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**“In life, only the realities are necessary”.
An analysis of social classes and their
implications in Charles Dickens’ *David
Copperfield* and *Hard Times for These Times***

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Abstract: This paper analyzes social classes in the Victorian Period and their implications in two of Dickens' novels: *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times for These Times*. The main objective of this research is to see what kind of depiction does Dickens provide. Moreover, it is aimed at comparing those depictions of social classes in both novels with the essays of public denounce published serially. These two novels put on perspective to what extent Victorian society is framed by all the huge economical and social changes. Charles Dickens, without doubt, creates characters that are representative of class struggle or the division of society according to social terms. In order to be able to analyze class struggle in Charles Dickens' novels, a sight to Jane Austen and her novel of manners has to be done to eventually understand how he incorporates these characters and how he denounces Victorian themes in a public way.

Keywords: social classes, Victorian Period, *Hard Times for These Times*, Charles Dickens, denounce, *David Copperfield*

Resumen: Esta investigación analiza las clases sociales en la Época Victoriana y sus implicaciones en dos de las novelas de Charles Dickens: *David Copperfield* y *Tiempos Difíciles*. El principal objetivo de esta investigación es observar cuál es la clase de representación que Dickens hace. Además, está orientada a comparar esas representaciones de las clases sociales en ambas novelas con los ensayos de denuncia pública que se publicaron de manera serial. Estas dos novelas pone en perspectiva hasta qué punto la sociedad victoriana está marcada por los cambios económicos y sociales. Sin duda, Charles Dickens crea personajes representativos de lucha de clases o de la división de la sociedad de acuerdo a términos sociales. Para poder analizar la lucha de clases en sus novelas, Jane Austen y su novela de novela costumbrista es necesaria para finalmente entender cómo incorpora estos personajes y cómo denuncia los diferentes temas victorianos de una manera pública.

Palabras clave: clases sociales, época victoriana, *Tiempos Difíciles*, Charles Dickens, denuncia, *David Copperfield*

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1. Introduction

Considered one of the most important novelists of the Victorian Period, Charles Dickens will be the object of consideration through this final dissertation. Quite a few topics have been identified in Dickens' works. In particular, the issue of social classes and their outstanding implications in two of his novels; *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times for These Times* will be examined in the following study.

Myron Magnet claims that "No ruling class has a right to withhold the means –material, social, spiritual– of raising life above the merely brutal and savage" (*Dickens and social order*, p.200). In other words, she acknowledges the fact that Dickens believed the low classes to be educated and humanized by the upper classes.

The Victorian Period showed a huge change that brought together controversy and hypocrisy. Basically speaking, English society was transformed from agricultural into industrial. Moreover, it was split into three categories: upper classes, middle classes and lower classes. It is important to point out, therefore, that the change of society was accompanied with economic transformation.

Hence, this division of social classes is what basically concerns this study, and at the same time it is what Dickens considered important to denounce. The fact that Charles Dickens was not only a Victorian writer, but he also played an important role in terms of social criticism has to be mentioned.

Despite being quite a few novels that deal with the topic of interest here, only two of his novels will be examined on a basis of social class struggle and its implications alongside its consequences in each of the works; *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times for These Times*.

The main justification for this study, consequently, is the interest of checking out what Dickens considered to be “social classes” and how they were analyzed within his literary production. Moreover, the Victorian Era plays a very important role because it supposed an enormous change; and literature had to adapt to those circumstances. Essentially, investigating one of the most prolific novelists of the Victorian Period has been the most important issue taken into account.

In order to understand the social criticism presented in Dickens’ novels, it is key to understand both the context and the literary production. Therefore, the methodology followed is that corresponding to the presentation and analysis of the Victorian Period, on the one hand; and the two novels studied, on the other hand. These two points cover history and literature, which necessarily need to be hand in hand.

In this way, section number 1 has been titled “Theoretical Framework”. Firstly, a view at the Historical Background and the Cultural Background will be presented in order to understand the period we are talking about. This introduction will be complemented by a deep presentation of Charles Dickens in terms of biography and literary production. Then, social class struggle will be specifically related to the Victorian Era so that a complete framework is set to begin the analysis of the two novels of interest.

Section number 2 deals with the tradition of analysing social class struggle in previous periods within novel genre. Jane Austen and her novel of manners will be established as a clear Romantic precedent to Charles Dickens. In order to analyze Jane Austen as an antecedent, her famous novel *Pride and Prejudice* will be examined thoroughly. Both the novel and the film adaptation in the year 2005 will be objected to analysis, within which clear instances alongside a coherent conclusion will be made.

When it comes to the core of the study, section number 3 is responsible for dealing with the presentation and deep analysis of the two novels studied in the research. For each of them, a brief summary alongside their most outstanding themes, structure and characters will be proposed before going into the analysis itself of class structure, struggle and references towards social classes. It has to be mentioned that specific examples will be given so as to fully understand the most important part of the dissertation.

Dickens did not only write novels, but he also gave his opinion towards these trivial issues of the Victorian Era by means of writing in the newspapers of the period. A possible reason could be that he felt more openly by denouncing Victorian themes to public. That is the reason why the last section of the study will be devoted to investigate these opinion pieces and relate them to what can be interpreted from his novels.

Roughly speaking, the consequence of all these aspects is the division of society according to hierarchical reasons, which is what this study wants to prove, specifically, in the Victorian production of Charles Dickens. Yet more importantly, what this study intends to point out is the fact that he had to denounce the issues that criticized in his novels. The question is whether he was more introverted writing novels, or the kind of people his literary production was intended to.

Finally, and considering all the aspects pointed out before, a conclusion on Charles Dickens will be raised on a basis of the analysis of *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times for These Times* and the comparison of these two novels with public essays; always taking into account the historical/cultural context and his literary precedent in the Romantic Period, Jane Austen.

2. The Victorian Era and Charles Dickens

The Victorian Era is the period which comprises the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). For this thesis, it is necessary to make a distinction between the Historical Background and the Cultural Background, because they both complement each other with the aim of framing the Victorian Era.

Queen Victoria was named the Famine Queen because the period was marked by terrible problems related to hunger and famine in Ireland. She ignored the problems because she was living so far away. Finally, she did give some help to Irish people; but she is still known like it today. She was not popular in her times, as she was the objective of eight assassination attempts (none succeeded). Queen Victoria had hemophilia, a kind of blood coagulation which men used to have. She was the first royal person to have the disease, which caused either external or internal damage. Her reign coincides with the Industrial Revolution, which will affect society and economy.

During the Industrial Revolution, there were two types of changes: one was economical and the other was social; and both are closely related because economy and society normally go hand in hand. New ways of creating textiles were adopted, which were quickly and cheaper. The steam supposed a great change as well, because it was more efficient and went faster. Finally, coke was highly produced as an efficient and powerful source of energy.

There were three Reform Acts during the Victorian Era. In 1832, the population wanted to change the electoral system by giving away those small districts where rich people were living and organizing it better around cities so as to make those cities representative. At this point, women were not allowed to vote, but this Reform Act implied a change in the electoral system together with the abolishment of tiny districts and the representation of cities by means of small landowners, tenant farmers, shopkeepers, householders and some lodgers.

In 1867, another Reform Act was passed, which supposed the enfranchised part of the urban male working class in England and Wales for the first time. The last Reform Act was passed in 1884, which extended the same voting qualifications as existed in the towns to the countryside.

If there is something to bear in mind when talking about the Victorian Period is Chartism (The People's Charter, 1838) and Fergus O'Connor (one of the most well-known names of the movement). The help of the working class was very important, as it satisfied the landholding requirement gain a vote. The following six points were not successful:

- A vote for every man 21 years of age
- The secret ballot: before, you would have to say it louder or write it in a piece of paper
- No property qualification for members of Parliament: you needed to own a land or a house, and they wanted to remove it
- Payment of members due to working: If you did not have money, you had to dedicate most of your time to the Parliament
- Equal constituencies: it was mainly concerned with giving representation independently of the dichotomy rich/poor. If a city had much power, it was given more representation
- Annual Parliament election and The National Company (1845)

In the year 1834, The Poor Law Amendment Act was passed in order to help poor people. It changed the poverty relief system and made sure the poor people were housed, clothed and fed (this system was known as “workhouses”; co-related with those slave houses appearing the past). The children received education if they worked for several hours a day. As it is evident, their conditions were not good. They were taught mathematics and some general knowledge.

As well, the Victorian Era was the refuge of several social reforms that meant not only reform, but meant also progress. The Factory Act (1833) established the guidelines to protect workers, especially children, because they were the most careless people. The Act meant the beginning of 48 hours-limit a week, together with children no younger than nine years old working in the factories.

The Mines Act (1862) limited things but for a while. There were lots of women and girls working in the mines, and the Act established that neither a woman nor a girl could work in a mine. Additionally, it established the minimum age for boys in about ten years more or less. The Elementary Education Act (1870) set the place to 'educate' all children between the ages of five and twelve. They were, without no doubt, the backgrounds of education as we know it nowadays.

The Public Health Act (1875) established some basic health points, such as: clean water, a proper drainage and sewage system & appointments of a Medical Officer of Health in every area. At this point, the first instance of making a map trying to outbreak a pandemic could be seen (The Broad Street cholera, in the year 1854).

The Legalisation of Trade Unions (1882), The Victorian Compromise and Imperial Power are important when focusing on the Historical Background of the Victorian Era. Progress, wealth and the British Empire as opposed to poverty, disease and injustice happened at the same time, but they can be intercalated. Labour was cheap and there were lots of diseases and losses. Upper classes were becoming even richer and the British Empire was growing and expanding worldwide.

Focusing on the Cultural Background in the Victorian Period, it is crucial to take a look at Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, the term 'utilitarianism' is "the belief that the right course of action is the one that will produce the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people". In other words, it comes from the idea that everything needs to be useful with a specific purpose.

Everything that happens has to be for the betterment of society and has to make people better. People were trying to go towards the betterment of society taking into account the ideas of reformation. At the same time, people were trying to make things bad.

Basically speaking, positivism bases its ideas around the senses by arguing that what you perceive by your senses is a kind of seeing. It is essentially based on empirical experience and on scientific constructions, as opposed to the idea of being useful. In this period, there is as well place for challenges to religious faith; defined in the figure of Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution. The survival of the fittest is based on strength and experience, which can derive in a sort of justification for rich people (as there is division into different classes).

Feminism and “The Woman Question” were objects of rebellions. People had more free time because of a fast productivity and creation of invents. Consequently, a lot of people, and specially women began to read. Carl Marx argues that the society is formed according to differences between classes. Friedrich Engels makes a more direct description of the working classes and he criticizes the industrialisation from an economic point of view.

The rotary press supposed a total revolution because it affected the production of books. It was made of rolling segments and it had a reverse printing. It was a way of printing lots of books which later were read and consumed by the middle classes. Finally, the Cultural Background of the Period would not be the same without looking at the middle class. Everything was quicker, they had more leisure time, they saw the 1840s Victorian Railway Expansion and 1850s Post Box (originally, they were green). They had sewing machines and a type of bicycle called Penny-farthing (1870s).

Now that the Victorian Period has been sketched out in terms of history and in terms of society, the turn of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) comes. This person is a novelist from the Victorian Period who was very popular in his ages. For the topic that concerns this final dissertation, his entire biography would be irrelevant. Nevertheless, there are some aspects of his life that are of special importance here.

His biographical background is relevant because his mother was obsessed with teaching, which later will gain importance. His father was a naval clerk with the aspiration of becoming a teacher and a school director. Dickens began to work at the age of 12 due to the imprisonment of his father who, after a while, inherits money and can leave prison. In the meantime, Dickens has to leave school and go to work at a boot-blackening factory. This situation will mean his father could work again and Dickens could go back to school.

Due to all these relevant issues within his biographical background, there are some recurrent themes in his novels: prisons (both literally and symbolically), attacks on the injustice of social institutions and the inequalities between the rich people and the poor people. The literary production of Charles Dickens is divided in three phases: first novels, middle phase and mature works. In each of the phases, some specific characteristics and literary pieces appear.

His first novels are mainly comedy and melodrama, and this first phase is also called “light-hearted phase”. At this point, there are descriptions or serious things but everything is to be taken with humour and satire. *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837), *Oliver Twist* (1837-1838) and *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-1839) are novels from this phase.

In the middle phase, comedy and melodrama deepen into a new more intense phase in which there is a need of being more dramatic and expressive. *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-1844) or *A Christmas Carol* (1843) are outstanding literary pieces.

Finally, his mature works have the influence of some Spanish writers such as Alexander Dumas and Victor Hugo. *David Copperfield* (1849-1850) and *Hard Times for These Times* (1854) are the two most important novels of this phase, and they are the ones which will be analyzed.

Therefore, these two mature works by Charles Dickens are the ones aimed at being analyzed paying attention to social classifications and the gap between social classes in some of its version (rich / poor & upper classes / low classes). Furthermore, for the analysis of these two novels, the age in which they were written alongside what the Victorian Period meant in terms of history and in terms of society will be the core issues of this final dissertation.

3. Representations of social class inequalities in previous literature

In the field of literature, a lot of possibilities are to be explored. That is why this section explains how Charles Dickens had some predecessors, and the way authors that came before him relate to him regarding either the form or the content; always speaking from a literary point of view.

Particularly, the tradition of Realism which was yet predominant within the new trends that appeared at the beginning of the 19th century has much to do here. The novel of manners was one of the trends that resisted Romanticism. “Manners” mean ways of behaviour, customs and habits that are related to people. According to Britannica, it is “fiction out of the observation of social behaviour; which is sometimes regarded as less worthy than to produce novels that excavate the human mind”.

It supposes a great opportunity in order to analyze such a prolific and long-lasting kind of novel. In this specific historical context, the novel of manners helps to see aspects of language, behaviour and traditions of some specific social classes. It can be named “the novel of conflict” due to the clash that produces between what is considered right and aspirations of these particular social classes. Nevertheless, it is so easy to analyze because connections between the characters & their manners and behaviours can be easily found throughout literary productions of this kind.

A very important issue to be taken into account when we are dealing with the novel of manners is that of looking into the moral aspects of the character, which inherently is much related with the social context. Moreover, in order to look for a good conclusion, the characters are to be analyzed looking for how they hold their standard positions within the social system.

The only novelist who is going to be analyzed is Jane Austen, because she is one of the most known authors associated with the novel of manners in the early years of the 19th century.

3.1. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane Austen was the first writer in giving a tone of modernity to the novel by means of treating ordinary people during their everyday lifetime. Her father was a scholar was focused on giving his children a very deep knowledge on learning. Her mother was famous for writing stories and verses. Jane had a very close relationship with her sister. Obviously, this stimulating family led to a very deep context for her literary production.

She portrays the customs of the gentry, which can be defined as a mixture of professionals and landowners that not necessarily a nobility title. It was the kind of low nobility that will include, little by little, industrialists and capitalists. At this point, it is important to remark that merchants and traders were not included because they were considered lower classes.

Jane Austen did not write Romantic stories, but she is aware of how problematic the situation was. Her works contain wonderful plots, continuing with the tradition of some women novelists in the 18th century. A very important issue that necessarily has to be kept in mind while reading Jane Austen is the woman marriage, understood as the needing of getting married because a young woman did not have any sort of profession. If they did not have inherited, then was the only chance to survive in society.

Four main novels have to be mentioned: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815). Together with these four great literary pieces, *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (1817) show her significance as an author. These two final works, *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (1817) were published together and posthumously.

The focus in this part of the dissertation is going to be placed on *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) so as to frame the novel of manners which is being analyzed and, more importantly, to see such a possible range of similar elements with Charles Dickens.

In order to analyze this novel; themes and characters are going to be the most important elements focuses upon to. Even more importantly, the social context plays a very important role. Nevertheless, it has to be remarked that no instances will be given from the text so as to prove the development of this section; because it is going to be only a brief superficial analysis in order to look for a precedent to Charles Dickens.

Pride and Prejudice revolves around the story of love between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. She is one of her four young sisters coming from a farmer family, while he is a wealthy young man. From the very beginning of the story, the break between social classes can be seen.

Mr. Bingley, a young gentleman, attends a ball in which the five daughters are present; and dances quite part of the evening with the youngest lady, Jane Bennet. Mr. Darcy, his friend, refuses dancing with Elizabeth Bennet; but then he realises his attraction to the intelligent and fabulous girl. As it can be seen, the rejection of Mr. Darcy towards the young woman could be taken as the first instance of how the difference between upper classes and lower classes works.

As a result of the relationship between Jane and Mr. Bingley, she decides to visit his mansion. Unfortunately, she becomes ill and has to stay home for several days. Her sister Elizabeth goes there to look for her sister, and encounters Mr. Darcy. Obviously, he pays attention to that fabulous girl, but when Darcy's sister notices this fact she becomes jealous. Here we have another instance in which people coming from the lower classes are looked down by people coming from the upper classes.

Up to this point, few instances of making a clear and pure difference between classes have been raised, but do not blame on all that is presupposed. A young clergyman called Mr. Collins proposes marriage to Elizabeth, whom she rejects due to her pride. In the meantime, some officers have arrived to a nearby town and the sisters are pleased. Among them, there is a man called Wickham who tells how far Darcy's cruelty goes.

Without any doubt, we could clearly see here that a man coming from the upper classes could perfectly love a girl belonging to the lower classes. Furthermore, Elizabeth has to choose between doing what is considered “correct” and ignoring her pride and look for what is considered “wrong”.

Due to life issues, Mr. Collins marries to a knight’s daughter and Elizabeth visits her in the home of Collin’s patron, who comes to be Darcy’s aunt. One day, he proposes marriage to Elizabeth, but this time it is her prejudice which forces her to decline the offer. We can see that all the stories which have been told about Mr. Darcy are in Elizabeth’s mind as a sort of keeping distance towards what is considered “incorrect”.

Shortly after her decline, she receives a letter from Mr. Darcy, in which he gives reasons so as to convince Elizabeth. This letter causes her to re-assess her feelings towards Darcy. Coincidence or destiny, she ends in Pemberley, which a neighbourhood located in Darcy’s state. It is true that they meet, but nothing about the proposal is mentioned.

This time, prejudice is what acts as the force of declining Darcy’s proposal. It can be seen, unquestionably, that she truly loves him. However, the clash between pride and prejudice of this young lady comes so that a comparison can be made regarding social inequalities.

Almost at the end of the novel, the lovely chance is set towards Elizabeth. Lady Catherine encounters Elizabeth while she is visiting the place. She says that some marriage rumours have come to her ears, but refuses to think about the marriage because she considers it an inappropriate marriage (between a Bennet and a Darcy). Elizabeth is obliged to refuse the proposal, but she does not agree with Lady’s point of view. Consequently, she realizes her own happiness is the only issue that matters, and truly accepts his proposal. Eventually, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy marry.

Pride and Prejudice is a great novel that makes the reader think about what decisions are good for our lives. We can be focused on whether something is good or bad for our future, but the only thing that matters is our sake for happiness. This story, indeed, is a quite good example when focusing on people's choices. Even if we are not sure about taking the initiative, it can wait until we know that we are going to be happy with the decision.

Last but not least, the social context in which this story is framed gives a lot of clues to identify differences and clashes or even similarities in the social system; and it is as well an important point to be taken into account.

4. Class Struggle in Charles Dickens' novels

4.1. *David Copperfield* (1850-1851)

David Copperfield (1849-1850) is the first novel objected to analysis in this final dissertation. It was serially published during 1849-1850, and in the year 1850 it saw the light in book format. The novel is autobiographical, relating early experiences that were meaningful for the child, such as his early years working in a factory or his teen ages. Before giving notions about the characters, the structure of the boom and the themes found in the story, it would be a good idea to frame the story to the reader by providing a brief summary.

4.1.1. Brief summary, characters, structure and themes

The story is told from the perspective of David Copperfield, as a way of looking back on his life. He is taken care from his mother and the housekeeper, because his father died six months before being born. He spends some time during his childhood at Mr. Peggotty home, shared with two orphaned children. One day, the man who has married his mother wants to beat him, and David bites his hand. As a result, the young child is sent to a boarding school. During his stay, he becomes friend of two gentlemen.

At the end of that year, David knows that his mother has died while giving birth. He does not return to school, but sent to a wine factory in London, where he meets a generous couple. After some adventures, she ends with his great-aunt Miss Betsey. Close after his schooling working for Mr. Wickfield, he returns to visit Peggotty. David agrees with Miss Betsey what he should become, and begins to work at the London office. Eventually and after quite a few situations, he spends three years in Europe and returns to marry Mr. Wickfield daughter, Agnes.

There is quite a good amount of character in *David Copperfield*, but there a clear distinction among them can be easily seen. That is, the reader clearly knows what characters have primary roles and what characters have secondary roles. The main interesting characters, together with what they represent, are:

- David Copperfield is the protagonist of the novel, and it is the voice telling the story. He is a very innocent and naive child. Yet more importantly, he has superior attitudes through the lower classes (=chauvinistic ideas).
- Clara Copperfield is the humble and caring mother of David Copperfield. It is true that throughout the novel the child remembers his mother as someone fallen from the heaven.
- Clara Peggotty is David's care-taker. She could be described as a kind and faithful woman that never leaves alone her family.
- Miss Betsey Trotwood is the great-aunt of David Copperfield, a kind and humble person. She performs the role of mother towards David when Clara Copperfield dies.
- Agnes Wickfield is the daughter of Mr. Wickfield. Eventually, he marries her. She suffers, in a way, from looking at David's relationships. Furthermore, she acts as a helper when the young boy needs support.

The structure of *David Copperfield* is extremely well-organized. According to Noah Jensen: "The vast amount of chapters in the novel can be organized in four "Retrospect" chapters, defined as the most important chapters according to content" (*A Retrospective: Time, Structure, and the Informal Segmentation of David Copperfield, n.a.*). These chapters deal with childhood, young adulthood, marriage and widowhood / acceptance. Moreover, the time duration (past - present – future) plays quite a meaningful role in the story because it is used to make transitions throughout chapters. A very important issue to take into account is that there are not marked transitions between sections, but it is the function of each "Retrospect" chapter.

There are themes in this story which are outstanding, such as: coming of age and personal development, social mobility and morality, memory and nostalgia, womanhood and gender roles & home and family.

The fact that the novel tells about the events in the life of David Copperfield is key to understand the story, but it is the theme of personal development which plays a more important role because these events are related to the child's growth and development. Social mobility is as well very present throughout the novel, and even it works as a promise. It is so because of the capitalist way of thinking during the Victorian Era. Together with that autobiographical sentiment, the fact that this novel can be considered a fictional memoir has to be taken into account. It is true, though, that David's intentions are not clear enough; but the question is what he wants to achieve.

To complicate things even more, the question of womanhood and gender roles appear as well through *David Copperfield*. It can be clearly seen that quite a few instances in the story correspond to femininity, and it is confirmed that the protagonist is quite interested on the place of women in the Victorian society. Finally, the theme of home and family is present in the story by means of the relationships with his mother, his care-taker or his comfort zone(s). It is, thus, an important point to take into account because it can be related to the Victorian Period. Basically speaking, what Charles Dickens writes about is how families are forced from other forces, impossibly creating a Victorian family.

4.1.2. Analysis

David Copperfield results in, without doubt, a complex in-depth analysis of the psychological development of its protagonist. The novel combines elements of fairy tales alongside with the form of bildungsroman. Firstly, it is obvious that the poor child is born in a poor family. What can be derived is that the novel deals, in a way, with how David works to achieve upper positions in society. From the beginning of the novel, the reader frames that working hard together with intention are the ingredients to achieve social mobility.

However, not all paths to achieve upper positions are welcome. Uriah Heep, a villain who appears in the story, wanted to climb the social system by means of being dishonest. The novel truly depicts both characters are fatherless, but it is the ambition of Uriah Heep which ultimately destroys his life. While David truly loves Dora, Uriah only aspires to marry Agnes so as to preserve his social position.

Emily, Mr. Peggotty's sweet and vain niece, can be put as well as an example of unfaithful means to climb upon the social system. Just like Uriah Heep, she wants to be a lady but the way she wishes will not work at all. Basically speaking, what Emily did was to break her relationship with an honest and hardworking person; but for Victorian standards breaking a relationship was unethical. Eventually, she is forced to leave because of her immoral methods to climb up the system.

In a different way, the novel attributes David's success to heavy work and hard discipline. The child claims that he "never could have done what I've done, without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one object at a time" (*Ambition, Social Mobility, and Morality. Theme Analysis*)

Furthermore, Charles Dickens proves that the relationships between class and gender can lead to anxiety, particularly evident when we are told that self-centered Steerforth has seduced Emily. Another instance in which this anxiety can be seen is "in David's move from the infantilized sexuality of Dora to the domesticated rationality of Agnes in his own quest for a family" (*Ambition, Social Mobility, and Morality. Theme Analysis*)

4.2. *Hard Times for These Times* (1854)

Hard Times for These Times (1854) is the second novel objected to analysis in this final dissertation. It was weekly serialized from 1st August to 12th August, 1854 in *Household Words*, a magazine that was owned by Charles Dickens. *Hard Times for These Times* is set in Coketown, a small village located in Preston, Lancashire. Before giving notions on characters, structure and themes of the book, it would be a good idea to frame this story to the reader by providing a brief summary.

4.2.1. Brief summary, characters, structure and themes

Thomas Gradgrind has imposed the utilitarianism learning method of his children. A friend of him, Josiah Bounderby, and Thomas, decide to spell from school the young student Sissy Jupe. Unfortunately, when they go to the circus where her father works to give him the notice, they find out that he has abandoned her child. As a result, Thomas decides to take her to his home. In his home, Sissy becomes a very good friend of Louisa Gradgrind. She agrees to marry Josiah in order to help her brother Tom. Louisa sees herself trapped in a loveless situation, and she lives all kinds of adventures. Meanwhile, the bank owned by Josiah Bounderby is robbed. People think that Stephen Blackpool, an honest worker, is the thief; but Tom turns out to be the guilty. Finally, Josiah Bounderby loses reputation and dies; while Thomas Gradgrind realizes he has ruined his children's life and becomes a real person.

The novel has a vast amount of characters, who have to be read slowly because every character has distinct traits that make them recognizable in one way or another. Its main characters, together with what they represent, are:

- Thomas Gradgrind is a little bit strange at the beginning of the novel, but he proves to be caring in some way. He is the representation of utilitarianism-positivism system.
- Josiah Bounderby is a selfish and hypocrite person. He is representative of social mobility.

- Louisa Gradgrind represents the success of social mobility alongside the rejection of positivism and fantasy.
- Tom Gradgrind's role is to act as a balance regarding the conflicts between his father and his sister.
- Cecilia Jupe can be put at the same level of Louisa Gradgrind, quite similar representing facts.
- Stephen Blackpool is a hard working person who represents honesty and integrity.
- Rachael is a nice person who has a very moral and ethical personality. She has a pure way of being. She represents moral purity.
- Bitzer is quite a good example of the perfect product resulting from the utilitarianism-positivistic system. He is the manifest of these thoughts.

The structure of the book is achieved through three parts: sowing, reaping and garnering. It is necessary, thus, offering a definition of each of the parts. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, sowing corresponds "to plant or spread seeds in or on the ground" (1). Reaping means "to obtain something, especially something good, as a direct result of something that you have done" (1). Finally, garnering means "to obtain or collect something such as information, support, etc." The structure of the book reveals some kind of biological metaphor looking at the methodology of teaching of everyone, the evolution of how people develop and its consequences. Furthermore, and following this structure, an opposition between the clock / mechanical time and the progress of seasons / natural time could be proposed.

Quite a good amount of themes can be identified in the story, and some of them reflect in a very good way the Victorian Period. For instance, the Industrial Revolution gains much presence in the book because it reviews social inequalities, towns, factories, working conditions and trade unions. The mechanization (or dehumanization) of human beings by means of industrial work can be seen in the factories, the employers or the employees.

The utilitarianism-positivism system applied to education is as well very important, because this rationalistic system of education produces machines rather than human beings. The opposition fact / fancy can be seen in Coketown and in the circus for the importance of development of the human being and, yet more importantly, the importance of artistic endeavour (very much related to the role of fiction).

Throughout the story, the Woman Question counteracts the mechanizing effects of industrialization because it focuses on the status as well as on the compassion, moral purity and emotional sensitivity of women. Eventually, unhappy marriages and divorces occur during the development of the story, which gives a sense of autobiographical elements.

4.2.2. Analysis

When comparing and contrasting the representation of social class in this novel, it is worth taking into account the background of the author. In this case, the spiralling childhood of Charles Dickens. He was born into a middle class family, giving him a positive start in life. However, his whole world was about to collapse when his father's money management skills (or lack of) lost him and his family everything. His father was sent to prison, leaving him and his family forced to work in a shoe-dye factory. Dickens was only age 11 when he began factory work.

These childhood experiences both on their own and combined influenced his writing. For example, factory work and conditions in industrialised Britain is a major theme in this novel and his other literary works. Some experts, though, have found a high serious tone in *Hard Times for These Times*; while other experts have looked for the opposition fact / fancy. It is, without doubt, very difficult to analyze social classes and their development or their implication in this novel, because there have been a vast amount of hypothesis on the subject of interest. Let's take the example of Catherine Gallagher, one of the most admired critics on this subject. She claims that "Dickens uses the metaphor of the society as family to organize the novel, a metaphor which ultimately fails" (*Hard Times and The Structure of Industrialism*, p. 3).

She argues, indeed, that Charles Dickens knew exactly what language he had to use, because he used class-conscious figurative language. It is true that the novel identifies the middle class with the external wall of the factory, while it relates the working class to the fuel of the factory. Therefore, the working class is the fuel of the society system. These relationships between the middle class and the working class are shaped in regards of the setting of the novel. Coketown is an industrial city, from which the reader knows only as a physical environment. That is, Charles Dickens does not focus on the pollution or the dirty streets of the city.

Dickens gives a great representation of social classes by means of focusing on the major characters. In the novel, three of these major characters represent the three main classes in the society system: the upper classes, the middle classes and the working classes (which also known as the lower classes).

James Harthouse, a gentleman who attempts to attract Louisa, is the representative of the upper classes. Briefly speaking, the character has everything and is wealthy. He is an aristocratic man that leaves quite a few issues to be desired, which is what Charles Dickens tries to show during the novel. He became a masterpiece on causing alteration on what the upper classes represent and how the upper classes are represented for the reader. For instance, in the second part of the book, James Harthouse is described as a soul searching for fulfilment. Without doubt, what symbolises is how one can buy a lot of things but true happiness. Therefore, the reader is told that he “had tried life as a Coronet of Dragoons, and found it a bore; and had afterwards tried it in train of an English minister abroad, and found it a bore [...] and got bored everywhere” (Hard Times for These Times, p.120)

Josiah Bounderby represents the middle class because he feels the need to create situations that are not real so as to gain caring from the worker of the factory. It is true that throughout the novel he performs his role as a creative person, but on the other hand he shows his controlling and obscure way of being. One clear instance can be seen on his authoritative relationship with Louisa.

However, a conclusion would be raised on the term “middle classes” because the people belonging to this social status are halfway between how treat people and how they act. It can be seen as well if the living conditions of the characters are examined. The novel tells that Bounderby has a dining table intended for meal times, which would be something related to the upper classes.

Finally, the character that would be the representative of the working classes is Stephen Blackpool. As opposed to Josiah Bounderby, he “was asleep in her little room, and went up stairs into his lodging...was a room, not unacquainted with black ladder under various tenants [...] as such a room could be” (*Hard Times for These Times*, p.57). This is the representation that living conditions play as well a crucial role on the division of social classes during the Victorian Period.

On a concluding note, it is clear enough that the social classes and the contrast of the different social classes are represented through a variety of ways in *Hard Times for These Times*. It can be argued that Dickens created such different characters and settings in order to get across a message so that an influence is made on the reader. Furthermore, what appears to be on the surface is rarely true. Only what lies underneath will give clarity on everything

5. Charles as an essayist: Denouncing Victorian themes publically

Charles Dickens was not only a novelist. He wrote as well non-fiction works and essays on a series of trivial issues that were published later in magazines and newspapers. The aim was, as could be imagined, denouncing the Victorian Era in a public way. However, to be able to publish these series of articles and essays there is a question that has to be clearly stated, and it is that of knowing on which magazine or on which newspaper are those essays going to be produced. For Dickens, there was not the place to answer this question because he owned *All The Year Round*.

All The Year Round was a magazine that was owned and founded by Charles Dickens. Its appearance was a pure British weekly literary way of publishing his articles and his essays. It worked across the United Kingdom between the years 1859 and 1895. Its content was a mixture of fiction and non-fiction works, from which topics of the Victorian Period (such as childhood and social affairs) stand out.

For the sake of analysis in this final dissertation, the following essays will be analyzed and discussed on a basis of how the denounce is made and how it relates with Charles Dickens' portraits of social classes inside the novels *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times for These Times*.

Thus, *The Poor Man and his Beer*, *The Young Man from the Country*, *An Enlightened Clergyman*, and *A Slight Question of Fact* are the publications which will be object of analysis. It has to be mentioned, thoroughly, that these stories have the form of tales (they can be tales of crimes, adventure, exploration, etc...); which gives a sense of how denounces could be raised during the Victorian Age.

For each of the four essays, a brief summary on which aspects does it focus upon alongside some instances of what it denounces will be the methodology throughout this part of the final dissertation.

The Poor Man and his Beer is the first essay that has been analyzed. It characterizes a man that attempts at creating an agricultural community by means of setting a working men's club. This depiction is, without doubt, a perfect relationship between the worker and the land-owners. As a result of this relationship, men would stop drinking irresponsibly.

According to *The Poor Man and his Beer* (1859): "...There used to be a great deal of drunkenness here, and I wanted to make it better if I could. The people are very ignorant, and have been much neglected, and I wanted to make that better, if I could. My utmost object was, to help them to a little self-government and a little homely pleasure. I only show the way to better things, and advise them. I never act for them; I never interfere; above all, I never patronise" (2-3). Indeed, it is quite a good example of how the man thought the society could be changed, but at the same time it shows how he cannot do anything to change it. This is a recurrent theme in the Victorian times, the willing to change society but the dislike not to achieve it.

There are other instances in which similar ideas appear. Following *The Poor Man and his Beer* (1859): "...They are a great success, for the people here are amazingly fond of music. But there is the early dinner-bell, and I have no need to talk to my endeavours when you will soon see them in their working dress" (3). This example shows how the society needs no talk about the land-owners because they are going to appear in dresses, as a result of characterizing them as people from the lower classes.

Finally, the last instance that will be explored is, according to *The Poor Man and his Beer* (1859): "...The club gets its beer direct from the brewer, by the barrel. So they get it good; at once much cheaper, and much better, than at the public-house. The members take it in turns to be steward, and serve out the beer: if a man should decline to serve when his turn came, he would pay a fine of twopence. The steward lasts, as long as the barrel lasts. When there is a new barrel, there is a new steward" (4). This last example illustrates how the relationship between the worker and the land-owners is to be made, and how this fruitful relationship has the chance to stop men from drinking irresponsibly.

The second essay that has been analyzed is *The Young Man from the Country*. Roughly speaking, it criticizes some periods of the history of America and England. That is to say, it proposes a criticism towards historical events. It could be said, thus, that the main aim of this essay is criticizing the society through the historical situations of the country.

An example showing how the history could be criticized is the following excerpt, taken from *The Young Man from the Country*: “Did I recognise in this assembly, a body of men, who, applying themselves in a new world to correct some of the falsehoods and vices of the old, purified the avenues to Public Life, paved the dirty ways to Place and Power, debated and made laws for the Common Good, and had no party but their Country? I saw in them, the wheels that move the meanest perversion of virtuous Political Machinery that the worst tools ever wrought” (17). In other words, the high spheres of the society are being criticized for not doing things well and, moreover, they are being criticized for belonging to the upper classes.

Sometime after, the tale tells that not all the inhabitants do behave the same way; there are quite a few other people that “...are, by nature, frank, brave, cordial, hospitable, and affectionate” (18). According to *The Young Man from the Country*: “These qualities are natural, I implicitly believe, to the whole people. That they are, however, sadly sapped and blighted in their growth among the mass; and that there are influences at work which endanger them still more, and give but little present promise of their healthy restoration; is a truth that ought to be told” (18).

The third essay that has been analyzed is *An Enlightened Clergyman*, which denounces the issues that the lower classes can, by no means, be subjected to. In particular, the following example illustrates in a good way what this essay looks for: “SIR, My attention has been directed to a piece called ‘The Bloomsbury Christening’, which you propose to read this evening. Without presuming to claim any interference in the arrangement of the readings, I would suggest to you whether you have on this occasion sufficiently considered the character of the composition you have selected...to raise the moral tone amongst the working class of the town....’The Bloomsbury Christening’ cannot possibly do this. It trifles with a sacred ordinance, and the language...has a direct tendency to lower it” (21).

That is to say, this essay denounces the right to be important. However, as the lower classes were not taken into account, they were not considered for this kind of lectures. Furthermore, and according to *An Enlightened Clergyman*: “The ordinance which is here exposed to ridicule is one which is much misunderstood and neglected amongst many families belonging to the Church of England, and the mode in which it is treated in this chapter cannot fail to appear as giving a sanction to, or at least excusing, such neglect” (21). Apart from not giving these kinds of tales for the lower classes, the language and style of such piece is not proper for rich families because of their beliefs. So, for the lower classes these issues cannot be exposed; but for the upper classes they cannot be exposed either because the families belonging to the upper classes might not get the sense of what is being told.

Finally, the last essay that has been analyzed is *A Slight Question of Fact*; which claims that no social reformer has to be forgotten, as “it is neither wholesome nor right...that the merit of his work should be gradually transferred elsewhere” (33). The title of this brief essay gives the taste that the social reforms are good for the change of the society system. Therefore, it is aimed to change the society by means of reformations.

6. Conclusions

Through this final section of the dissertation, a summary of what is this paper about, as well as problems or situations which encountered to be difficult will be exposed. The paper has begun with defining all the social and economical changes derived from the Victorian Period, where this dissertation falls to be framed. Moreover, a relation between the period studied and the author has been established so as to fully frame the research.

Then, only one antecedent has been deeply studied. Jane Austen and her novel of manners are considered to be one of the great predecessors of Charles Dickens. In particular, *Pride and Prejudice* was found to have quite a few instances on the object of interest, out of many novels by Jane Austen. Both the novel and the film adaptation from the year 2005 have been taken into account. Such this way, the analysis of *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times for These Times* results to be easier in form and in content.

For each of the two novels objected to analysis, a brief presentation containing a short summary, characters, structure and themes has been exposed to the reader in order to prepare him/her for the analysis. Obviously, the analysis of both novels has been performed following study guides and research papers written by critics. Specifically, a fixed structure has been followed in the two analysis, adding some and brief instances taken from the text. It has been done such this way because the reader does not want to read a lot of in-text citations, but wants to see really if the analysis corresponds to that first question of research.

Eventually, a section on essays written by Charles Dickens in order to denounce publically some themes of the Victorian Period has acted as the closure of the study. It is so because this final part has helped the reader to decide whether there is any difference on Dickens' literary production. Furthermore, it has helped to reach a conclusion of social classes and their true implications in the Victorian society and in the two novels.

After giving a brief summary of everything written in the paper, some general and specific conclusions are going to be exposed. Firstly, it is not easy to study the Victorian Period in its totality because it comprises so many key dates, acts and movements that have to be taken into account when falling to make a study of these characteristics. However, it can be easily studied if frontiers are clearly established.

Roughly speaking, I think that exposing the different social and economical changes during this period of time has helped a lot when analyzing these novels because the Victorian Period is meant to be taken into account, as a background or general information.

A good point that has to be remark is that the novels that were examined had the topic of interest exposed in a very clear way. That is, the portrayal of social classes in Dickens' *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times for These Times* appears to be obvious and helped to establishing boundaries of study, always thinking on Victorian times.

Furthermore, establishing a relationship between Charles Dickens and Jane Austen on the appearance and analysis of social classes through their major characters has helped so much on framing the analysis of the novel. It is so because, in my opinion, it gives an original sight to a topic that has been already analyzed. Particularly enjoyable was the movie *Pride and Prejudice*, edited in 2005 from the novel of the same name by Jane Austen. Establishing antecedents is always a good example of looking at the past of literature.

Throughout the analysis of both novels, social classes appear to have a great influence on Charles Dickens, and they have a great significance either for the people or for the society in each of the stories. *David Copperfield* shows how dishonest behaviours aimed at climbing up towards upper status in the social system are not part of Victorian thinking, and therefore are object of promotion. The story teaches how hard work and hard discipline to success.

In a quite similar way, *Hard Times for These Times* shows how each of the three social classes is represented by one major character in the story. What is different is the way “middle class” and “working class” are related, even not having borders between them and clashing each other. As a summary, the way of depicting social classes is very similar; and their implications are a bit different: while *David Copperfield* uses social classes to “punish” dishonest behaviours, *Hard Times for These Times* uses social classes as an instrument to describe industrialism and the factories.

All in all, the analysis of both novels was so easy because they clearly have a pattern that only changes depending on the point of view of the critic or the reader. Nevertheless, not all the question points were covered in the end. I think that a final dissertation requires time, and that very good analysis can be done if the student expended more time. In this case, it would have been a great idea to expand the analysis and the comparison with essays of public denounce by means of looking into other periods of history and other author’s literary production.

It is true, though; that these kinds of dissertations are constrained by specific length requirements, but it would be a great idea if literature studies could be crossed with other literary researches, just to be conscious of the infinite opportunities of literature. Charles Dickens was a novelist and an essayist, but he also was a young boy, a teenager and an adult. Without doubt, Dickens’ novels are also a reflection of his times, but he has inspired a pure sentiment on me through his novels.

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