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Geographical and Social Exploration as Female Empowerment in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this work to my dear parents, my father and my mother, who are the pride and the joy of my life. For their love, patience, and encouragement

This work is dedicated also to my brothers specially khier Eddin,

And to all my lovely friends.

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Abstract

Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* presents an interaction between gender and class in a society marked by the tremendous socio-economic upheavals virtue of the Industrial Revolution. The novel represents contemporary realism and social concern typifying the female development and the hard living conditions of marginalized working-class people. Gaskell devoted important roles for young Margaret Hale, her protagonist, in the public sphere and social participation, while breaking the traditional Victorian domesticity. *North and South* portrays the pathway of a heroine from daughterhood to womanhood. She is the main character and the central consciousness in which the socialization of women and the psychological misapprehensions are challenged as crucial constituents of patriarchal oppression to women. In order to structure such exploration Gaskell attempts to use the geographical setting. In other words, the characters are assorted by a specific place and each place symbolizes and reveals different aspects of life and society. Through these imagined communities or spaces, the concepts of gender and sexism are revealed in the novel, showing the different ways in which Gaskell transgressed social norms, starting from Judith Butler's theories on gender and transgression. In addition, the notions of female identity, empowerment and development are addressed basing on Naila Kabeer's Three Dimensional Models. Hence, Gaskell linked between female development and empowerment as well as social issues of class conflict.

Key words:

Class and Gender, *North and South*, Womanhood, Female Empowerment

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General Introduction

During the nineteenth century England became the supreme power that casted its shadow all over the world. It was the first industrialised country; it reached its peak due to its biggest economic power. During this time, industry was developing and the intense economic activity and the great number of the technical innovations led to the big urbanization that led to the growth of the working class. This was the main reason that caused the gap between classes. On the one hand, the rich enjoyed a prosperous life. On the other hand, the poor suffered from the hard living conditions and starvation. The Victorian wealthy people like the mill-owners and engineers gained their fortunes by the sacrifices of others. Therefore, the struggle in that time was between the strong and the weak. It was a well known fact that during the Victorian age the class boundaries were very strict and the social mobility was very rare and almost impossible. In addition, there was a huge gap between the working-class and the middle-class, this resulted a set of protests on the side of the marginalized workers. They protested against the unequal distribution of wealth in the society.

Because of the Industrial Revolution, the Victorian era witnessed the beginning of the social shift regarding gender roles which was a steady move from the patriarchal supremacy and female dependency towards gender equality. The characteristics of this era had a great influence on many English writers. Some of them were pessimists due to the hard conditions they lived, others were known by their optimism because they favoured happy endings. Yet, they had a common mission which was depicting social realities of their time. Elizabeth Gaskell's name was associated with the most famous names of Victorian novelists. Gaskell, unlike other Victorian female writers, used the plight of poor factory workers to propose a heightened position for women; her realistic optimism in *North and South* involved her heroine's movement toward greater female agency.

This thesis aims to show that the book's geographical setting underlies the structure of the heroine development, since these settings qualifies her to explore different societies, and contrasts various standards of life that expand her personal progress. Thus answering the following problematic: to what extent does Elizabeth

Gaskell feature her female empowerment and their contribution of breaking the social norms in Victorian Britain in *North and South*?

Gaskell took the advantage of the aura change and transgressed the limiting gender norms of the Victorian era by empowering women to be active members in society. She challenged the Victorian female stereotype of "The Angel of the House" which undermined any power women held. In *North and South*, Gaskell gave power to all her female characters, to the mother, the sisters, and the daughter, and they exerted power from family roles. In other words, they were not restricted to their domesticity. Her heroine's ultimate goal was not associated with the necessity of getting married, although at the end she did find love. Instead, she strived for the harmony of her family and shouldered the responsibility of the reconciliation between classes. Thus, Gaskell's novel *North and South* presented new and different perspectives of Victorian womanhood.

In order to answer the initial question, a number of sub-questions have been raised:

- How did Elizabeth Gaskell present class division through the conventional gender roles division? Or How did Elizabeth Gaskell come up with the current issue of women's power in relation to the issue of class conflict?
- In what ways the geographical settings in *North and South* influenced and affected the heroine's present and future life?
- Does Gaskell mean that women must travel and transform themselves into social explorers in order to attain a high ideal of self realization?

Many critical works have been written about Gaskell's *North and South*, mostly from the socialist Feminist approach which was a branch of the Feminist movement. It came into existence in 1960s-70s and it was different from radical Feminism in terms of ideology. Socialist Feminists pointed out that women's liberation can only be accomplished by seeking to end all the cultural and the economic sources of women's oppression. Socialist Feminists rejected radical Feminism's perspective that linked women's oppression only to patriarchy and they asserted that women were unable to be free in participating in public spheres

due to their financial dependence on men. American philosopher and key figure Judith Butler argues that gender is not an essential category that is; the repetitious performances of males and females create differences between both of them. On the other hand, Naila Kabeer linked the two concepts of gender and women's empowerment and pointed out that empowerment is the ability to exercise choice focusing on the fact that in any society those who practice great choice in their lives are not empowered because they were never disempowered in the first place.

Thus, chapter one in this work deals with the book's geographical setting which underlies the structure of the heroine's development, since these settings qualify her to explore different societies, and contrasts various standards of life that expand her personal progress and empowerment to reach that point of self-realization.

Chapter two on the other hand discussed the position of the heroine as she moved from the private and the public realms. In other words, Margaret Hale, the novel's heroine, reveals to the readers various social realms through which she moved and how these distinct spheres mould her personality, marking her development, thus creating a new setting for her progress and empowerment.

Chapter One:

Classicism and the Ideals of

Victorian Womanhood

Chapter One: Classicism and the Ideals of Victorian Womanhood

1.1. Introduction

Contemporary literature sees the Industrial Revolution approaches the most prevalent event of the nineteenth century England, the Industrial Revolution, through two perspectives or views. The traditional one was represented by the economic historians T. S. Ashton and David S. Landes who pointed out that it was a movement that shifted the British society and economy to a new level. Concerning this point, Ashton stated that the Industrial Revolution was "A wave of gadgets swept over England" (qtd in Temin 63). However, this perspective was challenged by Nicholas. F. R. Crafts and Charles Knickbocker Harley in which they argued that the Industrial Revolution was a "narrower phenomenon, as the result of technical change in few industries" (ibid).

Economist historian Peter Termin claimed that choosing one of these views was a matter of taste; especially that literature recently gave a great importance to the two modern industries identified by "the narrow view of Industrial Revolution" (ibid). The Industrial Revolution casted its shadow all over the human history, it was believed that it emerged as a result of the economic expansion that occurred in the sixteenth century. However, during the eighteenth century the Industrial Revolution led to a crucial break in British history as well as economy, in which the Western world was carried to a new level of mass prosperity that lasted until the twentieth century (Allen 1). Thus, the Industrial Revolution is an era of huge technological and economic progress that occurred in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Devi 28).

Before the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, the British common people suffered from the hard living conditions, merely because most of them were only farmers and craftsmen living in the countryside (Calvert 9). Yet, the rise of the Industrial Revolution resulted in prosperity and wealth among the British society and gave people specifically from the middle class new opportunities helping them to have a sense of pride and optimism (Devi28). Nevertheless, it had negative effects which led to class division, child labor, poverty among the lower class and sex exploitation (29).

Chapter One: Classicism and the Ideals of Victorian Womanhood

The British society was characterized by a stable system of social hierarchy in which people had great opportunities that improved their lives and this was due to the Industrial Revolution (Doepke 1). However, this led to several changes concerning British politics and economy which affected society and caused its division (ibid). During the reign of Queen Victoria, Britain was regarded as the domestic age or as the indoor life in which gender roles were approached rigidly. In other words, the majority of rights were owned by men and of course the term womanhood was always characterized by submissiveness (ibid).

In Victorian societies, gender structures had the potential to produce inequalities between men and women, in which women were more oversensitive to and badly affected by these inequalities. Kathryn Hughes in her article entitled "Gender Roles in The 19th" Century" argued that, the last two decades women were obliged to consecrate themselves to the indoor and domestic spheres of health and home as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers…..etc. In a deeper sense, they were expected to remain subservient to their husbands and to men in general .They were also supposed to prepare the next generation to carry on this way of life. Most importantly, to adopt a suitably conservative behavior and a moral code based on self-sacrifice. They avoided having strong desires, whims and strong opinions especially in opposition to men who were seen as their "guardians". The Victorian ideology of separate sphere suggested that women were "weaker", yet morally superior to men (Hughes). The only approach thus to challenge and to stand up against gender inequality was through women gaining power throughout a process of women's empowerment (Arnoff 4).

The Industrial Revolution played a major role in changing women's lives during the Victorian era. Historians blamed it for that because they believed that it took them out of the proper place that was at home (Hessen 109).

1.2. The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain

The Industrial Revolution, a point in British history which shifted the country and its economy to a different level between 1760 and 1840s, was epitomized by the transfer from agriculture to manufacture due to the new scientific, energy and finance sources. This kind of transition helped people to avoid hard working conditions in which they had to use their hands and to move to better methods as machines (Calvert 7). The Industrial Revolution was the result of the economic expansion which appeared in the sixteenth century. However, the eighteenth century witnessed a crucial break on the economic and technological levels. There were great inventions at that time which carried the west to a new level of prosperity such as: the steam engine, the spinning jenny and the coke smelting. The adoption of these inventions created the textile industry which gave rise to the economic growth in the continent (Allen6). In other words, the industrial revolution was a technological revolution and the most sufficient reason behind its emergence in Britain was because of "Britain's success in the international economy" (ibid).

Charles Dickens and Jane Austen were the most famous British writers to depict the nineteenth century and its social system. Yet, Elizabeth Gaskell was another female writer who succeeded in describing the Victorian social life (Mikyskovà 21). Her main inspiration was Manchester city because it was affected by the Industrial Revolution. Elizabeth Gaskell was concerned with the social ills, the effects of the Industrial Revolution on the British society, and the workers conditions. *Ruth*, *Mary Barton*, and *North and South* were her social and industrial novels (Mikyskovà 22).

Elizabeth Gaskell was influenced by the Crimean War[1] while writing her industrial novel *North and South*. The industrial novel is a literary genre that took place during the Victorian era and it represents the social conditions of the working class people and the influence of Industrial Revolution on their lives (27). *North and South* consisted of several interesting topics; it compared life between agriculture South and industrial North (ibid).

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[1] Crimean War: a war between Great Britain, France, Turkey, and Sardinia on one side, and Russia on the other fought chiefly in the Crimea 1853-56.

1.2.1. The Impacts of the Industrial Revolution on British Society

Before the emergence of the industrial revolution the British lived in the countryside where they worked as farmers and skilled craftsmen. Yet, the majority of the farmers were only regular workers, which means that those lands did not actually belong to them. The appearance of new inventions like machines led to the rise of mass production, however, it made people jobless so families had to leave to the city seeking for better lives; with the main goal of finding jobs in factories. The new employees were obliged to bear the hard working conditions and long working hours simply because they were underpaid. Most importantly, majority of the factory workers were women and children over the age of eight years old. These workers were totally perfect for the mill owners because they could work for few wages. The employers favored children because they could learn easily the new jobs; however, this led to the separation of family members and the negative impact on their values. As children had to work for long hours, they deprived them from the chance of spending time at home with their parents, and learn morals and manners which were important for the British society of the Victorian (Calvert 9).

Socialist and capitalism critics claimed that the working classes conditions were extremely relapsing during the Industrial Revolution. To be more precise, they stated that no one should blame capitalism for children condition because it brought various changes to their lives. The arguments suggested in this situation "The source of that injustice was ill-informed, emotional novelist and poets, like Dickens and Mrs. Browning; fanciful medievalists, like Southey; political tract writers posturing as economic historians, like Engels and Marx" (Hessen 104-105).

Victorian social novelists such as Elizabeth Gaskell, and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna gave the realistic image of the negative impacts of the Industrial Revolution on working-class conditions, which caused the loss of their "golden age" (ibid). However, historians have not really supported novelists' ideas, claiming that, Industrial Revolution saved people from starvation and death (106).These impacts of the

Industrial Revolution on the British society led to the creation of new social classes (Upper and Middle) (Calvert 10).

1.3. Social Classes in the Victorian Society

During the reign of Queen Victoria, the English society witnessed massive change and Britain began to extend its empire all over the world. This era was characterized by the British obsession with propriety especially that Queen Victoria was a symbol of proper civility (Doepke 1). The English society created a new rigid system of social hierarchy in which levels of power were divided between people. The British Industrial Revolution gave people the opportunity to improve their social conditions; and this led to several changes in political and social organizations which caused divisions within the British society (ibid).

1.3.1 Class Division in Victorian Britain:

For several years, sociologists gave much importance to the study of the social class and to the reasons that led to its emergence. Most importantly, the study of class structure was closely related to the analysis of the term 'power' which was not an easy task to examine (Giddens 345). The second crucial thing was that Britain had the first industrial society the world has ever known (ibid). Some of the philosophers such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels attempted to focus more on "the language of class as a tool of social description" (Hewitt 307), Hence, the term "class" was a key concern in many studies concerning society. It was defined by German philosopher Max Weber as "an aggregate of individuals who share a common market situation" (349).

Elizabeth Gaskell in her novel *North and South* showed many differences among people taking into consideration their social ranking. These differences were quite visible in this novel concerning two elements: housing and the perception of classes (ibid). Gaskell referred to the Thorntons as the upper class family in her aforementioned novel. They were a family who had a big house and a large number of servants; however they lived an icy and unbearable life. The middle-class was represented by the Hales; they had a nice house (not as good as the upper class), with a housemaid. The last social rank in the novel was the lower or the working class,

Gaskell referred to it by the Higgins family who lived a simple life in a small house (ibid).

Most importantly, Gaskell described another crucial difference between people from the North and others from the South which was class perception. In other words, the upper class family in Helstone did not allow people from the working class to go upstairs they must stay downstairs. Whereas, the upper class in Milton had not gave much importance to workers going upstairs (Mikyskovà 34).

1.3.1.1 The British Upper Class

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British upper class was known as the "Ruling class" or the "Landed class" (Hewitt 307). It consisted of the aristocrats, dukes and wealthy people who were members in the courts. Historians claimed that aristocracy was a caste that combined between almost five hundred British peers and nearly two thousand wealthy families (ibid). In other words the upper class was defined as:

> … definitions of the upper class include the boarder 'squirearchy' whose income derived from substantial landed estates, and the wider group of younger sons and their offspring, inserted, because of the restrictions of inheritance of estates and titles to the eldest male, into positions of profit and authority in the state system, the army, the church and the financial institutions (Hewitt 308).

This period epitomized the "Old corruption" (ibid) in which the kinship and the relationship between families as well as their social status were more important than wealth or the need to be the supreme power. The upper class was particularly characterized by the finance and commerce during the nineteenth century (ibid).

1.3.1.2 The Middle Class

The middle class was the following social ranking. It was characterized by the industrial manufacture especially in the Midlands and the North. It has always been

difficult to define realities within the middle class which included a population between fifteen and twenty per cent of people. The middle class' circumstances were in a secured comfort zone due to their incomes. However, professional merchants from the lower middle classes faced difficulties with few wages and they could not better their social status. Relying on profits, the middle class has been divided between two types of social status: the commercial middle class who was professional relying on fees concerning the income and the entrepreneurial middle class based on white collar occupations. These two types were different from other classes because they aimed to establish certain characteristics such as: brain work instead of manual work, responsibility and the right to vote (Hewitt 308).

1.3.1.3 The Lower Class

Within the discussed social hierarchy the working class was the lowest. Historians gave much importance to the inter divisions of the working class rather than to its boundaries. The working class was categorized by skilled and unskilled, urban and rural as well as artisan and factory manual hand. These class divisions were questioned for several years.

> …the nineteenth century middle class comprised a favored group who were   able to command premium wages, a much wider cohort who enjoyed relatively stable employment, albeit at lower wages, and a shifting mass forced to rely on casual labour, charity and the limited social provision provided by the poor law (Hewitt 308).

The nineteenth century presented these groups as socially different and self contained. Yet, it was quite clear that families changed their social life and status relying on economic or life process (ibid).

1.3.1.4. Lower-Class Working Women

The Victorian era was dominated by a patriarchal system in which women were treated differently from men; they were regarded as second-class citizens. The social system was harsh and made it impossible for women to have the freedom of

choice (Barette 6). Working women in this era participated in different jobs, yet they did not have the right for equal wages as men even if their work was better in terms of production and quality. Victorians harassed women in the labor field because they believed that women's suitable place was at home (ibid). Working women were viewed by society as damaged with no reputation because they accepted the brutal working conditions with few wages. They were also regarded as inferior in comparison with the other women who consecrated themselves to the domestic life (7). Women were forced to work on the outside of their households because their husbands were not gaining enough money to provide a better life for them and for their children (3). Women were negatively treated and not welcomed in the work places or even in the society (Barette 3-7).

North and South, Helen Fleetwood, and Shirley and Sybil all of these are novels that dealt with the idea of working women during the Victorian era. The authors of these novels strived to depict the roles of working-class women regardless of their social ranking and to show how they were treated by the British society (7). Each one of these novels described the terrible and the unsecure conditions that female workers faced every day and the ugly picture that the society draws about them (ibid). Women from the lower class were often described as "damaged women" (31). The majority of them were harassed by this title because they felt that it would make it impossible for them to make advance in their lives.

1.4. Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain

During the Victorian period women from the middle and upper classes symbolized "the perfect lady" that society designed which means that "a woman of leisure defined by her matrimonial and maternal status" (Huff 89). However, women were supposed to consecrate themselves to domestic and indoor lives. Nevertheless, the Victorian society witnessed various and massive changes concerning women's status and roles in their daily lives, which led to the rise of a new social role to challenge this ideal of womanhood, that is the governess. The governess of nineteenth-century Britain served as an "instructress to other families' children"

(ibid). She was unquestionably "a fixture" in the traditional, creative fantasies of Victorian Britain (Daily 1).

This era witnessed the rise of many authors, including Thomas Carlyle, Elizabeth Gaskell, and the Brontë sisters. Each one of these writers criticized the society's prejudices and idealized standards of Victorian womanhood (Huff 89). As evidenced, Elizabeth Gaskell was one of the most famous figures who took advantage of the glory change and gave a new image to the Victorian womanhood, one that gave women social opportunities to be mothers as well as active members in society. Gaskell revealed a huge rejection of the stereotypical women's roles in society and she shed light on female power in her books but only through family setting. Her works were about women seeking for social change about giving power and hope to the neglected and poor people (Tobias 4).

1.4.1 Expectations of Women in Victorian Society

During the reign of Queen Victoria, Britain was typified as the domestic age, which means the age of the indoor life. This was typically represented by Queen Victoria herself who gave the image of femininity that was centered on the responsibility of motherhood and family. Queen Victoria devoted her life to her son Prince Albert. Her indoor life became the ideal image of family that spread all over the nineteenth century. The famous Victorian image of the perfect lady or the ideal woman and wife was known as the "Angel in the House" (Hébert 4). In a deeper sense, women were supposed to consecrate themselves to their husbands and to be totally submitted to them. The term Angel, hence, refered to the following characteristics: powerless, self-sacrificing, patient, servile, sympathetic, gracefully, and above all loyal (ibid).

1.4.2. The Woman Question

The nineteenth century witnessed various changes and development concerning women's status and their place in Victorian society. This era was characterized by women's demands of gender equality, political rights as well as economic and social opportunities. Besides, this period shed light on the ideal image of women which was identified by the domestic sphere. Questions and debates concerning women's needs

and social place in Victorian England flood to the forefront of people's consciousness. Such debates were divided into mutually excluding opposites emphasizing either on women demands for equal economic, political and educational opportunities or the idea that women belong only to the indoor life as wives and mothers taking the responsibility of caretaker of their family (Saylor.org). Nevertheless, Queen Victoria personally reflected these two distinct sides of the question; she was presented as the perfect lady in terms of the ideal wife and mother to her son though reigned as the monarch (ibid).

Industrialization came to be the most sufficient reason that —casted its shadow all over the English society—helped women to make their place in politics, society, and education so central. Industrialization resulted into new jobs could be done both by men and women. However, women were not portrayed equally as men they were employed for fewer wages. The traditional notions of women as being economically inferior and different from men were challenged by the diffuse development of women's labor in industrialization (ibid).

1.4.2.1 Female Education

During the 1850s literacy rates for girls began to improve. In Britain, the educationist and writer Maria Grey founded the first National Union. This creation aimed to improve female education to women from different classes. This union was formed for women's literacy needs; therefore, it was named as the Women's Education Union. It was a group seeking for women's rights and higher appreciation for what they did and what they can do (Hébert 10).

The Education Act[2] gave women more opportunities to move one step closer to reach their goals about women's rights especially in terms of voting. This act gave women the right to be effective candidates in school board elections. Married women

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[2]Education Act: sets out broad objectives and principles underpinning the education system and provides for the rights of children and others to education

were given the right to vote and to sit on municipal councils by the 1884 Local Government Act[3] (ibid).

1.3.2.2 Social Justice: The Settlement House Movement

The settlement House Movement was a social reform that aimed to make poor and rich people coexist with each other in interdependent community. The main objective of establishing settlement houses was to help immigrant poor people coming from the country because of its harsh living conditions. The inspiration of the establishment of these settlement houses came from educated and protestant women and girls from comfortable backgrounds (Hébert 10).

Activist and social reformer Ellen Gates Starr founded Chicago's Hull House along with Jane Addams in 1889. This house was mainly designed to help poor people, specifically to sweep poor families with foreign identity off their feet (ibid). These two activists set up several changes such as the creation of nursery for working women's children, an employment office as well as social clubs. They aimed to minister the cultural and the economic needs for women (11).

After Jane Addams established the settlement house, thousands of women from different areas of the country were motivated to do the same thing and they started creating their own settlement houses of course base on the Hull House model. Jane Addams along with other house settlement formers played a significant role in the formation of progressive agenda and legislation (ibid).

1.4.2.3 A Nation of Clubwomen

Local women's clubs attracted thousands of women. These clubs were regarded as self-help organizations that gave women the will to be open minded, to have the best domestic skills, and to be powerful in terms of the moral faculties, these clubs aimed to take off social reform. In this case, clubwomen made major efforts concerning the improvement of schools, education for young girls about alcohol and

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[3] Local Government Act: is a stock short title used for legislation in Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Ireland and the United Kingdom, relating to local government.

sexuality, and libraries. Therefore, they made the public policy questioning the traditional needs and concerns of women (Hébert 11).

1.4.3 The Separate Sphere Ideology

For several years, human societies have attempted to allot different roles, behaviors, morality and feelings to men and women. By doing so, they focused on the biological distinction between males and females in the goal of superimposing and enforcing the social distinction of gender (Rhode 73), which was, according to American philosopher Judith Butler, "the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sexes" (20). Gender usually prescribes roles for both sexes (feminine and masculine), dealing with responsibilities and rights (ibid). Yet, Butler stated that gender is not an essential category that is, the repetitious performances of male and female in a given society create several differences between both of them (45). Butler argues that gender is "the repeated stylization of body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being"

This ideology aimed to depict the perfect place for a woman; that is at home, where she must provide love and care for her husband and children. The separate sphere ideology defined the deep-rooted characteristics of women as well as explained the importance of this separation (4). These traits made women socially neglected and most importantly incapable of participating in the public sphere. Women were described as "physically weaker, yet mentally superior to men" (ibid). This idea was supported mostly by religion. It was commonly believed that women's mental superiority suited them only in the domestic sphere. Women were supposed to teach the next generation, the important moral virtues (ibid).

1.4.4. Social problems: 'Women Different from Men'

The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the women's movement that was highly developed as a reaction to women's strives and needs to better develop their status and to ensure their participation in society (Cruea 187). This movement aimed to "initiate measures of charitable benevolence, temperance, and social welfare and to initiate

struggles for civic rights, social freedoms, higher education, remunerative occupations, and the ballot" (Cot qtd. In ibid). These goals were formed as a reaction of women's awareness of their own conditions and status in a patriarchal society that kept women underground as a neglected group (Cruea 187).

The women of this period were supposed to be dependent only on their husbands concerning financial support. In other words, upper and middle class women had the freedom to choose only in marriage and motherhood, as well as spinsterhood. Women who had the chance to work as shop girls or factory workers were viewed as unnatural because they earned wages. Therefore, women were discouraged to work and to earn wages. Besides, the hard working conditions and the low wages made marriage for middle class women the best choice. Hence, throughout the nineteenth century, women's movement was developed as a reaction to women's needs for a dependent situation. This movement established several changes in connection with the shift of power away from the patriarchal status, the change of mentalities towards gender and of course one step closer to change women's status in the patriarchal society (ibid).

The nineteenth century was identified by the ideology of Separated Spheres that controlled relations between the sexes (male and female). The male sphere was related to power, work, the economic, political, and social status, while the female sphere was concerned with the indoor or domestic life, motherhood, and submission to the husband (Hébert 8). It was called the separate sphere because men and women were not supposed to interfere into each other's spheres. However, after the Civil War[4], women rebelled against this ideology of separate sphere in several ways (ibid). The historian Barbara Welter in her work "The Cult of True Womanhood" states that: "Real women often felt they did not live up to the ideal of true womanhood; some often blamed themselves some challenged the standard, some tried to keep the virtues and enlarge the scope of womanhood" (8).

Real womanhood as expressed by Barbara Welter here gave women a series of images about their conditions and encouraged them to express their needs and to call

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[4] Civil War: The war in the United States between the Union and the Confederacy from 1861 to 1865. Also called War between States.

for their independency. According to the professor Susan .M. Cruea, true womanhood changed that rigid ideology and ideal about women (191).

1.5. Women's Empowerment

Simone de Beauvoir suggested in *The Second Sex* that "one is not born a woman, but rather, becomes one "(qtd. in Butler 8). Beauvoir used the term "becomes" to explain that gender is a social construct which means that the one who becomes a woman is not necessarily a female (Butler 8). She argued that the feminine gender was marked, defining women in terms of their sex, thereby glorifying the masculine gender (9). Butler claimed that, according to Beauvoir, it was never possible finally to become a woman, because she identified women with "sex" (33), a conflation of the category of women with the ostensibly sexualized features of their bodies, rejecting women's freedom and autonomy as it was enjoyed by men (17).

In 1979, a Convention on The Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination[5] against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly which described the discrimination against women and established a program or an agenda consisting of thirty articles for national action to put an end to such discrimination. The convention defined discrimination against women as:

> …any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital Statutes, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, Civil or any other field (2).

The convention aimed to provide standards for realizing equality between men and women to guarantee women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in political and public life. In other words, the convention's goals were centralized in promoting gender equality and empowering women. The United Nations development leaders and members have struggled to reduce gender gaps and worked to convince the

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[5] Convention on The Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination: defines what constitutes discrimination against women and girls and sets out a comprehensive framework for tackling gender inequality.

governments responsible for the legal and political commitments they have made through CEDAW. Thus the main reason behind these efforts —gender equality and women's empowerment— was to require fundamental transition in the division of power, social opportunities, and justice for both men and women(3).

The Global Development Community[6] has mainly focused its efforts on encouraging gender equality to reduce problems and achieve high levels of well-being in societies around the world, but also as an end in its self. In the year 2000, the United Nations organized what was known as the Millennium Summit[7], in which a group of world leaders gathered in New York to establish goals to reduce poverty and to protect the planet, known as The Millennium Development Goals[8]. The third goal in the summit was to promote gender equality and empowering women. Furthermore, United Nations Development Fund for Women[9] was formed in 2010 to guarantee women's participation in all levels of development planning and practice. It focused also on women's concerns and needs regionally and globally (Arnoff4).

1.5.1. The Concept of Empowerment

Women's empowerment was one of the most important goals in the international development (Arnoff 7). Terms like autonomy, power, status, and agency are used interchangeably with women's empowerment. However, there were certain differences between autonomy and power that one must be familiar with in order to distinguish between the two. Autonomy was more of a static concept and signified independence, whereas empowerment can include interdependence and process (ibid).

The World Bank's Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook defined empowerment in its broadest sense as the "expansion of freedom of choice and action" (Narayan 11). In a deeper sense, empowerment applied to women as well as to

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[6] The Global Development Community: Human development and international efforts to reduce poverty and inequality, and improve health, education and job opportunities around the world.
[7] The millennium Summit is the largest gathering of world leaders in history.
[8] The Millennium Development Goals: they are basic human rights-the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter and security.
[9] United Nations Development Fund for women: an organization assisting innovative programmes and implementing strategies that promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security.

other socially neglected groups. Yet, it was necessary to acknowledge that women's empowerment included other interesting elements. First, women were not just one of those socially disempowered groups. They were a cross-cutting category of individuals who overlapped with all these other groups. Second, the central position of women's disempowerment that was household and interfamilial relations can be seen differently by other disadvantaged groups, this means that efforts at empowering women must take into consideration household-level implications of broader policy action (71). Third, the term empowerment in its broadest sense was linked with the institutional transformation, whereas women's empowerment required systemic transformation not just of any institutions, but specifically those supporting the patriarchal structures (Narayan 72).

1.5.2 Empowering Women

In the mid-1980s, the notion of women's empowerment emerged as a way to challenge patriarchy (Arnoff 7). Dr. Preeti S. Rawat argued that women were defeated by the belief and practice of patriarchy at various levels- political, economic, social and cultural (43). She defined patriarchy as a social and ideological construct which considered men as superior to women.

Masculinity and femininity characters stereotypes were imposed in the society by patriarchy which strengthened the iniquitous power relations between men and women. Women's empowerment emerged to challenge the patriarchal control, exploitation, and oppression of women at the material and ideological levels, and as a conscious action by women to overcome the belief and the practice of patriarchy (ibid). Therefore, women's empowerment was considered as an important process to reach gender equality. In a deeper sense, rights, responsibilities, and social opportunities of individuals would not depend on being born a male or a female (Directorate –General for Internal Policies.10). An empowered woman had the ability to control over her own life, and had the sense of self-worth to determine her own choice (ibid).

1.5.3 Conceptualizing Women's Empowerment

Naila kabeer, professor of Gender and Development at the Gender Institute of instrumental goal, explicitly valued as an end in itself rather than as an instrument for achieving other goals" (13). To promote women's empowerment or measurement, one must be familiar with its conceptualization by development academics and experienced professionals. This can be clarified through Kabeer's suggested Three Dimensional Model, in which the concept of empowerment can be explored through closely interrelated dimensions: Agency; which represented the processes by which choices were made and put into effect, Resources were the medium through which agency is exercised; and achievements referred to the outcomes of agency (14).

1.6. Kabeer's Three Dimensional Model

Naila Kabeer was one of the most visible and well respected representatives of this topic. She was a conceptual thinker, who was interested in developing methodologies and frameworks to reduce gender gap in policy and planning (Arnoff 28). Kabeer interpreted that the term "empowerment" was the ability to make choices and to be disempowered means that the person lacks this ability (13). In any given society those who practiced a great deal of choice in their lives were not empowered because they were never disempowered in the first place (14). While clearly, Kabeer's definition of empowerment was similar *to The World Bank's Sourcebook on Empowerment and Poverty Reduction* understanding that empowerment was the "expansion of freedom of choice and action" (10).

In a deeper sense, individuals or any group of people who belonged to different societies had that capacity to make their own choices, and to put them into practice through real desired actions and outcomes (ibid). Kabeer argued that there will be no real choice if individuals do not have the ability to choose differently. In other words, ability was the key for development effectiveness and the absence of this former was probably to affect women and men differently. Furthermore, one must acknowledge that the ability of making choices does not necessarily mean power because some

choices have greater significance than others in terms of their consequences for people's lives (Kabeer 14).

Kabeer defined empowerment as a process which made disempowered individuals agents who formulated choices, controlled resources, and made strategic life choices. Yet, in order to make choices exist, alternatives must be taken into consideration. One must recognize and be able to choose alternative options (14). She interpreted that the concept of empowerment can be explored via three interrelated dimensions that were pathways through which empowerment occurred. The first of these three dimensions was agency which was considered as the central concept of empowerment, and as a process that made choices viable. The second dimension was resources, which can be understood as the circumference where agency was put into practice or as the pre-conditions of choice. Finally, the third dimension was achievements, which referred to the outcomes of agency. These dimensions were closely interrelated, because they were highly linked with terms like awareness, control, and power (Kabeer 14).

1.6.1 Agency

Kabeer referred to Agency as one's ability to make strategic life choices, and as one's power to define his or her own goals and act upon them (14). She highlighted some differences regarding agency. She distinguished between passive and active agency, claiming that active agency —the power to— was the ability to act in certain ways with no obstacles and freely, referring to purposeful behavior, whereas passive agency —the power over—was linked to actions done under circumstances or an exercised authority, violence, and compulsion. As previously mentioned not all choices were relevant to the definition of power, because as Kabeer claimed, power operated in the absence of explicit forms of agency. This was often used through decision-making ability. The capacity to exercise choice did not only mean empowerment, it implied also challenging power relations. The foundation of empowerment was how the one saw itself (i.e. their sense of self-worth). This in turn reliant on how they are seen by others around them (14-15).

1.6.2 Resources

Resources raised the ability to exercise choice and Kabeer interpreted that they were means in which agency was carried out. They were reached through social institutions and relationships in society. The social institutions and relationships gave males the supreme power or the authority to rule according to their own whims and accept gender inequality, while women were limited in terms of their capacity to make life choices (ibid).

1.6.3 Achievements

Kabeer described achievements as the extent in which one's abilities (i.e. resources and agency) were realized. In other words, resources and agency promoted people to live their lives as they want (14). The term achievements referred to the outcomes of people's efforts. It was important to note that achievements were viewed in relation to power through two terms: agency and its consequences. Kabeer centered some differences about achievements in relation to one's ability to challenge social inequalities, rather than personal predilections or individual characteristics (15).

1.6.4 Triangulating the Dimensions

The previous three dimensions characterized Kabeer's interpretation of the term empowerment. In her 1994 article "Resources, Agency, Achievements", Kabeer argued that each dimension should be separated from another in order to develop a meaningful and correct measurement of empowerment since it was impossible "to establish the meaning of an indicator … without reference to the other dimensions of empowerment" (452). Consequently, she focused on the importance of triangulating facts and information about each one of the dimensions to construct measures of empowerment, clarifying "the more evidence there is to support these assumptions, the more faith we are likely to have in the validity of the indicator in question" (ibid)

1.7. Women's rights and suffrage

1.7.1 Women's rights

Heated debates and discussions over women's legal rights were held by parliamentarians in the new House of Commons. However, there was an uncertainty about where accommodations for women should be established in this new house (Schmidt 2). During the nineteenth century, the English law system structured a legal doctrine that gave women their legal rights especially in marriage (Hébert 4). According to the British law and patriarchal society, married women were not supposed to own property, vote or to have any rights on their own children. In other words, they had no right to claim about their needs or concerns, whereas, unmarried widowed women were able to run business, work and own property (ibid).

1.7.1.1 Chartism

Chartism was a British popular and political movement that was controlled by male suffragists. This movement attracted a huge number of women, mainly wives who played a tremendous role in helping their husbands and supporting the Chartist movement. Furthermore, thousands of working women were active members in this movement.

In 1867, the National Society for Women's Suffrage was created to grantee women the right to vote and participate in society. It witnessed a huge success since it established a new act known as the Municipal Franchise Act which gave single and widowed women the opportunity to vote in borough elections (5). This act allowed women to participate and to be vivid members in local government. By the year 1880, almost one million women from England had the local franchise. The British political activist and the leader of British Suffragettes movement Emmeline Pankhurst helped women to reach one of their aims of being visible in a society dominated by male power. When the Local Government Act was passed in 1894 Pankhurst gained victory of the right of women to vote (ibid).

1.7.2 Women's Suffrage Movement

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the English society witnessed massive change concerning women's status and rights. In other words, the English political landscape was epitomized by the heated debate over women's right to vote. The Enlightenment political philosophy and the nineteenth-century liberal theory played major roles that led to the emergence of the Suffrage Movement in Britain (Hébert 2). Previously, women did not have the right to vote or to stand as candidates in the British parliament. They were not allowed to have place in national politics because their husbands replaced them and were responsible for all political matters (Hébert 2). For society and politicians, the suitable place for women was at home taking care of her children and providing a relaxed atmosphere for the husband. At that time women were in full time employment so they had the opportunity to form groups to discuss the social and political issues and to rebel against the patriarchal society (Women's suffrage movement) (Schmidt 6). This can be clearly depicted in this quote:

> Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers - in a word, better citizens (Wollstonecraft qtd. in ibid).

During the years 1866 to 1888, organized campaigns emerged and gave women the right to vote in local council elections. The political economist and the social reformer John Stuart Mill proposed an amendment that aimed to reach social equality between males and females. Yet, this proposal was rejected by the parliament. The movement for women's legal rights generally had two wings: the suffragists that were originated during the nineteenth century and the suffragettes who came into being in 1903. In 1897, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was formed under the leadership of the campaigner for the equal rights for women Millicent Fawcett. The

NUWS[10] first aim was to give women from middle class the chance to own property and to vote (Schmidt 6).

1.7.3 The New Women Movement

The nineteenth century witnessed several changes and developments concerning women's status in patriarchal societies. There was a significant transformation of the social attitude regarding the relationship between males and females. This decade marked the beginning of gender equality and the emergence of the New Woman Fiction (Diniejko 1).

The New Woman was a term established by the Irish feminist writer and public speaker Sarah Grand in her essay "the New Aspect of the Woman Question" in 1894. This phrase became famous especially in newspapers and books. The New Woman was depicted as the cultural symbol of the *fin de siècle*[11], flourished by the stereotype of Victorian women. Women who represented the New Woman Movement were from different classes, including the middle-class, factory workers and other women who worked in offices for fewer wages (Diniejko 1). It was defined as:

> The New Woman as a concept was, from its inception, riddled with contradictions. Whilst moral decadence and sexual license were supposed by some critics to be her hallmarks, elsewhere she figured in discourse as a 'mannish', asexual biological 'type' (Ledger 16).

At the late nineteenth century, changes concerning gender roles and equality, women's rights, and the shift from masculine power emerged as a result of the New Woman ideology. According to the leading scholar of Victorian studies Sally ledger stated that:

> The New Woman was very fin-de-siècle phenomenon. Contemporary with the new socialism, the new imperialism, the new fiction and the new

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[10] NUWS : The National Union of Women's Suffrage
[11] Fin de siècle: The end of the century

journalism, she was part of cultural novelties which manifested itself in the 1880-1890s" (qtd. in Diniejko 2

The New Woman Movement was an attempt to reduce gender inequality and to empower women to have significant roles in society and public sphere (Diniejko 3). This movement included famous novelists, social reformers, middle-class and suffragists women as well as professional women from the bourgeoisie class. The satirical representation of the woman visualized her "riding a bicycle in bloomers smoking a cigarette" (ibid).

1.8. The Victorian Novel

Victorian literature rose during the reign of Queen Victoria (1937-1901). However, the Welsh novelist and critic Raymond Williams argued that the real Victorian novel emerged ten years later (James 4). Novels during the nineteenth century played major roles in shaping English literature (ibid). In a deeper sense, prose fiction was viewed as the written and the widely read form that dealt with the humanities and science during the nineteenth century. The novel was hugely criticized during the eighteenth century and it was tackled in the Victorian era. Furthermore, the classic Victorian novel was largely written by middle class authors whose their aim was producing a novel that may shape social facts and to present middle class values and life, "…The middle-class Victorian novel was nevertheless related to the revolution in printing and reading that affected everyone in early nineteenth-century Britain" (qtd in James 4).

This period was epitomized by a high production of the novels, it was in fact impossible to know the number of the novels produced at that time (James 3). However, between the years 1837 to 1901 the publisher's circular suggested that almost sixty thousand titles of the novels were published (ibid).

1.8.1 The Rise and Reception of Female Authors

During the Victorian era, women did not have the right to choose their careers or destiny. The only proper place for them was home, where they had to remain

subservient and submissive to their husbands. It gave men the opportunity to be superior to women in economic, political, and social aspects of life. This ideology of separation resulted women's awareness of their own social statutes (ibid).

Irish Author and public speaker Sarah Grand introduced in her essay "The New Woman Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-siècle Feminisms" a new term known as "New Women" (4). This term described the dissatisfaction and the rejection of the stereotypical perception of male dominance; it gave women more rights and wills to be noticed in the society. The New Women writers gave female characters the main role as heroines. Their aim was to reveal to the readers the inner desires, whims, dreams and thoughts of women (ibid).

New Woman novelists were most of the time women. However, there were some male authors who participated in this genre. These novelists had only one goal which was the redefinition of women's role in social life including marriage and the social norms that women were obliged to follow. In their literary works, they criticized the perception of the Victorian ideal womanhood, the traditional patriarchal society and the idea that home was the suitable place for women. The New Woman novelists tried to change the rigid relations between males and females and to seek for social equality as well as honesty in sexual matters. Some of the most famous New Women novelists that were harshly criticized by both female and male writers were: Sarah Grand, George Egerton, and Olive Schreiner (Dijiejko 3).

The New Woman fiction expressed their dissatisfaction of social norms through their female protagonists. Female novelists used their work as a tool to depict the social ills and the pressure that the majority of women had to put up with (Mazul 4). The main themes of female novelists centered on independence and sexuality, presented in marriage constitution. Yet the love stories within these novels sparked the attention of the majority of the readers in which they started to demand for new novels (ibid).

The readers' requests for more and more novels made female writers so famous and popular; these public demands gave a push to the novels to be vastly produced and

helped women to be best-selling authors. However, the success of female writers and the increase of their novels production made male feel threatened. Male writers were worried that females would rob their markets and dominate more the subjects that were the main interest of their readership especially their young ladies readers. Every novel written by female authors was negatively criticized by powerful reviewers who believed that only men are talented and have the skill to write properly and affectively (ibid).

Male authors were convinced that female writings were just diaries where women struggled to reach their dreams through their heroines (Mazul 5). They stated that women were lost in their own thoughts and imagination:

> A great creator like Shakespeare or Dickens has a wide impartiality towards all his puppets … If a novelist take sides, he or she is lost. Then we get a pamphlet, a didactic exercise, a problem novel- never a work of art. The female author is at one-self conscious and didactic. For reasons which are tolerably clear …the beginning of a woman's work is generally the writing of personal diary (Thomas qtd. in Mazul 5).

Nevertheless, some of women writers had to disguise their female names for a better chance of being taken seriously. These women used male pseudonyms or to produce their works without mentioning any name so that they would not be criticized for their sex. A lot of female writer used pseudonyms to avoid the harsh criticism by male authors and the focus on their femininity, among them Charlotte Bronté who used the name of Carrer Bell while publishing her famous novel Jane Eyre. Bronte's novel Jane Eyre was hugely popular and successful that made readers wondering about the actual author (Mazul 5).

During the nineteenth century, women's fiction was depicted as trivial, inconsiderable, and artless (ibid). It was believed that women were not skillful to produce valued and well recognized literary works. However, women determined to change this mentality and ideal by producing an amazing works of art that forced the society to change its ideals about them (ibid).

One of the best known writers and social critics during the Victorian era was Elizabeth Gaskell. She was born in London to a Unitarian father but she lived with her aunt after the death of her mother (Peart 11). Gaskell started her career as a novelist by exploring the Industrial novel and depicting the world of labor in which she brought new themes and elements to the Victorian novel. In her fiction, she gave much importance to the problems of the working conditions in factories and to the relationship between the mill owners and their workers.

Most importantly, her novels were regarded as radical since they challenged the patriarchal society by shedding light on the nature of women, their expectations, and their participations in the labor fields. Gaskell among all the Victorian writers was interested to all the occupations of the middle-class people (Mohammed al-haj 1132). She was hugely influenced by her age and that was reflected in her works. She worked in factories among the poor people of Manchester and she took notice on the terrible conditions that the workers suffered from and how they were affected by the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, her main goal was to create better working conditions for factory workers and to reach equality between genders as well as classes (ibid).

Elizabeth Gaskell was a very talented writer; she wrote her novel *North and South* in an attempt to depict the social conditions of the Victorian society and to convey a valuable message to the British people. *North and South* tackled interesting themes such as: Labor, middle-class, women, gender, and feminism. It characterizes the emergence of an Industrial North described through the eyes of a very beautiful strong woman lived in the South, Margret Hale. Gaskell, through this novel aimed to challenge class privilege and poverty as well as women's rights (Peart 6). She focused her attention towards female influence by moving her female character Margaret Hale from the privet sphere to the public one. Through this novel, Gaskell represented a strong heroine with an ideal of an empowered woman (West 5).

1.9. Conclusion

England in the nineteenth century became the world's supreme power. In other words, it was the first industrial country with the biggest economic power. During the

Chapter One: Classicism and the Ideals of Victorian Womanhood

Victorian era, England was at its crest in which it possessed a great number of colonies which controlled a huge part of the world. Furthermore, the industry was developing during this time which impacted the British society and caused its division. It led to massive urbanization in which people left the country seeking for better jobs in the cities, especially that England changed itself from the agriculture to the industrial country. However, the working conditions in the new factories were so bad and the workers were often exploited mostly women and children because they were hired for lower wages.

The Victorian age was a topic that resulted heated debates and discussions due to its characteristics such as the struggle of the social classes, gender inequalities as well as women's statutes within the society. Britain during the Victorian era witnessed several changes that were caused by the Industrial Revolution. Class division and gender inequality were the key concepts that shaped the Victorian society; and forced writers especially novelists to consider them as their major themes. Therefore, the real life events of the British society were the major themes discussed in several Victorian novels such as *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell. In this sense, the next chapter will give a detailed description of the Victorian social life depicted by Gaskell in her fourth novel *North and South*.

Chapter Two:

The Character of Margaret Hale from Daughterhood to Womanhood

Chapter Two: The Character of Margaret Hale from Daughterhood to Womanhood

2.1. Introduction

The huge emergence and success of the Victorian novel were highly linked to the fact that:

> The novel was the vehicle best equipped to present a picture of life lived in a given society against a stable background of social and moral values by people who were recognizably like the people encountered by readers, and this was the kind of picture of life the middle-class reader wanted to read about (Daiches 222).

In a deeper sense, during the Victorian era the dominating literary form was the novel, and it

The Victorian period gave much importance to reading as it was the key concern at that time. People were skeptical about what to read or what materials can be read as well as how to read them. It centered around two major aspects: class and gender. Victorian fiction was written by authors from a social dominant class and due to this it was given much importance (Pintilii 217).

The nineteenth century was epitomized by the great progress that led to several changes within the Victorian society. People from the middle class drove their interests to achieve high social standards more than others from different classes. In this sense, writers attempted to spark reader's attention towards all the social aspects. Middle class writers had the ability to produce fiction with the most realistic image that represented the social events about their real world (ibid).

The Industrial Revolution brought success and progress to British society. Yet, this latter had great social, political, and economic effects on the country. These effects were explored and analyzed by authors who lived during that period such as: Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and Elizabeth Gaskell. These writers depicted the social conditions of Britain through storylines written in an industrial novel; known also as the Social-Problem Novel or the Condition of England novel. These authors have chosen this type of novels to describe the life and the conditions of the working-class

people and to encourage people from the middle-class to sympathize with them (Balkaya1).

The social and the cultural aspects of the British society are examined through Gaskell's novel *North and south*. She focuses on the huge gap between the middle class and the working class where she provides suggestions and solutions to teach people that they must learn how to coexist with each other in order to live in an emerging ideal society (Kalpakli 3).

2.1. Industrial England in *North and South*

A scrutinized reading or a close examination of Gaskell's novel *North and south* reveals various features about the industrial England that she mentioned in the first chapter. *North and South* was considered as one of the earliest industrial novels that resulted anger among the mill owners towards Elizabeth Gaskell. She was hugely criticized for writing this novel because of her characterization of Manchester as a mill town of Milton in the north (Ewald 2).

After the emergence of the Industrial Revolution a great number of people moved to cities looking for jobs as factory workers. Hence, the increase of population resulted a serious overcrowding, and the north was lacking sanitation which led to the rapid rise of urban diseases. All these effects caused poverty and starvation among classes especially the working class (ibid).

North and South was concerned with the workers situations, conditions and strikes in the unions. Through this novel Gaskell used vivid details to explain how the unions were organized, emphasizing on the fact that each worker belonged to a particular union. On the other hand, workers who did not belong to any union were regarded as nonconformist by the workers: "well! If a man doesn't belong to th' Union, them as works next looms has orders not to speak to him – if he's sorry or ill it's a' the same; he's out of bounds; he's none o' us; he comes among us, he works among us, but he's none o' us" (232). The unions made it difficult for the poor factory

workers to look for other jobs from where they can get more profits and they were obliged to follow them.

The unions were severe with the workers and whenever they rebelled against or betrayed them, they were no longer accepted by the others. To illustrate more, in the novel the factory workers from the lower class such as Boucher struck seeking for higher wages and better conditions. When the violent workers made a strike in front of the house of the factory owner Mr. Thornton, Margaret (The heroine) noticed her friend Boucher among them: "Oh, God! Cried Margaret suddenly; there is Boucher. I know his face, though he is lived with rage, –he is fighting to get to the front —look! Look!" (176). Margaret was astonished by her friend's attitude although she knew exactly that he and his family suffered from starvation, yet she was aware that such reaction would cause troubles for him and he may lost he job.

The strike scenes in the novel caused heated debated and discussions between people. Some of them were convinced that the workers decided to strike in order to have higher wages, while others believed that there were other reasons. Margaret wondered why people were going to strike and Mrs. Thornton answered: "For the mastership and ownership of other people's property… That is what they always strike for. If my son's work-place strike, I will only say they are a pack of ungrateful hounds" (115). Margaret was surprised because she lived in the South and southerners never rebelled against something. They were not violent. Southerners believed that strikes were not useful and not the ultimate solution; while people from the north used strikes as a method to be taken into consideration and improve their social conditions. However, Mrs. Thornton was convinced that the workers wanted more than higher wages while saying: "…But the truth is, they want to be masters, and make the masters into slaves on their own ground" (116).

The factory workers in the north could not defend themselves or reject the hard working conditions that the masters imposed on them which made them violent and led them to strike. Mrs. Thornton was the first one who saw the violent workers in front of the gates of the Thornton's house. Mrs. Thornton was frightened when she

saw the angry, violent, and madding crowd of workers in front of the gate and she knew that without the help of soldiers Mr. Thornton would be dead (174).

The relationship between masters and their workers in the industrial north was led by misunderstanding. In a deeper sense, workers did not have enough awareness to understand how trade worked; and masters could not explain to them that whenever there was a crisis in any part of the world the prices of the materials automatically increase. The bottom line is that masters cannot help the workers by giving them higher wages due to the crisis. When Margaret asked Mr. Thornton to give an explanation to his workers, he replied by saying: "Do you give your servants reasons for our expenditure, or your economy in the use of your own money?" (Gaskell 117). In other words, even though Margaret was a capital owner, she suggested communication and dialogue as a solution to avoid strikes.

North and south revealed facts about people's starvation and poverty during the nineteenth century England. During this period, the southerners relied upon agriculture because of the farming climate. They had fields next to their houses which saved them from starving to death. Whereas, people from the industrial north suffered from the high living cost; and because of their work in factories they had no fields which resulted in problems like hunger. The only solution was The Corn Law[12] in which it gave little support to farmers; they could get money by selling their corn. However, this law had negative impacts on the manufacturers because they could not obtain free trade and most of them went bankrupt, one of them was Mr. Thornton.

2.1.1 The Environment of the North and the South of England

Gaskell's *North and South* dealt with the huge disparity between the north and the south of England during the nineteenth century. During the industrialization of Britain these two towns were completely different from each other. Hence, in this novel Gaskell focused more on the environmental parts.

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[12] The Corn Law: The Corn Laws were series of statutes enacted between 1815 and 1846 which corn prices at high level. This measure was indented to protect English farmers from foreign imports of grain.

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The southern part in the novel was presented through the town of Helstone which was a real place in Cornwall. It was mentioned in the novel as the hometown of the Hales; since Margaret often referred to it as home (12).

Margaret presented Helstone to Mr. Lennox as her home saying she had no words to describe its beauty and charm (ibid); she also mentioned also that "Helstone is like a village in a poem" (ibid). All over the novel, Helstone was depicted as a calm place with a lovely and beautiful countryside where everything is put into order.

Gaskell referred to the northern part of England by the factitious town of Milton. However, she was badly criticized for that because there were a lot of similarities between Milton and Manchester discussed in the novel. She used Milton only as a *nickname* for Manchester because she lived there and she was influenced by its living conditions. Milton is described as an ugly place with a foggy smoky air.

North and South was regarded as radical since it did not represent the Industrial Revolution through a story of Good versus Evil. In a deeper sense, the south or the countryside was the good part where the place was just like heaven and people behaved like angels, and the evil being the mill owners and factories who contributed in the destruction of nature and pollution in the industrial north (Ewald 6).

Gaskell wrote *North and South* in an attempt to depict how British society transformed due to the Industrial Revolution by creating characters responding to the new emerging industrial reality, and not to show the supremacy of one part over another. Yet, Gaskell used her characters, the Hale family mainly, to explicitly describe the south as a better town than the north; this was clearly shown in Mrs. Hale's description of the industrial north: "You can't think the smoky air of a manufacturing town, all chimneys and dirt like Milton-Northern, would be better than this air, which is pure and sweet, if it is too soft and not relaxing. Fancy living in the middle of factories, and factory people!" (45). Gaskell described the north through Mrs. Hale's eyes as a polluted place with toxic air; emphasizing on the fact that it was an unbearable place to live in. whereas, she highlighted the beauty of the south by Margaret's expressions "…it is delicious air. It smells of the freshest, purest

fragrance…" (41). In other words, the south was the best place that the one can live in peacefully without any troubles.

Gaskell depicted Milton as a hostile town and as the harmful place for people due to the bad-smelling smoke coming out from the factories. This was tackled by characters in the novel who suffered from diseases caused by the smoky air and the terrible working conditions in the factories. In a deeper sense, Mrs. Hale and Bessy Higgins are the best examples. Mrs. Hale was ill before moving to the north and her health conditions got worse after leaving the fresh air of the south and that caused her death. On the other hand, Bessy's health was rapidly worsening because of her working years as a factory girl: "I am better in not being torn to pieces by coughing o'nights, but I am weary and tired o'Milton, and longing to get away to the land o'Beulah; and when I think I'm farther and farther off, my heart sinks, and I'm no better, I'm worse" (89). This discussion between Bessy Higgins and Margaret reveals facts about Bessy's dangerous health condition that was resulted by her working years at smoky factories from youth. Yet, what made Bessy more upset and drove her to madness is that she could not leave the harmful Milton.

The daily life in the industrial north was completely different from Helstone where the Hale family lived. In Helstone, life was quite simple with things going slowly every day; at times even sometime regarded as a boring country. Whereas, in Milton life went very quickly as people were busy with their jobs the whole day. It was so energetic and regarded by the Hales as a town that never sleeps,. Living in the north was a great challenge as well as a huge change for the Hales in comparison with the south, this can be clarified as the following:

> After a quiet life in a country personage for more than twenty years, there was something dazzling to Mr. Hale in the energy which conquered immense difficulties with ease; the power of the machinery of Milton, the power of men of Milton, impressed him with a sense of grandeur, which he yielded to without caring to inquire into the details of its exercise (69).

The discussion over the social conditions of the two towns, Helstone and Milton, usually ended with a fight between the Hales and the Thorntons as in Mrs. Hale's heated speech: "At any rate, Mr. Thornton,' said Mrs. Hale, 'you will allow that Milton is a much more smoky, dirty town than you will ever meet with in the south" (82). Margaret usually got excited when talking about her town Helstone in front of Bessy who wished to leave the smoky Milton which caused her illness. Bessy longed for freedom by running away from her hometown and discovering other countries. She was jealous of Margaret for living in such a beautiful and lovely town, while she knew only Milton and she never left it. Bessy enthusiastically asked Margaret to describe Helstone to her to know why she loved it that much:

> 'Oh, Bessy, I loved the home we have left so dearly! I wish you could see it. I cannot tell you half its beauty. There are great trees standing all about it, with their branches stretching long and level, and making a deep shade of rest even at noonday. And yet, though every leaf may seem still, there is a continual rushing sound of movement all around– not close at hand (100).

When Margaret moved to Milton, all her life changed and she could not put up with the daily social changes in Milton; for most of the time she was lonely and longing to go back to her home Helstone.

2.2 Portraying Society through the setting in North and South

Gaskell's great ability of description and characterization was remarkable in all her works. When her fourth novel *North and South* appeared it carried no author's name on its title page. However, Gaskell's writings were not secretly done; she was referred to as Mrs. Gaskell or the Manchester lady by a leader reviewer. She was regarded as a literary historian for her aesthetic description of Cranford as a charming place, "allowing her ability in delineating the restricted sphere of domesticity, but denying her range" (Harris 65).

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In *North and South*, Gaskell vividly portrayed the industrial world of Manchester as she lived there with her Unitarian husband William Gaskell. She was hugely influenced by this town; therefore, she created a fictitious town named *Milton,* which was the main part of the story. Gaskell described it in a gloomy way through the eyes of the Hales:

> For several miles before they reached Milton, they saw a deep lead-coloured cloud hanging over the horizon in the direction in which it lay. It was all the darker from contrast with the pale gray-blue of the wintry sky… Nearer to the town, the air had a faint taste and smell of smoke; perhaps, after all, more a loss of the fragrance of grass and herbage than any positive taste or smell. Quick they were whirled over long, straight, hopeless streets of regularly-built houses, all and of brick (Gaskell 59)

Milton was described by Gaskell as a dirty, smoky, and unhealthy town due to its nature and killing air. The best example for this can be shown through Mr. Hale's words: "this is an unhealthy place. Only suppose that your mother's health or yours should suffer" (66). Mr. Hale regretted moving to Milton because it was a terrible place to live in, and he pointed out: "I wished I had gone into some country place in Wales" (ibid). The ugly atmosphere in Milton made it impossible for the Hale family to live in peace. Milton in *North and South* represented the place where characters live and work, and the mechanical perspective of the industrial north society

2.2.1 Portraying Social Class' Differences through Characters

Each literary writer have their own perspective of characterization which makes his work different from others. The creation of characters in any literary work is an essential thing, and it can be explained through Kare Kay's ideas of characterization, who argues that:

> Character traits fall into three main categories: physical, identity, and social/moral. Physical traits refer to the character's appearance, not only their looks, but also their style of clothing and body language. A

character's identity is made up of personality traits, such as habits, and quirks, vices, psychological emotional/problems, and behavior. Their identity also includes external things, such occupations, education, and hobbies. Social/moral traits define how a character interacts within others and his or her code of ethics (Kay qtd in. Baechtold).

Gaskell was a talented writer in terms of using special characterization in which they may appear so real for the readers. Not only her description of Milton revealed a realistic picture of the social life in the Industrial north, but also the vivid and the detailed description of each character in *North and South*. Gaskell's characterization portrayed the different social classes in an Industrial town of Milton, in which the three main characters: Mr. Thornton, Margaret Hale and Nicholas Higgins, were representatives of the upper, middle and working social classes. Gaskell wrote *North and South* in attempt to depict the differences between the three social classes, living conditions, work, education, and even the use of dialect may reveal a lot about classes' differences in the British society.

2.2.1.1 The Upper Class

The characters who represented this social rank were the Thornton family. It consisted of John, Fanny, Mrs. Thornton and Mr. Thornton (the husband). They were very rich and had a big house. Mrs. Hale and Fanny loved the fact that they were rich, therefore, they wore fancy clothes and attended parties, John Thornton was much known and had a good reputation in Milton; he was an aristocratic member of society. This was very clear in his mother's words to Mr. Hale, Mrs. Thornton was very proud of having such honourable son:

> To hold and maintain a high, honourable place among the merchants of his country–the men of his town. Such a place my son has earned for himself. Go where you will– I don't say in England only, but in Europe– the name of John Thornton of Milton is known and respected amongst all men of business (Gaskell 114).

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Mrs. Thornton was very proud of her son John because he set up his own business by his own money. She looked at him as the idle gentlemen.

Gaskell developed Thornton's character throughout the novel. In a deeper sense, at the beginning of the novel he was represented as a severe, negative master who does not know how to communicate with his workers, "…could you not explain what good reason you have for expecting a bad trade" (117). Margaret tried to convince Mr. Thornton to find a way to explain to his workers that trade is not flourishing as previously and to communicate with them in order to find a solution. However, at the end of the novel his relationship with them got much better with his workers, merely with Nicholas Higgins, "I'm obleeged to yo' for a' yo'r kindness, measter, and most of a'for yo'r civilway o' saying good-bye" (321). Gaskell used her character Margaret Hale to highlight female influence exerted on men and this was clear when Mr. Thornton became more aware of his workers' conditions.

Margaret introduced Mr. Thornton to her father as an ignorant, selfish man, proud of being rich. She believed that Mr. Thornton gave much importance only to rich people, by saying:

> …testing everything by the standard of wealth. When he spoke of the mechanical powers, he evidently looked upon them only as new ways of extending trade and making money. And the poor men around him– they were poor because they were vicious–out of the pale of his sympathies because they had not his iron nature, and the capabilities that it gives him for being rich (Gaskell 88).

Mr. Thornton's relationship with Margaret was sensitive in the beginning as he did not like her way of talking neither her opinions. Yet his attitude towards her when he knew her very well, merely when she used her body to protect him from the mobs he fell in love with her (211). Mr. Thornton's feelings towards Margaret were very strong although she was not in love with him.

2.2.1.2 The Middle Class

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The Hales were the representatives of the middle class. This family consisted of Mr. Hale, Mrs. Hale as well as Margaret and her brother Frederick. They were regarded as the perfect family that represented southerners' values. Mr. Hale was a tutor as well as a respected clergy in his country, "Mr. Hale was one of the most delightful preachers … and a perfect model of a parish priest" (15). Mrs. Hale was not one the main characters in the novel, however, her main role was to complaining the whole time and making her daughter Margaret busy with family problems. Her health for most of the time was not good. Besides, she was a selfish woman, unsatisfied with her life unless every one follows her orders and whims:

> … had been detained at home by a multitude of half-reasons, none of which anybody fully understood, except Mr. Hale, who was perfectly aware that all his arguments in favour of a grey satin gown, which was midway between oldness and new-ness, had proved unavailing (15).

Margaret was the main protagonist in the novel. She was described as a proud young woman with a strong personality. She had a lot of similarities with Mrs. Gaskell, such as: moving to the Industrial north, supporting factory workers, loneliness, losing close people and love.

IN the beginning of the novel, Margaret was represented as girlish, compassionate, and naïve (12). However, throughout the novel she became more mature and a woman with experience. Margaret was not a romantic woman; she even had problems in understanding her own feelings: "The new love was displacing her already from her place as first in his heart. A terrible pain–a pang of vain jealousy– shot through her: she hardly knew whether it was physical or mental; but it forced her to sit down" (209). However, she learnt later how to control her feelings and become strong young woman.

The first time Margaret moved to Milton she hated it and she was telling everyone about the beauty of Helstone. Yet, gradually she started thinking in a different way about the north, merely after going back to Helstone she recognized that she cannot live there anymore.

2.2.1.3. The Working Class

Gaskell represented the working class in the Higgins family. It consisted of Nicholas, Mary and Bessy. They were very poor and lived in a small dwelling; they suffered from the hard living conditions, merely when Nicholas' wife died when the children were very young and he had to raise them by his own (99). Nicholas was a factory worker who needed more money to take care of his two daughters; therefore, he supported the strike hoping for better conditions and higher wages. However, he could not provide enough money for his family and as a result his daughter Bessy died at the age of nineteenth because of her work in the smoky factories. Bessy lost hope and she was convinced that she will die soon: "And I think, if this should be th' end of all; and if all I've been born for is just to work my heart and my life away, and to sicken i' this dree place" (101). She believed that Milton's smoky air also had negative impacts on her health.

2.3 Dimensions in Representing Differences between Classes

Gaskell was considered as an industrial novelist and as "a social explorer" by the Irish novelist Williams Raymond (Harris 65). She gave much importance to social affairs and problems. Moreover, she attempted to show differences between social classes in terms of various dimensions and categories through her fourth novel *North and South.*

2.3.1 Language

The language used in any literary text may define people's level of education or social class. In other words, the relationship between social classes and language may reveal aspects about the cultural contrast in a given literary speech (Mallinson 149). Gaskell used variety of English forms in an attempt to show differences between people from different social ranks and to form a precise image of the world depicted in the novel.

Through some extractions from *North and South* social differences can be identified in which representatives from the upper class: the Thorntons, the Hales, and

other masters such as Mr. Bell use a highly standard of English language, whereas, the Higgins family from lower class used dialect to communicate with each other. The example of the upper class use of language can be shown through Mrs. Thornton's speech:

> I will be a true friend, if circumstances require it. Not a tender friend. That I cannot be…It is not my nature to show affection even where I feel it, nor do I volunteer advice in general. Still, at your request, – if it will be any comfort to you, I will promise (241).

The Thornton family never used dialect in their daily life speech since it did not represent their social rank. On the other side, there was the Higgins who displayed very strong accent. This can be exemplified by Nicholas conversation with Mr. Thornton: "As I was a-sayin, sir, I reckon yo'd not ha'much belief in yo' if yo' lived here,–if yo'd been bred here.I ax your pardon if I use wrong words" (226). Gaskell focused a lot on the conversation between workers and masters to show differences between them.

Nevertheless, moving to Milton and being in contact with its people changed Margaret's way of talking. Her mother, Mrs. Hale often accused her for this new accent and "of having picked up a great deal of vulgarity" (238). However, the sense of vulgarity according to Margaret "referred purely to the use of local words" (ibid) rather than today's sense of the word vulgar. In a deeper sense, according to Mrs. Hale it was "factory slang" (237) and she wished her daughter Margaret not to "use these horrid Milton words" (ibid) as being a language used only by factory workers.

Gaskell used variety of languages because she was aware of the fact that each people's class likes to read about themselves with the language that suits them the best in order to fulfill the meaning.

2.3.2 Work and Education

Every society gives much importance to education and work as being connected with everyday life of people and their occupations and responsibilities. In addition, the

differences between the country and city may influence people's views towards education and work.

In *North and South*, Gaskell presented Milton as an industrial city based upon the notion of work. Workers gave no single attention to education. They were engaged in the same tasks in mills and factories. Yet, although work in these mills seemed uneasy and boring they could not help it, if they wanted to save themselves from starving to death. The importance of getting a work in this city was necessary, merely when Nicholas Higgins asked Margaret's help to get hired in Mr. Thornton's factory:

> For all I telled Hamper that, let alone his pledge–which I would not sign– no, I could na, not e'en for this–he'd ne'er ha' such a worker on his mill as I would be –he'd ha' none o' me–no more would none o' th' others . I'm poor black feckless sheep–childer may clem for aught I can do, unless, person, yo'd help me? (Gaskell 305). ي

Life in Milton was difficult for everyone, even for masters. They had to work every day in order to fulfill demands and orders from their customers. According to Margaret's godfather Mr. Bell, their work never stopped, they were so busy and had no time for themselves or for their family: "I don't believe there's a man in Milton who knows how to sit still" (331). Mr. Bell gave a faithful picture about men in Milton. However, things changed both for Mr. Thornton and his workers when he went into bankrupt, they had to work for other masters in lower posts because being jobless was unacceptable to either of them.

 Mr. Hale moved with his family to the north to work as a "private tutor" (39), willing to find a "busy life, if not a happy one" (ibid). He taught classics to private pupils. Yet, it was difficult to find men interested in learning classics or in education as whole: "most of the manufacturers placed their sons in sucking situations at fourteen or fifteen years of age, unsparingly cutting away all off-shoots in the direction of literature or high mental cultivation (68). Mrs. Thornton believed that there was no need for Milton men to learn classics; she revealed her disapproval about her son

education: "classics may do very well for men who loiter away their lives in the country or in colleges" (113).

Nevertheless, there were some exceptions among men and youth concerning this point:

> Still there were some wiser parents; and some young men, who had sense enough to perceive their own deficiencies, and strive to remedy them. Nay, there were a few no longer youths, but men in the prime of life, who had the stern wisdom to acknowledge their own ignorance, and to learn late what they should have learnt early (68-69).

Mr. Hale attempted to give public lectures to working men about "Ecclesiastical Architecture" (141) but that this later seemed ridiculous and not interesting since it had nothing to do with their daily life work.

2.3.3 Living Conditions

The living conditions of the representatives of each social class can also reveal the differences between social classes. It can be shown through the huge differences between the houses of the working-class people and the mill owners. In a deeper sense, the big, comfortable, and fancy houses belonged to the capital holders such as Mr. Thornton, whereas the small homes or dwells belonged to the workers and their families such as: the Boucher family who consisted of six children and the Higgins. Both of them suffered from the terrible living conditions, "The two families were living in one house" (338).

In addition to the bad housing conditions, dining was another element that characterized one's social rank. Dining was considered as a symbol of civilization in which families from higher social ranks were measured by the way they behave in such parties. In the novel, Margaret Hale went to dining with her family and she wore a beautiful "white silk" dress (149). Yet, she was annoyed by the scenes of class-discrimination, merely that her friend Bessy from the lower class was only a spectator. Bessy talked with Margaret about the sufferings of poor people and she felt shame for

attending this dinner and she said to her, "You'll make me feel wicked and guilty in going to this dinner" (150). In a deeper sense, Margaret was annoyed for attending this party, merely because she sympathized with the poor people while such places marginalized them.

On the other hand, Bessy tried to relieve Margaret's huge stress about class-discrimination by saying, "Some's pre-elected to sumptuous feasts, and purple and fine linen–may be yo're one on 'em. Others toil and moil all their lives long" (ibid). However, Margaret rejected this idea of class-distinction and said "It won't be division enough, in that awful day, that some of us have been rich,–we shall not be judged by that poor accident, but by or faithful following of Christ" (Gaskell 105). Margaret's words revealed facts about the social hierarchy, and although she lived a comfortable life she was aware that the upper-class people were pretending to see life from a religious perspective while they were not.

The fancy life and luxury of the upper-class and the lower-class poverty were juxtaposed in this novel. In this sense, Mrs. Shaw who was a member of the upper-class had a maid who accompanied her everywhere to "take care of the shawls and air-cushions" (366), while the Higgins family lacked even a personal environment.

2.4. Lower-Class Working Women in *North and South*

In the Novel *North and South*, Gaskell depicted the disregard to females in the factories through a character named Bessy Higgins. Bessy was unable to work in the harmful factories anymore because of her bad health conditions. However, although she stopped working and left these factories, bad memories and awful scenes still annoying her:

> I wish father would not speak as he does. He means well, as I told yo'
> yesterday, and tell yo' again and again. But yo' see, though I don't
> believe him a bit by day, yet by night,–when I'm in a fever, half-asleep
> and half-awake –it comes back upon me–oh! so bad! And I think, if this
> should be th' end of all, and if all I've been born for is just to work my

heart and my life away, and to sicken i' this dree place, wi' them mill-noises in my ears forever, until I could scream out for them to stop, and let me a piece o' quite–and wi' the fluff filling my lungs, until I thirst to death for one long deep breath o' the clear air yo' speak on (101).

Bessy Higgins could not forget the damaging conditions that tortured her during her working years in factories such as the loud noises of machines. Hence, the females who experienced harsh working conditions in factories suffered from mental and physical exhaustion and Bessy was one of them.

2.5. Gaskell's Geography of Gender

The British writer Krueger L. Christine related the geography of the Industrial Revolution to gender in her book titled *The Reade's Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse*, saying that in *North and South*:

> Margaret represents the south of England, but the south in turn represents not the gentry, but Gaskell's conception of the feminine, in its inculcation of the 'seeing-beauty spirit,' in the necessary social independence of a rural economy, as well as in the severe demands of its natural duties. Thornton's north is the world of men's power, individualism, technological triumphs over nature, and material wealth (206).

The tremendous changes that occurred in British society during the Industrial Revolution presented similar changing ideas concerning Victorian womanhood. The geography of gender in the absolute disparity of the north and the south highlighted the dramatic change that swept Britain. In *North and South*, Helstone was a yearning and an idyllic representation of the past in which Henry Lennox pointed out that "it really sounded like a village in a tale rather than in real life" (12). In this sense, the past became a fantasy, an idyll that cannot be reached or recognized in a progressive age. This kind of fantasy can be related to the wrong concepts that men held about women

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in the Victorian era; they idealized them and put them in the stereotypical idyllic past. Yet, with the emergence of industry, new ideas and views of true womanhood occurred.

In *North and South*, Gaskell presented a realistic picture of complex women who rebelled against the stereotypes that men imposed on them. Margaret's confrontation with the industrial town modeled on Manchester made it difficult for her to adapt and re-define her ideas about Victorian womanhood. Though Milton was a dark lifeless city, Margaret made a place for herself, merely, by finding human interest in the terrible conditions of the cotton mill workers. She eliminated the huge gap between Mr. Thornton, the mill owner, and his workers, simply, by encouraging him to be more aware of their plights and to sympathize with them.

During the course of the novel, Margaret's trajectory life did not align with the Victorian ideas of women's 'expectations, rather, she defied all the Victorian notions by rejecting two marriage proposals. After her rejection of Henry Lennox' proposal, she was anxious about his visible disinterest. She pondered:

> How different men were to women! Here was she disturbed and unhappy, because her instinct had made anything but a refusal impossible; while he, not many minutes after he had met with a rejection of what ought to have been the deepest, holiest proposal of his life, could speak as if briefs, success, and all its superficial consequences of a good house, clever and agreeable society, were the sole avowed objects of his desires (32).

Margaret was completely more upset by her own refusal than Henry Lennox was (ibid). She knew that she was not following the social rules and forsaking her role and duty as a British woman in being a wife and a mother. However, Margaret knew that she and Henry would not be appropriate for each other. Later she found a new path for herself in a new world in Milton.

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Margaret's feelings and confusions about her place in society increased after her second marriage refusal, of Mr. Thornton, she felt guilty because she could not obey the societal roles. Yet, her instincts, pride and self-esteem kept her away from initially being subservient to these roles. Her main goal in Milton was to support the rights of the mill workers. Margaret believed that marriage would be abandonment of her ability to uphold justice. This was the main reason that led Mr. Thornton undermined this goal.

Later, when Margaret spoke with her cousin Edith and aunt Mrs. Shaw, she pointed out "Only as I have neither husband nor child to give me natural duties, I must make myself some" (417), and her new duties were helping workers to communicate with their masters in a beneficial manner. In this sense, with the absence of what she called the "natural duty" (ibid), Margaret focused her interest towards a new role which was related to achieving peace within her own life as well as to the life of master and their workers.

Gaskell's female characters were depicted as morally stronger with high motherly qualities which defined a wonderful strength of women in a period where society treated them as second class citizens. In other words, though society dictated traditions and roles for women, Margaret rejected them and drew a new path for herself by acting as a mother to her parents and to her brother Frederick, and most importantly she had mother qualities towards poor factory workers in Milton.

Margaret's motherly feelings were clear in her relation with the Higgins and the Boucher families; however, due to her choices she could not see any future for herself as a wife or a mother. She noted "I have passed out of childhood into old age. I have no youth—no womanhood; the hopes of womanhood have closed for me—for I shall never marry; and I anticipate cares and sorrows just as if I were an old woman" (322). However, her feelings changed when she spent time with Edith's little boy, and she depicted that as her "sweetest moments. They gave her a taste of the feeling that she believed would be denied to her for ever" (405). She enjoyed spending time with this little boy because he gave her the strength to move on.

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Nevertheless, when Margaret read Edith's letters she found herself re-thinking about her rejection of Mr. Lennox and wondering about what would happen if "she had cared for him as a lover, and had accepted him" (67), as well as wishing for the life she could have had—a happy life with a caring husband and beautiful kids. She "did long for a day of Edith's life– her freedom from care, her cheerful home, her sunny skies. If a wish could have transported her, she would have gone off; just for one day" (235). Yet, among all her whims and desires, she must come back to her unbearable life in a cold city where she ought to show strength, patience, and courage.

Evidence of Margaret's motherly feelings can be seen in her pursuit of social justice and protection of any who face a plight. In the strike scene, when Margaret threw her arms around Mr. Thornton to protect him from the angry violent mobs, she denied the idea that her reaction was simply an expression of love for him and instead she claimed that "it was only a natural instinct; any woman would have done just the same. We all feel the sanctity of our sex as a high privilege when we see danger" (194). Her "Womanly instinct" (195) was the only tool she had, and it was a powerful protective one.

Margaret's new world challenged the philosophy of the British society about gender roles and the views of Victorian womanhood. In a deeper sense, she created a new role for herself in which she embraced the traditional southern culture while developing her new duties and responsibilities in the industrial north. Mr. Thornton was able to comprehend that Margaret was struggling with her two ways of life, and he recognized that:

> He only caught glimpses of her; he did not understand her altogether. At one time she was so brave, and at another so timid; now so tender, and then so haughty and regal-proud… He saw her in every dress, in every mood, and did not know which became her best (208).

Margaret's struggles with her newfound responsibilities in the industrial north explicitly revealed facts about the protectiveness of womanhood, merely that she used

the limited power that the society gave her to protect and save the ones who were in danger. Her motherly instincts helped her to face violence and injustice.

2.6 Women's Public appearance in *North and South*

During the Victorian era women's public appearance was regarded as a bad publicity. Yet, Gaskell challenged this perspective and attempted to give a new identity to women in order to participate in the public sphere. Gaskell's *North and South* depicted public realm for women as self-manifestation or display rather than political participation. Gaskell's aim was to transform a public domain to a private problem in which a political situation (Poor Law) was discussed through a romantic plot ending with marriage.

Gaskell disclosed the private dimension to the public. In other words, her main project was to show the moral influence of women applied on men. She lived in a period where the public sphere was dominated by males; this was clear in Mr. Thornton's words:

> I maintain that despotism is the best kind of government for them; so that in the hours in which I come in contact with them I must necessarily be an autocrat. I will use my best discretion –from no humbug or philanthropic feeling…to make wise laws and come to just decision in the conduct of my business– laws and decisions which work for my own good in the first instance (120).

Mr. Thornton believed that the man must be tyrant and detached from feelings in order to be able to rule correctly.

Male authority in public fields was characterized in *North and South* by mill owners such as: Mr. Thornton and Mr. Bell. However, Gaskell's ostensible goal was to manifest women's appearance by their moral influence exerted on men. In a deeper sense, Margaret and her mother, Mrs. Hale, used examples of parent's treatment of their children to explain to Mr. Thornton the plight of the workers and the evil of being a tyrant, "The error which many parents commit…is insisting on the same unreasoning

obedience as when all he had to do in the way of duty was, to obey the simple laws of "Come when you're called" and "Do as you're bid!" (ibid). Both Margaret and her mother used this comparison between masters' position to that of parents so that they would not be criticized by Mr. Thornton and to explicitly give him hints about the harsh treatment he imposed on his workers (121).

Gaskell challenged the patriarchal society by breaking the traditional norms and eliminating the boundaries between private and public which legalized females' public actions. In the first chapter of *North and South*, Gaskell combined two important aspects: femininity and unconsciousness. In a deeper sense, the opening scene was a suggestive one, in which Margaret actually seemed more conscious than her cousin Edith who lied sleeping on the sofa. Margaret responded to her aunt's request about the Indian shawls and stood as a lay figure rather than an exhausted body emptied from power (8).

Nevertheless, Gaskell stationed her between Edith and Mr. Lennox who "was expected to arrive by a late train" (6). Margaret's condition was different from that of Edith, she was not "dressed in white muslin and blue ribbons" (5), not the owner of the beautiful Indian shawls, not sleeping, and she was not going to get married, however, at the same time she was represented as a strong woman paying attention to all wedding details. Besides, not coming in from the outside like Mr. Lennox, she was occupied by her own person, that what Mr. Lennox called "ladies business…very different to my business, which is the real true law business. Playing with shawls is very different work to drawing up settlements" (10).

Margaret's position in this opening scene was not clearly established as Mr. Lennox would think. Margaret stood up for Edith at her wedding, but she was not Edith. She participated in "ladies business" (ibid), yet she had no real one for herself, she was only her cousin's representative. In other words, to be between Edith and Henry Lennox or between private and public life was not an easy task for Gaskell to define, the idea can be clear through Mr. Lennox, who whenever he saw Margaret she seemed to him " carried away whirlwind of some other person's making" (11).

Gaskell's final scene in Helstone presented the separation of inside from outside. Particularly Margaret's early confrontations with Mr. John Thornton highlighted differences between domestic gentlewoman and public mill owner. Margaret's arrogance and haughtiness were caused by her sense of superior rank. Mr. Thornton believed that Margaret's attitude towards him was insolent, "She treated me with a haughty civility which had a strong flavor of contempt in it. She held herself aloof from me as if she had been a queen and I her humble, unwashed vassal" (77). In addition, Margaret's awareness and consciousness of her own freedom gave her an equal position with men.

2.7 Victorian Women's Agency in *North and South*

In *North and South* the female protagonist Margaret Hale displayed increased agency as she moved between the private and the public sectors. In this novel, Margaret, typically part of the private arena, was brought to a powerful position affecting the public realm. Her identity as an agent of social reform; her development as a strong, unconventional and ambiguous woman; and her participation in the marriage plot revealed Gaskell's perspective in how an empowered woman could challenge the social system in order to help her community to reach its peak.

Gaskell wrote *North and South* in an attempt to show a series of life crises, the characters' reactions and responses to these crises revealed their nature. The riot scene in the novel caused heated debate since it represented two opposing forces coming together, when Margaret used her body as a shield to protect Mr. Thornton from the violent, abused mobs (the angry factory workers). In a deeper sense, although Margaret aligned with the working-class, she literally defended the bourgeoisie by helping Mr. Thornton. She became a flexible signifier of class binaries, the private home and the public arena, masculine and feminine, and between the individual and the group. Hence, this scene can be regarded as the progressiveness of womanhood.

Margaret was a feminist ideal, challenging the restrictions of the private and the public as well as playing a major role as an agent of political and social reform. In other words, her ability of moving between the separate spheres and transcending them

served as a powerful motivation for social change. Nevertheless, when she fell down during the riot scene, her physical collapse presented the negative consequences of challenging the political system. In fact, she dispersed the labor conflict precisely when she started to cry, bleed, and merely when she got a bad injury in her dome from a flying stone. Later she claimed that "any woman, worthy of the name of woman, would come forward to shield, with her reverenced helplessness, a man in danger from the violence of numbers" (195). In this case, her "reverenced helplessness" (ibid) as a woman put her in an effective position of political instrument in which the sufferings of the poor factory workers were regarded as the political causes in *North and South*.

The strike scene in the novel characterized a brave woman who faced fearlessly the political disorder. Margaret's attitude and intervention was a clear evidence of female possibility and empowerment that the previous feminist generation could not even imagine. Her voice and self determination were examples of female agency as well as a clear response to the traditional gender demands. Gaskell wrote *North and South* to create a feminist history of empowered womanhood and by doing so she focused on the powerful language of individual agency, this can be clear in Margaret's words: "am not afraid... No one yet has ever dared to be impertinent to me, and no one ever shell" (196). Her strong heroic words highlighted female empowerment and the stand against gender ideologies as well as agency in which a new history of female rebellion emerged. Margaret Hale, the political agency that Gaskell represented, sustained a balance of interests between the upper and the working classes, therefore, her role as philanthropist provided her with a kind of power.

2.7.1 Resources: The Ability to Exercise Choice

Gaskell's ostensible goal was to highlight women's issues in the Victorian society. Most of the titles in her well-known works hold female names such as: *Wives & Daughters, Mary Barton, Ruth*, and Margaret Hale which Charles Dickens changed to *North and South*. Margaret was represented as a more independent woman in her society; she was uncommonly strong with a great self-determination. She made life decisions concerning her own marriage, welfare, and happiness without being afraid

Chapter Two: The Character of Margaret Hale from Daughterhood to Womanhood

from the negative consequences of such decisions. Margaret showed a huge bravery in revolting against the gender norms and disobeying the traditional roles of her time. In addition, she had a great ability in voicing her opinion on public matters that she considered as important subjects that needed to be discussed.

Margaret had a very tender, submissive side to her, she did her best to be a good daughter, sister (helped her brother to escape from Milton), and a nice companion to her cousin Edith. She bravely took all the burdens of her family and shouldered the responsibility to sustain it. Margaret's sense of responsibility became so clear when her father decided to move to Milton. She knew that living in a manufacturing town would affect her mother's health; therefore, "she would willingly have deferred the expedition to Milton" to arrange and decide which house would be suitable for all of them especially for her mother (Gaskell 59).

After moving to Milton, it became so difficult for the Hales to employ a servant. Therefore, Margaret decided to undertake the whole responsibility of the chores such as house-cleaning, ironing "like any servant" (76). Mrs. Hale did not accept the idea of her daughter performing heavy chores. However, Margaret assured her mother of the importance of work and refinement: "I don't mind ironing, or any kind of work, for you and papa. I am myself a born and bred lady through it all, even though it comes to scouring a flour, or washing dishes" (ibid). Margaret was not a shamed to help with the household chores and to take care for her family.

Margaret's performances of male responsibilities put her in an equal position to men. In other words, her capability of acting as a strong unconventional woman with an independent mind reinforced her role as the head of the house. After some time in Milton, Mrs. Hale's health turned into serious illness. Again Margaret had to shoulder the responsibility instead of her father, who believed that his wife was only tired. Margaret saw the necessity for calling a doctor to check her mother, and she forcing him to tell her the truth about her mother's illness. Upon hearing the doctor's words about her mother's illness, she became very pale. In these moments the doctor's thoughts characterized Margaret's strong character when she accepted the truth and

controlled her emotions. Besides, he saw how "the very force of her will brought her round" (127). However, Margaret decided to take care of her mother by herself: "Oh, mamma! Let me be your nurse" (ibid).

After a while Mrs. Hale's health deteriorated and she died, Mr. Hale and his son Frederick— who fled from the navy to Spain— were paralyzed by grief, and Margaret had to arrange her mother's funeral by herself. Margaret decided to attend the funeral with her father, although "women do not generally go…because they can't control themselves" (266). Furthermore, Margaret showed physical and moral courage after her mother's death and she drew a new path for herself.

Living in Milton exposed to Margaret a new different world from her previous southern one. The industrial north demonstrated financial struggles and tension between all social classes. Thus Margaret decided to consecrate her time for learning about business and economics, seizing any opportunity to learn more about the factories in Milton. Her desires and interests were traditionally male subjects rather than females. This can be clear when Margaret and her father attended a dinner party at Mr. Thornton's house in which the majority of Milton's mill owners were invited. She paid more attention to men's conversations about strikes, wages, and economy rather than to ladies discussions. At the end of the novel, Margaret's godfather Mr. Bell died and left for her a good deal of money. Thus, she gained a financial independence and she decided to go deeper into the world of business and economics.

2.7.2 Female Achievements in North and South

In *North and South*, Gaskell adopted class alignment in which she gave voice to the working-class to express themselves and to call for their rights. However, she presented her female characters in rebel against the masculine dispositions in both classes. Bessy Higgins, the factory girl, who lost hope in getting better from the sickness in her lungs, described the battle between the masters and their workers as being "like th' great battle o' Armageddon" (151), and Margaret, the philanthropic heroine, was frightened to involve in such public affairs that may threat her life,

merely that the "wild beating and ranging" (178) of the working men met only with "the stony silence" from the masters (ibid).

Most importantly, the novel did not only bring the opposite sides into dialogue, but also exposed how aggression was raised in the reader's concepts of masculinity. In other words, although both Mr. Thornton, the mill owner, and Nicholas Higgins, the worker, had "tenderness" in their hearts towards children and poor people, they could not break the masculine toughness code by showing sympathy which symbolized weakness (300). Therefore, Margaret wished that both of them would find away to communicate with each other by saying: "if he and Mr. Thornton would speak out together as man to man—if Higgins would forget that Mr. Thornton was a master…and if Mr. Thornton would be patient enough to listen with his human heart, not with his master's ears" (309). Margaret wished that both the masters and their workers could only find a way to communicate with each other to resolve those ambiguities and problems between them.

Gaskell gave her heroine Margaret Hale both traditionally female qualities and masculine independence and action to limit the gender norms and to show the female influence exerted on men. In addition, she used the plight of poor industrial workers to propose a heightened position for women. In a deeper sense, Margaret's great achievement (and Gaskell's as well) was to show that sympathizing with the helpless and showing concern to the sufferings of the poor people does not undermine masculine power.

2.8. Conclusion

During the nineteenth century, England was the ideal standard for the huge differences between the North and the South. These differences were characterized among the environment, social classes, people, language, work and education, etc. Many other differences were presented in Gaskell's novel *North and South*.

The Northern part in England was industrial. Hence, the environment in the industrial towns was polluted and destroyed with a foul air and a thick fog. The

working conditions in factories were so bad and the workers suffered from diseases due to their long working years in such terrible conditions. It was not the perfect place for good health. In these grimy manufacturing towns, people were always busy and their lives went so quickly. In other words, the life in this part of England was modern and energetic. Furthermore, the South of England was agricultural. The southerners had an easy life; the time went slowly there and often seemed boring. The environment was not destroyed, there was a fresh air and nature was all around. Almost all the families were saved from starvation because they had their own gardens with field and fruity trees.

Nevertheless, both parts of England were suffering almost from the same problems. In a deeper sense, the living conditions were so difficult for people in both parts, the working conditions were often dreadful and the wages were so low, the working-class people were exploited especially children and women and they suffered from starvation due to the high prices of food. Several acts were issued in the nineteenth century to improve people's lives such as the factory law and the poor law.

North and South had a lot of similarities with Elizabeth Gaskell's life. The heroine in this novel Margaret was partly a personification of Gaskell herself as well as the life in the fictitious town of Milton had a lot of similarities with Manchester where Gaskell lived with her husband. Gaskell wrote North and South in an attempt to introduce the working-class and social issues caused by the industrialization. Her realistic optimism in this novel involved Margaret's movement towards greater female agency within her society's traditional.

General Conclusion

In *North and South,* Gaskell highlighted that in the Victorian society there were strict rules which characterized class boundaries. However, her aim in this novel was to show that these boundaries could not stop people from different classes to communicate, coexist with each other, and even take serious decisions together. Thus, through her novel she attempted to achieve harmony between different classes. That is, although social mobility between classes was impossible in Victorian society, she suggested "communication" as the only solution to avoid class conflict and to achieve her ideal society.

Throughout the Victorian era women were treated as second class citizens in comparison to men in society. Women were very bounded within their classes and work places. In a deeper sense, working-class women held many positions such as working in shops or factories, but they were not paid the same wages as men. The Victorians believed that the suitable place for women was at home focusing on the idea that working women were damaged and unnatural. Gaskell depicted working women's conditions to show that they were paid less than men only because they were female workers.

In *North and South,* Gaskell brought to the forefront the concerns of the industrial poor, women, and the issue of female independence. Through her adherence and resistance to the traditional marriage plot novel, she questioned women's position and status within a patriarchal society and transgressed the norms between the domestic and the public arenas. Thus, she illustrated how her female heroine firmly entrenched in the private realm, influenced the society. Gaskell's vision for reforming gender norms and female agency suggested her visualization for a better world in the nineteenth-century.

Gaskell was concerned with a woman's right to autonomy, self-government, and her freedom to choose and draw her own path in life. Therefore, she gave her female heroine, Margaret Hale, a powerful moral and psychological intelligence in which she ended up of having a lot more to her personality than other ladies from her social rank. In other words, Gaskell revealed that Margaret's business was the only

real one unlike the "ladies business" that Mr. Lennox spoke about at the beginning of the novel.

Gaskell aimed to explain to the readers that the social realms contributed Margaret's progress to maturity. In other words, in every geographical setting Margaret discovered new powerful points within herself, and all obstacles that she experienced challenged her to question her own social status and purpose in life, thus generating her personal empowerment and progress. She became a more complete character since the social realms moulded her personality. Therefore, Gaskell specifically chose for *North and south* the geographical and the social exploration as female empowerment to let her heroine mature.

Margaret Hale was used by Mrs. Gaskell as the novel's central consciousness. In this case, she created in Margaret an interface of opposing classes by giving her the strength to participate in the social sphere. Thus, the transgressions of spheres generated equality and overturn the structure of hierarchy. Therefore, Gaskell's idea was to use a travelling heroine to explore the social issues; however the notion of female movement between places and settings was central to the process of women's liberation and achievements.

Gaskell made great efforts and linked between gender roles and the book's distinct settings in which the notions of female empowerment and self-realization were influenced by the notions of traveling heroine and social exploration. Thus, Gaskell came up with the idea that each person had the choice to interpret and react to the social realms that encountered his life, hence forming a link with the three dimensional models of Naila Kabeer one of the two literary theories this thesis is based on.

The geographical settings in *North and South* affected not only the character, Margaret Hale in particular, but also affected the readers' understanding of the social issues as gender and class conflict. Therefore, the relationship between the geographical setting and the social exploration revealed a large knowledge about the social differences and cultures.

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