

The Industrial Novels

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Charlotte Brontë's Shirley,
Charles Dickens' Hard Times
and Elizabeth Gaskell's
North and South

By

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PREFACE

This book is intended for lecturers, college-level students and undergraduates who want to learn about the Industrial Revolution and its effects on the Victorian Novels in the attempt to achieve a better understanding of the Victorian Eras and Victorian Condition-of-England novels. The purpose of this work is to analyse education, poverty, conditions in factories, child labour, the position of women, marriage, and social unrest in the age of industrialization in England as reflected in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849), Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855).

The Industrial Revolution refers to the transitional period between 1760 and 1840, a transition from handmade production to new manufacturing processes. Industrialization mainly started with cloth and cotton manufacturing in many countries, but particularly in England. The invention of the steam engine by James Watt gave way to mechanization and railways. Most of the labour force comprised women and children working under dreadful conditions with little wages. The factory owners' desire was to get richer and richer through the exploitation of women and children. Long hours of work were paid with minimum wages.

It was a time when the country stopped making items on a small scale, and started mass production, which would prove to be cheaper in the long run due to mechanization. The invention of new machines and the establishment of new factories paved the way for the industrialization era.

In these novels, Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Charles Dickens criticized the exploitation of factory workers, the repression of women by a patriarchal system, and the workers' condition in England during industrialization.

This book consists of an introduction, three main chapters, and a conclusion. In the introductory chapter, the social and historical context of "The Industrial Revolution" will be explored.

In Chapter I, Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849), which focused on the "Luddite Riots of 1811- 15", will be analysed in terms of the causes and effects of those riots and the situation of the mill owner, together with the themes of social unrest due to mechanization in factories, as well as the question of women at the time. It will also examine how the novel focuses not only on the industrial unrest but also on the concept of marriage in the Victorian Era.

In Chapter II, Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854) is analysed, whereby it is asserted that the disorder in society is caused by the fact that people in factory towns are regarded as products or automatons of the industrial age; and the bleak factories even led to children being educated as if they were machines to be programmed.

In Chapter III, Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) is analysed, where the contrast between the north and south (of England) is reflected upon together with the themes of love, education, class struggles, and strikes that lead to violence.

In the Conclusion, it is asserted that in these novels, the industrial revolution and its social aftermath had turned society upside down. The fear of violence, as reflected in these novels and as witnessed in the Luddite Riots (1811-15), Preston Lock-outs (1853-4), and the Chartist Movement (1839-1850s), put the novelists into indecisive, even conflicting feelings towards rioting workers as reflected through characters such as Moses, Barraclough, Slackbridge, Higgins, and others. When analysing the works of these Victorian novelists, it can be said that Dickens is more pessimistic than Gaskell or Brontë in terms of his portrayal of the outcomes of industrialization. Because of the tragic end of the Gradgrinds, and the death of the manufacturer without the chance to reconcile with the workers, *Hard Times* portrays a pessimistic end for the ruling class characters. But despite such a pessimistic end and the gloomy atmosphere it portrays, there still seems to be hope for reconciliation.

INTRODUCTION

A Brief History of the Industrial Revolution and Industrial Novels

The aim of this study is to explore the negative social, political and economic effects of industrialization and urbanization as reflected in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849), Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855). These novels, which have a lot in common, are diverse and engaged with an accelerating industrial age. In and through the Victorian Era, industrialization made rapid progress that resulted in the polarization of society into two camps, viz. the rich and the poor or the exploiter and the exploited. Although these two camps lived side by side, there was no communication between them, which inevitably brought class struggles along with it. The poor workers and their families almost had no social securities. Because of the economic recession and fluctuation or progress in mechanization, workers were laid off. These conditions became the storyline of industrial novels, especially during the Victorian Era when novel reading was a popular activity, particularly among the middle class. This sub-genre of the Victorian Novel is also known as the "social-problem novel" or "the Condition of England novel", which deals with problems of class prejudice, industrialization, race and gender. Authors of these industrial novels narrated the plight of workers and their harsh working and living conditions in an attempt to entice the middle class to sympathize with the workers' plight. As industrialization grew, the gap between the poor working class and the rich middle class widened, while communication between the two classes shrank. As will be presented throughout the study, a certain level of sympathy for the oppressed and voiceless working class is expressed in these novels, while better communication between masters and workers to solve these problems seems to be put forward as a solution, rather than allowing the situation to get more polarized through riots, strikes or lockouts due to the social, political and economic problems that stem from industrialization and urbanization. Industrialization brings class distinction to a higher level because of the growing economic gap between the manufacturer and the worker. These Victorian novelists are putting across their ideas about the relationship between the middle class and the

working class. However, the unions, strikes, riots or any other organizations pertaining to workers are not considered to be a peaceful and viable solution to the industrial problems affecting the poor, oppressed and suffering working class. Because of the attitudes of union leaders, the unions are portrayed misleading. The fear of violence, as reflected in these novels and as witnessed in the history of England - the Luddite Riots (1811-15), Preston Lock-outs (1853-4), and the Chartist Movement (1839-1850s) - put the novelists into indecisive and conflicting feelings towards rioting workers as reflected through characters such as Moses, Barraclough, Slackbridge, Higgins, and others. It seems that the workers and manufacturers need to find a consensus for the welfare of society at large.

As will be explained, the novels of the 1840s and 1850s mostly dealt with industrialization, the state of the nation and its people, thereby helping to create awareness among the public via their underlying social analyses and messages of reform. It will be concluded that Brontë, Dickens and Gaskell drew attention to the necessity of reforms as far as the living and working conditions of the poor working class were concerned. These three novelists, through their narrations of industrialized society, invite both the middle class and the working class to develop better communication with each other as a way towards finding a solution, "a common Victorian, middle-class "cure" for industrial unrest..." (Humpherys 395). Notwithstanding the passing of factory acts (1850, 1853, and 1860) and reform bills, it was not so easy to put them into practice. In this respect, the inevitability of a healthy communication between the working class and middle class is pointed out in the examined novels. While analysing these three novels, it is hard to overlook the notion that the novelists wanted to be the voice of the voiceless and oppressed working class. Strikes, riots and lockouts, as narrated in the three novels, are solutions that are neither approved nor considered durable. In some way, at the end of each novel, it is suggested that establishing a better way of communication between the rich manufacturer and the poor workers might be a way to enable each class to empathise with the other, thereby leading both classes towards a peace-making solution (Elbir 6-11)¹.

"The industrial novel" takes industrialization, urbanization and class conflicts as its subject. When analysed in this context, it can be seen that historical events inspired these industrial novels. The Chartist Movement (1838-1850s), Luddite Riots (1811-1816), and Preston Lock-Out (1853-

¹ The translation of secondary sources from Turkish into English is done by the author of this study.

1854) were among such historical events to which Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, and Elizabeth Gaskell seem to have opposed and hence suggested in their novels ways to overcome them. In fact, social, economic, and industrial conflicts are decisive for the living and working conditions of both the working and middle classes. In their *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels think that technology, economy, and economic relations have an important place in the formation of society, politics and intellect. Marx and Engels explain that the bourgeoisie who own the factories, banks and coal mines have the power to control the state since they have the economic power (14-34). Therefore, class struggle stems from inequality in politics, economics and social life; and as Marx and Engels put it in their *Communist Manifesto*, “the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles” (3). Class struggles and the conditions that constituted these struggles were narrated in Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley*, Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times*, and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*.

Shirley narrates the plight of workers, and the difficulties the Yorkshire factory owner Robert Moore faces, within the context of the Luddite machine-breaking riots of 1811-1812, a protest by angry workers who lost their jobs that began in an effort to protect the rights of the working class due to mechanization. In the novel *Shirley*, after the mill owner Robert Moore is shot and wounded by a worker, Moore realizes what it is like to be dependent on someone else. At the end of the novel, Robert Moore’s life totally changes, and then cares for all the poor by providing work for them.

In *Hard Times*, the negative aspects of an industrialized society are portrayed using characters from different backgrounds. “Dickens is interested in ... the strikes and lockouts at factories in Preston...and in the educations of his middle-class characters – Louisa and Tom Gradgrind – and the circus girl, Sissy Jupe” (Simmons 348). In this respect, the novel can also be analysed as the portrayal of a battle between the rational and realist urban on the one hand, and the sentimental rural on the other. The moral and spiritual decay of the British people is narrated through a reflection on the utilitarian ideals of progress. The setting Coketown may stand for Preston or Leeds, and it is known that The Preston Lockout inspired Charles Dickens (Simmons 348).

North and South tells the story of the Hales, who move from Hampshire, a small town in the south of England, to north Milton, a growing industrial city that is modelled after Manchester. The struggle between the self-made factory owner John Thornton and the workers is reflected through the omniscient narrator and thoughts of Margaret Hale,

who seems impartial while playing the role of mediator between the two sides.

These novels represent a variety of critical perspectives on the problems of industrialization, particularly in industrial cities such as Manchester, Leeds, and Preston. These Victorian novelists write about the fears, prejudices and hopes of an industrial society, and at the end of each novel, it is commonly observed that effective communication between the two classes can be a solution to the negative consequences of industrialism. Brontë, Dickens, and Gaskell desire to bring social, economic and spiritual improvements to the living conditions of both the working and middle classes. Hence, to understand why and how these industrial novels had originated, it would be appropriate to examine the background of the Industrial Revolution.

During the Victorian Age (1830-1901), England faced economic, social and cultural changes “that brought England to its highest point of development as a world power” (Christ and Robson 979). The population of London “expanded from about two million inhabitants when Victoria came to the throne [in 1837] to six and a half million at the time of her death [1901]” (Christ and Robson 979). In the late 18th and early 19th century, England went through a number of technological, economic, and social changes which are considered in total as the Industrial Revolution. The word “industry”² comes from the Latin “industria” which also stands for “diligence” and “effort” in English. Eric Hobsbawm states that “by 1750, indeed, there was not much doubt that if any state was to win the race to be the first industrial power, it would be Britain” (29). The middle of the 18th century (1750s) is regarded as the starting point for the Industrial Revolution, and it is generally acknowledged that the 19th century witnessed great changes in English society (Hartwell 1). As the pioneer of the industrial revolution, which had quite an impact on economic, cultural and social conditions at the time, England was one of the most advanced countries in terms of manufacturing and trade in the second half of the 19th century. Actually, “in the mid-Victorian era Britain was the manufacturing centre of the world” (Trevelyan 764). However, the improvement in economy brought with it changes in the standard of living. Joel Mokyr argues that “the fruits of the Industrial Revolution were slow in coming. Per capita consumption and living standards increased little initially, but production technologies changed dramatically in many industries and sectors” (83). Hence, economic growth led to a transformation in society, culture and politics (Hartwell 1). The old cottage

² The production of goods for sale, especially in factories (Longman 673).

industry was replaced by the factory industry which gradually caused the migration of people from villages and small towns to cities in order to become factory workers. As Marx and Engels wrote in their *Communist Manifesto*, “the place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry; the place of the industrial middle class by industrial millionaires, the leaders of the whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois” (4). Harold Perkin points out that “the Industrial Revolution was no mere sequence of changes in industrial techniques and production, but a social revolution with social causes as well as profound social effects” (Preface xii). Due to these causes and effects of the Industrial revolution, it can be said that this revolution created the working class (consisting of workers in factories) and middle class (consisting of bankers, factory and mill owners). As discussed in this work, the Industrial Revolution was both a blessing and a curse to both social classes.

Relying on L. Laura Frader’s *The Industrial Revolution: A History in Documents*, it would be of great help to provide here a chronological outline of the technological and social improvements during the Industrial Revolution so as to allow for a closer look at the problem:

- 1733: Englishman John Kay invents the flying shuttle.
- 1760s-1830s: Enclosure Acts in England permit landlords to enclose common land.
- 1764: English inventor James Hargreaves invents the spinning jenny.
- 1769: Richard Arkwright invents the water frame in England.
- 1776: English inventor James Watt produces the first efficient steam engine, revolutionizing transportation and production of textiles, coal, and iron goods; French Minister of Finance, Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, issues a Royal Edict banning guilds; Scottish political economist, Adam Smith, publishes *The Wealth of Nations*.
- 1779: Samuel Crompton combines the technology of the spinning jenny and water frame in the “spinning mule”.
- 1787: Edmund Cartwright invents the power loom.
- 1799: English Combination Acts make it illegal for workers to unionize.
- 1802: Health and Morals of Apprentices Act in Britain limits apprentices’ labour to twelve hours a day.
- 1807: British Parliament votes to abolish slave trade, and the United States forbids Southern planters from engaging in the slave trade.
- 1811-1815: Luddite Riots take place in England and France.
- 1815: George Stephenson builds the first steam locomotive in England.
- 1819: First Factory Acts in Britain limits children’s age of employment and working hours.
- 1833: British Parliamentary Commission investigates the labour of women and children in textile factories, and limits the working hours of

children and youths; Britain bans slavery throughout the British Empire.

1845: Frederick Engels publishes his *Condition of the Working Class in England*.

1847: British Parliament passes Ten Hours Bill, limiting women's and children's workday to ten hours; British Mines Act prohibits the employment of women and children underground in mines.

1848: Democratic revolutions spring up all over Europe; middle class demands political rights; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels publish *The Communist Manifesto*.

1851: Crystal Palace Exhibition in London displays industrial goods from around the world (146, 147).

As observed, “a series of inventions [in the late 18th and early 19th centuries] revolutionized the industry and drastically altered the social conditions of the workers” (Perry et al. 465). Due to technological innovations, the cotton industry experienced immense progress: “British cotton production expanded tenfold between 1760 and 1785, and another tenfold between 1785 and 1825” (Perry et al. 465).

The flying shuttle, spinning jenny, water frame, spinning mule, and weaving loom were among the inventions effective for the cotton industry, and their owning costs were not so high for the industrialists. Basically, these inventions were required by the demand for more manufactured goods. Before the Industrial Revolution and mechanization, women were producing handmade textile products at home or in ateliers. Due to the aforementioned inventions – especially in the textile industry – manufacturing improved but in the course of time the inventions got bigger, and therefore, could not fit into houses or ateliers; also, these inventions and machines required energy which was largely supplied by steam engines. For centuries, wood and timber were used for heating and making ships, respectively; therefore, coal in particular, abundant in the northwestern part of the country, was begun to be used as an alternative energy source. But flooding was a big problem in coal mining, and horses were used for hauling water out of the mines, and eventually this system became inadequate when there was a need to go deeper for mining. In 1712, Thomas Newcomen invented the steam engine which pumped water out of the mine. But 64 years later, James Watt developed and produced a more powerful steam engine in 1776 (Frader 146). As G. M. Trevelyan puts it, “all over the island new businesses sprang up, each helped by some adaptation of James Watt's steam engine to the various processes of mining and manufacture” (715). Moreover, Watt's engine needed less coal to generate steam, therefore his steam engine was mostly used in factories. Before the invention of the steam engine, coal mines and factories were

established close to the rivers to provide energy for the machines but with the invention and proliferation of the steam engine, factories were established in the northern part of England, where the sources of iron and coal were abundant. Thus, “factories were no longer restricted to the power supplied by a river or a stream or to the space available beside flowing water; they could be built anywhere” (Perry et al. 466). The use of coke made cast iron and steel production possible, paving the way for machine production in factories. Also, the steam engine and the use of iron and steel contributed to the development of railways and locomotives. The Liverpool-Manchester railway line opened in 1830, and the British inventor George Stephenson’s steam locomotive was first used there (“George Stephenson”).

The Steamship was invented by the American Robert Fulton. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels stated that “meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionised industrial production” (15). Following these innovations, railroads, canals, tunnels, harbours and roads were built. “Railroads were so successful that in mid-nineteenth-century England, roads became mere auxiliaries to the railroads – just paths leading to the station” (Perry et al. 467). Thereafter, transportation had gained strength, and raw materials began to be transported to the industrialized cities of England from all corners of the world, and manufactured goods were sold out to markets all around the world. In other words, “other nations largely depended upon her [England] for coal and for manufactured goods in return for good and raw material” (Trevelyan 764). As Maxine Berg puts it,

the clustering of a key set of inventions was combined with new forms of work organization, centralized factories and workshops and as well as decentralized subcontracting, and new labor forces, especially women, children and other uninitiated labor such as pauper apprentices. (5)

It can be deduced that as a consequence of this machine-technology, steam engines, new ways of manufacturing, factories emerged; that is to say, manpower gave way to machine power, and workers began to work in factories to operate these machines. In other words, handmade production was replaced by mass (machined) production (Berlanstein 18-27). The union of machine and manpower in factories reduced the cost but increased productivity and profit rate of manufacturing (Berg 162-167).

As aforementioned, textile was a fast growing industry which required wool and cotton. This requirement was supplied with the rise of the enclosure movement by which lands were transferred to private property.

The enclosure movement refers to “the division or consolidation of communal fields, meadows, pastures, and other arable lands in western Europe into the carefully delineated and individually owned and managed farm plots of modern times” (“Enclosure”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*):

[It] began in the 12th century and proceeded rapidly in the period 1450–1640, when the purpose was mainly to increase the amount of full-time pasturage available to manorial lords. Much enclosure also occurred in the period from 1750 to 1860, when it was done for the sake of agricultural efficiency. By the end of the 19th century the process of the enclosure of common lands in England was virtually complete (“Enclosure.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

This movement was a process which enabled wealthy people, especially aristocrats, to take ownership of the common land, thereby enabling them to have a title, that is to say, landlord. These landlords began to graze their sheep in their lands which created the required wool for the textile industry. Wealthy landowners were controlling the land before the Industrial Revolution and people lived and worked in their farms. However, the situation changed with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution. The poor, who could not afford to buy land, migrated to the cities and contributed to the labour force in factories. As a result, the population of cities increased dramatically which caused poverty, unemployment, poor nutrition, poor health conditions, and many other social ills.

Regarding the Enclosure Act, historian Eric Hobsbawm remarks that “it was accused of throwing peasants off their holdings and labourers out of work” (79). As to the population explosion, William Gibson states that:

The eighteenth century was a period of rapid urbanization. In 1700, 17 per cent of the population lived in towns of more than 2,000 people. By 1800 this had risen to 27.5 per cent, and the population was rising. In 1700 London had a population of 500,000 – more than all the other English towns put together. There were only five towns with more than 10,000 people in 1700, but by 1800 there were twenty-seven (Kindle File).

As can be realised, the population of cities rapidly increased, but such a rapid and huge increase in population brought great challenges with it. “The enormous European population growth of the eighteenth century provided industry with both consumers and labor” (Perry et al. 462). The demand for more manufactured goods by the growing population required technological developments and inventions which eventually gave rise to the quick advancement in the cotton and textile industry. Regarding this new situation, Eric Hobsbawm writes that:

Whoever says Industrial Revolution, says cotton. When we think of it we see...the new and revolutionary city of Manchester, which multiplied tenfold in size between 1760 and 1830 (from 17,000 to 180,000 inhabitants), where 'we observe hundreds of five- and six-storied factories, each with a towering chimney by its side, which exhales black coal vapour'... (34).

Obviously, the Industrial Revolution, which is a movement from an agricultural to industrial society due to the use of machines instead of manual labour, led to the emergence of urban society. As G. M. Trevelyan argues, "a large immigration of Englishmen from the rural districts must in any case have taken place, owing to the rise in population coinciding with new facilities for employment in industrial centres" (717).

As seen above, the enclosure movement, the shift of population from rural area to urban area, and the aforementioned inventions greatly contributed to the emergence of factories, and factory cities. Consequently, finding workers for the factories was not a serious problem because of the overpopulation and abundance of manpower. Marx and Engels stated that "the bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural..." (16). Unemployed workers, many of whom migrated from the rural area, were forced to work under atrocious conditions and for long hours with little wages.

The factory, mine owners and bankers constituted the middle class, while the workers together with their families formed the working class. Although workers in manufacturing were working too much, their wages were too little. This limited income forced women and children to seek work so as to contribute to the family income. Based on his observation about industrialisation and exploitation of child labour, in his *Das Kapital* (1867) Karl Marx describes the working conditions of children as follows:

Children of nine or ten years are dragged from their squalid beds at two, three, or four o'clock in the morning and compelled to work for a bare subsistence until ten, eleven, or twelve at night, their limbs wearing away, their frames dwindling, their faces whitening, and their humanity absolutely sinking into a stone-like torpor, utterly horrible to contemplate. (1: 651)

Whilst children suffered, capitalist factory owners gained more profit by exploiting working class families. Men were paid very little amount of money but women and children were paid less than men even though they were also working for long hours in factories. James Richard Simmons states that "women worked for lower wages and were found to be easier to

manage than men; thus by the middle of the century more than a million women worked in factories” (337). Besides, some women worked as charwomen in homes of middle-class families. The factory owners knew that the workers, their wives and children had no other choice but to work, so these workers were forced to work for long hours with little wages. “Furthermore, most factory work could be performed equally as well by children as by adults, and usually at half the wages” (Simmons 337). “Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex” (Marx and Engels 10). The workers were not only working but also living under very poor conditions. They were living in the streets around the factories whose smoke and wastes were polluting the entire neighbourhood. Regarding these conditions, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels made this remark:

Modern Industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of labourers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the over-looker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. (10)

As can be seen, it is clear that society has become polarized as the “bourgeoisie”, the middle class, and the “proletariat” or the working class, “who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital” (Marx and Engels 9). Against the exploitations of the bourgeoisie, Marx and Engels highly recommend that the working class around the world should band together, and fight for their rights (34).

The three novels, studied in this work, present certain social, economic, cultural and political problems, all of which were brought about by the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century. Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley*, Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times*, and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* are concerned with the problems of the working class and the middle class, and other related issues such as urbanization and industrialization that England grappled with at the time. These Victorian novelists witnessed the problems of industrialization, and in their novels, they dealt with the economic and social problems of industrialization in the mid-Victorian Period. James Richard Simmons states that:

As the appetite for knowledge about the condition of England was whetted, novelists found an audience interested in learning more about the plight of the working classes, and the novel became a method of teaching the middle and upper classes about the “real” condition of England. (337)

Since these novels are responses to industrialism, they are known as “industrial novels”, which “provide some of the most vivid descriptions of life in an unsettled industrial society, and illustrate certain common assumptions within which the direct response was undertaken” (Williams 87). When analysed together, it can be said that “these novels ... illustrate ... the common criticism of industrialism ... [and] the general structure of feeling” (Williams 109) against industrialism and urbanization.

“Industrial novels” mostly dealt with the lives of working and middle classes, the changing education system, riots and lock-outs against industrialism and unemployment, love stories between the working and middle classes, and many other issues concerning the Industrial Revolution. Not only the middle class factory owners, but politicians were also interested in these novels, and it is known that the problems of, and responses to, industrialism in these industrial novels, in a way, underlie many laws regarding factories, working hours, and wages. Regarding the industrial novels, James R. Simmons remarked:

...the condition of England novel became a victim of its own success, because as legislation enacted reforms and the working class enjoyed improving conditions, other issues such as socialism and feminism (as in the “new woman” novel of the 1890s) came to the fore. Nevertheless, the condition of England novel played an important part in the development of Victorian literature, and more generally in Victorian politics and culture. (350-51)

As is known, little wages, unemployment, overworking and many other problems affected both daily and family life. People began to be alienated; migration to industrial towns in search of a job caused irrecoverable and deep wounds in the inner worlds of workers. As a result, workers were claiming their rights, as they did with the Chartists movement. Charles Dickens “dedicated [*Hard Times*] to Thomas Carlyle” (Greenblatt and Abrams 1238), a satirist, historian and essayist, who “raised the condition of England question in Chartism (1839), in which he expressed his sympathy for the poor and the industrial class in England and argued the need for a more profound reform” (Diniejko “Thomas Carlyle”). With the Chartist Movement, the workers demanded being able to acquire a franchise, hold elections annually by ballot, put away the requirements of being rich or owning land to become a Member of

Parliament, who would be paid for his services. On the other hand, the social demands of the movement were not as clear as the political ones (Trevelyan 762-3).

In the 1840s and 50s, the voice of the repressed workers began to resonate for reasons political and social. Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë, Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Kingsley and many other Victorian novelists had become the voice of the voiceless working class through their novels, and wished for reforms and acts to better the harsh conditions of the workers. However, as G. M. Trevelyan states, “the...shadow of Chartism in the background accelerated the passage of Factory Acts...” (763). And as James R. Simmons remarks,

The Chartists were still doing what they could to call attention to the problems of unemployment and poverty among the working classes. The Chartist movement, founded in 1838 when William Lovett drafted the “People’s Charter”, had been campaigning for change since the Reform Act of 1832 in an attempt to improve conditions for the working classes. (344)

However, “...Chartism indirectly improved the lot of the working classes...attained some of its real objective” (Trevelyan 763). In his essay “Chartism”, Thomas Carlyle examines why the working class had banded together in the Chartist movement. Thomas Carlyle writes that “a feeling very generally exists that the condition and the disposition of the Working Classes is a rather ominous matter at present; that something ought to be said, something ought to be done, in regard to it” (Carlyle 1). Like Karl Marx, Thomas Carlyle emphasizes the social and political rights of the working class. “Crowding, lack of sanitation, and other ills of urban expansion gave rise to concerns about “the condition of England” ” (Matus 27).

Compared with the ideas of Thomas Carlyle, Marx believes that industrialisation alienates the worker from his work, himself, and society. The daily grind and work make workers live both in economic and spiritual poverty. In other words, they are exploited by the factory owners. In the year that Karl Marx meets his lifetime friend Friedrich Engels, Marx writes his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in which he describes the alienation of the worker. He writes that “...labor is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; ...he...does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind” (30).

The monotonous, dreary and miserable working conditions led to workers being unsatisfied with their lives. In the aforementioned work,

Marx defines this concept as “estranged, alienated labor” (32). Thus, in referring to the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, this study explores the misery of workers and their alienation as reflected in Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley*, Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times*, and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*.

As analysed in *Shirley*, *Hard Times* and *North and South*, factory owners such as Robert Moore, Mr. Boundrby, and Mr. Thornton regarded workers as machines. To these factory owners, the workers are just like hands, and if any worker is not needed anymore, s/he is easily replaced by another worker. The factory owners in these novels do not care much about the living and working conditions of their workers; the masters seem to care only about their own benefits. In other words, factory owner-worker relationship is dealt with in these three industrial novels.

When the three novels are analysed, it is observed that class struggle stems from a miscommunication between the worker and the master, as mentioned by Annette Chang in her article in *The Victorian Web*: “The antagonism growing between workmen and the master stems from the stubborn unwillingness of both sides to communicate. Because each side is ignorant of the motives and opinions of the other, their hatred and bitterness grow to a pitch” (“North and South and Contemporary Attitudes toward Masters and Workers”).

Shirley, *Hard Times*, and *North and South* are reviewed in terms of cause and effect relations of class struggle with regard to economic relations, political and social conditions. As will be seen, the social conditions, depicted in the novels, seem to be shaped by the economic conditions. Social and cultural norms, such as art, religion, education, literature and so on, constitute the *superstructure*, which is determined by economics, *base*, that is to say, “the economic systems...structure human societies” (Tyson 53). Referring to the works of Marx and Engels as contemporaries of the three novelists, class struggles, working conditions, master-worker relations, and education as reflected in *Shirley*, *Hard Times*, and *North and South* will be analysed. All three novels can be seen as critiques of capitalism and classism because these novels both reflect and reflect upon the socioeconomic conditions of the Industrial Revolution.

CHAPTER ONE

THE LUDDITE RIOTS AS REFLECTED IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S *SHIRLEY*

Before delving into the novel itself, it might be helpful to briefly consider Charlotte Brontë's background. The Brontës had their fair share of tragedies. "[They] were born into the post-Napoleonic era in the aftermath of Waterloo" (Gordon 66). Charlotte Brontë was born on April 21, 1816 in Thornton as the third child to the Reverend Patrick Brontë and Maria Branwell Brontë. In 1824, at the age of eight, Charlotte Brontë and her sister Emily were sent to the Clergy Daughter's School at Cowan Bridge. In 1825, Charlotte's sisters, Elizabeth (10) and Maria (12), died of tuberculosis, and upon this tragedy, the Brontë sisters left school that same year.

In 1835, Charlotte Brontë started at Roe Head as a teacher, but upon her aunt's death she was recalled to their home in Haworth, a village in West Yorkshire, and tutored there to her sisters, Anne and Emily. In the late 1830s, Emily, Anne and Charlotte were writing poems, which they decided to publish even though they only managed to sell a few copies. But success eventually came, and in 1847 Charlotte, Emily and Anne published *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Agnes Gray*, respectively. By 1849, all her sisters were dead, such that Charlotte was by then living alone and taking care of her father at Haworth. In her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Elizabeth Gaskell states the following with regard to the impact of this familial tragedy on the novel *Shirley*:

Down into the very midst of her writing came the bolts of death. She had nearly finished the second volume of her tale when Branwell died—after him Emily—after her Anne; the pen, laid down when there were three sisters living and loving, was taken up when one alone remained. Well might she call the first chapter that she wrote after this, "The Valley of the Shadow of Death." (333)

In 1852, Charlotte married a curate, Arthur Bell Nichols, though only three years later Charlotte died; she was pregnant when she passed away.

Apart from *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Shirley* (1849), Charlotte Brontë also wrote *Villette* (1853), and *The Professor* (1857).

Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* was published in 1849 under the pseudonym Currer Bell in a triple-decker, i.e. a three-volume novel, which returned good profit to the publisher. The novel is set in 1811-1812, hence a historical novel. In this context, this novel is different from the other novels examined in this study because *Shirley* does not deal with the 1850s. Although the writer wrote her novel in 1849, she was dealing with the problems of the 1810s. However, while workers attacked the manufacturer's mill on account of the economic problems at the time, we do not witness a scene of unionization. In this context, *Shirley* is different from *Hard Times* and *North and South*, which deal with similar industrial problems and unrests in the 1850s along with the problems of unionization. Nevertheless, *Shirley* deals with the problems of both the working class and middle class as a result of rapid industrialization and changes in the social structure. Charlotte Brontë narrates history as "something real, cool, and solid," that is, as "unromantic as Monday morning" (Brontë 1; ch.1)¹. Concordantly, to place *Shirley* in its historical context, it is necessary to examine the novel in relation to the history of the Luddite Riots of 1811-1815 and the Orders in Council. By focusing on passages from the novel and analysing them in light of what Marx and Engels wrote in their works, the relationship between characters, shaped by class consciousness and discrimination in relation to contemporary historical events, will be studied in this chapter.

From the very beginning of the novel, Charlotte Brontë makes it clear that *Shirley* is different from her other novels as this one deals with real historical events such as the Luddite Riots of 1811-1815, a protest by workers who broke machines for fear of losing their jobs due to mechanization; therefore, it depicts the socioeconomic life of early 19th century England. The Luddite Riots were a consequence of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), political unrest, and the increasing gap between the rich and the poor (Webb 130-31). Yet, "the chief sufferers by the war were the working classes..." (Trevelyan 690).

The setting, working and middle class cultures and characters are all depicted in a realistic way, depending on the realities at the time. The lives of the working and middle class, with the curates "providing lively comic relief" (Gérin 389) between these two classes, are represented throughout the novel.

¹ Brontë, Charlotte. *Shirley*. 1849. London: Penguin Books, 1994. Hereafter, all references will be made to this edition, and only the page and chapter numbers will be given.

Through a close examination of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*, this chapter of the study aims to show that *Shirley* is not only a historical but also an industrial novel, depicting the social and working conditions in England at the time. As W. A. Craik remarks, *Shirley* is "in many ways a social novel and an historical one, concerned with the effects of the Napoleonic War and the Industrial Revolution in the West Riding clothing district of Yorkshire in 1812" (130).

In the first chapters, the novel is narrated by a first person-narrator but in the following chapters the first-person narrator is replaced by a third person-narrator with an omniscient point of view, providing the reader with a detailed account of the historical events, as seen in the first chapter: "The period of which I write was an overshadowed one in British history, and especially in the history of the northern provinces. War was then at its height. Europe was all involved therein" (27; ch. 2). As observed, the novelist directly informs the reader about the Napoleonic War.

Accordingly, this chapter of the study will deal with, and shed light on, the industrial plot of *Shirley* by taking the historical event of the Luddite Riots of 1811-1815 into account. However, the condition of repressed women and workers will also be discussed from the perspective of the novel.

The term Luddism is defined by Marjie Bloy in her article in the Victorian Web, as follows:

Luddites were men who took the name of a (perhaps) mythical individual, Ned Ludd who was reputed to live in Sherwood Forest. The Luddites were trying to save their livelihoods by smashing industrial machines developed for use in the textile industries of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire. Some Luddites were active in Lancashire also. They smashed stocking-frames and cropping frames among others. There does not seem to have been any political motivation behind the Luddite riots; equally, there was no national organisation. The men merely were attacking what they saw as the reason for the decline in their livelihoods. ("The Luddites 1811-16")

Within this context, the novelist recreates the Luddite Riots with her fictitious characters who experience the negative effects of industrialization.

William Cartwright's true story, witnessed by Charlotte Brontë's father Patrick Brontë, seems to have inspired her novel. Cartwright's mill near Heartshead at Rawfolds was attacked by one hundred rioters when the manufacturer wanted to stock new machinery to his mill (Gordon 69). "In the attack on his mill, two badly wounded rioters were captured and subsequently died. Patrick Brontë witnessed a clandestine burial in his own churchyard at Heartshead" (Gordon 69). Therefore, it can be deduced

that the experience of Charlotte's father may have played a role in inspiring her novel.

The struggle between the mill owners and workers in the Yorkshire countryside is handled masterfully. In light of these historical events, it can be seen that not only workers but also mill owners and their families had problems in the 19th century. This reality can be observed in the novel: "England, if not weary, was worn with long resistance: yes, and half her people were weary too, and cried out for peace on any terms" (27; ch.2).

The hierarchical microcosm presented in *Shirley* is full of conflicts, ambiguities and prejudices, all derived from classism. As will be shown, economic problems and political decisions affect not only the proletariat (factory workers) but also the middle class. As Arthur Asa Berger states, "class refers to categories based on the economic resources of different groups of people in a given society, and the social and cultural arrangements that stem from this division" (47). "From a Marxist perspective, differences in socioeconomic class divide people in ways that are much more significant than differences in religion, race, ethnicity, or gender" (Tyson 54). This division, as will be seen, engenders conflict. However, according to Helen Taylor, "the novel ... is attempting a critique of the dominance of bourgeois men over both the working class and women" (86). Throughout the novel, patriarchal society is observed. As will be argued, some workers refuse to discuss political and economic issues with Shirley. Also, the manufacturer Robert Moore does not give any reasons why he lays off some of his workers.

The industrial revolution, Napoleonic War, The Luddite Riots, the Orders in Council (1807), the status of women, the workers and the middle class are all mingled in this novel; hence, *Shirley* can be labelled as a "condition of England novel". The rapid changes in the social order due to industrialization and urbanization brought along with them overpopulation, miserable living, working and housing conditions, and diseases. As Nicholas Daly states, "... the industrial revolution was a revolution in the nature of manufacture, transport and communications, but shifts in these areas affected almost all aspects of experience" (43). Charlotte Brontë narrates the class struggle and social transformations due to industrialization in a manner similar to the other two novels discussed in this study. In his discussion of industrial novels, Sean Purchase states that "most of the novels contain set-piece industrial strikes, worker-industrialist tensions, problems of hunger or riots around mills" (87). The problems of riots are especially very true for the novel *Shirley* as it discusses the "transition from manual to machine-driven labour in the period" (Purchase 87).

The novel opens with the introduction of the three curates: Mr. Malone, Mr. Sweeting, and Mr. Donne. The setting is Briarfield, a parish in Yorkshire. The third-person narrator, who describes every detail of the setting and characters, satirizes the curates in the first chapters of the novel:

The curates had good appetites, and though the beef was 'tough,' they ate a great deal of it. They swallowed, too, a tolerable allowance of the 'flat beer,' while a dish of Yorkshire pudding, and two tureens of vegetable, disappeared like leaves before locusts. The cheese, too, received distinguished marks of their attention; and a 'spice-cake,' which followed by way of dessert, vanished like a vision, and was no more found. (5; ch. 1)

While the three curates eat heartily, Mr. Helstone, orphan Caroline Helstone's uncle, arrives and talks about the possible trouble Mr. Moore may have:

You know Moore has resolved to have new machinery, and he expects two wagon loads of frames and shears from Stilbro' this evening...he takes no warning from the fate of Pearson, nor from that of Armitage – shot, one in his own house and the other on the moor. (11-2; ch.1)

The mill-owner Robert Moore brings new machines to his mill. This machinery decreases the need for manpower, which causes unrest among the workers, who protest against their unemployment and hunger due to changes brought about by the new machines (Purchase 69). It can be said that the starting point of such changes is not only industrialization but also the wars and performed politics, which are reported as follows:

After the end of the French Wars, it became increasingly clear that England was suffering from great social, economic and political upheavals. These problems collectively became known as the 'Condition of England Question'. Many of these problems would have occurred eventually but had been speeded up by the effects of the French Wars on the country. Most of the major changes were the direct result of the French Wars. Others came from natural growth and change. The distress and discontent caused by these enormous changes were manifested in a series of events in the period 1811-19. One of these was the upsurge in Luddism. (Bloy "The Luddites 1811-1816")

Gilbert and Gubar state that "every class in this novel has been affected by the inability of the English to win their war against France" (375). However, as it was the age of industrialization, manufacturers demanded new machines, which allowed a job to be done more efficiently and faster,

so in time fewer workers were needed. This was obviously not the fault of workers. On the one hand, the mill owner had to keep up with the times, and had to get new machines to earn more; on the other, the workers were not needed anymore since the machines were faster and economically cheaper. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels state, the workers “live only so long as they find work” and they “find work only so long as their labor increases capital” (9). As a capitalist, Robert Moore, who thinks only of his own mill, disregards the condition of the unemployed workers. As narrated, Robert Moore “did not sufficiently care when the new inventions threw the old workpeople out of employ. He never asked himself where those to whom he no longer paid weekly wages found daily bread” (27; ch. 2). As mechanization increases, worker requirement decreases. The unemployed workers then smash those machines, and their hatred turns into a battle. Like a historian, the author narrates the riots: “Misery generates hate. These sufferers hated the machines which they believed took their bread from them; they hated the buildings which contained those machines; they hated the manufacturers who owned those buildings” (28; ch. 2). Before the arrival of the machinery, people were working in ateliers, and hand-labor was appreciated, but this concept changed with the Industrial Revolution. On this fact, the *Communist Manifesto* states the following:

The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. (Marx and Engels 11)

Tension between the workers and mill-owner rises when the former are unemployed. Moses, Barraclough, William Farren and many others were working in Robert Moore’s mill before the arrival of new machines. The poor workers, who can no longer earn bread for their families, become angry day by day. In a dispute with Moore, worker Barraclough says, “...I can remember as far back as maybe some twenty years, when hand-labour were encouraged and respected...” (138; ch. 8). What this working class character says reflects the reality of life before the industrialization. Due to industrialization, the means of production such as factories, machines, and tools became private property and the society was divided into two parts: bourgeoisie and proletariat. As discussed before, and as stated by Mr. Barraclough, hand labour was appreciated, and manufacture was done at ateliers. Before industrialization, a manufacturer was producing goods by him/herself and s/he was the one who made the profit and was respected, but as factories emerged, small ateliers began to disappear, and the self-