his sanity, however, his anxieties crawl out of his caged heart and make their way to his ears. His own heartbeat now echoes, horrifying him of his own sign of life, after having taken one. He is anguished, unable to draw a distinctive line between his villainy and the truth. Poe has masterfully showcased with very articulate precision the horrifying effects of insanity and one's own interactions with the outer environment. The narrator also confuses emotions and shows that love and hate can coexist only with complexities. The narrator's eyes are a portal to his worldview as he mistakes love and obsession with the 'evil blue eye' for sadistic hatred and takes his deteriorated mental health and insanity for stability and acumen. This whole story is an accumulation of frenzy, madness and absurdity that coexists in an individual and is a driving force to commit misdeeds. The narrator is caught in a morass of his own created complexity which eats him up at last. Though the insanity never exists in the frame, the reader gets an abrupt ending which leaves one with madness being a ghost- slipping into your slumber to keep you awake.

Alienation and Crime in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment (1866)

To better understand Russian literature and aspects of realism in Russian society, it is important to note that Russian authors like Fyodor Dostoevsky were heavily influenced by French writers like Balzac and Hugo and took inspiration from their realistic portrayal of human psychology. The influence of the French can be both political and cultural and can be rooted back in Russia's historical relations with Europe (the French invasion of Russia). The adoption of the French language for

conversation by the Russian nobility encouraged the popularisation of French literature. The elite society of Russia demanded French tutors and French educational methods which contributed to the spread of French ideas and took French status as the ideal form into which the Russians needed to be civilised. The European principles were deemed more sophisticated which led to Russian society getting exposure to the characteristics of the West in art which marked the new era of creativity. Dostoevsky, in particular, truly admired Honore de Balzac's realistic portrayal of society and his exploration of human emotions. However, Dostoevsky remained critical of the excessive materialism of French society and was more interested in French existentialist thought. Dostoevsky was influenced by French literary techniques, especially the use of psychological depth in the Human psyche, the idea of mental alienation and introspection in character development which led to the creation of emotionally complex and morally ambiguous characters in his stories. Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment" was indeed influenced by various societal and intellectual currents of the time, including some elements from French thought, the most notable being realism. Taking inspiration from Balzac or Gustave Flaubert's detailed, unvarnished mannerisms, Dostoevsky uses realist techniques to portray the gritty and most often sordid aspects of St. Petersburg society in the 19th century. The novel explores the lines of orthodox Russian beliefs, cultural and philosophical milieu and creates a psychologically complex character Raskolnikov who is caught up in a mental turmoil where he seeks rationalisation for his crime. Dostoevsky vividly describes the growing urban society, adopting new ideas and practices while also simultaneously highlighting the moral decay of certain neighbourhoods. Dostoevsky has also masterfully named the protagonist "Raskolnikov," from the Russian word "raskol," which means "schism" or "split," accentuating his internal and external separation from the world around him. Raskolnikov puts his intellect to rationalise his murder as a deed done for the 'greater good'. As he believes himself to be an "extraordinary" individual who is exempt from societal rules, his arrogance to have higher principles and sense of the world alienates him from the conventional ethics of his society, leading him to ultimately commit a crime. We can see the protagonist's mental state before and after the crime- the inner turmoil, anxiety, paranoia and distress which increasingly isolated him from others. Raskolnikov comes from a lower-middle-class background which strikes the contrast between the impoverished and the privileged in Russian society. We can see how he treads his moral ground as he is held in poverty's grip. So to overcome his own sense of inferiority and little importance in society, he sets his own rules, transcending

laws that govern others - deciding to murder Alyona Ivanovna because he considers her inferior, someone crude, and with "eyes sparkling with malice." Raskolnikov descends into a mental and physical degradation; guilt over the murders increasingly occupies his thinking as he fails at justifying the blood of innocents on his hand. With his sins sown deep in the shadows of the neighbourhood of St Petersburg, his psyche descends and with a grappling conscience, he seeks reasons to justify his morally corrupt actions. His internal conflict marks his punishment. The protagonist in the end seeks redemption in the prison after having confessed his crime. This novel in the 19th century puts light on the psychological account of crime. A young man with the hope to provide for his family is greeted by a murder which slips into his mind like a slick cat and leaves tormenting after-burn. The psychology of a murderer's brain is unfolded which leads to the rise of unanswerable questions and Raskolnikov's alienation from humanity. In this account of dramatised uncertainty- we can see an important question that has been raised- does the legal punishment for the crime haunt the criminal less than his own conscience?

REALISM IN GEORGE ELIOT'S POEM- IN A LONDON DRAWING ROOM (1869)

*'The sky is cloudy, yellowed by the smoke.
For view there are the houses opposite
Cutting the sky with one long line of wall
Like solid fog: far as the eye can stretch
Monotony of surface & of form
Without a break to hang a guess upon.
No bird can make a shadow as it flies,
For all is shadow, as in ways o'erhung
By thickest canvas, where the golden rays
Are clothed in hemp. No figure lingering
Pauses to feed the hunger of the eye
Or rest a little on the lap of life.
All hurry on & look upon the ground,
Or glance unmarking at the passers by
The wheels are hurrying too, cabs, carriages
All closed, in multiplied identity.
The world seems one huge prison-house & court
Where men are punished at the slightest cost,
With lowest rate of colour, warmth & joy.'*

This poem by George Eliot written in the 19th century is a perfect taunt to the monotonous and self-absorbed society

of London. The speaker is perhaps an observer who expresses a sense of detachment from dull city life. She describes feeling imprisoned, yearning for more authentic experiences amidst the coldness and lack of warmth of the social setting. The opening line is a description of the London skyline. While one would expect its romanticisation- Eliot tells us we are wrong to expect scenic views in the hub of the industrial revolution. The clouds are tinted yellow due to the smoke from the factories and to her dismay- the view from her window is of mere houses cutting the skyline with a long line of 'wall'. The wall here could be an indication of the disconnected and detached lifestyle of the ever-evolving Victorian society with nature. The next line talks about the unvarying and uninteresting attributes of London where everything looks similar as far as the eye can see, with no break in the pattern to allow a little artistry to sneak in. According to her, London is adorned with smog and fog- where an effort spent looking for inspiration would be futile. Eliot describes the city to be draped by cloth which absorbs the warm rays of the sun. She presents the city as a 'shadow', dark and dull - something in contrast to the brightness and liveliness of the sun which is an indicator of healthy and happening lives. The city is wrapped in a thick fabric- unable to even see the shadows the birds cast. 'No figure lingering pauses to feed the hunger of the eye or rest a little on the lap of life' the poet here describes the movement of humans as 'lingering' which takes off the humanlike essence from the gesture and portrays the masses as machine-like. The speaker says that no moving person pauses from life's busy hustle to feed their eyes with nature's beauty. Everyone is caught up in 'ratraps' -with their work and duties and is incapable of enjoying the beauty of existence and that prevails to please the creative chord. The speaker is pointing out a 'race in circles' which humans are running in. The novelty of creativity has endowed upon us an insatiable thirst to leave a 'mark'. We wish to remain immortal even though there is an end written for all of us. Maybe that's the real irony of human nature: to work and struggle till our bones shamble and strength crumbles as we walk towards a road's end and in our last hours lament about the time we missed and lecture about the years passing like months, months like days and days like hours. Our urge to solve discrepancies is perpetuated through inadvertence as we continue to run a race, alone where the first and the last person is us, thus not knowing if we won or lost a futile race that went on in circles, nowhere did we start, nowhere did we end. The speaker points out the ultimate irony- that we the humans are trying to solve the unresolvable. We are looking for answers, we are looking for light everywhere around but firstly within our surroundings. And then when one is tired and done trying like the little child who tries to climb back up to the steep

slide, they realise how they hadn't allowed themselves to meet the differences of the world in the first place. Or how their indifferent approach to accept the dissimilarities around them made them blame their own selves for the rhetorical questions whose answers were there, and, not. With all the running, one forgets to stop and breathe and rest. Before anyone else could, they surround their moist land with their own scathing eyes, only to harden it. Scarring their own selves with criticism, forcing themselves to 'redeem'. But from what? Simply from the constant guilt of spinning in the wheel of 'mediocrity' while accepting it too in order to not divert from the path set and fit in the monotony. As a Victorian writer, Eliot was a witness to London gradually losing its magnificence due to the rapid industrial revolution which transformed the society into being more money minded and devoted to service sectors. Recovering from famines and poverty, British society was at threat of overwhelming consequences of pollution and degradation which justifies the speaker's description of dull streets with minimal joyful activity and a sky filled with solid fog. Everything seems to be rushed and hurried, there is indifference in the air which is filled with greetings people have forgotten to exchange. Everybody is leading identical yet separate lives. There is a lack of emotion and kindness among people, so only flesh and bones tell us of an individual's humanity for the rest of passion and sentiment are distorted in between the dreariness of the uninteresting London city. According to the speaker, industrialisation has sucked the colour and life out of everything, making the city into one large and sad turmoil feeling like a prison. The sun's golden rays are muted by pollution. The smog that cradles the city cuts its people off from nature's beauty and freedom of 'being'. Eliot, as a reliable observer, tells us that the city has isolated people from nature- forcing the spirit of wonder and camaraderie to fade. City life is presented as hectic rather than inspiring or delightful. The people 'hurry on & look upon the ground' The vehicles "are hurrying too," along with the people transporting them in 'closed' little bubbles. These words elaborate upon the fact that their lives are hampered by relentless stress. Due to this, nobody takes note of their surroundings. No one stops to admire and embrace existence. The poet describes the society and life of mid-19th century London at the onset of the industrial revolution through metaphors and imagery.

Social and Magical Realism- through Franz Kafka's lens (1915)

Magical realism is a description of a normal world with authentic accounts of humans as well as societies. Magical realism maintains the seriousness of the theme, using

historical events, politics and cultural customs as well as raises questions about the current society. However, it is necessary to note that magical realism is not equivalent to 'fantasy'. While magical realism forces the reader to question the setting, understand the abrasive realities and form an opinion about the storyline, a fantasy would serve the purpose of mere entertainment. Fantasy elaborates upon the world of make-believe and the reader to a certain extent is sure of its impossibility. Magical realism picks up incidents and characterisations of the everyday world to present a thought or an idea that won't be limited to just the 'elite'. *Metamorphosis* is a story about the plight of the observer. The one who watches and yet is hesitant to speak. The ostracised and used. It is also a hint of people rejecting one's true nature. There lies in all of us, Gregor Samsa; existing and dying both- in the background. The story begins with a Kafkaesque cliché- unprecedented absurdity. Gregor wakes up from an 'uneasy' dream as a vermin. The elements of both realism and unrealism unfurl here as the realist setting of the Samsa family encounters a strange event- "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from a troubled dream, he found himself changed in his bed to some monstrous kind of vermin." The story doesn't follow a Disney storyline where it requires the kiss of a princess to the frog for transforming into a handsome man but rather is a realistic storyline with no climax and an uncalled ending. However, chills follow down the spine once you untangle Kafka's absurdist allegory and join the dots of a middle-class man's plight. Kafka adds a gripping sense of realistic portrayal by accentuating the most trite details in ways where extra detail is paid to every background reference as it too contains a deeper meaning contributing to the whole setting. It talks about a 'responsibility' sewn so deep in the mind of a middle-class man's mind fabric that his ultimate purpose is to beat mediocrity while striving for the same normalcy. Though a reader only grows sympathetic with Gregor from the beginning itself, Kafka has his own mysterious ways to dwell the reader to empathise with the selfishness of the family which one can easily mistake for their lack of choices in a materialistic world. Even after a tragic change in appearance, Gregor still chooses to act as himself- a pragmatic focusing on everyday things and worrying about his family and their reputation. Despite his monotonous lifestyle- working tirelessly day and night, not taking any days off with an uncooperative boss only to pay off his family's debt, his life was a monotony to which he was helplessly used to. Ever since the beginning, the intentions of the Samsa family are unclear. Though appearing cooperative in the start, they are actually masking a harsh reality which is soon revealed as Gregor's appearance progressively becomes more grotesque. The metamorphosis of Gregor degrades

humanistic elements in him- his speech becomes more unclear and his body and mind lose harmony ie- losing sync. His mind and body are now that of two different individuals. Though he thinks like Gregor still, his body wishes for old and rotten food. Soon his family starts ignoring him, thinking of it as a burden and refusing to bring in a doctor to protect their own image and family name. Upon seeing his father go back to work to provide for the family, he feels like he has failed in the role of the provider. His insect tendencies continue to develop, causing his appearance to be repulsive even to Greta. His internalised disgust and guilt for letting his family down promote his decision to keep himself out of their sight as he uses sheets to cover himself. Just as he was trapped in the cycle of working a boring job before, he is now trapped in his own body- both thriving and unable to communicate their real thoughts. Gregor starts to feel betrayed as his family seems to be living on their own and well-suited, without his help which also wound his self-esteem. Instead of helping him in this psychological distress, the family imposes the option of leaving on him as his moral duty to set them free of the burden he is continuously causing. The family's desire to fit in society results in distinguishing sympathy for Gregor as they continue with their immoral ways. Metamorphosis wasn't just of Gregor alone, it was of the whole family and the world around. The way Gregor's father change is the most realistic part of the novella. As Gregor was soon unloved when he lost his appearance, it was clear that they loved his body, his ability to provide, and their son in the flesh but not the soul. In the end, when he dies, his father's words are, "Will now we can thank God" The role of the caregiver of the family that Gregor played was not only forgotten but also undervalued after his inefficiency. Another juxtaposition to be noted here was the relationship between Charwoman and Gregor, who was kind to him despite having no blood relation. She does not get frightened by him and remains calm to provide for him like any other member of the Samsa family. She is not concerned with Gregor's appearance which signifies her adjustability with people of different natures and also her humble and non ostentatious background. The alienation soon leads to the vermin's silent death. He dies thinking fondly of his family with all tenderness which shows the presence of human nature in him despite being an insect in contrast to his human family members who are cruel and watch him die. Upon his death, his remains are cleared by the charwoman and his father refers to him as a 'bygone' as they go on a train ride enjoying 'freedom' as they try to find a new man to depend upon- Greta's husband. This shows how a person's significance in society is merely rooted and can be substituted easily upon losing their capacity to earn money. It could be pointed out that the vermin was the true

representation of the state of one's soul and the absurdity it encounters which can not be seen by the world and its societal disapproval signifies how rejection is common when one does not follow a pragmatic path of conduct or norm. It indicates the necessity of objective behaviors in the outer world where our externalities need to check in boxes and internal strifes need to peacefully coexist as mere dichotomies.

III. REALISM IN THE POST-MODERN AGE

American society in the 20th century through Toni Morrison's novel - The Bluest Eye (1970)

Through magical realism- Toni Morrison uses characters and stories to narrate the incidents of the cruelty of slavery and keeps alive the sufferings of African American people so as to not lose the sense of history and sacrifices of people of colour. Through such effects, Morrison uses qualities of magical realism to remind the victims like Pecola Breedlove of their identity and tell stories which depict a truer picture of the white-dominated society as the protagonist of her novel dreams of having blue eyes, a direct expression of the desire of an African American girl to have the same rights and privileges as a white person. Morrison accentuates the neglected stages of American history by showing the characters of the novel who have been damaged, oppressed, and wronged fighting for an identity with brown skin. This novel is a blistering modern romance between reality and desire. With her blunt evocation, definite voice and unequivocal description of a child's yearning and the ultimate tragedy to having fulfilled it at last, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* has the power to wake you up, rob you of sleep and mock the privileges that come easy to some of us. There are only a few stories which contain the power to have a tight grip on you and expose your bare heart to diverse and extreme weather. And through a subtle dichotomy- the same stories shield you from being part of an ignorant population and let you feast upon the rawness and beauty of truth. "Nuns go by as quiet as lust", the author sets the tone for the whole novel and dares the reader for the abraded explicit. The author here taunts the social norm of resonating a 'nun' with purity while through a simile expressing its relation with 'lust'- something deemed as impure by society. Expected like a father's fallibility and unexpected like a harsh slap across your face, Toni Morrison feeds you reality checks through the eyes of the underprivileged and makes you question your position in society. Claudia's journey of loving Shirley Temple from "pristine sadism to fabricated hatred to fraudulent love" is closely related to Pecola's journey of hating herself due to the insatiable thirst for blue eyes. The themes revolve around the complex realistic nature of circumstances and

encounters, desires and outcomes; each symbolising something or the other of the black struggle. Like a pinch in the sleep, the words deliver a commendable picture of the story's setting, very clearly establishing the racist experiences of minorities in 1940s America and how the dysfunctional and unfavourable environment can impose indestructible notions of self-hatred and solidify internalised racism. The language itself is filled with black colloquialisms, slang which helps establish a convoluted narrative, completely eliminating the white point of view. Pecola's journey is closely intertwined with that of Claudia. Pecola and Claudia in the novel are the vehicles to figuring out an important question - "How does a child learn to hate themselves?". Pecola and Claudia are shown as misfits or outsiders in their own community of people who are silently suffering ostracisation from the rest of the privileged, the only difference being that these two young girls dared to ask themselves- 'why?'. The novel shows the feeling of 'otherness' growing inside of them as they traced their peripheral existence in a regime of Eurocentric beauty standards and the plight of the ones in its destitution. The self-criticism by the ones devoid of the standard 'beauty' tightens like a knot. The bluest eye is a secret confession of sorrow experienced by one who considers their natural self to be incapable of love and insufficient for praise. The yearning for acceptance sets the girls laid on an easel, waiting to be coloured so that the world sees the beauty in them. It is a journey of womanhood and the tyranny faced due to the multidimensional consequences of oppression and how it feeds off the most vulnerable. The tragedy of being unaccepted is embodied by Claudia and Pecola who struggle for a place in the world with white girls. Pecola's biggest enemy is her apparent 'ugliness', her most desired wish is granted to her at the cost of her sanity. The blue eyes through which she wished to see the world is now useless as her perversely received gift is a form of blindness without a stable mind. The emasculation of Cholly Breedlove in the Novel leads to his anger settling on Pecola as he loses his last left humanity. The young girl pays the price of her father's unresolved conflict as she grew his sin in her womb. Her delusion and self-conviction for coping with a traumatic experience drive her to a periphery of sense as she spends the rest of her life being emotionally distraught and disturbed. The author points out how the community as a whole failed in the protection of a young girl. And how like earth's new child, yet to receive our first bath, we step into a new atmosphere where we are forced to feel ugly unless we please a few people and try to untangle the intangible doubts laid for us. The author has given a realistic portrayal of children dealing with cruelty through the means of denial. Pecola is one of the many people using physical beauty to make up for the ugliness of her trauma. The most powerful

quality of this novel is the casual yet overpowering exemplification of human autonomy and possession. It redefines the perceptions of racial discrimination in our minds through a story of complex characters and brilliant literary tools with its exquisite narration of inherent and simple qualities of humans alternating through tough circumstances, abstract from the white norm. Toni Morrison describes the ripple effects of slavery which are intertwined due to different yet haunting experiences of every individual. Morrison describes and beautifies the essence of an individual in the repression and not the community as a whole with the belief of keeping every unique soul who was a victim of slavery, alive through her words both blithe and exquisite and connects daily instances during The Depression to a much broader picture.

IV. CONCLUSION

The beginning stages of the 19th century welcomes romanticism, an artistic and intellectual movement which focused on a more emotive expression. As science became more prevalent, the 19th-century romantic writers stepped away from leisure and their focus shifted heavily to themes of nature, individualism, and the idea of the "common man". The common man reflected everyday society through the eyes of a plain, working-class individual. As we reflect on the history and legacy of the realism movement in literature, it's evident that its impact reverberates beyond a historical context and leaves an indelible mark on the tapestry of literature which helps us readers enrich our knowledge about societies and gives a better understanding of the multifaceted norms and cultures. The movement is highly committed to maintaining authenticity and exposing social injustices and inequalities while championing the importance of individual perspectives and depicting nuanced human conditions. Through the interpretation of these five novels and a poem, I tried to establish realism's relevance from the mid-19th century to the post-modern age. From Kafka's profound sorrow in mediocrity to Dostoevsky's motive, to Morrison's plight in the white beauty standard- I have tried to show society's varied hues through the lenses of literary works. The analysis of each novel presents my interpretation of the rhetorics used along with a brief summary of the stories and the type of realism (psychological/ social/ magical) used in them and further elucidates the historical backdrop while elaborating on the settings of each novel and uncovering the realistic element in each one of them by providing my own literary perspective and critically analysis. Along with addressing the significance of realism, this paper has also elaborated upon the movement that catalysed a change in narration techniques and theme dynamics. In conclusion, realism has

contributed significantly to understanding the socio as well as psychological conditions of various eras and has vastly helped in building a deeper understanding of the lives of the common mass.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adams, R. J. (2008). Seeing in Unordinary Ways: Magical Realism in Australian Theatre (Phd Thesis). A Gateway to Melbourne's Research.
- [2] Morrison, T. (2016). *The Bluest Eye*. London: Vintage.
- [3] Revolution and the growth of industrial society, 1789–1914 (romanticism and Realism) www.britannica.com
- [4] Victorian literature overview- www.newworldencyclopedia.com
- [5] David denby (2022), *The New Yorker* The Lockdown Lessons of “Crime and Punishment”