UNIVERZITA KARLOVA – FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

The Question of Social and Class Relationships in the British Social-Problem Novel

Problematika společenských a třídních vztahů v britském sociálním románu

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Anglistika – amerikanistika

Praha, květen 2022

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would hereby like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, PhDr. Zdeněk Beran, Ph.D., for his time, support, patience, valuable advice, helpful guidance, and critical insights.

ABSTRACT

The principal aim of this thesis is to explore social and class relationships in British social-problem novel as seen through the eyes of three prominent Victorian writers including Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens. The industrial novel emerged from the problems arising from the rapid process of the Industrial Revolution, which is closely described, together with its severe impact on the lives of British inhabitants, in Chapter Two. Apart from the origin of class antagonism, the second chapter also depicts the responses of the oppressed and disadvantaged working class to the ruthlessness and greediness of the industrial manufacturers in the form of the Luddite uprising, the Chartists movement and independent strikes and riots which often turned into verbally or physically violent actions leading to further deterioration of working relations. The chapters Three to Five offer the views of the above-mentioned authors on such distorted relations, and each of them, through the characters of their books, represents a possible solution leading to their improvement. The truth is, however, that even though the opinions of each of the three authors were influenced by different political or theological theories they believed in, or by their very personal experience, all of them eventually agreed that the only way leading to harmonious relationships is the willingness of all involved sides to communicate, respect, try to understand each other and come up with an adequate compromise. In the third chapter, dedicated to *Shirley*, and the fourth one, dedicated to *North and South*, this bachelor thesis explores not only working relations but also the role of female characters as well as the general social position and perception of women, which was, according to both female writers unsatisfactory and erroneous. The fifth chapter of the thesis offers an insight into the views of Charles Dickens who in his *Hard Times* focuses on the critique of the whole English Victorian society which is unable to deal not only with the twisted working relations but also with the educational methods emphasising the Utilitarian study of nothing but hard facts while completely suppressing the development of human fancy and imagination.

ABSTRAKT

Hlavním cílem této bakalářské práce je zobrazení třídních a sociálních vztahů v britském industriálním románu z pohledu tří prominentních autorů viktoriánské éry, a to Charlotte Brontëové, Elizabeth Gaskellové a Charlese Dickense. Sociální román vznikl v reakci na problémy pramenící z překotného rozvoje průmyslové revoluce, jejíž dopad na občany Anglie je popsán ve druhé kapitole, která navazuje na kapitolu úvodní. Stejná kapitola také popisuje původ špatných třídních vztahů a reakci utlačovaných a znevýhodněných dělníků na krutost, bezohlednost a chamtivost průmyslových zaměstnavatelů, ať už ve formě povstání Ludditů, hnutí chartistů nebo nezávislých stávek a veřejných povstání, které se často zvrtly v akce provázené verbálním či fyzickým násilím, což vztahy mezi zaměstnavateli a jejich zaměstnanci ještě více zhoršovalo. Třetí až pátá kapitola nabízí pohled zmíněných autorů na takové pokřivené vztahy, přičemž každý z nich prostřednictvím svých knižních postav představuje možné řešení, vedoucí k jejich zlepšení. Pravdou však je, že ačkoliv pohled každého z autorů je ovlivněn jinou politickou či teologickou teorií, kterou zastávali, nebo určitou zkušeností z jejich osobního života, na závěr se všichni shodují na faktu, že k harmonickým vztahům, jak v době průmyslové revoluce, tak obecně, nevede jiná cesta než ta, na níž je každá ze zúčastněných stran ochotna se dohodnout prostřednictvím komunikace, vzájemného respektu a porozumění na kompromisu, který přináší vyvážené množství pozitiv či negativ pro každou z nich. Ve třetí kapitole, věnované *Shirley,* a čtvrté, věnované *Severu a Jihu,* se tato bakalářská práce kromě vztahů na pracovišti zabývá také rolemi ženských hrdinek a postavením a vnímáním žen ve společnosti, které podle autorek bylo neuspokojivé a mylné. Pátá kapitola této práce nabízí pohled na názory Charlese Dickense, který se ve svých *Zlých Časech* zaměřuje na obecnou kritiku společnosti v době, ve které sám žil, a která si neumí poradit nejen se vztahy na pracovišti, ale také s výchovnými a vzdělávacími metodami, které při bezvýhradném důrazu na utilitární studium pouhých faktů zcela ignorují rozvoj lidské fantazie a představivosti.

Key words:

Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, social-problem novel, Victorian Era, Industrial Revolution, social class, society, relationships, social problems

Klíčová slova:

Charlotte Brontëová, Elizabeth Gaskellová, Charles Dickens, sociální román, Viktoriánská éra, průmyslová revoluce, společenská třída, společnost, vztahy, sociální problémy

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1. Introduction

Regardless of the abundant scope of Victorian poetry and huge popularity of seeing theatre plays, it was fiction which happened to be the most prominent, influential, and favoured literary form of the Victorian Era. The increased popularity of fiction, in terms of both its production and consumption, was based on several reasons. First of all, the period of overall progress affecting every sphere of life made books to be more available than ever especially via "cheaper books (thanks to mechanized printing technology), borrowing rights (thanks to subscription libraries), and instalment purchase (thanks to serialization in separately bound issues or in monthly magazines)."[1] The second reason was the chaos of the outer world. Everything from the industrialisation, urbanisation through harsh working conditions, high food prices, radicalism, class antagonism, political and socioeconomic movements, to scientific developments and doubts concerning religious faith contributed to authors' choice of a novel as the preferred literary form that can encompass the huge quantity of information. Majority of books was written in response to the everchanging world whose innovations could become beneficial for one, and unfavourable for another. Despite many fiction types which were born out of the noticeably long Victorian Era, the realist novel became to be the most relevant of all kinds of Victorian fiction.

Maureen Moran rendered the realist fiction as something which "seemed to offer a transparent window onto a society in rapid transition,"[2] as something that aimed to present "the 'truth' of 'real' life."[3] In spite of the fact that this kind of literature was written mainly by middle-class authors and "the very discourse of 'realism' it provides is really a middle-class adaptation of 'reality' from the outset,"[4] a quantity of important books was produced. Since the

[1] Maureen Moran, *Victorian Literature and Culture* (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 78.
[2] Moran, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 80.
[3] Moran, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 80.
[4] Sean Purchase, *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 186.

interests of the realist fiction lie in the analysis of the "antagonism between individuals and society,"[5] it comprises, apart from other subtypes including for example a Bildungsroman, also a social-problem novel which is simultaneously the main subject of this thesis.

The social-problem novel, synonymous with industrial or Condition-of-England novel, denotes a group of fictitious works emerging in Great Britain in the middle of the 19the century, in response to social problems arising primarily from the Industrial Revolution which is described in detail in the next chapter. After the historical context the thesis focuses on three social-problem novels written by three different authors. *Shirley* by Charlotte Brontë, *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell and *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens are the three books whose primary concern is the antagonism between the rich and the poor; the ever escalating animosity between two groups of people who not only live in the same country but in the same city and yet, their way of life and worldviews are indeed incomparable and so incompatible mainly because one set of people owns a considerable fortune and another one suffers from hunger despite endless hours of hard work. In three separate chapters, the thesis aims to show three individual responses to the twisted interpersonal relationships that each of the three authors had, in a way, a chance to see with their own eyes. Even though all of them are writing against the unjust social order, laws and unequal rights which make the rich even richer and the poor even poorer, each of them does it a bit differently and each of them draws on their own life experience which significantly influenced their perception of social differences, problems and overall arrangement of society. Nevertheless, within the analytical part the thesis proves that Brontë, Gaskell as well as Dickens reached more or less the same conclusion regarding the solution of unfavourable relationships between capital and labour — it lies not in humiliation, hatred,

[5] Purchase, *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature*, 186.

violence, machine-breaking, turbulent riots, or lockouts but in respect, communication and human understanding.

The major goal of authors writing Condition-of-England novels was, however, not to resolve industrial conflicts, or to improve dreary and unhealthy living and working conditions of lower-class people, but to present them to wide middle- or upper-class public that had often no idea about what was happening behind the closed doors of their comfortable living. These novels are credited with a didactic purpose and their authors aim to instruct their readers, provide them with an insight into the happenings on the political, economic and social scene, educate them about the current situation within their country and thus try to change, or at least modify the readers' former opinions and biases especially towards working-class people. The chief principle which makes the social-problem novel to be the social-problem novel lies, as Josephine M. Guy emphasized, "not so much in any formal features or properties (the works in question are not formally innovative or experimental), but rather in the non-literary ambitions which certain authors were assumed to have held."[6] As will be seen within the following chapters of this thesis, all the mentioned authors, although able to condemn dishonest, vulgar, irresponsible, and raging workers stood behind those honest, hardworking and caring lower-class people whose rights were harshly repressed by unjust laws and greedy masters and used their books to spread information about a great quantity of industrial evils in a hope to effect change.

[6] Josephine M. Guy, *The Victorian Social-Problem Novel: The Market, the Individual and Communal Life* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), 4.

1. Historical Context

2.1. Victorian Era

It was in 1837 when the eighteen-year-old princess came to be a monarch of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; and it was in 1901 when her death deprived her of the opportunity to live and privilege to govern. Sixty-three years of the reign of Queen Victoria represent a phase the end of which is so divergent from its beginning as a day is divergent from night. In proportion to all those years which humanity has already been through, this period is just like a drop in the ocean, and yet, by the end of it, nothing remained the same. The Victorian Era exemplifies a legendary transition from old ways to a completely new, modern life involving tremendous technical, scientific, political, economic, and social changes. Nevertheless, most of these essential changes took their roots long before Queen Victoria was even born and thus the term 'Victorian' cannot be simply applied only to those years of her reign. L. C. B. Seaman explained this misleading terminology as follows:

> Victorianism neither began in 1837 nor ended in 1901. A man of sixty in 1867, no less than a man who reached that age as late as 1927, could certainly be described as a Victorian. Yet the Victorianism of the first would have been shaped almost wholly by the pre-Victorian experience of the thirty years he had lived before the Queen's accession in 1837; and the second would almost certainly carry with him, into the fourth decade of the twentieth century, ideas and attitudes acquired in the last thirty-four years of the Queen's reign. [7]

This does not apply only to people's ideas and attitudes, but it also concerns goods which would not have been produced had it not been for the machinery invented during the pre-Victorian period. Many reforms of the era would not, again, come into force without events that happened earlier. Simultaneously, opinions, habits or various norms shaped between 1837 and 1901 could be followed long after the era was ended. Despite the invention of the labour-saving machinery, new means of transport, amazing advances in medicine and science, expansion of culture, art

[7] L.C.B. Seaman, *Victorian England Aspects of English and Imperial History 1837–1901* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 4.

and literature and overall improvement of living standards, the Victorian Era likewise saw extreme poverty, unhappiness, suffering, disagreements, and struggles. Whereas Britain directed towards the status of the "global superpower"[8], its inhabitants were gradually splitting in two groups. Firstly, there were those who benefited from the huge progress and secondly, there were those who were not enabled to be a part of it. The skyrocketing developments within all sectors of life had a significant impact on the structure of society as well as on interpersonal relationships.

2.1.2. Structured society

Division of society into several classes was a highly debated matter and great issue long before the onset of the Victorian Era. It was, however, this period in which the most fundamental changes of British society took place. The upper class of aristocracy and gentry remained rather unaltered, still representing the richest group of the highest prestige. Next, there was a middle class consisting of two subgroups. Firstly, there was the bourgeoisie, or the upper middle class, which grew rapidly during the Victorian Era especially because of the growth of cities and industrialization which transformed "former large merchants into manufacturers."[9] Secondly, there were the representatives of the lower middle class who were, by the rising manufacture from already "small shopkeepers, and very very few handicraftsmen,"[10] regardless of their skills, transformed into "the toiling proletariat."[11] By the term 'proletariat', Friedrich Engels meant the third social class whose members were at the bottom of the social ladder; they were mostly unskilled labourers, working for a minimum wage in brutal conditions. Moreover, this group constituted the greatest part of the population in Britain during the reign of Queen

[8] Gail B. Stewart, *Victorian England: Understanding World History* (San Diego, CA: ReferencePoint Press, 2013), 55.
[9] Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, ed. Victor Kiernan (Penguin Classics, 1987), 65.
[10] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 65.
[11] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 65.

Victoria. Lastly, there was also an underclass constituted by prostitutes, criminals, orphans, and other people who did not fit to any of the three main classes mentioned above.

Besides the class division, gender also played an essential part whether at home, in society or at work. In the case of the Victorian Era, Britain was deeply patriarchal. Speaking of the middle and upper class of the society, men dominated all spheres of public and private life. Sean Purchase admitted in his book that:

> They were prominent in all areas associated with 'masculine' arenas of power and ambition: politics, government, the law, economics, industry, commerce, engineering, education, sport, the armed services, and the administration of Victoria's growing world empire. […] Due to the man's status as husband, father, breadwinner and owner of all family 'property', including his wife, he reigned supreme, to all intents and purposes, throughout Victorian society.[12]

Women, on the other hand, were reduced into the passive roles of mothers, obedient wives, and housewives, never interfering in men's business. The situation was, though, very dissimilar within the working class where alongside men also women were involved in the industrial work on a day-to-day basis. At that time, gender advantages and disadvantages were, as everything else, determined by class affiliation.

Of the utmost importance was not, however, the existence of the classes as such but the problems which they posed inclusive of the growing antagonism among the members across the classes resulting from the colossal inequality, greed, selfishness and mainly unwillingness of men to listen, understand each other, and find a suitable compromise. Such hostility had its roots at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution during which the differences between the classes became more visible and less and less tolerable.

2.2. Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution was the life changing transformation process influencing every aspect of being of every person who lived in the second half of the 18th and during the

[12] Purchase, *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature*, 73-4.

course of the following century. The period is generally perceived to have lasted from about 1760 until 1830, nonetheless, Robert C. Allen noted that it was only between the years of 1830 and 1870 that the modern technology springing out of the revolution "spread across the economy"[13] and the progress was far more balanced than it was before 1830.[14] The whole process was launched by the introduction of a new kind of spinning jenny that although worked by hand, it was able to carry more spindles than its spinning-wheel predecessor, which resulted in an extended amount of cloth produced by a single worker within a shorter time. It did not take long, and more elaborate machines were invented such as the water frame and spinning mule which transferred the working from home, where the spinning and weaving was carried earlier, under one roof into large factories. After Edmund Cartwright's invention and further perfection of a power-loom, human hands faced a serious competitor and as Friedrich Engels confirmed: "all this machinery was made doubly important by James Watt's steam-engine, invented in 1764 [...];"[15] and consequently "the victory of machine-work over hand-work in the chief branches of English industry was won; [...]."[16]

The initiation of the new machinery system was both immensely prosperous and enormously destroying: "The consequences of this were, on the one hand, a rapid fall in price of all manufactured commodities, prosperity of commerce and manufacture, the conquest of nearly all the unprotected foreign markets, the sudden multiplication of capital and national wealth; [...]."[17]On the other hand, however, there could be seen the unfortunate reality of the lower-class workers who became the victims of the otherwise brilliant national progress. In addition to the developments in the dominant textile industry, the Industrial Revolution saw the rise of iron or coal production, demanded especially for the purposes of "building and fueling

[13] Robert C. Allen, *The Industrial Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 57.
[14] Allen, *The Industrial Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 57.
[15] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 57.
[16] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 57.
[17] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 57-8.

all of those new steam-driven machines."[18] This had, again, a double effect, positive as many new things and goods could be created, and negative because the burning of the coal caused severe pollution of air which was far from being the only thing having a detrimental impact on the health of people who were living and working within industrial cities.

2.2.1. Living and Working Conditions of the Lower-Class People During the Industrial Revolution

Since formerly independent workers, mostly from provincial areas, could not compete with new machines, they were deprived of their handwork and hence their earnings, and any financial support was out of the question, whole families were forced to leave their homes and search for new ones in large cities such as London, Manchester, Liverpool, Preston, and other areas that were offering increased job opportunities especially within the recently established factories, mills, or mines. Not only people from rural areas were moving to the cities but also people from Ireland who, according to Friedrich Engels, "had nothing to lose at home, and much to gain in England; and from the time when it became known in Ireland that the east side of the Irish Sea offered steady work and good pay for strong arms, every year has brought armies of the Irish hither."[19] Such a massive and rapid migration led to overpopulation which could not be handled. Enid Gauldie in her book *Cruel Habitations* stated that:

> the pace of population growth was too fast for the builders and scores of families were crowding into houses built to accommodate one or two. The shortage of accommodation sent town rents for decent housing beyond the pocket of the labourer, and cellars, shacks and subdivided rooms were all that was left for him.[20]

Thus, the poorest workers lived in shabby slums with no privacy, very little furniture, surrounded by filth, garbage, and smell. Reliable sewage system was too luxurious to be found in these districts, which led to the contamination of water by human and industrial waste. This

[18] Stewart, *Victorian England: Understanding World History,* 16.
[19] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 128.
[20] Enid Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations: A History of Working-Class Housing 1780–1918* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1974), 73.

polluted water got into wells and rivers and was consequently used as drinking water, consumption of which ensured diseases such as cholera, causing deaths of a considerable quantity of people. Air was also everything but clear or fresh, which was, once more, contributing to several respiratory illnesses. On the top of that all, due to the immense growth of population, there was high unemployment or, contrariwise, whole families including children and women had to toil in factories under unhealthy, dangerous, detrimental conditions for long hours for a minimum wage insufficient for a sustaining life. Due to such difficult life situation family bonds were hardly tight since often every single member of an individual family had to spent long hours at work to have a place to sleep and something to eat; as a result, members of families mostly lived next to each other rather than really together which frequently contributed to mutual disagreements and arguments. In addition, the most underprivileged people often found passion in intemperate consumption of alcoholic liquors and licentious sexual behaviour; all of this, though, for majority of people stood for at least temporary escape from the reality of their wretched lives. Lousy economic and social situation, moreover, forced quantity of working-class women to prostitution which they could execute as a part-time job when their main employment did not ensure sufficient wage, or when they were unemployed and desperate to feed themselves and their kids.

As a result, working-class people found themselves stuck in a desperate situation from which it was not easy to escape. They could not rise into lower middle class because this class vanished, and to rise even higher was impossible on regards of their lack of money needed for an independent business.[21] Another reason why their living conditions could not be improved was Britain's non-democratic society in which the only people with voting rights were male landowners, the leading class of aristocracy and gentry, who were preoccupied with the matters concerning their own advantage[22] and hence the prospect of betterment of workers' situation

[21] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 65-66.
[22] Allen, *The Industrial Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 79.

with unjustly set long working hours and low wages was very dim. The country's economic system also did not add to the happiness of the poor since *laissez-faire* capitalism represents "the theory that wages, prices, and supply could best find an appropriate balance without government playing a role, a system that took no account of the individual cost of radical change."[23] The situation in which working-class people had no rights, low wages and no decent life gradually united them, and as a self-conscious group they finally refused to be the slaves of their unscrupulous masters treating their employees almost inhumanly, and decided to go into the battle. The pre-Victorian and at least half of the Victorian Era is characterized by constant struggles between the rich and the poor, the capitalists and the workers. A character from Benjamin Disraeli's social-problem novel *Sybil, or The Two Nations* pictured the two groups as follows:

> Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.[24]

2. 3. Civil Disturbances

2. 3. 1. Luddites

People, not being emotionless machines soon gave vent to their feelings of desperation and anger and began to fight against those who deprived them of the possibility to work and thus make their living. The Luddites, organised groups of men, emerged in England between the years 1811 and 1816 where they spread across the major manufacturing counties including Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Leicester[25] leaving behind them considerable traces of violence. The movement is generally perceived to have been set

[23] Nicols Fox, *Against the Machine: The Hidden Luddite Tradition in Literature, Art, and Individual Lives* (Washington, Covelo, London: Island Press, 2002), 38.
[24] Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil, or the Two Nations* (Great Britain: The Mayflower Press, Plymouth and William Brendon & Son, Ltd., 1927), 99.
[25] Fox, *Against the Machine: The Hidden Luddite Tradition in Literature, Art, and Individual Lives,* 24.

against manufacturers and the machinery they started to use during the Industrial Revolution as a means of the production of items that were earlier created by hands of skilled craftsmen. The Luddites, producers of textile goods, are renowned for their night attacks during which the textile machinery was broken to pieces. Nonetheless, Malcolm I. Thomis conceded in his book that "these attacks on machines did not imply any necessary hostility to machinery as such; machinery was just a conveniently exposed target against which an attack could be made."[26]

When the booming Industrial Revolution with its inventions depriving workers of their jobs, economic consequences of Napoleonic Wars, low wages, bad harvest, and enormous food prices merged into overall commercial depression the frame-breaking was, surprisingly or expectedly, launched. Administration's and merchants' visions were at that time directed towards the well-functioning trade and enhancement of the amount of money gained by mass production of goods; very little attention was thus given to those who struggled to provide their families with at least a loaf of bread, and when these poverty-stricken people realised that they represented, as Nicols Fox noted, "merely cogs in the machinery of the industrial revolution,"[27] they did not hesitate to take justice in their own hands and began to smash what was available, and sure to be distressing for those who were deaf to their pleas. The Luddites were, however, not simply attacking the machinery but rather what the machines represented — the overall factory system with its industrialists and businessmen of upper classes who were unconcerned about workers' well-being after they employed more productive, inanimate mechanism substituting human hands and thus depriving workers of their source of income and hence of fully fledged lives. Since it was not hard to manipulate the new machines, children and women were commissioned to do this work and skilled craftsmen, fathers of the families, had any other choice than to accept a humiliating position and let their wives and kids to participate in the

[26] Malcolm L. Thomis, *The Luddites: Machine Breaking in Regency England* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 14.
[27] Fox, *Against the Machine: The Hidden Luddite Tradition in Literature, Art, and Individual Lives,* 25.

financial support of the family. In consequence, the rebellion of the Luddites served, furthermore, as a kind of manifestation of their determination to fight for respectable lives. Men wanted to be men in the right sense of words — they wanted to be the heads of families, the ones who needed to have a job and satisfactory pay which would ensure a decent life for their wives and offspring.

Exceptionally, however, in Yorkshire the Luddite attacks were actually aimed at nothing else but the new machines as such. Since the West Riding of Yorkshire was the centre of woollen industry, the war against the machines was led here particularly by local croppers. Gig mill and shearing frames were for croppers haunting nightmares for a long time. The involvement of these machines in the production of clothing meant that croppers were no longer needed. These machines were able to do all their job which was previously crucial for the finishing of the clothes. Thus, when the Luddite riots began, the cloth dressers did not hesitate to give vent to accumulated anger and fear and began to destroy the machines which turned them from well paid workers to unemployed people within few following years.

The Rebellion of the Luddites was organized by skilled artisans, primarily weavers whose career was severely threatened by the machinery that was undoubtedly producing goods of lower quality but did not require wages. Aggression of the frame-breakers was gradually more and more serious when it extended from breaking of the frames to threatening letters directed towards the government and manufacturers, and violent or even deadly attacks which included the use of weapons such as guns or fire. Probably the best remembered, and very well-organized onslaught led by a cropper George Mellor was directed against a mill owner in Yorkshire, William Cartwright, and his Rawfolds Mill full of shearing frames. Cartwright was expecting the enemies though and was prepared to strike the Luddites' truculence down which he managed with the help of five soldiers and his workmen. The offense was by no means merely about the frame-breaking, it was an actual bloodshed in which 140 shots were fired

within the 20-minute attack; three of the assailants were wounded two of which deadly; the surrounding of the venue was covered with pools of blood and there were reportedly found even pieces of human flesh and a finger.[28] This attack, however serious, was not at all the last one in Yorkshire. About a week after an unsuccessful attempt to kill Cartwright, the Luddites shot another mill owner William Horsfall who died of his injuries.

Such attacks were an "insurrection"[29] that needed to be stopped. Not only people were killed, and machines broken but the impact on the economy was equally serious as the cost of the damage was higher than £100,000.[30] As a solution "Troops were dispatched, [...]. More frequent arrests were made, rewards were offered, spies were paid, townspeople were interviewed and reinterviewed by magistrates,"[31] and in March of 1812 the Frame-Breaking Act was passed, making the machine-breaking a capital crime. The ensuing procedure was as follows: "Individuals were arrested and tried. After the first trials, eight were hanged, seventeen transported, thirteen imprisoned, and twenty acquitted. In January of 1813, fourteen more were hanged."[32] Gradually, the movement started to wane and the outrageous activities ended due to "the rescinding of the Orders in Council, the suppression of the riots by the government's use of spies and the military, some wage and usage concessions, and some reduction in food prices."[33] Even though the prize of the repression of the uprising was as high as Ł1.5 million it was definitely a worthy investment because "what was at stake was far more important to Great Britain in the eyes of the government and industrialists: it was, in a word, the industrial revolution."[34]

[28] "11th April 1812: Mass Luddite attack on William Cartwright's Mill at Rawfolds, near Cleckheaton", *Luddite Bicentenary*, published November 4, 2012, accessed February 16, 2021, http://ludditebicentenary.blogspot.com/2012/04/11th-april-1812-mass-luddite-attack-on.html
[29] Fox, 36.
[30] Fox, 36.
[31] Fox, 36.
[32] Fox, 37.
[33] *Writings of the Luddites*, ed. Kevin Binfield. (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 17.
[34] Fox, 37.

Apart from many opponents of Luddism, supporters and sympathizers could be found as well including big personas such as Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, or Percy Bysshe Shelley. Although they appeared earlier than the Luddites, these Romantic writers shared, according to Nicols Fox, "the principles and values the Luddites were fighting for, the right to the simple pleasures and satisfactions that human life might be expected to provide."[35] The Luddites were not just "technophobes"[36], "and they were not simply reacting to the loss of jobs, but to something more: the loss of a way of life."[37]

2.3.2. Unfavourable Effects of the Napoleonic Wars and The Corn Laws

The war between workers and capitalists did not end with the Luddites' machine-breaking, on the contrary, it was just a beginning. The Luddite uprising was largely accompanied by food riots which, however, lasted much longer than the movement of the Luddites. In the early 19the century, it was mainly bad harvest increasing the price of wheat and causing shortages of food among the poor. Starvation and inability to provide a family with nourishment led to general disturbances. People were pleading for whatever work for whatever wage that would allow them to buy a loaf of bread. Notwithstanding, even those who were employed could not afford nothing more extra on account of their miserable income. Ultimately, when begging for work or higher wages showed to be useless, a series of riots ensued.

At that time, however, the destitution of workers was not coming only out of the whims or self-interest of ruthless manufacturers, but it was also about the trade restrictions imposed by Napoleon during the Napoleonic Wars in order to weaken British economy, which simultaneously caused business troubles to manufacturers who therefore hired cheap and less skilled labourers to save as much money as possible. Later, food riots continued mainly because

[35] Fox, *Against the Machine: The Hidden Luddite Tradition in Literature, Art, and Individual Lives,* 53.
[36] *Writings of the Luddites*, 13.
[37] Fox, *Against the Machine: The Hidden Luddite Tradition in Literature, Art, and Individual Lives,* 25.

of the Corn Laws, coming into force in 1815, which imposed high tariffs on imported corn. The aim of the established regulations was to protect domestic farm products and generally domestic trade by preventing the importation of cheaper products from abroad. Due to the missing competition and bad harvest the price of food was high and hence the misery of underpaid working-class people and hardships of manufacturers were prolonged. Domestic market was after the Napoleonic wars badly hurt. Many industrialists were during the trade restrictions obliged to dismiss many skilled workers and before the market was healed, employers were unable to provide the remaining of their employees with higher wages, who, as a result, could hardly afford to buy food, let alone any manufactured goods. The Corn Laws had also their supporters though especially among the most influential circles of English dwellers. As admitted by G. Kitson Clark: "To the country gentlemen, and still more to the farmer, they [the Corn Laws] seemed to be the only means of safety in a very unkind world; and to the poor town-dweller, or to the manufacturer, they seemed to be plainly an instrument by means of which a selfish aristocracy starved or frustrated them to keep up rents."[38]

2.3.3 The Chartist Movement

Despite the Reform Act of 1832 provided the middle class with extended representation in parliament, working-class people still had no rights, low wages, and no prospect of betterment of their situation, which resulted in the creation of the working-class radical movement:

> It was in Birmingham in 1838 that the Chartist Movement was formally launched, with the aim of petitioning Parliament to pass a bill containing the Six Points [...]: universal (male) suffrage; secret ballot; equal electoral districts; payment of M.P.s; abolition of property qualifications for M.P.s; annual parliamentary elections.[39]

Although there were large-scale meetings supporting the Chartism, and more than a million people signed the petitions, parliament voted the requirements down and the Chartists turned to

[38]G. Kitson Clark, "The Repeal of the Corn Laws and the Politics of the Forties," *The Economic History Review* 4, no. 1 (1951): 2, JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/2591654.
[39] Seaman, *Victorian England Aspects of English and Imperial History 1837–1901,* 83.

violence. This time it was not merely about individuals fighting against a bourgeois but "the whole working class [arising] against the bourgeoisie, and attacks, first of all, the political power, the legislative rampart with which the bourgeoisie has surrounded itself."[40] The Chartists' efforts were, moreover, accompanied by the protests in the form of strikes through which workers responded to wage cuts. One of the most eminent years of strikes was the one of 1842 owing to the rebellion in which both working and middle class participated even though for different reasons. The first class wanted democracy and higher wages, and the latter one claimed the repeal of the Corn Laws.

2.3.4. The Great Irish Famine and the Repeal of the Corn Laws

In spite of the foundation of The Anti-Corn Law League in 1839 fighting for the repeal of the Corn Laws, this movement of the British middle-class businessmen and manufacturers failed to be the main force securing their annulment. The Great Irish Famine (1845-1849) and the importance of preservation of public order was the alleged incentive for the then conservative prime minister Robert Peel to start negotiations leading to the abolition of the Corn Laws — a turnaround he previously resisted together with other members of the House of Lords consisting largely of landowners making a wonderful profit from high wheat prices.[41] The period of great hunger, also known as the 'Hungry Forties', caused by the potato blight affected majority of Northern Europe before the end of the first half of the 19th century. Ireland happened to be the most afflicted by the disastrous famine resulting in death of about a million of its nationals especially because potatoes constituted the primary crop in Ireland and simultaneously the main and for many the only source of sustenance that suddenly became unavailable. It is important to note, nonetheless, that the problem was not merely in a huge deficiency of other food supplies since grain and different farming products were still exported from Ireland even at the times of its greatest misery and as Thomas P. O'Neill admitted: "there

[40] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 243.
[41] Allen, *The Industrial Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 97/8.

probably would have been sufficient food in Ireland to feed those affected by the potato failure of 1845 had the ports been closed."[42] The principal issue of the poor Irish people was their incapacity to pay for something else than potatoes due to high food prices resulting in the great number of deaths of starvation. When the Corn Laws were finally repealed by the Parliament in 1846, policy of free trade began to be applied, the crucial economic hardships were relieved, and interpersonal relationships started to be better. As "high productivity jobs were being created at a faster rate than low productivity jobs were disappearing,"[43] wages were increased, and the radical approaches were replaced by collective bargaining via trade unions which were, incidentally, illegal until 1871. Furthermore, Reform act of 1867 was enormously significant for the position of the working class in society since skilled workers were finally granted voting rights, which undoubtedly played its part in the amelioration of social relationships as well.

[42] Thomas P. O'Neill, "Food Problems during the Great Irish Famine," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 82, no. 2 (1952): 104, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25510822.
[43] Allen, *The Industrial Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 104.

2. Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*

Despite *Shirley* being the only condition-of-England novel among the four books Charlotte Brontë managed to write during her lifetime, this one was rather misunderstood, far less appreciated, and far more criticized than Brontë's, alias Currer Bell's remaining works. Looking retrospectively at the author's writings, the novel's literary value was being doubted for several reasons. Apart from being a piece of art directly addressing social affairs of the extra literary world, which was still quite new and unusual way of dealing with a narrative construction, *Shirley* was often compared with others of Brontë's books, and it simply did not live up to critics' expectations because it deviated from a specific kind of norm. As written by Andrew and Judith Hook, Brontë was perceived as "supremely the novelist of private life, exclusively concerned with the life and experience of her individual heroines; with material which, in the end, derives from her own life."[44] Even though Brontë's personal life influenced the final form of the book, the situations described in there are not derived solely from her life, and unlike *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, *Shirley* can hardly be labelled as the so called "imaginative autobiography"[45], and it was not even intended to be so.

Another aspect which has been passionately discussed is a widely held view that *Shirley* does not possess the necessary structural unity. Which has, again, a lot to do with the fact that the book was compared with *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* where, unlike in *Shirley*, the main focus was on individual lives of the heroines. It is crucial not to set all her works side by side, and to understand what Brontë intended to capture in the book — not the life of a specific protagonist but "the individual seen in close relation with the various forces moulding the society in which he lives."[46] In comparison with the novel that follows the personal life of a single hero, the approach towards the composition, reading and perceiving of the social novel with the focus on

[44] Andrew and Judith Hook, "Introduction", *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 9.
[45] The Hooks, "Introduction", 9.
[46] The Hooks, "Introduction", 19.

broad society must be different; and if it is supposed to be compared with any other work it should be another book of the same kind — a social-problem novel. Nonetheless, to fully understand the novels' final structure, the reason for the employment of the frequently criticized historical context, why Brontë chose to describe social relationships and the way she approached them, it is essential to know author's opinions, attitudes towards society and the context of her private life, not only generally but also during the time of *Shirley's* composition.

Charlotte Brontë grew up on the Yorkshire moors in a village of Haworth which has been by many, including Elizabeth Gaskell in *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, described as isolated, abandoned, gloomy place far away from real civilization "with a savage, lawless population, delighting in bull-baiting, cock-fighting and drunken funeral feasts, which literally had to be horse-whipped out of the inns and into church on Sundays."[47] Nonetheless, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës* is revealed, that such description applies to Haworth about hundred years before the Brontë family became an integral part of the already "busy industrial township"[48] with an increasing number of industrial mills and thus lower-class families representing factory workers. Unfortunately, Haworth as any manufacturing town during the Industrial Revolution suffered overpopulation and serious health issues connected with unsanitary conditions including the absence of sewage system which caused that any substances from the privies got into the drinking water supplying vast majority of the town. Also, the unpleasant odour coming from the common garbage mixed with human waste contributed to harmed health of the inhabitants. In addition, due to wool-combing practised in rooms without ventilation, many wool-combers were infected by tuberculosis they were subsequently spreading among family members and neighbours. Because of their own well and the location of their house on the very edge of the town, the Brontë family was not affected as

[47] Juliet Baker, "The Haworth context," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës,* ed. Heather Glen (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14.
[48] Baker, "The Haworth context," 15.

the families around them, but as confirmed by Juliet Baker, due to the place of their living, "the deaths within the Brontë family seem far less unusual and tragic than would otherwise be the case."[49] The truth is, that they were really one of the few middle-class families living amidst the industrial working class. For such lifelong experience, there is no wonder that Charlotte succumbed to temptation to write a social-problem novel into which she could insert what she found fascinating or otherwise disturbing.

The situation of their house, though, in no way robbed the Brontë children of general knowledge about the world since through their father's intelligence and willingness to discuss with his offspring various themes concerning religion, art, history, politics, and literature, they experienced life of rich educational practises. Likewise, in their adulthood, the Brontë siblings enjoyed lively culture of Haworth's musical concerts as well as they were regularly attending lectures of various kinds, read newspapers; and in support of the development of their literary imagination, the circulating libraries were available to them at any time.

Despite having some friends outside the family, the fact that the siblings shared from very early age the same passion for literature and writing made their relationships so solid and strong that they were most content when spending time together within the narrow circle of their family. Probably encouraged by their inspirational father, who also tried his hand at writing, the little Brontë children ended up creating their own imaginary worlds that appeared to them a lot more exciting than the one in which they really lived. The youngest children — Emily and Anne cooperated on the stories and poems incorporated into the setting of Gondal Island; and Charlotte and Branwell, the older surviving children (the oldest Brontë children, Maria and Elizabeth died of tuberculosis at the age of 11 and 10), collaborated on the writings relating to a fantastic world they called Angria. However, immersed into the non-existent world

[49] Baker, "The Haworth context," 18.

until adulthood, Charlotte soon began to feel uneasy about the degree to which the fantasy of Angria absorbed her and kept her away from the actual, less thrilling reality.

As the Victorian middle-class women, Brontë sisters did not have many career options. Married women were locked in the domestic spheres and those unmarried could work as governesses or schoolteachers which was for all the three sisters evidently unsatisfying and so they decided to further develop their childhood inclination towards literature. It was Charlotte, though, who realized that if she is to continue writing she can no longer be so overwhelmed by imagination and let the fantastic world of Angria to overshadow the world around her which is much more complicated but must be accepted if one is about to survive in it. As a result, she began to combine "the world of romantic hope and fulfilment, of passionate feeling and love, and the real world of pain and suffering, moral and social duty and responsibility."[50] In this way she could still freely use her imagination while not forgetting struggles, obstacles and contradictions of the outer world as can already be seen in *The Professor* and especially in *Jane Eyre*.

In case of *Shirley*, there is a different subtext in Brontë's motivation to write and to combine the world of imagination with the world of real social issues. Although the book's composition began soon after *Jane Eyre* had been published, it was set aside when only the first out of the three volumes was written, and it remained untouched for about eight months during which Charlotte gradually lost all her siblings. Such an interruption indeed disrupted the natural flow and the impact on the final form of the novel is evident. Nonetheless, after her last living sister Anne died, Charlotte felt the urge to continue with *Shirley* not only to please her readers but to her own relief, to be able to survive the surrounding darkness. It was at this time that the absorbing imaginative world she once found dangerous showed her and made her realize its healing powers. In a letter to her publisher W. S. Williams Brontë admitted:

[50] The Hooks, "Introduction", 18.

> The loss of what we possess nearest and dearest to us in this world, produces and effect upon the character; we search out what we have yet left that can support, and, when found, we cling to it with a hold of a new-strung tenacity. The faculty of imagination lifted me when I was sinking, three months ago; its active exercise has kept my head above water since; its results cheer me now, for I feel they have enabled me to give pleasure to others.[51]

There is no wonder then that the book is not endowed with a perfect structural unity, its ending is happy and rather romanticized, and the final form is diverse from the original plan in which Brontë intended to kill Caroline Helstone, a character often presumed to be based on her sister Anne. As confirmed by Nick Holland: "Unable to save her sister in real life, Charlotte did save her in print, and so whilst we see Caroline seemingly dying of a tuberculosis-like disease, she miraculously recovers, partly thanks to the loving attention of Mrs. Pryor."[52] Brontë simply could not make her fantastic world as gloomy as was the one in which she lived.

The reason why the author wrote in 1848-1849 about the years of 1811-1812 was often misapprehended. Still, a retrospective view allows a person to absorb and understand things and events more profoundly and completely. Secondly, it was actually during the first quarter of the century that the situation became really serious and the society of one state sharply split into two groups — the rich and the poor — while each of the groups stubbornly fought for what they considered right or just. Disagreements among social classes did not end at this period, contrarywise, the disputes were so lively in 1848-1849 as they were early in the century and so Brontë presents her readers with events of the past, which are, however, still relevant at the time of her life and at the time of *Shirley's* publication. Finally, Brontë definitely saw a parallel between those two periods and it is possible that *Shirley* is responding not that much to the Luddite uprising as to the Chartist movement fighting for their rights most intensely in the year of *Shirley's* formation. In the book itself, there is a suggestion that Charlotte actually witnessed

[51] Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë,* ed. Angus Easson (Oxford World's Classics, 2009), chap. IV, Google Books, https://books.google.cz/books?id=AAfwzrVX5UIC.
[52] Nick Holland, *Aunt Branwell and the Brontë Legacy* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2018), chap. 16, Google Books, https://books.google.cz/books?id=2AXMDwAAQBAJ.

the riots of the Chartists in contrast to the activities of the Luddites about which she heard primarily from her father who in the West Yorkshire where the family lived witnessed both the Luddite uprising as well as the Chartist movement. It was actually for the precise capture of The West Riding of Yorkshire, Charlotte's native county, that *Shirley* was, for once, praised. Owing to Brontë, the history of the Yorkshire's Luddite riots, regional manners and class and gender struggles will forever be preserved in this comprehensive book. The way Brontë portrayed the historical situation and what stance she took on the issue of class antagonism was influenced by the middle-class background of her family as well as by Tory ideology whose adherent was besides Charlotte also her father, the Reverend Patrick Brontë.

Representatives of the United Kingdom Conservative Party, the so-called Tories, ardently devoted to Victorian paternalism maintained that society should be based on "hierarchy, tradition, duty and organicism"[53], and they required "obedience, patience, submission and dutifulness"[54] from those who were on a social ladder below them. Nonetheless, as Andrew Heywood said, Benjamin Disraeli, the father of one-nation conservatism, "believed that society is naturally hierarchical, but also held that inequalities of wealth or social privilege give rise to an inequality of responsibilities."[55] Thus, in return for work-people's obedience and fulfilment of their obligations, the privileged people endowed with money and power must "shoulder the burden of social responsibility"[56] and protect those less fortunate and poor for the sake of functional society. It is the tradition of such paternalistic conservatism that Brontë is fond of and represents in *Shirley* as a kind of solution to class antipathies, also highlighting the importance of sympathy and cooperation as the essential tools for positive interpersonal relationships. Through several incidents, she gives a lesson to and presents a transformation of

[53] Andrew Heywood*, Political Ideologies: An Introduction 5th Edition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 82.
[54] David Roberts, *Paternalism in Early Victorian England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 69, Google Books, https://books.google.cz/books?id=Kj-TDAAAQBAJ.
[55] Heywood*, Political Ideologies: An Introduction 5th Edition,* 81-82.
[56] Heywood*, Political Ideologies: An Introduction 5th Edition,* 82.

the originally ruthless, selfish and greedy manufacturer Robert Moore into the protective, caring and responsible paternalist who is, in the end, able to negotiate, compromise and collaborate with his workers in order to prevent imminent, even graver conflicts between the rich and the poor, stemming out of desperation of the later.

Looking at the situation through the lenses of the Tory paternalist, Brontë presents the character of Robert Moore as "a selfish, an unfeeling [...] and foolish man"[57] who, as the majority of British tradesmen, "think[s] too exclusively of making money; [and is] too oblivious of every national consideration but that of extending England's (i. e. [his] own) commerce (183). Robert Moore is exactly the man whose "mill is [his] castle" (56) and he is the knight who will put all his efforts into protecting it. In the pursuit of profit and his personal well-being, he does not care about the needs of others, completely ignores any cry for help from people in distress and becomes a paternalistic sinner when, from his middle-class position, behaves irresponsibly, not protectively and even inhumanly towards his dismissed employees, the less well-off. Consequently, by being hostile, proud and uncompromising, Moore is, like other manufacturers of similar conduct, a lot responsible for the current animosity between the working and middle-class members of English society.

Notwithstanding, it must not be forgotten that the external historical circumstances bear the same share of blame for the wide abyss between the rich and the poor, and without any doubt, Robert Moore is also in an unlucky position not only because his business became the target of the violent Luddite uprising but also due to Napoleonic wars and Orders in Council which cut British manufacturers off the American trading markets, and thus caused a severe economic crisis on the side of English industrialists. However, this does not change the fact that his way of communication with the poor was more than inappropriate. It may be understandable

[57] Charlotte Bronte, *Shirley*, ed. Andrew and Judith Hook (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 158. All subsequent quotations from this edition will be indicated in the text of this chapter by parentheses.

that Moore was not kind to Mr Barraclough, the then hand-labourer of the clothing industry, who, by *advising* (my emphasis) Moore to "part wi' [the] infernal machinery, and tak' on more hands" (155), indirectly threatens him. Mr Barraclough is the kind of worker who used his unemployment as an excuse for excessive drinking, swindling and who was involved in the frame-breaking of Moore's new machines on the moors at Stilbro. What is neither understandable nor excusable though, is the way Moore treated William Farren "who was a very honest man, without envy or hatred of those more happily circumstanced than himself; thinking it no hardship and no injustice to be forced to live by labour [...]" (157). When Farren came to Moore "out o' no ill-will" (156), asking him very politely whether he could "mak' [the] changes rather slowly" (157) so that people can still make some money and not being forced to starve, Moore had shown no remorse for that modest man's situation and answered selfishly:

> [...] if I stopped by the way an instant, while others are rushing on, I should be trodden down. If I did as you wish me to do, I should be bankrupt in a month: and would my bankruptcy put bread into your hungry children's mouths? William Farren, neither to your dictation, nor to that of any other, will I submit. Talk to me no more about machinery; I will have my own way. I shall get new frames in to-morrow: — If you broke these, I would still ger more. *I'll never give in* (157).

Through the words of the book's narrator, a reader can feel Brontë's sympathy for Farren and the suffering of his people: "How could Moore leave him thus, with the words 'I'll never give in,' and not a whisper of good-will, or hope, or aid?" (158) Despite that, Robert's behaviour is being implicitly excused on account of his half-English origin: "Not being a native, nor for any length of time a resident of the neighbourhood, he did not sufficiently care when the new inventions threw the old work-people out of employ: he never asked himself where those to whom he no longer paid weekly wages found daily bread; [...]" (61). As admitted by Andrew and Judith Hook: "[...] his foreignness is used as an alibi. Not belonging to the Yorkshire community, he does not feel for it as, say, Mr Yorke, does."[58] Even though Brontë

[58] The Hooks, "Introduction", 29/30.

had an understanding for working-class' outrage, and felt sorry for their plight, as the Tory adherent, she strongly disagreed with revolutions, radicalism and violence, which may also explain why Shirley once conceded that "should the struggle of class break out into open violence then she would stand by Moore and friends."[59] Such resistance towards violence may have been, and probably was deepened also by Brontë's personal experience with working-class' violent activities. Furthermore, in defence of his actions, Moore himself also provided quite meaningful arguments concerning his employment of the new machinery when he told Mr Barraclough that if it was not him, it would be another manufacturer who would be standing instead of him, supporting the industrial development, introducing new inventions. Later, within the conversation with William Farren, he also remarked that it is the parliament towards which their complaints should be directed, not towards mill owners. In any case, these arguments do not vindicate his harsh, unfair and unfeeling attitude to lower-class people; the attitude, which made the relationships across different social classes worse than they could have been had the manufacturers been more responsible and caring about the needs and feelings of the underprivileged.

Fortunately, the longer he was living among the people of Yorkshire, the more he was becoming a part of the community realising, also due to his visits to London and Birmingham, that: "Something there is to look to, [...], beyond a man's personal interest: beyond the advancement of well-laid schemes; beyond even the discharge of dishonouring debts. To respect himself, a man must believe he renders justice to his fellow-men" (506). When away from the mill, Moore, for the first time, clearly saw the degree of destitution pervading the helpless poor; and it was after the recovery from the received gunshot turning him into a victim of human cruelty, that he indeed understood that cooperation with the workers may help him professionally as well as personally, and he slowly adopted the role of the responsible

[59] The Hooks, "Introduction", 30.

paternalist who is happy to please others. However, God knows whether it would be the same if Orders in Council were not repealed, and if it were not for Caroline who was Robert's paternalistic teacher emphasizing the urgency of better treatment of those poverty-stricken, frequently scolding Robert for his inclusion of "all poor working people under the general and insulting name of 'the mob'" (118).

The repeal of Orders in Council* in 1812, moreover, brings back to mind the parallel between middle-class women and working-class men; parallel that was seen and suggested already within the sixth chapter of the book by Caroline:

> I know it would be better for you to be loved by your workpeople than to be hated by them, and I am sure that kindness is more likely to win their regard than pride. If you were proud and cold to me and Hortense, should we love you? When you are cold to me, as you are sometimes, can I venture to be affectionate in return? (118).

The repeal saved Robert who will, consequently, not end up bankrupt but, conversely, "can take more workmen; give better wages; lay wiser and more liberal plans; do some good; be less selfish" (594), and thus save the people who were by his employment of new machinery deprived of fully-fledged lives. Through this prospect of better times, Caroline, too, can finally be happy in her marriage with Robert who can at last marry for love. When the danger of bankruptcy is no longer imminent, Moore does not have to fight against workers who will now do better as well; and he does not need to pursuit a woman for money as he did previously with Shirley who, by marrying Robert's brother, Louis Moore, will ensure that her money and property are to be kept in the family anyway. By this happy conclusion and by the paternalistic

*The 'Orders in Council' were the reply of the British government to Napoleon's attempt to destroy Britain by economic warfare through continental system. The Continental system was first established when the North German ports were closed to British ships (1 April 1806). There followed the Treaty of Tilsit (7 July 1807) and a series of decrees of increasing severity (Berlin, 21 November 1806; Warsaw, 25 January 1807; Milan 23 November and 17 December 1807; Fontainebleau, 18 and 25 October 1810). Britain replied to Napoleon with a series of twenty-four Orders in Council, imposing control and taxation on neutral trade with Europe. The Continental system cause acute distress in Britain, particularly 1811 when it heightened an already serious economic and monetary crisis. Had it been continued it might well have resulted in the total defeat of Britain which needed a favourable balance of trade in order to subsidize opposition to Napoleon, but the system gradually broke down as Napoleon lost power in Europe. (*Shirley*, 603)

resolution of class antagonism, Brontë presents what she perceives as the perfect state of things — mutual sympathy, cooperation, understanding and negotiation, yet, still combined with obedience, responsibility and mainly hierarchy: "a place for everyone, but everyone in their place."[60]

Society did not, however, consist only of men, thus, as long as the female half of population was oppressed by patriarchy, society as a whole could hardly be labelled as satisfied. Charlotte Brontë, being herself one of the unmarried Victorian middle-class women until the last year of her life, was within her works concerned with the unfavourable position of exactly this part of British female society, attempting to challenge the general misperception of the nature and abilities of women who struggled to find their voice amidst the oppressive male domination. Before the expansion of work opportunities after the second half of the 19th century, there were very little opportunities especially for middle-class women who without economic support ensured by a husband or another male relative had to work to make their living. The only possibility how these women could have provided for themselves was to become a teacher or a governess since working in factories as lower-class women did was for middle class seen as undesirable and humiliating. Job of a governess was, nonetheless, nothing like a dream profession since these employed women were never accepted as members of the family for which they worked, neither were they accepted to the circle of servants who were supposed to respect the governess because even though she also served somebody, on a social ladder, she was still above the common servants. Ultimately, governesses led lonely and isolated life, experiencing ill-treatment and degradation. Brontë herself, from her position of an unmarried daughter of a clergyman was forced to do this job which she, as well, did not find pleasing or satisfying. Married women or women without a husband and children but economically supported by a male relative were locked in the interiors of houses, expected to

[60] Matthew Roberts, "Tory-Radical Feeling in Charlotte Brontë's Shirley and Early Victorian England," *Victorian Studies*, 63. 1 (2020): 43. JSTOR <https://doi.org/10.2979/victorianstudies.63.1.02> 24 Aug. 2021.

be employed by domestic duties or trivial activities such as sewing, which were by many considered unfulfilling and repressive. Women from upper classes were basically denied any other activities or professions because they did not fit the image of the perfect, feminine, traditional woman. Theoretically, "women's work had meant work for others, women were defined as wholly passive, projected as selfless. Work for self-development was in direct conflict with the subordination and repression inherent in the feminine ideal."[61] Robert Southey wrote Charlotte Brontë in a letter that: "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation."[62] In her reply, she admitted her concealment and repression of her emotions and longings:

> "I confess, I do think, but I never trouble anyone else with my thoughts. [...] I have endeavoured not only attentively to observe all the duties a woman ought to fulfil, but to feel deeply interested in them. I don't always succeed, for sometimes when I'm teaching or sewing I would rather be reading or writing; but I try to deny myself."[63]

The society's judgement and dictation of what women should do and feel like was less and less tolerable, though, especially when a great deal of women strived for whatever activity concerning self-development, self-expression or any useful task. Consequently, female writers who were themselves despised for attempting to do what they felt to be their vocation, became the voice of all women who were silenced long enough and who gradually decided to fight for what every human being deserves — freedom, esteem and equality. Besides many female writers including Elizabeth Gaskell or George Eliot also Charlotte Brontë used her works in order to challenge the traditional notion of female nature, strength and abilities while simultaneously articulating the protest against male domination and oppression.

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[61] Sangeeta Dutta, "Charlotte Brontë and the Woman Question," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26. 40 (1991): 2311. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41625509> 13 Oct. 2021.
[62] Muriel Spark, *The Essence of the Brontës: A Compilation with Essays* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd, 2014), 78, ePUB.
[63] Spark, *The Essence of the Brontës: A Compilation with Essays,* 80.

In *Shirley*, Brontë expresses her discontentment regarding the society's perception of women through the characters of Shirley and Caroline, both fighting for recognition, equality, freedom, opportunities, and love but each of them acts in her own way in the attempt to reach the goal. Since women were not expected to be like Shirley Keeldar who is energetic, cheerful, intelligent, independent, rich, beautiful, and very dissimilar to the majority of Victorian women, she is trying to penetrate the male world and thus wider society by taking the advantage of the fact that her parents longed for a son "but providence had granted them only a daughter" (211) and gave her originally a male name: "I am an esquire: Shirley Keeldar, Esquire, ought to be my style and title. They gave me a man's name; I hold a man's position: it is enough to inspire me with a touch of manhood" (213). Her privilege of her independent position of a financially secured woman not repressed by parents or a husband made it easier for her to courageously approach the male domination, act as their equal and show them that even women are pondering upon subjects which were considered matters purely of men's conversation including business or politics; simultaneously, by her behaviour she proved that females do not correspond to the idea of many men who regard them as "silly, as light-headed, as vain, as open to ridicule as possible; [...] inferior: toys to play with, to amuse a vacant hour and to be thrown away" (138).

Nevertheless, despite Shirley's try to succeed within the male collective, she was gradually showed that she is not accounted for among men. If she was accepted it was only because of her money, property, and her position of a mill-owner, still, when it came to danger, she was left to occupy the safe domestic environment as any other Victorian woman, and despite being its owner, she was not informed when the Luddite attack on the mill was imminent and expected by men. In a different situation within a conversation with Joe Scott, Shirley was constantly put down by Joe's stubborn, conservative opinions about women, and whenever she wanted to convince him about her wide knowledge concerning politics, religion or trade he refused to discuss such topics with her with words: "It is raythe difficult to explain where you

are sure not to be understood" (321). For him, as for many men of the time, "Adam was first formed, then Eve" (322), therefore, men will always be superior, God-like ruling people and women should just "take their husbands' opinion both in politics and religion: it's wholesomest for them" (323). Not satisfied with the content or style of Joe Scott's communication with her, she replied: "Consider yourself groaned down, and cried shame over, for such a stupid observation" (323). Generally, there was probably no men with whom Shirley would be afraid to argue when she was persuaded of the correctness of her view of whatever matter, as well as she would not allow anybody to influence or change a decision she was standing by. Except for Scott, Shirley also eagerly faced absolutely inappropriate behaviour of the clergyman Donne who despised the sum she decided to donate to support the erection of a church school, and who was offending both the rich and the poor. With her head high, she did not hesitate to kick him out of her house. To his amazement that she was able to "turn out a clergyman" (287) she only added: "Off! Were you an archbishop: you have proved yourself no gentleman, and must go. Quick!" (287).

In spite of Shirley's unconventional views, behaviour and her cherished independence, she ended up in conventional marriage, criticized by many that while "recognising the disadvantages of marriage which, for her, would involve loss of independence, and the possibility of becoming a 'burden' and 'bore', she nonetheless accepts the inevitability of a hasty marriage to Louis."[64] As shown in the closing pages of the book, during the time of Pre-Victorian and Victorian era, female independence had it limits which could not have been crossed. As written by Helen Taylor: "Imprisoned within her time, Brontë could not imagine what else a woman landowner could do with wealth and independence except give them to the man she chose to love."[65] Regardless of this painful truth, Shirley herself decided to whom she

[64] Helen Taylor, Class and Gender in Charlotte Brontë's "Shirley", *Feminist Review*, No. 1 (1979): 89. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1394752> 13 Oct. 2021.
[65] Taylor, Class and Gender in Charlotte Brontë's "Shirley", 90.

will hand over her property and her independence, not letting anyone to tell her whom she should marry. Because she sharply despised marriage for money, she rejected two proposals and married a man she truly loved. At least this fact can be perceived as a little triumph, that in her decisions, she was her own master. Though marriage is an institution very conventional, Shirley was revolutionary. By marrying her tutor occupying lower class than herself, there is evident rejection of principles of the time, and the victory of love over money. Her dominant character is also confirmed in a sentence articulated by the narrator by the end of the story: "Louis, [...], would never have learned to rule, if she [Shirley] had not ceased to govern: the incapacity of the sovereign had developed the powers of the premier" (592).

Shirley, however, was not the only one rejecting to lead the conventional domestic life of a woman of the first half of the 19th century. It was actually Caroline who suffered the male supremacy to a much greater degree. Parentless Caroline Helstone, living with her emotionally rigid uncle, without any independent means, rejected by the man she loves — her cousin Robert Moore, struggles to find a reason to smile, to find a meaning of her life. After Caroline's dream to marry Robert seemed never to become true, she threw away all the chances of ever getting married and was gradually falling into despair which was mirrored in her physical health as well as in her appearance: "the hues of her complexion were paler, her eyes changed — a wan shade seemed to circle them, her countenance was dejected: she was not, in short, so pretty or so fresh as she used to be" (192). Having no serious occupation during the days, she could not think of anything else but her future life as an old maid which she did not consider anyhow attractive. She was completely swallowed up by her sadness and yearned for relief. Thus, she came up with a wish to become a governess. Through this profession she would be at least useful, gather some money and forget her sorrow. Unfortunately, when someone has as a guardian a man who advises to "learn shirt-making and gown-making, and pie-crust-making, and you'll be a clever woman" (122), it is hard to make a step towards self-knowledge, self-

expression and independence. For the mere idea of becoming a governess, Mr Helstone called his niece as being "bewitched" (203), "fantastical and whimsical" (205), forbidding her to ever think about such stupid thing again. Thus, one more time pushed into the corner by another man, Caroline was forced to continue the life of a passive, selfless girl who must repress herself and conceal her feelings since she was neither properly listened to nor understood. Despite her friendship with Shirley which cheered her up a bit, she was not allowed to take control over her life; there was nothing else left for her than to wait what those men around her have in store for her. Up to then she was supposed to fill her days with visits, walking, sewing, or other trivial activities leading to no real self-development.

The most destructive for Caroline was the awareness of how futile are all the activities she is forced to perform during the empty days. Often, she silently contemplated her existence: "What was I created for, I wonder? Where is my place in the world?" (190). In the book, there are more or less three types of middle- or upper-class women. Those who actually enjoy their life spent by performing domestic duties such as Hortense Moore. Women, who accepted and reconciled with their fate as the old maids Caroline visited; and women like Shirley, Rose Yorke and Caroline for whom the domestic life of the age was inconceivable and torturing. Caroline was thinking about the freedom and independence for all women and especially for those who will never marry: "I feel there is something wrong somewhere. I believe single women should have more to do — better chances of interesting and profitable occupation than they possess now" (377). By overthinking the dismal position of women of her time and by asking: "Am I always to be curbed and kept down?" (339), "Caroline Helstone speaks the oppression of women within patriarchal society by the very silence to which she is constantly reduced."[66] In the same way as extroverted Shirley also introverted Caroline was imprisoned within the kingdom of men. Even though Caroline married the man she loved, Robert proposed only at

[66] Taylor, Class and Gender in Charlotte Brontë's "Shirley", 91.

the time it was most convenient for him, assured that Caroline will say yes because what else should a woman of the first half of the 19the century do than to be an old maid or to choose more acceptable, pleasant opportunity — alliance with a man. Eventually, when Caroline, in addition, created a loving relationship with her previously lost mother, and married the man of her dreams, her spirits were finally raised. Maybe, it was not independence she needed the most, but it was love and understanding; but maybe, there was no other way than to accept the current state of things and be happy with what she got.

On the story of Shirley and Caroline, Brontë highlighted the similarity between them and working-class men. Both were repressed by middle-class men who considered women and their employers as their inferiors, treating them according to their current mood and trading success. On the other hand, Brontë also hinted the portrait of future-time women not only in the character of vigorous Shirley but also in the depiction of the character of twelve years old Rose Yorke who once said to Caroline: "I am resolved that my life shall be a life: not a black trance like the toad's, buried in marble; nor a long, slow death like yours in Briarfield Rectory" (384). Opportunities, independence and equality is what womankind has today, owing to women who in previous centuries did not give up and howsoever fought until they reached their goal. Charlotte Brontë, writing out of her own experience from the position of an unmarried middle-class woman and a keen observer of relationships among men across different classes provided her readers with colourful description of interpersonal relationships within contemporary society as seen through her eyes. On account of the employment of thorough historical background, vivid portrayal of class struggle, analysis of the woman question, and, with the usage of pronounced characters, there is no wonder that *Shirley* is now deemed as one of the most significant social-problem novels written during the reign of queen Victoria.

3. Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*

As it was with Charlotte Brontë, also Elizabeth Gaskell's time and place of growing and living made this intelligent and educated woman capture her observations of what was the common life of the 19th century England within her novels as well as short stories. Although vast majority of Gaskell's literary output provided her readers with certain insight into various societal and interpersonal issues, diverse modes of living and her personal critique of class and gender Victorian values, it was especially the controversial social-problem novels that provoked the fundamental, tumultuous discussion among literary critics as well as within the reading public.

For long decades Elizabeth Gaskell and her literary achievements were viewed in accordance with the critical perceptions of Lord David Cecil who described her in his *Early Victorian Essays* as "a minor artist,"[67] "not a powerful writer."[68] For Cecil, Gaskell "was all a woman was expected to be; gentle, domestic, tactful, unintellectual, prone to tears, easily shocked. So far from chafing at the limits imposed on her activities, she accepted them with serene satisfaction [...] Mrs. Gaskell was the typical Victorian woman."[69] His evaluation of her personality and literary works was biased by his stereotyped notions of domesticated married women and mothers who were not able to or supposed to be artists nor part of the masculine public sphere. The truth is, though, that the negative attitude towards her writing appeared only when it became clear that the author of the industrial novel *Mary Barton*, Gaskell's first novel originally published under the pseudonym of Cotton Mather Mills, was a woman. Moreover, the fact that she became Mrs. Gaskell, a wife of a Unitarian minister William Gaskell, and a mother of their four daughters made her publicly appear even more feminine and unsuitable for whatever activity generally considered as a masculine matter, let alone literature dealing with

[67] Lord David Cecil, *Early Victorian novelists: Essays in revaluation* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1934), 201.
[68] Cecil, *Early Victorian novelists: Essays in revaluation*, 200.
[69] Cecil, *Early Victorian novelists: Essays in revaluation*, 198.

the problems arising from the Industrial Revolution. Cecil argued that social themes of her novels required historical, political and economic knowledge which was, as he was persuaded, totally "outside the range of her Victorian feminine intellect."[70] Elizabeth's remaining novels such as *Sylvia's Lovers*, *Wives and Daughters* and *Cranford*, David Cecil managed to appreciate a bit more, admitting that these works "express a stronger side of Mrs. Gaskell's talent,"[71] although concluding that they were "not exactly great."[72] Nonetheless, not only *North and South* but also the other two of Gaskell's social-problem novels faced condemnation for its excessive sympathy for a "fallen woman" in *Ruth*; and for sympathy for working-class people and very unfair treatment of industrial manufacturers in *Mary Barton*.

Fortunately, discussions about Gaskell's literary talent did not end with the negative criticism. Quite a considerable number of influential people expressed their praise regarding Gaskell and her writings and thus, at least to a certain degree, they managed to shout down the negative responses of the opponents. Susan Hamilton highlights, for example, the pleasing words of Arnold Kettle, a Marxist critic of literature, who "claims the centrality of Gaskell's industrial novels not just to her reputation, but to the formation of early Victorian culture."[73] Ultimately, Mrs. Gaskell, today known rather as Elizabeth Gaskell, was "put [with her] *Mary Barton* and *North and South* on university syllabuses along with other 'minor' works such as Disraeli's *Sybil* and Kingsley's *Alton Locke*."[74] All in all, if one wants to immerse him- of herself into the investigation of Gaskell's work and really understand who Elizabeth Gaskell was, what her beliefs were and why she chose to write about class struggles and social issues, it is necessary, as it was in the case of Brontë, to know the context of her personal life.

[70] Cecil, Early Victorian novelists: Essays in revaluation, 235.
[71] Cecil, Early Victorian novelists: Essays in revaluation, 240.
[72] Cecil, Early Victorian novelists: Essays in revaluation, 240.
[73] Susan Hamilton, "Gaskell then and now," in The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell, ed. Jill L. Matus (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 185.
[74] Patsy Stoneman, "Preface to the Second Edition", Elizabeth Gaskell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1824).

Motherless at the age of one year and a month, little Elizabeth Stevenson, instead of going on living with her father, was adopted by the Holland family and brought up by her mother's sister Hannah Lumb in the small town of Knutsford while her father William Stevenson stayed in Chelsea, London, where he remarried to Catherine Thomson and had another two children. Despite any personal contact with her father in her childhood, Elizabeth visited him, though very sporadically, during her adolescent years. Yet, in a personal letter to Mary Howitt, already adult Gaskell confided that her stay in London was actually an extremely painful experience:

> Long ago I lived in Chelsea occasionally with my father and stepmother, and very, very unhappy I used to be; and if it had not been for the beautiful, grand river, which was an inexplicable comfort to me, and a family of the name of Kennett, I think my child's heart would have broken.[75]

The fact that out of Stevenson's eight children only Elizabeth and her brother John Stevenson survived into adulthood formed between the two a real sibling bond they tried to maintain at least through active correspondence. John was twelve years older than his sister and when Elizabeth was twelve, John joined the Merchant Navy and after six years in service, he disappeared at the sea on the way to India, leaving Elizabeth broken and brotherless.

Every literary work, either fiction or otherwise, that Gaskell produced was influenced by or contained a little fragment of her real lifetime experience. As noted by Deirdre D'Albertis: "With the miraculous return home of lost men – Peter Jenkyns in *Cranford* or Charley Kinraid in *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863) – Gaskell sought to repair imaginatively a rupture in her own family that could never be healed [...]."[76] Similarly, "Gaskell's fiction bears witness to the difficulties of the relationship between stepmother and daughter, the worldly, self-interested Mrs. Gibson in *Wives and Daughters* offering a censorious portrait of the stepmother she knew and resented

[75] Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, ed. J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Great Britain: Manchester University Press, 1997), 797.
[76] Deirdre D'Albertis, "The life and letters of E. C. Gaskell", in *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. Jill L. Matus (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 18.

when she was a girl."[77] Although Elizabeth cherished her aunt, her "more than mother"[78], she felt the absence of the woman whom she was born to and intentionally or subconsciously she transferred these feelings into her works where "more often than not, the beloved mother is powerless, dead, or dying; motherless daughters are left to fend for themselves or to seek out surrogates in kindly spinsters and rough, homespun domestics."[79] Sensitive, complaining and ultimately dying type of a mother can also be seen in *North and South*, where Margaret, the daughter of the Hale family, actually becomes its head and is forced to take over the parenting not only of her sick mother but also of her effeminate and weak father.

Gaskell's personal growth, social and religious ideas and literary output were gradually shaped through people she met or lived with, places she visited or inhabited, and doctrines she identified with. Since Gaskell's father, William Stevenson, the family where Elizabeth grew up, and later her husband William Gaskell were all Unitarians, it was this religious tradition, below described by Stoneman and Chapple, which shaped the author's personal as well as social life:

> Unitarians were the most radical of the many Dissenting groups in nineteenth-century England. Rejecting the idea of a divine Christ who suffered to redeem humanity from sins incurred by Adam, they adopted a more rational and optimistic position based on the belief that God created human beings with the capacity to govern themselves with both justice and compassion.[80] For Unitarians, the search for truth was a supreme value, consistent with Enlightenment ideals of freedom of rational thought and inquiry, liberty of conscience, tolerance, and self-improvement.[81]

On the basis of such values, in contrast to the non-Unitarian girls and women of the pre- and Victorian era, those females who were brought up in the non-conformist families enjoyed much greater freedom to act and wider range of possibilities within numerous fields of life ranging

[77] Deirdre D'Albertis, "The life and letters of E. C. Gaskell", 19.
[78] Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland, *Private Voices: The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland*, ed. J. A. V. Chapple and Anita Wilson (Staffordshire, Keele University Press, 2019), 63.
[79] Deirdre D'Albertis, "The life and letters of E. C. Gaskell", 22.
[80] Patsy Stoneman, "Gaskell, gender, and the family", *in The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. Jill L. Matus (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 134.
[81] John Chapple, "Unitarian dissent", in The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell, ed. Jill L. Matus (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 165.

from educational opportunities through varied social life and bigger involvement in public sphere to the crucial role of a mother who was the main character in the formation of her children's personality. As stated by Patsy Stoneman: "Given the Unitarian emphasis on self-government based on careful early training, it follows that mothers, and all those who care for children, preside over the foundations of the polity."[82] In the way of this nontrinitarian faith Gaskell grew up, raised her daughters, lived in a marriage where she retained her own self and independence, and, most importantly, wrote literature. As admitted by Chapple, even though "Unitarianism as such is absent from her fiction, its humane perspectives are omnipresent,"[83] which will also be portrayed within the analysis of *North and South,* the social-problem novel, which was supposed to "evoke sympathy for the victims of the market."[84] By the victims Gaskell, "guided by Unitarian and humanitarian principles,"[85] meant the poor, toiling and often deadly sick working-class people that she felt sorry for, and whom she had a chance to meet daily on the streets of Manchester, the then capital of the cotton industry, where she lived after her marriage to William who led there his congregation at Cross Street Chapel, a Unitarian church.

Both places — Knutsford and Manchester, and its people among who Gaskell lived for longer periods of her life, formed her personality, developed her thinking, helped her to clarify her world views, and enabled her to become Elizabeth Gaskell, the writer. Although Gaskell left the provincial place where she grew up, and spent her adulthood in the large industrial city, Knutsford always remained the author's second home. Deirdre D'Albertis admitted that:

> The [Gaskell's] Manchester self that came into being as a result [of her living there] never canceled an enduringly strong sense of herself as still belonging to the rural society of Cheshire. Gaskell moved between these poles throughout her life – North and

[82] Patsy Stoneman, "Gaskell, gender, and the family", 134.
[83] John Chapple, "Unitarian dissent", 165.
[84] Patsy Stoneman, "Gaskell, gender, and the family", 135.
[85] Jill L. Matus, "Introduction", in *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. Jill L. Matus (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8.

> South, public and private life, political engagement and pastoral retreat – without ultimately settling on one or the other.[86]

Such situation of Gaskell recalls the adult life of Margaret Hale in *North and South* who, due to several incidents, learnt to accept not only South as her home, but also the originally despised North.

Unitarians, unlike other Christians, did not suffer the religious shock when in 1859 Charles Darwin came with *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, the theory which clashed with the concept of divine creation described in Bible. Adherents of Unitarianism including Gaskell were "intellectually open-minded"[87] and as admitted by Chapple: "Biological evolution they thought consistent with God's plan for human progress."[88] As many social Darwinists, Gaskell likewise recognized the struggle for existence within the Victorian era society where only the fittest who were able to adapt to the conditions of social change coming out of the Industrial Revolution could survive and prosper. Although Darwin's book appeared about five years latter than *North and South*, its ideas were already hinted or presented in Darwin's early essays which Gaskell, who happened to be Darwin's cousin, presumably read. The first evident impact of 'the survival of the fittest', the phrase first used by the evolution theory's advocate Herbert Spencer, can be seen in *North and South* in the statement of John Thornton who explains how he had to face others, "neck to neck, in the struggle for bread"[89] and simultaneously for the socioeconomic position he managed to win for himself and his family. This idea of struggle for existence also represents the theory of overpopulation of Thomas Malthus who claimed that the resources of food will be insufficient for everyone unless the grow of population is checked either by contraception or by famine, diseases and wars reducing the number of people needing nourishment. In case the growth is unchecked, the 'neck

[86] Deirdre D'Albertis, "The life and letters of E. C. Gaskell", 20.
[87] John Chapple, "Unitarian dissent", 171.
[88] John Chapple, "Unitarian dissent", 171.
[89] Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*, ed. Patricia Ingham (England: Penguin Books, 1995), 86. All subsequent quotations from this edition will be indicated in the text of this chapter by parentheses.

to neck' competition for food will always be the natural necessity ensuring the survival of those stronger, better adapted individuals whose self-discipline and eagerness will make them fight until they reach their goal. In this way, John Thornton became from a poor worker one of the most successful manufacturers of the time and place who was later forced to compete with other English businessmen since all of them were cornered by Americans who were "getting their yarns so into the general market, that [English manufacturers'] only chance is producing them at a lower rate" (143/4).

With profitless trade, emotionless behaviour and unconcealed scorn towards the workpeople, there is no wonder that John Thornton, the owner of the Marlborough mill, is in the constant disagreement with his employees that he considers not his but "their own enemies" (85) because they did not manage to "rule [themselves] to decency and sobriety of conduct, and attention to [their] duties" (84) and thus to "raise [themselves] into the power and position of a master" (84) as he himself did. Since manufacturers, including Mr Thornton, refuse to talk and explain the trade issues to their workers, the working-class people are ignorant, believing that the low wages they receive for their toiling is simply a result of their masters' greed. Consequently, the trade crisis on one side and starving families of the 'hands' on the other, combined with complete lack of communication and not a speck of mutual sympathy leads to "a battle between the two classes;" (84) to a strike which culminates in a violent riot after the poor workmen find out that the cheap labour in the form of "Irishmen were to be brought in to rob their little ones of bread" (176). In this struggle for bread which workers believed was ruthlessly withheld from them by their cruel master, the striking employees approached Thornton's mill with animal-like rage resembling of "the demoniac desire of some terrible wild beast for the food that is withheld from his ravening" (175). John Thornton is ready to deal with those "creatures who are driven mad" (175) by summoning soldiers who will, according to his words, "bring them to reason. [...], the only reason that does with men that make themselves

into wild beasts" (175). It is actually this 'bringing somebody to reason' *by force* that is to be blamed for the present war between the workers and employers; this Thornton's long lasting 'reasonable behaviour' that did not stop the men from throwing a stone after Thornton which unfortunately hurt Margaret whose notion of reason was different from Thornton's, though identical with that of Gaskell and workers like Higgins. Although Gaskell recognizes the struggle for existence within human society and represents qualities that are needed for survival and consequent progress of humanity, she emphasizes the importance of cooperation and verbal communication if society should progress in human way and thus differentiate itself from the jungle in which the ferocious tiger eats the meek lamb. In *North and South*, Margaret Hale, John Thornton, Nicholas Higgins, and Frederick Hale as opposed to Mr and Mrs Hale, Bessy Higgins, and John Boucher managed, due to their inner strength, to adapt to change and continue their lives even in the turbulently changing world, in the age of the Industrial Revolution. The last thing the adapted individuals needed to learn was mutual respect, understanding and cooperation if all of them should coexist.

The above-mentioned workers' strike was planned as nonviolent occasion, and as explained by Bessy led by "thoughtful men; good hands, and good citizens, who were friendly to law and judgement, and would uphold order; who wanted their right wage, and wouldn't work, even though they starved, till they got 'em; but who would ne'er injure property or life" (198). However, the faction of the desperate workers with the leader like Boucher who had "a sickly wife, and eight childer, none of 'em factory age" (134) did not manage to supress their suffering and anger anymore and initiated the riot which "ruined th' strike" (227). Nonetheless, as stated by Patsy Stoneman: "The rioters only act out the aggression inherent in Higgins's own metaphors, which are derived from the dominant ideology; the relationship between classes is 'like war' (229) because its terms are dictated by those who maintain their power by force."[90]

[90] Patsy Stoneman, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 83.

Since masters, considered an authority, think and talk about their relationship with men in terms of continuous battle, there is no other way for the weak minority with no voice, no parliament representation nor support, than to unite and fight back in the same, violent way.

In her book, Gaskell wanted to show the powerlessness of a common employee against those, who hold the throne, as well as the twisted nature of the court where righteousness, truth and evidence mean nothing if a person stands against someone whose social status and importance exceed the importance of one who is right, but lacks might. The perfect example is Frederick Hale whose return to his native England will always be associated with the possibility of being caught and hanged since he took part in the mutiny against his sea captain of the British Navy who tyrannized and threatened the sailors "with the cat-of-nine-tails" (107) "for not going through the ship's manoeuvres as quickly as the Avenger" (107). Regardless of the captain's inhumanity, he was "a commanding officer" (203) and the rest of the ship crew were just sailors who should be unquestioningly loyal to their superior. Though, Frederick's sister justifies her brother's actions with words: "Loyalty and obedience to wisdom and justice are fine; but it is still finer to defy arbitrary power, unjustly and cruelly used - not on behalf of ourselves, but on behalf of others more helpless" (109). This statement suggests Margaret's sympathy and understanding not only for his brother but also for the workers who went on strike to receive higher wages to be able to feed not only themselves but mainly their kids and wives. However, recognizing their inability to take effective action against manufacturers, the nearly almighty figures of the Industrial Revolution, Margaret strived perseveringly to bring workmen and their master together believing that if they try to know each other better, they will find a way to improve their relationships. Before this can happen though, people holding power, John Thornton in particular, must lose prejudice, change their approach towards lower-class members, use reason, abandon gender stereotypes, and reveal their human, emotional side.

Until this happens, there can be no wonder that people like Higgins want as much workers as possible to join the Trade Union because as Nicholas explains:

> It's a withstanding of injustice, past, present, or to come. It may be like a war; along wi' it come crimes; but I think it were a greater crime to let it alone. Our only chance is binding men together in one common interest; and if some are cowards and some are fools, they mun come along and join the great march, whose only strength is in numbers (229).

Both Frederick and Higgins knew that when confronted with authority they alone are and will be impotent, yet, both of them decided to do whatever it takes so that those weaker than they are do not suffer; Frederick participated in the mutiny for the sake of his fellow sailors and Higgins supported the strike and Trade Unions to ensure decent life for his daughters and later also for Boucher's children.

Gaskell's lack of understanding of the class antagonism and a wish for society to be in as harmonious relationships as possible, make her to voice, through Margaret and Mr Hale, some ideas that would, according to her, lead not necessarily to affection within the master-workers relationship, but at least to mutual respect and in some happy cases to a friendship. In a debate concerning ways of paternalism Mr Thornton, Margaret and her father each communicates their point of view regarding working relations. Margaret, articulating her dissatisfaction with the alleged approach of the masters to their workers who feel that their employers "would like their hands to be merely tall, large children — living in the present moments — with a blind unreasoning kind of obedience," (119) later agrees with her father who suggests that if Thornton sees his "people in the condition of children," (120) as he admits he does, he should be, instead of "an autocrat" (120) "a wise parent [who] humours the desire for independent action, so as to become the friend and adviser when his absolute rule shall cease" (121). Nevertheless, this notion of a master, Thornton rejects, echoing the thoughts of John Stuart Mill who, like Thornton, "believed that any employer's involvement in the lives of

his workers violated the workers' basic freedoms and the kept them in a state of dependency."[91] Thornton says that "the time is not come for the hand to have any independent action during business hours; [...] [and] because they labour ten hours a-day for us, I do not see that we have any right to impose leading-strings upon them for the rest of their time" (121). By such statement, Thornton, while admitting his use of "the comparison of the position of the master to that of a parent" (121) in fact rejects the paternal care that is, according to Mill, inseparably attached to paternal authority.

As a Unitarian woman, Gaskell, in her thinking about a functional recipe for improved working relations emphasizes the importance of reason whose role regarding interpersonal relationships is very well described by Andrew Heywood:

> In short, the power of reason gives human beings the capacity to take charge of their own lives and fashion their own destinies. Reason emancipates humankind from the grip of the past and from the weight of custom and tradition. [...]. Reason, moreover, is significant in highlighting the importance of discussion, debate and argument. While liberals are generally optimistic about human nature, seeing people as reason-guided creatures, they have seldom subscribed to the utopian creed of human perfectibility because they recognize the power of self-interest and egoism. The inevitable result of this is rivalry and conflict. [...]. [However], the liberal preference is clearly that such conflicts be settled through debate and negotiation. [...] the use of force is justified either on the grounds of self-defence or as a means of countering oppression, but always and only after reason and argument have been exhausted.[92]

This paragraph renders the ideal procedure for conflict solution shared by Gaskell, Margaret, Nicholas Higgins, and Trade Unions. The author's intention here, was, beside other things, to show that nothing is only black or white and she always tried to examine the good as well as the bad side of every matter. This applies also to the mentioned rationality which can be an obstacle especially for the natural flow of human emotions as seen in the case of John Thornton who claims to be "made of iron" (210), but in reality "he had tenderness in his heart – 'a soft place,' [...] but he had some pride in concealing it" (317). Gaskell was not a fan of any extremes

[91] Julie Nash, *Servants and Paternalism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Gaskell* (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 107.
[92] Andrew Heywood*, Political Ideologies: An Introduction 5th Edition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 32.

which, unfortunately, dominated the Victorian age. Emotional and sentimental behaviour was at that time seen as merely women's affair and thus it was considered almost a shame when a man was being emotional. In addition, emotions represented a threat to order and control over one's actions, and within patriarchal society with laissez-faire economy where order of things was essential, even a slight loss of self-control was inadmissible if a businessman wanted to succeed on the market. Yet, in the same way as Gaskell showed how Mr Hale's exaggerated, self-destructive emotionality and lability made him unsuitable for the present environment, she showed that not being emotional at all means not being fully human which results in conflicts emerging from the lack of sympathy and understanding.

By the end of the book, it might have been the shock and physical pain Thornton felt after Margaret's rejection of him, or his continuous affection for her that caused his emotional awakening; or it could have been his failing trade combined with the information that Higgins spent five hours waiting for him that made him feel sorry and forced him to realize that emotional rigidity and sternness towards his workers leads nowhere especially when he saw, during the strike, how important is their work for his industrial welfare. Ultimately, John Thornton needed to see Nicholas Higgins in his natural environment as he takes care of Boucher's kids, that made him understand that Higgins cannot be compared to men "who interrupt commerce and injure the very town they live in: mere demagogues, lovers of power, at whatever cost to other" (312), but to a physically as well as mentally strong, responsible, hardworking and especially caring man. Eventually, though Thornton labels himself as not being "a hopeful man" (421), and the only improvement he expects is that strikes will not be "the bitter, venomous sources of hatred they have hitherto been" (421), he still thinks that his "intercourse with the hands beyond mere 'cash nexus'" (420) is worth trying if they are supposed to get along. It was after his encounter with Higgins that he finally understood their mutual dependency as well as the need of communication to "understand each other better, and

[...] like each other more" (421). However, it cannot be forgotten that the manufacturer would not see the "actual personal contact" (421) between the two classes as "the very breath of life" (421) had it not been for Margaret who was needed to push and bring those stubborn men together so that they can solve their contradictions, which would make their workplace more of a happy place. Eventually though, in Patsy Stoneman's opinion, Robert Moore,

> the mill-owner in *Shirley*, though temporarily exposed to feminine influence during an illness, reverts to his authoritarian ways on recovery, his wife taking upon herself the duty to act as his social conscience. Thornton, on the other hand, is personally changed by his contact with Margaret and with Higgins.[93]

It is Margaret's active intervention in the men's relationship that distinguishes her from Shirley who with Caroline rather stayed away when Robert Moore's mill was attacked while Margaret did not hesitate to literally jump in front of Thornton and defend him with her own body when he stood before a group of animalistically raged workers. Margaret Hale, at first disgusted by industrial Milton and men who are "testing everything by the standard of wealth" (88), gradually learnt not to be prejudiced against tradesmen and, in fact, started to admire those, and especially John Thornton, who with eagerness and immense energy managed to work themselves from poverty to prosperity. Also, coming from Helstone, Margaret had to admit that her beloved and romanticized village in the South has also its faults mainly in its backwardness, belief in superstitions and practicing outdated folk customs, and get used to the unattractive smoky town with men commenting upon her appearance, and "loud spoken and boisterous" (72) girls Margaret met while walking along the Milton streets in the North. It was after she made friends among the working-class people and became more and more acquainted with the trade issues plaguing the manufacturers that she started to like the new place which she was gradually able to accept as her new home. To be herself in return accepted by the town's citizens, though, Margaret, at first, had to deal with the fact that being an educated daughter of

[93] Patsy Stoneman, "Gaskell, gender, and the family", 139.

a former clergyman from the South did not make her a better person than Milton manufacturers whose success and popularity in society was measured not by a degree of education but by their business skills and amount of wealth. In the North she basically could not compare herself and her family to this manufacturing middle class nor did she belong among workers who, at least at the beginning, did not consider her their superior as she thought herself to be. When she invited herself to the Higgins' abode, Nicholas' first words were not welcoming, contrarywise he admitted: "I'm none so fond of having strange folk in my house" (74). Margaret, later confessing that she forgot to come to their place as she previously said she would, was reminded by Bessy that: "Yo offered it [the visit]! we asked none of it" (90). Thus, Margaret observing both classes from somewhere in the middle recognized "two classes dependent on each other in every possible way, yet each evidently regarding the interests of the other as opposed to their own; [...] always running each other down" (118). As a reasonable Christian woman, Margaret was able to feel sorry for neglected persons whether it was for workers, or one manufacturer threatened by many. Simultaneously, professing humanitarian qualities and having such intentions, she wished for nonviolent solutions of conflicts and throughout the story urged the representatives of both classes to meet, talk to each other and come up with a wise resolution of the war they are leading against each other.

From the opening pages of the book, Margaret was described as a very strong personality with "powerful and decided nature" (49) that allowed her to push Thornton to face his employers and talk to them as a man to men; likewise, it was also this kind of nature that made her enter the public sphere and thus in a way break the Victorian gender as well as class boundaries when she realized the danger she pushed Thornton to, and decided to interfere and protect him from his furious enemies during the workers' riot. Everybody present at the riot was surprised by Margaret's performance in public; and while for her to help a person in a state of emergency was mainly an act of humanity, for others it was the act of love and sexual desire.

This public opinion made her feel ashamed, offended, and her confident and decisive behaviour was from now on severely wounded.

Margaret's determined nature and hypocritical values of the society she was surrounded by showed to be preventing her from being fully true to herself in the matters of her attraction to Thornton and the acknowledgement of her own sexual consciousness, both of which Margaret tried to suppress for as long as possible because these facts were in a dispute with the "prescribed standards of 'maidenliness.'"[94] Consequently, while she was forced to skip cheerful adolescence and become a head of the family at home and literally parent her sick mother, oversensitive father and worry about her convicted brother, she endeavoured, though not always successfully, to act the conventional Victorian woman in the public to satisfy the 'feminine' qualities which, as stated by Stoneman, "are not innate, but socially constructed, as is Thornton's masculinity."[95] Both Margaret and John had to overcome their pride, understand their previous mistakes, and realize how foolish are the social values they were following to be able to get along well and after a series of misunderstandings and disagreements eventually form a couple. In addition, Margaret's decision to finally marry Thornton recalls of Jane Eyre who also expressed her consent for the wedding with Mr Rochester only after the two became more equal financially. Thornton, moreover, must have learnt that the expression of emotions does not make him feminine, as well as he had to accept Margaret as the new woman whose public performance and later her public role of a landlord do not make her neither manly nor unmaidenly. As for Margaret, many dramatic and tragic events she came through within quite a short time transformed her into a reasonable, independent woman who understands the language of trade and contemplates the ways to combine her roles as a wife not mainly of a manufacturer, but of man who is no longer afraid to express his feelings, and her new role of her future husband's mill owner, all in the middle of the 19th century.

[94] Patsy Stoneman, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 86.
[95] Patsy Stoneman, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 87.

The *North and South's* ending articulates Elizabeth Gaskell's wish for the collapse of societal polarities and blurred boundaries between North and South, public and private sphere, feminine and masculine qualities, and poor and rich people. As the advocate of Unitarian free thought, she wanted people from different classes to mix more freely, teach from each other and follow the rules and values they themselves consider appropriate and right. Rather than conventions and traditions, Gaskell preferred the progress of humanity which she knew will always be connected with conflicts. This she accepted as a fact and competition between people was not something she condemned, still, what she was reluctant to tolerate was violent and unreasonable behaviour, wars in which the stronger are aggressive and unfeeling and the weaker are fought to death. Reason, cooperation, mutual respect, and consideration of other people's feelings Gaskell saw as the key aspect leading to the narrowing of the gap between the people who do not stand on the same side of a cliff. As a role-model relationship between workers and their employers, Gaskell provided her readers with an insight into the harmonious relationship between the employee and employer that, although maybe seldom, but existed in the families who could afford a servant who gradually became a dear family member like Dixon who once entered the Hale's family and never left because despite several disagreements with the family members, she was always talked to with respect and understanding. On the role of a woman in society, Gaskell also looked through the Unitarian lenses. She lived her life in society where she was not considered unmaidenly or immodest when she appeared in public, in fact, "Unitarians were far from puritanical; social intercourse was generally easy, inclusive, and polite,"[96] and Elizabeth enjoyed rich social and cultural life before as well as after her marriage to William Gaskell. The freedom Elizabeth experienced during her lifetime, she wished for every woman and so granted it also to her heroine, Margaret Hale, who turned to be an embodiment of determined, powerful, brave, and independent woman.

[96] John Chapple, "Unitarian dissent", 169.

4. Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*

From the first baby steps onwards, people learn to accept the universal truth of ups and downs which will accompany them throughout the life till old age and death. Whether we like it or not, difficult moments we happen to encounter during the lifetime can leave behind a painful scar, ultimately, though, these hardships strengthen our personalities and reveal the real value of sunlit moments which should always be appreciated and fought for. Destiny did not spare even Charles Dickens a miserable experience which hurt him badly but contributed, at least, to his personal development leading to his becoming Charles Dickens, one of the most remarkable Victorian writers. Despite the fact that he was born into a middle-class family, young Charles with his relatives sank into material poverty due to his father, John Dickens, who "habitually lived beyond his means"[97] and was imprisoned for debts in Marshalsea jail. The four youngest children with their mother followed John to prison as was a custom of those times. As for Charles, the familial financial crisis cost him replacement of education for job which he started two weeks before his father's arrest, and the same crisis caused that twelve-year-old Dickens did not join the family in prison but continued working for the next three months at Warren's Blacking Factory until his father was released on the basis of his mother's legacy and could sent his son to Wellington House Academy, a private school in London.

Even though three months do not seem to be such a long time in comparison with a whole life, it was more than enough for a young talented, ardent but sensitive boy who was suddenly deprived, not knowing for how long, not only of happy childhood but also of the presence of his siblings, parents, comfort of his former life and, as he then believed, of promising career prospects. Certainly, this separation and involvement in working process may have not been that physically and mentally demanding if it occurred to Dickens not at this young

[97] Norman Page, *Macmillan Master Guides: Hard Times by Charles Dickens* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Education Ldt., 1985), 1.

age and in the middle of the booming Industrial Revolution accompanied by the wretched, unsanitary working conditions, long working hours, low wages, and insufficient amount of nourishment. However, the pre-Victorian era days when Charles was a kid looked exactly like that for people without means and thus, what was left for him was, as given by Norman Page, a "work in a rat-infested warehouse by the Thames. There he pasted labels on pots of boot-blacking and suffered a depression of spirits that haunted him for the rest of his life; [...]."[98] As Dickens later admitted in a letter to his close friend and notable Victorian writer John Forster:

> No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these every day associates with those of my happier childhood; and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in my breast. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written. My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of my life. [99]

In his essay, Grahame Smith acknowledged, though, that Dickens' self-pity was not generally understood: "His [Dickens'] own view of the Blacking Factory episode has been dismissed by some recent critics as the self-indulgent whining of a poor little rich boy whose fate was much better than that of hundreds of thousands of child laborers in the period."[100] With respect to the individuality of every human being, though, such Dickens' reaction to the situation that turned his life completely upside down should not be condemned and criticized but accepted as natural and mainly perceived as based on his unique personality which is responsible for the emotions Dickens experienced and later inserted into majority of his novels where he showed his concern for unhappy people from the lowest ranks of society and especially for children who were due

[98] Page, *Macmillan Master Guides: Hard Times by Charles Dickens*, 1.
[99] John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, Vol. I-III, Complete (Boston: James R. Osgood & Company, 2008), Chap. 2, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25851/25851-h/25851-h.htm
[100] Grahame Smith, "The life and times of Charles Dickens", in *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. John O. Jordan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3/4.

to their innocence, naivety and lack of self-sufficiency exposed to mistreatment and exploitation from people socially above them.

Although the revolution had an impact on the whole England, the sharpest and most distorted relationships were among people settled in the North where the manufacturing cities of major industries were located, and where the biggest amount of lower-class residents looked for work in large mills and factories having as its owners frequently men who were driven, as Mr. Gradgrind in *Hard Times* named it, by "a wisdom of the head"[101], by the approach which "places sole emphasis on reason, on precise knowledge of a scientific or factual kind, on the measurable and quantifiable, and on self-interest as a motive for effort"[102], while completely disregarding fundamental human needs and emotions and the crucial importance of communication and common sense.

Charles Dickens grew up and spent his life within the Southern area of England; so when he decided to talk about relationships between masters and men in his *Hard Times*, his source of information consisted of words of Thomas Carlyle, the "eloquent denouncer of the ills of Victorian society"[103] to whom the book was dedicated; and of Dickens' own experience stemming from the numerous visits he paid to country's northern cities, which provided him with certain insight into social issues plaguing the places and its people. Nonetheless, to see a place as a mere visitor means to see it differently than a resident which was already portrayed in the poems of William Wordsworth and William Blake whose view of London is as dissimilar as night and day. As a visitor, Wordsworth employed his creative eye and presented dirty and smoky place as beautiful; Dickens, as a visitor of northern cities used the same poetic practice within a description of Coketown and *Hard Times's* characters, but instead of presenting the

[101] George Ford and Sylvère Monod, eds., *Charles Dickens Hard Times: An Authoritative Text Backgrounds, Sources, And Contemporary Reactions Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1966), 170. All subsequent quotations from this edition will be indicated in the text of this chapter by parentheses.
[102] Page, *Macmillan Master Guides: Hard Times by Charles Dickens*, 37.
[103] Page, *Macmillan Master Guides: Hard Times by Charles Dickens*, 37.

ugly as beautiful, he presented the ugly several times more hideous. As stated by Ruskin, in Dickens' rendering, Mr. Bounderby "is a dramatic monster, instead of a characteristic example of a worldly master."[104] *Hard Times'* use of excessive exaggeration was actually discussed by a quantity of literary experts. Apart from Ruskin, Harriet Martineau stated that the book "in its characters, conversations, and incidents, is so unlike life, — so unlike Lancashire or English life (..)."[105] E. P. Whipple found the book filled with "exquisitely satirical caricatures, rash and hasty judgements [...]"[106]; and George Bernard Shaw in his reaction to *Hard Times* and its presentation of industrial conflicts mentioned "pure middle-class ignorance"[107] which he connected with the fact that Dickens did not spend longer time among the working and middle class of the English Victorian society as did, for example, Elizabeth Gaskell while she lived for some time in Manchester and was thus able to portray the conflicts between work and capital more accurately.

Despite all these and many more accusations of *Hard Times'* fallaciousness, the evils Dickens described there — primarily the method of education based on facts and class antagonism — really existed in English society and the exaggeration, though rather disliked or condemned, was present not only for more drama ensuring higher sales of *Household Words* where the tale was being published in a serial form for almost five months, but it was present because *Hard Times* was still a book of fiction and Dickens was a great artist; and because his personality was sincerely hurt by and mad at the industrial society that allowed "factory

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[104] John Ruskin, "A Note on Hard Times," In *Charles Dickens Hard Times: An Authoritative Text Backgrounds, Sources, And Contemporary Reactions Criticism*, ed. George Ford and Sylvère Monod (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1966), 332.
[105] Harriet Martineau, "The Factory Legislation: A Warning Against Meddling Legislation (Manchester 1855)," In *Charles Dickens Hard Times: An Authoritative Text Backgrounds, Sources, And Contemporary Reactions Criticism*, ed. George Ford and Sylvère Monod (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1966), 302.
[106] E. P. Whipple, "On the Economic Fallacies of Hard Times," In *Charles Dickens Hard Times: An Authoritative Text Backgrounds, Sources, And Contemporary Reactions Criticism*, ed. George Ford and Sylvère Monod (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1966), 326.
[107] George Bernard Shaw, "Hard Times," In *Charles Dickens Hard Times: An Authoritative Text Backgrounds, Sources, And Contemporary Reactions Criticism*, ed. George Ford and Sylvère Monod (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1966), 337.

operatives [to] toil miserably and incessantly only to see the streams of gold they set flowing slip through their fingers into the pockets of men who revile and oppress them."[108] As a result, overwhelmed by emotions and without an access to inner life of the industrial oppressors, the sympathetic author as well as the mistreated workers may have not perceived the character of Bounderby, unlucky position of the abused lower-class people, or the description of twisted education system as something unrealistic or overstated. For instance, as Whipple admitted: "he [Bounderby] seems real to thousands who observe their employers from the outside, and judge of them, not as they are, but as they appear to their embittered minds and hearts."[109] Fortunately for Dickens and the book's contemporary reputation, critics including F. R. Leavis, Ruskin or Shaw who saw and talked about the unjust portrayal or exaggerated nature of some characters and situations were not, in spite of that, hesitant to acknowledge *Hard Times* as a real masterpiece mostly for the "mercilessly faithful and penetrating exposures of English social, industrial and political life."[110] Moreover, John Ruskin even considered the condemnation of *Hard Times* because of the presence of exaggeration as unwise since, as he said, "Dickens's caricature, though often gross, is never mistaken."[111]

Unlike *Shirley* and *North and South* where the authors' main theme was built upon the gap between the wealthy manufacturers and poor workers with no parliamentary representation and their attempts to win equity and decent living conditions through riots, strikes and movements, Dickens in his *Hard Times* portrays the industrial topic as secondary to the one which deals with and shows the destructive impact of the Utilitarian theories and its educational practices based on mere facts, on individuals and interpersonal relationships. Due to limited space caused by the serial publication planned for *Hard Times*, Dickens went straight to the

[108] Shaw, "Hard Times," 334.
[109] Whipple, "On the Economic Fallacies of Hard Times," 325.
[110] Shaw, "Hard Times," 335.
[111] Ruskin, "A Note on Hard Times," 331.

point and already the first lines of the book's first page reveal the satire directed at the philosophy considering facts the very essence of life:

> Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts; nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children (1).

Mr Gradgrind, a school owner, parliamentary figure, and "eminently practical father" (8) of Louisa, Tom and other three younger children, is by articulating the words above setting up the atmosphere of dreary oppression which, as will be seen, severely afflicted Gradgrind's own children as well as the children attending Gradgrind's school where the upbringing and education were deprived of anything whimsical, imaginative, fanciful, and emotional. As noted by the narrator:

> No little Gradgrind had ever seen a face in the moon [...]. No little Gradgrind had ever learned the silly jingle, Twinkle, twinkle, little star [...]. No little Gradgrind had ever associated a cow in a field with that famous cow with the crumpled horn who tossed the dog who worried the cat, who killed the rat who ate the malt, [...], and had only been introduced to a cow as a graminivorous ruminating quadruped with several stomachs (7).

By depiction of such way of nurturing kids, Dickens attacks the modern Utilitarian philosophy introduced in *the Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* in 1789 by Jeremy Bentham who, as explained by Andrew Heywood,

> believed [...] that individuals are motivated by self-interest and that these interests can be defined as the desire for pleasure, or happiness, and the wish to avoid pain, both calculated in terms of utility. [...] The principle of utility is, furthermore, a moral principle in that it suggests that the 'rightness' of an action, policy or institution can be established by its tendency to promote happiness. Just as each individual can calculate what is morally good by the quantity of pleasure an action will produce, so the principle of 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number' can be used to establish which policies or institutions will benefit society at large.[112]

In *Hard Times*, the author ignores Utilitarians as great reformers — Bentham, for example, was among other things huge supporter of women rights — but through the lenses of an angry artist,

[112] Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction 5th Edition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 45/6.

he sees mainly the stupidity of their attempts to measure everything including human happiness and pleasure which stand for very abstract and very individual features of human nature which, according to common sense, can be measured neither through Bentham's algorithm 'Felicific calculus' nor through anything else. In a letter to Charles Knight, Dickens himself admitted that:

> My satire is against those who see figures and averages and nothing else — the representatives of the wickedest and most enormous vice of this time — [...]; the addled heads who would take the average of cold in the Crimea during twelve months as a reason for clothing a soldier in nankeens on a night when he would be frozen to death in fur [...].[113]

Even though Whipple almost forcibly said that what Dickens proclaimed is "a caricatured statement of what statisticians propose to prove by their 'figures and averages,'"[114] it can be seen that Utilitarian adherents give priority to facts and figures over everything else, and especially over humanity which intrinsically encompasses wondering, doubting, fancying, imagining, feeling as well as some degree of empathy, care and sympathy for others. It is the disregard of such natural processes by Utilitarians over which Dickens in his book rages and which he uncompromisingly condemns. Apart from mere criticism, though, Dickens shows what future awaits people whose life was from the beginning devoid of the world of fancy and contrasts their destinies with the destinies of those whose early years were connected with fairy tales about dragons and princesses, with toys, pets, and family activities inclusive of circus visits. On the characters of Louisa and Tom, and Sissy and Bitzer Dickens portrays what role education plays in love, sibling, working and friend relationships as well as in relationships of people with themselves.

Tom and his sister Louisa represent the kids who "from the cradle upwards [...] have been practically formed by rule and line" (14) by Mr. Gradgrind who "systematically devoted

[113] Walter Dexter, ed., *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, Volumes 10-12 of *The Nonesuch Dickens* (Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1937-38).
[114] Whipple, "On the Economic Fallacies of Hard Times," 324.

[himself] [...] to the education of the reason of [his] family," and who claims that "the reason is [...] the only faculty to which education should be addressed" (14). In support of dishonest and despotic Mr. Bounderby, a Coketown factory and bank owner, and Mr M'Choakumchild, a school teacher, who was trained to "always kill outright the robber Fancy lurking within" (6) the minds of the pupils, Mr. Gradgrind attempts to achieve one of the "Victorian goals of producing 'workers' to work at factories and students who are 'shaped' for the future without the ability to think and question by repressing their individuality and fancy."[115] In addition, as a keen Utilitarian, Mr Gradgrind was also the advocate of laissez-faire economy, which highlights the uttermost paradox of Utilitarianism which aims at the happiness of the greatest number of people while supporting Adam Smith's economic theory that "a man is a self-seeking creature who thrives best when no one interferes to regulate his activities"[116]. The question is, what else can grow out of children whose childhood is based on nothing but learning of hard facts and whose evolving individuality and imagination are suppressed even before they begin to flourish? Dickens' answer is clear: "anything but little parrots and small calculating machines,"[117] which applies best to Bitzer, "a model pupil"[118], whose "mind was so exactly regulated, that he had no affections or passions. All his proceedings were the result of the nicest and coldest calculation" (88). From the beginning Bitzer starved for better position than that of "general spy and informer" (88) in Bounderby's bank and when he found out that Tom was the bank's robber, Bitzer did not hesitate to chase him in order to get him arrest not because it would be good for society and Coketown's inhabitants to have a robber behind the bars, but because he knew as he said: "that Mr. Bounderby will then promote me to young Mr. Tom's situation. And I wish to have his situation, Sir, for it will be a rise to *me*, and will do *me* good"

[115] Mehmet Akif Balkaya, *The Industrial Novels: Charlotte Brontë's Shirley, Charles Dickens' Hard Times and Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 51.
[116] George Ford and Sylvère Monod, eds., *Charles Dickens Hard Times: An Authoritative Text Backgrounds, Sources, And Contemporary Reactions Criticism*, 315.
[117] Dickens, 311.
[118] Page, *Macmillan Master Guides: Hard Times by Charles Dickens*, 43.

(88) (my emphasis). As Bitzer himself admitted, his former education made his heart "accessible to Reason [...]. And to nothing else" (218), not even to Mr. Gradgrind's pleas for mercy for his criminal son.

In a similar way, the rigid upbringing, repressed imagination and pressure on scholastic and work performance led also young Tom to use his sister's affection to his own benefit and to push her to marry about a quarter of a century older Bounderby, which would ensure Tom advantageous position in the bank, and, through his sister, he would have easier access to Bounderby's money he needed for his gambling and ensuing debts. What is more, lacking any compassion and the idea of what is truly moral, Tom did not even hesitate to frame the naive, poor, and desperate worker Stephen Blackpool for the bank robbery he himself was responsible for. Finally, in a reaction to his father's shock concerning his theft, Tom blames not himself for turning into a criminal but his father and his twisted education system, and even "comes up with a logical and utilitarian explanation to legitimise his robbery:"[119] "So many people are employed in situations of trust; so many people, out of so many, will be dishonest. I have heard you talk, a hundred times, of its being a law. How can I help laws? You have comforted others with such things, father. Comfort yourself!" (216) Consequently, Bitzer and Tom, both products of the Utilitarian fact-based education proved that the belief held by the same philosophy that "[...] individuals [...] in prosecuting branches of industry advantageous to themselves, they necessarily prosecute such as are, at the same time, advantageous to the public,"[120] is false. On the contrary, their selfish behaviour did not eventually do any good to themselves let alone to public or their families (Bitzer's father was dead, and mother locked up in a workhouse; and Tom's family was broken and miserable).

[119] Balkaya, *The Industrial Novels: Charlotte Brontë's Shirley, Charles Dickens' Hard Times and Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South, 55.*
[120] George Ford and Sylvère Monod, eds., *Charles Dickens Hard Times: An Authoritative Text Backgrounds, Sources, And Contemporary Reactions Criticism*, 319.

As for Louisa who did not grow emotionless and insidious like her brother, ultimately ended up like a heap of unhappiness anyway since she did not know how to deal with emotions that appeared to her so confusing and unmanageable after many years of its suppression. From the birth being fed by mere facts like a machine, Louisa with no purpose or life prospects let the family patriarchs and mainly her brother who was "the subject of all little tenderness of [her] life" (166) to decide for her and make her enter into a contract in the form of marriage lacking any love feelings and being basically no more than an exchange of sex for economic advantages filling Tom's pocket. Later, after almost succumbing to temptation of a bored, calculating upper-class seducer Mr. Harthouse, "the feelings long suppressed broke loose" (167) and Louisa, unable to handle the eruption of all those overwhelming emotions, ran away straight to the home of her father whose educational methods caused the severe confusion of Louisa's mind who eventually collapsed like a house of cards, feeling sure only about one thing: "All that I know is, your philosophy and your teaching will not save me. Now father, you have brought me to this. Save me by some other means!" (167). As a result, Mr. Gradgrind "saw the pride of his heart and the triumph of his system, lying an insensible heap, at his feet" (167) and he had to admit that "there is a wisdom of the Head, and that there is a wisdom of the Heart, I have not supposed so; but, [...], I mistrust myself now. I have supposed the head to be all-sufficient. It may not be all-sufficient [...]" (170).

From the start, the 'wisdom of the Heart' was represented by Sissy Jupe, a compassionate, caring, loving, jovial young girl, who was neglected by people like Mr. Gradgrind because she was a part of the small circus community living outside the industrialized, greedy, machine-like world and because she did not know a horse as a mixture of its innate, observable features: "quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, [...]. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, shed hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth" (3), but she knew a horse as a charming and smart animal, who

as any other living entity has its own needs and preferences. Sissy did not care about money or numbers and averages but about human feelings, longings and sufferings, which made her, ultimately, naturally smarter and morally better person than any member of the Gradgrinds' family was, and which also ensured her happy adult life which neither Bitzer nor Tom and Louisa experienced. The necessity of out-of-school activities, relax and entertainment Dickens articulated through the words of Mr. Sleary, the circus owner, who said Mr. Gradgrind that: "People mutht be amuthed. They can't be alwayth a learning, nor yet they can't be alwayth a working, they an't made for it" (222). The message is clear: "The failure of 'fancy' is part of the systematic failure of imagination that results in the bad marriages, ruined homes, and selfish strivings of virtually all of the characters."[121] Within upbringing and school education it is necessary to cultivate the intellectual and imaginative side of human nature on equal terms, if one is to become a decent, reliable and honest person who is supposed to have functional relationships with people around him.

Through the representation of the world of circus as the greatest contrast to the world of Gradgrind's education, Dickens does not try to show the lifestyle of circus people as the appropriate or perfect one. Contrariwise, he wants to show another extreme and thus point out that each of the two worlds needs to adopt some features of the other one if our planet is to be generally populated by intelligent, educated, happy, and kind-hearted people and not by two strikingly dissimilar groups — one almost illiterate but good at heart, and the other having perfect knowledge of every science but being corrupt and unfeeling. In the book, the need of the balanced world of fact and fancy was first understood and encouraged by Sissy's father, who abandoned his daughter so that she can break free from the circus and its uneducated, working-class people and move on to receive a decent education and have a more stable life than he has had as a circus clown. Thus, the childhood full of familial love and entertainment

[121] Hilary Schor, "Novels of the 1850s: Hard Times, Little Dorrit, and A Tale of Two Cities", in *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. John O. Jordan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 69.

filling the young kid's heart with sincere happiness, and adolescence based not only on formal education but mainly on the orderly life in the Gradgrinds' house enabled Cecilia to grow into a smart adult woman, who is ready to give the needy a helping hand, serve as a life guide first to Tom's and Louisa's younger sister Jane and later to her own children, and "beautify their lives [...] with those imaginative graces and delights, without which the heart of infancy will wither up [...]" (226). Eventually, out of the five Gradgrind children only Jane's face was "beaming" (168) because of Sissy, who brought into their fact-based lives the fancy of her circus childhood, which did not allow Jane to end up like her siblings because she got enough from the world of facts as well as from the world of fancy.

Alongside the Victorian root-learning based education turning the future generations of children into little machines throwing up facts without an inkling of knowledge of how to lead happy and moral lives, the dehumanizing approach was at the same time applied to working-class factory employees who were perceived not as complex human beings but merely as:

> something to be worked so much and paid so much, and there ended; something to be infallibly settled by laws of supply and demand; something that blundered against those laws, and floundered into difficulty; something that was a little pinched when wheat was dear, and over-ate itself when wheat was cheap; [...] (121).

The above notion of workers may be forgivable when coming from the adolescent mind which never came to contact with such people. Worse is, however, the case of employers who see their workers, whose only real desire is 'armony, brotherly love, and con-cord (295), as greedy, ungrateful folk who would love "to be fed on turtle soup and venison with a gold spoon" (96). Like in Brontë's *Shirley* and Gaskell's *North and South*, in Dickens' *Hard Times* readers find the typical industrial issue concerning the problematic relationship between the bullying, unfeeling factory employer and his poor, oppressed employee. In this story there is Mr. Bounderby, a major link between the educational and industrial theme, who owns a factory in a fictional manufacturing northern city of Coketown, "a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; [...]. [A town] inhabited by people equally

like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, [...], to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, [...]" (17). This Mr. Bounderby of Coketown who himself embodies a fiction due to his made up and million times repeated story of him being a self-made man that is now looking down at people who were idle and did not manage to rise themselves from rags to riches as he allegedly did, is actually Josiah Bounderby of Coketown who had nice childhood and education opportunities but happened to become as unpleasant person as could have ever been produced; and who, moreover, by his boasting about his fabricated social rise shows the upward social mobility as false and improbable. Although Mr. Bounderby became the target of the author's considerable amount of remarkable mocking, the pure existence of this lying "Bully of humility" (11) with his unjust hostility towards his own family and lower-class people including his employers and especially those most angel-like as is the worker Stephen Blackpool, does not seem to be the thing that piqued Dickens' mind the most.

In reality, Charles Dickens uses *Hard Times* to blame the overall set-up of English society and especially the high-ranking people reluctant to take steps leading to more equally distributed well-being. Contrariwise, driven by the laissez-faire economy, the society produces self-seeking people who, as portrayed in the novel, neglect poor though honest men and instead of trying to make their life better, if not by required higher wages, then at least by such improvements as leading to the perseverance of workers' health whether by increasing safety of industrial machines or by dealing with no longer used mine-shafts one of which caused Stephen Blackpool injuries leading to his death. Norman Page explains that: "The mine-shaft down which Stephen falls is not only a physical feature but a symbol of the employers' lack of concern for their workers' safety, as Dickens makes explicit in Stephen's dying speech."[122]

[122] Page, *Macmillan Master Guides: Hard Times by Charles Dickens*, 66.

Blackpool's message is obvious - nobody ever cared, then nor now, for the safety of those workers without whom the vision of the industrial success would never be fulfilled:

> I ha' read on 't in the public petition, [...], fro' the men that works in pits, in which they ha' pray'n [...] the lawmakers for Christ's sake not to let their work be murder to 'em, but to spare 'em for th' wives and children that they loves [...]. When it [mine-shafts] were in work, it killed wi'out need; when 'tis let alone, it kills wi'out need. See how we die an' no need, one way an' another — in a muddle - every day!" (207).

Within another subplot of the industrial theme and social relationships, Dickens attacks the law that makes it impossible for unhappy married couple to obtain divorce if the two are short of money. In the Victorian era, marriage was considered a holy and lasting union between two people and only in serious cases, such as adultery committed by a woman, men could apply and pay a lot of money for a very long and complex court procedure leading to final official separation. In the book, neither of the two marriages shown there ends up well but the difference between them is big and crucial. Bounderby and Louisa entered more of a social contract than marriage out of love, however, if there really appeared, as almost did, such thing as Louisa's adultery with Mr. Harthouse, the divorce would be easily achieved due to Mr. Bounderby's financial abundance. On the other hand, the marriage of Stephen Blackpool and his wife that may have begun as a real love story could not be ended up even under the condition that the woman did more than turning into an unbearable drunkard just because of Stephen's lack of money needed for the procedure. Consequently, what Dickens criticizes is the injustice of the law which gives chance to happy life after an unsuccessful marriage only to rich people.

As could be seen, Dickens undoubtedly stands behind and supports the improvement of working-class people's living and working conditions, nonetheless, he also paradoxically articulates his disapproval with the unionization that the workers see as the only way through which any improvement could be achieved. Stephen Blackpool, though described by Ruskin as "a dramatic perfection, instead of a characteristic example of an honest workman,"[123] is *Hard*

[123] Ruskin, "A Note on Hard Times," 332.

Times' main working-class representative who struggles at his personal as well as working life and echoes Dickens' conviction that workers' unionizing and subsequent striking for better working conditions is a mistake. Within his speech, Stephen expresses his disbelief that "th' proposed reg'lations [...] [can do] yo onny good. Licker they'll do yo hurt" (108). Thus Stephen, the embodiment of honesty and worldly good who never hurt anyone, becomes upon his rejection of the union membership the so-called marked man, ostracized not only by his fellow workers but also by his employer, Mr. Bounderby, who fired him from the factory for being reluctant to talk about the union or speak badly about his fellow workers. "Thus easily did Stephen Blackpool fall into the loneliest of lives, the life of solitude among a familiar crowd" (110). He knew that not joining the rest will turn him into a traitor in the eyes of other workers, he knew that "if [he] was s lyin parisht i' th' road, [they would] feel it right to pass [him] by, as a forrenner and strange" (108). Still, he was never for a minute angry about his fellow-workers' decision to join the union nor about their cold behaviour towards him since Stephen, like Dickens, believed that "their [workers'] mistake is generally an honest one, and that it is sustained by the good that is in them, and not by the evil."[124] Despite the fact that in *Hard Times* Dickens' attitude toward trade unions is negative and disapproving, in his article "On Strike", written for *Household Worlds*, Dickens expressed his admiration of the demeanour of the working-class delegates whose meeting at Preston he had a chance to observe:

> Their astonishing fortitude and perseverance; their high sense of honor among themselves, the extent to which they are impressed with the responsibility that is upon them of setting a careful example, and keeping their order out of any harm and loss of reputation; the noble readiness in them to help one another, of which most medical practitioners and working clergymen can give so many affecting examples; could scarcely ever be plainer to an ordinary observer of human nature than in this cockpit.[125]

[124] Charles Dickens, "On Strike," In *Charles Dickens Hard Times: An Authoritative Text Backgrounds, Sources, And Contemporary Reactions Criticism*, ed. George Ford and Sylvère Monod (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1966), 296.
[125] Dickens, "On Strike," 296.

In spite of such statement and acknowledgment of the right of working class to combine that he also articulated in the mentioned article, Dickens' resulting opinion stays the same as in the book where no such sympathizing with the unionists occurs: the workers' combining and striking against their employers is an "unreasonable struggle, wherein they began ill and cannot end well."[126]

The main problem in the matter, however, seems to lay in union leaders who are often likely to be, as admitted by Patrick Brantlinger, "scoundrels and demagogues like Slackbridge in *Hard Times*."[127] These leaders were supposed to be mediators between employees and their employer whose main task was to negotiate some kind of improvement on the side of the operatives and their working conditions. Notwithstanding, as portrayed in the book, Slackbridge, "an ill-made, high-shouldered" (106) orator did as much as agitating ignorant, gullible and often starving workers to striking against their masters, sometimes to violent actions, and frequently to ostracism of those who decided, like Stephen Blackpool, to "hold [themselves] aloof, and [...] not be one of those associated in the gallant stand for Freedom and for Right" (107). Nonetheless, the person who addresses his listeners as "the down-trodden operatives [...]; the slaves of an iron-handed and grinding despotism [...]" (105) is, according to Shaw, "a mere figment of the middle-class imagination [since] no such man would be listened to by a meeting of English factory hands."[128] Exaggerated or not, Dickens produced the character of Slackbridge to show the problematic industrial relationships from a different side.

The antagonism did not exist only between masters and men but also between workers themselves as portrayed in the book where one group, forced by fear of ostracism, joined the union, and participated in strikes stood against the other group which was more prudent and did not let the agitators to intimidate them. Of course, there were eager workers who truly believed

[126] Dickens, "On Strike," 289.
[127] Patrick Brantlinger, "The Case against Trade Unions in Early Victorian Fiction," *Victorian Studies* 13. 1 (1969): 41, JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3825993> 24 April 2022.
[128] Shaw, "Hard Times," 337.

in positive outcome of combinations especially due to the strength of many as compared with the strength of few, but still, in many cases many workers joined a union not because they were persuaded about the rightness of union's philosophy, but because they were scared of the resulting bullying; or, many men did not know anymore how to get out from the desperation of their miserable life that the trade union stood for a symbol of sparkle that could fall on them, their families and friends and bring some light into the gloominess of their present reality. As stated by the narrator of *Hard Times*: "every man felt his condition to be, somehow or other, worse than it might be; that every man considered it incumbent on him to join the rest, towards making it better [...]" (106). The narrator though, in similar way as Stephen, supported Dickens' opinion that such workers' belief was "unhappily wrong" (106) since their long striking, unless their employer meets their requirements, will make their suffering many times longer and deeper, their pockets emptier, and their children's necks hungrier.

Sadly enough, in *Hard Times* in contrast with *Shirley* and *North and South* is missing a female character that would offer any solution and bring men from different classes together who would subsequently manage to narrow the gap between them, whether within master-worker or worker-worker relationship; neither is there anyone else who would do that. In a conversation with Bounderby, Stephen, the main representative of the book's operatives, complains:

> look how we live, an' wheer we live, an' in what numbers, an' by what chances, and wi' what sameness; and look how the mills is awlus a goin, and how they works us no nigher to onny dis'ant object — ceptin, awlus Death. Look how you considers of us, and writes of us, and talk of us, and goes up wi' yor deputations to Sevretaries o' State 'bout us, and how yo are awlus right, and how we are awlus wrong, and never had'n no reason in us sin ever we were born. [...] Who can look on 't, Sir, and fairly tell a man 'tis not a muddle? (114)

Nonetheless, Stephen does not show any effort by trying to come up with some solution. His answer to Bounderby's question: "how would you set this muddle" (115), was telling nothing besides highlighting his ignorance: "Sir, I canna, wi' my little learning an' my common way,

tell the gentleman what will better aw this [...] (115). Dickens depicted Stephen as a man who did not enter "the United Aggregate Tribunal" (106) on the basis of his disbelief towards such institutions, and his promise to Rachael not to involve in any problematic situations; and as a person who though dissatisfied with the present state of affairs was not able to articulate any solution leading to better social relationships and working conditions. Thus, instead of supporting workers by involving Stephen with the rest into any action that could help them to finally win some rights making their life better, Dickens, by making Stephen inflexible and unprogressive actually robs the workers of the chance to at least try to improve their living standards. As a result, readers may think that though sympathizing with them, the author does not believe that the workers' attempts could end up in the achievement of any progress, or that they are able to live through the process until the end. Stephen, an honest worker though quite a weak personality, died a victim of the industrial order; and the rest of workers probably continued in listening to despotic orators who would continue to agitate them with their provocative speeches, and who would be sending to Coventry more people whose opinion did not coincide with theirs. Similarly, in the relationship between the callous manufacturer Mr. Bounderby and the workmen no attempt to decrease the mutual animosity was made and so nothing changed. At least, Josiah Bounderby's lifelong wrongdoing was punished by the public revelation of his lies about his origin and later by his early death.

Eventually, though ending the book with working relations unsolved, Charles Dickens uses Stephen Blackpool's prayer to articulate the wish he shared with Brontë, Gaskell and many people living during the revolution: "that aw th' world may on'y coom together more, an' get better unnerstan'in' o' one another, than when I were in 't my own weak seln" (207). Even though *Hard Times* is one of a few books that were not sufficiently appreciated, as concluded by George Bernard Shaw: "*Hard Times* was written to make you uncomfortable; and it will

make you uncomfortable [...] though it will perhaps interest you more, and certainly leave a deeper scar on you, than any two of its forerunners."[129]

[129] Shaw, "Hard Times," 335.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore social and class relationships in three social-problem novels written in England during and relating to the Industrial Revolution that was under way throughout the large period of the Victorian era which will always be remembered for its transformative scientific progress as well as for the giant abyss that was formed between the capital and labour on the basis of huge economic and civil inequality.

Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens, all belonged to English middle-class, but none of them was blind to inhuman living and working conditions of the Victorian working-class people who were either overlooked or treated as filthy underclass by both government and their industrial employers. Since each of the three authors had a chance to closely observe or be a part of the industrial working process, they wanted to spread among their readers, frequently ignorant about this part of English life, the information about the whole factory system including the disagreements between employers and employees, evoke their sympathy for the oppressed, and express their suggestions concerning the possible solutions of the twisted industrial relationships.

In *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë, influenced by Tory ideology, advocates perseverance of social hierarchy but at the same time emphasizes the necessity of upper classes endowed with a considerable fortune to be responsible and take complex paternal care of the people they are employing. Elizabeth Gaskell, in *North and South* driven by Unitarian religious tradition also supports hierarchical order of society but, in contrast to Brontë, she rather approves of hierarchy more limited to professional sphere in terms of necessary respect between the employer and employee and is generally for free mixing of people from diverse classes so that they know and understand each other better which would enable them to solve potential problems easily and without unnecessary anger. Instead of rigid paternalism which "prevent[s] individuals from making their own moral choices and, if necessary, from learning from their own mistakes, but

it also creates the prospect that those invested with responsibility for others will abuse their position for their own ends,"[130] Gaskell highlights the importance of free thought, rational behaviour and self-government cultivated since childhood which will produce intelligent and experienced people who know that interpersonal problems cannot be successfully solved through aggression, but through mutual communication and compromise leading to a final agreement.

The thesis also depicted each female authors' view on the role of a woman in society governed by patriarchs. Brontë introduces women one of which is dissatisfied with trivial activities women are supposed to perform according to traditional conventions, and the other one is dissatisfied with the overall perception of a woman as belonging to the domestic sphere, not being smart enough to understand the matters of business which was, according to Shirley, mistakenly considered purely masculine field of interest. In conclusion though, Brontë let Shirley, who proclaimed marriage a restriction of liberty, to lock herself up in the mentioned sphere by marrying Louis Moore, and thus depriving her of the freedom Shirley originally very cherished. This shows that although Brontë wished for the existence of an independent woman who will be her own master, she did not believe in the possibility of such a thing during the times she lived and wrote. In contrast, Gaskell's Margaret Hale is not able to live up to society's expectations she cannot identify with, and her decisions are influenced only by her own consciousness and her inner voice. Also, when Margaret entered the marriage with Thornton it did not mean any limitation of her freedom or impossibility of her inclusion in the 'masculine matters', contrariwise, the inherited money made her more equal to her future husband and caused her to ponder upon the roles of a wife and businesswoman which she did not see as completely mutually exclusive.

[130] Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction 5th Edition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 31.

As was depicted in the chapter dedicated to *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens criticizes the overall disorder of English society which is unable to lead peaceful lives and be in harmonious relationships. Raging over Utilitarian educational methods, greedy and false masters, Dickens does not even rejoice over the working-class attempts to improve their living standards because their chosen way through trade unions and strikes, he perceives as mistaken, leading to no positive conclusion. In *Hard Times*, readers do not find instructions for social issues' resolution, all they can find is Dickens' wrath and his wish that one day people will be willing to talk, respect and understand each other more, which is what Dickens, Brontë and Gaskell saw as the only unique key capable of the opening of human hearts whose intrinsic goodness will soften the anger of human minds and bring people closer to each other.

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