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Rigorózní práce

The Reflection of Social, Economic and Cultural
Changes in Britain in Selected Early Victorian
Fiction

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Čestné prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou rigorózní práci vypracovala samostatně za použití zdrojů a literatury v ní uvedených.

V Praze 29. května 2012

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Abstract

The thesis “The Reflection of Social, Economic and Cultural Changes in Britain in Selected Early Victorian Fiction” aims to investigate the relationship between the First Industrial Revolution in the Great Britain and the English fiction of this era. It deals with the question if the selected authors reflected major industrial and social changes in their writing and if so, what particular events they described. Further, it is focused on the relationship between the novelists and their works, in other words, if there is any connection between their class origin and their point of view of the social problematic displayed in particular novels. It also tries to find out if the prose writers identified themselves with their novel characters and/or if they projected their own life experience into their stories. The work concerns with literary movements represented in selected early Victorian novels: Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, *Hard Times*, *Oliver Twist* and *The Personal History of David Copperfield the Younger* and William Makepeace Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*.

Key words: Social changes, the Industrial Revolution, the Victorian society, social mobility, the class conflict, the novel

Abstrakt

Cílem rigorózní práce s názvem „Sociální, ekonomické a kulturní změny probíhající v Británii a jejich odraz ve vybraných dílech raně viktoriánské prózy“ je prozkoumat vztah mezi První průmyslovou revolucí ve Velké Británii a anglickou prózou tohoto období. Zabývá se otázkou, zda vybraní autoři ve svých dílech odráželi hlavní průmyslové a společenské změny a pokud ano, tak na které konkrétní události se zaměřovali. Dále se tato práce zabývá vztahem mezi romanopisci a jejich díly, jinak řečeno, snaží se prokázat, zda existuje nějaký vztah mezi třídním původem autorů a způsobem, jakým vyobrazovali sociální problematiku ve svých románech. Tato rigorózní práce se také snaží zjistit, jestli se autoři vybraných děl identifikovali se svými hrdiny a/nebo zda projektovali své životní zkušenosti do vlastní literární tvorby. Práce se také zaměřuje na literární směry zastoupené v následujících raně viktoriánských románech: *Janě Eyrové* od Charlotty Brontëové, *Bouřlivých výšinach* od Emily Brontëové, *Nadějných vyhlídkách*, *Zlých časech*, *Oliveru Twistovi* a *Příběhu Davida Copperfielda* od Charlese Dickense a *Jarmarku marnosti* od Williama Mekapeace Thackerého.

Klíčová slova: sociální změny, průmyslová revoluce, viktoriánská společnost, společenská mobilita, třídní konflikt, román

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Introduction

This thesis deals with social, economic and cultural changes which took place in Britain during the Industrial Revolution, and it explores the extent and the ways in which the selected early Victorian writers depicted these changes in their novels. The Victorian period began when Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 and ended with her death in 1901. In terms of literature the period is divided into early Victorian period which lasted till the 1850s and 60s and later Victorian period.

The Industrial Revolution was a process which represented a great turning point in recent history, dividing what we regard as modern English society from all its previous forms, and which had far-reaching consequences on the future generations. It lasted for nearly one hundred years, spanning approximately between 1750 and 1850, and a lot of major changes affecting all aspects of human lives took place during this period. Great Britain became the biggest industrial and commercial power in the world. It had extensive overseas markets under its control and became "the workshop of the world". The commercial turnover rose by more than two hundred per cent between 1750 and 1800. The most important commodities were coal, iron and textile products. The greater demand also needed greater supply which was achieved by greater productivity. New ways of production were searched for, which resulted, firstly, in numerous technical inventions and, secondly, in new ways of work organization. Production was moved from manufactures to factories, working labour moved from the countryside to towns. At the beginning of the nineteenth century manufacturing machines, developed from the eighteenth century inventions, started to be put into production, especially in the textile industry, which allowed for even greater production. As a result, British manufactured goods dominated world trade for a few decades in the early-nineteenth century. In agriculture ongoing enclosures gathered its pace so as to increase corn production. At the same time, smaller and the family farms were being replaced by large ones which were more likely to satisfy the increased food demand and had enough capital to apply the needed technical innovations. As the British agriculture was more efficient than any other agriculture in Europe of those days, the increasing population did not have to worry about their nourishment.

It is estimated that the population in Britain increased by twenty five per cent between 1750 and 1801. The increase in population was closely connected with the development of towns. By 1801 there were about thirty per cent of the total population living in towns, out of which thirty per cent lived in London. By 1851 the number of people living in towns had risen to over 50 % of the total British population. It is estimated that the population of London itself increased by 30 % during only 20 years. By 1800 there lived about 950 thousand people while around 1820 the population of London was more than 1 350 000. The growth of town population was, on the one hand, a response to industrialization, on the other hand, it was a result of the decreased mortality rate. In spite of the fact that medical service and diet improved significantly, there were still several waves of epidemics in London during the first half of the nineteenth century. It was caused mainly by the poor hygiene, bad sanitation and overcrowding of dwellings for the poor.

Towns were also places where the growing social disparity was most apparent. The accelerating pace of material growth influenced the structure of the new English society. The newly established middle class started to lay the foundations of its future strong position. The standard of living increased in the middle and at the top of the social ladder more quickly than at its lower end which resulted in an even more apparent social polarization. The two different worlds of the poor and the rich and their continual confrontation led to social clashes within the society.

Social issues started to be frequently reflected in novels of that era, which gave rise to a new literary movement called Critical Realism. Among its most notable writers are Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, the Brontë sisters and Elisabeth Gaskell. They were critical to class differences and social changes resulting from the Industrial Revolution. The writers focused their attention mainly on the common life of common people. Their literature was highly descriptive and full of emotions and characterised by a strong sense of morality. They were preoccupied with class hierarchy and the growing general involvement in human rights put women, children and workers at the forefront of their interest.

In my thesis I will concentrate on selected works of Charles Dickens, Emily and Charlotte Brontës and William Makepeace Thackeray. The aim of my work is to prove or disprove the following hypotheses:

- 1) The British prose of the first half of the nineteenth century reflects events based on social and industrial changes within the society. The prose attempts to reflect them realistically.
- 2) We can find particular historical events related to this period in the selected literature.
- 3) The point of view of social problematic displayed by the British writers of the first half of the nineteenth century is connected with their class origin and their social status.
- 4) The prose writers of the first half of the nineteenth century identified themselves with some of their novel characters and they used their own life experience to describe it in their works.
- 5) The early Victorian literature differs thematically from the proceeding early-nineteenth century British literature.

In order to prove or disprove the hypotheses, the selected novels will be analysed and afterwards, compared one to another from the point of view of individual premises. Later, I will compare my findings with views related to this topic presented in secondary sources. To reach the aim, I will use comparative and partly analytical method.

Concerning the structure I proceed from the general to the particular. The work is divided into two parts, the theoretical and the analytical one, which are further subdivided into chapters and subchapters according to the scope of interest related to individual hypotheses. The theoretical part, entitled Historical Background, presents a brief, general historical-socio-economic overview of the first Industrial Revolution in Britain and an overview of British literature of that time. The historical background concerns themes such as important inventions, changes in agriculture, economic changes, British Empire, population, social changes and religion. It focuses on description of the most important realms of that period in order to provide a general view of the era. The literary overview includes a brief description of the genres typical for this era and notable

novelists and among others includes chapters the Gothic Novel, Revolutionary Writings, Essays, the Historical Novel, or the Critical Realism.

The analytical part is subdivided into chapters devoted to particular novelists and their selected novels. For my work I chose Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) as they both have a feminine insight of the social problematic and focus on so called "The Woman Question", which was a frequently debated issue of the Victorian period. They deal with the topic of sexual equality and the position of a woman in the Victorian society. These two novels differ from the other fiction of the era also thematically because they bear characteristic features of the Gothic novel. Next, I included Charles Dickens's novels which deal mainly with the class conflict and social changes within the Victorian society: *Hard Times* (1853) which uniquely depicts the factory life and stresses the severe working and living conditions of the working class; *Oliver Twist* (1838) and *Great Expectations* (1861) which deal with the topic of the position of children in the society, show the social structure and portray the widening differences between classes; and *David Copperfield* (1850) in which we can learn a lot about the system of education and child labour. Finally, I used *Vanity Fair* (1848) as the most important and best known novel of William Makepeace Thackeray, in which the author openly attacks and satirizes the upper classes. Each of these writers had his or her subjective approach to the topical issues of the Victorian epoch and the literary production of those days provides us with the probing insight in the era.

Part I - Theoretical Part

Historical background

The Industrial Revolution was a period spanning from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. It is an era in which major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, mining, and transport occurred and which had a profound effect on the socio-economic and cultural development of Britain. These changes spread in different forms throughout Europe, North America, and subsequently the rest of the world. The Industrial Revolution meant a major turning point in human history. Almost every aspect of daily life was eventually influenced in some way.

This period is appropriately labelled “revolution,” as it destroyed the old manners of doing things, though the term is simultaneously inappropriate, for the changes were not immediate (as the term “revolution“ suggests) but gradual. The changes were occurring during the whole period (1760-1850). “Although one can find the origins of industrialization in earlier centuries and although the changes were at a very incomplete stage by the mid-nineteenth century, an unprecedented shift was underway which was to change the nature of human society for ever.”¹ Particular manifestations of the Industrial Revolution in the everyday lives of ordinary people were identified only by the following generations, and it also took some time before people started to believe in the usefulness of the brought about effects.

Important inventions

The Industrial Revolution was a period in which a lot of important inventions were made. It was stimulated by the demand for British manufacturers to exceed their supply in the eighteenth century. These inventions followed up the discoveries and newly acquired pieces of knowledge in nature and science made in previous centuries.

¹ http://www.ehs.org.uk/industrialrevolution/PH_index.htm, retrieved on 13 December, 2011

“In manufacturing industry the technical transformation was most evident and most complete in the textile industries, particularly cotton, and in the metal-using industries, particularly iron.” (Deane, p. 121) The advancement in the textile industry was caused mainly by a number of inventions that appeared in the course of the eighteenth century to make the process of cotton and wool processing easier and thus to speed up the production. Among the most significant inventions were the flying shuttle patented by John Kay in 1733, the spinning jenny invented by James Hargreaves in 1764, the spinning frame invented by Richard Arkwright and John Kay in the 1760s or the spinning mule invented by Samuel Crompton in the 1780s. These inventions made possible the introduction of mass production methods. The flying shuttle speeded up weaving, the jenny made faster spinning possible, the spinning mule spun strong thread even faster. In 1787 a power operated loom which accelerated weaving was constructed. Technical innovation was taken up much more readily by the cotton industry than by wool manufacturers, whose industry was less adaptable to the new methods.

As till the end of the eighteenth century water power was used to operate the machinery, Lancashire became the natural center of the cotton industry, which could exploit the fast-flowing streams of the Pennine Hills. In the nineteenth century (when there was a transition to steam power) the abundance of coal in Lancashire caused that it became a centre of textile manufactures. In 1764 James Watt invented the steam engine and some 20 years later steam engines began to be used to drive spinning machines. Watt modified the technology of engines invented at the beginning of the century which enabled their placement away from rivers. He also made the engine operation much cheaper by using less coal. These advancements allowed for higher performance of the machines, enabled further development of factories all over the country and provided for a more universal usage of the engine which accelerated progress in other industries as well.

Another important fast-developing industry was the iron industry. “The iron industry played a role in British industrialization that was both pervasive and stimulating. It provided cheaply and abundantly the commodity on which, more than on any other single material except coal, modern industry was to depend for its essential equipment.” (Deane, p. 114) The production of cheap iron

meant the beginning of the engineering industry and the onset of the machine age. Iron was used as a construction material and in connection with steam power it represented a turning point in the development of the transport industry. In 1807 Robert Fulton, an American inventor, constructed the first steamboat. Followingly, the first full-scale working railway steam locomotive was built by Richard Trevithick in 1804. In 1825 George Stephenson built the Locomotion for north-east England which became the first public steam railway in the world and in 1830 the world's first regular passenger-carrying railway connecting Liverpool and Manchester was opened. The "Railway Age" that followed, marks the beginning of an immense increase in all branches of industry and the beginning of modern heavy industry. The development of railway system enabled transportation of goods, messages and people which was important for the further growth of British economy during the nineteenth century.

Changes in agriculture

Large areas of England were still cultivated under the system of "open" fields at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This system involved organizing the arable land around a village into two or three large fields. In order to ensure an equitable distribution of land of differing qualities, each farmer worked a number of strips of land which were placed in various parts of large fields. Usually, one of the fields would be devoted to fallow, while the others to corn crops. There resulted a two-or-three-course rotation, which served to maintain crop yields. This system was practiced in most regions of England. In other areas, the small-farm nature of provincial agriculture was common.

Between the early eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth century there occurred a great agrarian reorganization of English agriculture - the enclosure of the remaining open fields of England. Enclosure was a process incorporating common lands, moor land and waste into commercial farms, which in fact meant the extension of the arable farming land. Enclosure had been going on since the middle ages but gathered pace during the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries as “by the end of the eighteenth century English agricultural experts were convinced that the only way of expanding the output of the cultivated area, so as to keep pace with the increasing demands that were being made on it, was to break up the open-field farms and to put the commons to profitable commercial use.” (Deane, p. 42) The procedure was facilitated by several Parliamentary Acts, the first of which known as the first General Enclosure Act was passed in 1801. After 1850, only a handful of unenclosed villages remained.

On the livestock side, enclosure made possible the evolution of herds and flocks of more uniform quality than it was possible in the open fields as the livestock farming became more intensive. Likewise, the spread of diseases was limited. On the arable side, consolidation of lands under enclosure avoided the loss of time and energy involved in working scattered strips of ploughland and reduced the possibility of damage from straying animals and weeds from the neighbouring farmers’ strips.

On the one hand, enclosure on a great scale was absolutely necessary in order to increase corn production and to keep pace with the changes in industry. On the other hand, the method adopted had far reaching social consequences. The enclosures had increased the food supply and the national wealth, but the increased wealth had gone chiefly in rent to landlords, in tithe to parsons, to pockets of the more fortunate big farmers and naturally, to the state purse by means of taxes. The lower middle class had become poor, and the poor had become paupers. Agricultural progress brought disaster to small scale farmers and the working agriculturist.

There were several reasons for the spread of enclosure and adoption of new techniques of production as well as application of new scientific knowledge. Firstly, it was necessary to stimulate the crops’ production after the agricultural depression that followed the French and Napoleonic Wars and to eliminate the famine. Secondly, there was the need to feed the increasing numbers of population and particularly the population of emerging industrial centres and thirdly, there was the fact “that agriculturalists generally became more concerned with producing for a national or international market than for home or regional consumption.” (Deane, p. 45) Consequently, the transformation of the village community appeared. The individual farmers were freed from the

constraints of scattered strips resulting from the open field system and communal practices and self-subsistent peasants were transformed into a community of agricultural labourers. They became more dependant on the conditions of national and international markets than on weather conditions.

Changes also occurred in the structure of landowning and farming with the growth of larger farms, which were normally rented out by landowners to tenant farmers. The number of small farms declined as the young people started to migrate to towns and family farms worked only by a farmer and his family became very rare. Large commercially-oriented farms became typical in many regions and small-scale farming lost out. Large tenanted farms used almost exclusively male wage labour whose strength was essential for the work with the newly appeared instruments. At the same time, the female workforce on the land declined very markedly.

Another aspect that caused the predomination of larger farms in the course of the second half of the eighteenth century was the fact that the launch of all the technical improvements needed the necessary capital. Therefore, the innovations could be successfully applied only by the wealthy landlords, and, consequently, the small independent farmers were ruined because their primitive farming could not compete with the more productive big farmers. Some of the ruined farmers became agricultural labourers thus losing their own sources of income. They were left in helpless dependence on big farmers (in terms of their wages) who misused the situation and cut the wages down to the starvation rate. Some of the ruined farmers moved to town to find employment in the rising industries and some chose emigration to seek their happiness in the United States, Canada or Australia. As Thompson points out “voluntary migration to better jobs in the towns at home or overseas“ was the reason for declining ranks of agricultural labourers „rather than their displacement by machinery. Mechanization of harvest work with horse-drawn hay-mowers and reapers had in fact spread considerably from the late 1850s, and accelerated in the 1890s with the adoption of combined reaper-binders.“ (p. 239)

Despite the decreasing number of people working on farms, there was an impressive rise in grain output and of livestock (sheep and cattle) during the Industrial Revolution. The increase in the crop production was enabled by enclosures (as mentioned above), adoption of progressive farming methods,

especially by innovations in the sort of crops grown, in crop and livestock rotations, in the fertilization of soils (animal dung), in the regional and local specialization of production (some areas specialized in arable production, others in pasture and many farms near to towns specialized in dairy production, poultry and vegetables), and by various agricultural inventions. The most important of these was the seed-drill invented by Jethro Tull in 1701. It enabled farmers to plant seeds at an even depth at regular intervals. Other technical improvements that “modernized” agriculture were the iron plough and the method of deep ploughing.

Economic changes

In the hundred years from the middle of the eighteenth century the British economy became predominantly industrial. “Industry had been growing rapidly since the late eighteenth century, and employment in manufacturing, mining, and building, inside and outside the factory, had grown from about 30 per cent of the total working population in 1811 to over 30 per cent in 1831.” (Thompson, p. 25) Most people lived and worked in towns. Britain’s industrialization made it the workshop of the world and brought it vast wealth and power.

Britain had a good base for industry as it had natural resources such as wool, water, coal and iron ore. Wool was used to make cloth. Water was used as a source of power in the first phase of the Industrial Revolution. Later, it became indispensable to industry for cleaning, cooling and so forth. Coal was an increasingly used source of energy after the eighteenth century, and iron ore was essential to iron and steel production.

The British iron industry had, due to its rich deposits, flourished since prehistoric times. The blooming of the iron industry came in the middle of the eighteenth century, after Abraham Darby had discovered how to smelt iron by using coke (1709). This discovery led, by a chain of closely interrelated developments, to the mass production of brass and iron goods and Great

Britain turned into an important brass goods exporter.² “In the 1780s Henry Cort devised a method of making purer iron. The most famous ironmaster of those days was John Wilkinson, who built great ironworks in Shropshire and applied iron to the manufacture of almost everything. He produced the first iron boat, which floated, so other materials needed by industry (such as cotton), could be easily imported.” (Randle, 105) The development in ironmaking techniques allowed for better working of iron and accelerated the iron production, which consequently influenced most of the industries. Further expansion of iron industry came with shipbuilding and railways development in the 1840s which facilitated the transportation, supported mobility of both goods and people and, as a result, prompted further industrial growth of Britain. As Thompson points out, “railways produced wholly new perceptions of individual horizons and profound changes in social habits, of work and leisure, in the pace as well as the place of living.” (p. 47)

Coal-mining was an ancient industry as well as a strategically important activity for the industrial economy. Its development during the Industrial Revolution was prodigious as coal was needed in larger quantities as a source of power for steam engines. It became the fuel of manufacturing, ironmaking and transport. The need for more coal had already produced not only steam engines but it had also prompted the production of English canals and many years later the steam railways as they were used to carry coal around the country. As Black points out, “coal had come to be Britain’s key industry. For a few brief decades it was the monopoly fuel. There was a steady rise in domestic need, an overwhelming demand for exports. Britain fuelled the industrialization of Europe.” (p. 138) As a result, the number of miners was rapidly increasing. At the same time, coal mines got deeper and thinner and mining became more and more dangerous. Miners had to work hard underground as most of the work had to be done by hand due to insufficient mechanization of the industry.

Changes in cotton and wool followed hard on the changes in iron and coal. More iron, the result of more coal, in turn made it possible to produce more steam-engines, and people looked round for other ways to employ them, whether in locomotion or manufacturing. In Watt’s own lifetime (1736-1819) his

² <http://inventors.about.com/od/britishinventions/a/AbrahamDarby.htm>, retrieved on 8 December, 2011

steam engines were applied to the cotton industry. The cotton industry, though not supported by the completely new machinery, became a very important branch. "It was far and away the largest factory industry. There had been around 100 000 factory operatives in the mills towards the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and by 1830 there were about double that number; they were still outnumbered by the quarter million or so non-factory workers who made up the rest of the labour force in the cotton industry, chiefly handloom weavers but also many ancillary workers." (Thompson, p. 22) The industry was concentrated in South and Central Lancashire as there were rivers and coal mines to provide the necessary power supply and the northern cities to ensure the needed work force. Equally, the port of Liverpool was convenient for a trade depending on the import of raw cotton and the export of the manufactured articles. In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were numerous inventions, such as the Flying Shuttle (1733), the Spinning Jenny (1765) or Robert's Power Loom (1812) that transformed the British cotton industry. "All these inventions had a major impact in the amount of cotton produced in Great Britain and the fortune this represented...In Manchester alone, the number of cotton mills rose dramatically in a very short space of time: from 2 in 1790 to 66 in 1821."³ The increasing number of mill factories helped to make Great Britain the "workshop of the world" during the Industrial Revolution.

British Empire

The British Empire in the second half of the eighteenth century was characterized by perpetual overseas explorations, conquests and wars that contributed to its expansion not only in terms of territory but also in the fields of commerce and political power. In the nineteenth century the British continued to expand their empire by moving of settler communities into the newly gained territories or by annexation of neighbouring states. The British were present in almost every quarter of the newly discovered globe.

³ http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/cotton_industrial_revolution.htm, retrieved on 12 December, 2011

The main rivals of the British, in terms of colonization in the latter part of the eighteenth century, were the French. There were continual fights and wars between these two European powers till 1815 when the French army under Napoleon was finally defeated. The Seven Years War, which began in 1756, was the first war waged on a global scale with fighting taking place in Europe, India, North America, Caribbean Islands and even in Africa. With the British victory over France in 1763, Britain enlarged its Empire by obtaining new territories and, at the same time, it became the world's most powerful maritime power. The most important territory gained in the war was the one in India formerly controlled by the French. British India grew into the Empire's most valuable possession as it was a source of many worthwhile commodities such as tea, wood, cotton, jute, salt or opium.⁴ The importance of India grew with the ongoing Industrial Revolution as India was a notable source of raw materials demanded for the newly established manufacturing processes.

"Britain was challenged again by France under Napoleon, in a struggle that, unlike previous wars, represented a contest of ideologies between the two nations. It was not only Britain's position on the world stage that was threatened: Napoleon threatened to invade Britain itself, just as his armies had overrun many countries of continental Europe."⁵ The Napoleonic Wars ended by the defeat of France and Britain benefited from the victory once again. The British took from their enemies places of strategic importance such as Malta, Mauritius or Ceylon.

The continuous conquests and creation of new administrations spread the concerns about costs among members of the House of Commons and the British Treasury as the costs were likely to fall on the British taxpayers. Simultaneously, the colonial expansion enabled commerce to rise steadily and wealth from trade increased the investment and spending power in Britain, which resulted in general economic growth of the country.

In the eighteenth century the British Empire had been a closely integrated trading block. Colonies had to send much of their production, such as Australian wool, Indian cotton, jute and tea, Canadian wheat and West Indian sugar, to

⁴ The business in India was conducted through East India Company founded in 1599 with the intention to lead business with newly explored West Indies, later focusing on trading with the Indian subcontinent.

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire, retrieved on 25 January, 2012

Britain and had to buy British manufactured goods as manufacturing was not encouraged in colonies. The goods were to be transported in English or colonial ships only. On top of this, it was expected that any imported European goods should pass through England on the way to the colonies. The British had become the main middlemen between overseas producers and European consumers. "The object was a closed market – a monopoly of the colonial carrying trade for colonial and English ships at the expense of the foreigner." (Graham, p. 48) With the growth of commerce, the demand for goods increased to such an extent that the old manual production methods of the home industry were no longer capable of meeting this demand. This was the major reason for the mass production advent. The volume of traded goods was multiplied and the system of the closed market was not sustainable any more. In the first part of the nineteenth century several steps towards the free market were taken.

By the beginning of the 1840s, the movement towards the free trade had obtained enormous momentum, and there ensued a bitter campaign which saw its grand climax in the abolition of duties on foreign grain. This spectacular struggle over the so-called Corn Laws was essentially a struggle for the right to buy food staples in the cheapest market, whether colonial or foreign, and it involved the same principle as freedom to transport colonial or any other goods at the lowest available freight rates, whatever the nationality of the ships. Following on the radical budget of 1842, the repeal of the Corn Laws four years later practically destroyed the colonial preferential tariff. (Graham, p. 160)

Towards the middle of the century voices of opponents of imperial preferences became even louder and the reorganization of the Empire in terms of commerce and government seemed inevitable.

British colonies were formally possessions of the Crown, acquired by settlement of areas not legitimately claimed by other European powers or by conquest. The authority of the first overseas colonies was usually delegated by the Crown to be exercised by certain individuals or groups of people. By the end of the eighteenth century new patterns of colonial government evolved. The

representatives of the Crown (the Governors) shared some of their authority with the local representative bodies (assemblies).

The mechanisms by which power within the empire was exercised radiated in a complicated network from the hub of London to district offices on the rim of empire. Central and supreme were the monarchy and Parliament. But Parliament remained remote from the actual management of empire (members debated imperial issues infrequently and divided over them even less often), which resulted in the fact that the British government itself did not play a very active role in the politics of the whole Empire. This was partly caused by the physical difficulties of communicating (all the communication was practiced by sailing ships) and partly by the decision of the British Parliament to give political freedom to the inhabitants of the British colonies.

(Marshall, p.149)

In general, British policy executed over the colonies was to ensure an adequate degree of imperial authority only over the “essential matters”. The colonists were given sovereignty in all other respects and they administered their power through their own assemblies or local parliaments with little interference of the Crown. In the wartime, between 1793 and 1815, the successive British governments tried to take tighter control over the colonies and the Colonial Office began to take shape. “The basic principles of the system built up after 1815 were: concentration of power in the hands of the governor; a strict control of the governor by a new department for colonies in London; and finally, the conduct of administration, as far as possible by orders-in-council under the royal prerogative, without recourse to Parliament. Even in the old settled white colonies, although representative bodies might vote taxes and even laws, they could not control the executive.” (Graham, p. 126) In other words, both all newly conquered colonies and the old settled ones were put under direct administration from home and colonial governments were under the close direction of the British government. The main reason for these changes in the policy of the Empire was that most of the new colonies were conquests and not

settlements and it seemed necessary to maintain direct control over people whose loyalty could not be taken for granted.

The situation was different in terms of law practicing. English settlers in the new colonies took the common law of England with them and adapted it to local conditions by their own law making process. At the same time, the conquered peoples were allowed to keep their own laws by the Crown. What emerged was often a kind of hybrid between British and non-British traditions. With each colony making law in its own way through legislation, the British Empire developed a huge variety of legal systems. However, in all of the systems certain principles, such as the equality before the law or the independence of the judiciary, were believed to be respected. Since the end of the eighteenth century it was the British Parliament that was the only body to make laws for the colonies.

Conquests and colonial expansion

In the second half of the eighteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution brought a lot of changes to the life of British society, the British started to leave the British Isles in hope for better and more prosperous life overseas. They built new colonies in North America following the first colonization from the seventeenth century when the Puritan refugees arrived from England to the “New Continent” to escape religious persecution under the Stuarts.

The main rivals of the English in the colonization of North America were the French. In the eighteenth century there were continual wars between the English and the French. The French were defeated and when the Seven Years’ War ended in 1763 with the Peace of Paris, the English kept the territories they had conquered in America and received all the territory east of the Mississippi except New Orleans. By that time, Britain was seen as the world’s leading colonial power with footholds in the West Indies Islands and dominions in North America and Asia.

The trade and wealth of the colonies was utilized for the exclusive benefit of the British ruling class. It was central to the Industrial Revolution as part of

the capital was used for the reinvestments into industry (mostly in new technologies) and the rest of the accumulated capital of the merchants and nabobs (men who had been enriched in India) was spent on houses, estates and generally costly living.

As capitalism in the English colonies in North America was developing rapidly, the interests of the colonial bourgeoisie conflicted sharply with those of British manufacturers. The British Parliament, protecting the interests of the British manufacturers, passed a number of laws designed to paralyse the rising industry and commerce in the colonies: e.g. the colonies produced some raw material such as iron, timber, tobacco, but they were forbidden to build their own manufacturing industries. Direct trade of the English colonies with the French and Spanish settlements in America was also prohibited. All such restrictive measures imposed by the British government were naturally denied by the American colonists and provoked their negative reactions.

The situation escalated after the Seven Years' War with France (1756 – 1763) when Britain was in financial difficulties, and the burden of the high taxes (that were to bring money to the treasury) had to be borne by the British people, especially the people in the colonies. Relations between the American colonies and Britain became increasingly strained, primarily because of anger caused by the British Parliament's attempts to govern and tax the American colonists without their consent. This evoked general discontent among people in the colonies. The anti-English feeling gave rise to an organization called the Sons of Liberty. This organization was represented by the slogan "No Taxation without Representation" and carried on agitation against English oppression by means of boycott of English goods. "Then came the Boston Tea Party of 16 December 1773 when various malcontents disguised as Indians threw a cargo of East India Company tea overboard in Boston harbour." (Graham, p. 94) There were variety of reasons for their acting but, in principal, they did it in protest against the Tea Act⁶, passed by the British government in 1773, and the monopolistic East India Company, which controlled all the tea, commodity so cherished by the British, imported into the colonies. As Graham remarks, "who

⁶ The Act was passed with the object to reduce the massive surplus of tea on the market and thus help the financially troubled British East India Company. In other words, the aim was to reduce the illegal tea business and to convince the colonists buy Company tea on which duty was paid.

knows – the British public might not have risen in wrath, if the Adams gang had thrown overboard anything other than tea!” (p. 94)

It was the first open act of violence against the English, which announced the coming revolution. In 1775 the War of Independence began. The following year, the colonists declared the independence of the United States and, with the assistance from France, Spain and the Neatherlands, they won the war in 1783 when King George III finally signed the peace treaty through which Britain officially recognized the independence of the United States.

The loss of such a large portion of British America, at that time Britain’s most populous overseas possession, is seen by historians as the event defining the transition between the “first” and “second” empires. As Marshall writes, “When Britain conceded American independence in 1783, Quebeck and Nova Scotia formed the nucleus of the colonies that constituted Britain’s remaining stake on the North American continent – British North America.” (p. 34) The population of these colonies was increased by the arrival of some 50 thousand loyalists⁷ who formed the major non-French element in the province of Quebec. In 1791 the English speaking districts of Quebec formed up a separate province called Upper Canada. The population of this province increased gradually by continuous immigration from Britain and this caused that the British Canadians constituted a powerful majority in British North America as a whole by the mid-nineteenth century.

After the loss of the thirteen American colonies in 1783 Britain was forced to find an alternative location, as “no one knew what was to be done with criminals in an age when 160 offences were punished by death.” (Graham, p. 108) Britain turned to the newly discovered lands. In 1788 a British colony was established in a part of the world totally remote from any European colonizing enterprise in the past. After a voyage across the Indian Ocean a fleet of ships brought the first settlers (mainly convicts from England) to Australia where they established a British colony later known as New South Wales. This was to be the first European settlement of any kind in Australasia. Majority of the prisoners were transported here for a seven-year term, after which they became free settlers. This was practiced until 1868 when the transportation was abolished.

⁷ People who for various reasons had chosen to leave the rebellious colonies and continue to live under British authority

From the 1820s on, non-convict “free” British settlers, in hope of better life, started to emigrate to Australia as it offered many natural resources and mainly an abundance of land taken from the Aborigines. The land was in particular utilized for raising sheep that were used to produce wool and the wool was shipped to Britain to supply the British textile industry. The colonization of Australia proceeded and was at its peak by 1850 when gold was discovered there. “Australia, by an accident of history, became a comparatively untouchable British preserve. For the whole of the nineteenth century, the country was peopled almost entirely from Britain. Moreover, Britain was the one export market and the one source of commodity imports.” (Graham, p. 108)

By the 1830s some whites from New South Wales crossed over into New Zealand to use it as a base for voyages into the Pacific and to trade with the original inhabitants (Maoris), but the actual colonization of New Zealand began only after 1840 when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed. According to this treaty New Zealand was constituted as a British colony and the Maoris acknowledged the sovereignty of Great Britain. However, they believed to have signed it in return for protection of their lands, which soon appeared to be false. Due to many language discrepancies between English and Maori versions of the Treaty disputes between the Maoris and British settlers, mainly because of the land ownership, appeared and resulted in open fights. The fights together with the continuing flow of new British immigrants into New Zealand, stimulated by gold rushes in South Island, reduced the Maoris to a minority of the total island’s population.

Africa was another continent on which the British focused their attention after the loss of the colonies in North America. As the interior of the Dark Continent was still unmapped and unexplored till the end of the eighteenth century, the British concentrated on the coast areas first.⁸ In 1806 the British annexed the Cape of Good Hope and started to colonize the South Africa. Not many British emigrated there at first though, as this land was not regarded as major economic asset. There were only two commodities, wool and wine, which developed its importance and its harbour. The British used it as a stop-over

⁸ It was only around the turn of the century, when Mungo Park, a young Scottish surgeon, initiated the century’s work of exploring and mapping of the African continent. His work was carried on by Speke and Livingstone in the nineteenth century.

point and refreshment base on their way to the West Indies. The situation changed dramatically after the great discoveries of minerals in the later nineteenth century.

The chief connection of England with Africa was the slave trade. The British supplied North and South America and the West Indies with slaves from the African continent. They called them “black ivory” and treated them like animals. The slaves were transported for long distances under harsh conditions suffering from malnutrition and various diseases. When they reached their final destinations, they, if lucky, lived for other few years. The slaves were used for the work in the plantations where tropics in constantly increasing volumes were produced. The most important among the tropics were coffee, tea and sugar, the popularity of which rose extremely among the British, other Europeans and North Americans during the eighteenth century. “A spicy luxury in 1700, this addictive substance had become a sweet necessity by 1800. During the century consumption increased five-fold, to nearly twenty pounds a head – compared to two pounds a head in France. Sugar was an essential complement to the imported tea, coffee and chocolate.” (Brendon, p. 16) During the eighteenth century sugar became the most valuable commodity in European trade. “It made up a fifth of all European imports and by the end of the eighteenth century four-fifths of the sugar came from the British and French colonies in the West Indies.”⁹ At the end of the eighteenth century, Britain was the biggest exporter of slaves and operated the biggest and most successful slave-worked plantation system in the world.

After the American War for Independence, which prompted libertarian thinking, the slave trade started to be rejected for its cruelty. Various anti-slave groups and movements were formed. Moreover, “by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the direction of the British policy was to be influenced by a weighing of moral benefits in relation to profits, a calculation which involved the acceptance of a new valuation of human life.” (Graham, p. 129) The formation of Anti-Slave Trade Committees among the members of the British Parliament began. They succeeded first in the abolition of the slave trade with the Slave Trade Act in 1807 and then of slavery itself with the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833 under the British flag.

The abolition of slave trade and slavery resulted in the inability to compete effectively with new producers of sugar and other crops like Cuba or Brazil, both of which continued to import and use slaves from black Africa until much later. Thus, the abolition of slavery, which was a triumph of the British humanitarians and their altruism, meant the actual breakdown of the entirely functional system. The humanitarians and the politicians who abolished slavery thought that life in the British West Indies would continue much as before and that the ending of slavery would make no real difference to the economy of the British sugar colonies. They believed that the former slaves would voluntarily continue to work on the plantations, but as free men for wages and no longer under compulsion, and Britain would thus be able to keep their primacy in the world trade. On smaller islands in the West Indies, such as Antigua or Barbados, this is what happened. There was little if any spare land and virtually no alternative employment. Therefore black people out of necessity continued to work for the planters, so long as sugar remained an economically favourable crop.

The post-slavery development of the situation in larger colonies like Jamaica, British Guyana, Trinidad and Mauritius, was, however, completely different. As there was much more free land available, the former slaves were not forced to continue to work on the plantations but they looked for other labour possibilities. Very often they moved away from the plantations to set up their own homesteads and villages on vacant land. There they could run their own lives and try to make a living as peasant farmers cultivating small plots.

If they continued to work on the plantations, they did so on their own terms to earn extra money. Within a few years of the ending of slavery, planters in British Guyana and Trinidad were complaining that a labour force that they had never regarded as adequate had been depleted by up to a half and that the high wages that they were paying to the rest were making their sugar uncompetitive. (Marshall, pp 281-282)

In the end, the abolition of slavery turned out to be far from the economic interests of Britain.

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_sugar, retrieved on 24 January, 2012

The expansion of influence

The conquest and settlement of new territories had in fact been only a part of a much wider pattern of expansion. The expansion of the British Empire also meant the spread of values, ideas, beliefs and culture of the British people throughout the world. The implementation of Christianity in non-Christian areas had been a result of the work of British missionaries. British institutions and ways of doing things were imitated. The adoption of the Greenwich meridian as the universal meridian of longitude and of the universal system of time zones based on the Greenwich meridian were also a result of Britain's influence. In many instances though, this movement was unconscious and incoherent. Thus Scottish missionaries, for example, taught English literature and sciences to generations of Indians and Africans. On the other hand, the British were also influenced by the culture and habits of the people from colonies: rhododendron, for instance, was brought from the Himalayas and blighted many British gardens of that time, or ostrich feathers complemented the wardrobes of English ladies. Sugar and later tea were the two imported items that "got on the table" of almost every British person, however poor he or she might be.

A striking feature of the British Empire during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the global spread of written and spoken English.

Britain's economic weight in the world throughout the period of empire made English a natural language of commerce and the fact that the government and administration of large parts of the world were conducted in English created powerful incentives for non-English speakers to acquire the language of their rulers. (Marshall, p. 186)

At the same time, the English language adopted a lot of expressions (borrowings) from other languages, mainly from Oriental ones.

British travellers brought home curiosities from their journeys overseas, which were displayed in various cabinets. The major accumulations of non-European material were first made in the late eighteenth century with the initial

British conquests in India and the great Pacific voyages. Captain Cook, for instance, collected objects on a massive scale on his three voyages. Most of the Pacific “curiosities” went to the British Museum where a “South Seas” room was opened in 1808 to acquaint the British people with particular customs of various nations of the British Empire.

The expansion of the British Empire can also be regarded as broadening of experience in terms of interaction of Britain and its colonies. It did not have only positive influence in the sense of the above-mentioned, but it also brought some negative aspects. The possession of the Empire often prompted Britons to increase their self-confidence and strengthened their sense of superiority to all those with whom they came into contact, which frequently caused social and communication barriers between the British and other nations within the Empire.

Population

It is not easy to calculate the size of the population of Britain at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution as the first real British Census was taken in 1801, the early censuses were unreliable. Only after 1841 did the census become significantly more accurate. The estimations of population size before are based on information on the number of baptisms, weddings and burials stated in parish registers which were incomplete or on shabby estimates based upon tax figures. Although it is difficult to date the upturn in growth which occurred in the later eighteenth century precisely, it appears that between 1791 and 1831 the population of England and Wales grew at an unprecedented rate. “Britain’s population doubled twice in the course of the nineteenth century. This impressive, even overwhelming growth was achieved in spite of vast outward migration overseas and the almost halving of Ireland’s population.” (Black, p. 151)

There were more people to work in the economy and to buy goods. It is not possible to give a precise explanation for the population growth as historians have not agreed upon the reasons until today, but certain conditions may have contributed to the rise. There were no large-scale wars and fewer

mass epidemics. Hygiene in towns was still elementary and the death rate there was much higher than in the countryside, but sanitary arrangements slowly improved in towns in the course of the nineteenth century with innovations in water supply, sewage disposal and lighting. Soap came to be used in households for washing; it was a commodity and not a luxury any more. However, laundry was still a very expensive business and took a major part of any household budget. At least two people were needed to do the laundry at home so it was much cheaper to send it out for washing. However, in this case there was a risk of infection from other unknown laundry. Buildings were better constructed and probably warmer. Yet by the end of the eighteenth century medicine had not improved much, and hospitals still tended to do as much harm as good. "Hospitals and dispensaries were more likely to spread disease than to check it. People who went to hospital in the eighteenth century normally died there, generally from disease other than that with which they were admitted." (Deane, p. 29) The population rose more because people lived longer as epidemics were eliminated and because childbirth had become safer and infancy more secure. Most advances of health came from advances in hygiene, sanitation and improvements in nutrition. Among other factors that influenced the rise of population were the development of new medical instruments such as thermometer or stethoscope and the usage of drugs such as smallpox vaccine, morphine or quinine.

Changes in marriage practices appear to have been one of the main reasons for the growing birth rate between the 1750s and the 1850s. Couples had more children because they were tending to marry some two or three years earlier (on average) than they had in the previous centuries. This was caused by the growing landlessness (proletarianisation), migration of young people to towns away from the constraints and controls of village communities and their ability to earn wages earlier in life.

The enlarged population was fed, until the mid-nineteenth century, mostly with home-produced food. Farming improved steadily throughout the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, continuing the progress made in the seventeenth century. This remarkable advance was achieved in spite of farming's declining share of the labour force in the country. Additionally, vast improvements in transport system in the eighteenth century resulted in

better food distribution as well as the transportation of raw materials for industry.

The growth of population in England in particular was accompanied by marked and unprecedented urbanisation. The population was increasingly concentrated in the developing industrial regions - North-west, West Yorkshire, North-east, West Midlands, Central Scotland, South Wales and Metropolitan South-east. By 1840 England had a much higher urban share (48% living in towns with population of over 10,000) than did most of the rest of Europe half a century later. London was by far the biggest city in Europe and expanded its population to well over a million by 1830.¹⁰

Social changes

The development during the Industrial Revolution brought changes in the lives of common people. They perceived themselves, and were perceived by others, in a new way. This was manifested in various forms. New vocabulary was created. In the 1780s men still used the language of ranks and orders, as they had done in the days of King Gregory. Common people were referred to as the lower orders or the labouring poor. But then this usage was replaced by the language of class, and by the 1830s it was common to refer to the working classes and the middle classes.¹¹ This change in language was a recognition of new interests and divisions in society. The Industrial Revolution created not only new social classes but also changed the nature of the relationship between classes. Thomas Carlyle wrote in his essays of the “cash nexus”¹² which by the 1830s had come to dominate nearly all social relationships.

The change which affected common people, however, was more than a change in the social structure. Before the Revolution most people lived in small villages, working either in agriculture or as skilled craftsmen. They lived and

¹⁰ http://www.ehs.org.uk/industrialrevolution/PH_Population_1.htm, retrieved on 13 December, 2011

¹¹ Class has a dual meaning: it can be used either as a description of a social strata or in the sense of class consciousness.

¹² The reduction of all human relationships to monetary exchange. (<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-cashnexus.html>)

often worked as a family, doing everything by hand. With the advent of industrialization, however, everything changed. The new enclosure laws had left many poor farmers bankrupt and without employment. The newly invented machines, that produced huge outputs, caused that small hand weavers living in the village became redundant. This required them to move to towns so that they could be close to their new jobs in factories. At the same time, it meant the higher living expenses for the families which resulted in the fact that women and children were sent out to work to support their family budget.

Due to all the crucial socio-economic changes the family life of the poor changed as well. Since workers were labouring for up to eighteen hours each day, there was very little family contact, and the only time that one was at home was spent sleeping. As the poor people had to share housing with other families, it was not uncommon to find seven or eight people sleeping in one room, which further contributed to the breakdown of the family unit. All this resulted in a purely financial relationship among the family members or a total break up of the family bonds.

The working class was a socio-economic group separated from other groups by differences of income and political and social power. "The life of the working class as a whole was ruled by the factories. Not that everybody worked in them – far from it – but the livelihood of a great many who did not – railwaymen, miners, dockers, for example – depended on their prosperity. Moreover, the factory was symbolic of the whole industrial way of life, with its regular hours and its machine-made discipline." (Reader, p. 103) Only few of the workmen or their wives could read. "As late as 1880, according to the Census Report of 1881, something like twenty per cent of the population could not sign their names, and in 1850 the figure had been forty per cent. Only about half the children aged five to fifteen were then at school." (Reader, p. 115) The children had the factory and the slum, but not the school or the playground. Holiday travels and popular entertainments were rare except some sporting events of a low type. In the misery of such a life, pubs and drinking played a leading part in the poor's free time.

The only way in which the Industrial Revolution and its social consequences could have been acceptable for the common people was if they had benefited from it materially, which apparently did not happen. In fact, the

first results were economic and social misery the lowest social classes had never before experienced.

Some industries such as the cotton trade were particularly hard for workers to endure the long hours of labour. The nature of the work being done meant that the workplace had to be very hot. Steam engines contributed further to the heat and made the working conditions very exhausting. Machinery was not always fenced off and workers were exposed to the moving parts of the machines whilst they were working. The work in cotton factories was done mainly by women and children. "In 1850 about 331 000 people worked in factories in the cotton industry in the United Kingdom, 189 000 were women and girls, and 15 000 (9 000 boys; 6 000 girls) were under 13." (Reader, p. 85) Children were often employed to move between dangerous machines as they were small enough to fit between tightly packed machinery. They were thus exposed to immense danger and death rates were quite high in factories. Mothers and children worked from twelve to fifteen hours a day under insanitary conditions, without either the amenities of life or the conditions which make factory life attractive today. The discipline of the early factories was like the discipline of a prison and the work itself was very monotonous. Small children were often cruelly treated to keep them awake during the long hours, which shortened their lives or undermined their health. As Reader points out, "usually the smaller a factory and the less organized the labour, the worse conditions would be". (p. 104)

Another branch of industry where the conditions were hard to endure was mining. As Traveyan says, "women were used there as beasts of burden." (p. 163). Children were sent to work in mines as they were able to get more coal and ore from the deep and tight pits, which was apparently very dangerous for them. "The employment of children in the textile industries and in the mines was regulated by law during the forties, after shocking revelations by the Children's Employment Commission, and the regulations were enforced by inspection. But there were still plenty of trades unregulated." (Reader, p. 115) Among the most dangerous we can include match-making or chimney sweeping.

Union movements

To defend their common interests against their employers, the industrial workers started to organize themselves and formed union movements. Britain became the cradle of trade unionism. The first unions came into existence by the end of the eighteenth century. The main method the unions used to enforce their demands was strike action which was, however, soon made illegal as factory owners were, thanks to their political power, able to put through their interests among the government members. Both the factory owners (the middle class) and the government were afraid of the unions to be able to destroy the whole society like the Jacobins¹³ did in France. From this reason the British Parliament passed several acts, known as the Combination Laws, between 1799 and 1800. These acts prohibited trade unions and collective bargaining by British workers and made trade unions illegal. For the following two decades of the century the acting of trade unions was reduced. The Combination Acts were repealed in 1824 but the persecution of trade unionists continued. When the industrialisation reached its climax, the social situation of the people working in factories even worsened. With the ongoing mechanization of production many workers became unemployed as machines replaced their labour.

Many of these unemployed workers turned their hostility towards the machines that had taken their jobs and began destroying factories and machinery. These attackers became known as Luddites.¹⁴ The first attacks of the Luddite movement began in 1811 as a reaction to the escalating social situation caused by bad harvests from previous years and the industrial depression of 1811 which was caused by the closure of the American market. The Luddites rapidly gained popularity, and the British government took drastic measures using the army to protect industry. Some of the rioters were transported to the colonies, others were hanged. "Luddism can be perceived as

¹³ **T**he Jacobins were a very radical group of people who believed in the need to remove all social class distinctions. They also believed that the vote should be universal and that government should provide for the welfare of the poor.

¹⁴ They were regarded as followers of Ned Ludd, an imagined national leader, who started the first protests by breaking machines.

a clash between the rival moralities of capitalism and the working class. In other words, it was an early example of class conflict in Britain.“ (Laybourn, p.185)

Unrests were spread throughout other sectors that were industrialised and resulted in Trade Unions formation and, consequently, in governmental reforms. Trade Unions helped working people to push through their interests. Their major power was in their abundance. In the case of rioting they could withdraw all labour and thus halt the whole production. Employers had to decide then between suiting their demands or suffer the cost of the lost production. Skilled workers were hard to replace so these groups were the first ones to successfully advance their working conditions through rioting.

Working class people's growing dissatisfaction with working and social conditions and parliamentary politics turned workers to revolutionary unionization. Their acting was strongly influenced by the ideas of Robert Owen¹⁵. He had been quite successful in bringing his ideas into life until he publicly denounced religion which triggered a huge campaign against his reputation and buried his idealistic attempts.

In the 1830s the first large-scale organized movement in the world appeared – the Chartist movement. The movement campaigned for political equality and social justice. It took its name from the People's Charter of 1838¹⁶, which stipulated the six main aims of the movement as:

1. A vote for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.
2. The ballot. - To protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.
3. No property qualification for members of Parliament - thus enabling the constituencies to return the man of their choice, be he rich or poor.
4. Payment of members, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency, when taken from his business to attend to the interests of the Country.

¹⁵ Robert Owen was a cotton manufacturer at New Lanark in Scotland. He set up a workers' community where the workers lived in a good environment and had access to education which he believed would help develop their own business and get out of poverty. He was a utopian socialist who believed that transition from capitalism to socialism can be achieved peacefully by turning the trade unions into cooperative productive societies.

¹⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartism>, retrieved on 28 December, 2011

5. Equal Constituencies, securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of large ones.
6. Annual parliaments, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot), no purse could buy a constituency (under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelve-month; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituents as now.

The national Chartist Association was the first working class political party. Unfortunately, Chartism was bound to fail because the working class of that time was not mature enough and their leaders were not experienced and united. Working people also formed other societies as mutual support groups against times of economic hardship to improve their conditions. Towards the mid of the nineteenth century unions slowly overcame the legal restrictions on the right to strike and in 1842 there was a general strike organised by the Chartist movement which stopped production in the whole country. It lasted twenty days and was the most massive industrial action to take place in the nineteenth century.

Life in the countryside

At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution majority of English people were engaged in agriculture. Rural England accounted for three-fourths of England of that time. The countryside formed an agricultural community which was to feed the nation.

In the nineteenth century rural society started to die out. Urban civilization gradually replaced the village tradition. Up to the eighteenth century the countryside was less purely agricultural than it became in later times; agricultural labourers and their families carried on various branches of

manufacture in their own cottages when field labour was slack. The work of women and children played as large a part in these cottage industries as in the factories that replaced them. Women agricultural labourers “appear to have been the fourth largest group of women workers after those employed in domestic service, textiles and the clothing trades, but they have been more numerous than the 80 000 enumerated in 1841 or 230 000 in 1851.” (Thompson, p. 26)

Villages of England supported with their hands the great major industries, like the woollen trade, which were centred in towns. So long as the system of manufacture continued, the rural population was much more numerous than the city population. However, the situation started to change towards the middle of the century with the ongoing mechanization of cotton and woollen industries and its move into the factory alongside with improving town facilities. “There were still nearly 50 000 cotton handloom weavers left in 1850, many of them in extreme destitution at the lowest paid and coarsest end of the industry, but some of them working upmarket on fancy designs in short runs which were still beyond the technical capacity, or economics, of power weaving. A few lingered into the 1860s, but by then the surviving handloom weaver in cottons was no more than a curiosity.” (Thompson, p. 32) The use of new technologies and mechanization of the textile industry enabled higher productivity of goods. The transfer of production from small manufactories to large factories, in fact, meant a development of mass production.

As textile and other trades were, year by year, gathered round the new machinery and the new factories, the corresponding industries disappeared out of cottage after cottage and village after village. In some districts the disappearance of the cottage industries was the major or only ground why the small yeomen sold their farms. In other districts it was the technical improvements that caused the drop of the share of people working in the countryside. It is estimated that by the end of the eighteenth century there were over 40 per cent of the labour force working on the land as opposed to 21 per cent in 1851.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a typical village was still a single long street of cottages, each standing in its garden, or a cluster of roofs huddled round the church. Later, however, everything changed. The new

enclosure laws (1801 Act of Parliament) – which required that all grazing grounds be fenced in at the owner’s expense – had left many poor farmers bankrupt and unemployed. Some of the farmers were lucky to sell their lands to the squires.

There was a “landhunger” among the upper class of that day as “land conferred social and political, as well as economic benefits upon its owners.” (Black, p. 120) They were eager to gather large consolidated estates, for the reasons of profit as well as social prestige. “The ‘landed gentry’ covers a wide range, from the untitled owners of comparatively small estates, wholly agricultural, up to the great ducal families – Devonshire, Bedford, Northumberland and the rest – whose immense properties included thousands of acres of farm land, large areas of London and other towns, mining rights, market rights, and so on.” (Reader, p. 32) The upper class spent most of the year in the countryside where the noblemen practised deer stalking, shooting and field sports on their grounds. They were also great fans of horseracing which traditionally took place on private moors and open fields. These activities, besides literature and public affairs, were found as the only proper for a gentleman. “A country gentleman might live virtually his whole life within the borders, social and geographical, of ‘the county’. Unless he was a very great landowner indeed he would be unlikely to own a house in London, though he might take one for ‘the season’ when his daughters were marriageable or for the session if he was in Parliament.” (Reader, p. 48)

The gentry were perceived as well educated and good looking people with choiced manners and distinguished bearing, often with passion for personal liberty. They were educated either privately or at local grammar schools which were replaced by boarding schools in the course of the nineteenth century. Most of young gentlemen went on studying at universities like Oxford or Cambridge though they often did not finish their studies. They were sent there not only to become well-educated men but also to meet other boys of their own kind and to develop their “characters”. Upper class girls remained to be educated privately at home in spite of the great development of girls’ boarding schools in the fifties. It was not only the cost of education that prevented girls from being sent to school. It was mainly the general conviction that “schools were breeders of disease, places of dubious, if not downright poor,

morals and just 'Bad'". (Flanders, p. 54) They were also regarded as dangerous for their health because of the demandness of study. On top of these reasons there were the girls' social life requirements that did not allow them to undergo fulltime education. The boarding schools were widely used by the middle-class intellectuals' daughters who cared for education much more than their upper-class peers.

During the Industrial Revolution the English aristocracy were the art patrons of the world. It was the custom of the great "milords" and wealthier gentry to spend one or two years between college and the beginning of their Parliamentary careers in making the 'Grand Tour'. (Trevelyan, p 35).

The Grand Tour was a continental journey which was an essential part of a gentleman's education. During this "Tour" the young representatives of English Aristocracy were living in the families of French and Italian Courts. They visited the Classical sites of Greece and Italy while being introduced to the glories of the Renaissance architecture and the works of such Italian masters as Andrea Palladio and Vincenzo Scamozzi. They brought the Renaissance architecture back to their homeland. The abundance of massive houses in the English and Scottish countryside is a testimony to the wealth of the men who built them and to their desire to make their mark on the county. The acquired "love for art" of the nobility was represented by their collecting of paintings so at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were numerous fine private collections in the country.¹⁷ Travelling, education and a new habit of reading improved the upper class in their manners as a whole.

¹⁷ As there was no national collection of paintings to compare with those to be found in Italy and France, king George IV (1762 – 1830) decided to enlarge the valuable royal collection which Charles I had begun, and commissioned William Wilkins, a famous architect of the time, to build the National Gallery in the 1820's.

Life in towns

The Industrial Revolution produced exceptionally rapid changes in the location and living conditions of the British people. People became increasingly concentrated in towns and cities. Before the nineteenth century, Britain's urban population was by international comparison rather underdeveloped. With the exception of London, which had a population of over a million in 1801, the rest of urban Britain was composed of a series of small market towns and ports. Britain was one of the least urban-centred societies, having no cities in the middle range of size (between a small commercial centre and a giant metropolis). "In 1801 there had been no towns in Britain, outside London, with as many as 100 000 inhabitants. By 1831 there were seven – Manchester, Glasgow, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Leeds and Bristol – and together with London they contained one sixth of the total population." (Thompson, p. 28) The growing numbers of town population were, on the one hand, a response to industrialization, on the other hand, it was a result of the increased fertility and decreased mortality rates caused at the same time by medical progress and gradually improving social services. Of course, there were wide differences between regions and classes.

In the growing industrial towns housing was being put up hurriedly and without regard to any layout plan as there was little experience with urban living in Britain compared to other European countries where cities had already existed. Bad sanitation brought a lot of problems. The water supplied was inadequate and impure (e.g. most of London's water came from the Thames, polluted though it was by outfall from the sewers, by stable dung, rotten sprats and other rubbish thrown into it from slaughter-houses, tanneries etc.). The sewers were insufficient spreading of water-borne germs and subsequent contamination of springs and wells. The indoor sanitation was very rare. The majority of houses were served with privy middens only, many others were equipped with pan closets which were emptied into carts and the contents were sold to farmers for manure. "The flush lavatory first came into widespread popular consciousness with The Great Exhibition of 1851, the bathroom following

later. (Flanders, p. 286) There was no hot water, no real plumbing. Filth abounded in the very centre of cities as there was no litter disposal service.

Another factor influencing the state of public health was overcrowding of big towns and cities. There were not enough houses, especially for the poor. There were too many people in too few rooms. Poor people lived in overcrowded buildings they had to either take in lodgers or share the rooms with as many people as possible to meet their rental costs. On top of this the air of big towns was extremely polluted. The bigger the city, the worse the situation was. "London had been called 'the big smoke' or simply 'the smoke' from the eighteenth century for good reason. The Industrial Revolution had brought with it a pall that hung over all the major cities, made up of the coal smoke, dirt and dust pouring out of millions of chimneys, together with the mist that these prevented from being burnt off by the sun." (Flanders, p. 370) No wonder, there were several waves of contagious diseases around the country during the first half of the nineteenth century. "From 1831 to 1833 there were two influenza epidemics and the first-ever outbreak of cholera in Britain, which alone killed 52 000; from 1836 to 1842 there were epidemics of influenza, typhus, smallpox and scarlet fever; from 1846 to 1849 came typhus, typhoid and cholera again." (Flanders, pp. 297-298) The greatest problem of early Victorian towns seemed to keep their people alive as the living conditions of cities were miserable.

Later in the nineteenth century, though, the situation started to improve. "Victorian prosperity did mean enhanced standards of life and expectations. Diet improved, not merely for the better-off but for society as a whole. Meat consumption, for example, rose far more substantially than the total population. ...Refrigeration and economic linkages with tropical areas made the exotic routine. The banana joined the apple as a staple consumption fruit. Sweats, tea and sticky confections became habits. Jam was typical on the working class table." (Black, p. 155) Besides better nutrition and improved eating habits, there were also other aspects that supported health of the population, prolonged their life-expectancy and made their urban life more comfortable. Among the positive contributions of nineteenth century urban civilization the establishment of great public services must be included, frequently controlled by the municipalities themselves, often with great civic pride. After an early period during which cities grew so fast that their social investment could not keep pace with the rate of

growth – a time when an expert knowledge of engineering and medicine was inadequate, when their inhabitants were most deprived and criticisms sharpest – the infrastructure began to take shape: road systems involving paving and asphaltting of streets, the making of sidewalks, impressive network of sewers, water distribution services, water sometimes being brought not only in pipes but in aqueducts over great distances, with the result that the consumption tripled or quadrupled in a few decades, organization of household waste collection, creation of parks and public gardens, municipal baths and laundries. In short, the daily life of city dwellers was made more convenient and comfortable towards the end of the first half of the nineteenth century. Hygiene progressed, living conditions improved.

Urban life was improved also thanks to the organization of public transport system. By the end of the eighteenth century, the city-dwellers travelled mostly on foot. For the upper classes there were carriages and cabs. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, new means of public transport were being introduced. They eased the life of city people, linked the suburbs with the centre and made possible further extensive mass urbanization. First in this process was the railway with special rates for workers (cheap workmen's trains). Besides these, there were tramways, a local version of a stagecoach which picked up and dropped off passengers on a regular route and on a given timetable. From the 1830's there were also omnibuses, a kind of a London public transport capable of accommodating up to twenty passengers, all inside. However, due to their width they could be driven only in some parts of London.

London

London was the political, financial and social capital. It was the warehouse of England, the heart of commerce, the seat of legislature, the Home of Justice and the center of culture and religion. London attracted people from all parts of Britain. They were moving in from the neighbouring counties, from further districts and even from Scotland and Ireland. "Already at the first Census, in 1801, London had nearly eleven per cent of the total population of England and

Wales, and after that for ninety years or so its population grew faster than the population of the country as a whole.” (Reader, p. 94) To house the great numbers of newly urbanized people a great many new houses had to be built. A massive building programme in the eighteenth century resulted in the development of miles of Neo-Classical squares and terraces. There were numerous new buildings for the expanding professions, for educational institutions, for charitable bodies, for hospitals, for London’s expanding trade and for the humanitarian organizations. There were four new bridges across the river Thames, there were a lot of new and restored churches, many of them the result of the Church Building Act¹⁸ of 1818. While churches and chapels were being built, so too were new theatres. Between 1808 and 1809 a new Covent Garden Opera was built. It was also the great age of club building. The area of the city was spreading so fast in the nineteenth century that it became nearly impossible for its inhabitants to say where London ended. “It was not just the biggest city in Britain; it was the biggest city in the world: in 1890 it had 4.2 million people, compared to 2.7 million in New York, its nearest rival, and just 2.5 million in Paris.” (Flanders, p. xxxvi)

Despite the growth of the built-up area of the city, the unspoilt country was still not far away. As the climate of London was constantly deteriorating, many middle and upper-class families had their houses in the countryside or at least at the outskirts of the city. A merchant with offices in the heart of the City had scarcely more than a mile’s coach drive to reach open fields and quiet villages where he had his villa which was much easier now with the gradual increase in road numbers. The multiplication of the road network consequently accelerated the bloom of London’s surrounding villages.

Most of London’s new streets were paved, but there were still many roads (even at the beginning of the nineteenth century), which were little more than tracks with a lot of holes so that it was often difficult for the coach to drive along. The roads were not only in poor condition but also very filthy. It was almost impossible to walk along the streets without being injured. Although there was

¹⁸ The Act which arose following a meeting in the Freemasons’ Hall, London on 6 February 1818, at which formation of a Church Building Society was proposed. The Society lobbied parliament to provide funding for a church building programme. Subsequently, parliament passed the Church Building Act, voting £1,000,000 to the cause to be administered by appointed Commissioners. The Act became popularly known as the "Million Act".

the recognised rule that: “every man keeps to the right”, most of the pedestrians did not accept it. Obviously, the safest way preventing from collision with a pedestrian walking against or a carriage was to keep as close to the wall as possible as the streets were very narrow. However, there was another kind of danger – the danger of collapsing houses or their falling bits as the houses of the eighteenth century were not constructed well.

Besides the development of the road system, there were also improvements concerning the city’s infrastructure in the course of the nineteenth century. “Throughout the century, metropolitan councils had worked to ameliorate the character of the streets by a variety of local and municipal acts, which ensured that the drainage was improved, roads widened to accommodate increased carriage traffic, and minimum safety standards were achieved by paving and cleaning, and then further safety secured by better lighting and policing.” (Flanders, pp. 349 – 350) The gas lighting was first used in London factories by the end of the eighteenth century with the intention to help the industrial development. But its spread was so quick that “by 1816 gas was common in London...and in 1862 London alone was consuming as much gas as all of Germany. (A rough comparison shows the population of London to have been around the 3 million mark; the German Confederation in 1865 had approximately 47 million people.)” (Flanders, pp. 166-167)

The poor in London lived in warrens of narrow streets under dreadful conditions in the centre of the town as close to the place they worked in as possible. Often they lived in 'back-to-backs' - houses of three (or sometimes only two) rooms, one on top of the other. The back of one house joined onto the back of another and they only had windows on one side. The worst homes were cellar dwellings (one-room cellars usually damp and poorly ventilated). These homes would share toilet facilities and have open sewers. The poorest people slept on piles of straw because they could not afford beds. As a result, huge numbers of the labouring poor died due to diseases spreading through the cramped living conditions. The conditions of the poor improved over the course of the nineteenth century because of government and local authorities plans which led to cities becoming cleaner places.

There were not many occasions to amuse themselves for the poor. They had hardly any free time to dedicate themselves to anything else but to their

work. Gambling and alcohol drinking were the most popular pastimes of the lowest classes. "All classes drank, but only the working classes went in for public drinking. There had been a little of this segregation in the eighteenth century, when merchants and lawyers often had their own parlours customarily reserved for them in city taverns, and village inns were reputedly the scenes of convivial, socially mixed drinking. By the 1850s no respectable middle-class man would enter a public house, although in country towns farmers and dealers kept up their tradition of meeting in inns on market days." (Thompson, p. 308) The reason for middle-class men keeping away from public houses was, besides their reputation, the possibility of meeting their companions in their large-enough houses. For the working class men with their overcrowded homes, though, the pubs were the only places they could meet in. In British cities, mainly in London, gambling and betting was widely spread not only among the working class but it was prevalent in all social classes. People bet on anything – sporting events, horse races, dog fights, cricket matches, political contests or even on the ages at which various males would die. The completion of the electric telegraph network in the 1850s which made news of racing results nationally and instantly available gave rise to organized, mass betting.

The upper classes lived a large proportion of the year on their estates out of town. They could live there isolated from other classes whom they did not regard as equal members of the society and from whom they wished to stay segregated as much as possible. There were only very few of them who permanently lived in their London houses. However, also in London they tried to be as much separated as possible and lived in their own districts. Besides other reasons, they were afraid of catching various contracting diseases which were spread among their poorer cohabitants. For the aristocracy it was necessary to be in London during "the season" when most of the balls and grand receptions took place. "The season was an important part of the social year and coincided roughly with the sitting of Parliament, for the people who were prominent in society were also those who ruled the country." (Avery, p. 67) The great noblemen felt obliged to be in London in May, June and July.

Middle class

In the industrial world, members of the established middle class were steadily increasing their power and influence over the society together with their ever increasing possession. They started to break the rules of the traditional social system in which every man knew his place and kept to it. This place was recognized on birth according to the “cradle” born. Children learnt that they were superior to those beneath them from an early age. “Wealth, property and social position were conveniently regarded as belonging to those who were ‘born to them’”. (Reader, p. 146) The middle classes dominated the industrial world. Besides merchants and other people active in commerce and business they were mostly factory owners. They were also representatives of professions practicing law, medicine or finances and many other professions that came into being as a result of the industrial progress such as engineers.

Since the beginning of their rise the middle classes had to fight for their position with the well established aristocracy. One of their possibilities to approach the upper class was to copy their lifestyle and habits. The essential part of this strategy was the provision of good, quality schooling to middle-class children which assured them moving from manual occupations to trade, or further to specific professions like lawyers, judges or practitioners. There were several types of available schools, the most widely spread of which were the public schools. They followed the tradition of grammar school education where mainly classical subjects, such as Greek, Latin and literature, were taught. There were also private schools that came into the existence at the beginning of the nineteenth century to comfort the increasing middle-class numbers of schoolchildren and to provide education of better quality.

These were profit-making institutions which had to supply what the customers thought they wanted. That, generally speaking, was vocational training and a desirable social background. That meant a background no lower the parents’ own and as much above it as they could afford. With other aspects of education, middle-class parents were not greatly concerned. They wanted their boys taught enough English to write business

letters and very good arithmetic, which many of them looked upon as the most important subject at all. (Reader, p. 155)

In the 1830s, a new type of private schools, so called proprietary schools, appeared. Their primary purpose was education and not profit making, and unlike public schools they focused on “modern subjects” which complied better with the changes in life brought by the industrialization and technical advancement.

Housing was another aspect of life in which the middle classes tried to imitate the upper classes. According to their model middle class families preferred privacy, greenery and fresh air away from smog and city smoke. They also wanted to separate home from work and to make family life as private as possible. They moved to the expanding suburbs which were segregated to keep the classes separate in the same way as parts of town were isolated before.

Not only the location of the house but also its appearance was important to Victorian people. It was an affirmation of the owner’s status within the social hierarchy. “House structure, therefore, can be seen as a form of social structure; and the home, the type of life lived in the house, can be seen as the means by which the structure was translated into different types of social behaviour.” (Thompson, pp. 153-154) The more wealthy the family was, the more separated its members were. As the lower-class houses had usually only two bedrooms, one for parents and one for children, the upper-class houses would provide rooms to separate parents from their children, boys from girls, older children from babies and servants from employers. To suit the increasing demand of the middle class for both the external separation from lower classes, and the internal one separating the individual family members from one another, the houses grew bigger throughout the nineteenth century.

The Victorian middle classes had a strong self-control and temperance belonged among their general characteristics. They denied alcohol and were shocked by increased alcohol consumption among the working classes of those days. Most of the middle-class representatives were highly religious which influenced their lives in almost every sphere. They were regular Sunday church-goers or keen church-builders. They lived very strict lives ordered by morality. Many pursuits like cards and dancing or alcohol drinking were forbidden in most

middle-class households. They were very prudent too and home and marriage were the utmost values they cherished. It did not, of course, apply to all of the middle classes. Some male representatives were regular visitors of brothels advocating the difference between male's and female's physical needs and stressing that male sexual needs were far greater than those of female as an excuse for their immoral behaviour.

Work was at the centre of the middle class interest, at least at the beginning of the nineteenth century, for without work the middle-class men could not get their possession and they could not rise to their social position. They were tough employers and expected hard work from the people they employed. However, they practised themselves, what they preached to other people. Middle-class men worked very hard, often staying at work more than twelve hours a day. Middle-class women, on the contrary, stayed at home as it was generally considered unladylike for a woman to go out to work. They were to take care for the house and family. Besides this, there were charitable works, either organized by the church or purely individual that employed middle-class women in their spare time.

Towards the middle of the century the situation changed. The second generation of entrepreneurs and businessmen did not spend so much time at work any more because they did not have to. They could easily build on their fathers' work and enjoy their lives more. At the same time, the influence of religion was lessening. Generally, they practised those entertainments they found improving or uplifting. For men it was mainly reading or practising various kinds of sports such as cricket or football. For women it was music-making and singing or needlework. By the middle of the nineteenth century they also started to go out to amuse themselves. There were concert halls, theatres, continuous fairs or various sports events. The popularity of weekendening away from home was growing.

Religion

Before the mid-nineteenth century, there was little collection of statistics on the religious habits of the British people except for the ones of the middle class. Generally, the Church of England took the primacy until the end of the eighteenth century. The Churchmen of that era paid scarcely more attention to the newly appeared slums than did other constituted authorities.

After 1818, when the Church Building Act was passed, there was an expansion of church buildings as 100 new churches were built at the expense of taxpayers. "The beneficed clergy were suspect to the workmen as 'black dragoons' of the possessing classes." (Trevelyan, p.166) Most working people perceived the Church representatives as "lucky individuals" who benefited from tithes¹⁹ and not as an institution endowed for a great public purpose. (*Atlas of British Social and Economic History*, p. 211) On the the other hand, there were also representatives of the new proletariat who found in the chapel an opportunity for self-development and joy. It was a place where men were "taken up aloft" and judged by spiritual and moral standards and not by their possession.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century the Church of England started to lose its primacy as the Christian Church in England was split and the Church of Rome started to assert its interests. These years were very turbulent for the English church when feelings of religious differences were passionate, sometimes even violent, when families were often split apart.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the religious situation in England even worsened. "The religious census in 1851 revealed that out of the now swollen population of 17 927 609 for England and Wales only 7 261 032 attended some kind of service. If the vast number of those who failed to attend public worship on the census Sundays were working-class men and women who easily found alternative and more agreeable ways of spending the one day of rest allowed to them, there were also, amongst the educated classes, deep

¹⁹ The idea that people should pay tithes (10 per cent of the annual produce of land or labour) to support their local minister and parish church was established in the 8th century. In the 10th century a law was introduced to impose penalties for non-payment.

and growing doubts as to the very doctrinal and historical bases of Christianity.” (Sanders, pp. 398 – 399) These doubts were encouraged by both Charles Darwin’s work *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection* published in 1859 and by culture influenced by scientific materialism that undercut the Church’s traditional teaching on the origin of human life. Thus, a fatal stroke was inflicted to religion in general. Many people were much confused as the theory cast doubt on the very nature of religious belief. The position of religion started to decline and in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century majority of people in towns stopped going to Church and neglected their religious life.

Conclusion

To sum up, the Industrial Revolution was a period in which major transformations of agriculture, industry, manufacturing and technology took place. The Industrial Revolution also led to the creation of new social and political ideologies. It helped to form a new social group – the rich bourgeoisie middle class – which developed its own moral code that differed much from that of the working class.

All these changes had significant impact on society as a whole but, at the same time, they influenced individual people’s lives. Social conditions changed as women and children left homes for work. Family life was affected deeply as wives and husbands worked in separate places. Health conditions and medical care improved which accelerated the population growth. The growth of population together with new overseas explorations increased the demand for food and products. The increased demand for food and products inhibited their massproduction and eliminated small family farming. It also attracted people to towns and started massive urbanization. Rapid urbanization was connected with negative rather than positive aspects such as air and water pollution, spread of diseases, deteriorated living conditions and increasing disparities among the individual social classes. Technological changes, inventions and developments eased the life and helped to develop transportation which connected Britain with the rest of the world.

The whole process of transformation was more than a series of technological innovations and economic changes. It offered to men, for the first time in history, an opportunity to control their environment instead of being at its mercy. Overall, the Industrial Revolution was a process that caused irreversible economic, social, political and cultural changes that completely transformed every aspect of life in Britain and consecutively in the rest of the world.

Literature during the era of the Industrial Revolution

In the last two decades of the eighteenth century people rebelled against political and social norms of previous ages. Their belief as well as their efforts were supported by the French Revolution, which was with its slogan “liberty, equality and fraternity” glorified in their minds. At the same time, the persuasion of people modified. First counter-reactions of the society to changes coming from the Industrial Revolution appeared. People were not convinced about its positive assets. The influence of the Industrial Revolution was also apparent in the field of art which became more realistic and reflected the general disillusionment.

As a result, a new artistic and intellectual movement known as Romanticism appeared. “Romanticism thus represented the reaction of emotion against reason, of nature against rationality, of simplicity against complex, and of faith against skepticism. Romanticism was filled with a new enthusiasm for nature and for distant civilizations.” (Artz, p. 226) Romantic literary works helped people to escape from reality, from the depression of the factories and to look at more beautiful things present in their lives, such as nature. Besides escape from reality, nature was associated with unpredictability which was again in sharp contrast to the orderly Enlightenment. Romantic writers drew their inspiration from the atmosphere of the Middle Ages. They also used various exotic places to set their stories in as they could find there the desired adventures. They were interested in the mysterious and supernatural too. In their works they dealt with common people preferring solitary life rather than life within a society. Opposed to preceding Neo-Classicism, Romanticism

inclines to all that is individualistic and original. “The Romantic hero is usually an egocentric individual devoured by melancholy or boredom, or a fiery rebel against society and its rules, authorities and traditions.” (Artz, p. 224) Poetry became the prevailing form of Romanticism as it expresses the inner life of a human being with his feelings and emotions. Among the most notable British Romantic writers were the Lake Poets, a small group of friends including William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge who lived in and drew their inspiration from the Lake District in northwestern England. They were trying to write an innovative kind of poetry both in style and form. They were describing nature and unspoiled natural surroundings as well as human feelings. They experimented with verse forms in favour of more original forms. They were followed by Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats who concentrated mainly on social and political topics in their poems. They were more concerned with the basic issues of social change of their time. Romanticism was succeeded by the Victorian Realism.

Gothic novel

Prose of the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century was interested in non-rational experience and focused on the description of inner feelings and emotions of individuals. A new genre – the Gothic Novel – was introduced to the reading public. It was based on the atmosphere of mystery and fear and it combined elements of both horror and romance. The gothic novel stories were set in medieval buildings far from the civilised world and they were often associated with mysterious, fantastic and superstitious rituals. The characteristic features of Gothic fiction include mystery, haunted houses, castles, darkness, death, madness and conflict between vicious male villains and innocent female victims. Ann Radcliffe is regarded as the pioneer of the genre. Her novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), is considered one of the essential Gothic Novels of the late eighteenth century. All her novels involved innocent, heroic women who find themselves in mysterious castles where they are confronted with male villains.

Another famous Gothic Novel writer was Mathew Gregory Lewis with his work *The Monk* (1796) who is though often criticised for lack of originality because he drew his inspiration from works of Ann Radcliffe and William Godwin. Within the group of English Gothic Novel writers we can also include John William Polidori who introduced the vampire genre. His most successful work is the short story *The Vampyre* (1819).

Another representative of the Gothic Novel and, at the same time, the most famous Gothic writer is Mary Shelley (a daughter of William Godwin). With her novel *Frankenstein* (1818) she also gave birth to the science fiction novel. It combines both romantic and gothic elements. The major gothic elements Shelley used in her novel were mystery, fear, darkness and a conflict between a villain and his victim. The title of the novel refers to a scientist, Victor Frankenstein, who learns how to make a body with human parts taken from different corpses and bringing them to life with electricity. It is a kind of a fantasy where a supernatural being plays the main part. The scientist creates a being similar to a man, but his physical and mental powers are on a higher level than those of an average man. The story takes place in a lab where the light is subdued which makes it even more mysterious. The horror of the story is multiplied by the spine-chilling appearance of the monster which is so ugly that Victor escapes from his lab the moment the monster is brought into life. The story ends in Frankenstein's struggle for survival after the monster had turned his bitterness coming from desperation and social exclusion against his own creator.

The novel has also its philosophical aspect. The author examines the ethical point of view of the subject matter and states a clear message to her readers that there are certain things a person is not meant to do and should definitely not do. Shelley expresses her doubts about science and progress and she warns that experiments on human species of any kind can have unforeseeable consequences for humankind.

By the Victorian era (1837 – 1901), Gothic had ceased to be the dominant prose genre but we can still find some characteristic features of Gothic fiction in novels of that time. We can mention, for example, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) where ghosts haunt the house of Thrushcross Grange and where the main character – Heathcliff – bears some features of a Byronic hero. We

can also mention Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) where the madwoman Bertha, staying locked in the attic, causes a lot of harm that seems "supernatural" to other people who do not know about her existence. In most of these novels we can also find so called Byronic heroes.²⁰

Revolutionary writings

By the end of the eighteenth century a group of prose writers focused on political writings that were inspired by the French Revolution. Among them we can mention William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley's parents. William Godwin is best known for his book *Things as They Are or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) in which he conveys his opinion that a society must be reformed. In this work he begins with the conclusion of the story and develops the plot backwards which was a new technique brought into writing. Mary Wollstonecraft was a philosopher and feminist and she is famous for her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and, especially, for *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)²¹ in which she argues that women are not naturally inferior to men, but appear to be only because they lack education. She suggests that women should receive education corresponding to their position in society, claiming that women are essential to the nation because they educate its children and because they could be "companions" to their husbands, rather than mere wives. Instead of viewing women as ornaments to society or property to be traded in marriage, Wollstonecraft maintains that they are human beings deserving the same fundamental rights as men²². Wollstonecraft called for equality between the sexes in particular areas of life such as morality, but she did not explicitly state that men and

²⁰ The Byronic hero is an idealised but defective character exemplified in the life and writings of Lord Byron. The Byronic hero typically possesses one or more of the following characteristics: a strong sense of arrogance, high level of intelligence, suffering from an unnamed crime, a troubled past, sophisticated and educated, self-critical, mysterious and charismatic, emotional conflict and moodiness, a distaste for social institutions and norms, being and outcast, has seen the world, cynicism, self-destructive behaviour, a good heart in the end.

²¹ Wollstonecraft was prompted to write the *Rights of Woman* after reading Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord's 1791 report to the French National Assembly, which stated that women should only receive a domestic education

women were equal which makes it difficult to classify her as a modern feminist. Besides these two main works she wrote a history of the French Revolution, *A Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* (1794).

Essays

The Romantic influence with its emphasis on emotions and imagination and rejection of rationality at the same time is seen in much of the prose of the period, not only in novels but also in the critical writing and essays. Thomas de Quincey is a notable essayist of the Romantic and early Victorian periods. He is best known for his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821). The book begins with an autobiographical account of the author's addiction. De Quincey describes in detail the euphoric and highly symbolic "daydreaming", his escape from reality, that he experienced under the drug's influence, and depicts the horrible nightmares that continued use of the drug produced. He concentrates on the expression of his own feelings too. The highly poetic and imaginative narrative of the *Confessions* makes it one of the enduring stylistic masterpieces of English literature.

In 1827 De Quincey wrote an essay *On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts*. It is a philosophical analysis of an aesthetic perception of a murder. De Quincey evokes questions concerning the classification of "good" and "bad" and "beauty" and "ugliness". He also analyses thoughts of ancient Greek philosophers, emerges into human's subconscious and discovers primitive instincts of a person. The essay focuses on "Ratcliff Highway murders" that occurred over twelve days in London in the year of 1811 (on December 7 and December 19). The murders shocked Londoners because for the first time they took place inside people's homes. The English saying "an Englishman's home is his castle" was violated then. De Quincey describes the conduct of the murderer from the very beginning when he starts to think of murdering to his jailing by the police. Here, again, De Quincey concentrates on the individual's feelings and emotions and lays emphasis on human's imagination. The essay

²² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Vindication_of_the_Rights_of_Woman, retrieved on 12 December

was enthusiastically received and had a strong influence on subsequent literary representations of crime.

Historical novel

Another pre-Victorian writer that influenced general public with his novels not only in Great Britain but also in the rest of Europe and America was Walter Scott. He started his literary career as a poet. He became famous with his work *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805). It was followed by *Marmion* (1808), a historical romance written in tetrameter. Scott's last major poem, *The Lord of the Isles*, was published in 1815. Smaller success of further poems and ballads drove him to prose writing, mainly to the writing of historical novels. In his novels he dealt with historical topics and is regarded as a father of a new literary genre called historical novel. He can be seen as a real "transitor" between Romanticism and Realism as he synthesises the romantic view of nature and the realistic description of single characters in his novels. Walter Scott is said to be "the father of the realist historical novel" as Terry Eagleton points out in *The English Novel*. (p. 95) He also points out that, "it was certainly Scott who played a major role in establishing the novel as a genuinely 'serious' literary genre. He won for the form a new prestige and authority, so that now, the critics could console themselves, it was no longer just a genre for fantasizing females." (p. 95) Although he came from a family of a lawyer and belonged to the upper class, he was able to depict the life of all the classes of a nation without any prejudice. Thus he became a real national writer. First he focused on Scottish history in his novels, he wrote about Scotland of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (*Waverley* (1814), *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1817), and *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818). All these novels were based on ballads and tales from the Scottish past collected from the oral tradition. They dealt with actual historical events, characters, settings as well as national customs and culture. Later, when he used all the main topics from the Scottish history, he concentrated on historical events of medieval England, for example in *Ivanhoe*

(1819), and other European countries which brought him world-wide popularity. Critics generally agree that Scott's English novels are of lower historical value in terms of historical facts and character construction.

Jane Austen (1775 – 1817)

During the Romantic period the novel became the leading form of literature in English. It drew attention of the increasing reading audience as it described the whole society and its problems more comprehensively than poems did. The spread and popularity of the early nineteenth century novel is primarily credited to women writers. Jane Austen is regarded as a typical English woman novel writer. In her novels, she describes the surroundings of Hampshire countryside with little attention to the ongoing social, political and industrial changes. She focuses on both lives of individuals and life of the society as a whole. She portrays the upper-middle class and gentry of that time living in the countryside where life goes orderly in prosperity and where the greatest events are visits, conversations, social games and balls. She depicts very complicated relationships among the main characters of her novels. The main characters are depicted in details; special attention is paid to their feelings and emotions as well as their views, ideas and attitudes. She softly criticises the ruling class of her time using satire and humour, in her later novels also irony. She also deals with class awareness and concentrates on the role of women and their social status within the society. She strictly denounces the social prejudices of her time and reveals their influence on life of individuals. The central theme of all her novels is a chase of young ladies about to be married on rich men. She is regarded a classical moralist as she deals with morality and social conduct in her novels. She stresses the importance of education because she believes that education and innate dispositions are the two important factors that highly influence morality of an individual.

Austen drew inspiration for her writing from her own life. She came from an upper-middle class family and spent her whole life unmarried in the countryside. She very often visited the rest of her family and took part in various

balls and entertaining events enjoying the privileged life of the landed gentry which she reflected in her fiction. What she also admired and upheld in her writing was the culture of her class. She highly esteemed their good manners and nobility of spirit and felt endangered by the rising middle class. Not by their money, but by their “moral laxity”. (Eagleton, p. 117)

Bringing wisdom besides emotions into her novels, Jane Austen cannot be regarded as a Romantic novel writer. Historically, she stands on the frontier between Neo-classicism and Romanticism. Her novels bear Neo-classicist features that are expressed by her desire to balance emotions with rationality or to concentrate not only on an individual character but also on the society as a whole. Her attempt is the reconciliation of an individual with the society within her scope of focus.

Critical realism

The Industrial Revolution being in its full swing, writers started to focus more and more on changes within the society. They became more critical to class differences and suffrage resulting from industrial changes. Victorian literature is characterized by a strong sense of morality as the novelists of that time depicted labourers as physically and mentally oppressed people and the newly appearing upper-middle class as the capitalists who did not care about anything else but money. Yet in all the critical novels love and luck win in the end, fairness, honesty and decency are rewarded and all the wrongdoers are suitably punished. “In many Victorian novels, knowledge seeking and truth telling were at the heart of the story. Plots often turned on the ability of the protagonist to develop the proper temper and objective state of mind to permit a realistic confrontation with the world.” (Lightman, p. 25, Science and culture)

The social novel, a prevailing genre of the nineteenth century prose, portrayed current social problems in all their connections. Main characters of those novels were recruited from the working class. Their stories were directed towards

middle-class audiences to win their sympathy and subsequently to use their action in pushing for legal and moral change.

The nineteenth century is often regarded as a turning point in British literature. Novels became ubiquitous, Victorian novelists created legacy works with continuing appeal up to the present times. Some of the best-known authors of the first half of the century are the Brontë sisters, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and William Makepeace Thackeray.

English novel

The English novel developed during the eighteenth century as a new literary genre especially for the increasing middle-class reading public. In the second half of the eighteenth century the novel as a genre grew in its importance and it gradually took over moral and social functions which were formerly attributed to poetry as its form, to much greater extent than poetry, enabled the authors to concentrate on the outer world and the changes which were at the forefront of the interest of the people. It was by the end of the eighteenth century when the novel came to be the dominant genre of English literature.

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were one of the most fertile, diverse and adventurous periods of novel-writing in English history, as Gothic fiction, romance, regional and national tales, Jacobin and anti-Jacobin novels, novels of travel, sentiment, abolitionism and the condition of women, stories of foreign and domestic manners, and works derived from ballad, myth and folklore, tumbled copiously from the presses....The English novel gained in 'civility' and sophistication and lost out to some degree in vision, passion and fantasy. (Eagleton, p. 94)

In the eighteenth century novels were read especially by middle and lower-middle classes and women. In the nineteenth century reading novels became extremely popular, which was caused by both the increasing literacy of the population and by the topics chosen by the novelists of that time, and the

reading audience spread. Novels were not considered “light reading” for women any more. They also lost their didactic function as they did not provide examples of correct conduct and their formerly moral tone started to disappear. With the upper-class readers being the main reading audience at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the novels were usually focused on topics to meet the tastes of aristocrats and nobles.

Later, with the advent of Victorian era writers were concerned more with the topics pleasing a large group of middle-class readers who became the main reading audience. The novels were a close representation of social life of that time which was characterised by the development of the emerging middle class. Most Victorian novels were long, published in several volumes and written in sophisticated language. Most of them had also been serialized in popular newspapers before they were published. From the 1830s on, their attention was paid to various social topics. The novelists of this period concentrated on the thoughts and feelings of ordinary people showing their obvious sympathy with the working poor. At the same time, they also reacted to numerous developments brought by the Industrial Revolution, such as industrialization and urbanization.

Part II - Practical Part

Analysis of particular literary works in respect to individual hypotheses

Charlotte (1816–1855) and Emily (1818–1848) Brontë

Charlotte and Emily Brontë were born in Thornton, Yorkshire, in the north of England. Charlotte was born as the third and Emily as the fifth out of six children. Their father was an Irish clergyman. He came from a poor Irish family and after finishing his studies at Cambridge he changed his surname from Brunty to the more noble Brontë. Their mother came from a wealthy English family. She unfortunately fell ill and died in 1821 when the children were still very little. Soon after her death the family moved to Haworth to the Yorkshire countryside as their father got there his parsonage amid moors and hills. The children were cared after by their father and strict religious aunt. The children spent most of their time reading and to escape their unhappiness Anne, Emily, Charlotte and their brother Branwell created imaginary worlds, which were featured in stories and poems they wrote. In the summer of 1824 Charlotte and her three sisters were sent to the Clergy Daughter's School. They had to live under very poor conditions there which affected their health.

Charlotte continued her studies and in the meantime she worked as a teacher to help to pay for the schooling of her younger surviving sister Emily. In 1838 Emily started to work as a governess at Law Hill School near Halifax but only after 6 months she quit the job and returned home due to homesickness. She had a strong attachment to home she was growing up in. Also Charlotte worked as a governess in various families in Yorkshire but she did not like the work and in 1842 she decided to travel with her sisters Emily and Ann to

Brussels to study languages and management at a boarding school with the intention to open their own school. Charlotte later fell in love with a married man, Constantin Heger, the owner of the school where she taught. When the sisters came back home from Brussels they tried to realize their dream and open up the school but had no pupils. Eventually all the sisters turned to writing. When Charlotte accidentally discovered Emily's Gondal verses, she initiated the publication of her and her sisters joint collection of their poetry in 1846. To evade contemporary prejudice against female writers, the Brontë sisters adopted androgynous first names retaining the same initials – Charlotte became Currer Bell, Anne became Acton Bell, and Emily became Ellis Bell. Although only two copies were sold, it did not discourage them from further writing.

Charlotte used her memories from the boarding school to write the novels *The Professor* (1846) and *Villette* (1853). In her life she wrote two more novels, *Shirley* (1848) and *Jane Eyre* (1847) which became immediate success. Emily published her only novel *Wuthering Heights* in 1847. Due to its innovative style and structure, a-story-within-a-story, it was not accepted by the critics well right after its publication. Later, the book became an English literary classic that inspired many other writers.

Emily was a very independent, but withdrawn woman. She had pastimes that were not proper for women of those times. She enjoyed whistling like a man and even practised pistol shooting with her father. She dressed oddly for that time and was nicknamed "the Mayor". Opposed to Charlotte, Emily had no friends and very few people new her. Two of Charlotte's friends served as Emily's acquaintances. They were Amy Taylor and Ellen Nussey who is portrayed in *Wuthering Heights* as a servant Nelly Dean.

Emily as her other siblings suffered from poor health all her life which was in part caused by harsh weather at home. During Branwell's funeral in September 1848 she caught a cold and three months later she died of tuberculosis. Anne died the same year. Charlotte was the last surviving of Brontë children. In 1854 she married Arthur Bell Nicholls, her father's curate. Soon she became pregnant. Unfortunately, she had died (of tuberculosis), before she gave birth to her baby.

Jane Eyre (1847)

The novel describes the life of Jane Eyre who is the narrator of the story. The narration is full of emotions and feelings that are presented to the reader through Jane's dreams, fantasy and visions. Brontë concentrates on the inner life of the main female character as it was typical for women novelists in the 19th century who used their own experience for their writing. As Elaine Showalter points out, the story is a "powerful description of growing up as a female in Victorian England. It belongs to the classic feminine novels as it realistically describes an extraordinary range of women's physical and social experiences." (p. 112) It is divided into five stages that correspond to the most important life periods of the main character. Brontë describes Jane's feelings and emotions very truly and trustfully. She imprints her own life experience in the novel and it can be partly regarded as her autobiographical work.

Class inequality

In comparison to other writers of her time, such as Charles Dickens or Elisabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë is much less concerned with politics and other public events. This general view applies to all Brontë's novels, including *Jane Eyre*, even though, it is not completely free of social topics. As opposed to other writers of her time, Charlotte Brontë tends to approach social issues, such as the class inequality or the caste system in Victorian England, rather in terms of their impact on the personal lives of individuals and she does not take them into account with respect to social reform or legislative action. Class inequality is one of the main social issues of the novel and there are hints to this theme in each part of the work. The story begins with the humiliation of Jane ten-year-old by her aunt Mrs. Reed. As it was not her own will to take care of the orphaned Jane, she does not behave to her in a nice way. Mrs. Reed takes Jane as somebody unequal to her and her children because Jane does not have any money. She also wants her servants to treat Jane in the same way as she

does, which we can see in a dialogue between servant Betty and Jane in the house of Mrs. Reed:

”You ought to be aware, Miss, that you are under obligations to Mrs. Reed: she keeps you: if she were to turn you off, you would have to go to the poor house. “

I had nothing to say to these words: they were not new to me: my very first recollections of existence included hints of the same kind. This reproach of my dependence had become a vague sing-song in my ear; very painful and crushing, but only half intelligible. Miss Abbot joined in: “And you ought not to think yourself of an equality with the Misses Reed and Master Reed, because Missis kindly allows you to be brought up with them. They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none: it is your place to be humble, and to try to make yourself agreeable to them.”
(p. 27)

Mrs. Reed does not treat Jane as a human being. She disregards her feelings and emotions, she treats her as if she did not have any. Mrs. Reed is a representative of the upper class generally viewed as the “superordinate class”. Jane, as a representative of the lower class, is expected to be submissive and obedient to her guardian and her children. John, Jane’s cousin, goes even further than his mother to show his superiority to Jane. He uses his man’s power, yet still not in its full strength, to bully her and attack her physically. Mrs. Reed is aware of her son’s behaviour but she disdains it. The servants are too afraid of offending their master losing their job and lodgings with the Reeds. When Jane tries to defend herself in front of Mrs. Reed, she is accused of lying. She is never trusted and she never has any support from the servants because they are afraid of getting into conflict with their mistress.

We can also mention another example of Jane’s unequal position within the family of her aunt when Mrs. Reed decides to get rid of Jane and send her to a school. She invites Mr. Brocklehurst, who is the donator of Lowood School, to arrange necessary things concerning Jane’s admission. On this occasion Mrs. Reed introduces Jane to him and shortly speaks about Jane’s qualities. She speaks of her as of a “liar”:

“Mr. Brocklehurst, I believe I intimated in the letter which I wrote to you three weeks ago, that this little girl has not quite the character and disposition I could wish: should you admit her into Lowood school, I should be glad if the superintendant and teachers were requested to keep a strict eye on her, and above all to guard against her worst fault, a tendency to deceit. I mention this in your hearing, Jane, that you may not attempt to impose on Mr. Brocklehurst.” (p. 50)

Jane feels humiliated because she knows that it is not true. However she cannot acquit herself from this imputation because she knows she would not be trusted as usual. She feels very disappointed and very unhappy because she realizes she will have to bear this inequality further on. Charlotte Brontë here highlights the social implications of the differences between the rich and the poor. The rich are always right and they are always believed by others while the poor are always liars and cannot be trusted. Mrs. Reed lies to Mr. Brocklehurst about Jane’s qualities because she wants to harm Jane.

Similarly, in the second part of the novel when Jane comes to Lowood School we can find the topic of class inequality: Once Mr. Brocklehurst gives a speech to pupils on being modest and humble in front of God, to dress decently and avoid all lust and vanity, his wife and daughters enter the classroom:

Mr. Brocklehurst was here interrupted: three other visitors, ladies, now entered the room. They ought to have come a little sooner to have heard his lecture on dress, for they were splendidly attired in velvet, silk, and furs. The two younger of the trio (fine girls of sixteen and seventeen) had grey beaver hats, then in fashion, shaded with ostrich plumes, and from under the brim of this gracefull head-dress fell a profusion of light tresses, elaborately curled, the elderly lady was enveloped in a costly velvet shawl, trimmed with ermine, and she wore a false front of French curls. (p. 84)

The author stresses that the poor do not have the same rights as the rich. They cannot wear nice dresses, cannot wear long curled hair (even if it is their natural hair), cannot follow the fashion. Coming from their social status the girls in

Lowood School are taught to be humble and obedient and to learn their right place in the society. We can also notice the Victorian persuasion that girls while being educated should be constantly supervised and protected from any temptation. The possibilities for educating girls were still very limited during the 19th century. It was caused by the generally accepted belief that women were to prepare for matrimony. They “did not usually have careers as such, and were not ‘citizens’ in the sense of being directly involved in politics” due to their unequal position within the society (none of them was able to vote). As a result, “there was little need for higher education for them, and most writers on the subject of ‘female education’ preferred that women receive a practical (and religious) training for their domestic role - thus Byron once spouted off the remark that women should " read neither poetry nor politics - nothing but books of piety and cookery.”²³ A middle-class girls education was taken, almost entirely, at home. There were boarding schools, but no University, and the studies were very different to the ones of boys. The traditional education of girls emphasized the development of so called accomplishments such as French, painting, drawing, singing and piano-playing.

In the third part of the novel when Jane comes to Thornfield to work as a governess for small Adèle, a ward of Mr. Rochester, Brontë shows the class inequality from another point of view. This time she describes the power of money. Money meant respect, grace, popularity and already mentioned credibility. Once Jane asks Mrs. Fairfax when they can expect Mr. Rochester to come back from a visit:

“Do you expect him to come back tonight?”

“No-nor tomorrow either; I should think he is very likely to stay a week or more: when these fine, fashionable people get together, they are so surrounded by elegance and gaiety; so well provided with all that can please and entertain, they are in no hurry to separate. Gentlemen, especially, are often in request on such occasions; and Mr. Rochester is so talented and so lively in society, that I believe he is general favourite: the ladies are very fond of him; though you would not think his appearance calculated to recommend him particularly in their eyes: but I suppose his

²³ <http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/pptopic2.html#educrev>, retrieved on 10 September, 2011

acquirement and abilities, perhaps his wealth and good blood, make amends for any little fault of look.” (p. 186)

Brontë depicts Mr. Rochester as an interesting and desirable man. He is bright, amusing and sociable. And he is also rich and born in the right cradle, which makes him even more attractive to young women than any other of his merits.

Brontë also focuses on class differences and boundaries between the lower and upper classes when she describes the love between Jane and Mr. Rochester. Jane starts to feel comfortable with Mr. Rochester and she starts to think of her feelings for him. She also thinks of his feelings for her, but suddenly she awakes from her dreaming and finds herself back in reality:

You have nothing to do with the Master of Thornfield, further than to receive the salary he gives you for teaching his protégée, and to be grateful for such respectful and kind treatment as, if you do your duty, you have a right to expect at his hands. Be sure that is the only tie he seriously acknowledges between you and him: so don't make him the object of your fine feelings, your raptures, agonies, and so forth. He is not of your order: keep to your caste..... (p. 190)

The caste system was something still very natural in the nineteenth century. It was not common that people from the upper class got mixed with the people from the lower one as the Victorian society was based on rank and privilege. Each class was clearly defined by unofficially enforced boundaries, and members of the system knew their place. Although “in practice, of course, society did not consist of three monolithic classes. Within each class there were uncertain areas and differing perceptions.” (Ingham, p.48) Nevertheless, it was something unimaginable for the society that an aristocratic man would marry a poor girl.

When Mr. Rochester opens his heart to Jane and offers her to marry him, Jane is cautious and decides to test his love for a month. In the meantime the servants notice something has happened between their Master and Jane and when Jane tells the truth about the marriage to Mrs. Fairfax (a housekeeper), her doubts are intensified:

“It passes me!” she (Mrs. Fairfax) continued: “But no doubt it is true since you say so. How it will answer, I cannot tell: I really don’t know. Equality of position and fortune is often advisable in such cases; ”

”I hope all will be right in the end,” she (Mrs. Fairfax) said: but believe me, you cannot be too careful. Try and keep Mr. Rochester at a distance: distrust yourself as well as him. Gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses.” (p. 301)

Nobody believes Mr. Rochester could mean it as it was so uncommon for the Victorian society. A noble man was not supposed to marry a governess even though she was educated and had good manners. She belonged to a lower middle-class and had to work to make her living. The Victorian upper-class society was based upon earthbound and hypocritical relationships. A man or a woman from the upper class could not marry a woman or a man from the lower middle-class because it would humble the whole family and the family would become socially isolated.

Own life experience

In the whole novel we can find a lot of similarities between the main character’s and the author’s life. For instance, Jane’s mother came from a rich family and made a low marriage. This corresponds to Charlotte’s own life. Jane became orphaned, as well as Charlotte, in her early age. Charlotte Brontë lived in an environment strongly influenced by religion as her father was an Irish clergyman and after the death of her mother Charlotte and her siblings were looked after by their strict religious aunt. Charlotte attributed this experience to Jane in the fourth part of the novel when she meets John Rivers who is a Christian clergyman and a missionary.

In the second part of the novel Charlotte Brontë depicts the life of girls of Lowood School which are based on her own memories and experiences from

the evangelical school she was sent to together with her siblings after their mother's death.

The evidence of sources other than Charlotte's novel confirms that conditions were indeed harsh and that the details of life at Lowood match those at Cowen Bridge. The school was founded on a basis of extreme evangelicalism which regarded all humanity as innately sinful and in need of regeneration by discipline. Hence the early rising to wash in ice-covered water, followed by a breakfast of porridge, often too burnt to eat. Other meals were equally unappetizing. Study was undertaken from 9 a.m. till midday; after dinner there was more study. (Ingham, p.4)

She describes the very strictly organized life of the pupils full of hardship and deficiency which was common to all charity schools. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when there was still not existing a national system of education in Britain, Charity schools provided education for the poorer sections of the society. They were less formal institutions than public schools or grammar schools and many of them were provided by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge to spread Christian knowledge, others were funded by subscriptions and endowments. They were sponsored by landlords and philanthropists, by clergy and municipalities and educated children free of charge. However, the quality of education was different school from school.²⁴

At Lowood School Jane finds a friend, Helen, who is not biased to her and who likes her. Brontë depicts the intensity of affection between these two girls culminating in the time when Jane goes to visit Helen to her room in spite of a strict ban and irrespective to any danger that might arise from the visit for her. Charlotte Brontë most probably used her memories of a relationship to her life-long friend Ellen Nussey she had met at Roe Head school.

Alone among the Brontë girls, Charlotte made friends with girls of her own age and class which were to last a lifetime. Charlotte's two closest friends were Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor. The quiet, ladylike and kind Ellen, who had comforted her when she had been in throes of homesickness in

her first weeks at school, became her bed-fellow in the dormitory and a spur to further achievement in the classroom. Even while they were both still at school, Charlotte and Ellen were already exchanging letters.....Throughout the many years of correspondence between them, Ellen was Charlotte's confidante for family problems and an emotional prop. (Barker, pp. 181, 182)

Tuberculosis was also something very familiar to Charlotte. Two of her younger sisters died of it and it is generally supposed that Charlotte died of tuberculosis herself.

Another example of implementing Brontë's own life experience in the novel is the usage of French language. She uses it in conversations between Adèle and Jane (Adèle is a daughter of a French ballet dancer and speaks hardly any English). Brontë learnt French at the pensionnat in Brussels.

In the fourth part of the novel Jane asks Mr. Rivers to find a job that she could make living on. Mr. Rivers offers her to become a country teacher for children from poor families:

He put the question rather hurriedly; he seemed half to expect an indignant, or at least a disdainful rejection of the offer: not knowing all my thoughts and feelings, though guessing some, he could not tell in what light the lot would appear to me. In truth it was humble – but then it was sheltered, and I wanted a safe asylum: it was plodding – but then, compared with that of a governess in a rich house, it was independent ; and the fear of servitude with strangers entered my soul like iron: it was not ignoble – not unworthy – not mentally degrading. ...(p. 401)

Brontë herself worked as a governess but she did not like this kind of work. She was not happy to serve in rich families as she felt humiliated there. She projects these feelings into her writing and thus Jane feels degraded when realizing the discrepancy between her own and Mr. Rochester's social standing. In line with this, Ingham points out in *The Brontës*: "Jane Eyre accepts the class hierarchy and is concerned only with her own status in it, as becomes evident in

²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charity_school, retrieved on 12 September, 2011

her reaction to Rochester's apology for his peremptory treatment of her which is indeed condescending. Her gratification at his stooping to apologize rules out any sense of humiliation. Instead she thinks to herself with a smile that "Mr. Rochester is peculiar – he seems to forget that he pays me GBP 30 per annum for receiving his orders. (book I, chapter 14)" (Ingham, p. 106) Jane clearly admits her role though it does not make her happy.

Brontë always wanted to earn enough money to run her own school. She puts this fact in mouth of Jane when she is talking to Mr. Rochester dressed up like an old gipsy woman. They are talking about Jane's future ideas of her life: "The utmost I hope is, to save money enough out of my earnings to set up a school some day in a little house rented by myself." (p. 229) So, when she gets the offer from Mr. Rivers, she is quite happy because she will not be in a subordinate role as a governess and will not have to bear dispositions and whims of misbehaved children from rich families which corresponded with Brontë's own life desires.

Yet another example of similarity between the heroine's and Brontë's lives is Jane's relationship to a married man. Charlotte Brontë fell in love with her teacher, Monsieur Heger, when she was studying at the Brussel's pensionnat. "Like Monsieur Heger, Mr. Rochester was married, and Jane, like Charlotte, would take the moral line and flee from temptations; but Jane, unlike Charlotte, would eventually win her man." (Barker, p. 510) The relationship between Charlotte Brontë and M. Heger never stepped over the intellectual level, at least not in public.

Social and industrial changes within the nineteenth century society

The Industrial Revolution and changes in everyday life are not stressed in the work. The author mentions towns and their busy life only a few times within the whole story while descriptions of the countryside are quite frequent. Once she also describes social life of people in towns, namely in London, when Miss Georgiana Reed tells Jane her experience from London balls, visits and social

events she took part in while staying at her relatives. We can notice very sketchy indications of some industrial inventions such as using coal instead of wood for heating (when Jane tries to heat up the room of Thornfield Manor) or the existence of factories (when Jane works at a charity school that is supervised by Mr. Oliver, a local factory owner). The factory and the change of social rearrangement in the countryside is described in the dialogue when Jane comes to the village of Whitcross while seeking something to eat. She enters a baker's shop and asks a woman there:

“What was the chief trade in this place? What did most of the people do? “
“Some were farm labourers; a good deal worked at Mr. Oliver's needle factory, and at the foundry.” (p. 370)

Herewith Charlotte Brontë takes down the main characteristic feature of the Industrial Revolution – the transition from the agricultural to the industrial country. The lives of Victorian people changed. The attention started to be paid more to factories and to commercial business and not to crops production and tilling the soil as centuries before. “In 1851 the population of England and Wales was 18,000,000 of whom about half were town-dwellers and half country-dwellers. By 1861 the population had risen to 20,000,000 and there were five town-dwellers to four country-dwellers; and of the country people only over 2,000,000 were employed in agriculture.” (Borer, p. 108) We can see that the general changes caused by the Industrial Revolution are noticed in the novel though very briefly and directly and that the author does not pay much attention to them.

Literary movements reflected in the novel

In *Jane Eyre* we can find various literary means specific for the gothic novel such as the wounded Mr. Mason who turns out to be bit by some supernatural creature, the all of a sudden burning bed of Mr. Rochester in the middle of the night and the peculiar sounds in the corridor of the house in Thornfield that Jane hears several times:

This was a demoniac laugh – low, suppressed, and deep – uttered, as it seemed, at the very key - hole of my chamber door. The head of my bed was near the door, and I thought at first the goblin-laughter stood at my bedside – or rather, crouched by my pillow: but I rose, looked round, and could not see nothing; while, as I still gazed, the unnatural sound was reiterated: and I knew it came from behind the panels. My first impulse was to rise and fasten the bolt; my next again to cry out, “Who is there?” Something gurgled and moaned. Ere long, steps retreated up the gallery towards the third story staircase: a door had lately been made to shut in that staircase; I heard it open and close, and all was still. (p. 175)

In time we find out that the sounds and all the events that seemed to be of supernatural character first are caused by the weird character Bertha, who is Mr. Rochester’s insane wife hidden in the attic of the house. Charlotte Brontë also uses other romantic features very often, such as gloomy weather, fogs, thunderstorms, winds or detailed description of the countryside, flowers, trees and birds in the novel. Besides these, as the Evans note, “for the majority of readers, *Jane Eyre*’s major “romantic” appeal lay and still lies in its heroine, who is placed in a succession of situations which bare her vulnerability – physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and moral, and in its hero.” (Evans, p. 243)

The novel also bears characteristics of the Bildungsroman – development of the main character both physical and mental, focus on emotions and feelings of the main character or highlighting bad life experiences and emotional deprivation. At the beginning of the story Jane is an innocent ten-year-old orphaned child full of pure and true emotions. She bears with difficulty the bullying and injustice of her aunt’s and the rest of her family’s behaviour towards herself. Jane wants to do something about it, she believes there must be some justice. After the visit of Mr. Brocklehurst at Gateshead she dares to show her true feelings for Mrs. Reed:

“*Speak* I must: I had been trodden on severely, and *must* turn: but how? What strength had I to dart retaliation at my antagonist? I gathered my energies and launched them in this blunt sentence: -

“I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved *you*, but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed; and this book about the liar, you may give to your girl, Georgiana, for it is she who tells lies, and not I”. (p.52)

It is for the first time when Jane speaks openly about her feelings and she is sure this is the right way she should behave. She understands she has the same rights as the others and she is ready to fight for them. She is a kind of a survivor full of energy to fight the evil and injustice.

By the end of the story Jane is a mature, well-balanced person. With time she gains her self-confidence and she knows then that there is no need to whimper for the absence of love from her aunt and her cousins. Jane has found out that she can find love and affection with other people. She is also aware that she can rely on herself which gives her strength and feeds her self-trust.

Emotions vs Rationality

In *Jane Eyre* we can find an inner conflict between rationality and emotionality of the main character. Jane is considering whether she should marry Mr. Rochester or not for quite a long time. She knows she should get married but she is not sure if Mr. Rochester is the right man to marry, as already mentioned above. To this topic Ingham notes:

The way that society was structured left few options for women and built perceived inferiority into the system, with many articles and conduct books to reinforce this characterization of women's nature, which frequently seemed the norm even for the women themselves. Indeed those who did not achieve married status became, in the words of an article (about what to do with such women) 'redundant'. (p. 51)

In other words, becoming a wife was, alongside with having children and taking care of the household, a major task of a woman in the Victorian Era. However,

there were different incentives for women's getting married varying according to social class they belonged to. Women from the working class were driven mainly by the material perspective as they needed someone to support them financially. It was caused by the very limited possibilities of them being employed. Opposed to lower class women, women from middle and upper-middle classes were driven mainly by the perspective of their status within the society. Marriages of daughters from these families were regarded as a business deal. They were used to secure commercial undertaking, increase wealth or raise status. Women from middle-class families were often dealt with as being objects. They could not protest against such a treatment as they did not want to be denounced by their families and to risk living the rest of their lives as spinsters, which was the ultimate way to lose their social position. As Ingham ironically claims: "When women did achieve what was seen as their main purpose-marriage-they became not first-class persons but non-persons." (p.51) What all the Victorian women had in common, was the fact that they did not marry for love.

We can notice another inner conflict between rationality and emotionality when Jane finds out that Mr. Rochester is already married in front of the altar. On the one hand, she loves him very much and wants to stay with him but, on the other hand, she wants to observe the rules she was taught. She attributes this teaching to God but in fact it was the Victorian society that established these rules. These rules are telling her that she cannot stay with Mr. Rochester in an illegitimate relationship and she had better leave so that she is not enticed to do wrong things for which she might be punished by God. All these thoughts occur in her mind where further doubts appear. As a result she feels more and more confused. To this point Evans remark: "Some readers have regarded *Jane Eyre* as a religious novel because it is the record of the fidelity of a young woman to the inexorable laws of God as she sees them. Even more, to her adherence to duty, to order, and her fidelity to what is expected of her it might be said that Jane demonstrates Christian principles in practice." (Evans, p. 248) Brontë presents here a thorny social problem of the Victorian period that includes divorce and bigamy. Bigamous relationships were not exceptional in Victorian era due to the difficulty, or almost impossibility, of getting divorced. Divorce in Victorian England was very difficult to obtain. For most people,

marriage was terminable only by death. The only reason accepted for getting a divorce was adultery, and this was only valid for men. Clearly, there was a double standard for granting divorces to men and women. Although these strict laws were modified in the mid-nineteenth century making divorces more accessible to both men and women, there was still a stigma that was placed on people who got divorced. Many felt that although the marriage was dissolved in the eyes of the law, it was still binding in the eyes of God.

Another difficulty in obtaining a divorce was its financial demandingness. From this reason it was only a feasible option for those who had money, namely the upper class. And because getting a divorce would entail the loss of some wealth and property that were passed down from generation to generation, divorce then was not a practical option. As a result, divorces were still scarce in the nineteenth-century.²⁵

Yet another example of the conflict between rationality and emotionality within Jane is the situation when St. John asks her to marry him and become a wife of a missionary to India. She has to decide whether she is going to suppress her lasting feelings for Mr. Rochester and marry a man whom she does not love and become beneficial for others, or whether she is going to free her passions and reject St. John's offer. The basis for this episode was built on Brontë's own life experience. Once she found herself in exactly the same situation when she got a proposal from the Reverend Henry Nussey, Ellen's brother. Juliet Barker remarks to this: "Charlotte liked the idea of becoming a Reverend's wife as there were positive advantages to accepting. She would no longer have to worry about provision for her future. She could forget the idea of having to return to the dreary round of teaching and look forward to the prospect of conducting her own school, save in the knowledge that her husband could support her financially." (p. 301) But, as Barker also points out, "the problem was that Charlotte, like Jane Eyre, had the romantic notion that she should love her husband." (p. 301) Ultimately, both in the novel and in Brontë's own life emotionality wins over rationality. Charlotte refuses Henry Nussey's proposal.

²⁵http://www.umd.umich.edu/casl/hum/eng/classes/434/charweb/MARR_485.htm,

retrieved on 20 September, 2011

Likewise, Jane turns down to marry St. John and sets for a journey to visit Mr. Rochester. It is not a typical behaviour of a Victorian woman as women were supposed to be submissive and obedient. They had few rights and little choice in their lives. Therefore, because marriages had their basis in wealth and social status and not in love and emotions, we can consider Jane a rebel by means of whom the author tries to revolt against the rooted social norms.

Wuthering Heights (1847)

Literary movements reflected in the novel

We can consider the novel to be a kind of a gothic novel as the characteristics of the Gothic novel prevail over other literary movements. The story of the novel takes place at moorlands of Northern England in two manors (Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights) that are a good way distant from each other and faraway from any other civilisation. The manor of Wuthering Heights is haunted by a ghost of dead Catherine Earnshaw and later when Heathcliff dies also by his ghost.

At the beginning of the story Mr. Lockwood comes to the Wuthering Heights to introduce himself as a new tenant of Thrushcross Grange. Due to coincidence of bad weather and lateness of the day, he is forced to stay overnight and the ghost appears to him in a dream:

The intense horror of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed,
Let me in – let me in!

“Who are you?” I asked struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself.

“Catherine Linton” it replied shiveringly (why did I think of *Linton*? I had read *Earnshaw* twenty times for Linton), “I am come home, I’d lost my way on the moor! (p. 67)

The author describes a very strange atmosphere of the manor of Wuthering Hights and the strange behaviour of people living there. She describes it by means of Mr. Lockwood's insights and remarks. It makes a mysterious and puzzling effect on the reader. Brontë makes only a few allusions to the actual story in the beginning which can be understood and unraveled almost by the end of the novel when explaining complicated relationships among people involved within the story.

Another characteristic of the gothic novel comes in the personality of Heathcliff who is portrayed mostly as a strange, sneaky, ill-natured and revengeful man who is able to do anything to achieve his aims. Heathcliff bears some characteristics of a Byronic hero. He is a passion-driven freak with unconventional behaviour. He is an outcast of the society without money and family roots too. "Heathcliff is a mysterious figure who destroys the beautiful woman he pursues and who usurps inheritances, and with typical Gothic excess he batters his head against a tree."²⁶ He has a troubled past as he was an orphan brought to the family of Mr. Earnshaw from Liverpool and he is not accepted by the members of the family except for Catherine who feels some kind of attraction to him as well as affinity for him since the very beginning. He has a problematic relationship with other people around.

Heathcliff suffers from an emotional conflict due to his unfulfilled love to Catherine Earnshaw. As a result of all the negative emotional experience and hardship, Heathcliff starts to oppress and abuse people around him. Being a very charismatic person, he can easily manipulate people around him.

In the novel we can find other characteristic features of Romanticism such as expression of emotions and feelings between the characters. These emotions are expressed in their various forms. We can find ever-lasting and at the same time devastating love between Heathcliff and Catherine or fatherly love of Edgar to Cathy. Beside love we can find other emotions such as passion, hardship, hatred or revenge in the novel. Emily Brontë also concentrates on the individual characters and deals with common people in *Wuthering Heights* which are other characteristics of the Romanticism. On top

²⁶ http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel_19c/wuthering/gothic.html, retrieved on 12 March, 2010

of that the author uses romantic setting of her story in the Yorkshire moorland and describes the harsh weather and countryside in details.

The novel can be regarded as a Bildungsroman too as we can trace characteristic features of the genre such as the individual's evolution, growth or formation of an individual's character within the novel. Brontë concentrates mainly on Heathcliff who is the central character of *Wuthering Heights*. We can record the gradual development of his personality. The story starts when small Heathcliff is brought to Wuthering Heights. As a foundling he is backed up by Mr. Earnshaw to the detriment of the other children of the family which has a negative effect on the development of interpersonal relationships. As Golban notes in her analysis, "every Victorian bildungsroman focuses on the individual that can be defined by his experience of the past and growing self. The essential experience is that of childhood, and the essential mode of operation of the hero's psyche is memory."²⁷ This assumption goes hand in hand with the further negative development of the main hero's character. Heathcliff becomes more reserved while accumulating aversion and aggression against the others. The turning point comes when Heathcliff returns to Wuthering Heights from the world notably changed and moneyed; he takes a revenge on all the people who, as he thinks, have mentally harmed him. In the end, right before his death when he is witness to the love between Cathy and Hareton he seems to come to reconciliation by abandoning the desire of revenge.

Emotions vs. Rationality

The contrast between emotionality and rationality mingles throughout the novel. The author presents two opposite worlds, each of them belonging to one polarity. Wuthering Heights and people living there are described as emotional – wild, natural and passionate while Thrushcross Grandge and its inhabitants are depicted as rational, ballanced, restricted and sophisticated.

In *Wuthering Heights* as well as in *Jane Eyre* we can find a similar conflict situation between emotionality and rationality. As Jane is considering if she

²⁷ <http://sbe.dpu.edu.tr/8/299.pdf>, retrieved on 15 September, 2011

should leave Mr. Rochester or stay with him, Catherine is considering if she should marry Heathcliff, whom she loves, or Edgar, who can give her the status within the society. Once Catherine tells Nelly the secret that she agreed to marry Edgar and wants to know her opinion if she did the right decision. Nelly asks her then why she wants to marry Edgar and not any other man:

“...do you love Mr. Edgar? “

“Who can help it? Of course, I do,” she answered.

Then I put her through the following catechism – for a girl of twenty-two, it was not injudicious.

“Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?”

“Nonsense, I do – that’s sufficient.”

“By no means; you must say why.”

“Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with.”

“Bad,” was my commentary.

“And because he is young and cheerful.”

“Bad, still.”

“And because he loves me.”

“Indifferent, coming there,”

“And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband. (p. 119)

It is obvious that Catherine does not feel any love for Edgar. She likes the way he looks and behaves, she loves his money and she is aware that Edgar loves her which means (at least she thinks so) that he would do anything to please her. Moreover, she wants his money to assure her wished social status but also to be able to support Heathcliff whom she really loves. As the primary role of a woman in the Victorian society was to be married, every woman wanted to find the best match in her neighbourhood. From this point of view Edgar seems to be the right choice because the Linton’s family belong to the landed gentry with a relatively stable position within the social hierarchy. Even though Catherine can make a good match and marry up, she is not happy. She would like to marry Heathcliff, but she can not because Heathcliff as a foundling with gypsy blood belongs to the bottom of the Victorian society. Catherine realizes

well she would marry down to her status. The greatest problem for her is not to break the set moral rules though but to lose the social status and suffer from money shortage. "The conflict which she senses in herself is stated in terms of a contrast between the *agreeable* and the *necessary*, between emotions which serve to adorn life and others whose absence is felt, at a level at once deeper and more dangerous, to be equivalent to the death of the spirit." (Traversi, p. 255) Her unhappiness based on discrepancy of her mind grows until she falls ill. It causes her a lot of inner harm, she suffers from hallucinations and turns to dreaming to escape her real life.

Emily Brontë puts money and social status against love and emotions and creates a conflict which has a far-reaching effect on lives of all the people involved. Thus she stresses the main values of the Victorian middle-class society which is considered as prevalently materialistic. She criticises the futile and self-serving behavior of Catherine and brings her punishment in the form of misery.

Social and industrial changes within the nineteenth century society

The novel is set in the period when the new structure of the society in England appeared and relationships between social classes were formed. "Agriculture had long been in relative decline, since it is the essence of industrial and commercial growth that the non-agricultural proportion of population should increase." (Thompson, p. 25) We can see the disappearing group of old farmers represented by Hareton who should be the heir to his father's farm and lands but suppressed by newly appeared middle class represented by Heathcliff who mysteriously grew rich while staying out of Wuthering Heights. Thanks to his money and tricky nature Heathcliff takes from Hareton his heritage. Brontë shows here her very good knowledge of the nineteenth century law though there is not a single evidence in her biography that she would have ever been educated in this field. Opposed to many other novelists, she correctly applies the Common Law, mainly the Law of inheritance and the Property law, when

depicting the acquirement of both properties, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, by Heathcliff, as Sanger points out: “What is remarkable about Wuthering Heights is that the ten or twelve legal references are, I think, sufficient to enable us to ascertain the various legal processes by which Heathcliff obtained the property. It is not a simple matter.”²⁸ In the novel Brontë also reflects the position of a woman within marriage, a widely discussed topic in the Victorian society when she describes the matrimonial relationships between Heathcliff and Isabel and Cathy and Linton. She demonstrates the application of law on several examples here and highlights the unjust position of a married woman.²⁹

Class inequality

In *Wuthering Heights* the conflict between classes is apparent in every respect. The lower class is represented by Heathcliff and Wuthering Heights and the upper class is represented by Edgar and Thrushcross Grange. Brontë depicts Thrushcross Grange with astonishment as something beautiful and extraordinary in comparison to Wuthering Heights:

Both of us were able to look in by standing on the basement, and lingering to the ledge, and we saw – ah! It was beautiful – a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers. (p. 89)

Home had a special meaning for Victorian people as a family was at the centre of their interest. Its primal purpose was to provide as much privacy to its family members as possible. At the same time there was, as Thompson states, “an equally important purpose for its size, appearance, style, and location to be

²⁸ <http://www.wuthering-heights.co.uk/legal.htm>, retrieved on 5 April, 2010

²⁹ Married women had very limited rights. The law regarded a married couple as one person. A wife was supposed to obey her husband. All her personal property brought into the marriage was then owned by her husband, even in case of a divorce. The wife was not able to conclude any contract on her own; she needed her husband's agreement.

plainly visible as a statement of the owner's precise place in the social hierarchy". Besides comparing the houses and living conditions of the two involved families, Brontë describes and compares the habits and individual characters of persons living at Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. She stresses the difference between these two worlds.

She emphasises the contrast through mutual perception and observation of differences between classes and their representatives within the novel. Thus we can see that the Lintons are horrified with Heathcliff's appearance and his way of speaking whenever they meet him and, on the contrary, that Heathcliff disdains their manners. The contrast is most obvious when Cathrine comes back home from Thrushcross Grange after a few weeks she spent there:

Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks, till Christmas. By that time her ankle was thoroughly cured, and her manners much improved. The mistress visited her often, in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery, which she took readily: so that, instead of a wild, hattless little savage jimping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there lighted from handsome black pony a very dignified person, with brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in.
(p. 93)

The social gap between Catherine and Heathcliff widens. As Catherine looks up to the Lintons, she tries to familiarize with their habits and their way of life as much as possible in the course of her stay at Thrushcross Range. In relatively short time she changes her look, manners and behaviour. She leaves as a woman and she comes back as a lady. This is the turning point between her and Heathcliff. While Catherine admires the sophisticate, gentlemanly manners and she starts to desire living the "high life" herself, Heathcliff has no real aspirations to gentility and he shows no interest in luxury. The class conflict is the actual and primal reason of all the future tragedies portrayed in the novel. Catherine prefers Edgar to Heathcliff because Edgar is wealthy and can assure Cathrine an upper-class social status which was so important in the Victorian

society where at the top of the society was the royalty, followed by the aristocracy, then by the gentry and then by the lower classes. The social status of aristocrats was formal and settled within the hierarchy because aristocrats had official titles. Members of the gentry held no titles and their status was changeable in accordance to the possession they kept.

Another social topic Brontë incorporates in the novel is that of social mobility and its incentives. On the one hand, there is Catherine who desires and tries hard to become a lady, on the other hand, there is Heathcliff who primarily does not intend to become a member of the upper-class but who, driven by his revengful desires, becomes a lord in the end. In her book Ingham comments: "Heathcliff has shown that upward mobility is available not only through a combination of high-minded diligence and talent but through low-mindedness, ruthlessness, and opportunism at the expense of the others." (p. 127) Brontë proves here that social mobility is not only a womanly subject as presented in most Victorian novels but that it exists in various forms with both sexes.

Own life experience

The title of the novel comes from the Yorkshire manor and "wuthering" is a Yorkshire word meaning turbulent weather. Emily Brontë set the story of her only novel into the countryside of Yorkshire which was her beloved home-country. She describes details of the surroundings and of the houses which are most likely the houses she knew personally and that really existed in her times.

Is Wuthering Heights as pleasant a place as Thrushcross Grange?" he inquired, turning to take a last glance into the valley, whence a light mist mounted, and formed a fleecy cloud, on the skirts of the blue.

"It is not so burried in trees," I replied and it is not quite so large, but you can see the country beautifully, all round; and the air is healthier for you – fresher and dryer. You will, perhaps, think the building old and dark, at first – thugh it is a respectable house, the next best in the neighbourhood. And you will have such nice rambles on the moors! (p. 240)

Emily's love of nature is very apparent in her novel. She loved walking in the moors and watching nature which is reflected in her writing. "The region in which the Brontë lived, like the rest of the country, had been a hierarchical society in which superior status depended on inherited rank, ownership of land, or practice in certain professions." (Ingham, p. 44) Emily used this knowledge to outline the social background of the novel and to depict the major social conflicts between the main characters.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Charles John Huffman Dickens was born in Portsmouth as the second out of eight children to John Dickens and Elisabeth Barrow. His father was a clerk in Navy Pay Office. John was very hospitable and generous which caused him financial difficulties throughout his life. In 1814 the family moved to London where Charles received some education. When he was not attending school, he and his siblings were reading, played various games, gave recitations of poetry and created theatrical productions that initiated Charles' life-long love for the theatre. Dickens' household expenses were rising and in 1824 John Dickens was arrested for debts. Charles, at the age of twelve was sent to work at Warren's Shoe Blacking Factory to support the family. Thus, he was suddenly introduced to the world of the working poor. This life experience had a strong effect on his future life and the working and living conditions of the poor became the central theme of his novels. After finishing school in 1827 Dickens worked as a law office clerk and shorthand reporter. At that time, he spent much of his spare time reading in the British Museum's library. He was contributing to numerous periodicals and newspapers. In 1833, his first story *A Dinner at Poplar Walk* was published in Monthly Magazine and his career as a writer of fiction started. Most of his novels were first serialised in monthly magazines as was a common practice of the time. His first book *Sketches by Boz* was published in 1836. Dickens' first novel *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, stories about a group of rather odd individuals and their travels was published in 1836.

In the same year, Dickens accepted the job of an editor of Bentley's Miscellany, a position he held for three years. At the same time his success as a novelist continued. He wrote *Oliver Twist* (1837 – 1839), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838 – 1839), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840 – 1841) and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841).

In 1836, Charles Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, daughter of the editor of the Evening Chronicle. In 1842, after the death of Catherine's sister Mary, who became a character in many of Dickens's books, the couple travelled to the United States and Canada to support the abolition of slavery and these travels led Charles to write *American Notes* (1842). In this work he admires the American democracy but at the same time he criticizes its shortcomings. It was followed by *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843 – 1844), *The Chimes* (1845), *Cricket on the Heart* (1846). In 1844, the Dickens travelled to Italy where they settled for a year in Genoa. His *Pictures of Italy* (1846) were written there. After his return from abroad, Dickens continued with his success with *Dombey and Son* (1848) and *David Copperfield* (1849 – 1850).

In 1851, Charles Dickens moved to Tavistock House in London where he wrote *Bleak House* (1852 – 1853), *Hard Times* (1854) and *Little Dorrit* (1857). Later, he wrote his major works *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Great Expectations* (1860 – 1861). During the last decade of his life, Dickens devoted most of his time to the public reading from his best-loved novels and his travelling shows were extremely popular not only in England and Scotland but also in the United States. In June 1870 Dickens suffered his last of a series of strokes and died. He is regarded as the most popular of the English novelist of the Victorian era and one of the greatest realistic novel authors of the nineteenth century. In all his works Dickens described the lives and fates of characters coming from the lowest social class such as orphans, working-class people or criminals. He also paid special attention to children in his works. As Phillip Collins remarks in his essay *Dickens and his Readers*, "it was in line with his feeling for family and home that Dickens effectively introduced childhood as a major topic in English fiction". (*Victorian Values*, p. 51) Many of his novels first appeared in magazines in serialized form but unlike other authors of that time.

He brought thrill to his stories to keep the public curious about the next instalment. Most of his stories take place partly or completely in London.

Being widely read in his time, Charles Dickens became a very influential writer who was able to change the approach of general public to the lower of lowers and to highlight the perception of social problems of the day. With his stories he was able to change the opinion of the public in regard to class inequalities and to make the Victorian public confront various social issues that had been commonly ignored in the past.

Great Expectations (1861)

Class inequality

Class inequality is the central topic of *Great Expectations*. Throughout the book, we can learn about various social classes and thus we get quite a detailed information about the early Victorian England.

Class is a complex term, in use since the late eighteenth century, and employed in many different ways. In our context classes are the more or less distinct social groupings which at a given historical period, taken as a whole, constituted British Society. Different social classes can be (and were by the classes themselves) distinguished by inequalities in such areas as power, authority, wealth, working and living conditions, life-styles, life-span, education, religion, and culture. The basic hierarchical structure, comprising the „upper classes“, the „middle classes“, the „working classes“ (with skilled labourers at one extreme and unskilled at the other), and the impoverished „Under Class“, remained relatively stable despite periodic (and frequently violent) upheavals, and despite the Marxist view of the inevitability of the class conflict, at least until the outbreak of World War I.³⁰

³⁰ <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/Class.html>, retrieved on 2 June, 2010

In the novel, each class is represented by a character with whom Pip becomes involved. We can briefly mention the lower of the lowers' representatives who are criminals Magwitch and Compeyson. The working class is represented by Joe, Pip's brother-in-law and best friend and Biddy who runs an evening school and becomes Pip's teacher and the upper class is represented by Herbert Pocket, a friend of Pip who shares with him an apartment in London, Mr. Jagers or Miss Havisham.

Dickens introduces the conflict between the upper and lower class right at the beginning of the story when Pip meets Estella and he starts to realize the difference between him and his family and Estella and the environment she lives in. Pip lives in the family of the blacksmith Joe, a husband of Pip's sister who took care of Pip after their parents had died. Pip is quite happy there and he is preparing for his future job as a blacksmith. He lives under modest conditions but he is happy to have home. On the other hand, Estella is raised by Mrs. Havisham in a large house and has the comfort to suit all her needs. When Estella and Pip meet for the first time, Pip is fascinated by her beauty, her appearance and her assorted manners. All his positive feelings about Estella are amplified by the luxury and affluence he sees in the house. He suddenly realizes that he starts to be ashamed of his family roots, he notices that his language is different from Estella's. "I took the opportunity of being alone in the courtyard, to look at my coarse hands and my common boots. My opinion of those accessories was not favourable. They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now." (p. 59) Pip realizes that Estella looks at him with disdain because of his roots and his appearance that is typical for the working class representative. He decides to earn money to be "upgraded" to the higher class society to come close to Estella and attract her interest. At the same time, he fights his inner fight between the desire and reason. He feels guilty when he thinks of his roots and family as something worse in comparison to Mrs. Havisham and her affluent acquaintances. Pip is wondering if it is not ingratitude to be ashamed of his home as he was happy to stay with his sister after their parents had died. He realizes he could have ended up in the street having no roof above his head. As Lucas notes in *The Melancholy Man* "Pip feels acutely guilty about Joe because in spite of his education and his ambitions he is basically a good man. More especially, he feels guilt because he is aware of

human ties that conflict with social obligations and class distinctions.” (p. 296) He wishes his best friend Joe was genteelly brought up so that he could have been genteelly brought up too. He would like to be rich and to mingle with the higher society. His home is not as good for him as it used to be in the past. He dreams of a better future for himself. All his new feelings, both positive and negative, are provoked by his love for Estella whom he adores. This conflict shows the repugnancy between the individual classes represented in the Victorian society.

Another confrontation of lower and upper classes comes when Pip is told about his secret donator who wants to assure him a better future. Because he does not know who his benefactor is, Pip starts to create his own scenario in his mind. He would love Mrs. Havisham to be his donator because he looks up to her with admiration based on her class ranking and possession. Pip would love to belong to Mrs. Havisham’s “family“. We can see yet another confrontation between classes in an episode when Pip takes a coach to visit Miss Havisham:

It came out that the whole of the back of the coach had been taken by a family removing from London, and that there were no places for the two prisoners but on the seat in front, behind the coachman. Hereupon, the choleric gentleman, who had taken the fourth place on that seat, flew into a most violent passion, and said that it was a breach of contract to mix him with such villainous company, and that it was poisonous and pernicious and infamous and shameful, and I don’t know what else. (p. 224)

It is obvious that the criminals were perceived as the bottom of the Victorian society and that it was unacceptable for other people, even from the lower class, to be mixed with them. Dickens shows that the caste system was nestled well within the nineteenth century English society. People from one class did not want to be mixed with people from another class and this was applied throughout the whole society. Thus it was unthinkable for an upper class representative to sit on the coach next to a working class person as for the example above.

In *Great Expectations* Dickens stresses negative characteristics of people from the upper class such as exploitation and falseness and the positive

characteristics of people from the lower class such as dedication and modesty at the same time. Thus, Mr. Jaggers is described as a prominent London lawyer who makes servants of his poor clients who would do or pay anything to stay out of prison. He simply misuses the poor position of lower class people to make a living on them. Miss Havisham is a great manipulator who uses Pip for her own amusement and makes him believe that Estella could become his future wife.

Dickens proves here that money does not assure happiness. He portrays the character of Miss Havisham who is a rich old spinster having everything but happiness. She has to “buy” love through the adoption of Estella who substitutes for the real family to her. She lives closed in her house away from the outer life, feeling sorry for herself and her lost love and thinking of her unhappiness. On the other hand, Joe, having almost nothing but his blacksmithery, never complains about anything. He peacefully lives his life and accepts all the good and bad coming into his life with open arms. He is content despite his impoverished life and would do anything to help others.

Emotions vs. Rationality

Pip likes Bidy because of her nature and her qualities but at the same time he thinks she is not good enough for him, a future rich man. To this point Lucas notes: “Estella’s influence has deeply conditioned his ways of seeing people, Bidy not excluded. Though he knows that she is better than Estella, it is Estella who becomes the ideal against which Bidy is measured”. (p.295) He thinks of Estella as of his future wife but not in terms of her personality but of her appearance. Dickens highlights the superficiality of some people and shows that “not everything that glitters is gold”. Pip perceives Estella through her outer look that shades her wickedness. He sees only her nice clothes and good manners acquired by being raised in the upper class society and disregards her real nature being selfish, proud, masterful and disdainful. As he repeatedly confronts Estella with Bidy and vice versa, Pip’s mind is getting bewildered:

And now, because my mind was not confused enough before, I complicated its confusion fifty thousand-fold, by having states and seasons when I was clear that Bidley was immeasurably better than Estella, and that the plain honest working life to which I was born had nothing in it to be ashamed of, but offered me sufficient means of self-respect and happiness. (p. 130)

We can see Pip's disorderly and unbalanced personality caused by his lasting inner conflict between emotions and understanding. He is captivated by Estella's appearance but is at the same time well-aware of her bad character qualities. Several times in his thoughts he moves towards her as his future wife and several times his brain tells him he should not think in this way and he had better choose Bidley to become his wife. Pip has never really loved Estella he only wanted to marry her to acquire the upper class status.

Pip is also aware of his inappropriate conducting to Joe when being promoted to the upper class. On the one hand, he wants to impress Estella and wants to avoid meeting people Estella would regard as inadequate yet, on the other hand, he feels his disposition is incorrect because he still feels strong devotion to Joe and Bidley and does not want to lose them. Consequently, he gets into the state of chronic uneasiness twinging his conscience. Nearly by the end of the story when Pip meets his real benefactor, he realizes how blind he was and he regrets that because of Estella and Magwitch he neglected his real friend Joe.

Dickens stresses that the real beauty is not seen from outside but is hidden inside each person's personality. At the end of Pip's story, when he grows wiser and realizes he would not be happy with Estella, he would love to marry Bidley but it is not possible anymore. Pip comes from the Orient to find out that she has already married Joe and that both of them are very happy. Dickens also proves that one can not judge others just according to their social status but according to their real qualities. We can see it in the comparison of the two women characters, Bidley and Estella, or in the case of Magwitch who got into prison by coincidence but the label of a criminal will last on him forever. Good qualities, mainly being hard-working and kind, however, prevail in his character .

Own life experience

Much of the story is placed in London where Dickens spent most of his life. He describes the atmosphere of the city and characters from various social classes. The main character, Pip, is described as an orphaned boy who has to work to earn money for his living in which we can see a parallel with the author's own life. However, the main similarity between Dickens's life and *Great Expectations* is in the character of Wemmick who is a lawyer's clerk. When Dickens was fifteen, he was employed as a clerk in a solicitor's office. He uses this experience to describe Wemmick and his duties. Dickens also describes the office itself and makes use of his knowledge in the field of law. "There was a bookcase in the room; I saw from the backs of the books, that they were about evidence, criminal law, criminal biography, trials, acts of parliament, and such things." (pp. 207-208) Another own life experience used in the story can be found in the relationship between Pip and Estella. Pip loves Estella but she does not find him appropriate for herself because he is not a representative of the upper class. Charles Dickens fell in love with Maria Beadnell, a girl from an upper class family, when he was nineteen. For some three years he had been paying court to her. Unfortunately, his advances were soon overridden and finally rebuffed. "That he was thwarted and stalled and frustrated and wounded there is no doubt; he was always afraid of being rebuffed, and now, for the first time, he had been rejected. In later life he seemed to regard it as a traumatic event – one which he had "locked up" in his own breast and which, he said, had led directly to a "habit of suppression" which meant that he could never display his true feelings to anyone not even to his children." (Ackroyd, p. 79) Maria's parents were also sure to play a significant role in this relationship. They did not approve of the young Charles mainly because of his father's debts.

Social and industrial changes within the nineteenth century society

In the novel we can find a lot of hints to modern and fashionable habits of Victorian people during the first half of the nineteenth century, such as rum and punch drinking, sugar sweetening, coffee drinking or tobacco smoking. During his living in London, Pip often goes to various concerts, theatres and becomes a regular book and periodicals reader.

We can also find the latest economic theories of that time concerning mainly capital investments and development of business used in the novel. Herbert dreams about running his own business. He wants to own an insurance company and trade with the East Indies to earn a lot of money. Based on the economic findings he wants to diversify his business activities to minimize the risk. "I shall not rest satisfied with merely employing my capital in insuring ships. I shall buy up some good Life Assurance shares, and cut into the Direction. I shall also do a little in the mining way. None of these things will interfere with my chartering a few thousand tons on my own account. I think I shall trade," said he, leaning back in his chair, „to the East Indies, for silks, shawls, spices, dyes, drugs and precious woods.“ (p. 179) The Industrial Revolution was a time when middle class appeared and became an influential part of the society. They started their own businesses and contributed fundamentally to the economic development of Britain. This fact was something that Charles Dickens could not avoid in his realistic description of the nineteenth century life.

In the story we can find information about the British Empire, which is a topic widely used in Victorian literature. We also get to know the system of convict transportation to Australia in the nineteenth century. As the old penal system proved costly in terms of feeding, housing and maintaining, "the government announced that it would freely lend its convicts to anybody who would relieve them of the burden of supporting them. There soon grew keen competition for convict labour. They were employed not only as agricultural labourers on farmlands, but those who had a trade or a profession were eagerly sought for work in the towns." (Avery, p. 235) Abel Magwitch, a convict dispatched to the colony of New South Wales, first worked as a slave on the

farm of a free British settler for food and lodgings. After the death of his master he continued to run his own farming, prospered and grew rich.

Dickens describes Australia as a place of opportunity where anyone can earn fortune if working hard. He also notes the social structure within the empire. People from the colonies were not taken equally in comparison to people from the Central Britain. Dickens describes the situation when Pip finds out that his real benefactor is a former convict and that the money, which was to assure “great expectations” to him, comes from the Australian colony. Pip realizes he would never be accepted by the London’s society and he rejects to take other money from Magwitch and decides to start working as a regular employee in Herbert’s Middle East Company.

In *Great Expectations* we can also get to know the situation in the largest city of that time, London. Thus we learn that the traffic in London was very thick, that London was a wicked place where a man could be easily robbed, cheated and murdered. We can also learn that London was a very filthy and always foggy place. London fogs were famous then; there were white, green, yellow fogs, the exhalations of coal fires and steamboats, factories and breweries. Streets were lit with gas lanterns, ship and railway transport were developing. Dickens’s description of London in *Great Expectations* takes us back to London of his childhood and youth. “Dickens never ceased to live in that old city. Even as he walked along the Thames Embankment, he was still walking with Pip through the city of forty years before. For the old city was the one in which he always lived. It was the city of his dreams and the city of his imagination.” (Ackroyd, p. 465) It is evident from his biographies that Dickens was a conservative man who was not in favour of industrial changes and who never got used to the industrial advancement.

Literary movements reflected in the novel

Great Expectations is a typical Bildungsroman³¹ as it focuses on psychological and moral growth of the main character that goes through a fundamental

³¹ The bildungsroman is a genre which arose in Germany and had extensive influence on literary writing first in Europe and later throughout the world. After Thomas Carlyle had translated Goethe’s

development of his personality. The story begins when Pip is a seven year old boy staying with his sister and her husband Joe in an old blacksmithery and ends when Pip is an adult and mature person. By a circumstance he gets in contact with luxury and affluent people which strongly influences the future development of his character. On his way to maturity Pip gets into the identity conflict which is caused by a collision between his wishes and desires and rules accepted by the society. He wishes to become one of the rich, to become a gentleman. He starts to be dissatisfied with his existing life and wants to change it, but, at the same time, he knows he cannot abandon Joe just because he is not educated and does not have assorted manners.

Another example of the clash between Pip's needs and desires and the views and judgements of the society, comes when Pip meets his real patron. Pip is ashamed of his donator's criminal past and he does not want to be connected with a convict and thus to endanger his longed-for social ranking. However, he at the same time desires to have his money. First, Pip wants to break off the contact with Magwitch and strictly refuses his wish to spend with him the rest of his life. Later though, when the danger of Magwitch's arrest emerges, Pip's positive self prevails. He realizes that Magwitch worked hard to ensure a better life for him and tries hard to save the convict's life. As Suzanne Hader points out "the process of maturity in a bildungsroman is long, gradual, and often arduous."³² Dickens describes a character with a rich inner life who undergoes a large personal development within the story. At the end of the novel, Pip metaphorically gets back on the right track when he decides to set on his own way and to earn money step by step by working as a regular clerk. Through several fatal events and his life experience Pip finally realizes how foolish person he was and that his "great expectations" he had were nothing but an illusion. The realization of own mistakes and reassessment of the hero's life as well as finding and accepting the hero's right place within the society are yet another characteristic features of the bildungsroman.

In the novel we can also find some characteristic features of Critical Realism. Dickens attacks the upper class when he describes the qualities of a

novel into English in the 1820s, many British authors wrote novels inspired by it. The genre reached its peak in popularity in the twentieth century.

³² <http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/hader1.html>, retrieved on 4 October, 2011

traditional gentleman. In the Victorian society a gentleman was a man of good manners, wealth and status, someone who could afford good education, wore fine clothes and ate assorted delicacies. At the same time, it was someone who could spend money foolishly, go into debt and live a futile and empty life. All these characteristics are attributed to Pip when he is living in London. Dickens contrasts external qualities of a gentleman with internal qualities of an “ordinary” blacksmith, such as outspokenness, morality and kindness. Generally, the author describes his characters from the working class as more simple but also more honest and sincere than people from the upper classes. He also shows that money does not necessarily bring happiness and that people from the upper class are not happier than those from the lower class. He thus attacks the society’s view of the crucial significance of wealth and money.

Hard Times (1853)

Class inequality

In the novel Charles Dickens tries to reflect the times of the Industrial Revolution faithfully. *Hard Times*, as well as Dickens’s other later novels, “is concerned with the confrontation of the rich and the poor, the privileged and the unprivileged, the gentle and the rough, capital and labour”, as Barbara Hardy remarks in her essay. She also points out that “it is perhaps not surprising that Dickens’s concern with social criticism becomes more passionate, more urgent, more sharply and wholly shaping the force in the novels” (p.15) as there was depression, riot and genuine fear of revolution in England in those days. In *Hard Times* there are more main characters to depict the society and their mutual relationships running through all the classes. Cecilia Jupe is a small girl who is up to the age of seven growing up in the environment of Sleary’s circus. Her father, a circus performer, enrolls her in Gradgrind’s school to assure her some education and thus supposingly a better life. Yet, Sissi does not do well at school. She is reminded of her roots and confronted with her fellow students all

the time. Dickens describes Sissi as a simple girl using her plain common sense and representing the class of “circus folk” generally viewed as a lower class or, we can say, the lower of the lower class. She has to suffer the humiliation from Mr. Gradgrind, the headmaster of the school and a big advocate of utilitarian approach in education. He lays emphasis on statistics and facts strictly rejecting any imagination with his pupils. As Hobsbaum remarks, the Grandgrind’s educational method based on question and answer approach is not exaggerated: “Dickens has taken it from the Birkbeck schools, founded by William Ellis, a Utilitarian, and friend of John Stuart Mill. His intention was to equip the poor for their social function in an industrial society.” (p.176) Education started to be generally viewed as crucial for the middle and upper classes at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Consequently, the education system started to develop considerably in the course of the century. It was influenced by the main philosophical ideology of Victorian times – utilitarianism.³³ “Utilitarians saw education as a matter of accumulating information and understanding. According to them this would be sufficient for progress and social peace” as Black writes in his *Victorian Culture and Society* (p. 431). In the novel, Dickens presents his disagreement with this theory showing how this ideology can, on the contrary, ruin the lives of individuals. In Dickens’s interpretation, the prevalence of utilitarian values in educational institutions created young adults whose imagination had been neglected due to an over-emphasis on facts at the expense of more imaginative pursuits.³⁴ In the nineteenth century education was supposed to reduce crime and pauperism and therefore several ideas about widespread education were introduced to the House of Commons. All the efforts to develop the educational system were more or less unsuccessful mostly due to financial intensity until 1870 when the Education Act, which set the framework for schooling of all children between ages 5 and 12 in England and Wales, was finally passed. Using the topic of education in *Hard Times* Charles Dickens supported his life-long activities

³³ Utilitarianism is the theory which says that the right action is the one that brings out the largest amount of positive values and minimizes the suffering and pain at the same time. (utility can be defined as pleasure minus pain, knowledge or other things)

³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hard_Times#Prevalence_of_utilitarianism, retrieved on 5 August, 2010

around schooling. He was a big advocate of Ragged Schools³⁵ as he wanted to permit the education to children from deprived families and thus to improve their employment opportunities. He strongly believed in the transforming power of education. His attempt was derived from his own life experience and from his desire for education, which he was not granted to the extent he wished. Dickens supported the schools financially on various occasions all his life.

Good education and literacy was also viewed as assurance of prestigious employment, which securely brought a certain social status. Therefore, the topic of education is highlighted and layed emphasis upon in *Hard Times* as it reflected the current events and changes taking place within the society. The class conflict is portrayed as a continual confrontation of individuals of different classes. As it was usual for the Victorian era different classes did not mix. We can notice this fact when Mr. Gradgrind offers Sissi to adopt her under the condition that she would give up her friends from the Sleary's circus and she would not meet them again. It would be unthinkable for a teacher to be seen in the society of "circus people" as he would lose all his credibility. The general awarness of the social caste system makes Mr. Gradgrind forbid his children, the children of a Coketown teacher, to visit the circus hosting in the town not to get in the company of wrong people and to be mistaken by the "fancy thinking" because they are brought up in the awareness that facts are the only and most important ways of considering.

On the other hand, there is Mrs. Sparsit who is described as a "highly connected lady" (p. 47). She enjoys the privileged status in the house of Mr. Bounderby, which she believes to deserve. Dickens ironically describes a sort of upper class people who do not have to work and still hold their status based either on their family roots or former connections within the society. Dickens shows that these people do not deserve the way they are treated and confronted them with people from the lower class to prove that less moneyed people can be richer in their morality. The same topic is used in his *Great Expectations*. Mrs. Sparsit thus turns out to be a very prying person whose

³⁵ Ragged Schools were charitable schools appointed to poor children; they first appeared in the 1840s. The education was provided for free there. The schools were developed in working class districts of industrial towns.

qualities outclass her position within the society and she gets her punishment in the form of being elegantly sent-off from her provider's house in the end.

Further, we can find Mr. Boudery standing on the edge between the upper and lower class in the novel. He was born to a lower class family but thanks to his own efforts he becomes a highly acknowledged Coketown's businessman and a banker. He disdains lower class people and stresses that if anyone wants, he or she can achieve a better position within the society like him on condition that he or she tries hard. Again, as in his other novels, Dickens tries to prove that social mobility is possible. He strictly rejects the generally accepted view that people from the lower class cannot be promoted into the middle or even upper class. In the character of Josiah Boudery the author highlighted negative qualities of the wealthy such as superiority exercised over the less moneyed or falseness and insincerity.

Dickens also concentrates on the working class in this novel. He describes mainly the bad working conditions and strict working regime of workers that are called "Hands" here. He puts them in contrast to Boudery's living conditions full of luxury and affluence. Whenever a worker from his factory comes to see him, Boudery immediately assumes he or she is coming to complain about bad working conditions, which he always regards as improper. He stultifies all the working class and their conditions with his regular saying that "any Hand who is not entirely satisfied expects to be fed on turtle soup and venison with a gold spoon". (p. 70) Turtle soup and venison were expensive dishes served only in the best taverns or on special occasions and banquets. Boudery thinks of the workers as of machines that can work from dawn to sunset, and who have no needs as only a little is enough to satisfy them. His aim is to earn as much money as possible whatever the costs are.

Next to the class and social inequalities Dickens also explores the theme of inequality in terms of law. Stephen Blackpool does not have the same rights as Mr. Boudery when being in the same life situation. As Hobsbaum remarks to this topic: "His (Stephen's) contrast with Boudery is not that between master and man; it is rather that between a husband rich enough to free himself of his wife and one too poor to do any such thing." (p.183) Generally said, rich people could favour the laws applied to all the contemporary people in Britain during the nineteenth century while the poor could not use the same laws

because they did not have enough money to pay for the routine procedure. The routine procedure was settled by the Government whose members were upper class and well-off people. The Government passed laws that were basically discriminating the poor and served to moneyed people to exercise their power.

Emotions vs. Rationality

The conflict between emotions and rationality takes place in various forms in the novel and we can say that it is one of its main themes. With this conflict Dickens attacks the utilitarians and their views.

Theoretical Utilitarian ethics hold that promotion of general social welfare is the ultimate goal for the individual and society in general: “the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people”. Dickens believed that in practical terms, the pursuit of a totally rationalized society could lead to great misery.³⁶

First, we can notice the conflict when Cecilia has to decide whether she is going to stay with the Sleary’s circus company, with people she knows and wait if her father comes back to her, or whether she abandons the environment familiar to her and stays with Mr. Gradgrinds’ family where she would be given a possibility to attend school. Cecilia has to decide between her emotions full of love and attachment to the people from the circus and rationality telling her she should join the Gradgrinds’ family that can give her better background for her future life. Rationality prevails in this case.

Another example of the conflict between rationality and emotionality can be seen in the confrontation between the Gradgrind’s and Cecilia’s families. Mr. Gradgrind is an earnest teacher of Coketown who believes only in practicality of life and who represents facts. He does not acknowledge any kind of emotion and according to him the only sense of one’s life is to do things rationally and accurately by using one’s reason. Cecilia, on the other hand, is a representative

³⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hard_Times#Prevalence_of_utilitarianism, retrieved on 6 August, 2010

of a life based on fantasies and amusement. She is warm-hearted and full of emotions and does not understand the substance of facts. When these two worlds come in contact, a lot of misunderstandings and disappointments arise. Cecilia goes through hard times at the beginning of her stay with the Gradgrinds. Later, we can notice that reasonability and facts give way to emotions and fantasy. Cecilia evolves from an underestimated and humiliated girl into a respected and favourable person who influences people around herself. She changes the behaviour of Mr. Gradgrind who becomes more susceptible to his daughter's feelings and starts to give priority to emotions over rationality after Luisa's breakdown.

The clash between rationality and emotionality can also be found in the person of Luisa who marries Mr. Bounderby, a Coketown's businessman and banker, because she is supposed to do so to strengthen her social status and to retain a comfortable life. She does what is "reasonable". Luisa marries a man some thirty years older without loving him, which she finds natural as she was taught to negate her emotions and to fulfill her father's wishes. When she meets James Harthouse, she suddenly reevaluates her up-to-date life and realizes that she hates facts, which she was taught since her childhood and rationality she was brought up within. She realizes that she prefers emotions and affections. Luisa expresses all her conviction in an intimate dialogue with her father:

...if you had known that there lingered in my breast, sensibilities, affections, weaknesses, capable of being cherished into strength, defying all the calculations ever made by man, and no more known to his arithmetic than his Creator – would you have given me to the husband whom I am now sure that I hate? (p. 214)

Dickens here attacks the Victorian society who neglected an individual's feelings and emotions. He also attacks Jeremy Bentham, the Utilitarian philosopher, social and political reformist, and his contemporary "who neglected human and cultural values and trusted reason as able to overcome any problem" in his teaching.³⁷ With Luisa's final resolution he suggests that love,

³⁷ http://www.atuttascuola.it/risorse/inglese/the_victorian_age.htm, retrieved on 28 November, 2011

rather than reason or convenience, should be the foundation of a happy marriage.

Social and industrial changes within the nineteenth century society

We can find a lot of connections to both social and industrial changes during the Industrial Revolution in the novel. Dickens describes the environment of the industrial town of Coketown with its narrow streets, high and smoking chimneys and the ever-present killing air. He also mentions the dirty, contaminated river, which was a consequence of the growing industry and increasing number of factories. Mr. Bounderby is an owner of a mill where a lot of the central characters of the story are employed. We can notice the change in the urbanization scheme of the country. People started to move to towns to be employed in factories, which gradually replaced the small family business in the English countryside.

Coal-fuelled steam power was the motor of change in the early Victorian period, as it had been for decades before. For the working class this meant a radical re-organization of the nature of work. It meant factory work rather than agricultural work or cottage industry; life ruled by clock rather than more traditional diurnal and seasonal patterns. (Daly, p. 44)

The town population grew rapidly while the countryside got depopulated. Workers were forced to work under hard conditions including long working days, bad sanitation and hygiene conditions in factories, poor lighting and over-heated halls. Machines were often dangerous and accidents were common. As the table below shows, machines were responsible for most of the workers' injuries, which took place in the factories between 1852 and 1854. The entries are based on the numbers reported by the inspectors in the factory districts.

Table of Factory Accidents

	By machinery		Not by machinery		Total	
	1852/3	1853/4	1852/3	1853/4	1852/3	1853/4
Deaths	42	42	8	19	50	61
Amputations	554	595	3	2	557	597
Fractures	439	525	34	46	473	571
Injuries to head and face	177	225	45	27	222	252
Other injuries	2811	2657	177	119	2988	2776
<hr/>						
Total	4023	4044	267	213	4290	4257

(Simpson, Appendix C)

All this caused general dissatisfaction of workers and gave rise to several protest movements. The protests were strictly rejected by the upper-middle class (factory owners) who believed there was no reason for any complaints. Dickens portrays this atmosphere in the novel with the following Bounderby's words advocating the factory work: "It's the pleasanest work there is. More than that, we couldn't improve the mills themselves, unless we laid down Turkey carpets on the floors. Which we're not a-going to do." (p.127) Dickens uses irony here to stress negligence and indifference of the upper-middle class people towards issues concerning factory workers. The factory owners had a decisive say concerning laws due to their close link to politicians and the non-existence of right to vote for workers. Aristocracy and the middle classes thus formed the actual political power in Britain at that time. This was the main reason why there were only very slow and gradual improvements of working conditions of factory workers in the first half of the nineteenth century. The first significant improvements were achieved by the Reform Act of 1833 when child labour was radically limited. Children under 9 were not allowed to work at all

and children between 9 and 13 were limited to 8-hour working day and they must have been given a 2-hour education a day. First inspecorate was established to check on the factories. Another important Reform Act was passed in 1844 when working hours for children were further reduced as well as working hours for women and machinery was to be fenced in to reduce injuries. By this Act manufacturers were also required to send labouring children to school for at least three hours in a working day. To prove the observance of the Act, the manufacturers were asked to produce a weekly certificate from a schoolteacher where the attendance of children was noted.

Another topic dealt with in the novel is the banking system. As Deane points out in her book "*The First Industrial Revolution*", one of the advantages with which Britain entered upon the first industrial revolution was a developed system of money and banking. It was quite highly developed in relation to the monetary systems which many of today's underdeveloped countries enjoy, and indeed in relation to most of its contemporaries in Europe." (p. 168) At the beginning of the nineteenth century the banking system in England was being finally set up to redistribute assets from places with accumulated capital to the places where there was not enough capital as the demand for money increased with the increasing demand for products. Banks also won their importance with the increased demand for loans for arms and weapons during the Napoleonic wars. When the wars ended there were, except The Bank of England, "about 60 London private banks of strength and reputation and about 800 small private country banks." (Deane, p.177). These small country banks depended heavily on personal connections and "most of the country bankers were primarily or originally engaged in some other kind of business for which banking was a natural and lucrative sideline - particularly in view of the shortage of means of payment. Bankers often originated in industry or trade, for example, or in the legal profession." (Deane, p. 178) Thus Mr. Bounderby in *Hard Times* is not only an owner of the mill factory but he is also an owner of a newly established bank in Coketown. Dickens shows that banks became a common part of everyday life of British people in the nineteenth century. He also shows the difference between the "ordinary" factory environment and the "superior" environment of bank houses. Being a banker in Victorian England meant to belong to the selected few of the society and therefore people employed in the

Bounderby's bank, such as Mrs. Sparsit or James Harthouse, are described as those who belong to the high society.

Literary movements reflected in the novel

Hard Times is a typical work of Critical Realism. Dickens wrote it after his visit to the industrial North "to see how a northern industrial town looked when in the grip of a long and stubborn strike. He had been depressed by the gloom of the place and the dispirited lethargy of the strikers." (Hibbert, p. 142) Dickens describes the suffering and hard life of working people. In the novel he concentrates on the long working hours, severe working conditions and miserable living conditions of undervalued workers. As Hobsbaum points out, "it is not industry per se that Dickens is fighting; rather *laissez faire*, which polluted the atmosphere, allowed open mine-shafts to fester, employed or starved workers according to the market without any sense of human need or potential. Not industry alone is in question, but the philosophy operating behind it." (p. 187) There are several major characters in the novel and each of them is portrayed either as good or bad. The most important character from the above-mentioned point of view is Stephen Blackpool. Stephen Blackpool is a working class person with strong sense of morality who has to suffer for being honest, frank and open-minded. One moment he finds himself fighting simultaneously against his fellow class members, his employer and his wife who ruins his life. He is a typical critical realist hero who has to endure hardship to prove his being unguilty in the end. Opposed to him is Josiah Bounderby, an upper middle-class representative who turns out to be a liar telling others his made-up story of being left by his mother while still a child. He uses Mrs. Sparsit in order to obtain status as she belonged to the Powlers', a very respectable family in the country. At the same time, he is described as an arrogant man using his superiority based on his possession and social ranking.

In his novels Charles Dickens stresses the difference between classes and he uses hyperbole and satire while describing the upper class characters. He exaggerates their negative qualities and highlights their behavior which is

immoral in his view. He shows their moral ugliness and puts them in contrast with lower class representatives that are presented as “heroes”. We can feel Dickens’s irony when Bounderby says that the only improvement remaining to be carried out to improve the working conditions in factories is to lay down Turkey carpets on the floors or when he refers to factory smoke as to the healthiest thing in the world. There is also irony in the way Bitzer describes a horse or in the manner in which Gradgrind’s obsession with facts is depicted. Dickens satirizes utilitarianism, snobbery, materialism and greed for money.

Own life experience

In *Hard Times* we can find some similarities with the author’s own life. Charles Dickens describes the environment of the Coketown factory. He uses his experience from Warren’s Shoe Blacking Factory where he started to work at the only age of 12 to support his family after his father had been imprisoned. “He worked for ten hours a day, with a meal break at twelve and a tea-break in the late afternoon. Dickens’s job was ”...to cover the pots of paste-blackening: first with a piece of oil-paper, and then with a piece of blue-paper; to tie them round with a string; and then to clip the paper close and neat all round.” (Ackroyd, p. 46) In the novel he describes the rhythm of a working day in a factory, the habits of working people and, of course, the harsh working conditions – mainly the long working hours and poor salary for the demanding work. He depicts both the views of the working people on their employers – in this case on Mr. Bounderby – and their feelings towards him. He also outlines workers’ perception of class inequalities and injustice. Dickens describes in details the differences in eating habits of Mr. Bounderby who enjoys several meal courses at a time with the poor and nutritionally insufficient meals of the poor. Similarly, Dickens describes the differences of living conditions of Stephen Blackpool in contrast to Mr. Bounderby’s palace. Dickens’ lower class birthplace is thus notable in each respect.

Another similarity between Dickens’s own life and *Hard Times* can be seen in incorporating the marriage and divorce topic within the novel. In the novel, Stephen Blackpool would like to divorce his alcoholic wife and marry

another woman whom he loves but he is unable to do so due to legal difficulties and high financial demandness. Dickens himself wanted to get divorced from his wife Catherine and marry his long-time mistress Ellen Ternan but never did so as divorce was socially unacceptable for someone as famous as him and it was also very expensive in the nineteenth century. In 1858 he separated from his wife and stayed in a relationship with Ellen Ternan, a professional actress, for the rest of his life.

Yet another example of similarity between the novel and Dickens's life is to be found in the marriage of Luisa and Mr. Bounderby. Luisa is some thirty years younger than her future husband, which is nearly the same age difference which was between Dickens and Nelly Ternan. When Dickens first met Ellen in 1857, he was 45 years old and she was only 18.

Oliver Twist (1838)

Class inequality

Class inequality is one of the main topics Dickens deals with in *Oliver Twist*. He concentrates on social issues topical in the time when the novel was written. "Dickens was prone to take up issues, and to campaign against what he saw as injustice, using fiction as his vehicle. He was not alone in this in his own time, but his name continues to be popularly associated with good causes and with remedies for social abuses because his was quite the wittiest, and the most influential voice." (Sanders, p. 404) As a rule, he uses comparison between classes to point out the social differences. In *Oliver Twist* Charles Dickens compares social classes of Victorian England on the basis of moral values and qualities. He emphasizes innocence and purity of orphaned children to deviousness and petty-bourgeois mentality of corrupt state officials. He criticizes the false morality of those people who pile their money while children in the orphanage have hardly anything to eat. *Oliver Twist* was written as a reaction to the New Poor Law released in 1834. According to this law, all the paupers

should have been housed in workhouses, clothed and fed. The aim of this new law was to take beggars off the streets and to reduce the cost of looking after the increasing number of the poor. In return to this care, the poor would have to work for several hours a day. Yet the Victorian society was not united in the view of these Poor Laws. There were voices against these laws which argued that the living conditions in the workhouses were even worse than in prisons and that paupers housed in these workhouses had to work harder than slaves in the West Indies often doing unpleasant jobs such as picking oakum or breaking stones.

Dickens uses this topic to present his own opinion and to reflect the running discontent and conflict within the society in his writing. He also attempts to show how the Victorian society was full of prejudices as they automatically identified orphans with thieves and other criminals, which means that orphans and people without their origin were doomed to poor life on the bottom of the society, without a slight chance for any improvement. Thus Dickens incorporates an event when Oliver is punished for something he did not do when staying at Sowerberrys. The injustice of the punishment is emphasized by the words of Mrs. Sowerberry: "I only hope this'll teach master not to have any more of these dreadful creatures, that are born to be murderers and robbers from their very cradle." (p. 90) On this and many other examples within the novel Dickens denounces the behaviour of the upper classes and clearly advocates people from the lower class. This view is coming from his own bad life experience, lived through mainly in his childhood. When his father was arrested in jail for debtors, the Dickens' family suffered from lack of money, respectively lack of food. Charles was forced to start working to support his mother and his five siblings. However, his job in a blacking shoe company did not bring much money and he, alongside with the rest of the family, was sent to Marshalsea, London jail for debtor's. Both in the jail and in the factory, Charles met a lot of beggars and lower class people and identified himself with their living conditions. Using his experience Dickens acquaints us with the living conditions and habits of the people from the bottom of the society in *Oliver Twist*. Dickens describes the dark, narrow and filthy streets of London where these people sheltered and the derelict, smelly houses where they lived. He also describes their clothing, eating habits and daily activities. Clothing is a

topic Dickens pays special attention to. He uses clothes to differentiate various classes within the society. People from the thieving gang are dressed in shabby, old and loose-fitting clothes while people from the upper class such as Mr. Brownlow or Mr. Grimwig are dressed in perfectly fitting clothes made of first-class materials complemented by fashionable stick and watch chain. In line with this Lucas writes: "Oliver is an excellent example of the power of dress' whose worth is denied by the badge of his cloth. And from the gentleman who is identified only by his white waistcoat, through the doctor whose boots creak in 'a very important and wealthy manner', to Bumble, whose virility is identified with his cocked hat, gold-laced coat and staff, and who is unmanned when he loses them, society is identified by its clothes." (p. 41) The author attributes special meanings to hats and handkerchiefs. Each class status is demonstrated by a special type of a hat and handkerchiefs show the affiliation to the upper class. That is why Fagin and his gang focus on stealing handkerchiefs which symbolizes their attempt at promoting from the bottom of the society to the opposite end of the class scale.

Clothes in *Oliver Twist* serve not only as an emblem of class differentiation but also of self-identification. "Oliver is not simply caught between the worlds of power and powerless; he is balanced on the precarious division between two sorts of appearances, two sorts of identities." (Stein, p. 139) Thus when Oliver gets new clothes from Mr. Brownlow, he feels very happy because he has never had a new suit in his life and because he believes that the old days full of suffering are definitely gone at the same time. He connects his sad and unhappy life in the workhouse with his old clothes and awaits brighter future to come together with his new clothes.

The class conflict is also seen when the author describes various parts of London. Victorian London was the largest and most spectacular city in the world. By 1800 the city reached the population of one million. Dickens shows us how the capital was experiencing the Industrial Revolution that was around 1840, when *Oliver Twist* was written, in its final phase. The author highlights the difference between various parts of the city where he places his story. Fashionable areas with a lot of greenery, theatres and houses for the rich were placed in the west part of the town while markets, docks and dwellings for the poor were placed in the east part. Busy the East-End streets and markets were

places with the most numerous crime-rate. "Fear of the urban masses, and the desire to control them, underlie some very different Victorian phenomena accross the century: the rise of an organised police force and the surveillant power of the detective police." (Daly, p.45). The newly formed police was not of much help in the beginning because there were only few police forces to suppress the criminality. The borderline between these two parts was not very distinct in most of the places and the homes of the upper and middle class existed in close proximity to areas of immense poverty there. Dickens describes the East End as a noisy, crowded and filthy place with smell in the air and sewage running in gutters along the streets, while the West End is pictured as a place with wider and rather empty streets, decorated by trees and lit by gasoline lamps at night. It is a place where life gets much slower.

Emotions vs. Rationality

In *Oliver Twist* we can notice the conflict between emotionality and rationality in a very limited extent. Firstly, we find it when Harry, the son of Mrs. Maylie, appears in the story. He is in love with Rose, Mrs. Maylie's protégée. While Harry comes from an upper class family and has a respectful job, Rose is an orphan having an upper class father but born out of the wedlock. Dickens confronts Harry's emotions with his mother's rationality when she dissuades him from marrying Rose. On the one hand, Harry feels love and passion for a woman but on the other hand, he is afraid of losing the social status. These feelings are mixing together within himself. The conflict is transferred further to Rose who fights her inner fight when rejecting Harry's offer to marry himself. She loves him but she is aware of the problems that could possibly arise.

"Then, if your lot had been differently cast," rejoined Rose; "if you had been even a little, but not so far, above me; if I could have been a help and comfort to you in any humble scene of peace of retirement, and not a blot and drawback in ambitious and distinguished crowds; I should have

been spared this trial. I have every reason to be happy, very happy, now; but then, Harry, I own, I should have been happier.” (p. 317)

Being born as an illegitimate child meant being an outcast in the society. Illegitimately born children had no rights, no legal status and were very often subject to physical abuse. There were discriminating laws against mothers of illegitimately born children and those children themselves. They had to be kept away from the rest of the society as they represented moral risk for its “proper” members coming from decent families. The above mentioned laws were adopted by the Government mainly due to the fact that the number of illegitimate children within the English society was constantly rising during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries which meant increasing costs on their support for the state. At one time, more relief was issued to maintain illegitimate children than to support legitimate children in the 1830s, which made the Government to form the Bastardy Clause³⁸ in the New Poor Law of 1834. Rose knows she would most probably damage the promising life of Harry if she agreed to marry him and make him an outcast of society too because infants of unwed mothers were a disgrace to morality.

Secondly, we notice the conflict between emotionality and rationality when Nancy decides to tell the truth about Oliver’s family roots to Rose and Mr. Brownlow and thus save Oliver’s life. On the one hand, she feels this is the right thing she should do because she is sorry for Oliver but, on the other hand, she feels she betrayed Fagin who impersonates safety in her poor life. As she feels grateful to him for being offered a place to stay, her decision is not easy.

³⁸ According to the Bastardy Clause Act all illegitimate children were under the sole responsibility of their mothers until they were 16 years old. If mothers of bastard children were unable to support themselves and their children, they would have to enter the workhouse. The supposed father became free of any legal responsibility for his illegitimate children. The aim of this Clause was to

Own life experience

In the novel we can find only a few hints to the author's own life in comparison to his *Great Expectations* or *David Copperfield*. The novel describes the living conditions of poor people as well as those of upper-class people. In both cases Dickens drew his experience from his own life. As a small boy he got familiar with the poor living conditions when his family was put in jail for debtors and Charles was sent to work in a factory to support the rest of his family. As child's labour was an ordinary occurrence in the nineteenth century England, Charles' parents did not find anything improper about their son being employed in the factory. The 12-year-old Charles dreamt of becoming a gentleman and felt humiliated working with rough and ordinary men. He shared his life with factory workers and met people from the bottom of the society when he used to visit his father and the rest of the family at Marshalsea. He was much depressed from his needy family conditions. As Ackroyd remarks, "throughout his life Dickens had an obsessive need for the security which money could bring. It is clear enough that he knew as well as anyone, at least as well as any of his biographers, from what troubled origins this demand for money came. It was just that his early experiences in the Marshalsea and blacking factory provoked an anxiety which only the assurance of financial well-being could assuage." (p. 106) This painful experience caused that he used the topic of poverty and need for money in most of his novels.

Another example of a link between the story of *Oliver Twist* and the author's own life is the appearance of the court and law practice. Dickens takes us to the court when he puts Artful Dodger before the trial. He describes the environment including the appearance of jurors and the courtroom in details. Dickens uses his own experience from the times when he worked as a law office clerk at the Ellis and Blackmore law firm. His duties included keeping the petty cash fund, delivering documents and other various tasks. He did not like this kind of work and therefore took another job at the law company of Charles Molley in November 1828. However, Dickens did not like the job either, as he found it tedious and boring and left it after only a few months to find another

remove the not frequent problem of disputed fatherhood and to discourage women from entering

way to make his living. Nevertheless, he used his knowledge of this particular environment in many of his novels.

The main part of the story is placed in London where he spent most of his life. London is a city Dickens was always fascinated with. He regarded it “as a place which contains within its space everything with its opposite extreme and contradiction, a place that holds together thousand worlds.” (Ackroyd, p. 169) He describes various parts of the town including narrow and serpentine lanes, muddy streets, dirty places, bridges and the embankments of the river Thames. He loved to stroll about the town. On his walks he was watching people around and much of the observation he used in his writing. He liked London’s atmosphere with his history and historical buildings. London brought him inspiration.

Even though the city went through major changes caused by the Industrial Revolution during his lifetime, Dickens always portrayed London of the 1830s in his novels. He did not like the advancement and the changes brought about. He loved the city as it was when he was a small boy.

Social changes within the nineteenth century society

In *Oliver Twist* we find a lot of links to social changes during the Industrial Revolution. The author refers to the social system that developed during the Industrial Revolution and gives us a survey of the nineteenth century society. He describes various social environments and concentrates mainly on the lower and the lowest ones where he includes orphans, illegitimate children, criminals and prostitutes. Lucas claims that “the picaresque element of *Oliver Twist* provides Dickens with the opportunities he needs for confronting his audience with those areas of society from which they have escaped or about which they are plainly ignorant”. Except for general living conditions he depicts habits and customs typical for people of that time, such as taking opium and drinking alcohol, or the very popular and fashionable reading of books.

into dissolute relationships.

Prostitution is another topic related to changes during the Industrial Revolution mentioned in *Oliver Twist*. Dickens describes Nancy, the prostitute, as a victim of social morality who was forced to prostitution due to her illegitimate birth and subsequent categorization among the lowest class within the society. "Victorian society was still held together by the cement of Christian moral teaching and constricted by the triumph of puritan sexual mores. It laid a particular stress on the virtues of monogamy and family life, but it was also aware of flagrant moral anomalies throughout the social system." (Sanders, p. 399) At the beginning of the nineteenth century when the number of prostitutes was increasing in England, the general public viewed it as a necessary social evil. Later, towards the middle of the century, people started to concentrate more on the harm done to the society as a whole and wished to regulate it. There were increased concerns about the spread of venereal disease, specifically syphilis. For this reason, the Parliament passed a series of acts, called The Contagious Diseases Acts, to get the disease under control between the 1860s and 1870s. The efficiency of these acts was limited though, as they were specifically directed at women in order to protect the health of men. Moreover, men were not subject to this Act at all even though they were equally responsible for spreading the disease. This caused that the acts were heavily attacked by the public due to the double-standard³⁹ nature of these laws. The public concern also gave rise to a number of institutions working to reform "fallen women" and to enable them to enter respectable society. Dickens was personally involved in two such institutions - the Magdalen Society and Urania Cottage. Dickens belonged to the public that believed in possible reparation of fallen women and he reflects it in the novel when he gives Nancy a chance to live a new life in a seclusion. Nancy is offered "...a quiet asylum either in England, or, in some foreign country.."(p.353) by Rose Maylie. Unfortunately, she refuses this offer and decides to live on her wretched life. Nancy's refusal indicates the difficult position of fallen women in the Victorian society. Though they were given a chance to redeem and to re-integrate in the respectable society, they had to face other difficulties connected with this process, such as

³⁹ Double standard was an unjust usage and application of standards and principles within the society. It negated the basic assumption of modern legal jurisprudence: that all people should be equal before the law.

fear of the new and unknown, which often made them continue their miserable life.

Literary movements reflected in the novel

Oliver Twist is a typical Victorian novel encompassing critical realism. Dickens criticizes all the social classes represented in the story and compares them to one another. He stresses the negative sides of the Victorian society and points out the drawbacks of the social system. He also shows how people working in the state service influence lives of poor people and how they can predetermine the fate and ruin the life of poor children growing up in foster institutions run by the state. Foster institutions and workhouses are among the central topics of the novel. To emphasize the hypocrisy and arrogance of the conduct of state officials and to degrade their social status at the same time, Dickens uses humor, exaggeration and satire.

The members of this board were very sage, deep, philosophical men, and when they came to turn their attention to their workhouse, they found out at once, what ordinary folks would never have discovered – the poor people liked it! It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes; a tavern where there was nothing to pay; a public breakfast, dinner, tea and supper all the year round; a brick and mortar Elysium, where it was all play and no work. “Oho!”, said the board, looking very knowing; “we are the fellows to set this to rights; we’ll stop it all, in no time.” So, they established the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they), of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it. (p. 55)

In *Oliver Twist* Dickens denounces the social environment of his time and stresses its social injustice. As Lucas notes in his work *The Melancholy Man...* there are several scenes in the novel that “blend with Dickens’s own perception that justice is very much a class-matter.” (p. 23) Dickens depicts individual

classes within the society through various central characters of the novel. Oliver is a sort of a guide who takes us to different backgrounds and shows us the difference in living conditions, habits and moralities of these characters. As Collins notes down in his essay *Dickens and his Readers*, “it was to be characteristic of Dickens, and part of his wisdom in apprehending and commenting upon his society, that his characters are so often seen, not just in their personal and occupational interaction with one another, but also in relation to the major institutions of their society – the legal system culminating in the prison and the scaffold, the governmental system (national and local), the churches and other supposedly moral forces, schools, the money market, the factory system, and much else.” (*Victorian Values*, p.45) Dickens highlights the consequences of the Industrial Revolution changes among which he includes the growing differences among individual classes, poverty, malnutrition and poor living conditions of lower class people and an increased crime-rate.

Like Pip in *Great Expectations*, Oliver is described as an orphaned poor boy who has to struggle for his place in the world. He has to suffer humiliation and ill-treatment from the workhouse staff and, later, he has to prove his innocence when he is considered a criminal and a liar. Dickens thus criticizes the Victorian upper class and authorities that automatically take poor people for criminals and liars. Dickens also attacks the Malthusian teaching, that was widely accepted by the intellectuals of the Victorian era, in his novels. “The political economist Thomas Malthus held that the poor should be suppressed. The earth, he considered, was over-populated, and charities and relief of those who could not support themselves only encouraged people to produce more children. They must be discouraged even if it meant starving them, otherwise the whole earth would be peopled with paupers.” (Avery, p. 210) To highlight his attacks and to show his discontent with this theory, Dickens repeatedly uses irony in his works. Followingly, Dickens criticizes the Victorian society as a whole and denounces their moral values that are driven by material interests.

“You have the same eye to your own interest, that you have always had, I doubt not?” resumed the stranger, looking keenly into Mr. Bumble’s eyes, as he raised them in an astonishment at the question. “Don’t scruple to answer freely, man. I know you pretty well, you see.”

“I suppose, a married man,” replied Mr. Bumble, shading his eyes with his hand, and surveying the stranger, from head to foot, in evident perplexity, “is not more averse to turning an honest penny when he can, than a single one. Porochial officers are not so well paid that they can afford to refuse any little extra fee, when it comes to them in a civil and proper manner.” (p. 330)

In *Oliver Twist* the author focuses mainly on criticism of the upper class, namely state officials and politicians. He describes them as corrupt people preferring their own interests to the interests of the whole society. He also depicts them as people misusing their powers and influence. “In his speech during his final visit to Birmingham in January 1870, Dickens remarked:”I have very little faith in people who govern but I have great confidence in the People whom they govern.” (Simpson, p. 233) As already mentioned, Dickens also criticizes the existence of workhouses and the social system in Victorian England. He openly attacks the Government for not being attentive enough to social concerns of that time. In the novel he uses satire and exaggeration to lampoon the authorities, which increases the antipathy against the governing bodies and, at the same time, evokes sympathy for the poor.

The Personal History and Experience of David Copperfield The Younger (1850)

David Copperfield is considered a Bildungsroman with autobiographical features. The story begins when David is born and is ended when he is a mature man, which means that the main character is growing up throughout the story and undergoes a development of his personality formed by emotional hardship and complicated and very troubled childhood. David has to make his way and find his place in the world by going through several false starts. “The

novel differs from the novels written just before and after it, in that it is less concerned with “the Condition of England question”, with social issues and political institutions. Also it contains no murder or violent crime, such as occur in most Dickens novels.” (Collins, p.13) The novel also bears the most autobiographical features of all his novels. It is written as an autobiography of David Copperfield and narrated in the first person from the point of view of the main character. The whole story is told in the retrospective way.

Class inequality

The novel focuses on class diversification and hierarchy within the society. Class inequality forms the central theme of *David Copperfield*. Differences between individual classes are seen through the eyes of David and are taken as given. The author describes them as natural but unjust. As Lucas points out “it is an essential part of David’s education that he should be exposed to the inequities of class-distinctions.” (p. 191) In the novel, Dickens attributes characteristic qualities to representatives of individual classes. James Steerforth, for example, is made arrogant, cruel and self-confident. The same characteristics can be found with Mr. Creakle, the director of the boarding school. Mr. Pegotty who is ranked at the bottom of the society is, on the other hand, described as open minded, good-hearted and very helpful. By attributing mostly positive qualities to lower-class people and negative qualities to upper-class people Dickens clearly advocates the poor and shows his discontent with the caste system and the general belief of the Victorian society that poverty is a symptom of moral degeneracy. Dickens challenges this prejudice in his novels by expressing his persuasion that class does not correspond to moral status. By means of his characters, Dickens shows that wealth and class status are not reliable signs indicating qualities and morality of a person. He shows that morality is shaped by the influence of one’s environment.

Class conflicts are mentioned within the story several times. We find one when David comes to the Salem boarding school where he has to accept and adapt to the school’s social hierarchy. Social hierarchy within the Salem school

reflects the hierarchy within the whole Victorian society. The higher ranking one has, the more privileged life he desires. Thus Mr. Creakle has his separate table in the school dining room and Mr. Sharp who is the first master of the school is allowed to sit at the table with him. Mr. Mell, on the other hand, who is a subordinate teacher to Mr. Sharp, has to take his meals with his students. Similarly, when there is hot and cold meat for dinner at Mr. Creakle's table, "Mr. Sharp was always expected to say he preferred cold." (p. 83)

The class conflict is most obviously dramatized in the novel's greatest tragedy – the dishonor of Little Emily. She leaves her uncle Daniel Pegotty and her fiancé Ham for James Steerforth who shortly after their elopement abandons her. Emily becomes an outcast of the society as she is not accepted by the Steerforth family.

"Unless he brings me back a lady." Said Mr. Pegotty, tracing out that part with his finger. "I come to know, ma'am, whether he will keep his word?"

"No," she returned.

"Why not?" said Mr. Pegotty.

"It is impossible. He would disgrace himself. You cannot fail to know that she is far below him ."

"Raise her up!" said Mr Pegotty.

"She is uneducated and ignorant." (p. 442)

Dickens incorporates the perception of inequality between classes here. As Collins points out "Emily's situation was a stock one in Victorian drama and fiction – the lower class girl with a faithful lover of her own class, and an unscrupulous well-to-do admirer who plays upon her desire to be a lady." (p.54) Emily cannot be accepted by the Steerforth family because she is of humble origin (a daughter of a fisherman) while the Steerforths belong to the upper-class. As already explained above, it was unthinkable to get mixed between classes in the mid-nineteenth century because the upper-class representative would be expelled from his milieu and would be denounced to the lower-class standard of life with no possibility of getting back. This would damage all the future aspirations of the respective person. Dickens features another social aspect arising from this plot – the position of a dishonest woman in the

Victorian society. This topic was commonly discussed in the nineteenth century society which explains its frequent use in the literature of that time. Emily is perceived as a mistress because pre-marital sexual experience was perceived as the first stage to prostitution. Like Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, she finds herself on the edge of the society which denounces her. Although Dickens shows his sympathy and understanding towards Emily in the story, he undoubtedly admits that she committed a crime. Dickens highlights here the generally accepted truth that seduction was worse than death in his time. Emily is not allowed to become a regular member of respectable society any more and becomes a real outcast. For this reason she flees to Australia to continue her spoiled life among people who do not know her past. The topic of a “fallen woman” was very familiar to Dickens. In 1846 he set up a Urania Cottage in Shepherd’s Bush that for over a decade served as home for young women from prisons, workhouses and from the streets of London. They were taught basic literacy skills as well as how to cook, sew and clean there. “Dickens called this place ‘Asylum’ and practised his life-long belief that girls with “wretched histories” might be improved by a course of ‘education and example’ and thus be led to a happier fate.” (Ackroyd, p. 296)

Own life experience

David Copperfield can be regarded as Charles Dickens’ autobiographical work as it resembles his own life in many ways. There are similarities between the main characters of the novel and Dickens’s family members and friends. We can recognise Maria Beadnell, Dickens’s first love, in the character of Dora Spenlow and Dickens’s parents in the characters of Wilkins Micawber and his wife Emma Micawber. Mrs. Micawber, like Dickens’s mother, tries to streamline her husband’s careless dealing with money and thus protect the whole family from their poor ending. She always stands at her husband’s side and supports him which is another similarity to Dickens’s mother. Likewise, Mr. Micawber bears the basic and most obvious characteristics of Dickens’s father. As Collins remarks “he is the product of observation and memory as well as Dickens’s

imagination, for much of Micawber's grandiloquent idiom, as well as some of his misfortunes, derive directly from Dickens's father." (p. 58) Both of them are enjoying their costly and irresponsible life which finally sends both of them to the debtor's prison. Dickens describes frequent visits of creditors and their rough manners, multiple executions and visits of pawnshops. This experience from his childhood brought on his lifelong anxiety about money and caused that Dickens never felt comfortable about his financial situation. This is reflected in the novel when David has recurrent dreams about being poor again and having nothing to eat long after he started his new life supported by his aunt.

Further, Dickens incorporates some of his life experience which has special importance for himself. As a twelve-year-old boy, he was sent to work for some months at a Warren's Blacking Factory placed at Hungerford Market in London while his father was arrested in Marshalsea debtor's prison. He was fixing labels to bottles of blacking to support his family. Dickens dreamt of studying and becoming a gentleman and he felt humiliated working with rough and ordinary men in the factory. Dickens portrays these memories in the passage of the novel when David works at Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse.

No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these henceforth every-day associates with those of my happier childhood – not to say with Steerforth, Traddles and the rest of those boys; and felt my hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my bosom. The deep remembrance of the sense I had, of being utterly without hope now; 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, would pass away from me, little by little, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written. (p. 148)

Generally, Dickens picks mostly negative experience from his life and uncovers his own uncomfortable secrets in the novel. One of the related topics is noted in the description of the Micawbers family and their life. Dickens describes Mr. Micawber as a very irresponsible person who is ready to weigh down his family with debts in order to enjoy his life. They organize opulent dinners with fine

delicacies that are apparently above their standard. It recalls his sad memories from childhood when the family suffered from lack of money due to his father's unreasonable handling with funds. In the novel Dickens also refers to the frequent visits of his family at Marshalsea Prison and describes his feelings full of humiliation and shame resulting from these visits through David. Dickens describes another very touching scene from his own life when Mr. Micawber asks David to take some of their treasured possessions to the pawn shop in order to be able to meet their obligations. This scene relates to the event when young Charles was asked by his father to sell his beloved books to pay off some of their debts.

Books and reading were Dickens's lifelong passion. His father had a small collection of books which were kept in a little room leading out of Charles's own room. Charles spent a lot of time there and novels by Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Daniel Defoe and Oliver Goldsmith served as an inspiration for his future writing. This collection of books and Dickens's love for them is described in Chapter 4 of *David Copperfield*.

Like Dickens, David is born on Friday. David also becomes a law clerk but this job does not appeal to him and he decides to find another way to make his living. As it is difficult for him to cope with unjust laws, he abandons his idea of becoming a lawyer. He wants to become a parliamentary reporter to commence his career as a writer. To qualify for that position Dickens, respectively David Copperfield, has to learn the Gurney system of shorthand writing. The work of a journalist took him first to the Law Courts, including the Court of Chancery, and in 1831 Dickens became a shorthand reporter with the *Mirror of Parliament*. As Rubbery writes, this involvement with journalism was a rule rather than an exception for Victorian novelists, virtually all of whom wrote for the press at some point during their literary careers. (Rubbery, p. 179) Dickens was very successful in this job and soon became known for his quick and accurate courtroom reporting. Through the character of David Dickens describes the principles of a new shorthand system devised by Thomas Gurney and Isaac Pitman which improved the accuracy and speed of writing through the use of an abbreviated, symbolic notation method.

I bought an approved scheme of the noble art and mystery of stenography (which cost me ten and sixpence); and plunged into a sea of perplexity that brought me, in a few weeks, to the confines of distraction. The changes that were rung upon dots, which in such a position meant such a thing, and in such another position something else, entirely different; the wonderful vagaries that were played by circles; the unaccountable consequences that resulted from marks like flies' legs; the tremendous effects of a curve in a wrong place; not only troubled my waking hours but reappeared before me in my sleep. (p. 287)

Dickens portrays perplexity and difficulties that accompanied his short-hand studies in a humorous way. He wrote it shortly after his own experience as a parliamentary reporter.

His job of a shorthand reporter enabled Dickens to get familiarized with government institutions and their running. He actually never worked as Proctor like the main character David does but through his job of a shorthand reporter he often got in touch with Doctors' Commons.⁴⁰ In the novel Dickens describes it as follows:

It's a little out-of-the-way place, where they administer what is called ecclesiastical law, and play all kinds of tricks with obsolete old monsters of acts of Parliament, which three-fourths of the world know nothing about, and the other fourth supposes to have been dug up, on a fossil state, in the days of the Edwards. (p. 325)

With these words he reflects the nineteenth century general belief that this institution was old-fashioned and their members seemed to be untrustworthy due to their efforts to confuse ordinary people unacquainted with the Civil Law as much as possible. He expresses his doubts about utility of the service of Doctors' Commons and his contempt for the institution itself which was based on his first-hand knowledge of the institution. He also mentions the hierarchy

⁴⁰ Doctors' Commons was a society of lawyers practising civil law in London. The society had buildings with rooms where its members lived and worked and where court proceedings of the civil law courts were occasionally held.

among lawyers and ranks proctors at the top of the imaginary pyramid. He describes them as a special elite group that can not be equalled with other lawyers, namely solicitors.

David, like Dickens, starts to write stories and has them serialized in various newspapers which became affordable for the quickly growing reading public. "Nearly everyone was exposed to print of some kind during an era offering over 25,000 different journals. Periodicals, not books, were the most widely read genre of the nineteenth century as it was favoured by Victorian readers as a way of spending their leisure time." (Rubbery, p. 177) Later, David has his first book published and he becomes a successful author. Dickens's career as a writer started in 1833 when his first short stories appeared in monthly magazines. Among others, we can mention *A Christmas Dinner*, *New Year*, *Omnibuses* or *The Pawnbroker's Shop*. His first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, was published in 1836. Dickens soon became famous and popular among all the classes of Victorian England; it became fashion for everyone to read Dickens or had Dickens read to them. This is another characteristic that the author attributed to the main character of his novel.

Social and industrial changes within the nineteenth century society

We find a lot of links to social changes but only very few to industrial ones in the novel. Throughout the novel the tea-drinking ritual is connected with all social classes. The ritual appears in every social milieu David gets in touch with - the Wickfields, Mrs. Steerforth or the Micawber's. The habit of drinking tea was spread during the eighteenth century when there was a gradual reduction of the import duties on tea, though it was not affordable for the working class to buy the imported tea directly. They bought second hand leaves (once already used) from the bourgeoisie and let the tea steep longer to compensate. Around the 1840s, after Queen Victoria came to the throne, drinking of tea became real fashion as she was a real tea fanatic. A legend says that the Duchess of Bedford, one of Queen Victoria's Ladies in Waiting, came up with the idea of a

late afternoon meal to overcome the “sinking feeling” she had. Her idea caught on and was enthusiastically supported by the Queen herself. At this time the European tea service format was adopted in England; it comprised inviting friends at home as opposed to the former habit of drinking tea in tea houses. Two types of tea service were introduced. They were called High and Low. High tea was served in the afternoons between 5 and 6 o’clock and was accompanied with cold meats, eggs, cakes, sandwiches and assorted sweets. It was considered the main meal of the day and was spread among the working class. Its function was highly practical: to fill. Low tea was drunk before or after dinner. It was served in the homes of aristocrats and upper-middle class people and consisted of simple gourmet tidbits rather than regular meals. With this type of tea the emphasis was laid upon personal presentation and conversation.⁴¹

Besides tea drinking and rituals connected with it Dickens also describes other habits of the middle class people living in cities, such as theatre going, balls, restaurants; playing the piano; cigar smoking and sherry drinking or reading books and newspapers. As Matthew Rubbery states, the Victorians witnessed a boom in the volume of affordable books, magazines and newspapers produced to satisfy the demands of the first mass reading public. Wilkie Collins described this new audience as the “Unknown Public”, the millions of readers who were more likely to acquire their literature from the tabacconist’s shop than the circulating library. (p. 177) Dickens was one of the most widely read authors of his time as he dealt with topics familiar to most of the readers.

As in his other novels, Dickens refers to the Empire, namely to India and Australia. He has several of the major characters emigrate to Australia: the Micawbers, Mr. Pegotty, Emily, Martha and Mr. Mell. Each of them has his or her own reason why they want to flee to Australia, but all of them want to start their new life and all of them are convinced that they will live happily there. Australia was “one of those convenient colonies to which Victorian novelists were fond of “exporting their surplus population” (to quote the great emigration slogan of the day, for emigration was then a notable feature of British life, as well as of British fiction; only two of Dickens’s sons, for instance, made their

⁴¹ http://www.morbidoutlook.com/nonfiction/articles/2001_05_hightea.html, retrieved on 20 November, 2010

careers at home.” (Collins, p. 18) During the reign of Queen Victoria (1837 – 1901) almost fifteen million people left the British Isles in search of a better life. They settled mostly in the United States, Canada and Australia. The main reasons why people left their homeland were the devastating potato famine in Ireland, the Highland clearances in Scotland and the agrarian revolution in England.⁴² It was much more difficult to get to Australia than to the USA or Canada due to greater distance from Europe. Despite the long and arduous sea voyage, settlers were attracted by the prospect of making a new life on virtually free Crown land that was opened up for farming.⁴³ It was generally believed that if someone settles down in Australia, he or she would surely become successful there.

Dickens touches on problems concerning sanitation in the nineteenth century London in the story of David Copperfield. He describes the bad hygiene conditions of poor parts of London with smelly streets, noisy houses, crowded apartments and shared lavatories where people had to queue on Sunday mornings. He highlights the fact that Londoners were used to throw all the trash out from their windows directly onto the streets, as there was no system of drainage in these days. The remainders of food and other junk were lying about the streets in various stages of decay haunting the inhabitants with stinking smell of rotten food at every step. “Dickens was accustomed to the odours of the poor, since part of his knowledge of London came from his journeys into its interior where thousands of people lived in close-packed rookeries or jerry-built tenements without ventilation or sanitation. It was after Chadwick’s *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population* that he emphasised the importance of sanitary reform and used it as a theme in many of his novels.” (Ackroyd, pp. 216 – 217) Dickens describes London as a city full of opposite extremes and contradictions, highlighting the difference between West End and East End. His West End is full of restaurants, coffee houses, theatres, concert halls, parks, baths, sites and other places of joy and interest. The West End streets are lit with gasoline lamps at nights while the East End streets are

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http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/past_exhibitions/exiles_and_emigrants/an_extraordinary_chapter/, retrieved on 25 November, 2010

mostly blind and are more dirty. In the novel Dickens uses irony when speaking about London and comparing it to the countryside:

“I suppose this unfortunate fowl was born and brought up in the cellar“, said my aunt, “and never took the air except on a hackney coach-stand. I hope the steak may be beef, but I don’t believe it. Nothing’s genuine in the place, in my opinion, but the dirt.”

Don’t you think the fowl may have come out of the country, aunt?” I hinted. “Certainly not,” returned my aunt. “It would be no pleasure to a London tradesman to sell anything which was what he pretended it was.” (p. 327)

Herewith Dickens stresses the negative impact of industrialization on lives of ordinary people, as well as social changes resulting from the industrialization. He also shows his personal antipathy against the dehumanising consequences of urbanization and points out to the negative aspects influencing characters of people living in towns.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811 – 1863)

William Makepeace Thackeray was born in Calcutta as the only child to Richmond Thackeray and Anne Becher. His father was a secretary to the board of revenue in British East India Company. William’s mother was a daughter of Harman Becher who was also a secretary for the East India Company. William’s father died in 1815, which caused his mother to decide to return William to England in 1816 while she remained in India. In England he was educated at elite schools in Southampton and Chiswick, later in Charterhouse. He was also admitted to Cambridge but did not finish his studies. He believed that studying was the last thing a young and wealthy gentleman like him needed. He preferred travelling to studying. When he reached the age of 21, he got his inheritance after his father. He soon lost most of it on gambling, drinking

and unsuccessful investments. In 1836 when he studied arts in Paris he married a poor Irish girl Isabella Gethin Shawe. She gave William three children and after the birth of the third one Isabella succumbed to a permanent mental illness. After a few months of desperate search for a help for his wife, Thackeray adopted to a life in a solitude. He started to work as a journalist for various English magazines and newspapers. In the early 1840s, he had some success with two travel books, *The Paris Sketch Book* (1843) and *The Irish Sketch Book* (1844). Later in the decade, he achieved some notoriety with his *Snob Papers*, but the work that really established his fame was the novel *Vanity Fair*, which first appeared in serialized installments in 1847. The book was published in 1848. With this work Thackeray became a celebrity and he was equalled to Dickens. Opposed to Dickens, he focused on criticizing the high society only and did not use exaggeration and hyperbole in his writing. In his novels there is also less of sentiment and emotionality. He addressed mainly the British intellectuals and not the wide masses of readers as Dickens did in his time. Similarly to Dickens, he published under pseudonyms at the beginning of his writing career and made a lecturing tour around America.

He remained famous and admired for the next decade and a half. He wrote several large novels, notably *Pendennis* (1848-1850), *The Newcomes* (1855), and *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852). Besides writing, Thackeray also gave lectures in London (on the English humourists of the eighteenth century and on the first four Hanoverian monarchs). These lectures were later published in books. For a short time he also worked as an editor and illustrator. He died unexpectedly of a stroke on 23 December 1863.

Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero (1848)

Vanity Fair is a satirical novel that attacks the values of duty and earnestness by means of its main characters. Due to its timelessness it has remained the most widely read novel among Thackeray's literary works up to now. Though Thackeray set his novel to the beginning of the nineteenth century, he was

writing about the times when the novel was written. The book's title comes from John Bunyan's story *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) and it refers to a stop along the pilgrim's progress at a never ending fair in the town called Vanity. The name "Vanity" reflects the author's criticism of the society running after material benefits. The subtitle "A Novel without a Hero" indicates the author's effort to depict not individuals but the society as a whole.

Own life experience

Thackeray's own life experience had a great influence on his writing. Actually, it was the only source of his inspiration as he concentrated only on matters and topics that were familiar to him through his experience. "Thackeray's life was punctuated by wild ups-and-downs of fortune. It reads like a fiction. More accurately, it reads like one of his own fictions, for, try as he might to invent some other topic, he kept writing half-disguised versions of it, and most of his main characters are based on his acquaintances of himself." (Carey, p.11) In *Vanity Fair* Thackeray identifies himself with many of his characters. He projects his own qualities and characteristic features into them. Thus he describes Rawdon Crawley as a man enjoying gambling until he loses all his money or Joseph Sedley as someone being fond of eating and drinking. "He (Thackeray) ate and drank excessively, and almost died in October 1849 from a complaint variously diagnosed as gastric fever, cholera and typhoid." (Carey, p.21) The character of Rebecca Sharp is most probably based on ex-governess Mlle Pauline whom Thackeray met at a mask ball on his trip to Paris in 1830 and who became his mistress.⁴⁴ Thackeray also liked the Bohemian style of life which can be identified with Rebecca and Joseph Sedley. He tasted and relished the Bohemian lifestyle briefly when being a student of arts in Paris, and later in London. He admired mainly painters and wanted to become one of them.

Thackeray also takes down his poor recollections of his life in India. One of the characters, Joseph Sedley, is a nabob who made his wealth as a tax

⁴⁴ Carey, Thackeray Prodigal Genius, p. 13

collector in India. He ranked himself among the high society after his return to England. There are various allusions to Indian culture in the novel: silky scarfs sent to Amalie and Rebecca, Joe's Indian servant Sambo, spicy Indian food or oriental furniture. India belonged to the most important colonies of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. Many British merchants settled there to run their business and Thackeray shows how the British middle class enjoyed the wealth and culture coming from there. "Though Thackeray's recollections of his early years in India were scanty, the culture of Anglo-Indians figures prominently in a number of his works, including *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Goliath Gahagan*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The Newcomes*."⁴⁵

Further in the story, he incorporates his memories from his stay in Weimar. He spent there a winter of 1832 after dropping out his Cambridge studies. The author moves his characters to Pumpnickel to spend summer there describing the life of a small German Court aristocracy: "The above events had occurred, and a few weeks had passed, when on one fine morning, Parliament being over, the summer advanced, and all the good company in London about to quit that city for their annual tour in search of pleasure or health, the *Batavier* steamboat left the Tower stairs laden with a goodly company of English fugitives." (p. 847) Thackeray describes the habit of Victorian London society who spent certain months of the year in London which roughly coincided with the sitting of Parliament. During the "season" balls, grand receptions, theatre performances and concerts took place there. It was necessary for the upper classes to take part in these events to be seen there. Equally, it was necessary for them to be out of London during the summer months of July and August. As a rule, they went on a sightseeing tour abroad or on a health visit to some of the foreign watering places such as Baden Baden, Pau or Menton.

In the novel Thackeray mentions Napoleon several times on various occasions. He personally met him once when he was sent from India back to England after the death of his father. "The ship that brought him to England put in at St. Helena, and his black servant took him to see a man walking in the garden. "That" he said "is Bonaparte! He eats three sheep every day and all the little children he can lay hands on." (Carey, p.12) Although this was Thackeray's

⁴⁵ <http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/authors/wmt/wmtbio.html>, retrieved on 10 June, 2011

the only contact with Napoleon, the meeting and the personality of Napoleon made a deep impression upon him.

Social Class

Thackeray does not concentrate on the class conflict as most of his contemporary writers do for class is a major subject in the Victorian novel. As Cockshut notes in the new introduction to *Vanity Fair*: "...it is important to see that Thackeray is nevertheless unusual, perhaps unique, in the particular nature of his preoccupation with it. He is not very much concerned with plain differences created by birth, education or occupation. He is concerned with fine distinctions between people who may be much alike in these respects. Class is a constant source of worry to his characters, and perhaps to their creator." (p. VIII) He focuses on middle and upper-middle classes and aristocracy of Victorian England. He does not describe the lower classes including the working class as he did not get much in touch with this social milieu in his life. There is only a brief reference to lower class when the author describes the humble origin of Rebecca at the beginning of the novel. Thackeray was born to an upper-middle class family and was raised as a gentleman. As his writing comes from his own experience only, he directs his attention to an upper part of the Victorian social "ladder". The highest position in the novel's social ranking is occupied by Sir Pitt Crawley and Marquess of Steyne. They form the elite of the society, both of them are noblemen. Upper-middle class is represented by the Osborn's, Sedley's and the Dobbin's. Rebecca stands slightly off this social structure and is the only person, beside the Sedley's, who moves forth and back on the ladder.

Thackeray does not intend to compare the classes mentioned in the novel to one another. The only comparison in terms of classes we can find when following the lots of two friends, Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp, with all their ups and downs. In *Vanity Fair* Thackeray focuses mainly on qualities and personal lives of its characters. There are various topics involved in the novel, the most important among which is the possible upward social mobility. At the

beginning of the nineteenth century the society was strictly stratified in accordance with the social class hierarchy. A person could expect to stay in a class he/she was born to throughout the whole life. The only possible way to escape the destined class was to enter into an advantageous marriage. "Where a woman would live, what her ultimate station would be and how well she would be accepted in her social circles would all depend on her marriage."⁴⁶ Thackeray depicts the life of Becky Sharp who was born to a painter and a French ballet dancer which destined her to a low place in a society. She does not want to put up with this fate. She is not willing to continue to live her life within the social ranking she was born into. Her aim is to get among the high society at any price. Once she leaves Miss Pinkerton's boarding school she realizes that the only way to get there is to marry to an upper-class man or better to a nobleman. She tries hard to find an appropriate husband. To get him is not an easy task for her though. She has to fight the social dogma that moving upwards is hardly possible in the Victorian society. First, she picks out Amelia's brother Joseph who seems to be rich enough for her. Unfortunately, Becky's plan is unfolded and Mrs. Sedley is strongly against stating: "that her son would demean himself by a marriage with an artist's daughter." (p.64) Here the author outlines a topic of social inequality, which is widely discussed in Victorian literature. The relationship between a rich former civil-servant and a poor girl of humble origin was perceived as disparate. There was a wide social gap between the lower and upper-middle classes, which would socially discredit the upper class representative in the case of marrying a lower class girl. The same topic is used again when describing the relationship between Amelia and John Osborn. Amelia comes from a middle-class family; her father is a stockbroker. A marriage between Amelia and John was agreed upon by their fathers when they were still children. However when the marriage is about to come old Mr. Osborn stands resolutely against arguing that: "... people's positions alter, sir. I don't deny that Sedley made my fortune – or rather put me in the way of acquiring, by my own talents and genius, that proud position which, I may say, I occupy in my tallow trade and the City of London. I've shown my gratitude to Sedley; and he has tried it of late, sir, as my cheque-

⁴⁶ <http://www.suite101.com/content/vanity-fair-pride-and-prejudice-a37378>, retrieved on 21 June, 2011

book can show.”(p. 162) In this case, the importance of money and herewith connected social status in Victorian society is even more apparent. Old Mr. Osborn does not hesitate to withdraw his old promise to ensure his son a prospered life among the elite. Amelia is considered a subject that proportionately loses its value as the material possession of her father lessens. Thackeray describes the society in which the emphasis was put on wealth and material goods and in which the moral values were neglected for the benefit of rank, power and appearance. With his description of society Thackeray confirms de Tocqueville’s words that “the whole of English society is based upon privileges of money”. (Avery, p. 25) This is what the French statesman and writer said about the nation after his visit to England in 1833 and this is what Thackeray mentions and indicates in the novel many times.

Beside craving for money as a characteristic feature of the Victorian society Thackeray describes other qualities that he attributes to the upper-class people such a selfishness, hypocrisy, fake, affection or two-facedness. The most striking character of the novel that bears many of these negative qualities is Becky Sharp. The author describes her as being unnaturally selfish, heartless and unrelenting personality incapable of loving.

Thackeray also describes habits of the upper-class people in the novel. Becky and Rawdon are regular visitors to the theatre as many other characters of the novel are; at one point Rebecca even has her own box there. They make opulent dinners for notable aristocrats serving the best wine and exotic food. They organize grandiose parties, keep servants, charter carriages. They like to show off. It is obviously the sort of life that requires a considerable income. The Crawleys rely on the moneylenders to get them over any difficulty of lack of funds. “Thackeray devotes two chapters to ‘How to Live Well on Nothing a Year’, showing how Colonel Rawdon Crawley and his wife with no income at all, live splendidly and spend lavishly.” (Avery, p. 66) He describes how they get the money which is spent upon their entertainments. They economically use cash money and pay hardly anybody leaving thus many ruined. The less lucky ones even end in debtor’s prison, such as the man who let them his house. As Avery remarks, “the Victorian upper-classes were rarely discouraged from enjoying themselves by lack of money.” (p. 64) The higher one’s position in Victorian society was, the easier it became to live comfortably in the absence of money.

Thus the Crawleys having immense debts live like princes. Once the threat of jail appears for them in England, they escape to continental Europe for some time where they continue their life on credit.

Emotions vs. Rationality

Thackeray uses the conflict between emotionality and rationality in the character of Amelia. She is portrayed as good-natured, warm-hearted but very submissive. The conflict comes when Amelia stays widowed bringing up her only son George while living with her impoverished parents who try to dominate her. After the death of her husband she devotes her life to George who is the only bright point in her life. One day she gets an offer from her disunited father in law to take the boy and raise him in return to making him a heir to the fortune formerly intended for his father and a yearly allowance for herself. At first, she categorically rejects it. Later, she starts to contemplate about it. She gets much emotionally disordered because she loves her son more than any other thing in the world, but, at the same time, she is well aware she cannot assure him as much comfort and welfare as his grandpa can.

And then she went into her room, and sank down in despair and misery. She saw it all now. Her selfishness was sacrificing the boy. But for her he might have wealth, station, education, and his father's place, which the elder George had forfeited for her sake. She had but to speak the words, and her father was restored to competency, and the boy raised to fortune. Oh, what a conviction it was to that tender and stricken heart!" (pp. 635-6)

She experiences a very intensive inner fight considering whether she should exchange her happiness for her son's welfare or not. She knows that if she kept the boy she would doom him to a much poorer life. She would never be able to pay good schooling for him which was so necessary for becoming a gentleman and a member of respected high society in the nineteenth century. Sons from wealthy families were taught at home up to the age of ten and then they were

sent away to public boarding schools like Eton or Rugby. Besides intellect their character was developed there by means of games of football or cricket. "These schools were turning out young men who, if they had no outstanding intellectual attainments, nevertheless bore a stamp of assurance which was the envy and despair of many other European countries. These were the men who became the builders of the Empire, the governors, magistrates, commissioners and army officers." (Borer, p. 99) In the end she accepts the offer. Her final decision is supported by the alarming financial situation of her parents who have hardly anything to eat.

Another type of clash between emotionality and rationality we may find in the character of Rebecca. She intentionally smothers her feelings and emotions to reach all her aims. Thus she does not feel any love, sorrow or pity for anybody and anything she has done. Becky is very rational in all her doing and knows exactly what she wants which enables her to achieve success. She uses her charm and beauty to seduce upper-class men who bring her the desired wealth. She is strictly rational in her tactic and when she acts emotionally, meaning when she shows love, friendliness, kindness, amiability, it is always on a certain purpose. She has strong self control and she is a brilliant actress too. Thus when she is flattering to Amelia, caressing her and reproaching of her sad faith, it is not all because of her gentle nature. It is because she tries to arouse Amelia's sympathy and her support when chasing Jos. Similarly, when Becky tells Amelia about her husband's infidelity by the end of the novel, it is not that she is doing a favour to her by giving the excuse to marry Dobbin. She makes it intentionally because she wants to show her superiority over Amelia by giving her this benefit.

Literary movements reflected in the novel

Vanity Fair is an example of the Victorian novel that bears the following characteristic features: it is realistic as it truthfully describes the contemporary life, there are many characters involved and it is long as it was serialized first. It was printed in 20 monthly parts in the Punch magazine between January 1847

and July 1848. As was standard practice, the last part was a “double number“ containing parts 19 and 20.⁴⁷ The novel can be regarded as a kind of a social novel, though to a very limited extent. We can note moralistic efforts of the author related to his strong criticism of the upper-class society and a very passing hint to social changes appearing as a consequence to the Napoleonic Wars. “As Thackeray said himself, in a letter to one of his reviewers, ‘I want to leave everybody dissatisfied and unhappy at the end of the story’.” (Cockshut, p. VII) This clearly proves his intention to arouse his readers to contemplate about the alarming situation within the upper-class society. The novel is a superb example of critical realism. The author shows the cruel rules of capitalist society that is controlled by the force of money. It is a satire of the society as a whole. He criticizes the upper-class society for their badness, immorality and indulgence. “Thackeray approves of honesty, sincerity and spontaneity, and criticizes posing and artifice. The critical emphasis varies, falling on heartlessness or hypocrisy or exhibitionism or artful manipulation, and sometimes on all four simultaneously.” (Hardy, p.50) The main characters are depicted as materialistic snobs whose only interest is their quest for money, prestige or exclusive social ranking. The desire to rise higher in the social sphere appears to be the main motivation for most of the characters in *Vanity Fair*. Thackeray describes a world where external appearance and money are valued more than good character and ethical conduct. In spite of his strong criticism of the society Thackeray does not make any direct moralistic comments and oppose to his peers, mainly Dickens, he does not make any conclusions sketching future improvement of his characters. Harm is not punished, main characters are not corrected and routed to their right way.

The novel is outlined as a series of succeeding episodes that come from the authors own life experience. “There is also a world-weary, mildly sardonic note about his observations, as of a man who has seen and known all and retired from it, a man with the wisdom and experience of age.” (Pollard, p. 115) One can clearly feel Thackeray’s disillusionment about the Victorian upper-class life. There may also be seen moodiness resulting from the discontent of his own life or with his own self. He wasted a lot of money on alcohol, cards and women enjoying his Bohemian lifestyle. In 1833 he lost the rest of his money in the

⁴⁷ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanity_Fair_\(novel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanity_Fair_(novel)), retrieved on 21 November, 2011

financial crisis which ended his life of a wastrel and drove him to write to earn his living. By that time he had to undergo a complete reassessment of his existing life values. This moodiness can be clearly seen in the last paragraph of the novel: "Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum! Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?" (p. 942) As Pollard comments in line with the above mentioned: "Here is the disillusion and resignation that springs from the wisdom of experience. These words are fitting epitaph to *Vanity Fair*, for in this great sad satire the view Thackeray presents is enough to persuade us that life is like that." (pp. 120-121) We can feel the sheer scepticism of a man who lost his belief in anything. The belief that would make him trust in possible reformation of the society.

The novel is composed as a theatre play performed on a stage with characters being puppets. The author works as a puppeteer, emphasizing thus his power over the main characters' destinies. He also acts as a narrator who guides us throughout the story and making occasional comments on it. At intervals he addresses the readers trying to establish a more intimate relationship with them and simultaneously get them involved in the story as much as possible. The story is set in the period of the Napoleonic Wars and there have been discussions if it can be regarded as a historical novel or not. The reviewers are not united in their view. In my opinion it is not a real historical novel as there are no real historical personages included in the story except for Napoleon. Similarly, there is no exact information about historical events relating to this period apart from the Battle of Waterloo. "The battle itself is touched on briefly but brilliantly...A piece of information to which other novelists might have devoted chapters of ranting and posturing is relegated to a subordinate clause." (McMaster, p. 35) The conflict is used as more of a backdrop to the lives of his characters. The time forms only the background here, which helps to portray the story in an even more realistic aspect.

Conclusion

This thesis focused on the British prose of the first half of the nineteenth century which was written during the era of the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution brought about changes which influenced the lives of people in many respects and I tried to prove in this work that there was a connection between the Industrial Revolution with all its social, economic and industrial changes and the literature produced in that period. Therefore, I tried to find out what particular events or ongoing changes were or were not reflected in the British literature of the first half of the nineteenth century. I also focused on the relationship between the authors and their novels and tried to explore influence of the novelists' social status and class origin on their point of view of the social problematic displayed in their works. Finally, I concentrated on the literary genres of that era in order to learn if the early Victorian literature differs thematically from the preceding early-nineteenth century British literature.

When looking for the answers to individual hypotheses I had to consider that each of the authors whose novels I analysed in my work approached his or her writing in their own way through their own life philosophy. In other words, they used their own sociological and psychological approach to the ongoing social, technical and economical changes brought by the Industrial Revolution.

Concerning the first hypothesis, if the British prose of the first half of the nineteenth century reflects events based on social and industrial changes within the society and if the prose reflects them realistically, I have to admit that the British fiction of that era mirrored the changes, yet there are differences in attitudes of individual authors and in the topics they chose. Thus in *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Brontë lays emphasis on the class inequality and highlights the unjust treatment of the upper-class representatives with people, like orphans, staying on the edge of the society. Her aim is not to reform the social system but to develop the story and to show the influence of such a treatment on lives of individual characters. She also emphasizes the uneven position of women in the society, and particularly within marriage, which is a topic shared also by her sister Emily in *Wuthering Heights*. In her only novel, Emily depicted the transition from the agricultural to the industrial country. She also describes the

rearrangement of the rural society when Heathcliff leaves the farm of Wuthering Heights as a poor farmhand and later comes back rich and educated representing the newly risen middle class. With both these novelists we can detect a feminine insight in the social problematic concerning social inequality. The whole story of *Jane Eyre* is narrated by the main heroine Jane and *Wuthering Heights* is partly recounted by the servant Nelly Dean. Charles Dickens, on the other hand, often uses the point of view of a small boy. He refers to the social system that developed during the Industrial Revolution and focuses on the marginal parts of the society such as working-class people, orphaned children, criminals or prostitutes in his works.

Dickens pays special attention to the topic of class inequality in accordance with legal inequality of an individual. In his novels he touches on various legal reforms carried out during the first half of the nineteenth century, such as the New Poor Law of 1834 or the Reform Act of 1833, and he stresses the negative social consequences of the Industrial Revolution among which he includes poverty, malnutrition, poor living conditions of lower class people or an increased crime-rate. In his writing he realistically reflects the running discontent with the deteriorating situation of the lower classes within the society. Unlike Charlotte Brontë, he accentuates the social issues with the aim to attack the system he disagrees with and which he hopes to reform. Paying their primary attention to the conflict between classes the early Victorian novelists prove that social inequality was a topical issue in their time.

Another social subject on which the early Victorian writers concentrate in their novels very often is that of social mobility. In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë touches on this topic realistically when she lets the main heroine Jane wonder if Mr. Rochester is serious when making her a proposal. By coincidence, Jane inherits twenty thousand pounds from her unknown only relative by the end of the story by means of which she moves up in the social ladder and becomes socially equal to her fiancé. The upward mobility through marriage in the case of Becky in *Vanity Fair* or Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* is improbable and stands in direct contrast with reality as the mixing of classes was unlikely to happen. The Victorian society was based on rank and privilege and the caste system was something still very natural and well established in Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Emily Brontë also depicts social mobility in

the case of Heathcliff who mysteriously grows rich while being a few years away from Wuthering Heights. She shows that social mobility is not a womanly matter only but that it exists in various forms with both genders. In most of Dickens's novels we find that social mobility is generally not possible as in the example of little Emily in *David Copperfield*. However, in some of his novels main heroes change their social status thanks to unexpected inheritance or through discovery of their real origin. Thus in *Great Expectations* Pip inherits money and status from a former convict, or in *Oliver Twist* Oliver gains heritage from his dead father when the truth about his parentage emerges.

It is a characteristic feature of all these novels that there are many references to social changes but only very few to industrial ones. Social changes were mainly a result of industrial changes and most of the authors concentrate on the social changes and do not accentuate the industrial causes. The only author who deals with industrialization as such in his novels is Charles Dickens. In the first place, we can mention his *Hard Times* where he masterly describes the environment of an industrial town full of smog, polluted air and contaminated river as a consequence of the growing industry and increasing number of factories. Besides these, he concentrates on harsh living and working conditions of factory workers and their growing dissatisfaction resulting in the formation of trade unions. In the novel Dickens puts the workers in direct contrast with the factory owners to show their different perception of the situation. In order to depict these circumstances realistically, the author himself spent some time in the alarmed northern industrial part of England in the 1840's.

In most of his novels, Dickens describes London and shows how the capital was experiencing the Industrial Revolution and, again, focuses prevalingly on the negative impact of rapid urbanization such as bad hygiene, miserable living conditions of the poor, and the increasing social difference between the lower and the middle classes in towns. These differences are highlighted by the comparison of West End and East End of London in his novels. In *Oliver Twist*, for example, Dickens settles Fagin's gang at Saffron Hill, a criminal district of London and, as a contrast, Mr. Brownlow's house to Pentonville, a new and fashionable district of West End.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Napoleonic Wars were in full flow. Even though Britain was much more stabilized than any other European country at this time, and the ongoing social changes were resulting largely from the Industrial Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars played its special part. England was forced to leave its policy of splendid isolation and take part in continental events more frequently, which considerably stretched its national budget. The topic of Napoleonic Wars can be found in the novel *Vanity Fair*, serving as a background of the story with not great many details related to this historical event. The author reminds his readers of the Wars throughout the story, as there are references to the movement of the army from Flanders in various chapters. He concentrates on the last few days of the war in June 1815, which resulted in the battle of Waterloo. The battle represents the climax of the whole story.

Another important event described in that period literature are the strikes of the cotton-mill factory workers protesting against inhuman working conditions and the formation of the early trade unions, which Charles Dickens took down in *Hard Times*. He based this story on the 1854 cotton workers strike in the town of Preston, which he himself visited during the turbulent weeks.

The social problematic display in the British novels of the first half of the nineteenth century was much connected with the social status and class origin of their writers who both consciously and unconsciously confronted their own profile with given social situations described in their novels. The viewpoint differed according to their social status, education and family traditions.

Both Charlotte and Emily Brontë focused on the life of lower-class women in their writing. *Jane Eyre* is a life story of an orphaned girl and the difficulties she has to go through. The story is told from the point of view of the main character and Charlotte Brontë concentrates on several social topics connected with the lower class, such as the unequal position of orphans in the social hierarchy. In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë portrays the story of the Earnshaws, a lower-class family living in the English countryside. In the novel, she highlights the social problem of people with unknown parentage and reflects their status in Victorian society. Emily, as well as her sister Charlotte in *Jane Eyre*, is concerned with the role of women in an English family and their position in the nineteenth century society.

Charles Dickens spent his childhood in anxiety about the financial situation of his whole family. His father, a clerk in Navy Pay office, spent more than he earned and weighed down the family with debts, which had a strong effect on Charles's future life. The working and living conditions of the poor became the central theme of his novels. In the factory and at Marshalsea, where his father was arrested, he met many people from the bottom of the society and who became models for his novel characters. Thus, in *Oliver Twist* he acquaints the reader with the living conditions and habits of beggars, thieves or prostitutes. He depicts the environment of orphanages and the uneasy life of orphaned children there. In *Great Expectations*, Dickens tells the life story of an orphaned boy Pip who grows up in the family of a blacksmith and describes their humble living conditions. In *Hard Times*, Dickens depicts the suffering and hard life of people working in factories. He concentrates on the severe working conditions and miserable living conditions of undervalued workers.

Thackeray's own life experience had a great influence on his writing. In *Vanity Fair* he directs his attention to an upper part of the Victorian society. He describes their life and habits and concentrates on the qualities and personal characteristics of the main characters. He does not pay attention to lower classes including the working class with whom he did not get much in touch in his life.

As the early Victorian prose writers were strongly influenced by their social background in their writing, it was rather natural that they used experience coming from their own life too. They projected themselves into their characters and most of the novels bear apparent similarities between their own lives and the lives of their characters. In *Jane Eyre* the main character becomes orphaned and is sent to a charity school based on a strict discipline. Charlotte Brontë depicts the life of Lowood School with all the suffering, which comes from her memories and experiences from the evangelical school she was sent to after the death of her mother. Further, Jane becomes a governess and falls in love with a married man, which is another similarity with the author's own life. In *Wuthering Heights* Emily Brontë sets the story into the countryside of Yorkshire, which was her home country. She describes the surroundings and the houses that really existed in her times in details. In all the novels by Charles Dickens, we can find his own life experience, however, the novels differ from

each other in the amount of common features and the level of the author's identification with his hero or heroes. Some of the analysed novels can even be regarded as partly autobiographical as it is in case of *David Copperfield*. Dickens depicted some of his family members and friends there. Thus we can recognise Dickens's first love Maria Beadnell in the character of Dora Spenlow or Dickens's parents in the characters of Wilkins Micawber and his devoted wife Emma. Dickens also describes Micawber's fancy in a costly way of living and his irresponsible dealing with money which takes him, as well as it took Dickens's father, to the debtor's prison. Dickens used here the memories from his childhood. Another similarity between the novel character and the author is in their professions and taken jobs. Unlike the other mentioned authors, Thackeray identifies himself with many of his characters in *Vanity Fair*. Thus we can trace similarities between the author and Rawdon Crawley who loses all his money through gambling, or Joseph Sedley, a nabob, who eats and drinks excessively and enjoys a Bohemian way of living, or Rebecca who goes through ups and downs in her life. He also notes down some memories and recollections from his life in India or his stay in Weimar.

To be able to judge if the early Victorian literature thematically differs from the proceeding early nineteenth century British literature we have to divide the analysed works according to their authors and their scope of interest. The first group involves novels by Charlotte and Emily Brontë which focus on the life in the countryside and most of the criticism there is aimed at the upper class, in fact at gentry. In *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Brontë attacks the superordinate behavior of upper-class people towards lower classes represented by Jane. She is never trusted and always unfairly suspected of doing wrong things. Charlotte Brontë portrays the upper classes as biased and discriminating. She also criticizes the uneven position of lower and upper classes in terms of their rights. In *Wuthering Heights* we can find much softer criticism of the ruling class which is to be found in comparison of the way of living of the Lintons and the Earnshaws. In both mentioned novels we can find many literary means specific for Romanticism, especially for the Gothic novel. Nature and mystery play important roles there. Both stories take place in the English countryside and the authors make use of the dramatic effect of this wild scenery. The story of *Wuthering Heights* is placed at moorlands of Northern England. The wild environment is partly

portrayed also in *Jane Eyre* when Jane runs away from Mr. Rochester and rambles about the forest for several days. The romantic atmosphere is supported by extreme weather conditions and by the appearance of strange sounds or supernatural beings. In both novels, emphasis is laid on feelings and emotions between the main characters. Both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* also bear characteristics of the Bildungsroman. In both novels, the main characters, Jane and Heathcliff, grow up to become physically and mentally mature persons in the end of the story. Both of them suffer from emotional deprivation; Jane has to bear humiliation and bullying of her aunt and her cousins and Heathcliff has to fight for his place in the family. Both of the characters have problematic relationships, which cause them severe emotional hardship.

The second group involves novels by Charles Dickens. All his analysed novels can be taken as works of Critical Realism as they all express strong criticism of the British society of those days. Dickens attacks the upper classes by exaggerating their negative qualities and showing their immoral behavior which is driven by material interests. He puts the upper-class people in contrast with lower class representatives who are presented as “heroes” in his novels. Herewith, he stresses the difference between the classes. In *Oliver Twist* he also criticizes the Government for not being attentive enough to social concerns of that time and he draws his attention to social injustice. In *Hard Times*, Dickens focuses on the suffering of working people and their hard life. In all his novels, Dickens generally highlights the negative characteristics of the Victorian society and points out the drawbacks of the social system. Some of Dickens’s novels, such as *Great Expectations* or *David Copperfield*, can also be regarded as Bildungsromans. The story of David begins when he is born, the story of Pip starts when Pip is a seven-year-old boy. Being orphans, they both have a complicated childhood and difficulties in finding their own identity. They undergo a development of their personalities and turn into mature men by the end of the story. The nature of their characters is formed by emotional hardship and difficulties experienced in their lives.

Vanity Fair forms the third group. William Makepeace Thackeray does not pay his primary attention to the class conflict even though rank and social status are of constant worry of the main characters in the novel. Thackeray

concentrates on the middle and upper classes in his writing and almost avoids the lower class he did not get in touch with personally in his life. The only an exception when Thackeray describes the humble origin of Rebecca or later, when he puts in contrast rich-grown Becky with her impoverished “friend” Amelia. In Amelia’s case he highlights the exclusion of the family from the upper society and their poor living conditions after Mr. Sedley’s washout at the stock exchange. The author shows the cruel rules of capitalist society that is controlled by the force of money and strongly criticizes that. He describes unscrupulous people who value money and social status more than good character and ethical conduct. The most striking example is the character of Rebecca whose only interest is to get among the upper society at any price. However strong moralistic efforts of the author we can trace in the novel, Thackeray does not make any conclusions indicating any future improvement of his characters. It is not a typical critical novel though as there are no current social problems portrayed and as love and luck do not “win” in the end.

To sum up, we can say that there is a difference between individual novelists of the early Victorian era. While the Brontë sisters concentrate on the life in the countryside and focus their attention on the role of women and their position in the Victorian society, Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray write about the town life and concentrate on the urban society and its class stratification. The novels of Dickens and Thackeray are typical works of critical realism. Both Dickens and Thackeray criticize the society, mainly the upper classes, and at the centre of their interest stand the class inequality and social mobility. The difference between Dickens and Thackeray is in their attitude towards such criticism. Thackeray is very pessimistic in his view of the society and describes his characters in a negative way. He uses irony and satire and all his novels tend to bear a moralizing tone. Dickens, on the other hand, uses more gentle humour and irony and slighter criticism in his writing. He shows his sympathy for common people and his novels are more emotional, and sometimes even sentimental. Moreover, he portrays amusing characters which also gives his stories a cheerful tone.

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