

University of Anbar

College of Arts

Department of English

Lectures in English Victorian Novel

Third Grade/ 2nd Course / 2019-2020

Lecturer's Name: Istabraq Rafea Gharkan, MA.

Lecturer's Email: istabraqrafea@uoanbar.edu.iq

Lecture One

Introduction to *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens

Hard Times is a novel written in the Victorian Age by Charles Dickens.

This novel shows tyranny and oppression of manufacturers and owners of factories during the 19th century. Dickens explores how drastically the Industrial Revolution changed lives of people particularly farmers. This literary work does not merely inspire readers and students but it also proves that Dickens is interested in politics and social affairs of people especially England. The novel covers the lives of both lower and middle class who suffered oppression and poverty. One of the most important purposes of Dickens in writing his

novel *Hard Times* is to comment on the faults and mistakes of inventing machines; in addition to that it brought pollution and malformation for nature. It also discusses violating and exploitation by the manufacturers.

The negative view point of Dickens concerning the Industrial Revolution which he relied on in the history of England in the 19th century made lots of politicians and socialists hate him. However, "Dickens's main intention, as Leavis says, was to comment on certain key characteristics of Victorian civilization. He was concerned about the difference... between Fact and Fancy. The purpose of the novel was to emphasize... that... any method of ruling product or affairs that lacks sympathy, love and understanding between human being -, is in the end... bitterly destructive"(Fielding,132).

In this fiction, Dickens gives us a general idea about the lives of farmers and how the life of city influenced them. For example, children of peasants enrolled in schools or educational institutes and educated on facts and nothing else. Their journey to classes became boring. They believed that their lives were just like machines at factories. Coketown is the fictional city in which Dickens describes not only the poor people and their suffering, misery and oppression, but also how prosperous individuals lived at exploiting and limiting freedom and independence of the lower social class. In fact, Hard Times is a realistic novel that depicts how the industrialization in England drastically changed the lives of people. The poor people work 24 hours as

machines without getting their independence and rights, and they do not have enough time to care for their children and this of course would leave very negative impact on their lives. We can say that a lot of families suffered psychological problems because of work pressure at factories. On the other hand, the owners of those mills and manufactures live wealthily and peacefully depending on violating the rights of other. The novel also discusses the disadvantages of smoke which extends all over the cities and would eventually pollute and deform nature. *Hard Times* is a novel that describes the educational system of schools at the Victorian Age. It explains how teachers teach pupils merely facts and do not give their pupils any opportunity to express their ideas and thoughts. They do not teach them about imagination. The attitude of teachers is very strict and tough. This would influence their lives and they would believe that all educational places are just for learning facts like mathematics. Dickens in his novel *Hard Times* comments on the difference between facts and fancy. Teachers have to teach pupils literature and the important role of literary works in the lives of people due to its great impact. Dickens relates the life of undervalued workers and their children at school for instance the owners of mills and factories always try to apply their utilitarian principles at both schools and factories to control the lives

of people and want to tell citizens of England that it is very hard and complex to break-up or resolve

this crisis. The owners are the controllers of the English life. They think that they would transfer authority and become the makers of rules to legislate new laws that suit their lives.

Lecture Two

Dystopia in *Hard Times*

For more than one century, dystopian narrative has been a literary genre. Some writers of written dystopian novels believe that this genre of literature can amuse its readers, and also has the ability to cultivate them to make them understand the meaning of the world where they live. The periods of great black looks or the lack of hopes to see the aspects of things far worse which are abridged by wars, arrogance, tyranny and many other happenings have been written by the dystopian novelists.

Many critics and writers defined the word dystopia in various ways. This word is associated with the notion of "badness" . It is difficult to define dystopia because every definer has his/her point of view; therefore, it becomes a subjective term in literature. Actually, dystopia

becomes complex and it is associated with fictional works where its definition is narrowed down.

In 1868 J. S. Mills used the word dystopia in his political speech in the state of Ireland where he used the word in contrast with the term utopia. In his speech, he roughly criticizes the policy of government on Irish property stating that "What is commonly called Utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they [the government] appear to favour is too bad to be practicable."

Jan Pospíšil says "by merely coining the word to contrast what had been thus far called Utopia, he delimited its basic concept. On the basis of this speech, the Oxford English Dictionary describes dystopia as "an imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible." It will be argued that despite the fairly wide development of dystopian literature, the definition of the term does not necessarily need to be more complex than the one proposed by this entry. As dystopia is defined as being the reverse of utopia, the latter term must be elaborated on prior to attempting to define the former. Utopia is a fictional village created by Thomas More in his eponymous book. It

represents his concept of an ideal society. More thus created the framework for future "utopian" novels".

Dystopia is a combined word which means a bad place. It denotes an imperfect or incomplete thing. Some writers in literature have used this meaning as an imagined society where everything is gloomy and wistful. Dystopia is the corruption of government that does not give its people what they need, require and aspire. It awards its followers what they want just to gain their utilities depending poor or uneducated citizens who do not understand and know laws and political rules that run and organize the lives of people.

In literature, the effective and open device to criticize the sociopolitical conditions mirroring on defects, distorting and bad management of the imagined and ideal societies could be done by dystopian literature. The representation of bad and weak places expanding the potential of the future social order is offered by literary dystopia. The hero or heroine in dystopian literature often feels the struggle to liberate or award freedom. Existing inquires about the sociopolitical systems of society are awfully wrong and inaccurate.

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*(1726), Voltaire's *Candide*(1759), Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*(1949)and others are the most prominent

dystopian literature writers. The writers of dystopian literature believe that destructive and negative visibility of the future or near-future society can be offered by dystopia. It is argued that technology might be one of the main reasons behind dividing people into social classes. This would effect the creation of nature that makes it unproductive. Ignorance, insufficiency, overpopulation and capitalism are the most important evils of dystopia.

Dickens is the founder of dystopian fantasy in English literature(Gardner,141). His novel *Hard Times* is a dystopian reflection of the insufficiency of society in Victorian Age. He gives us a look about how the rich and poor people live in one place and might embrace the same religion but unfortunately they are unequal in rights and freedom. "The life of a population with a rich variety of qualitative distinctions and complex individual descriptions of functioning and impediments to functioning, using a general notion of human need and human functioning in a highly concrete context, it provides the sort of information required to assess quality of life and involves the reader in the task of making the assessment"(Nussbaum,15). Coketown is a fictional city where Dickens discusses the rules and traditions of capitalism and their utilities in

north England. He depicts the very wide gap between social policies and the applied rules in factories. He also challenges those who claim that the increase of technology and the development of production would change lives of England.

Hard Times is a "direct indictment on Utilitarianism"(Narita,186). Dickens strongly criticizes the utilitarian system of education and the different types of school, he describes teachers and their relationships with the owners of manufactures and how they always try to confirm negatively that the system which have been applied by the capitalism and utilitarianism is the only method that could increase and improve the lives of people of the English nation in particular. Utilitarianism in educational system refuses to teach and cultivate pupils and students the imagination or any imagined subject that deals with fancy and supernatural elements. What they believe is just facts. They argue that life depends on truth and there is no existence to imagination. Some critics think that imagination would destruct and limit the advantage of both utilitarian and capitalist system because they believe that this would fail their plans, ambition, arrogance and pretension.

Although the main concern of Dickens' Victorian era was the Enlightenment-era schism between reason and emotion, disconnection between fact and fancy in the anthology of dystopian literature as well as in Dickens' works plays a very important role. Fixation facts and exclusion imagination are the central theme in *Hard*

Times which demonstrates the misery that results when children are completely cut off from imagination and fancy and subjected to a utilitarian and facts-only education. "Lack of imagination, fancy, and emotion in Dickens' works leads to standardization and loss of identity"(Micaela,7).

It is noticeable in all concerns of the genre of dystopian literature the issue of injustice and corruption in structures of government and it is perhaps the most pronounced. In many cases, the plot of dystopian novels revolves around the corruption of government and the weakness of the educational system applied in schools. It depicts the suffering of the people and how the flaws and deterioration of the economic system in Victorian Era had murdered the innocence of children. "George Orwell imagines a society in which the citizens are constantly monitored and controlled by their government which employs propaganda, manipulation, and brainwashing in order to control individual thought and produce desired behavior" (Micaela,8). Dickens, in his two novels(*Great Expectations* & *Hard Times*)deals with the legal and economic systems. He thinks that lawyers take bribes instead of exposing truth and achieving it. They are concerned with their private properties and desires.

The inequality of social class and the wide gap between the destitution of the poor and the luxury of the rich are the other concern of Dickens. What is meant in this concern is to reflect the realistic facts of his society and to resolve these crises by building new society relying on justice, helping each other, rights and independence. Dickens illustrates the symbols of ash and fire in *Hard Times*. He always tries to bridge the wide gap between luxury rich and indigence of poor people in which they are unequal. Undoubtedly, Dickens refuses the ideas of bourgeois or the beneficiaries of applying these economic systems and rules. Some scientists and critics believe that laws and ideas of bourgeois might consist of virtues according to the religion they embrace and the religious men they follow.

Fact and Fancy in *Hard Times*

By writing the novel *Hard Times* for the ordinary people, Dickens discusses in a way abasement, indignity, maltreatment and negative effects of the Industrial Revolution, generally in Europe and England in particular. He recognizes that his society needs to read books, stories, and essays which include imagination and fancy and not only relying on facts. Theatre and circus are the two places which supply people

with imaginative and fantastic pictures. Dickens thinks that life is not just about facts but there is more in life.

Society, in *Hard Times*, is classified into two different distinctions: the owners of factories and the undervalued workers in the Victorian Age. The novel is about three parts, the first part is concerned with sowing. The second is about reaping and the last one is about gathering or garnering. These names are referring to the Bible. "What you sow you reap and then you harvest. *Hard Times* is about what you harvest when using only facts. Facts are a symbol of something that is unchangeable and fancy is something that is changeable in people's imagination and mind. Dickens maintain in his novel that fact and fancy must work together, so the individual can succeed in life, and become a healthy human being"(Anna,3).

The events of *Hard Times* take their place in a fictional city(Coketown). This city is jail for the ordinary and poor people who were treated as animals. The meaning of the city refers to coal that was used to power factories during the Industrial Revolution. Coketown is a city of pollution. It can be described as follows: "it was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have

been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage"(28). Workers do not get their true wages. They are obliged to work for long hours to cover their basic needs in order to live. This is the fact that Dickens always displays in his writings. He concentrates on one thing that all human beings are equal in their rights and responsibilities. He describes this fact in *Hard Times*:" the measured motion of their shadows on the walls, was the substitute Coketown had to show for the shadows of rustling woods; while, for summer hum of insects, it could offer, all the year around, from the dawn of Monday to the night of Saturday, the whirr of shafts and wheels"(148).

Lecture Three

Chapter by Chapter Analysis of *Hard Times*

Book One: Sowing (Chapters 1-3)

Book One consists of sixteen chapters in which are sown not only the seeds of the plot but also the seeds of the characters. As these seeds are sown, so shall they be reaped.

These chapters, titled "The One Thing Needful," "Murdering the Innocent," and "A Loophole," give the seeds that Thomas Gradgrind sows. He sows the seeds of Fact, not Fancy; of sense, not sentimentality; of conformity, not curiosity. There is only proof, not poetry for him. His very description is one of fact: "square forefinger . . . square wall of a forehead . . . square coat . . . square legs, square shoulders."

In the second chapter, Thomas Gradgrind teaches a lesson as an example for the schoolmaster, Mr. M'Choakumchild, a man who chokes children with Facts. Thomas Gradgrind tries to fill the "little pitchers" — who are numbered, not named — with facts. Sissy Jupe, alone, is the only "little vessel" who cannot be filled with facts, such as the statistical description of a horse. She has lived too long among the "savages" of the circus to perform properly in this school. Here Bitzer, later to show how well he has learned his lesson, can recite all of the physical attributes of a horse.

In the third chapter, some of the seeds that Thomas Gradgrind has sown appear not to have taken root. On his way home from his successful lesson to the children, he spies his own children, Louisa and Tom Jr., peeping through a hole at the circus people of Sleary's Horse-riding. Although he had sown seeds of Fact and seeds of not wondering, there was a loophole: his two children desired to learn more than what they had been taught in the "lecturing castle" or in Stone Lodge. At Stone Lodge, each of the five little Gradgrinds has his cabinets of Facts which he must absorb. Gradgrind scolds his erring offspring, admonishing them by asking, "What would Mr. Bounderby say?" Here one sees that Gradgrind, though retired from the hardware business and a member of Parliament, is aware of the wealth and influence of the factory owner. The reader sees here, too, that Louisa, a girl of fifteen or sixteen, is protective toward her younger brother, Tom.

Chapter Four

Chapter 4, "Mr. Bounderby," gives a portrait of this influential man. Described as a "Bully of Humility," he is rich: a banker, merchant, and manufacturer. Although he is forty-seven or forty-eight years of age,

he looks older. His one marked physical characteristic is the enlarged vein in his temple. As usual, he is bragging that he is a "self-made man." The reader also meets Mrs. Gradgrind, a pathetic woman who understands little of the world in which she lives. As she listens to Mr. Bounderby's story, the reader can see that he has bored her many times before with his supposedly miserable birth and childhood — born in a ditch, he was abandoned by his mother to the not-so-tender mercies of a drunken grandmother who sold his shoes for liquor and who drank fourteen glasses of intoxicant before breakfast.

When Bounderby is told of Louisa and Tom's grave misdeed of spying on the circus, he accuses Sissy Jupe of corrupting the children of the town and says that she must be removed from the school. Very generously, he forgives Tom and Louisa. As Louisa accepts his kiss, the reader learns that she does not like him. She tells Tom that she would not feel the pain if he were to take a knife and cut out the spot on her cheek that Bounderby had kissed. Jane, the youngest Gradgrind, is pictured asleep, her tear-stained face bent over her slate of fractions.

Chapters 5-6

In these two chapters, one gets a picture of Coketown and learns that Sissy Jupe's father has abandoned her. Chapter 5, "The Keynote," describes Coketown as a town of red brick sacred to Fact. It is a town in which all of the buildings are so much alike that one cannot distinguish the jail from the infirmary without reading the names of the two inscribed above the doors. It is a town blackened by the "serpent-like" smoke that billows endlessly into the air from the factory chimneys and settles in the lungs of the workers, a town with a black canal and a river that runs purple with industrial waste, a town of eighteen denominations housed in pious warehouses of red brick. Who belongs to these eighteen denominations is the mystery. The laboring classes do not belong, even though there are always petitions to the House of Commons for acts of Parliament to make the laboring classes religious by force. A Tee-total Society has tabular statements showing that people drink; chemists and druggists have tabular statements showing that those who do not drink take opium. Also in this chapter is an analogy between the conformity of the town and the conformity of the Gradgrinds and the other products of Fact.

Bounderby and Gradgrind, on their way to Pod's End, a shabby section of the town, to inform Sissy's father that he must remove her from school before she corrupts the other children, encounter Sissy being chased by Bitzer, the ideal student. They send Bitzer on his way and go with Sissy to see her father. Having gone for "nine oils" for her father's "hurts," Sissy tells the two men about her father's profession as a clown and about Merrylegs, his performing dog. Bounderby, in his usual manner, comments with a metallic laugh, "Merrylegs and nine oils. Pretty well this, for a self-made man."

Chapter 6, entitled "Sleary's Horsemanship," portrays the circus folk, who are in direct contrast to Bounderby and Gradgrind. In this chapter, one learns that Sissy's father, thinking that others will take better care of her than he can, has deserted her. In the Pegasus's Arms, the hotel of the circus people, Bounderby and Gradgrind exchange philosophy with Mr. Sleary, a stout, flabby man, the proprietor of the circus, and with Mr. E. W. B. Childers, and Kidderminster, performers in the circus. The ensuing conversation between the schools of Fact and Fancy reveals that there is little understanding between the two. When Bounderby states that the

circus people do not know the value of time and that he has raised himself above such people, Kidderminster replies that Bounderby should lower himself. Sleary's philosophy is that of Dickens, "Make the best of it, not the worst." (Make the best of it [life], not the worst.)

When Sissy is convinced that her father has deserted her, she accepts Gradgrind's invitation to become a member of his household. Gradgrind's offer is motivated by Fact. Louisa will see what vulgar curiosity will lead to. Sleary encourages Sissy to accept the offer of the "Squire" (the name he has given Gradgrind). He says that she is too old to apprentice; however, he contends that there must be people in the world dedicated to amusing others.

Lecture Four

Chapter Seven

This chapter is one of character portrayal. Here the reader meets Mrs. Sparsit, a member of the ancient Powler stock. A widow left penniless by her spendthrift former husband, she serves as Bounderby's housekeeper. Depicted as a contrast to her employer, she does not contradict Bounderby to his face; however, she despises him for the uncouth person that he is. Here, too, the reader sees being planted the seeds of Bounderby's intentions of marrying Louisa. He hopes that Sissy will not corrupt Louisa, but that Louisa will be good for Sissy. The chapter concludes with Sissy's being told that she is ignorant and must forget the stories of Fairies and Fancy that she has read to her father.

Chapter Eight

"Never Wonder," the keynote of the Gradgrind educational system, is discussed by Louisa and Tom Gradgrind. Dickens' satire on the educational system is expounded through young Tom's dissatisfaction with his own education and Louisa's desire to do and to learn more. She feels that there is something missing — although she does not know what — or lacking in her life. Tom, calling himself a "donkey,"

vows to take revenge on his father and the whole educational system. He wishes that he could take gunpowder and blow up the doctrine of Facts. His revenge is that he will enjoy life when he leaves home. He has completed his "cramming" and will soon enter Bounderby's bank. Tom later reveals the secret of his future enjoyment: he tells his sister that, since Bounderby is so fond of her, she can make his life easier by playing up to Bounderby. As they gaze into the fire and "wonder," they are interrupted and scolded for their wondering by their mother, a pathetic woman who does not understand her logical husband. Her complete character can be summarized in one of her own comments: "I really *do* wish that I had never had a family, and then you would have known what it was to do without me!"

Chapter Nine

Sissy's education in the Gradgrind home and in M'Choakumchild's school does not progress as rapidly as Mr. Gradgrind would desire. She — reared to wonder, to think, to love, and to believe in Fancy — cannot digest the volumes of Facts and figures given her. She cannot be categorized or catalogued. She cannot learn even the most

elementary principles of Practical Economy. Even though Sissy cannot be educated into the ways of the Gradgrinds, she becomes a partial educator of Louisa and young Jane. When she talks with Louisa, she defends her runaway father; in doing so and in repeating some of the stories of the circus, she adds nourishment to the tiny seeds of doubt that have been implanted in Louisa's mind about the training she has received. Daily she inquires of Mr. Gradgrind if a letter for her has arrived. She does not lose hope of hearing from or about her father. Gradually Sissy teaches Louisa the first lesson of compassion and understanding.

Lecture Five

Chapters 10-13

These chapters present a picture of the struggles, the desperation, and the momentary joys of the working class. Entitled "Stephen Blackpool," "No Way Out," "The Old Woman," and "Rachael," they are chapters of character representation, of Dickens' philosophy, and of symbolism.

The tenth chapter injects some of Dickens' philosophy into the character sketch of Stephen Blackpool, a power-loom weaver in the Bounderby mill. Representative of Dickens' picture of the Hands, Stephen, a man of integrity, is forty years of age. Even though he has been married for many years, his wife had left him long ago. In this chapter, the seeds of Stephen's discontent are revealed when he returns to his lonely apartment after walking his beloved Rachael home and finds that his drunken wife has returned. Through the words of Blackpool, the reader learns that Dickens believes the laws of England to be unfair to the poor workingman. On the other hand, Dickens lets Rachael, the woman whom Stephen loves, tell him that he should not be bitter toward the laws. When he realizes that the object of his misery has re-entered his life, he sinks into despair; tied to this disreputable creature, he can never marry Rachael.

The title of the eleventh chapter, "No Way Out," is significant in that it characterizes Stephen's hopeless marriage and the seemingly futile struggles of the working class. This chapter also contains imagery that adds to the tone of the story. Dickens satirizes the Industrial Revolution as he likens the roaring furnace to Fairy Palaces and the

factories to elephants from which belch forth the serpents of death-giving smoke. The people must breathe this poison daily as they struggle with the monstrous machines in order to earn a pittance. Dickens also satirizes Malthus' system of determining the economy through arithmetic.

Further, one sees Stephen going to his employer to seek help with his marriage. Bounderby's title could well be "Bully of Humanity" for the manner in which he deals with this worker. Stephen learns only one thing: the laws are truly for the benefit of the rich. If he leaves his drunken wife or if he harms her or if he marries Rachael or if he just lives with Rachael without the sanction of marriage, Stephen will be punished, for the laws are thus arranged; on the other hand, if he seeks a divorce, he cannot obtain one, for money is the only key that opens the doors of the courts of justice in England. As he leaves Bounderby's house, Stephen concludes that the laws of the land are a muddle. During the entire discussion, Mrs. Sparsit listens and seems to agree with her boasting employer. Bounderby terminates the interview with his favorite comment: "I see traces of turtle soup, and venison,

and gold spoon in this." In other words, he regards the Hands as people desiring the best of life without working for it.

The twelfth chapter, entitled "The Old Woman," introduces mystery into the novel. As Stephen departs from Bounderby's house, he encounters an old woman who asks eagerly about Bounderby. She seems to be entranced as she looks at Bounderby's house and the factory. Stephen, too dejected concerning his own affairs, answers her many questions but does not wonder as to her interest in his employer.

Again, through satire, Dickens censures the machine age by referring to the towering smoke pipes as Towers of Babel, speaking without being understood. At the end of his long day, Stephen turns his feet homeward, walking slowly, dreading to re-enter the small apartment where his wife lies in a drunken stupor.

In Chapter 13, Dickens enters the story again as he draws a portrait of Rachael, the thirty-five-year-old Hand, as a ministering angel. Through Stephen, Dickens expresses the thought that during the nineteenth century there was no equality among people except at birth and

death. Stephen, on entering the apartment, finds his beloved Rachael seated by the bedside of his wife. She tells him that his landlady had summoned her to care for the sick woman. His love for Rachael fills him momentarily as he hears her refer to his wife as one of the sick and the lost, a sister who does not realize what she is doing. He and Rachael sit by the woman's bedside, watching over her while Rachael treats her injuries. As the night lengthens, Stephen falls into a troubled sleep and is wakened just in time to see his wife reach for one of the bottles of antiseptic. The seeds of his misery begin to grow as he watches stupor-like, knowing that if she drinks the poisonous preparation she will die. He seems to be dreaming of his own death, knowing that it would come before he had lived happily. As he watches the woman reach for the instrument of her own death, he sits unmoving. Perhaps the object of his miserable existence will be taken; although frightened at his thoughts, he cannot act as the distraught woman pours from the bottle. But Rachael awakens and seizes the deadly cup. Stephen bows in shame for what he almost let happen, blesses Rachael as an angel, and tells her that her act has saved him from complete destruction. She consoles him and leaves the apartment, knowing that he will not weaken again. To him she is the

shining star that illuminates the night as compared to the heavy candle that dispels only a little of the darkness that shrouds the world.