

THE CASE OF MARGINALISED VICTORIAN WOMEN: AN ANALYSIS OF CHARLES
DICKENS'S *OLIVER TWIST* AND *HARD TIMES* THROUGH KATE MILLETT'S
FEMINISM



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TUBA KIRMIZIGÜL



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Tuba KIRMIZIGÜL

ABSTRACT

The present dissertation aims to analyse Victorian society and its reflection in the 19th-century novels such as *Hard Times* and *Oliver Twist* within the feminist framework. Discriminative attitudes in a patriarchal society and how females meet abuse from childhood are among the main concerns; therefore, these are also examined with a great emphasis and added to the research. Their miserable condition inspires the author of this study to shed light upon the women and children within their fictionalisation both in the Victorian novels and in different periods. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* is considered the secondary source to develop ideas and explain the quotes taken from the mentioned novels. She discusses the inequality between sexes stemming from the religious, psychological, and historical mistreatment of women. The research is mainly based on the analysis of deprived groups such as women and children; thus, Charles Dickens's masterpieces are used as evidence supporting the main idea of this work because he is one of the significant novelists of the Victorian Era for his realistic illustrations of society.

Keywords: abuse, feminism, Hard Times, Kate Millet, Oliver Twist, Patriarchal Society of Victorian Era

ÖZET

Bu tezin amacı, Viktorya toplumunu, *Zor Zamanlar* ve *Oliver Twist* gibi 19. Yüzyıl romanlarındaki yansımaları ile feminist teori bağlamında analiz etmektir. Kadınların, çocukluk yıllarından itibaren ataerkil toplumda karşılaştıkları istismar ve ayrımcı tutumlar ana sorunlardan biri olarak ele alınmış dolayısıyla, bu kısımlar da titizlik içerisinde incelenmiş ve araştırmaya eklenmiştir. Kadınların ve çocukların hem Viktoryen edebiyatı ilüstrasyonlarında, hem de farklı dönemlerde içinde bulundukları bedbaht durum, bu tezin yazarına konuya ışık tutması için ilham vermiştir. Bahsi geçen romanlardaki belli başlı bölümleri açıklamak ve fikir edinmek hususunda, Kate Millett'in *Cinsel Politika* adlı teori kitabı, ikincil kaynak olarak kabul edilmiştir. Millett kitabında, cinsiyetler arasındaki eşitsizliğin dini ve psikolojik nedenlerini irdelemekte ve tarihte kadının yanlış yorumlanmasını bu eşitsizliğe sebep göstermektedir. Çalışma esas olarak kadınlar ve çocuklar gibi daha zayıf durumda görülen gruplar üzerinde yoğunlaştığından, Viktorya dönemi toplumunu gerçekçi bir şekilde kaleme alan Charles Dickens'ın başyapıtları tezde tartışılan konuyu desteklemek ve örneklendirmek amacıyla ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Feminizm, İstismar, Kate Millet, Oliver Twist, Viktoryen Dönem Ataerkil düzeni, Zor Zamanlar



To my mother Ayşe,
the strongest and the most
amazing woman, and my
dearest family.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature belonged to the upper classes and mostly dealt with their portrayals in poetic verses to praise their glory until the Victorian Era. Yet, everything radically changed in Victorian society, starting the time of transition from an agricultural to an industrial society. These changes mostly affected Europe, and the social order was reconstructed. As a result, the proletariat emerged as a new class, and instead of praising the upper classes in poetic verses, literature started to emphasise diverse social groups in the rising trend of novel writing. Even if the novel has been used before the 19th century in prior times “[...] Usage of the term ‘novel’ was not fully established until the end of the eighteenth century” (Watt, 1957, p. 9). The conflict between classes and its reflection in daily life were truthfully represented in Victorian fiction. The depiction of everyday reality was a new phenomenon in 19th-century Western literature. As a result of rapid societal changes, literature started to have a new perspective as a realistic reflection of life in fiction. And the instant popularity of the novel relied on the fact that it gave the privilege to lower classes taking part in fiction that it provided access to reading literature for ordinary people and dealt with the interaction between the classes developing in parallel to societal change. Erich Auerbach defines realistic literature in *Mimesis* as “the imitation of real life and living” (Auerbach, 1946, p. 119) and “direct imitation of the contemporary reality” (Auerbach, 1946, p. 258). The term mimesis juxtaposes the imitation, in which Aristotle and Plato claim that the artist imitates life. For Auerbach, mimesis is based on realism, and it is far beyond romance because unlike realistic literature romance does not correspond to reality “that it cannot possibly be considered an imitation of everyday life” (Auerbach, 1946, p.30). For this reason, the relationship between the

19th-century novel and realistic description is gratefully acknowledged while the Victorian novel was examined.

Before the Victorian Era, literary works generally contained the beauties of nature or sophisticated poems written for the sake of glorification of important people. In contrast, the image of children was absent in literary works. By the end of the 17th century, with the emergence of the family concept, children had started to be apparent in literature; therefore, Romantics emphasised children in their poems; yet, children had a symbolic value. On the contrary, in the Victorian Era, the symbolic value of the children was demolished, and the child was humanised because the Victorian Era was famous for its hostile attitude towards children. The Victorian novelists focused on the harsh living conditions of lower-class children, and most of them portrayed these poor children in their novels. The 19th century was an era when the disadvantages of the industrial revolution started to burden the underprivileged groups like the poor, children, and women with the problem of survival. Charles Dickens, who is famous for his child characters, dealt with the vulnerable children and their place in society as a Victorian novelist. Also, the condition of women was an important issue for Victorian literature and Dickens. It was a patriarchal society where everything was shaped to glorify men and their power; for this reason, some authors and scholars of the era had reacted to the discrimination imposed on women and children. Where children strove with the difficulties imposed on them by the adults, women were suppressed under male supremacy.

Along with that, Victorian authors depicted the condition of women and children in Victorian society. It was considered that women existed only for men, and they were expected to spend their lives devoted to males. In the Victorian Period, morality

was an important aspect, and only women were expected to behave morally to gain societal acceptance. All the customs of Victorian understanding of morality were based on women's appropriate behaviours in every aspect. Even young girls were trained to become the ideal Victorian women in society, and their education was based on household, child-raising, and fulfilling male's desires. In many 19th-century novels, women were pure, obedient, and oppressed; therefore, the only duty of women was to become ideal wives and mothers. Besides, beauty was essential for women to achieve success in marriage. Society's cruelty to children and inequality between sexes are considered in this dissertation with great emphasis. The novelists portrayed those characters because they could not speak for themselves as a result of societal oppression. Similar to women, children were also under male supremacy. The portrayals of child characters are often identical in 19th-century novels where they are subdued by authorities and never given a chance to express themselves adequately. As Michel Foucault suggested, "Childhood can only speak through the memories, observations, or selections and interpretations of adults" (Foucault, 1961, p. 49). As the starting point, the noun child should be taken into consideration. The child is described as "a young human being below the age of puberty or below the age of majority" and "a son or daughter of any age" in the Oxford dictionary (*Lexico.com*, n.d.) It was even more complicated for the daughters to survive in patriarchal societies because they were destined to be an unfortunate mixture of children and females. It can be observed that numerous novelists portrayed the abuse of women and children; hence, the emphasis of this dissertation is to show how their abuse is depicted in the selected novels.

1.1. Women and Children in Ancient Greece

Since ancient times, women and children have been discriminated against in several ways and excluded from the social order. Ancient societies and their biased perspective on women and children formed the basis of Western thought and played a significant role in framing the patriarchal norms. In Ancient Greece, there were spheres in a typical Greek city-state or polis which put men above all. Women, children, immigrants, labourers, and slaves had defined roles, but classes had interaction with one another. The society of Ancient Greece was composed mainly of groups led by men. Then semi-free labourers came before women. Women belonged to all of the above male groups, however, without citizen rights (Catwright, 2018). More precisely, according to ancient Greek philosophy, women and men are different from each other and men are accepted as superior. Unfortunately, the condition of the child was similar to women in terms of societal order. From the beginning of human civilisation, children have always been dismissed or unseen by adults and they have been raised through gender roles established by the patriarchal system. Girls were educated to become successful mothers, and boys were trained as future rulers. In the Ancient World, philosophers disliked women as a class. Through their writings, it is evident that women were considered inferior to men in several ways, and they were only responsible for the household. Men, in contrast, were seen as rulers. “Gorgias is reported as saying that the virtue of a woman is different from that of a man. The virtue of the man is to order the state and avoid harm, that of the woman to keep house and obey their husband” (Wender, 1973, p. 77). It is easy to comprehend that in the ancient world women and men had defined gender roles in social order. Ancient philosophers mostly believed in differences among sexes and to them, women were inferior in ruling the state. This belief indicates that in the ancient world, the mind was

considered a masculine quality according to their rejection of females in ruling the states because women were not seen as able to make decisions and manage a country. “Aristotle observed that the only slave to whom a commoner might lay claim was his woman” (Millett, 1970, p. 38). In the myths, women are generally seen as troublemakers, just like Pandora and Eve. Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* emphasises this aspect and discusses that religion perceives women as demonic creatures because just as in the classical tale Pandora’s box, in the Holy Bible women are seen as feminine evil and their sexual conditions are used as the ethical justification of the events as they are. According to these classic writings, women create problems for humanity. Most famous myths confirm that women characters have a negative image and were blamed for the unrest. “Pandora was the origin of ‘the damnable race of women-a plague which men must live with’” (Millett, 1970, p. 51). Millett, in *Sexual Politics*, argues the negative portrayal of women throughout history using several examples from the literary texts, and she puts emphasis on the subject of inequality between sexes and its reasons. Although Millett is a contemporary theorist, according to her discussions about women, unfortunately, the condition of women and the attitude toward them is pretty identical to the ancient scope. Therefore, the issues she addresses are the ones that have been ignored for thousands of years.

1.2. Women and Children in Medieval Europe

When considering the monotheistic religions such as Christianity, the story in which women were constructed as inferior to men is told from a similar perspective to ancient societies. In the traditional discourse of Christianity, Eve was created from Adam’s rib, so he is superior to her. Moreover, the Holy Scriptures assert that Eve was created for Adam. Since the Holy Bible was interpreted by male biblical scholars, in early Christian times, interpreters assumed that Eve was inferior to Adam, so they

translated the Hebrew word “ezer” (Genesis 2, p.18) as “helper”. Ambrose a 4th-century bishop and one of the four great doctors of the Latin Church refers to Eve as a procreative “helper for the purpose of generating human nature and concludes that this then is the way in which a woman is a good helper of less importance” (Milne, 1989). All the patriarchal norms are based on this religious belief shaped by the church. These rules were determined to formalise women’s identity by forcing them to be chaste, silent, and obedient to their male counterparts to get accepted by society. These features are imposed on women by the Church as well, that’s why patriarchy takes religion on its side and designs the gender roles on a religious basis. Kate Millett analyses the myth of origin in her *Sexual Politics*. She focuses on the relationship between the ideas of females’ considered inferiority and the basis of patriarchal norms in detail. According to her, religion is one of the reasons why women are considered inferior, as it is interpreted in line with patriarchal values. The Bible confirms that Eve, the very first woman, is responsible for the fall of man. She is the weak one who is seduced by the serpent and causes the loss of Eden, which is considered the number one reason for the inequality between men and women. Patriarchy marginalises women because of the original sin if the myth is to be taken as the source.

To blame the evils and sorrows of life -the loss of Eden and the rest- on sexuality would all too logically implicate the male, and such implication is hardly the purpose of the story, designed as it is expressly in order to blame all this world’s discomfort on the female. Therefore, it is the female who is tempted first and *beguiled* by the penis, transformed into something else, a snake [...] Accordingly, in her inferiority and vulnerability the woman takes and eats, simple carnal thing that she is, affected by flattery even in a reptile.

Only after this does the male Fall, and with him, humanity (Millett, 1970, p. 53).

Eve's sentence is far more political in nature and a brilliant explanation of her inferior status. "In sorrow, thou shalt bring forth children. And thy desire shall be to thy husband. And he shall rule over thee" (Millett, 1970, p. 53). Christian doctrine regards Eve as the cause for human fall, according to Bible her considered weakness brought trouble to the Garden of Eden. As a result, God punished humans and sentenced both Adam and Eve to a lifetime of hard work on earth. Nevertheless, for Eve, the sentence was interpreted from a patriarchal perspective, and she was blamed as if women's sexuality were evil and punishment imposed on her. She started to be seen as weak, underprivileged and someone in need of a man in despair. Eve was cursed, and she was doomed to be under her husband's domination not by God but by patriarchal interpretation of the Holy Bible:

What requires further emphasis is the responsibility of the female, a marginal creature, in bringing on this plague, and the justice of her suborned condition as dependent on her primary role in this original sin. The connection of woman, sex, and sin constitutes the fundamental pattern of western patriarchal thought thereafter (Millett, 1970, p. 55).

Eve has been given all responsibility for the fall, although it was both Adam and Eve who jointly tasted the fruit. Besides, her weakness is associated with female sexuality in general by patriarchal power holders, and it is claimed that Eve was easy to be seduced, so she experienced something they should stay away from. Interpretations show that women and their so-called weakness negatively impacted Western thought and society was structured on the basis of patriarchal ideology and patriarchal interpretation of religion. In the eyes of patriarchy, the woman is the cause of human

fall, and she brings sinful children to the earth. However, patriarchy protects Adam who is claimed as “fallen” because of his partner. If Adam was considered superior to Eve in the context of weakness and constructed as more determined than his partner, he should have stayed away from eating the fruit. It is not only Eve who is tempted by the serpent, Adam was also responsible for the downfall in this respect. Because of women’s so-called inferiority and weakness, Eve is pointed out as the main reason for man’s fall. Therefore, women can be constructed as weak and inferior to men because of the interpretation of the Bible in a very patriarchal attitude. “This mystic version of the female as the cause of human suffering, knowledge and sin is still the foundation of sexual attitudes, for it represents the most crucial argument of the patriarchal tradition in the West” (Millett, 1970, p. 52).

Just like women, children are also seen as inferior through the lens of patriarchy. There are notable names that elaborate on children and their place in society. In his book *Centuries of Childhood*, French medievalist and historian Philippe Aries points out that the concept of childhood does not exist in medieval society. He states that “Medieval art until about the twelfth century did not know childhood or did not attempt to portray it. It is hard to believe that this neglect was due to incompetence or incapacity; it seems more probable that there was no place for childhood in the medieval world” (Aries, 1973, p. 31). By the 17th century, according to Aries, the concept of childhood flowered within the concept of family. Up to that time, children were not a subject for fiction. They were also excluded from the social order as Christopher Hibbert emphasised, “Children should be seen, not heard” (Hibbert, 1975, p. 41). A child should obey the authority; everybody above them can be the authority, such as God, parents, society, government and teachers. Thus, children had to obey

specific rules made for them by society. In the 18th century, children started to take place in writings but with their innocence and purity.

1.3. Women and Children in Victorian England

The condition of women and children was bleak in Victorian England, either they were unseen or mistreated by males. Social discrimination and oppression toward women and children arose rapidly, especially women had specific duties in the domestic sphere and were definitely dependent on men. Simon Morgan writes: “Quantitatively and qualitatively, women were definitely second-class citizens in early nineteenth-century cultural societies” (Morgan, 2007, p. 69). Victorian society did not only perceive women as the secondary sex but also legitimized male domination through redundant statements. *The Angel in The House* is a famous Victorian poem by Coventry Patmore that describes the Victorian ideal of domesticity and displays the gendered discourse of the era. In compliance with his lines, he distinguishes women as weak and pure, and adopts a misogynist perspective toward women. Therefore, the desire for the angel in the houses started to become the component ideology of the patriarchal perception, and Patmore’s sexist ideas were celebrated by Victorians for a quite long time.

Man must be pleased, but him to please

Is woman’s pleasure; down the gulf

Of his condoled necessities

She casts her best, she flings herself. (Patmore, 1854)

Angel in the House (Lexico.com, n.d.) refers to the ideal woman of the 19th century, whereas *the “fallen” woman* (Lexico.com, n.d.) is rejected. Like the angel, the “fallen” woman is still meant to please men, but out of wedlock; thus, she cannot be the ideal woman for the Victorians. In a patriarchal society, a “fallen” woman is marginalised

since she earns money by selling her body or loses her virginity before the marriage.

Women's number one duty is to bring children to the earth, yet these children have to be accepted by society; otherwise, both women and their children are excluded from the social order. Since unwed females' sexuality was considered a social corruption problem in the 19th century, abortion was against the Victorians' understanding.

Thereby, the production of children in brothels and mothers' deaths due to weak health resulted in an increasing number of orphans and illegitimate children during the era. Patriarchy perceives men as the superior, and for their needs, everything is expected to be done by women to create a comfortable atmosphere for men. Although, sexual act causes social problems like an increasing number of illegitimate children, for women and illegitimate children, suffering is inevitable considering their position and depiction in a patriarchal society. The authorities, which are generally composed of men, are given the power to practise an oppressive regime upon females and children for the ultimate achievement of dominance. Men abused those groups both physically and emotionally in order to maintain control; thus, Victorian women and children were expected to behave according to morality shaped by the patriarchal mindset as religion and society commanded in the 19th century. Women are blamed for not keeping their bodies safe, and children born out of wedlock are neglected due to their illegitimate status in society. These institutions, such as religion, workhouses, and factories perceive women and children in secondary positions and glorify men's masculinity. As a result, the government ends up as governance that is intermingled with religious doctrines and dogmas serving the purpose of patriarchy. This power relationship giving supremacy to men results in the subordination of women and children. Christopher Hibbert in his book *Daily Life in Victorian England* (1975) states that:

Childhood, to many Victorians perhaps to most grown-ups, was, however, a far from the painless process, since unquestioning submission to their elders and betters was required of all children from their earliest years. “Children obey your parents in the Lord!” was an injunction as inviolable as “Wives, obey your husbands!” (Hibbert, 1975, p. 41)

Romantic poets like William Blake and William Wordsworth wrote poems that dealt with the idea of the innocence of childhood and the idea of adults moving away from childhood’s innocence. Romantics focused on the integrity and good sides of the children, and they tried to reflect that purity in their poetry. Different from the Romantics, Victorians adopted a dismal attitude towards children by treating them as if they were adults. For instance, in the Victorian era, children took place in labour since it was pretty common to have children workers in factories. Along with the workload, education was also problematic because poor children were forced to work in the factories whereas upper-class children were taught by adults in the way they designed for children. Therefore, Victorians started to educate children at an early age to teach them how to live in a patriarchal society (Mendel, 1992, p. 19). Working in the factories is designed for the poor whereas the upper classes dominated children in different ways through education. Although children started to get an education, they need to follow several certain rules. Education differentiated according to sexes; however, it was similar for both until early childhood, when girls started to grow up mothers tended to teach their daughters about their future domestic roles. Boys often spent their time outside as they pleased; however, if girls left the house, they were supposed to get their exercise from ladylike walks. For the Victorian girls, it was harder to survive in a patriarchal society. They were expected to become the ideal domestic wives; because it was their only way to be accepted by society, likewise the

condition was abject for those who were sexually assaulted at a very young age on account of the fact that they were deflowered.

Children were under adult oppression, and that was the reality of the 19th century; Llyod de Mause, in his book *The History of Childhood*, states that “The child is misused to fulfil the physical, emotional, sexual and economic needs of the parents. Foremost amongst these excesses are sexual abuse and child labour” (Mause, 1974, p. 9). The 19th century’s society was cruel to poor children because children at the age of five played an important role in child labour. The Victorian teenage girls worked as prostitutes to make money. Focusing on childhood in Victorian texts written for adults, Gavin states that childhood is not a condition looked for, desired or inspirational but “[a] vulnerable often painful, powerless state, victims of adult power, emotional or physical brutalities, social neglect, illness and early death” (Gavin, 2012, p. 9).

In contrast to the Romantic approach to children, the Victorians saw children as superfluous creatures. Analysing some of Dickens’s novels has shown that Victorian texts generally reflect the suppressed children realistically and critically. Several child characters can be found in the Victorian texts, and most of them encounter sexual, emotional and spiritual abuse throughout their lifetime. These stereotypical children found in the 19th-century novels are evidence in support of reflecting the society as it was. Among other great novelists, Dickens has been said to be the pre-eminent writer of childhood in the Victorian period, for he portrayed the “humanising of child characters, focused on children as victims” (Gavin, 2012, p. 9). Yet this does not mean that the children of Victorian literature or Dickensian child were always portrayed as the subjects of suffering; some of the Dickensian children were victims of the adult’s power. Dickens adopts a romantic attitude in describing his

vulnerable children because he shows sympathy and invites his readers to understand the difficulties of these weak characters. The Dickensian children who were seen as victims were often orphans or the ones who lived in the poor areas of London.

Dickens's depiction of the poor leads the reader to distinguish between good and evil and manifests the morally good texture of the indigent characters. Similar to what Dickens and Romantics assert, Sandner claims that:

In the moral tale, the adults had instructed the children in ethics and proper behaviour; in nineteenth-century children's fantasy, now the corrupted adults must follow the children to heaven – only childhood, through the purity of innocence and the force of imagination, could redeem fallen humanity (Sandner, 1996, p. 11).

The quotation above indicates that not the adults but the children possess innocence. In earlier times, adults who had shepherded children in ethics and proper behaviour misused children for their own sake in the 19th century. Only through children and their innocence they can reach salvation. Sandner's claim is very much like in terms of a child's innocence compared to corrupt adults.

1.3.1. Victorian Era – Victorian Sexuality

The Victorian Era was when sexuality was incredibly oppressed; therefore, sex was only allowed within the marital bedrooms to produce healthy children. It was paradoxical that in a period where even talking about sexual intercourse was taboo, prostitution had reached its highest point. As a result, London's slums were full of orphan children, and this corruption formulated a slight connection between prostitution and orphans. The 19th century had its harsh social norms, especially on women, like forcing them to behave appropriately according to moral values. They were expected to act virtuously in public and raise their children properly. In such a

conservative period that was that strict about sexuality, the number of prostitutes was ironic because the Victorian's disapproval of prostitutes was highlighted simultaneously; they were exploited to serve men their bodies. Although they were excluded from Victorian society and never received respect as public members, they engaged in work labour by entertaining males. It was a time of hypocrisy, as Foucault suggests in his *The History of Sexuality*: "For a long time, the story goes, we supported a Victorian regime, and we continue to be dominated by it even today. Thus, the image of the imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality" (Foucault, 1976, p. 1). Victorians act virtuously on the surface, but there was so much immorality in the 19th century. He also states that:

On the subject of sex, silence became the rule. The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. The couple imposed itself as model, enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth, and reserved the right to speak while retaining the principle of secrecy. A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parents' bedroom (Foucault, 1976, p. 1).

The patriarchal structure obliges women to protect their dignity and stay away from sex out of wedlock. At this moment, moral tales and stories of the 19th century imagination frame the purity of women confronted with angels in the Bible, proving that patriarchy takes God on its side and has the power to formulate society according to religious scripts. The obedient woman is the main stereotype in Victorian novels generated in the Victorian novel, and she is an angelic figure that refers to the angels represented in the Bible. The angel in the house was overused in the 19th century and continued to be used in the 20th century, and Virginia Woolf, in her speech 'Professions for Women', literally kills the angel in the house. As Nina Auerbach also

notes in *Woman and the Demon The life of a Victorian Myth*, “We no longer adore angels; we do not even like them, dismissing them impatiently as soggy dilutions of human complexity” (Auerbach, 1984, p. 64). They both assert that women are not meant to be angels; they are individuals who do not need to fit into certain shapes designed for them by the patriarchal society.



THE VICTORIAN NOVELIST CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, Hampshire, England. He died on June 9, 1870, in Gad's Hill near Chatham, Kent. He is one of the most highly acclaimed English novelists of the Victorian era. Dickens is a Victorian author who deals with the problems of children in his novels. Dickens sheds light on the poor areas of London and emphasises the cruelty of his society toward children critically. Almost every novel written by Dickens contains at least two or three major child characters, and the plot is shaped around the struggles of children who try to survive in society.

Oliver Twist is a story of an orphan boy and his adventures in the ghettos of Victorian England. Although Nancy is not the protagonist, Dickens erases her neglected appearance and recreates a visible character whom he puts into the spotlight to illuminate the horrific imagery imposed on the “fallen” women and prostitutes in the 19th century. She is a misfit, just like Oliver's mother, Agnes. Through Nancy and Agnes, Dickens fictionalises Victorian society's hatred of “fallen” women depending on the real-life imagery, along with the social problems observed in the Victorian Era such as diseases, illegitimate children, and poverty. The lower classes were only misused by Victorian society, and the prevalent occupation for the poor Victorian girls was prostitution to survive. Sex belonged to the marital bedrooms; as a result, females have relegated to the position of the “fallen” woman if they were to perform a sexual activity out of wedlock. Although there was a lot of immorality “The Victorians are renowned for their devotion to purity and chastity” (Millet, 1970, p. 71). Young girls were forced to sell their bodies to gain money, and most of them were not even adults. Charles Dickens is influenced by those social problems and puts his emphasis on the subjects and includes them in his novels.

One of the most critical pens in Victorian literature is undoubtedly Charles Dickens. What makes him that famous is his care and affection for the underprivileged groups of his society and his desire to portray the dark sides of England in his fiction. Dickens is a novelist who is aware of the problems that occurred in his time, and his style includes statements to reveal both his own experiences and his society's shortcomings. In Victorian novels, at least one character is an orphan; as Laura Peters stated, "One can barely open a novel by Dickens, The Brontë Sisters, or George Eliot without stumbling over at least one orphan" (Peters, L. 2000). One of the most common stereotypes in the Victorian novel is the orphaned child, who is often vulnerable and needs protection. Because they have no proper family responsible for their safety, it is even more challenging for the female orphan. When society views women as the other, the orphan girl is abused in several ways. She is used by everyone and sexually assaulted because she lives on the streets with no protectors. More precisely, she becomes a "fallen" woman if she is not lucky enough to find a family that gives her a surname. This mirrors Nancy's life and other outcasts in *Oliver Twist*; Dickens's narration highlights the neglect toward the orphans and prostitutes. Dickens is an author who can establish connections and shows empathy for his underprivileged characters; for this reason, his affection and care for the orphans are quite comprehensive throughout his writings. His respect for Nancy is visible because Nancy is described as a "fallen" woman with a good heart. He reveals that Nancy is treated unjustly throughout the novel for her prostitution background.

The Industrial Revolution started in England; afterwards, urbanisation, work labour, and the immediate population increase became social problems in 19th century England. Thus, the Victorian novel includes the description of slum areas of England in a critical manner. Patriarchal societies tend to neglect the poor and weak characters

in several ways because of their rigid perception. Still, some names, such as Dickens, put their emphasis on the subject as Hughes suggests “Dickens was the great English apostle of the poor – especially of the neglected childhood” (Hughes, 1972, p. 304). He mainly attacks the unjust treatment and ill-usage of children. In his society, children are often unheard of or wrong trained; they suffer from adult abuse. Charles Dickens has a great emphasis on children, and according to Hughes, he is considered the first person who gives the place of honour to the child in literature. He also states, “The habit of doing things because ordered to do them, which is slavery; and the habit of doing things he does not like or wish to do, which is the basis of hypocrisy” (Hughes, 1972, p. 78). Dickens, in his novels, mostly arouses the feeling of sympathy connected to human tendency and warmth toward children. Dickens speaks for the weak, abused, poor and neglected characters to spread awareness about those people. Within the usage of the witty and satiric language, he aims to reveal the deformation, misery and suffering of the poor conditioned people in his context.

Child abuse and neglect were recognised when Kempe wrote his articles about baby battering in the 1960s and 1970s. However, it has obviously been an issue for centuries and Dickens certainly described all the categories of abuse, together with many predisposing features and many sequelae (Brennan, 2001)

Dickens also gives women’s appearance high value, and he focuses on the representation of Victorian womanhood in his novels. For instance, in *Hard Times*, women are either passive or obedient because Dickens uses straightforward language with realistic illustrations of the particular society where the authority is a man. Mr. Gradgrind rules the family, educates the children, and holds the money in his hands.

He is a man of reason, and his reason-based education represents that fact itself is the essential element in life. He represents false education imposed on children in the Victorian Era through his character in the novel. There are women oppressed by the men in their families because of the considered weakness of women designed by the patriarchal norms in the family structure. Family is the chief institution that devours the identity of females by performing dominance over them. This kind of dominance hinders women's development as an individual. In the patriarchal regime, a woman does not necessarily have to be an orphan to meet abusive attitudes; being a woman is more than enough to be marginalised. The Victorian novel contains many similar characters, whether they are orphans or not. As stated at the beginning of this study, religion, family, and marriage are constitutions ruled by patriarchal norms during the 19th century. It is pervasive for the fathers to arrange marriages for their daughters in the typical Victorian family. Also, it is a very common characteristic of the Victorian novel that the plot is shaped around the marriage theme. Based on Millett's observation of the concept of marriage, she remarks that formal education of women is to urge them to become the ones who possess compliance, servility, and to impose sexual oppression almost to distract them from sexuality for its emphasis on virtue (Millett, 1970, p. 74). "The Victorian belief in marriage -nearly an article of faith- is an attempt to beautify the traditional confinement of women at any cost" (Millett, 1970, p. 79). According to the Victorian understanding of marriage, there are solid principles and women are accepted to possess specific characteristics mainly based on moral values to be ideal wives. The general belief of the Victorians imposed on women is to become angels in the house because women must belong to the domestic sphere according to them. Charles Dickens focuses on the case of the marginalised women in *Hard Times* and *Oliver Twist* through significant characters helping him

reveal the dissimulation of Victorian society toward women in the 19th century.

Along with the conditions of the poor and the theme of marriage, education is another subject that Dickens emphasises. The social order and education are also reconstructed according to rapid changes. In some of his novels, he criticises the Victorian education system in a sarcastic tone. It is a time of changes regarding the French and Industrial revolution. Hence daily life and education are highly affected by those changes during the 19th century. One of the most famous examples of the Victorian novels discussing the false education system is *Hard Times*, written by Charles Dickens. And the novel can be analysed from a Marxist point of view because some concepts like *alienation* and *hands* can be found in the novel. It is a Victorian novel which is influenced by the Industrial Revolution, for this reason, these concepts discuss the loss of humane sides of factory workers; however, Dickens, with his excellent talent for critique, magnificently integrates them with his literary characters to portray the emotional abuse of a typical Victorian teenage girl. Dickens connotes the term *hands* with Louisa's loss of self-consciousness and disattachment to herself from the world and, this example indicates that the monotonous working hours and schooling turn human beings into machines in the same attitude. The more people join the work labour, the less they feel connected to the emotions. They are left *alienated* (*Alienation*, n.d.) as Karl Marx suggested in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Dickens's power of imagination combines these two different concepts in one particular instance of his own society. Dickens draws an analogy between Louisa's loss of individualism and her potential as a human being through the education she receives and links it to the concept of alienation with his masterful usage of language and well-developed writing skills. Each novel focuses on the different problems that occurred in the 19th century, and Dickens uses his talent to represent the social issues aiming to find a

solution. As a critique of his own time, he purposes to highlight the problems of society and spread awareness of these problems such as women's condition and the weak child figure in the Victorian era.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FEMINISM: KATE MILLETT'S *SEXUAL POLITICS*

Millett and her ideas about women are regarded as essential to discuss the causes and effects of patriarchal oppression on women. She asserts that women are seen as inferior in the eyes of men; she also emphasizes the place of women through the historical improvement of society. Millett in *Sexual Politics* focuses on the biological, psychological, historical, social and mythical points of view on women. From the very beginning of human civilisation, women have always been oppressed by men in several ways. Thus, her ideas on womanhood are significant to explain historical and contemporary reasons behind the mistreatment of women.

[...] Feminine evil is too likely to wear the recognizable social and economic garments of prostitution or penury; in prose fiction, the sexuality projected upon the female demands the more honest explanation of the whore, the “fallen woman” the servant seduced: Nancy, Tess, Esther Waters (Millett, 1970, p. 128).

Along with the condition of women in Victorian society, children and their struggles are attached to the examination from a feminist approach. The analysis has shown that these groups can be studied together as both are in disadvantaged positions under male oppression. So, the analysis of chosen novels aims to indicate the adverse effects of patriarchal oppression on women and children. Likewise, there are several dissertations and studies which discuss the condition of women and children jointly so, they were added to the study to prove that it is more appropriate to work on the condition of women and children together.

The position of the child is in some respects similar to that of the woman. In the nineteenth century, both were expected to be submissive and obedient to

their “superiors”. The rights of women and children alike were generally unacknowledged or, at best, were less well-defined than those of men (Eason,1977).

Considering patriarchy, men were the ruling class in the social hierarchy, so the rest suffered from the oppression imposed on them by males. Therefore, the depiction of women and children was researched thoroughly from ancient times until the Victorian Era just to prove that they were marginalized in almost every society. However, the main focus of this work is basically on the 19th century and its reflection in the novels of the period with detailed analysis in later chapters.

As stated in the abstract, this thesis examines particular Victorian novels and the chosen characters from a feminist perspective. *Feminism* is defined as “the belief in the social, political and economic equality of sexes” (Brunnel&Burkett,2019). Since oppression comes from the male authority, it is imposed on women and children. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, who is the author of *Children’s Literature Criticism and the Fictional Child*, remarked that “A comparison with a better-known and more widely discussed area of meaning-construction emphasises the particular position of childhood: feminism has, after all, long since addressed the concept of woman and femininity, and shares crucial importance with” (Oberstein, 1994, p. 29). Numerous dissertations emphasise the same topic from the very same theoretical framework. However, the concepts of feminism differ, and each focus on diverse effects. The reason for choosing Millett for this work is to avoid repetition in the analysis of the 19th century within the same framework of the feminist theory. Millett is a contemporary theorist and Anglo-American feminist, so her ideas can be used when considering the marginalisation of women of colour. However, it is also possible to refer to Millett’s feminism while focusing on Victorian England and novels that

represent Victorian England. Although these novels were written in the 19th century, studies have shown that the attitude toward women and children has a resemblance in the Victorian period, in Millett's time and today. These particular parts, which Millett underlined in her book, were involved in the analysis within the feminist scope of this thesis.

Katherine Murray Millett (1934-2017) is an American feminist writer, educator, artist, activist and author of the bestseller *Sexual Politics*, mainly focusing on women's marginalisation. The book is divided into three sections; sexual politics, historical background, and literary reflections. In the first chapter, Millett discusses the role of dominance and power in sexual activity through famous literary works. According to chosen novels, she asserts that the male organ gives men power; in contrast, the female genital makes her inferior in the eyes of men. The man obtains his privileged position and power to prove his superiority through his organ. In the second chapter, she wrote, "In introducing the term 'sexual politics', one must answer the inevitable question 'Can the relationship between the sexes be viewed in a political light at all?'" (Millett, 1970, p. 23). Her answer to this question is that her essay does not define the "political as that relatively narrow and exclusive meetings, chairmen, and parties" (Millett, 1970, p. 23). She asserts that "The term politics shall refer to power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons controlled by another" (Millett, 1970, p. 23). So, Millett suggests that the relationship between sexes can also be political in terms of power because just like the parties control citizens, the power is given to men to control women through domination and oppression. In the first chapter Millett quotes Hannah Arendt to support her claim above, Arendt asserts that the "government is upheld by power supported either through consent or imposed through violence" (Millett, 1970, p. 26). Through

Arendt's assertion, she connects the power and violence domains to the so-called male superiority. In *Sexual Politics*, Millett argues that men occupy privileged positions in every field. Masculine and feminine stereotypes differ in personality; men are associated with aggression, intelligence, force and efficacy, whereas women represent passivity, ignorance, virtue and ineffectuality. According to sex roles in the domestic sphere, women are responsible for childraising and the household, whereas men are given other accomplishments: ambition and interest. One of the most important arguments of Millett is the sexual differentiation and the superiority of men as a result. Like religion, asserts Millett, psychology defines women as inferior to men due to the child's sexual development, and she attacks Freud and his idea of penis envy. Freud, who is considered the father of psychoanalysis, claims that in sexual development, seeing the brother's or male friend's penis causes the little girl to develop penis envy. The boy possesses an organ that the girl lacks because she is already castrated. In the paper *Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes* finished by Freud in 1925, he asserts that little girls "notice the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, at once recognise it as the superior counterpart of their own small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall a victim to envy for the penis" (Freud, 1925, p. 177). He further claims that after seeing the organ, the girl develops a sense of inferiority, which resembles a scar for Freud. Also, in *Female Sexuality* (1931) about women, Freud remarks that she becomes aware of her castration and the hierarchy between herself and males, yet she rebels against it because she is not pleased with the fact. He claims that when little girls see the male genital organ, they discover their deficiency (Freud, 1931, p. 192). Girls, like their mothers, realise that their sex makes them inferior. According to Freud, when a little girl sees the penis, she develops a

weaker ego and castration complex; and it results in penis envy which negatively affects her entire lifetime. “Much of Freudian theory rests upon this moment of discovery and done is struck how, in the case of female, to recapitulate the peculiar drama of penis envy is to rehearse again the fable of the Fall, a Fall that is Eve’s alone” (Millett, 1970, p. 181). For Millett, Freud’s claims on women are a repetition of the biblical story of creation because he has the same patriarchal view toward women. Millett rejects his idea of penis envy, yet, she is aware that men feel that way because of the organ’s existence. Patriarchy gives all the credit to this idea. “The penis, badge of the male’s superior status in both preliterate and civilised patriarchies, is given the most crucial significance, the subject both of endless boasting and endless anxiety” (Millett, 1970, p. 49). For this reason, women who are already castrated, as Freud suggests in his riddle, cannot be acknowledged as the equivalent of men, and patriarchy still upholds what Freud claimed at the beginning of the 1900s. Sexual differences give men the right to dominate women; in terms of women’s sexual inferiority, men are the ones who need to be glorified. “By an irony nearly tragic, the discoveries of a great pioneer, whose theories of the unconscious and of infant sexuality were major contributions to human understanding, were in time invoked to sponsor a point of view essentially conservative” (Millett, 1970, p. 178). The point is that, at the very end of the process, women start to develop a weaker ego because of the absence of a penis, remarked Freud. However, his argument is against logic, and patriarchy conveniently misunderstands the sexual differences. There are differences between sexes, yet this does not mean that one sex is superior to another. The struggle between sexes is based on physical differentiation. Freud’s argument suggests that women envy men and wish they would possess a penis one day. Historical documents, myths, ancient philosophy, and the Holy Scriptures assign that women are portrayed

as the other in almost every culture. When all the customs are made for men, women see the privilege of men only because they possess an organ that she lacks.

“Confronted with so much concrete evidence of the male’s superior status, sensing on all sides the depreciation in which they are held, girls’ envy not the penis, but only what the penis gives one social pretensions to” (Millett, 1970, p. 187). Although Freud’s assumptions about women still maintain their importance even today, they cannot offer a realistic explanation for women’s considered inferiority. It is illogical to regard women’s physical differences as something negative. Men misuse the differentiation of sexes to continue their privileged position in society. It does not make sense to believe in such a delusion that perceives women as the secondary sex due to the lack of an organ. Besides, the absence of the male organ cannot truly explain how it evokes the castration complex of a female. *Gender* is a term that has psychological or cultural rather than biological connotations. If the proper terms for sex are male and female, the corresponding terms for gender are masculine and feminine; these latter may be quite independent of (biological) sex (Millett, 1970, p. 35). Sex refers to the different biological characteristics of men and women, whereas gender is socially constructed. Freud again fails to distinguish between the biological and social constructions and claims that women and men have defined roles in society according to their gender norms. Every woman who resists the gender roles is accepted as neurotic because a woman must not lose her femininity, which means she is expected to serve her devotion to her master. Freud’s main argument asserts that women are the total negative aspects of being a human. According to him, men represent positive qualities, whereas women possess adverse characteristics such as weakness. In the masculine imagination, women are created for men; and they are described as having no identity without men’s existence. Everything they possess has

to glorify men in which they are silenced and left in need to be identified with males' words. According to Millett, under the patriarchy woman is not the one who developed the symbols that describe her; everything used to describe her are male words, ideas and male design. Men create this image, and it is designed to suit their needs. On the differences between men and women, Millett states that "Whatever the real differences between the sexes may be, we are not likely to know them until the sexes are treated differently, that is alike" (Millett, 1970, p. 33).

Kate Millett's work aims at criticising the rigid patriarchal society on how women are approached and treated. From a sexual-political standpoint, she focuses on the apparent disparity and the unfair social classification of women and female characters in the works of male writers. Millett successfully provides clear examples of how certain scenes of Henry Miller's *Sexus* (1949) and Norman Mailer, *An American Dream* (1965) are biased. According to Millett, male writers are inclined to exhibit men as superior and dominant during the origination of the two parties, whereas women are depicted as inferior and obedient. Additionally, women are also described as sex objects that are not worth breaking words that have been asserted in *Sexual Politics* (Millett, 2016, p. 4). Aside from the usual portrait of women, Gilbert and Gubar point out that women in *The Mad Women in the Attic* are designed with two complete, opposite terms; either a monster or an angel (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979, p. 17). Millett draws attention to misogyny in the following statement by Miller: "I just did not give a fuck for her, as a person" (Millett, 1970, p. 4). This statement shows how some male novelists do not accept women as individuals. They use insulting language while referring to them in their works. Therefore, it is obvious that women's function is to sexually please and serve men. However, the role of women or the way men see them may surpass the above mentioned in the sense that they are

depicted as evil souls, as suggested in *Sexus*. “She was a monster from top to toe” (Millet, 1970, p. 4).

The Victorian literary children and women characters were linked to each other because both of them were ruled by the authority of men; therefore, those characters often share similar Victorian characteristics, and they are the victims of their society. In *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*, women and children are depicted as weaker than males by nature. There are parallel characters such as prostitutes, “fallen” women and angelic females whom men can practice patronising and sexist behaviours towards them. From the beginning of human civilisation, the contrast between males and females has been remarkable. Hence, state, religion, laws, and everything in life are ordered perfectly to glorify males’ manhood. According to patriarchy, there is a hierarchy between sexes which separates men from women as De Beauvoir discusses women by referring to them as *the other* in her classic work *The Second Sex* “Man is the positive and the neutral;...whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity....He is the subject, he is the Absolute-she is the Other” (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 64). Millett agrees with Beauvoir and examines the hierarchy between sexes as Beauvoir did. According to Millett, women are marginalised by patriarchy, and men represent the human being alone. “Patriarchy has already been established, and the male has already set himself as the human norm, the subject and referent to which the female is other or alien” (Millet, 1970, p. 46). This idea occupies the linguistic differentiation; the noun man refers to all humans; one must think of humanity when defined as a man. Otherness is linked to the femininity, as Zygmund Bauman suggests:

Woman is the other of man, animal is the other of human, stranger is the other of native, abnormality the other of norm, deviation the other of law-abiding,

illness is the other of health, insanity the other of reason, lay public the other of the expert, foreigner the other of state subject, enemy the other of friend
(Bauman, 1991, p. 8).

The social construction of gender in Western societies constructs women as other than the man in the context of opposition. Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex* in the 1950s, argues that “Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought. Thus, it is that no group ever sets itself as the one without at once setting up the other over against itself.” She claims that woman is constructed as the other of man; masculinity, therefore, is socially set up as the essential gender norm, whereas femininity is described as something other than masculine. Being a female in such a society leads them to suffer and be abused by men. Regarding Millett’s arguments about women, it is evident that women have always been discriminated against in society throughout history. There are several reasons behind this attitude of men towards women; they consider women as inferior according to women’s physical and psychological differentiation. So, women are expected to be obedient creatures who must belong to the domestic sphere, and they shall be women, stay women. For this reason, the portrayal of women in the 19th-century novels shares similar characteristics. Louisa, Mrs. Gradgrind, Agnes, Nancy, and Rose, are examples of how society treated women; their depiction enables the audience to uncover the different types of oppression women experienced in those times. They were the subjects of parental, sexual, emotional and social abuse.

CHAPTER 1: *OLIVER TWIST*: NANCY

1.1 Nancy the Prostitute

Oliver Twist or *The Parish Boy's Progress* is a 19th-century novel written by Charles Dickens in 1838 to portray London's slum areas. Dickens's novels generally aim to reveal the ill conditions of the poor in detail, and Dickensian narration focuses on children and their place in society. Through Oliver, Dickens criticises society's cruelty to children, yet Oliver is not the only child who is abused by authorities. When he goes to London, he meets several orphans who share the same ordeal, and these children are forced to participate in criminal acts to survive. Also, in this gang, there is a prostitute called Nancy who is in her late childhood when sexually abused by Bill Sikes. Nancy is not an ideal woman of the 19th century because she could not keep her virginity until marriage and shares a house with her male counterpart out of wedlock; therefore, Nancy is doomed to become a "fallen" woman. Yet, being sexually active is considered something abnormal for Victorian maidens, so she is marginalised for sharing the same roof with her lover out of wedlock. Dickens through Nancy and Sikes exposes the sexual abuse and violence which is a common issue in the slum areas of Victorian England. According to the traits of patriarchy, Millett discusses that "If aggressiveness is the trait of the master class, docility must be the corresponding trait of a subject group" (Millett, 1970, p. 32). Therefore, when mentioning the master class, one must consider the male in terms of authority and its oppression by any means of women in society. Bill subjects the oppression through sexual assault and violence to his mistress Nancy. Nancy and Sikes are not attached to one another through love. It is not even close to the concept of love, because the crime Sikes commits is an example of paedophilia, as he misuses a child for his sexual needs. Although they are not attached to one another through love, Bill and Nancy are in a

romantic relationship which compels Nancy to be with him. Millett in *Sexual Politics* argues the concept of romantic love by asserting that “The concept of romantic love affords a means of emotional manipulation which the male is free to exploit, since love is the only circumstance in which the female is (ideologically) pardoned for sexual activity” (Millett, 1970, p. 37). Of course, Nancy and her partner are not the subjects of romantic love, but the tie between the two is based on the obligatory bond for the so-called romantic love, and perhaps in the typical slum area of London prostitute being with her pimp must not be an eccentric trait. “Bill Sykes, while not obviously mentally ill, is of a violent and paranoid personality, who also abuses his dog. The passivity of the dog after abuse, mirrors the behaviour of some abused children” (Brennan, 2001). Girls who are identical to Nancy in terms of personality are perceived as a threat to society. It is ironic that they suffer from exploitation and besides, they are the ones who are blamed. They are seen as social problems and encounter social neglect because of their status. Boys are glorified when they are sexually active, however, girls possess a bad reputation if they take a part in a sexual act. Sexual assault enriches masculinity, whereas it gives a penalty to abused girls.

When a man sexually abuses a child or a woman, she is considered a “fallen” because she loses her innocence. However, the irritating part is that only women are proclaimed morally corrupt and become the subjects of punishment. On the other hand, no one does not even ask or criticise men for what they caused. A woman’s character, unlike a man’s, was judged in relation to her sexual reputation. Girls and women could fall, but boys were immune, according to the Victorian sexual schema. Sexually abused girls, as a group, constituted a specially targeted social problem. Boys did not, and their futures were rarely discussed (Jackson, 1999, p. 5).

Nancy lost her innocence because of Fagin the Jew's harassment, and after that, she becomes a prostitute. "Nancy, indeed, was not exempt from a failing which was very common among the Jew's female pupils; and in which, in their tenderer years, they were rather encouraged than checked" (Dickens, 1838, p. 589). Rose, a foil to Nancy, pities her and tries to save her from Fagin and Sikes because she is very much aware that Nancy is being used for males' sexual needs. She also acknowledges that a good reputation is vital for women to become idealised characters in Victorian society.

Rose plays an essential role in the novel because she criticises the societies that show hatred for those kinds of women. Also, she represents Victorian purity as a chaste lady and so she is not even close to having sympathy for what Nancy has to overcome. Through Rose, Dickens wants to awaken both the society and the abused children in a satiric manner. Nancy's attachment to Bill Sikes is not out of love, it rather relies on desperation, she is a good and naïve young woman who does not have any other chance. Although she is aware that these people are evil, she is still with them showing respect and cherishing them.

Stay another moment, interposed Rose... "Will you return to this gang of robbers, and to this man, when a word can save you? What fascination is it that can take you back, and make you cling to wickedness and misery?" "When ladies as young, and good, and beautiful as you are", replied the girl steadily (Dickens, 1838, p. 754-755).

Nancy, just like other outcasts, is an obscure character in Victorian society because of her position. She lost her childhood and innocence because of the sexual assault of adults. The society that is responsible for her protection instead hands Nancy to the streets on a silver platter and causes her to end up in Sikes' arms. As an abandoned child living in a slum, the only way for Nancy is to submit and surrender her flesh to

Sikes. In return, she is fed because she sexually pleases him. Instead of staying in the workhouse, Nancy prefers being a mistress because orphans are forced to work under the harsh circumstances in the workhouses.

Two kinds of stereotypes were observed in the Victorian era: the angels in the house and the “fallen” women, as expressed at the beginning of the thesis. The ideal Victorian women’s function was to be obedient all the time; in this respect, the angel in the house figure is parallel to a bird in a cage. Those women are considered weaker than men by nature, like a bird entertaining its owner. Certain characteristics such as vulnerability, morality, ambiguity, and purity were designed for Victorian women. In contrast to the angel in the house, the term *fallen* implies that they have been somehow removed from their girlhood, or it has been ruined before it could even begin. The “fallen” women were marginalised since they were not ideal, pure angelic women who fulfilled the angel’s role in the house. The idea of “fallen” women focuses on the corruption through male lust and her subsequent loss of innocence. On the other hand, a “fallen” woman metaphorically refers to the Bible, which resembles Eve’s fall out of the Garden of Eden. Eve is marginalised, irritating, and unwanted because she is weak and easy to be seduced. According to Christianity, Eve represents women as a whole; she is the weak one, unlike the man, so the serpent could easily tempt her. This idea of women’s so-called inferiority occupied society’s social development, so patriarchy constructed whole females as weaker than men by nature. Although men and women perform the sexual activity jointly, only women are disparaged for not keeping their virginity until the bridal chamber. “The large quantity of guilt attached to sexuality in patriarchy is overwhelmingly placed upon the female, who is, culturally speaking, held to be the culpable or the more culpable party in nearly any sexual liaison, whatever the extenuating circumstances. A tendency toward

the reification of the female makes her more often a sexual object than a person” (Millett, 1970, p. 54). Nancy’s condition is complicated that she devotes her body to a man, making her a “fallen” angel. Nancy is already oppressed; nevertheless, her male companion never takes her as a wife. She is a figure that everybody has taken advantage of in different ways. Nancy has been with the gang for years; although it is not the most suitable place for a child to remain, she has no other place. She is loyal; she knows that they are people with ill intentions, yet she still loves them. Millett asserts that within the case of prostitution, male supremacy through the humiliation of women is a chief part, and it needs to be proclaimed or at least confirmed by some. Also, when a prostitute performs a sexual activity, she is forced to feel degraded and meets the negative attitude of society which is strict toward sex, however, the same society does not even think to punish men for sexual acts (Millett, 1970, p. 123). Nancy is used to fulfill the sexual desire of a man, so she is a wretched character, and her situation is miserable. Patriarchy provides a basis for men to perceive women as sexual objects and encourage them to exploit females both physically and emotionally. When it comes to ethical and moral values, Victorians are hypocritical in that they treat prostitutes with hatred while at the same time visiting them frequently.

Nancy is ostracised from society for several reasons; beyond prostitution, there is a significant point where she is sent to the court to pretend to be Oliver’s sister. However, she is aware of the fact that she needs to change her outfit to be taken seriously and receive respect. “Accordingly, with a clean white apron tied over her gown, and her curl-papers tucked under a straw bonnet [. . .] Miss Nancy prepared to issue forth on her errand” (Dickens, 1838, p. 222). Nancy is not the novel’s protagonist, yet she is an essential representative considering the diverse groups that populate Victorian society. “Fallen” girls mostly come from poor areas, and they are

often killed or remain prostitutes until they perish. Millett mentions Engels, who claims that prostitution is a social institute, and continues by asserting that prostitution provides sexual freedom to men. She argues that only men get the pleasure out of the act; the prostitutes suffer from being excluded from society (Millett, 1970, p. 123). After becoming fallen, nothing is done for women to regain their personal dignity. For instance, Nancy is described as a “fallen” woman with a good heart because she devotes herself to help Oliver. She even risks her own life to save him from Fagin and Sikes; as a result, she is murdered by her pimp. She is a person who has a warm heart, but unfortunately, she is not the angel of the novel just because of her position in society; she is Nancy, the prostitute. Although described as a “fallen” woman, Nancy is portrayed as a warm person, protective of Oliver’s life, which results in her death. Unlike the evil characters in the gang, her care for Oliver is acknowledged that she is like a surrogate mother to Oliver, although she is still a teenager. “Society values gold and underrates brass, but brass has much more strength and practical use than does gold. Translated, this means that society values the angel-in-the-house, but a woman like Nancy is much stronger of character and provides more practical service” (Ayres, 1998, p. 120). Nancy is described as a person with strong character, and courage because she aims to help Oliver by revealing Fagin’s plans to harm Oliver. In the Victorian era, strength was perceived as something masculine, for this reason, Dickens who feels sympathy for Nancy portrays her as a strong female to arouse the reader’s admiration and interest. Contrary to Rose Maylie, she is a Victorian girl whose character is a mixture of masculine and feminine features. Moreover, she is aware of the fact that she does not embody Victorian femininity, she is not passive, instead, she is portrayed as a character who is ready to take action. However, her strong character does not change society’s perspective toward her. Although she is a prostitute who

possesses a good heart she is still ostracised by society, but Dickens underlines that Nancy's strong character is way better and more functional than Rose's innocence and angel-like personality. "Brass can do better than the gold what has stood the fire" (Dickens, Dickens, 1838, p. 639). She is described as brass, and she is the hero in this story, although it is a common title for males. She becomes the hero when she acts and saves Oliver from these evil people. Through her character, Dickens criticises the moral hypocrisy of Victorian society, which never appreciates a prostitute for sacrificing herself for the life of an orphan boy. Nancy is doomed to be only pitied instead of earning recognition for what she does to protect Oliver, and she dies without receiving appreciation for her mercy. Her murder is tragic, she is beaten to death by Sikes, and one day he just kills her with a super cold attitude. "The murderer staggering backward to the wall, and shutting out the sight with his hand, seized a heavy club and struck her down" (Dickens, 1838, p. 771). Although the public gets curious and angry, Nancy is faded away in the gloom of London's streets, and nobody cared about her later. "The prostitute is a scapegoat; man unloads his turpitude onto her, and he repudiates her. Whether a legal status puts her under police surveillance or she works clandestinely, she is in any case treated as a pariah" (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 1480). The idea of the "fallen" women occupies a massive place in the Victorian imagination. "Fallen" women were considered disgraced by the Victorian morals and ideology. "Women are socially disadvantaged in controlling sexual access to their bodies through socialisation to customs that define a woman's body as for sexual use by men. Sexual access is regularly forced or pressured or routinised beyond denial" (MacKinnon, C. 2007). The patriarchy has normalised male-centric thinking, the idea that anything women do is for men. Such societies cannot escape from searching for reasons behind women's acts and connect them to the idea that women exist only for

men. When they think women live for the sake of men, they cannot think of women as free individuals. In *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millett lays stress on the Victorian Era and compares Mill's and Ruskin's ideas on the relationship between sexes. According to her, Ruskin adopts patriarchal norms and considers women inferior to men, while Millett rejects his male-centric attitude. She includes the statements of Mill and Ruskin in her dissertation to support her ideas and underline the social discrimination against women. Millett argues that women have always been considered inferior in the eyes of patriarchy and are excluded from the social order. They also have to bear the male supremacy imposed on them. Millett combines her ideas related to races and femininity together and draws attention to several types of inequalities in society. She uses the term "domestic slavery" to describe the condition of women in Victorian times. According to Millett, Ruskin misinterprets the scene where Sikes beats Nancy to death "down in that back street knocking each other's teeth out." These were the very common occurrences in the period. Ruskin relates them to the class humour, yet, Mill, unlike Ruskin, finds them far too inhumane.

Even Ruskin shows he has heard of them in a reference of tasteless levity to 'Bill and Nancy', whom he deliberately misrepresents as sparring partners, 'down in that back street...knocking each other's teeth out'. The allusion is, of course to Bill Sikes and the woman he clubbed to death in Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. Such instances of brutality, ranging from blows to murder, were very common occurrences in the period, and though Ruskin tosses them off with a loutish attempt at class humour, Mill is far too humane either to try to find them funny (Millett, 1970, p. 100).

In his novels, Dickens portrays Victorian femininity as it was seen in his time. According to Millett, his version of women is both similar to Engels' and Ruskin's; this is because he has intended to demonstrate the condition of the Victorian women in his novels. His descriptions are realistic, and they often fictionalise the natural setting of society. In *Sexual Politics*, Millett gives a detailed analysis of the Victorian Era, considering the significant names of the period. Millett argues that Victorian male novelists often portrayed women in a stereotypical and misogynistic manner; yet, some of them treated their female characters with sympathy and respect. In their writings, they could make the distinction between sexes in an appropriate way, rather than the ones who have always been excluding or disparaging females. Millett's examination of several Victorian novels suggests that in that period women were seen as inferior, sexual objects and as submissive. In contrast, some novelists such as Dickens and theorist Mill were aware of the condition, and they portray women as they were perceived in their society but not implying that women are weaker than men. Their descriptions of women were more humane than those who have always been trying to represent women as stereotypical inferior characters.

1.1.1 Child Labour and Sex Workers in Victorian England

Due to the Industrial Revolution, children started to work in factories and on farms because they were easier to discipline and cheaper to employ. For many families, a child who brought money home was more important than an educated child. They had several jobs such as chimney sweeping, prostitution, and maidhood. Children were forced to work under harsh circumstances, and adults exploited them using their physical opportunities and social status. Besides that, they were confronted with physical and mental abuse. In the 19th century, children were often unheard,

unwanted and socially excluded, so they must have found their path to forge. Some lost their innocence through sexual assault and became prostitutes; others were forced to work in the factories just like adults. Instead of protecting and cherishing the children, Victorian society's attitude was to devour them. Thus child labour became one of the most important themes of the late 18th and 19th-century literature (*Child Labour*, n.d.). Towards the end of the 19th century, education started to be given to children; until then, children worked outside and made money. In Dickens's novels, numerous examples represent the wickedness of the Victorian state. Charles Dickens was aware of the mistreatment of children, so, through his novels, he attempts to change the situation critically. Dickensian children are usually poor, vulnerable, and need affection and love. He portrays the gloomy poor London and how the miserable suffer in the slum areas. The reason he focuses on the exploitation of children is because of his own experience at the workhouse. According to Forster's quotation below, Dickens reflects some of the notable moments of his personal life in his fiction. The descriptions of the workhouse are associated with his own experiences in 1824, Charles Dickens's father was arrested, and Dickens started to work in Wallen's Blacking Warehouse.

My work was to cover the pots of paste-blackening; first with a piece of oil-paper, and then with a piece of blue paper; to tie them round with a string; and then to clip the paper close and neat, all round, until it looked as smart as a pot of ointment from an apothecary's shop[...] His name was Bob Fagin; and I took the liberty of using his name, long afterwards, in *Oliver Twist* (Forster, 1872, p. 52).

The Victorian society believes in moral values, but although they know the condition of the poor, they do not attempt to do anything to change it. Dickens, in his works,

focuses on the cruelty of society toward vulnerable children. According to Dickensian narration, the Victorian Era is primarily dark and shady, especially the poor conditions of Victorian London have been described straight as a horror setting. The situation is miserable for the orphans, the poor, and the dependent during the era when *Oliver Twist* was written. According to his own workhouse experience, Dickens often emphasises the idea of the helpless child. Alexander Welsh suggests in his book *From Copyright to Copperfield: The Identity of Dickens*

The secret memory of the blacking warehouse explains a great deal in Dickens's life and fiction. It partially explains why, in the midst of his success with *Pickwick*, he should begin a fairy tale of the workhouse child, *Oliver Twist*. It explains the vein of self-pity that crops up again and again in the novels, and particularly the childlike sentiment that if he had died or turned bad, it would have served the grown-ups right (Welsh, 1987, p. 4).

Dickens who encountered the same issues and discrimination throughout his childhood is a writer with the inclination to create stories revolving around the struggles he has also been through. For this reason, his illustrations and descriptions of the Victorian Era and the vulnerability of the weak are based on his reliable experiences that bother him both as a child and as a responsible adult. Through his narration, he almost describes his childhood as innocent and naïve, untouched by the ferocity of a cruel world. These scratches in his own soul might be healed when written on the paper because, in most of his novels, he aims to save those children in despair and in the end rewards them generously.

1.2 Agnes the “Fallen” Woman

The 19th century’s rigid society unwelcomed the wretched and unfortunate children of “fallen” women and orphans. Since conservative attitudes dominated the Victorian Era, sex was banned in every part of society except for producing children in the marital bedrooms. Thus, the children produced out of marital bedrooms were never accepted by Victorian society. For this reason, Oliver’s mother’s death is significant; she represents the unmarried mothers of the Victorian Era. Her situation while giving birth is sordid and portrays the dark sides of death due to weak health and carelessness. Oliver and his mother, Agnes, are insignificant characters because nobody respects a woman who gives birth to an illegitimate child “The old story...no wedding-ring. I see. Ah! Good night” (Dickens, 1838, p. 8). Agnes is considered a “fallen” woman in her society due to her sexual status; therefore, she is marginalised and becomes an outsider. Soon she dies in a hospital because of the carelessness and denial of her society; even her name is not mentioned until the end of the novel. Her dead body is neglected, and so is her newborn child. All these features signify that Victorians are overcareful about marriage and reputation; therefore, they punish a newborn baby and his mother because of the parents’ infidelity. In *Oliver Twist*, marriage was connected to chastity, but only in the case of women; for this reason, Agnes must be punished, whereas her partner’s infidelity is tolerated. Simone De Beauvoir emphasises marriage in her book and argues that a woman alone is not a complete being, although, she makes money; there must be a ring on her finger to receive respect and be morally acceptable. “Motherhood, in particular, is respected only in the married woman; the unwed mother remains an object of scandal, and a child is a severe handicap for her” (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 1102). Just as in France and even America, premarital experiences are all denied by the so-called virtuous societies

and The Victorians successfully exclude such kinds of women from their moral society. Women have either been idealised or demonised throughout history. A woman has three crucial roles in her lifetime; a daughter, a wife, and a mother. According to the patriarchal sphere, a woman is created for a man; first, her life is ruled by her father; she must stay under her father's protection until her man comes and takes her as his wife and rules over her.

Furthermore, there were few professions for women during the 19th century, so their financial needs often drove them to sell their bodies. Although men and women were involved in the process, only the woman was blamed. Thus, it was harder for such a woman to find a respectable job in society. When the public tolerated a man's cheating, a woman's infidelity was totally rejected, and it was considered abnormal. It was men who needed to get pleasure through sex, whereas women were only the means to an end. Prostitutes were expected to serve themselves to men for money, and they were still criticised by society. Their bodies belonged to the male customer for quite some time, and they were marginalised for what they had been doing. Mikhail Bakhtin has defined the grotesque body celebrated in the carnival as a body defined in terms of its openings and its "lower strata": digestive, excretory, genital and reproductive (Gilbert, 1997, p.17). According to Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of the grotesque body, Pamela K. Gilbert, in her *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels*, states that "In the Victorian Era, two kinds of bodies definable as grotesque were the diseased body and the body of the prostitute-often one and the same" (Gilbert, 1997, p. 17). The body of the prostitute was seen as grotesque imagery in the Victorian Era resembling a tool that provides entertainment and pleasure to the customer, unlike the ideal Victorian female. When the body of the prostitute sexually entertains and gives pleasure to the customer it is socially

ostracised. Bakhtin in his study *Rabelais and His World* (1968) fictionalises the degradation of society into its lowered maternal levels. The grotesqueness of the prostitute is associated with degradation in this context because she is the degraded abstract of a moral woman. Like in the carnival, in Victorian society, the body of the prostitute is replaced with the chaste women's bodies, and they were overused by Victorian males. He also urges upon the idea that breaking all the rules of society and the disappearance of hierarchy implies that all the oppressed groups are free to behave as they wish with relief. Looking at the description of Dickens's England, the ghettos of London can be explained through Bakhtin's grotesque chronotope, because just as in the carnivals, everybody can freely behave in the ghettos without feeling the pressure of moral values. It is like an escape from the ordeal society imposes on the community to follow ethical rules, men can have free sex with women who are not their wives in this imaginative carnival. Nancy and Agnes are not proper prostitutes since they are not receiving money in exchange for selling their bodies, but their condition is more like a prostitute, unsuitable and rejected. They are "fallen" in terms of chastity, and the very last sentences of the novel reveal that Agnes is a "fallen" woman. She is described as weak and erring because of her pregnancy out of wedlock, which eventually results in her dying in disgrace. She is considered a "fallen" woman, just like Nancy, yet her pregnancy makes her fall even worse. Agnes was sexually active even when she is not married, for this reason, she is perceived as a "fallen" woman by her standard. She gives birth to the protagonist of the novel; however, her name is not revealed until the end of the novel, this is the link between the Victorian mindset and how they viewed disreputable women. Being libidinal women, meaning that sexually active ones were seen as a threat if they are not under the bridal chamber. Both social and religious perspective toward them is not the kindest.

AGNES, there is no coffin in that tomb, and may it be many, many years before another name is placed above it! But, if the spirits of the Dead ever come back to earth to visit spots hallowed by the love – the love beyond the grave – of those whom they knew in life, I believe that the shade of Agnes sometimes hovers round the solemn nook. I believe it none the less because that nook is in a Church, and she was weak and erring (Dickens, 1838, p. 861).

Whether a prostitute or a “fallen” woman, these kinds of characters are always dismissed in society and left alone because of the bad reputation they possess. Agnes does not have a complete name which shows that she has no identity and she is not married. She is the victim of the patriarchy because she dies alone in a hospital to protect her family’s reputation. Dickens, through these very tragic lines, implies that the dead body of a “fallen” woman is not respected. Thus, Agnes and Nancy’s personalities do not correspond to the Victorian approval of femininity.

1.3 Rose Maylie the Angel

Rose Maylie is a character who is treated by her society with respect and love. She is a gentle lady who treats people with kindness and tendency. However, although she is the ideal Victorian female, Dickens’s affection for Nancy is more comprehensive for his desire to extinguish her suffering and depression. She is neglected yet, Dickens reveals his empathy and the love she deserved by creating her as a “fallen” woman with all the good values of a human being. For Dickens she corresponds to the mixture of good and bad; she is a nice person who does not embody the Victorian morality. For this reason, Nancy is more like a distinct character and she reflects the true identity of humans, she is not an idealised or desired version of females in an unrealistic perception. In contrast to Nancy and Agnes, Rose Maylie is the angel of the novel only because she is adopted by a wealthy family that gives

her a surname. Rose is another child in the novel who is also an orphan, but she serves as a foil to Nancy in terms of her description. She represents the angel figure for being pure and gentle, a true lady. She is called the angel by people in the novel, and her character corresponds to the ideal woman of the Victorian Era. After becoming orphaned, she is adopted by Mrs. Maylie, who gives her the last name. Having the last name is what differentiates her from Nancy and Agnes. It represents that she has an identity and a family, which is important for a Victorian female. Rose is surrounded by good people, unlike other women in the novel. Ayres emphasises that: "More accurately the good people surround her and contain her within a proper domestic sphere so that she will never be a social misfit like Nancy and Agnes" (Ayres, 1998:124). When she meets Rose for the first time, Nancy realises that she has never felt kindness before. "Oh, dear Lady, why aren't those who claim to be God's own folks as gentle and as kind to us poor wretches as you [. . .]?" (Dickens, 1838, p. 430). Obviously, if Nancy had a chance to run away from her environment, she could be saved. "Lady, cries poor Nancy to Rose Maylie, sinking on her knees, "dear, sweet, angel lady, you are the first that ever blessed me with such words as these; and if I had heard them years ago, they might have turned me from a life of sin and sorrow; but it is too late, it is too late!" (Dickens, 1838, p. 375). Fagin isolates those children to make them believe they have no other way to go. So, they feel like they are dependent on Fagin and stay with him not to be left alone on the streets. Unlike Rose, Nancy is with people who have a bad influence on her character. Nancy knows that Rose is superior to her in terms of social status and has respect for her. She admires Rose because they call her the angel, although they share the same ordeal of being orphaned, Rose is more respected and accepted by society. "The young middle-class woman could be frightened into social and sexual conformity with the spectres of

governessing, factory work, or prostitution. And the less favoured female is left only to dream of becoming a “lady” (Millett, 1970, p. 73). The same society that respects and has sympathy for Rose, drives Nancy to practise immoral acts and degrades herself. Rose Maylie is designed to be a model for the Victorian feminine portrait. She is a gentle and elegant character who has sympathy for others and has the ability to establish good relationships with them. Dickens’s affection for Rose is apparent, however, he prefers to value Nancy, and shows the sympathy she deserves. Rose never fails to get acceptance by society wherever she goes for being kind and nice, but characters like Nancy are always excluded and Dickens reveals his desire to change the stereotyped perspective and prejudices over prostitutes.

CHAPTER 2: *HARD TIMES*: LOUISA GRADGRIND

2.1. Gradgrind Family and Emotional Abuse

Hard Times is a Victorian novel written by Charles Dickens in 1854. The novel is a content-rich one that includes almost every social class of the 19th century, and the plot is shaped around the struggle within those groups. In *Hard Times*, Dickens's primary purpose is to criticise Mr. Thomas Gradgrind's rigid education system along with the adverse effects of industrialisation. Mr. Gradgrind is a typical utilitarian-minded man who praises the idea of facts. In his model school, the education is based upon turning pupils into robots who act according to Mr. Gradgrind's desires. As a father and a teacher, Mr. Gradgrind is very proud that he trains his students the way he wishes. "Mr. Gradgrind walked home from the school in a state of considerable satisfaction. It was his school, and he intended it to be a model. He intended every child in it to be a model – just as the young Gradgrinds were all models" (Dickens, 1854, p. 8). Victorian society was patriarchal, so the father figure is the authority in a typical concept of family. As the dominant character in the family, Mr. Gradgrind educates his children without imagination and fancy. For him, nothing but only the facts are wanted in life. As a result of his education system, his older children Louisa and Thomas Gradgrind grow up without something very vital in life; the power of imagination. Louisa becomes an alienated character who cannot keep up with others around; Tom loses his humane side and becomes a selfish boy who uses his sister's love and affection to possess freedom. Gradgrind children suffer from their father's attitudes; yet, Louisa is the one who is affected the most because besides being the child of an abusive father, she is a woman at the same time. Dickens, who generally focuses on the realistic portrayal of life in his writings, in *Hard Times*, most of the women and children are portrayed as weak characters. They are under male

domination, such as Louisa Gradgrind. She devotes herself to her brother Tom and lets him emotionally abuse her. Because of her exaggerated attachment to Tom, she is not capable of building a healthy relationship with other people. First, her father abuses Louisa through his rigid education; secondly, Tom, her brother, uses her feelings and emotionally abuses her. The abuse mostly comes from the males in her family. Millett, in her *Sexual Politics*, asserts that “Patriarchy’s chief institution is the family” (Millett, 1970, p. 33). According to Millett’s quotation above, the family is an archetypal joint that adopts the same patterns in every culture; more precisely, it is an organisation that imposes male-centric thinking on people in patriarchal societies. Through the Gradgrind family, Dickens represents the patriarchal aspects of Victorian society and their duties. The Gradgrind family is amongst these families who adopt patriarchal norms; for this reason, Mr. Gradgrind abuses his family members through his masculine power. As a stereotypical Victorian father, he obtains the privileged position as the decision-maker and does not allow anyone else to interfere with his solid dominance. “Classically, as head of the family, the father is both begetter and owner in a system in which kinship is property” (Millett, 1970, p. 33). His descriptions prove that man is the one who decides for everybody else in the family, without even asking their opinion.

2.2. Mrs. Gradgrind – Mother

As the mother figure, Mrs. Gradgrind is a very passive character in the novel which contains several scenes between Mr. Gradgrind and his daughter Louisa where Mr. Gradgrind erases his wife’s role in Louisa’s life. He has “formed his daughter on his own model (Dickens, 1854, p. 168), and she is known to all as Tom Gradgrind’s daughter” (Dickens, 1854, p. 143). This attitude of Mr. Gradgrind causes his daughter

to become isolated from everything in life because she lacks identity as an individual. Since this dissertation aims to shed light on child abuse and discrimination against women, Mr. Gradgrind is the first one who must be criticised for his exploitation of his wife and children. Victorian families are seen in novels are similar to one other, and generally adopt a patriarchal point of view where the father has complete authority over his family. As a great representative of his own society, Dickens has perfectly portrayed women's place in the 19th century. In the Victorian Era, women were generally submissive, and they were expected to possess obedience. In a stereotypical patriarchal family, the mother figure is always an indistinct character, and Mrs. Gradgrind is one of them. "As the fundamental instrument and the foundation unit of patriarchal society, the family and its roles are prototypical" (Millett, 1970, p.33) Mrs. Gradgrind's position in the family is to be the shadow of her husband because she is described as a weak character both physically and mentally. Mrs. Gradgrind is not represented as a person; instead, she is an object, a "feminine dormouse" (Dickens, 1854, p. 110) and a "bundle of shawls" (Dickens, 1854, p. 27). She appears in only five of the thirty-seven chapters, which emphasises that *Hard Times* is the world of patriarchy. Dickens portrays the social discourse of the 19th century in almost all of his novels and *Hard Times* is a novel that demonstrates the male authority from the very beginning through Thomas Gradgrind's system. Bakhtin suggests the term the word of fathers to explain the male dominance in societies;

The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it...It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the

past. It is a prior discourse. It is, therefore not a question of choosing it from among other possible discourses that are its equal (Bakhtin, 1982, p. 342).

When oppressed by her husband, Mrs. Gradgrind remains a trivial character in the eyes of her children. She is not a bright character either because women were formed to be so without having any high expectations of them. According to patriarchy, men were considered intelligent, and women must follow their lead. Mrs. Gradgrind was weak in knowledge; therefore, Mr. Gradgrind raised “her to her high matrimonial position because she was most satisfactory as a question of figures. Secondly, he had no nonsense about her. By nonsense, he meant fancy [...] she was as free from any alloy of that nature[...].” (Dickens, 1854, p. 16). In societies where women are discriminated against and treated unequally by men, marriage means women’s enslavement enslaving in the domestic sphere. Therefore, women’s obedient nature is essential because they eventually end up as the angels in the house to be the caretaker of the children and the husband. “If knowledge is power, power is also knowledge, and a large factor in their marriage Mr. Gradgrind married her because she has no imagination” (Dickens, 1854, p. 16). Mrs. Gradgrind is not the exact angel in the house figure for her limited existence in domesticity. She rather follows what Mr. Gradgrind demands because she is convinced that he rules over his family and for her Mr. Gradgrind is a knowledgeable person, but she does not intend to be the smart character. Mrs. Gradgrind functions as an object in the house. Thus, she cannot fit in the angel in the house type; she has no femininity, does not take care of her children and husband, and does not meet the Victorian understanding of womanhood expectations. She is just a futile character who is always sick and weak in personality.

2.3. The unhappy marriage: Mrs. and Mr. Bounderby

Louisa is demanded by her father to marry his old friend; because he is described as a merciless father for cunningly convincing his daughter to accept the proposal of Mr. Josiah Bounderby. In patriarchal societies, fathers as the authorities can arrange marriages for their children; as Simone de Beauvoir emphasises in her *The Second Sex*, “When she is a young girl, the father has total power over her; in her marriage, he transmits it entirely to her spouse” (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 251). Arranged marriages are based upon parents’ approval for some reasons; thus, emotional connection cannot be found in those kinds of vows. Marriage was considered an important aspect, a convenient and satisfying conclusion for Victorians. Yet, such marriages are meant to enslave women, as Beauvoir emphasises in her major work. It is a kind of enslavement that refers to the Foucauldian Panopticon. Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) theorises the architectural concept of the panopticon, which refers to a circular hall with doors faced to the centre. Thus, the tower can easily watch the prisoners’ behaviours in the centre. They are under the gaze of authorities, so, instead of being themselves, they do what they are expected to do; therefore, the panopticon can be associated with male supremacy in this respect. Through the concept of the other, Simone De Beauvoir emphasises that considering women as the other means putting them into shape and expecting them to behave according to what society imposes on them. Just like the prisoners, they are also under the gaze, but this time, the eye is a male who always watches women and corrects them if they are to step out of the discipline.

But by marrying, the woman falls under the husband’s guardianship and administration; he can beat her; he watches over her behaviour, relations, and

correspondence and disposes of her fortune, not through a contract, but by the very fact of marriage (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 299).

Almost in every novel written in the 19th century, the plot revolves around the marriage theme, which is the ultimate solution for the Victorian society. In those novels, gender roles in the family are described in detail. Every woman and man had particular roles in maintaining the family and their marriage, and women were expected to be the angel in the house to keep the family together. Otherwise, men had the right to divorce the non-obedient wife because the woman's only duty was to fulfil the husband's desires and take care of their children. From a very young age, women had been taught and expected to embrace this notion of patriarchy. "It is men's society that allows each of its members to accomplish himself as husband and father; woman, integrated as slave or vassal into the family group dominated by fathers and brothers, has always been given in marriage to males by other males" (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 1092). Beauvoir criticises patriarchal societies that consider women inferior to men because, according to their perspective, women have always been seen as dependent on the males in the family and marriage. She also emphasises arranged marriages as well, she remarks that women are just like objects in the marriage process, given to their husbands by their fathers and brothers. This quotation is an excellent example to draw an analogy between Louisa's situation and the patriarchal mindset imposed on women. When Mr. Gradgrind tries to convince Louisa to accept his old friend's proposal, her brother Tom who is another male authority in the family, twists the situation for his own sake and uses Louisa's affection to escape from home.

Mr. Gradgrind has "artificial barriers" (Dickens, 1853, p. 93) between himself and everybody around him, so it is impossible to talk to him because of the distance

he puts. So, Louisa's only resolution is to surrender her father's request. This marriage is beneficial for both parties because they are socially equal in his mindset. Also, Louisa does not need to be a sentimental character; she is well-trained by her father and worships the facts. Hence this kind of marriage can be more than enough for a Gradgrind lady. Although she keeps asking questions about the union's function and its connection with feelings, Mr. Gradgrind does not care about Louisa's concerns. He turns the marriage into a more practical one instead of a love-based relationship. As Millett emphasises "Most patriarchies go to great length to exclude love as a basis of mate selection. Modern patriarchies tend to do so through class, ethnic, and religious facts" (Millett, 1970, p.50). Louisa is a naïve maiden who does not have the chance to experience life itself, cannot resist the father's demands and approves the proposal.

Even after the marriage, Louisa remains unhappy because she does not willingly accept to become old Bounderby's wife; for this reason, she fails to fulfil domestic duties in her marriage. Her unhealthy attachment to her brother sustains her from maintaining this unhappy marriage until she finally realises that she is able to feel love for someone other than Tom whose name is James Harthouse. Louisa is not the perfect Victorian female; she does not embody certain qualities; she is more like a distant character, a stranger to Victorian society. Perhaps Dickens wishes to show that women do not have to be angels in the houses and maintain an unhappy marriage because Louisa's depression and pain reveal that she sacrifices her well-being for something that is not that worthy. In the very typical Victorian society "The female is continually obliged to seek survival or advancement through the approval of males as those who hold power" (Millett, 1970, p.54). This is related to Louisa's never-ending questions about the proposal that she asks her father about love. As an inexperienced lady, Louisa does not know anything about love, this is apparent yet her concerns

about love could be related to her need for approval from her father. Louisa's character development and progress as a more substantial female show that she is an obedient girl who does not even question at the novel's beginning. She is now capable of drawing an analogy between her depression and her father's wrong decision, which affects her life much. After a long time, when Louisa returns home, like a flashback in the story, Louisa and Mr. Gradgrind reunite in the same spot, and she again asks for help, but this time verbally. Mr. Gradgrind, who comes to a realisation and regrets everything he caused, also evolves and treats his daughter with compassion and shows mercy upon Louisa. Through Mr. Gradgrind's conclusive perception of his mistake, Dickens allows his readers to comprehend the consequences of erring decisions. And Mr. Gradgrind acknowledges that everything he tented to do with a good intention and all his belief in the idea of the fact tumbled down when Louisa falls to the ground. But to blame Mr. Gradgrind as the only responsible person for the unhappy marriage would be too much. Although he indirectly forced her daughter to get married to a man whose age is twice hers, Mr. Bounderby, Mrs. Sparsit and others believe that Louisa is declined for not being an ideal domestic woman; even the maid dares to question the lady of the house, thus Louisa in the marriage remains a tragic character.

2.4.The False Education of Louisa Gradgrind

Dickens's main target is to challenge the false education imposed on children in *Hard Times* and criticises the education system through Mr. Gradgrind's schooling. Louisa, for instance, loses her emotions and human values because of her father's education. She becomes a dull character who does not even recognise herself and gets married to Mr. Bounderby at last. "For the first time in her life, Louisa had come into one of the dwellings of the Coketown Hand; for the first in her life, she was face to

face with anything like individuality in connexion with them” (Dickens, 1854, p. 13).

This quotation indicates that in the 19th century, women’s identities were taken, and they were not seen as individuals. She is left out cold, emotionless as if she is prisoned, and her connection with life is only through a fire in her room where she is not allowed to wonder anything while looking at it. This is all because of her father’s misunderstanding of parenting based on training the next generation as robots.

Thomas Gradgrind represents all cruel and abusive fathers in the Victorian Era for turning his wife and children into weak characters. Louisa suffers from loneliness and emptiness in her heart because of her father; she is turned into a human being alienated from society. She became a self-enclosed person because of her family’s attitude toward her.

The chief contribution of the family in patriarchy is the socialisation of the young (largely through the example and admonition of their parents) into patriarchal ideology’s prescribed attitudes toward the categories of role, temperament, and status. Although slight differences of definition depend here upon the parents’ grasp of cultural values, the general effect of uniformity is achieved, to be further reinforced through peers, schools, media, and other learning sources, formal and informal. While we may niggle over the balance of authority between the personalities of various households, one must remember that the entire culture supports masculine authority in all areas of life and -outside of the home- permits the female none at all (Millett, 1970, p. 35).

Her father’s education ruins Louisa’s childhood; when she grows a little older, she has taken the role of motherhood and devotes herself to her selfish brother. Because it is a

Victorian novel, the results of the Industrial Revolution can easily be detected. It was a period when people's values were demolished; instead, a new type of source occurred. Thus, human resource is replaced with machine power, and the human authority over the product is dissolved. Labourers are forced to become alienated from the work they labour; they rather start to be seen as the hands in the eyes of factory owners, which demolishes their individuality and creativity. Like the hands, Mr. Gradgrind aims to create a model child through the utilitarian philosophy by extinguishing children's imagination and urging them to become monotonous characters. Dickens, who focuses on different spheres of society, draws a correspondence between Gradgrind's robots and Coketown hands; he criticises the same perspective imposed on different groups in a very typical manner. "The Gradgrind children and manufacturing labourers –*hands*– are compared by the narrator. They both end up in dull presences, untouched by delight. Is it possible, I wonder, that there was any analogy between the case of the Coketown and the case of the little Gradgrinds?" (Dickens, 1854, p. 22). According to the quotation above, both hands and Gradgrind children are spoilt. Consequently, they end up lonely and alienated from society and nature. Their father's education destroys Louisa Gradgrind and Tom Gradgrind's personalities; they are the victims of a stifling and cruel educational system. Tom becomes a selfish boy who has no sympathy and ability to feel empathy; Louisa ends up in a tragedy for caring about her brother too much; she ruins her life. Because she is an alienated girl who only cares about her brother, she does not know how to treat people. She becomes stuck to the facts and establishes a ground for her father and brother to exploit her. Through these two different yet similar examples, the narrator underlines that without feelings and emotions, and individuality, life would be unbearable. Mr. Gradgrind is an ignorant man who even

feels happy to raise a child who does not have imaginative fancy; according to him, being fond of emotions and feelings is something considered harmful that weak people can only obtain. In his understanding, these people are less impressive than those sticking to the facts; he raises both his children and pupils the way he believes.

You have been so well trained, and you do, I am happy to say, so much justice to the education you have received, that I have perfect confidence in your good sense. You are not impulsive, you are not romantic, you are accustomed to view everything from the strong dispassionate ground of reason and calculation (Dickens, 1854, p. 90).

Louisa is the one who can not represent the ideal femininity of the Victorian era, whereas her counterpart Cecilia Jupe truly reflects the stereotypical woman figure of the 19th century. Dickens creates a balance between bright and unsophisticated dispositions through her colourful personality, and he celebrates her triumph over Mr. Gradgrind. She is everything that Louisa lacks in essence, just because she is raised in an environment where loving people surround her. Dickens attempts to underline the importance of love and affection, the power of emotions that affect children positively, in contrast to the destructive impact of distant parents and how their disappointing influence may ruin a childhood. Louisa and Tom are unhappy children because they were not needed to be emotionally sound; they were only trained to understand the rationality of circumstances. However, Sissy is a girl who is fond of flowers and gives her dog the name merry legs. Mr. Gradgrind, who destroys children's imagination, attempts to change Sissy as well, yet Sissy does not get affected by his education system. She is instead the one who helps Mr. Gradgrind and others to awaken the emotions within themselves by healing their soul. Sissy serves as

a foil to Louisa; while Sissy is imaginative and compassionate, Louisa is impassive and, for the most part, unfeeling. Sissy is naturally good and emotionally healthy, so Gradgrind's philosophy does not affect her; she is almost a messenger from the land of imagination and creativity. Through Sissy, Jane Gradgrind leads a happy childhood, unlike her elder siblings. In *Dickens at Work*, John Butt and & Kathleen Tillotson emphasise that,

This is the milieu from which Sissy comes to be an inmate of the Gradgrind household, there to be educated in Mr. Gradgrind's system. It is some measure of the man's inherent goodness that he receives her as an inmate. He is redeemable, and the course of the novel shows that he will be redeemed by Sissy. He fails to educate her head, but she succeeds in education in heart (Butt & Kathleen, 1957, p. 209).

Sissy's attitude and contribution to the plot are very positive and awakening. With her childlike personality, happiness and innocence she helps everybody around her to awaken from the nightmare. Although Mr. Gradgrind tries to change her personality into a less sentimental standard, she touches upon everybody's character and puts the spell of humane behaviours to encourage them to progress, she succeeds in the end. Both Louisa and Mr. Gradgrind recognise that they were in a situation that was harmful and tragic. Especially, Louisa, was proud to open her heart to Sissy, after seeing her sister raised with love and affection, and encountering Sissy's positive effects on Jane's personality, she acknowledges Sissy's warmth and healthy characterisation. Through witnessing the difference between her family's treatments and Sissy's beneficial attitudes, Louisa realises that she made a mistake by letting her family and her marriage ruin her.

In *Madness and Civilisations*, Michel Foucault interprets the role of insanity within society as “What is originaive is the caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason; reason’s subjugation of non-reason, wresting from it its truth as madness, crime, or disease, derives explicitly from this point” (Foucault, 1961, p. 48). He also states that “Childhood does not perhaps carry quite such a heavy load of negative meaning as madness or insanity (though madness, too, has at times been held to be a privileged state of contact with the divine, or with unbearable knowledge or ecstasy), but it, too functions as an exponent of the non- adult and non-reason” (Foucault, 1961, p. 48). As an author, Dickens is famous for his stories written for children, and he believes in the significance of imagination in their lives. The Dickensian narration suggests the inhumane aspects of the 19th century in England. He sheds light upon the children abused at home by their parents and cruel administrators at schools. Dickens, as always, focuses on the issue of childhood; in *Oliver Twist*, he stresses poverty and sexual abuse, whereas he puts his finger on the subject of education and spiritual abuse in *Hard Times*.

In *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times*, *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, Dickens attacked English institutions with a ferocity that had never been approached. Yet he managed to do it without making himself hated, and, more than this, the very people he attacked have swallowed him so completely that he has become a national institution himself. In its attitude towards Dickens, the English public has always been a little like the elephant, which feels a blow with a walking-stick as a delightful tickling (Orwell, G).

According to George Orwell, Dickens is an author who deals with the problems of children, and he considers Dickens as the first author who focuses on children in his writings. He also agrees with the idea of the wretchedness of the 19th century over

children. He acknowledges that the 19th century was not a suitable place for a child just because they were imposed discrimination by society.

A sympathetic attitude towards children was a much rarer thing in Dickens's day than it is now. The early nineteenth century was not a good time to be a child. In Dickens's youth, children were still being solemnly tried at a criminal bar, where they were held up to be seen, and it was not so long since boys of thirteen had been hanged for petty theft (Orwell, G).

Dickens creates two different settings and two different types of human reflections in *Hard Times* and puts his emphasis on the differences between these two. For him, Stonlodge represents evil industrial England, whereas the Circus and its people, serve a utopic England for Dickens's imagination. In both descriptions people suffer from the harmful effects of the Industrial Revolution, however, circus people avoid melancholy and depression of the industrialisation, whereas others become monotonous characters under the influence of urbanisation because they lack feelings and emotions in their personality. For this reason, they suffer and feel the depression of Victorian England in their soul and need someone like Sissy to be awakened from the nightmare. 19th century is not a suitable place for a child to remain just because it has a dark and gloomy atmosphere, yet Dickens through imaginative land remarks that everything could be more positive and bearable.

3. THE FEMINIST CHARLES DICKENS?

In *Hard Times*, Dickens portrays the Victorian feminine and takes the side of women by criticising male authority upon them. Through Mr. Gradgrind and his follower manufacturer Mr. Bounderby, Dickens remarks that males who adopt patriarchal norms discriminate against women and suppress the lower classes. Louisa Gradgrind is one of the main characters in the novel, however, Charles Dickens, in *Hard Times*, represents the ideal Victorian femininity through Sissy. She is a pure, fanciful, emotional, and loving person. Her depiction suggests that she is far from being rational, so she belongs to the Victorian female sphere for being a sentimental character. On the other hand, Louisa is removed from the ideal femininity because of her father's education. Nevertheless, she still tries to be a model Victorian daughter, sister and wife. Millett, in *Sexual Politics*, emphasised that the Victorian doctrine built upon unstated thoughts that all women are ladies, and their legal or personal freedoms were disallowed (Millett, 1970, p. 73). In an arranged unhappy marriage, Louisa meets James Harthouse whom she is tempted by his interest in Louisa. Yet, her marital position never allows her to betray her husband and father. Although she never loved Mr. Bounderby, she is well aware of the fact that her society would never approve a woman cheating on her husband. For this reason, she does not run away from her husband and asks for her father's help to save her by any means. Mrs. Sparsit, with all her arrogance, tries to manipulate Louisa, and she practices everything a domestic woman is obliged to do. For her, Louisa is not worthy of Mr. Bounderby, because she feels like she is the one who needs to be with him. She tries too hard to prove herself and impress Mr. Bounderby, yet Dickens through her depiction, reveals the comical effect in the novel. Because she is a stiff character,

unlike the typical Victorian women. Her desire to take Louisa's place gets Dickens's attention and although he mocks Mrs. Sparsit, he is actually very much into her personality because she is a strong character, unlike the typical Victorian female. According to solid expectations in marriage, Louisa is not the one who functions properly. There is no romance between them, and the description of their marriage is quite cold and boring. Mr. Harthouse's visit spices up their home and helps Louisa to progress and to recognise that she is worthy of love. Still, Louisa does not rebel against her father's decision and maintains the relationship with Mr. Bounderby for her brother's wellness. Her marriage to Bounderby is out of a duty that she needs to do in order for her brother to achieve freedom. And her attitude in the domestic sphere does not seem abnormal to the Victorian audience because they are familiar with such kinds of unions. *Hard Times* illustrates the role of women in Victorian society, and they were seen as only capable of performing domestic duties, yet there are lower-class women who work in factories such as Rachael. Louisa Gradgrind is the novel's primary female character, yet she does not fully meet the femininity that patriarchy imposed on Victorian women. Her cold-hearted childhood leads her to detach from her environment. Dickens portrays the ideal femininity of Victorian society in a very realistic manner, and through his narration, it is evident that women were somehow oppressed in such an environment. Although Louisa tries to be the character who represents the Victorian ideal woman, she is not necessarily the one who embodies a trait that her society expected. As a Gradgrind and Bounderby, she remains a lifeless character who is still influenced by her father's false education. She can not comprehend the function of emotions at the beginning of the novel; however, with the help of Sissy, Mr. Harthouse and Rachael, her character development as an individual becomes more visible. She is depicted within her depression, but as the story changes

and develops, she grows in character and becomes a model woman. In the later chapters, Dickens's narrative changes into one that adopts a feminist approach and he lets her female characters start to take action. Especially Louisa awakens to realisation, and she even becomes a more distinct character that makes her father admit his mistake "Louisa awoke from torpor" (Dickens, 1854, p. 93). Through Louisa's awakening into a realisation, Dickens's desire is to show that after Louisa's rebirth, the system of her father is destroyed. When Louisa is introduced to individuality, she realises that her marriage is not worth suffering, and she becomes a more confident person in confessing her depression to her father. Towards the end of the story, Louisa's progress and character development showcase the revolution of females through rebellion. It also proves that Louisa does not have to surrender herself to her depressive marriage and remain a cold woman in the eyes of males. She spends her life as an alienated female who cannot understand the meaning of her existence and who is far beyond comprehending emotions' traits. It is a Victorian novel that is related to the Industrial Revolution, which dramatically influenced men's oppression of women because men belonged to the labour where women were expected to practise their duties in the domestic sphere. There were women who took place in labour; however, it is not that common for women to be employed. There are several reasons behind this fact and Millett comments on the subject by referring to the dilemmas of Victorian women in the labour.

Since woman's independence in economic life is viewed with distrust, prescriptive agencies of all kinds (religion, psychology, advertising, etc.) continuously admonish or even inveigh against the employment of middle-class women, particularly mothers. The toil of working-class women is more readily accepted as "need," if not always by the working class itself, at least by

the middle class. And to be sure, it serves the purpose of making available cheap labour in factory and lower-grade service and clerical positions. Its wages and tasks are unremunerative that, unlike more prestigious employment for women, it fails to threaten patriarchy financially or psychologically. Women who are employed have two jobs since the burden of domestic service and child care is unrelieved either by day care or other social agencies or by co-operation by husbands (Millet, 1970, p. 41).

Rachael is described as a “ministering angel” for her gentle behaviours, and here again, Dickens’s sympathy for the poor is revealed again, because she is a nice, gentle and angelic person who always helps others, however, she becomes the victim of Victorian suffering because of her economic status. Rachael and Stephen represent the factory workers, and the case of how they lead a poor life and merely afford to live with the money they make. Dickens in *Hard Times* puts his emphasis on the overwhelming circumstances of Victorian women. Dickens reveals his success by twisting the situation and recreating an area for women to express themselves as he suddenly changes the course of events in the story. Louisa is not allowed to exercise fancy and emotions because her reason-based education led her to a position in which she lacks human tendency. Growing without the contribution of fancy and feelings, Louisa is attempted to reflect the unpleasant result that females are not given a chance to experience imaginative fancy. Also, *Hard Times* illustrates the different social roles among genders; men represent mind and rationality, whereas women are expected to possess passivity and sentimentality. However, Louisa fails to embody certain features, and she ends up as a self-neglect woman. “I curse the hour which I was born to such a destiny...Where are the graces of my soul? Where are the sentiments of my heart?” (Dickens, 1854, p. 205). On the other hand, although Sissy Jupe concretises a

fanciful personality, she is also unheeded by Victorian society. Mr. Gradgrind does not even call her by name; instead, he assigns her as girl number twenty, indicating that she has no true identity in the eyes of male authorities. Louisa and Sissy develop in character, they become more distinct, and they finally take action. Through their rise at the end of the story, Dickens takes women's side and indirectly remarks that Victorian women blossom and they are able to become strong characters. Mr. Gradgrind feels proud of raising his children as he wishes, and he wants to educate Sissy as well. Sissy is one of the females in the novel representing Victorian ideal femininity, her fanciful character, and her not being rational. Mr. Gradgrind adopts her just because he desires to enhance Sissy's knowledge. When Mr. Gradgrind decides to bring Sissy to his house, he does not need his wife's approval because, in the Victorian era, women do not have the power to make decisions. Mr. Gradgrind tries to prove that facts are superior to imaginative fancy, and he underlines that fact belongs to the male world when fancy is linked to the female sphere. For this reason, Mr. Gradgrind attempts to educate Sissy in his way of understanding, just like Louisa Gradgrind and Tom Gradgrind. According to his philosophy, facts are superior to fancy, yet at the end of the novel, fancy triumphs, and Mr. Gradgrind's education system falls to the ground. In the light of the passages from the novel, Dickens's enterprise to take women's side is remarkable. He does not only mirror Victorian society in his stories; he also highlights women's struggle in a patriarchal society through significant events. Although Sissy does not progress as she wishes, she helps others to awaken and to realise their mistake and her success is very much appreciated by Dickens.

Carr focuses on *Hard Times* as evidence of Dickens's determination to put himself on the side of femininity, fiction and Fancy against the masculine

world of Fact, an alignment which allows Dickens to explore “how his own position as a writer of fiction is marked off as suspect or inferior” (1989, p. 169). Carr’s analysis brings women’s views of Dickens full circle, concluding that in *Hard Times*, Dickens is in effect “writing as a woman” Sadrin (1992), through more conventional techniques of close reading, has made a similar claim for *Bleak House*, praising the author’s success at turning himself into the female narrator “Charlotte Dickens” (Westland, E).

According to some critiques, Dickens is a misogynist dominated by patriarchal norms because in his writings women are generally weak and passive. In contrast, others, such as Jean Ferguson Carr, believe that he takes the side of feminism for portraying oppressed women in his writings. In the light of this study, it is evident that Dickens is far from being a misogynist; he instead takes the side of the women he presented in his novels. Although he does not directly remark that he is a feminist, his depiction of the characters shows that he shares their misery or portrays them in the way they were seen in the Victorian era. It was a bleak period for a female to survive. For this reason, Dickens and his two famous novels have been chosen among other books to examine the different types of discrimination and abuse. Since these are realistic Victorian novels, it is convenient to mention that the Victorian Era was cruel toward females. Lastly, Dickens had the power to develop a critical view of his time; according to him, there was unrest in the Victorian era, visible in his writings because he committed himself to question the current order. He is good at drawing an analogy between the character and the place. In this novel, his characters, who are taken from the different parts of society, successfully hold a mirror to their habitats. They have helped Dickens criticise the events he has problematised indirectly. His narration suggests that, as if he speaks to the audience, he has no boundaries and limits. Dickens, who attempts to

awaken society and spread awareness, uses straightforward language, and creates the feeling of direct communication with his reader because he is an author who can interact with people through his fiction based on real-life imagery. Dickens does not remark that he is a feminist, or he is not considered as one of the most significant feminists, yet his ambition to appreciate and encourage his female characters makes him a feminist. He reflects real life in fiction; however, he does not undermine the value of women in his writings.



CONCLUSION

Considering the aforementioned points, it can be said that gender equality has been disregarded for thousands of years, and patriarchal cultures still prioritize males over women and children. The problem of living in a world that maintains its dominance with ancient societal norms must be addressed and solved for a brighter future. Otherwise, the existing order would never have the chance to be replaced with a more modern, sophisticated, and fair community. The primary focus of the presented thesis is to explore the discrimination that occurred against women and children during the Victorian era, however, studies have revealed that those groups are still facing the same challenges now as they did throughout earlier eras of male domination. It is a literary analysis of the Victorian Era; the characters and events have mainly been chosen from selected novels, nevertheless, they particularly reflect Victorian society by establishing a solid connection between reality and 19th-century fiction, and they could possibly even be connected to the marginalisation of women today. Women struggle and encounter obstacles both in the patriarchal society and in fiction, which is a sad fact that has to be changed.

The outcome of this study can be summarised as, despite progress being made in societies' treatment of women, desired equality has not yet been attained, and even centuries later, the topic is still being debated. Inequality, exclusion, and mistreatment of women continue to exist. The reason behind this solid existence is due to the patriarchal system maintaining to dominate the world. Women are still disliked as a class; they are trying to be removed from the labour just because they are perceived as a threat to thwart men's place. It is unfortunate that women are still being raped, subjected to sexual harassment, expected to remain in the home and play the role of the house angel, or sacrificed to toxic masculinity practically everywhere around the

world. After a thorough analysis, the present dissertation, which aims to address the relationship between the Victorian Era and its reflection in literature, as well as contemporary societies, concluded that, after a century, today's milieu is not entirely different from the Victorians; likewise, Foucault in *We Other Victorians* suggests that the modern community is not much different from the older generations and, adopting a Victorian attitude which arouses the feeling that the Victorian Era is still very much alive and well.

This is so because our society, like other historical civilisations, is patriarchal. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance -in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands (Millet, 1970, p. 25).

Compared to previous decades, people are more inspired and knowledgeable about gender equality; nonetheless, there is still more work to be done to attain overall success. Education should be utilized to teach society how to respect individuals since it is the key to eradicating ignorance. The only way a community could grow and regain its humanitarian characteristics is via adequate education. In every community, women, particularly mothers, can provide the proper education and teach their offspring how to construct an egalitarian society; the case of women who exist under an oppressive regime must be addressed directly to change the status quo, and women should train to be their own warriors to stand up for themselves. They are strong enough to achieve what they want if they speak the same language. The writing was one of the first steps toward social and economic equality for women during the Victorian era. It was a time of social and political transformation for women's role in

writing, even though they published their books behind nicknames. Through their writing, they were able to express themselves like male authors, earn money, and support themselves. Their demonstration, which incorporates pro-liberty literature, is quite inspiring and contains its own feminist propaganda. And it reveals that, if allowed economic independence, women may respond and express themselves through writing.

And here, it would seem that the most profound changes implied are accomplished by human growth and correct re-education, rather than those arrived at through the theatrics of armed struggle-even should the latter become inevitable (Millett, 1970, p. 363).

Millett asserts that women should rebel against the discrimination together to change the situation; success is gained only through informing people about the subjects that have been ignored for thousands of years. Women have always been dismissed, yet in contrast to past decades, there is a slight change in consideration of women in society. They can play a role in defending themselves, and they are in a community where it is even more possible to raise their voice. For Millett "To succeed both the sexual revolution and the Women's movement would have to cross class lines and join lady to factory hand, the loose and the respectable in a common cause. The the extent it could be so, it succeeded" (Millett, 1970, p. 73). Although there is still the unjust treatment of women, comparing the past, women accomplished so many opportunities that they were not able to achieve before. Feminism is the key to success when approached and taught correctly because it helps societies be less vague about gender issues. Patriarchy is still a phenomenon in some cultures; however, women and men are more educated and encouraged to transfer their knowledge to upcoming

generations. People live in a world that was established and designed for males, and while they have talked a lot about equality in recent years, they are still a long way from achieving it. The most important value is to react to the inequalities of both sexes and not to ignore any of the members of society to become a more sophisticated and fair society. Everybody should participate in the revolutionary acts, yet women have a lot more to do than men if they want to gain the total equality that they deserve. Because although it is a more modern society, women are still perceived as inferior to males, whether in working areas, families, marriage, or other environments. They need to be educated and educate others for awareness. The case of women is not totally different from past decades, and this will not ever change if women and men do not consider the male oppression and its negative influence on society. In the following quotation, women are encouraged by Millett to take an active leadership role in the social revolution for their liberty.

As the largest alienated element in our society, and because of their numbers, passion, and length of oppression, its largest revolutionary base, women might come to play a leadership part in social revolution, quite unknown before in history (Millett, 1970, p. 363).

In patriarchal societies, men oppress women in different ways; some have the strength to fight against male oppression and achieve success, whereas others, locked in cages like birds, bow to the inevitable. The only solution is to spread awareness on the subject and empower those whose power is taken, and it is possible by reacting against the oppression with the power of words. Just as Dickens did, women must be motivated to tackle the case of women and their dilemmas within their society

whether through a pen or a with any kind of women's movement. If a problem is to be solved, it must be addressed.



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