

**MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
ABDERRAHMANE MIRA UNIVERSITY OF BEJAIA
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**



Theme

**A MARXIST READING OF CHARLES DICKENS' NOVEL
*HARD TIMES***

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a

Master's degree in English Literature and Civilization

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Academic Year: 2020-2021

Dedications

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and my friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, my mother OUARDIA and my father MARZOUK whose care and words of encouragement and advice helped me accomplish this work. My wonderful sisters LAMIA and LYLIA who never left my side. I also dedicate it to my brothers TOUFIK, HASSIM, REDOUANE, RAFIK, ZIAD and to my lovely niece ELYANNA.

To my friend and Binomial YOUSRA.

To my best friend who I consider like a sister and soulmate “LYDIA” and all her family.

Special thanks to best guy that I have ever met in my life “CHRIS”, who has always supported me and encouraged me.

I am infinitely grateful for your love and support, Thank You all.

-HADID Bilynda-

I dedicate this dissertation to my dear family; my dearest mother and father who supported me during my journey in education, and who helped me most when I am down. To my sisters Rania with whom I share my hobbies, and Chahinez who never fails to cheer me up as well as my brothers Walid and Badreddine and to my dear cousins with whom I spent my childhood.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my friend Bilynda who worked hard with me on this thesis.

Thank you, and I love you.

-IDIR Yousra-

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our sincere gratefulness to our supervisor, Mr. MAZIANI Mourad for his help, guidance and valuable suggestions.

We are also thankful to the all the professors who taught us during our journey in the university.

We are very grateful to the board of examiners who have accepted to read and evaluate the present dissertation.

Abstract

The present study is an effort to apply the Elements of the Marxist theory tackling the Victorian author Charles Dickens's novel *Hard Times* as a case-study. It aims at highlighting the elements of the theory in the novel as a medium to prove the negative impact of inequality in wealth distribution. This dissertation is a Marxist reading of the novel as a critic of the social inequality. It introduces the reader to class consciousness and class struggle as elements of the Marxist theory in order to foreground Dickens' ideology through his novel's social context and characters.

Key words: Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, Victorian era, Literature, Marxism, Social Division, Class Struggle, Class Consciousness, False Consciousness.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

The Victorian age was the age of progress, stability and great social reforms, but in the same time was characterized by poverty, injustice and social unrest. This era was a time of major social, economic and technological progress around the world with the industrial revolution driving changes across almost every aspect of every aspect of daily life. According to (Taibi 2008) “An age that began with a confidence and optimism leading to economic boom and prosperity eventually gave way to uncertainty and doubt regarding Britain’s Place in the world”. This period was also rich on painting and literary production.

Literature is a window into the re-created realities of writer's worlds. All its genres deal with human experiences, but the relationship between the individual and society is the specialty of the novel. The Victorian novelist, George Eliot, writes that “The doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mess of feelings, in place of finite substantial reality.” (Quoted in Louis, 2006: 30), this idea may represent the belief that the Victorian novelists based their writings on, and they sublimated literature from a work of imagination to a fiction based on realities. Reading literary works is belonged to the great writers of the Victorian period like Charles Dickens.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) is one of the Victorian significant writers and realists. His genius style in creating stories makes his novels among the most known writings in England. His writings excellently exemplify the rise of Britain during the 19th century, and it represents a vivid picture of the Victorian society. He gets his messages across through his criticizing writings and his use of caricatures in presenting facts. Dickens's novels deal with a number of social issues and exemplify the problems of an industrial town in England during the period;

they also illustrate the class struggles in society. Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) is a representation of the different social classes in the Victorian society (Ingham, 1996).

Hard Times' setting represents an industrial town during the Victorian era. In his fictional town called Coketown, Dickens portrays the living conditions, work, and education in addition to other inequalities between characters that belong to the working, middle, and upper classes. This novel is considered as one of Dickens's strong criticizing social works. Dickens tries to send a message by drawing the details of reality.

In an attempt to highlight Dickens's aversion of the social reality of his society that is incorporated in *Hard Times*, and foreground the contrast in the lifestyle of the different social classes; the literary work should be analysed clearly for illustrating the target object of the study. It requires an adaptation of a suitable literary theory which will be the Marxist literary criticism.

Marxism is a body of ideas which sees all human history as the history of class struggle. In particular, it is concerned to analyse the dynamics and contradictions of the capitalist system, and to show how the working class has the historical potential to overthrow capitalism and establish a classless, socialist society. Marxism stands or falls by its ability to interpret existing society, and to mobilize men and women to change it. A Marxist theory of literature- or, for that matter, of music, sexuality or carpet-weaving framework. At first sight, it might not appear that the consideration of so-called 'creative literature' has very much importance for Marxism. If it had nothing to say on the matter, its validity as a revolutionary theory would scarcely be challenged thereby.

In fact, Marxism has always had a great deal to say about literature and to its practitioners. The major figures of Marxism from Marx and Engels to Gramsci and Trotsky all wrote at length, if fragmentarily, about literary questions. And many of the most important figures of twentieth century literature Hikmet, to name only a handful- have been influenced by Marxism

and attempted to absorb its insights into their creative practice. Many reasons have been given for this close interplay between Marxism and literature. Meszaros attributes it is conceivable only if situated within such a Sartre, Brecht, Gorky, Breton, Neruda, to Marxism, preoccupation with the question of alienation (Meszaros 1970: 190); while Lukács sees literature as a particularly suitable area for the ideological clarification that precedes a 'great crisis in social relations' (Lukács 1972: 107). Yet to many people the attempt to integrate a theory of literature within a theory of politics seems to pose a threat to the integrity of literature, indeed to its very essence.

A research by Philip V. Allingham (1998) Faculty of Education, Lakehead University, entitled "Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* for These Times as an Industrial Novel" states that Dickens described the appalling conditions of life in factory towns; preached that the poor were entitled to the same justice, the same healthy conditions, the same freedom, as the rich; attacked every kind of public pest, especially those whose love for the public was really a love of publicity.

Another research was conducted by Johnson Charles (1998) Middle East Technical University in "Evil Intentions are the Evil Person's Own Undoing". It is about the distinction between two classes, middle class and upper class. *Hard times* been viewed varied even conflicting ways different critics. Critics drawn detail with convincing relationship real world with inner life. Opinion majority characters flat oppose round. Definition flat characters purpose this essay lacking depth maintains those characteristics throughout story. This developed reflect different aspects humanity uses their personalities depict moral themes. Example Gradgrind represents felt evil only interested in numbers; willing to sacrifice Louisa by marrying her off to Bounder by, a rich banker, for a better social situation.

As researchers we delved into this study in order to show the way in which a specific literary text gives the reader a clear image of the society at a specific period of time. It also aims at explaining and pointing out a major function of literature which is mirroring society as it aims at analysing *Hard Times* through the lens of a Marxist ideology. It proves that literature is not just a collection of fictitious stories based on imagination and written for entertaining readers; it is based on realities and the ideologies of the authors whose goal is to highlight social and political issues that concern them as individuals who belong to a society. Therefore, this work would try to find out the social class differences in Dickens's *Hard Times*, and if the author portrays his ideology through his characters all while highlighting the societal issues that concern him. Consequently, two questions have arisen to us while trying to dissect this theory; does Charles Dickens use his characters in order to highlight the Marxist elements of the social conflict theory? and does the social class division in *Hard Times* pose a problem upon the harmony of the characters?

Two hypotheses are formulated to answer the previously mentioned research questions. If Dickens' aim through *Hard Times* is to depict the societal issues and prove his ideology, then his characters are certainly his tools to depict the characteristics of class struggle and class consciousness as elements of the Marxist theory, furthermore, we suppose that the state of social class division which is depicted in the novel creates a drift between the members of current society compared to the previous harmonious state of the pre-capitalist society.

The thesis will be divided into four parts; a general introduction in which we explain our main theme and our object of research, then we will delve into our first chapter where we detail on the theory that we will be using to analyse the novel as well as a thorough explanation of the Victorian literature. The second chapter will focus on applying our chosen theory on our subject of research *Hard Times* and discovering if the hypothesis is indeed the answers to our research

questions. Finally, a general conclusion will contain the final result of the thesis, and it will either confirm or deny our assumptions after giving an overview of the whole research project.

In the process of realizing this work, we will need several sources which we will use in our qualitative data collection. The primary work will be Charles Dickens's novel *Hard Times* which we will read closely while taking into consideration the Marxist elements that represent the theory of class conflict. Our other resources will include journals, books or thesis that is closely related to our current topic of research to bridge the gaps and assist us in analysing the novel from a Marxist perspective

Chapter One

Victorian Literature and The Marxist Conflict Theory

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to introduce the reader to the historical context of Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times*. The Characteristics of the Victorian Novel, thus will be discussed while taking the social reality as a terrain of investigation and inquiring into understanding Dickens' motivations and goals.

As a theoretical framework, we will rely on the Marxist theory among other theories to highlight the importance of the social environment on shaping man's behaviour.

Therefore, there will bring forth elements of the Marxist literary theory that will be used to analyze the novel. The two major elements that will be discussed are class consciousness understands as an awareness of the proletariat class's oppression and having solidarity in order to fight for equality. Whereas class struggle will serve to understand struggle between social classes.

I. The Victorian Literature and Social Class

Victorian literature is the literature produced during the reign of Victoria and corresponded to the Victorian era. It forms a transition within the history of literature between the romantic period literature and therefore the very different literature of the 20th century. It produced great poets, writes remarkable and excellent prose. The artistic works shared common characteristics. The main characteristic is that Victorian literature tends to return closer to the lifestyle which reflects the issues and interests exist actually. It becomes a strong mean for human progress, socially and economical.

The Victorian literature seems to deviate from the common role of literature, art for art's sake, and asserts its moral purpose. Idealism is often a main characteristic of the Victorian literature. This era is considered an age of doubt and pessimism. Though the age is characterized by practical and materialistic, most of the writers exalt a purely ideal life. In twenty-four other

words, it is an idealistic age that tackles great ideals like truth, justice, love, and brotherhood. These ideals were the main themes of poets, essayists, and novelists of the Age. The novel as a form of artistic expression is the most representative for of that era as Taibi says:

“The novel continued to thrive through this time. Its importance to the era could easily be compared to the importance of the plays of Shakespeare for the Elizabethans.”

Poetry thrived too, but not the maximum amount as prose. It did with the works of the Browning, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the verse of Lewis Carroll and Rudyard Kipling.

Victorian novels tend to be idealized portraits of inauspicious lives during which diligence, perseverance, love and luck win call at the end; virtue would be rewarded and wrongdoers are suitably punished. They intended to be of an improving nature with a central moral lesson at heart. While this formula was the thought for much of earlier Victorian fiction, things became more complex because of the growing century progress.

The 19th century saw the novel becoming the leading sort of literature in English. The pre-Victorian writers like Austen and Scott had perfected both closely-observed social satire and adventure stories. Popular works opened a marketplace for the novel amongst a reading public. The 19th century is typically considered a neighborhood in British literature also as in other countries like France, the US and Russia. Books and novels especially, became ubiquitous, and thus the "Victorian novelist" created legacy works with continuing appeal.

The Victorian novel as mentioned before was the dominant form in the Victorian literature; the subsequent quote could show that: *“Prior to the last war, the whole literature of the Victorian period languished in the depth of critical disfavor, and the novels were considered, if possible, even more contemptible than any of the other literary genre”* (Bloom, 2004: 47).

It seeks to represent an outsized and comprehensive social world, with a variety of classes. Its major themes always struggle with the fate of the society and the protagonist’s aspirations or social position as Bloom says:

“The Victorian novelists had given emotional coloring to everything they wrote about [...] their complicated plots had often included melodramatic suspense or farcical absurdity; many of them were committed to overt social purpose” (Bloom, 2004: 48)

For the first time, women novelists were major writers: Emily, Anne, and Charlotte Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot. The novel was a principal sort of entertainment. Also, it had been more preferred than the opposite sorts of writing:

The novel was a form of entertainment, and well-brought up children were taught to read novels before luncheon. An educated Victorian reader idled away an evening with a novel when he did not feel equal to reading something important history for example or history. (Bloom, 2004: 26).

It is known that historians divided the history of England into a series of periods. From the traditional Britain to the fashionable age, these periods are spans of time in which each one of them has its own particular characteristics whether within the social life, literature, religion, or other aspects. Thus, the Victorian era is one among periods which has its own characteristics. Social characteristics like class division and child labor which were the theme of the period's literature especially novels. It is almost impossible to understand the nineteenth century English novel without an understanding of the class system of English society. Although the term 'class' was a nineteenth century invention of Engels and Karl Marx, there had been other terms used previously: 'orders' was a standard one, suggesting a hierarchy from high to low. Technological Revolution led to several effects. A serious one is the social class change that appeared in England society as a result of economic reasons. There were three new social class structures in England during the Victorian era. These three distinct classes are the Church and aristocracy, the middle class, and the working class (Taibi, 2008).

During the Victorian era appeared in many situations:

The class division on the railway was echoed throughout the land. In church the higher classes sat at the front in reserved pews and the lower classes at the back. In dress, the wives of wealthy industrialists were clothed in conspicuous finery as they were the social representatives of their soberly dressed husband (Taibi, 2008: 61).

As stated before, the society is divided into three social classes. Then, according to historians the Victorian society was divided into the upper and lower classes. Later on, a third class emerged which is the middle class.

The upper class is a group of the owners of natural resources and factories (Marx, 19). Their power comes from employment of labors and wealth. This group controlled the political power of the country. In his novel, *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894), George Gissing tells the story of a group of a young upper and lower-middle-class people at the time of Queen Victoria's role, and describes the upper-class manner of living in very high living conditions. (Drabble, 2000). Also, it was called the aristocracy. This class included the Church and nobility which had a great power and wealth. It consisted of about two percent of the population and included the royal family, lords, the clergy, great officers of state, and those above the degree of baronet. The members of this class were born in nobility and they owned the majority of the land. They were privileged and avoided taxes. Aristocrats made a lot of money, the wealthiest ones of them made about 30,000 pounds per year. They put aside 150 pounds per year to their sons and 100 pounds per year to their daughters from the day they were born (Cody, 2013).

During the last half of the eighteenth century in Britain, there had been a little class of merchants, trades and little farmers. This small class was "the middle class", and it had increased with the increase of industrialists and factory owners. Then, within the nineteenth century grew quickly. Industrialists of this class were successful and self-made men who came from poor beginnings (McDowall, 2006). The center class made from factory owners, bankers, shopkeepers, merchants, lawyers, engineers, businessmen, traders, teachers, and other

professionals. In other words; it included everyone between the labor and therefore the upper crust. New roles were defined for bourgeoisie men and women; bourgeoisie men went for add business, while their women stayed home and cared for the family needs. bourgeoisie men didn't marry until the age of 27 or 30 due to the importance of being financially stable. This class made up about fifteen percent of the population. A man's status depends on his values, education, and community position. Though, the clergyman of the Church of England might 23 have had very small incomes, he was still considered gentleman. one among the most characteristics of this class is that the idealization of family life and togetherness because the chance of its members in being together. The middle-class children were raised by servants, and that they had the prospect to travel to local grammar schools or visited private schools. Their education became increasingly important. People of this class shared set of values and concepts. They valued diligence, virtue, and individual responsibility.

The lower class was divided into two sections: the working class (laborers), and therefore the poor. It contained men, women, and children performing many sorts of labor, including factory work, seam stressing, and chimney sweeping, mining, and other jobs. It consisted of about eighty- five percent of the population but owned less than fifty percent of the land. People of this class had to endure a large burden of taxes, and made up about twenty-five pounds per year (Harris, 1994). People from this class earned just enough to stay alive. At their twenties, working men were at their peak physically, in order that they were most highly paid. After the working man and woman married the family would be quit poor. For the rationale that upon arrival of children and woman could not continue to work a twelve to fourteen hour every day. As the man grew older, he earns such a lot less because his physical conditions.

I.2- Elements of the Marxist Literary Theory

Marxism is an ideology and political movement that stems from the class conflict and social differences. Karl Marx, a German philosopher, was one of its founding fathers.

Marxism is a complicated ideology, for Marx is by no means the only influence on this critical school. Despite his influence on several political movements such as socialism, Trotskyism, communism and Leninism, one despairs at trying to provide a fair and lucid introduction. Nonetheless, there are a number of Marxist thoughts that present a huge influence on recent scholarly developments; particularly in literary, cultural, and political studies. Thus, giving a sense for the major concepts influencing this approach while attempting to stay conscious of the various ways that individual terms have been contested over the last number of decades. The major distinction in Marxist thought that influences literary and cultural theory is that between traditional Marxists and what are sometimes referred to as post-Marxists or neo-Marxists. The major distinction between these two versions of Marxist thought lies in the concept of ideology: traditional Marxists tend to believe that it is possible to get past ideology in an effort to reach some essential truth.

Marx based his class conflict theory on the capitalist society where a class is defined by the ownership of property. Such ownership vests a person with the power to exclude others from the property and to use it for personal purposes. In relation to property there are three great classes of society: the bourgeoisie who own the means of production such as machinery and factory buildings, and whose source of income is profit, landowners whose income is rent, and the proletariat who own their labor and sell it for a wage.

The two facets that incorporate this theory are class consciousness in which the proletariat class becomes conscious of its oppression and the unfairness of the social situation and the class struggle that is the start of the fight against this social reality; an attempt to settle a fairer ownership and a struggle against the oppression of the working class.

Class Consciousness

Class Consciousness is a core facet of the Marxist theory of class conflict which focuses on the social, economic, and political relationships between workers and owners within a capitalist economy. It is mostly developed on the basis of theories on how workers could overthrow the capitalist system that controls their livelihood. His concern was neither with gauging levels of consciousness nor with plumbing the mysteries of psychological phenomena. His objective was to characterize, theoretically and politically, the historical processes that determine the movements of class consciousness (Iasi 2006, 2007).

According to Karl Marx, class consciousness is one's awareness of his social class as well as an understanding of the economic rank of the class to which he belongs in the context of the larger society. In order to acquire a class consciousness, a considerably large number of people realizing that they are living under the same circumstances is not sufficient. However, the existence of said individuals who struggle with their circumstances and the imposed labour become politically and economically aware, lets them step into a territory where they could unite in order to overthrow the exploitative capitalist system, where owners abuse their power by overworking the labourers in exchange for small wages.

According to the Marxist scheme, the workers start from a generally inert situation, capable at most of occasional acts of instinctive revolt. Through the experience of industrialization, which brings them together in huge factories to impose upon them a common fate, they acquire a revolutionary class consciousness".

On the basis of such accounts, which have long been commonplace, the working- class commitment to socialism poses few problems. Their life situation generates, virtually automatically, the appropriate political consciousness. Our purpose here will be to suggest that while such an interpretation has a certain basis in Marx's writings, it is ultimately far from adequate. This approach is what we shall refer to as *the topographical theory of consciousness*,

according to which particular sets of ideas are the ideational expression of the perspective available from a given economic and social situation. What you see is determined by where you are looking from. Thus, the perspective available from the bottom of the social pyramid looking up is diametrically different from that seen from the top looking down. In respect of the relative value of these different perspectives a common assumption here is that the burden of having the full dead weight of society above one is, at least partially, compensated by the view it affords of social reality. Differential vision confines the bourgeoisie generally within their narrow philistine horizon" while presenting the proletariat with a more expansive and hence realistic panorama.

The social class reality comes with the very clear difference in the power dynamics of two very distinct social classes; the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Whereas the bourgeoisie consists on owners of factories and land who contribute to production with their properties, the proletariat consists on workers who can only contribute to said production with their labour and working force.

We have several examples that amplify the concept of class consciousness. Having class consciousness requires getting to form opinions as a whole class instead of individually; wherein: the working class forms a sense of realization that they are being exploited by the bourgeoisie class and being alluded that they are paid as much as they offer. There is however an opposing concept called False Consciousness that slows the process of Class Consciousness or even prevents it from ever happening.

False consciousness is a concept derived from Marxist theory of class conflict. The concept refers to the systematic misrepresentation of dominant social relations in the consciousness of subordinate classes.

False Consciousness is a dictated reality that prevents the proletariat from seizing their independence and natural right from the upper class. Members of the proletariat class suffer

from false consciousness in that their mental representations of the social relations around them systematically conceal or obscure the realities of subordination, exploitation, and domination those relations embody

Consciousness or lack thereof is not what determines one's social standing; social being, however, does determine one's consciousness according to Marx in *Preface of a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (159)

False Consciousness is presented by the owners of these businesses and lands, offering illusions to the labourers that, one day, they will be rewarded for their hard work and be able to climb the social ladder through their own hard work.

The bourgeoisie hold controlling their workers to a great importance, for if that control went loose, their authority as business owners would be threatened. Therefore, they try controlling their workers by giving them hope that they will succeed in changing their social status in the future.

The working class becomes dependent on the only thing they can offer, which is their labour, making them work themselves to the ground in an attempt to reach that false hope.

The workers will benefit the rich making them even richer and more powerful, all while exhausting their efforts to the attain unrealistic goals that the owners predetermined for them, and getting further from realising their reality, recognize the abuse of power or even developing a sense of solidarity with the other individuals of their social standing because they are too occupied by working harder than each other in order to satisfy the great standards that have been predetermined for them, so rather than feeling that they are on the same side of the struggle, they consider themselves competitors who are struggling against each other in order to reach said standards.

Gramsci gave this Marxist ideology a more active role in politics as he argued that the proletariat has the ability to influence the terms of its consciousness, so there is an extended

struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat over the terms of the representation of the existing social reality. (Gramsci: 1971)

The bourgeoisie exercises its dominance over the proletariat through its control of the instruments of consciousness; but the proletariat can exert influence through its own cultural institutions; therefore, it denies that the proletariat is a passive side of this class dynamic.

class consciousness incorporates having a common knowledge of the class's struggles, a strong feeling of solidarity as well as having a desire to change said reality by planning to take over the means of production and overthrowing the bourgeoisie class for the sake of equality of wealth and a fight against the oppression that is imposed on the proletariat, who possess nothing but their labour, by the owners.

Class Struggle

Class Struggle or Class Conflict is the course of action taken in response to the oppression that the working class has been through after reaching their class consciousness. Obtaining that consciousness means that the working class has realized that its members are being exploited in favour of the bourgeoisie class and their comfort while being paid less than necessary for a living all while being put under the harshest working conditions.

This is a dependence dynamic where the owners depend on the labourers for the production and the workers depend on the owners for the production means. The force transforming latent class membership into a struggle of classes is *class interest*. Out of similar class situations, individuals come to act similarly. They develop a mutual dependence, a community, a shared interest interrelated with a common income of profit or of wages. From this common interest classes are formed, and for Marx, individuals form classes to the extent that their interests engage them in a struggle with the opposite class.

Marx believed that this inequality would fuel a change in this capitalist society because a society that lives with such inequality may pose complications that will lead to its own destruction.

The ownership of the means of production such as factories and lands belonged to the bourgeoisie class which limited the proletariat's chances of production, so their mission now is to take over the means of production and redistribute the wealth in order to create a well-balanced society.

The existence of a thesis enables the existence of an anti-thesis, and in this case, the bourgeoisie being the owners and the biggest profiter whereas the proletariat are the labourers who work harder and profit much less is the thesis. The anti-thesis is the desire of the working class for change and inequality. The division between classes will widen and the condition of the exploited worker will deteriorate so badly that social structure collapses: the class struggle is transformed into a proletarian revolution. The workers' triumph will eliminate the basis of class division in property through public ownership of the means of production. With the basis of classes thus wiped away, a classless society will ensue (by definition), and since political power to protect the bourgeoisie against the workers is unnecessary, political authority and the state will wither away.

As Marx saw the development of class conflict, the struggle between classes was initially confined to individual factories. Eventually, given the maturing of capitalism, the growing disparity between life conditions of bourgeoisie and proletariat, and the increasing homogenization within each class, individual struggles become generalized to coalitions across factories. Increasingly class conflict is manifested at the societal level. Class consciousness is increased, common interests and policies are organized, and the use of and struggle for political power occurs. Classes become political forces.

The struggle between the two classes and said conflict will lead to a compromise where members of the working class are promoted to higher ranks in order to create a common standing for both classes, and from here comes the middle class.

The middle class could possibly become more powerful; posing a threat to the bourgeoisie because of the support and trust of the working class. The latter might also envy their former class members which will be a reason for unrest.

An anti-thesis could rise from either side of the society which results in class conflicts and equal rights demands to arise once again for an endless circle.

Conclusion

This chapter embodies descriptions of the Victorian literature and its depiction of the social realities where the society was divided into different social classes as the industrial revolution developed.

As we progress through the chapter, the reader is introduced to the main elements that will be used to dissect the novel, thus class consciousness is introduced as an ideological stage where the working class realizes that it is being oppressed and the whole cluster is politically aware, whereas, false consciousness is the absence of consciousness and an illusion that prevents the workers from any way of revolting against the owners.

Class Struggle is introduced as the second element of the selected class conflict theory which is the part where the proletariat has gained its class consciousness and is gearing for its revolt against the oppressors.

Chapter Two

Marxist Reading of Charles Dickens *Hard Times*

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to identify the application of the Marxist theory in Dickens's *Hard Times*, Dickens tackles the mechanized British society, which is embodied in his fictional characters, where working people, women and the poor were living in bad conditions in order to picture the development that led to the consciousness of the workers as well as their struggle for better treatment and equality for all.

I-Application of the Marxist Theory in Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*

Marxism is embedded today as it is displayed in a variety of ways in our society which is a theory developed by Karl Marx that proposes social economic classes that are evident in literature as well as those reflected in real life. Within Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*, one can view the simple teachings of Mister Gradgrind in the Book: The Sowing, a form of Marxism. He encounters a student in the school he teaches at that does not abide with his teachings. He later takes her in where she opens his eyes to the mistakes of his proposed educational plan. With a glance through a Marxist lens, one can prove Marxism is evident in Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* through the corrupt ideologies of Mister Gradgrind leading to the destruction of youth and the social alienation of Sissy Jupe.

Gradgrind's utilitarian ideology is implemented into the minds of young children in his school and those that reside in his home. The book opens with a proposal of his doctrine which he simply states, "Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own this statement; one can see that his ideology surrounds the idea of distinguishing the mind and the heart. His philosophy trumps

any idea of imagination while rooting children and this is the principle on which I bring up these children" (Dickens: 3)

By everything else out. It is based solely on factuality and leaves little room for creativity. The use of this ideology is a capitalist tactic. The authority in this context takes advantage of the kids by means of viewing them as vessels of information. After the teaching of his utilitarian philosophy, Gradgrind hoped the kids would think rationally rather than emotionally. Despite the strong belief in his philosophy, it is proven to be ineffective when the kids he once taught have grown into robot-like individuals. With the lack of exposure to the creative arts, their emotions, and imagination, these children have yet to display any sense of morality. After implementing his ideology onto his own kids, Louisa confronts her father years later and says, "All that I know is, your philosophy and your teaching will not save me. Now. Father, you have brought me to this. Save me by some other means!" (224). After years of firmly believing in utilitarian ideology, he sees firsthand as to what the outcome of his teachings may be. During this confrontation, his daughter mentions that she is getting a divorce. He reveals that he is disturbed as to why his daughter desires a divorce at a young age. After this encounter, he is enlightened to the fact he cannot teach emotions. By doing so, he tries to abandon his ideology to help his daughter. The topic of ideology in the Marxist theory is expressed in *Hard Times* through the philosophy of utilitarian education and its ultimate downfall.

Throughout the novel, Cecelia Jupe has been viewed as an outcast by society, she is continuously alienated by her peers and nonetheless, Mister Gradgrind, while in class, Cecelia "Sissy" mentions that she would fancy. This evokes a negative response from Gradgrind as he states, "That's it! You are never to fancy... You must discard the word Fancy altogether. You have nothing to do with it. You are not to have, in any object use or ornament, what would be a contradiction in fact". (Dickens: 4).

Through the simple exchange between Mr. Gradgrind and Cecilia Jupe, one can observe that she is not abiding to his teachings. His utilitarian ideology is not more effective on Jupe than it is on the other kids. With her acknowledgement of imagination, she is viewed as "altogether below the mark" (Dickens 125). Her constant response to the emotion she feels directly contrast to her peers. Jupe's inability to repress her own thoughts places her in a position to deal with the social alienation from her peers. To scold Cecelia for stepping out of the status quo among the classroom, he only further proves that she is indeed the alienated in the classroom. Sissy's inability to comprehend Gradgrind's ideology results in a positive outcome. Unlike suffering the dreadful fate Louisa endures, Sissy encounters the good karma that has been waiting for her.

Throughout the novel, Mr. Gradgrind is always making an attempt to convert Sissy's way of thinking. By maintaining her humanity, Gradgrind's utilitarian ideology does not affect her. She is the only resident of Coketown who has a real sense of happiness which, yet again, alienates her from the rest of society. Ultimately, Gradgrind's ideology leads to the social alienation of Sissy within the classroom and through the town.

One can prove Marxism is evident in Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* through the corrupt ideologies of Mr. Gradgrind leading to the destruction of his own daughter Louisa and the social alienation of Sissy Jupe. Depriving kids of any sort of creativity will affect them soon. If one allows the kid to express their creativity and imagination, they will grow to be exceptional kid.

Additionally, Marxist themes are shown in the novel *Hard Times* (1854) by Charles Dickens; it deals with the effects of the industrial revolution of the 1840s. There are class struggles people are used like machines or robots. *Hard times* begin with the wealthy merchant Thomas Gradgrind in Coketown England.

Coketown is dominated by capitalist employers, the manufacturer makes more than it does and gains more than its workers. The capitalist's benefit is changed. The product value is generated by the worker as well as the real pay earned by the worker varies from the benefits, Dickens says that if capitalist Bosses can lift their salaries, the employees are not simple too, the workers should also use their brains to get what they truly deserve in this novel the "Ruling class" dominates the ways of production in society structure and thoughts behind society.

As the novel *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens is studied it is seen that in this literary piece that there are Marxist concepts and ideas; the novel does not allow capitalists to behave according to such bourgeois and imperialist rules. The ruling classes do not allow people of the lower class to think and feel. These laws therefore lead to their tasks as robots or machines, workers earn less attention from capacities than the true value of their work. Workers' wages are not enough in *Hard Times*, a person's status and living condition started to change as industrialism began.

II-Portraying Social Class Differences through Characters:

Each writer has his own special way of characterization. The importance of the writer's creation of his characters within the literary composition lays in the depiction of the distinct characteristics that helps the readers see the contrast of the characters' looks, behaviour and education which hint at their social standing.

Dickens features a special use of characterization during which they'll seem real for the reader, as T.S Eliot remarked that: "*Dickens's characters are real because there is no one like them.*" (Quoted in Bloom, 2004: 7). Not only can the outline of Coketown reveal the image of society, but also the precise description of every character. Dickens characterization portrays the various social classes in an Industrial town, during which the three characters; James Harthouse, Josiah Bounderby and Stephen Blackpool, are representatives of the upper, middle and dealing social

classes. Dickens in adversity tries to reveal the differences between the three social classes, their education, work, living conditions, and even the dialects within the novel can reveal tons about the classes' differences within the Victorian society (Ilhem, 2012).

The character that represents the bourgeoisie class the most is Mr. James Harthouse an upscale man, an aristocratic member of society who visits Coketown because he becomes tired of life, and he's trying to find something new; who Dickens describes as followed:

“Now, this gentleman had a younger brother of still better appearance Than himself, who had tried life as a Coronet of Dragoons, and found it a bore; and had afterwards tried it in train of an English minister abroad, and found it a bore; and they had then gone yachting about the world, and got bored everywhere.” (Dickens 125).

From the time of his arrival to Coketown, Mr. Harthouse's only goal was seducing Louisa and finding his lost love. James Harthouse, a young politician without heart or principles, involves Coketown, takes advantage of Louisa's unhappy life with Bounderby and attempts to seduce her. Mr. Harthouse bored because he was from an upscale family and ten hours of labor to feed oneself wasn't his concern or a neighborhood of his regime. There's not much description of the living conditions within the upper class's family. There's little evidence from the late nineteenth century to support the family picture of the bourgeois family at the sunshine of the 37 technological revolutions as a secure emotional refuge from the physical and moral horrors of an encircling free enterprise.” (Harris, 1994).

Mr. Josiah Bounderby may be a representative of the middle class. He's “a rich man: a banker, a merchant and a manufacturer,” Dickens goes on to personify him as:

“A big, loud man, with a stare and a metallic laugh. A man made out of a coarse material, [...] A man with a great puffed head and forehead, swelled veins in his temples, and such as trained skin to his face that it seemed to hold his eyes open and lift his

eyebrows up. A man with a pervading appearance on him of being inflated like a balloon, and ready to start. A man who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man. A man who was always proclaiming, through that brassy speaking trumpet of a voice of his, his old ignorance and his old poverty. A man who was the Bully of humility.” (Dickens 15).

Mr. Bounderby leads everybody to believe that he worked hard to succeed in the position of a man of means and a factory owner, and claims that every member from the center class has worked very hard to urge the respect of being where he's. In any conversation involves his presence he speaks about his sad childhood and the way his mother has abandoned him and left him to his drunken grandmother to draw in peoples' sympathy *“I hadn't a shoe to my foot. As to a stocking, I didn't know such a thing by name. I passed the day in a ditch, and the night in a pigsty. That's the way I spent my tenth birthday [...].”* (Dickens 16). To the purpose when his mother, Mrs. Pegler appears and uncovers the truth that she didn't abandon him. He has no interest in helping and speaking with people whose class is less than him as he says to Mr. Jupe: *“[...] we are the people who know the value of time and you are the kind of people who don't know the value of time.”* (Dickens 30-31), he also keeps mocking and laughing at the people of Circus speeches and his bad behaviour when Mr. Blackpool asked for his help. He never makes any consideration to other people's feelings because he always sees them as workers which will get replaced easily any time.

Mr. Stephen Blackpool is a representative of the labor. A worker in Bounderby's factory and lives a tough life together with his drunk wife. People called him old Stephen although he's forty years aged. Dickens describes him as:

“A rather stooping man, with a knitted brow, a pondering expression of face, and a hard-looking head sufficiently capacious, on which his orangery hair lay long and thin,

old Stephen might have passed for a particularly intelligent man in his condition.”

(Dickens 63-64)

Although he always knows that what he wants are some things difficult and involves be impossible, he's so pessimistic character and always honest. He fell in love with Rachael who is additionally from an equivalent class and works at an equivalent factory with him. Getting married with Rachael was his only dream which was something impossible a bit like Bounderby tells him when he asked for divorce Stephen's dying prayer are often considered because of the target message that Dickens intended to convey through *Hard Times*.

II-1 Class Consciousness and False Consciousness in *Hard Times*

As we have previously seen, class consciousness is a consciousness of the oppression that proletariat class has been made to take silently. It is a realization of the inequality resulting in a desire to change and fight back. This consciousness; however; can be hindered by another factor; which is False Consciousness.

False consciousness is an illusion created by the oppressor in order to restrict the oppressed workers' quest for freedom and equality; as well as a false reality and a delusion of a certain class's aspirations which we can notice in Dickens' *Hard Times*; specifically represented by the character called Mr. Bounderby.

Mr. Bounderby who was a self-made man, a successful business-man and an unfair employer is the perfect representation of false consciousness because he created this fake scenario for himself and Dickens called him "Bully of humility" (Dickens 15), which means that he constantly brags about his progress from claims of the poverty and misery of his early life, claiming to have been raised in an egg-box (Dickens 17) to his current situation as a "banker, merchant, manufacturer, and what not" (Dickens 15) , whereas he is only aspiring to be on the same level as the aristocracy.

Mr. Bounderby makes this alluding idea known to everybody, trying to create a sort of hope for the workers and other individuals that they, one day, could succeed in their jobs as much as he did. He represents a false figure of success that encourages the proletariat to keep on working in the goal of succeeding, thus giving an advantage to the labour owners who will gain even more control over them. He assumes that he has a connection to this class, for his housekeeper Mrs. Sparsit seems to have belonged to it. He never fails to brag about her previous social status, and to make references to her family and their connections:

“Now, you know, this good lady is a born lady, a high lady. You are not to suppose because she keeps my house for me, that she hasn’t been very high up the tree—ah, up to the top of the tree! Now, if you have got anything to say that can’t be said before a born lady, this lady will leave the room. If what you have got to say can be said before a born lady, this lady will stay where she is.” (Dickens 71).

This passage proves that Bounderby takes pride in his social standing, and he enjoys the thought of having connections to a higher class

Josiah Bounderby claiming that he is a self-made man implies that all his achievements were done without any connections to the higher class (Dickens 15). However, his claim is contradicted when he scolded Sissy Jupe for not greeting Mrs. Sparsit like she greeted Mr. Bounderby, Mr. Gradgrind and Louisa.

“Now, I tell you what, my girl. The name of that lady by the tea-pot is Mrs. Sparsit. That lady acts as mistress of this house, and she is a highly connected lady. Consequently, if ever you come again into any room in this house, you will make short stay in it if you don’t behave towards that lady in your most respectful manner.” (Dickens 47).

This particular character considers his factory workers replaceable, and he refuses to give them any importance that might lead to them to asking for any improvement in their working

conditions; assuming that the workers would ask for improvements only to satisfy their own desire for pleasure.

In chapter XXI Mr. Bounderby was visited by Stephen as per his request. Bounderby immediately starts with his windy manner proving that he does not consider his workers worthwhile by calling them pests:

“Well, Stephen, what’s this I hear? What have these pests of the earth been doing to you? Come in, and speak up.” (Dickens 146).

Therefore, Bounderby addressed the workers fighting for their rights as “pests” which confirms that he does not consider the Hands as people who work for him, but as mere tools who turn into pests as long as they demand any changes in their working conditions.

This ideology is also manifested when Stephen Blackpool comes to Bounderby for advice about his divorce and the author shows Bounderby’s first response which Dickens clarifies that Bounderby thinks of every worker who has come to him with concerns as a wealth and pleasure seeker only:

“Now, you know, we have never had any difficulty with you, and you have never been one of the unreasonable ones. You don’t expect to be set up in a coach and six, and to be fed on turtle soup and venison, with a gold spoon, as good as many of ‘em do and therefor I know already that you have not come here to make a complaint. Now, you know, I am certain of that beforehand.” (Dickens 70).

Aside from the obvious deflection that Bounderby exercises in order to allude Stephen into believing that he is trusted and that he is different from the other workers, who he calls as “em”, reducing them to seekers of pleasure and comfort rather than seekers of fair and respectful

treatment, this quote has several prejudices and falsities that are not at all common in the bourgeoisie ideology of the time. However, Bounderby is blinded by his social standing and his idealistic images of the social class that he wishes to get closer to.

Class consciousness in *Hard Times* is manifested in the labourers realizing their exploitation and uniting in order to seek their rights. The Hands depended on their solidarity and faith in each other as well as the hope to provide better lives for their families.

In the chapter XX titled “Men and Brothers”, a motivational speech is delivered by a man called Slackbridge in order to urge the labourers to take action:

“Oh my friends, the down-trodden operatives of Coketown! Oh my friends and fellow-countrymen, the slaves of an iron-handed and grinding despotism! Oh my friends and fellow-sufferers, and fellow-workmen, and fellow-men! I tell you that hour is come, when we must rally round one another as one united power” (Dickens 138).

The workers have gathered to listen to a fellow proletariat member who voices all the common ideas that the workers share in order to unite them against their common enemy.

Stephen Blackpool who was shunned by his peers for not joining the workers’ union is summoned by Blitzer to Bounderby.

Stephen explains why he is scorned by his fellow-workers and describes how their solidarity is maintained:

“No, ma’am, no. They’re true to one another, faithfo’ to one another, ‘fectionate to one another, e’en to death. Be poor among ‘em, be sick among ‘em, grieve among ‘em for onny o’ th’ money causes that carries grief to the poor man’s door, an’ they’ll be tender wi’ yo, gentle wi’ yo, comfortable wi’ yo, Chrisen wi’ yo. Be sure o’ that, ma’am. They’d be riven to bits, ere ever they’d be different.” (Dickens 148).

Class consciousness, as previously mentioned, requires a sense of political awareness as well as the oppressed workers' realization of their exploitation. Class consciousness also entails the solidarity of the oppressed social class as referenced in previous passage.

II-2 Class Struggle in *Hard Times*

Class struggle is mainly an outcome of class consciousness, and the workers have gone past their differences and focused on their common interests as one social unit against the capitalist system. In the novel, the Hands of Mr. Bounderby's Factory have become aware of their oppression and decided to take action against their oppressor by joining a union of workers called the United Aggregate Tribunal led by Slackbridge.

“The eagerness, both of attention and intention, exhibited in all the countenances, made them the most impressive sight. There was no carelessness, no languor no idle curiosity—none of the many shades of indifference to be seen in all other assemblies—visible for one moment there.”
(Dickens 139).

This quote describes the intentions of the motivational speech's attendees. The workers were eager and focused on the goal set for them; they were invested and had every intention to start their struggle for their rights and to fight their oppressor. This is also an apparent depiction of the workers' uniting in their desire for fairness, with no doubtful individuals, as well as their solidarity with one another by having one single goal that pushes them to strive together to fight for their well-deserved rights.

Slackbridge speaks again denouncing the factory owner, describing him as the oppressor that he is, urging the Hands to rise as one strong body in order to make an impact, and make their oppressor fear their solidarity:

“With a noble and majestic unanimity that will make Tyrants tremble,”

The previous quote rings true because Bounderby was indeed triggered by the movement, thus he summoned Stephen Blackpool, whom he thought was a “self-interested deserter”, in order to question him about it; Stephen, however, refuses to speak up. Bounderby wants to know about their plans and claims to Mr. Hearthouse that he had warned Stephen from being swayed by his fellow workers whom he considers as pests.

“Now, look here, Hearthouse,” said he, “here’s a specimen of ’em. When this man was here once before, I warned this man against the mischievous strangers who are always about—and who ought to be hanged wherever they are found—and I told this man that he was going in the wrong direction. Now, would you believe it, that although they have put this mark upon him, he is such a slave to them still, that he’s afraid to open his lips about them?”

The fear that Bounderby feels is made obvious when he expresses that the revolting Hands, whom he called “mischievous strangers”, “ought to be hanged”.

Dickens weaves into chapter XXII, titled “Fading Away”, some third-person narration concerning the fate of the workers. He says:

“Utilitarian economists, skeletons of schoolmasters, Commissioners of Fact, genteel and used-up infidels, gabblers of many little dog's-eared creeds, the poor you will have always with you.”

He urges the owners and economists treat their workers as human beings, or else, the poor will surely rise and demand their natural rights as well as equality, and if the oppressors do not consider this change, the workers will surely destroy this capitalist system. That will result in the downfall of the economists.

Conclusion

The capitalist system depicted in *Hard Times* oppressed the proletariat class and imposed a strict reality on the workers. This chapter is an application of the Marxist theory of class conflict.

The characters of the novel realized that they must revolt against the bourgeoisie in order to fight their oppressors, additionally when analyzed in terms of Marxist view, it may be said that both Dickens's novel *Hard Times* and Marx's Ideal notion require revolution sacrifice. In the novel, in the hands of capitalism, the workers experience inequality and oppression.

In sum, in the novel *Hard Times* Dickens is seen to be opposed to the poor and workers' oppression by the rich or masters, this opposition is reflected by the way of the author's Marxist view in the novel.

General Conclusion

General conclusion

This research aimed to identify Dickens' portrayal of the social class reality through his novel *Hard Times*'s characters in order to foreground the societal issues that stemmed from class division all while employing Dickens' characters, that embody class consciousness and class struggle as the two main elements of the Marxist theory of class conflict, as tools to highlight the author's ideology and his contribution to the ideals of the society.

It can be concluded that Dickens, as a Victorian author, experienced the class division during the period and that he stands to express his lean towards the Marxist ideologies by the obvious developments of the novel that hint at the class conflict theory, and his commentary while narrating the story; obviously stating his standing from what concerns the capitalist, utilitarian society.

Initially, in the theoretical part of the thesis, descriptions of the Victorian era depict the social realities of that period, specifically the industrial society and class division, as well as Victorian authors such as Charles Dickens' characterization of their characters that helps the readers distinguish them and recognize their social standing. Furthermore, this chapter of the study was used to introduce the reader to the Marxist elements of the conflict theory, hence, describing class consciousness as a proletariat political and social awareness of one's oppression that leads to this social class's solidarity and its desire for change consequently leading to class struggle which is the course of action taken against the oppressors.

The second part is where the analysis of the *Hard Times* starts. The class division in the novel does indeed match what is mentioned previously about the Victorian society, that is to say, the society in the novel are divided into the bourgeoisie class which is represented by Mr. Harthouse, Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby being the perfect representation of the upper middle class while Stephen Blackpool is the representative of the proletariat.

Depictions of class consciousness and lack thereof are included in this section. For instance, Mr. Bounderby is both an influencer and an embodiment of false consciousness, which is detailed through the several quotes from the novel. Class consciousness and class struggle, however, go hand in hand in the novel when the workers become aware of their oppression and unite in order to revolt and overthrow their capitalist oppressors.

Evidently, this thesis proves that Charles Dickens wrote *Hard Times* while keeping in mind the Marxist values that aim at overthrowing the capitalist system in order to restore a harmonious society free division and utilitarian ideologies.

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Glossary

Glossary

-Bourgeoisie: The owners of the means of production and distribution, as opposed to the proletariat. (Abrams, 1999)

-Characterization: It is the process in which writers reveal and describe the personality of their characters. (Cambridge, 2008)

-Class Struggle: In Marxism, a fight between the capitalist class and the working class for political and economic reasons. (Cambridge, 2008).

-Capitalist: Someone who has a large amount of money invested. (Cambridge, 2008).

-Proletariat: The class of people who do unskilled jobs and own little to no property. (Cambridge, 2008).

Résumé

Cette étude est un effort pour appliquer les éléments de la théorie marxiste en se servant du roman *Hard Times* de l'auteur victorien Charles Dickens comme sujet d'étude. Il vise à mettre en évidence les éléments de ladite théorie dans le roman comme moyen de prouver l'impact négatif des inégalités dans la répartition des richesses. Cette présente au lecteur la littérature victorienne, la division de classe de l'ère victorienne et l'introduction de la conscience de classe et du conflit des classes, en but d'analyser le roman en expliquant les éléments marxistes dans *Hard Times* afin de mettre en valeur l'idéologie de l'auteur.

Mots clés : Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, époque victorienne, littérature, marxisme, division sociale, conflit des classes, conscience de classe, fausse conscience.

ملخص

الدراسة الحالية هي محاولة لتطبيق عناصر النظرية الماركسية على رواية "أوقات عصيبة" للكاتب الفيكتوري تشارلز ديكنز كموضوع للدراسة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إبراز عناصر النظرية المذكورة في الرواية كوسيلة لإثبات الأثر السلبي لعدم المساواة في توزيع الثروة. هذه المذكرة تجسد الأدب الفيكتوري والتقسيم الطبقي في العصر الفيكتوري بالإضافة إلى مقدمة للوعي الطبقي والنضال الطبقي كعناصر من النظرية الماركسية التي ستستخدم لاحقاً لتحليل الرواية وتسلط الضوء على أدلة العناصر الماركسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تشارلز ديكنز، أوقات عصيبة، العصر الفيكتوري، الأدب الفيكتوري، النظرية الماركسية، التقسيم الاجتماعي، الصراع الطبقي، الوعي الطبقي، الوعي الزائف.