

PARALLAX PERSPECTIVES ON THE INDUSTRIAL NOVEL IN
VICTORIAN FICTION

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes three industrial novels written during the Victorian period in England, specifically 1844 to 1854. The three novels investigated are the most widely read of the industrial novel genre: Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, and Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*. Using Slavoj Žižek's concept of the parallax—ontological, scientific, and political—to analyze these novels, this thesis argues that their solutions for England's disparity, while materially feasible, are not socially compatible with the period. Disraeli's support of the aristocracy hinders the progression of democracy. Gaskell's corporate socialism promotes transparency that still progresses slowly in the twenty-first century. Dickens's totalitarian fiction, while offering intellectual stimulation for people with access to literacy via education and literate story tellers, does not offer a practical solution, only Dickens cynical view of Victorian society.

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Table of Contents

Authorization to Submit Dissertation.....	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Disraeli, Ontological Parallax. Parallel Subcultures: Mowbray Slums, Hell-House Yard, & Trafford’s Village.....	11
Chapter 2 Scientific Parallax. Misunderstanding between Egremont and Sybil.....	21
Chapter 3 Political Parallax. Disraeli’s Withdrawal from England’s Impending Democracy	26
Chapter 4: Gaskell, Ontological Parallax. Paralleling Margaret’s Stoning & Frederick’s Mutiny	34
Chapter 5 Scientific Parallax. Misunderstanding Natural Capitalism & Implied Paternalism	41
Chapter 6 Political Parallax. Advocating Social Responsibility in the Factory Work Place.....	51
Chapter 7: Dickens, Introduction.....	61
Chapter 8 Ontological Parallax. Dickens’s World of Totalitarian Marriage	65
Chapter 9 Scientific Parallax. Misunderstanding the Metaphor of Sleary’s Circus	76

Chapter 10 Political Parallax. The Withdrawal of Louisa Gradgrind.....	85
Chapter 11: Dickens, Conclusion	94
Chapter 12: Conclusion.....	95
Works Cited.....	100

Introduction

The following research investigates English literature during the period between 1832, the year of Britain's first Parliamentary Reform Act, and 1855, the year Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *North and South* was published. Among the major themes explored by authors of the period were politics, economics, theology, and philosophy. This thesis will take up the three most widely read Condition of England novels: Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil or the Two Nations*, Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*. Catherine Gallagher writes of this genre, stating: "narrative fiction, especially the novel, underwent basic changes whenever it became a part of the discourse over industrialism" (xi). The works most immediately affected were those we now call the "industrial novels," the most prominent of which are Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke*, Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, and George Eliot's *Felix Holt*. Also important during this period are Friedrich Engels's book, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, and the collaboration between him and Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*. All these works were influenced by the rise of industrialism and consolidation of the lower classes and poor into cities where they lived near factories that hired them.

Disraeli, Marx, and Engels were concerned with the rise of industrialism, and especially the paradigm shift from the feudal era to the influence of the British Parliament in a constitutional monarchy. While Marx and Engels were mainly concerned with the effect of political economy on the lower classes, Disraeli was more interested in the parliamentary shift from a landed aristocracy to industrial capitalism. Much of Marx and Engels's work relies on the binary between the bourgeois middle-class of industrialists and the lower-class

laborers of the proletariat. While Disraeli also wrote about the lower class of laborers, he was also concerned with the lag in parliament, which was in the process of shifting from feudal, landed aristocracy to industrial capitalism. Disraeli's politics were still driven by the ideology of a monarchy and dominant church-centered government. He believed that the government should be run by the aristocracy and that the middle-class of industrialists took advantage of the poor. He pushed for a Tory socialism that included direct control of England's industry by the aristocracy and a church that provided charity to the poor rather than government welfare. Disraeli believed the older generation of his party was inept and he was part of a splinter group within his party called "Young England." Marx and Engels were aware of the parliamentary shift and the ideology of "Young England" and other groups, but only briefly mention them in the *Communist Manifesto*, saying:

the people, so often as it joined them, saw on their hindquarters the old feudal coats of arms, and deserted with loud and irreverent laughter.

One section of the French Legitimists and "Young England" exhibited this spectacle. In pointing out that their mode of exploitation was different to that of the bourgeoisie, the feudalists forget that they exploited under circumstances and conditions that were quite different, and that are now antiquated. In showing that, under their rule, the modern proletariat never existed, they forget that the modern bourgeoisie is the necessary offspring of their own form of society. (Marx, *Manifesto* 97)

The paradigm shift within parliament discussed by Disraeli in *Sybil* is important to be aware of with regards to the Condition of England novel. Without an awareness of the political shift in England during this historically short period it is difficult to understand the policy (Reform

Act, Poor Law, Corn Law, and to a lesser degree Chartism) that underlies the problems experienced by the lower classes before parliament was able to stabilize the economy and find acceptable means for sustaining the poor.

When Dickens published *Hard Times* (1854) and Gaskell published *North and South* (1855), the shift in government was nearly complete. Because of this, many of the problems that their novels approach are unlike those addressed by Disraeli. Much of the interest with the lower classes has moved from Chartism to Unionism and strikes. Child labor and the exploitation of women seem ameliorated and their novels are elusive about these earlier trends in industry. Men and women laborers are both exploited and problems arise from union antagonism toward people who work during strikes (known as knobs). Marx thinks of Dickens and Gaskell as fellow stewards of his progressive social agenda writing:

The present splendid brotherhood of fiction writers in England, whose graphic and eloquent pages have issued to the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists and moralists put together, have described every section of the middle class from the “highly genteel” annuitant and fundholder, who looks upon all sorts of business as vulgar, to the little shopkeeper and lawyer’s clerk. And how have Dickens and Thackeray, Miss Bronte and Mrs. Gaskell painted them? As full of presumption, affectation, petty tyranny and ignorance; and the civilized world have confirmed their verdict with the damning epigram that it has fixed to the class “that they are servile to those above, and tyrannical to those beneath them.” (Marx, *The English Middle Class* 105)

Marx allies these writers with his criticism of the bourgeoisie, but unlike Engels and Marx, these writers were concerned with reaching out to the middle-class rather than effecting a direct reaction via shock value, facts, and absolute polemics. Their novels present social problems in a way that allows third parties to participate in a fictional situation taken from living society and posit solutions to personalized and subjective views.

As members of the middle class, Disraeli, Dickens and Gaskell had limited experience with the lower classes, but were able to assess their misery from observing them in the environment, third hand discussion, news articles, and government publications. Their empathy with the lower classes led them to experiment with cross-discourse among the classes and social solutions to poverty in their fiction. Sheila Smith writes in her introduction to Disraeli's *Sybil*:

In the 1830's and 1840's an increasing number of writers and reformers attempted to inform middle-class readers and influence opinion concerning social distress accentuated by the Industrial Revolution. It was the time of the early Royal Commissions and Blue Books (Government Reports, so-called because they are bound in stiff blue paper) investigating labor conditions in factories, sanitation, and destitution both urban and rural. The literary counterparts of these enquiries were the novels "with a purpose" which debated "the condition of England" and exposed social problems. The novel, the increasingly popular literary form, often available in cheap editions made possible by the newly invented steam printing press, was an excellent way of propagating ideas and ideologies. (x)

Well-meaning and socially conscious authors—Disraeli, Gaskell, and Dickens—asserted their views of theology, philosophy, and government in an entertaining and informative way, leading readers to consider theoretical solutions with regard to fictional characters, rather than arguments of selective bias and political affiliation. Unable to correct England's social disparity, authors offered readers fictional solutions to the Condition of England. Readers, then and now are able to filter or elaborate circumstances from the fictional premises supporting writers' solutions. This enables readers to build their own conclusions. Authors write their novels from their own research and limited experiences which guide their perspectives. Readers compare authors' perspectives, gaining important insight into socially constructed contexts: those of the authors and those of the society and people with which they lived during the period. But simply to accept an author's fictional solution can be superficial and lack the depth of analysis for understanding more dynamic social difficulties. For the novels investigated in this analysis, a tool is needed to help identify social difficulties not clearly identified in the novels or their related criticism and history. Further insight is needed to identify and understand social difficulties that led to the Condition of England novel.

In the twenty-first century, readers of England's nineteenth-century industrial novels are confronted with the difficulty of analyzing these texts with Marxism's rise in the twentieth century and its criticism by post-structuralists later in the same century. The difficulties with Marxism arise from discussions of determinism. Determinism, or historical determinism, is defined in *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory* by Gregory Castle as:

A theory of history that holds that all human events are affected in material ways by the economic sphere of society (i.e., the modes of production in classical Marxism).

History is therefore the history of *determinations* made by productive forces. Of course, such determinations are complex, especially in advanced industrial societies. For “post-Marxists,” the most important *determinations* occur at the superstructural level (i.e., media, social and cultural institutions, ideologies); for them, the relationship is not deterministic or mechanistic but hegemonic. (312)

It is easy to suggest that authors of industrial novels pointed out the profit-seeking interests of capitalists and then determined material-world solutions to poverty. A classical Marxist approach would reduce economics to formulas, allowing entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, and authors to envision logical and cogent solutions, not allowing for relative values dynamically determined by the superstructure. In a perfect Victorian world (per the era’s dominant ideology), male factory owners would pay male workers a living wage. Women and children would comprise manageable families with male workers and be accounted for in the wage and profit formulas. Yet industrialization was changing the social institution we now know as the nuclear family. Women and children were used as labor in some factories with scant income allowing factory owners to incur greater profits. Men unable to find work or injured during work were supported by wives and children. Classical Marxism could be said to be a reaction to an erosion of the proletariat. Post-Marxism, with its social emphasis, tries to take the multiple effects of the superstructure into account and does not rely on any strict formulas.

The material dialectic of Marx encourages us to “follow the money,” by implying cause and effect. It denotes presence and absence, but needs a rationale by which people can discuss social cohesion. Slavoj Žižek addresses this need with his concept of parallax in his 2006 book, *The Parallax View*. As individuals, groups, and political parties interpret culture

and history, gaps emerge between their perspectives. Žižek defines three modes of parallax in *Parallax View*. Each mode attempts to reveal rational gaps in perception as viewed differently in the ontology of individuals, reasoning within groups, and political or class distinctions practiced in societies. These modes of parallax are difficult to grasp within the experience of living in a dynamic world. Gaps and differences that reveal one another are continuously changing in society, but in canonical literature such change should be minimized, if not occurring. If a defined temporality, such as that indicated above regarding the three industrial novels to be investigated, is analyzed, these three modes can attenuate authors' and society's rational and behavioral currents, revealing creative influences within a genre such as the Condition of England novel. Such influences affecting the works of authors creates parameters for discussions. The solution fictionalized by the authors of industrial novels, or other genres, attempting to alter negative behaviors and relieve societal difficulties can then be weighed against other historical alternatives and outcomes left out of their texts or overlooked by readers.

It is important to keep in mind that Žižek offers three modes of parallax, each presenting its own way of distinguishing perspectives from given information. An ontological or philosophical parallax seeks to discover differences between deterministic possibilities and their relations with the material world. It seeks rational gaps between possibilities and social influences. According to Žižek,

One of the minimal definitions of a modernist painting concerns the function of its frame. The frame of the painting in front of us is not its true frame; there is another, invisible, frame, the frame implied by the structure of the painting, the frame that

enframes our perception of the painting, and these two frames by definition never overlap—an invisible gap separates them. (29)

This is useful for the study of fiction as well as for visual art: it is implicit when we compare characters' similarities and differences in fictional stories. Characters have something to relate to or a reason for identifying with each other. For example, the two most compatible couples in Dickens's *Hard Times* are Bounderby with Sparsit and Louisa with James Harthouse. It is when Bounderby is alone with Sparsit and Louisa is alone with Harthouse that their compatibilities are revealed: Sparsit is aware of Bounderby's habits (Dickens 183) and Harthouse's youth and connections appeal to Louisa (Dickens 163). It is the way Dickens parallels these relationships that enables readers to recognize Louisa's oppression having married the much older Bounderby at her father's request. When discussing ontological parallax, paralleling stories or subplots is the simplest approach. Parallel stories within the novels to be investigated by this criticism are discussed in order to reveal ontological parallaxes.

Žižek's second form of parallax is the scientific. There is, for instance, a parallax between explanations of volition—material or physical—caused by biological mechanisms in the human brain. Writers and critics must confront challenges of presenting their fictional interpretations based on personal and collective experiences in their existing social environments to possibilities coherent to their audiences. Often writers will go through multiple drafts with editors in order to make their stories and criticism clear to their audiences. Žižek opens his chapters on scientific parallax by noting that the “plasticity of the alleged meaning of works of art is almost infinite” (147). Authors create a work that they hope will convey a specific message, but like “Voroshilov” audiences either perceive or

interpret the creator's message differently. This does not mean that the author's message goes unperceived by the entire audience. In order for this type of parallax to be recognized a divided audience works best, some will understand the author's message and some will interpret it differently.

The third mode of parallax, political, is a differential gap caused by class distinctions, policy positions, societal norms, and collective subjectivity. It is observable behavior of human interaction that hints at group rationale asserting differences, physical and intellectual, that are generalized for provoking political influence. Žižek is interested in the behavior of political minorities and politically oppressed people. In democracies, because the majority of people tend to vote for the most accepted behaviors, people who are not in favor of the majority's decisions often have little recourse but to withdraw and blend with the majority. Unlike ontological parallax, in which rational differences are mediated by an individual, and scientific parallax, in which interpretations between numbers of people are misunderstood, political parallax tends to appear within emotional arguments about public policy. Because of the need for people to belong in society, minority groups or groups subservient to a powerful influence tend to accept secondary status or keep their views private. Parallax results from two different views of a successful society: those who believe in publicly upheld policies and those who believe in alternatives. The political parallax in Victorian England, as glimpsed through the *Condition of England* novel, seems to have centered around the patriarchal structure of government and social behavior. England was evolving into a parliamentary democracy. While women were not a minority, they remained in a state of withdrawal likely held over from the family patriarchal structures accepted in the feudal era. More interesting is that some men believed in more rights for women, for instance as discussed later in this

analysis, John Stuart Mill and Charles Dickens believed that women should have the right to claim divorce on the bases of an incompatible marriage.

Victorian fiction gives us access to all three forms of parallax. *Sybil*, *North and South*, and *Hard Times* present alternative, otherwise inaccessible perspectives within the broader hegemonic frame of the period. These novels are interested in offering solutions to public policies, the influx of poor that were congregating in the cities, and difficulties created by gender roles. Concentrating on government, religion, and romance, the qualities which define humanity and literature, these industrial novels search for ways of relieving wide spread disparity. They offer a proving ground for multiple perspectives that can only be accessed with a critical theory that explores historical decisions with outcomes and desires. Žižek's modes of parallax offer readers and scholars of industrial novels a foundational process, enabling them to focus their social inquiries and discover sources of conflict that shaped the Victorian world and the present.

Chapter 1

Disraeli: Ontological Parallax

Parallel Subcultures: Mowbray Slums, Hell-house Yard, & Trafford's Village

Before discussing Benjamin Disraeli's novel, *Sybil*, it is beneficial to know that the number of England's poor compared to the middle class appears greatly exaggerated from the perspective of his characters. This exaggeration arises from the consolidation of poor factory workers into the low-rent districts of cities in which the factories that support them are located. When characters are described in these areas, the number of poor compared to the upper and middle-class is emphasized in elaborate and lengthy scenes. These scenes make the numbers of poor seem larger than the numbers of people in the middle class.

According to research cited by Sheila M. Smith, "In the spring of 1842, the Home Secretary reported that almost 1,500,000 people in England and Wales were paupers and receiving poor relief. The total population then was about 16 million" (*Other Nation* 5). At approximately 10.67%, the poverty level may seem reasonable compared to some twenty-first-century industrialized countries. Readers should bear in mind that before the Industrial Revolution in England occurred, the poor had not been fully consolidated into cities. The difficulty that the poor seemed to pose in cities during the period appeared greater than anything previously experienced by the English Government and its people.

This analysis of the novel *Sybil* will emphasize Disraeli's politics and discuss support of his fictional solution by comparing three examples of fictional society (from his novel) in the mode of ontological difference. It is important to bear in mind that the ontological difference between Disraeli's theorized solution and how the European public of the period viewed his solution is best understood by discussing history, politics, and economic activity

together. Like the ratio of poverty discussed above, social conditions are viewed subjectively and the existence of a large number of impoverished people remained then, as it remains now in the twenty-first century, a material and physical challenge that could not and cannot be solved by rationalization alone; a deconstructive process of dialectical materialism is needed to analyze authorial inspiration with theoretical possibilities.

Disraeli's political stance is systemic to his optimistic resolution of *Sybil*. Although he was a Tory, Disraeli identified more with his policies than with political designations. Many Tories were of the landed aristocracy and believed that property and the agriculture it supported were the basis of the country and its economics. They agitated the poor by limiting their franchise and enforcing the Corn Laws which hindered free-trade and inflated the price of food. While Disraeli agreed with the landed aristocracy and its system of peerage, he wanted political reform that would end corruption of peerage (buying of titles) and the Poor Law. The ending of the poor law would restore the church's ability to conduct charity and also allow for the landed gentry to pool their charitable resources for the impoverished. Friedrich Engels even identifies Disraeli as an "exception" to the usual malfeasance of the bourgeoisie, along with the other "Young England" Tories (297).

While Disraeli was not alone in his politics, he was in a minority whose vision is instilled in *Sybil* so that readers can infer "Young England's" resolution to The Condition of England. Early French critic Cazamian writes of the unusual political stance of Disraeli's group:

Thus the Tory social program Young England put forward was as idealistic as anything in Dickens, but under the reactionary influence of the aristocracy it took a

feudal, authoritarian form. The nobility were to mix with the people, join in their amusements, gain their confidence, and recover the moral leadership they had forfeited. They were to be generous alms-givers, and quick to heal class enmity with sympathetic words and friendly familiarity. (190)

Disraeli and his constituents had more faith in the landed aristocracy and humanity as a whole to heal the immense poverty that was being perceived in the streets of England's industrial cities than was, and still is, practical in a government with specialized interests. Disraeli, in the course of his own observations and research, sought out, described, and paralleled examples of what he considered unacceptable social conditions with social conditions he believed universally applicable.

In *Sybil*, Disraeli describes three societies. Two of these, the slums of Mowbray and a no-man's-land in Wodgate called Hell-house Yard, have intolerable living conditions—they are examples of an irresponsible and indifferent government as exemplified by the aristocracies of Lord Marney and Lord Mowbray. The ruins of Marney Abbey, its abandoned church, and lack of centralized religion evoke England's move from institutionalized religion. These symbolize a comfortable past for Disraeli. In his conservatism he desires to re-institutionalize religion which will contribute to his solution. The stolen titles that link Walter Gerard with Lord Mowbray's property, along with Lord Mowbray's lack of sympathy for Gerard and the Chartists (who seek universal male suffrage in parliament), do not help Disraeli's solution. Disraeli's last example, a well-run village by an industrialist named Trafford, breaks with Tory politics. The industrial complex in England was represented by the Whig party. It is this final example that shows Disraeli's appeal toward a bipartisan politic, an uncorrupted aristocracy that could oversee a responsible industrial complex and

sustain the lower class with the help of a unified church. Disraeli draws his inspiration for the three societies he fictionalizes from records of existing societies during the period. While his examples support his possible solution to England's conditions, the amount of cooperation needed for such an outcome cannot be universally adapted to the rational desires of England's living population. For Disraeli's fictional solution to have worked, his politics would have had to be accepted by political leaders and his policies implemented. The society would have had to adopt the formulas of classical Marxism allowing for a predictable determinism.

The ontological parallax here is the difference between circumstances as viewed by Disraeli in his fiction and material-world circumstances as viewed by people in England. An example of this parallax is Disraeli's fictional description of an English slum and Engels's non-fictional description of an English slum. For the slums of Mowbray, Disraeli describes the early, desolate, life of squalor experienced by Devilsdust, a character used in *Sybil* to typify young, resilient, factory workers: or at least workers who made it into their teens without succumbing to infant mortality, parental neglect, and localized epidemics. It is likely that Disraeli used Blue Books and common knowledge of the slums of Manchester to create his description of Devilsdust's childhood:

At length, when the nameless one had completed his fifth year, the pest which never quitted the nest of cellars of which he was a citizen, raged in the quarter with such intensity, that the extinction of its swarming population was menaced. The haunt of this child was peculiarly visited. All the children gradually sickened except himself; and one night when he returned home he found the old woman herself dead, and surrounded only by corpses. The child before this had slept on the same bed of straw

with a corpse, but then there were also breathing beings for his companions. A night passed only with corpses seemed to him in itself a kind of death. He stole out of the cellar, quitted the quarter of pestilence, and after much wandering lay down near the door of a factory. (97)

Devilsdust is hired by the factory to help clean up. It is here he gets his name (slang for the cotton fluff breathed by factory workers that leads to many deaths) and earns a wage allowing him to survive. This slum, where Devilsdust grew up, is the *mise-en-scène* for later character excursions. Walking from the Mowbray monastery to The Cat and Fiddle (entertainment and drinks), the chartists Walter and Stephen pass through the slum. Later, searching for her father at a print shop, Sybil passes through the slum. Such slums, like that described by Disraeli, posed problems for the middle class as pointed out in a letter to “the president of the board of trade” cited by Engels in his *The Condition of the Working Class*:

These towns, for in extent and number of inhabitants they are towns, have been erected with the utmost disregard of everything except the immediate advantage of the speculating builder. A carpenter and builder unite to buy a series of building sites (i.e. they lease them for a number of years), and cover them with so-called houses. In one place we found a whole street following the course of a ditch, because in this way deeper cellars could be secured without the cost of digging, cellars not for storing wares or rubbish, but for dwellings for human beings. “Not one house of this street escaped the cholera.” In general, the streets of these suburbs are unpaved, with a dung-heap or ditch in the middle; the houses are built back to back without ventilation or drainage, and whole families are limited to a corner of a cellar or a garret. (76)

From this excerpt, social difficulties leading to the Condition of England, pointed out by Engels, can be understood as influencing Disraeli's fiction. Disraeli's slum entertains readers in a dark way with its effort to draw sympathy from readers, provoking them to discuss solutions. It also works in direct contrast to Trafford's factory and village, to be discussed later. But Disraeli's fiction doesn't tell readers how the slums are formed. It only gives the impression that they are tolerated. From Engel's citation, it becomes clear that the landed aristocracy, those who lease land to the builders, have a stake in the perpetuation of slums and low wage employment. The landed aristocracy inhabits places in parliament as Tories, Disraeli's party. Here, the parallax becomes clear. The cooperation of the aristocracy is needed to influence the building of healthy habitations. It would have been difficult for Disraeli to raise such an issue in parliament. It is probable that Disraeli purposely gives readers a limited view to help support his solution, leaving some readers unaware of the facts presented by Engels.

Unlike the slums of Mowbray, the no-man's-land of Hell-house Yard is not controlled by the landed aristocracy. It is an impoverished town within the mining district of Wodgate, but is called simply Wodegate in the novel. In Hell-house Yard the strong and cunning rule, using violence against the ignorant and manipulating them with fear. Disraeli describes its categorical and primitive existence within an otherwise civil and bureaucratically governed society:

Wodgate a sort of squatting district of the great mining region to which it was contiguous, a place where adventurers in the industry which was rapidly developing settled themselves; for though the great veins of coal and iron-stone cropped up, as they phrase it, before they reached this bare and barren land, and it was thus deficient

in those mineral and metallic treasures which had enriched its neighborhood, Wodgate had advantages of its own, and of a kind which touch the fancy of the lawless. It was land without an owner; no one claimed any manorial right over it; they could build cottages without paying rent. (161)

In Hell-house Yard, metal fabricators run shops with apprentices who they raise to perform menial work and sustain their masters' incomes. Apprentices are treated as slaves, "by whom their affairs are principally conducted, and whom they treat as the Mamlouks treated the Egyptians" (163). Disraeli describes the fabricators as an absolute aristocracy, feudal lords without religion or ethics with an endless supply of free labor, a combination of slave owners and opportunistic industrialists without conscience. As with the slums of Mowbray, Disraeli does not invent Hell-house Yard and its unique form of governance. He bases it on acquired documents. According to Sheila M. Smith: "He found much of his material for Wodgate in R.H. Horne's report on children's employment in 'the manufacturing district of Staffordshire and the contiguous counties' printed in *CEC II*, Appendix 2. . . . [and] bases most of the Wodgate details on fact and is not given to wild exaggeration, he chooses one of the worst areas in the Black Country to make a point in his discussion of the nature of aristocracy, so important to the whole novel" (*Other Nation* 71). What "point" is Disraeli making? Because Disraeli is explicit about there being no factories in Hell-house Yard, it is tempting to discuss the possibility of communism within a society with little capital interest: metal fabricators, without rent, raising apprentices to do their work. But his description in *Sybil* makes clear what he wants readers to understand:

Here Labour reigns supreme . . . These master workmen indeed form a powerful aristocracy, nor is it possible to conceive one apparently more oppressive. They are

ruthless tyrants . . . Yet . . . the aristocracy of Wodgate is by no means so unpopular as the aristocracy of most other places. In the first place, it is a real aristocracy; it is privileged, but it does something for its privileges . . . It is the most knowing class at Wodgate; it possesses indeed in its way complete knowledge; and it imparts in its manner a certain quantity of it to those whom it guides. Thus it is an aristocracy that leads, and therefore a fact. (163)

Disraeli shows a binary society with an upper and lower class but no middle class. There is no bourgeoisie. Unlike the “two nations” described to Egremont in *Sybil* (65), the people of Hell-house Yard speak the same language and live in the same houses. Unlike the poor living in the Mowbray slums, the poor in Hell-house deal directly with their proprietors. While they pay no rent, they are responsible for production and must answer to their proprietors. Again, the parallax between Disraeli’s fiction and European society becomes clear: to attain any form of direct government and to avoid layers of bureaucracy, people in the middle must be removed. For this to work with Disraeli’s solution the landed aristocracy would have to own the factories and oversee production rather than lease land to industrialists and labor.

When considered with the previous examples, Disraeli’s third gives readers the best of both worlds, a binary society in which the lower class lives in pristine conditions. He describes a village run by a factory owner who is the second son of landed aristocracy. The implication of the factory owner’s (Trafford’s) situation is that, as family of the aristocracy, he is a direct link from the aristocracy to society. In Disraeli’s reasoning, Trafford is attached to the land and industrial complex, allowing him to subsidize the lower class to a respectable living rather than ignoring them and leaving them to fall prey to a competitive middle class. The economy of the aristocracy is distributed more liberally among the people, who in turn,

support their church and educational institutions, allowing them a social network which insulates the population from poverty. Disraeli writes of Trafford:

He was the younger son of a family that had for centuries been planted in the land, but who, not satisfied with the factitious consideration with which society compensates the junior members of a territorial house for their entailed poverty, had availed himself of some opportunities that offered themselves, and had devoted his energies to those new sources of wealth that were unknown to his ancestors. . . . With gentle blood in his veins, and old English feelings, he imbibed, at an early period of his career, a correct conception of the relations which should subsist between the employer and the employed. He felt that between them there should be other ties than the payment and the receipt of wages. (181)

When Disraeli describes Trafford's village, he paints a scene that is like modern suburbia: there are middle-class dwellings with gardens and people who work regular factory hours, send their children to school and attend church on off days. It is a vast contrast from disease-ridden families in a procession of cellars at Mowbray slum and the scarred and beaten apprentices with their grubby children in the streets of Hell-house Yard. The relaxed politics and business practices of 1845 allowed the aristocracy and industrialists to lead separate lives and take advantage of workers, but the lower class poor were still a minority and Trafford's operation was not outside the realm of possibility. Citing factory inspector Leonard Horner from his letter in 1838, Smith writes:

The mill is surrounded by the cottages of the workpeople, and they form quite a community of themselves . . . The moral condition of the people is a great object of

attention with the proprietors; they pay eighty pounds a year to a clergyman, have built a chapel and school-house and maintain a schoolmaster. From all I hear, it is a most virtuous and happy little colony. (*Other Nation* 74)

Disraeli's fictional village was not unrealistic. As a premise for his possible solution to the condition of England, it was conceivably a simple process of incorporating the politics and business practices of a model village into those of the country of England. The parallax between Trafford's Mill compared with Mowbray's slum and Hell-house yard reveals differences in values. Values, as ontological constructs, and because of their relative nature, lead to paradoxes between freedom and value. People in the twenty-first century and the Victorian era have a choice between freedom to rise above a lower class majority in the throes of laissez-faire capitalism or submit to an aristocratic minority and tolerate a system of universal values. The slums of Mowbray and the shops of Hell-house Yard are driven by competition while the suburbs of Trafford's Mill are subsidized and governed under the hierarchy of the aristocracy: power descends from landed aristocrats to the factory owner to clergy and lead citizens. Difficulties, then as now, occurred in inheritance. People with inherited interests are not necessarily the right choices for leadership positions. Because of the land requirement in the English Parliament, the ontology of some profit seeking inheritors led to valuing the lives of lower class people less. It was this ontological parallax and a lack of cooperation among members of parliament and the societal hierarchy that helped make Disraeli's solution un-tenable.

Chapter 2

Scientific Parallax

Misunderstanding between Egremont and Sybil

The scientific parallax explored by Disraeli results from his views of chartism in his character dialogue between Egremont and Sybil. For his dialogue to work, he must write his argument in a way that justifies his policy against chartism and do it so that people who are in favor of chartism will understand his views. This does not mean that they agree with his argument, only that they understand his argument. Scientific parallax occurs when some members of Disraeli's audience understand the two sides of the chartist argument differently than his dialogue. In an effort to create an understanding with his audience Disraeli wrestles with his own views of chartism in his character dialogue between Egremont and Sybil. This can be observed in the second chapter of book V.

In the events leading up to Disraeli's argumentative dialogue, it is revealed that Walter Gerard, Sybil's father, is a Chartist. Earlier in the novel Egremont lives with the Gerards under the pseudonym of Franklin. While in the guise of Franklin, Egremont passively investigates the lives of his middle-class hosts, preparing him for his political stance and future position in the House of Commons. After leaving the Gerards and serving in the House, Egremont meets Sybil again and must reveal his true identity, exposing himself as a politician. Sybil, faithful to her father's views of Chartism, becomes disillusioned with her old friend, Franklin. She must now engage with Egremont and his views, contrary to her father's, of Chartism.

The difficulty faced by Disraeli in his fiction is best understood with some explanation of Chartism. In his introduction to Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class*,

David McLellan writes: “In 1838 a People’s Charter had been drawn up demanding universal suffrage for men, a secret ballot, and annual parliaments with the abolition of a property qualification. In 1842 a petition to Parliament on behalf of the Charter gained 3,500,000 signatures” (xvi). The Charter was an attempt by the lower class to bid for parliamentary positions. Along with the demands listed by McLellan a demand for members of parliament to draw salaries was also included (Disraeli 225). As professional politicians, members of the lower class could resist the peerage of the aristocracy and mobilize a new direction for promoting themselves. In a system of competitive capitalism this makes sense, but the Tories (Disraeli’s party) would lose their claim to upper-class status and their property would have a less direct influence in Europe’s economy. Labor would have a greater influence in Europe’s economy. The Chartists’ demands not only contradicted Disraeli’s politics, but they deterred his fictional solution. As Cazamian writes of Disraeli’s ambivalent stance regarding Chartism: “Disraeli, however, could not completely disregard the sufferings of the people. He knew that the problem posed by the Reform Act had been complicated considerably by the rise of Chartism. Although he did not name or describe the Chartists precisely, he allowed social problems to be discernible behind the political questions” (189). While the Reform Act of 1832 removed ownership of land as a requirement for holding positions in parliament, it still required members to have a mortgage of at least 10 pounds a year. Members were still connected with property.

The “social problems” and “political questions” alluded to by Cazamian are confronted by Egremont in his discussion with Sybil after she has complemented him on a parliamentary speech he has given printed in the newspaper. At the end of their discussion, Disraeli attempts to justify his political views using the dialogue of Egremont. In this

discussion, Disraeli contends with Sybil's faithfulness to her father's views. He attempts to avoid Chartism by hinting at the rise of a Tory majority in England's deadlocked government which will enable his aristocracy to legislate charitable reforms that will raise the living standards of the lower class. As part of his position on Chartism, Disraeli/Egremont appeals to Sybil's empathy toward the lower class by emphasizing the "raising" of their living standards rather than "leveling" them with the upper-class. In the dialogue of Egremont, Disraeli is unable to overcome the scientific gap between his aversion to Chartism and its justification by his characters, Walter and Sybil. In an effort to explain his political stance and hold Sybil's interest in Egremont, Disraeli writes Egremont's dialogue like so:

Those opinions which you have been educated to dread and mistrust, are opinions that are dying away. Predominant opinions are generally the opinions of the generation that is vanishing. Let an accident, which speculation could not foresee, the balanced state at this moment of parliamentary parties, cease, and in a few years, more or less, cease it must, and you will witness a development of the new mind of England, which will make up by its rapid progress for its retarded action. I live among these men; I know their inmost souls; I watch their instincts and their impulses; I know the principles which they have imbibed, and I know, their inmost souls; I watch their instincts and their impulses; I know the principles which they have imbibed, and I know, however hindered by circumstances for the moment, those principles must bear their fruit. It will be a produce hostile to the oligarchical system. The future principle of English politics will not be a leveling principle; not a principle adverse to privileges, but favorable to their extension. It will seek to ensure equality, not by leveling the Few, but by elevating the Many. (Disraeli 294)

Egremont's/Disraeli's abstract speech advances a Tory agenda. The "opinions" Sybil "mistrusts" are those of the politicians that have rejected the Charter. "Predominant opinions" associated with an older generation are those of Walter Gerard and the civilian Chartists. The "Accident" alluded to is a Tory majority in the House of Commons, breaking the deadlock which slows any radical change. The "principles" of parliament Egremont claims to know remain abstract until they "bear their fruit": "their fruit" being the legislation that will empower the English peerage to oversee industry, establish church reform, and raise the living standards of the poor via charity. Further the absence of "leveling" any social classes and inabilities to undermine upper-class "privileges" are added. In essence, Egremont's final claims in the discussion seem to justify Sybil's "mistrust." Disraeli is practicing his own politics trying to woo Sybil. It is difficult to know if he believed his own argument and if what he perceived as the greatest good for society would have been what the people wanted. Although Disraeli was able to write fiction that coincided with his views, he still struggled with supporting his policy, even in fiction, with a subjective public.

In Disraeli's solution to England's condition, Walter's and Sybil's opposition to Disraeli's politics is repressed from his reasoning. Disraeli is struggling with paradoxes and omissions: the paradoxes of his fictional characters, Walter and Sybil, who believe that Chartism and repeal of the Corn Laws will offer relief, and his own Tory politics attempting through parliament to compartmentalize agriculture, industry, and nonprofit charity in a way that removes them from any dynamic adjustments within capitalism. The peerage of the Tory party, their land holdings, and Corn Law isolated any property market and agriculture. The industrial interests of the Whig party were at the mercy of property owners and under the scrutiny of the public for an inability to sustain livable wages in a saturated market. The Poor

Law had consolidated the parishes to provide oppressive institutions where poor people were held without necessities out of view from the public. The state controlled religion and charitable institutions. For Disraeli and other politicians there are rational parallaxes resulting in an oppressive material praxis. Unlike this single example of Disraeli's scientific parallax, political parallax is interactive, dynamic, and supports many social positions.

Chapter 3

Political Parallax

Disraeli's Withdrawal from England's Impending Democracy

The political parallax that occurs in Disraeli's novel, *Sybil*, is a fictional and symbolic discourse between democratic freedom and social control. Disraeli was an extreme conservative politician. While Disraeli's practical philosophy of keeping things simple was logical in reference to tracking economic resources to social benefits, it was restricted by its allocation of those resources in a direct flow from the aristocracy to the working class and poor. England, during the writing of *Sybil*, was in a transition from a feudal monarchy to a global, capitalist economy. The English Reformation of the sixteenth century had removed Catholic control from Church and State and the rise of Protestantism after the crowning of William III in 1688 freed English society to pursue theological charity (until the Poor Law of 1834) or secular capitalistic interests. The rise of parliament and the Reform Act of 1832 brought England closer to democracy and moved them toward the dissolution of peerage and opening up of borders to free trade. Disraeli's conservative theories would have reversed this democratic process and returned England to a Catholic Monarchy and put the nobility in charge of England's industrial complex.

For Disraeli to achieve his fictional solution, he has to first work his theology into the structure of government. To do this he shows how his Catholic theology, not blatant in *Sybil*, was divided from England's monarchy and then devises characters to represent that theology and raises them to noble positions. Disraeli's fictional theology is entrenched with England's history which is predominantly Catholic until the Protestant Reformation. According to Daniel R. Schwarz:

The convent and the Mowbray Cathedral are remnants of the tradition of mercy and charity represented by Marney Abbey before the monasteries were seized by Henry VIII. (As we have seen, until the 1850's, Disraeli was sympathetic to Catholics because they too had been an ostracized minority until 1828.) By implying that the Anglican Church is not fundamentally different from the Catholic Church particularly at a time when several members of the Oxford Movement had made the journey to Rome, Disraeli was taking a controversial position. (112)

During the Protestant Reformation, under Henry VIII, the Catholic Church and its lands were confiscated by the English monarch, and its property and wealth were distributed among the populace loyal to the Crown. This was when the Church at Marney Abbey was sacked and laid to ruin. It is at this point in history Disraeli began his theology for a solution to the Condition of England. Sybil, Walter Gerard, and Stephen Morley meet at the ruins, where they previously met Egremont, who was fleeing from debt owed to his electoral creditors. Sybil is the symbol for theological enlightenment regarding charity and eternal moral values. Catherine Gallagher writes:

As a symbol of the sacred, she is identical with her separation from the profane: "holy walls," her father explains, "have made her what she is." Sybil thus represents a kind of value that is not socially produced, that is, indeed, produced by its removal from the social process of exchange. (214)

Sybil is an ideal representation of Catholic theology that has not been influenced or corrupted by society. She is a pure source of altruism, representative of the charitable deeds advocated by the church, she is the symbol that will unite Disraeli's theology with his politics. Sybil's

Catholic peerage can be traced before the Protestant Reformation and she has been raised in a convent and contemplates taking the vows of a nun. Throughout Book II, Chapter 8, Sybil is referred to by her father and Morley as “The Religious.” It is in this chapter that her origin and the papers that separate her father from a seat in parliament are discussed. Her father tells Morley:

I never thought of them, or thought of them with disgust, as the cause of my ruin.

Then when you came the other day, and showed me in the book that the last Abbot of Marney was a Walter Gerard, the old feeling stirred again; and I could not help telling you that my fathers fought at Azincourt, though I was only the overlooker at Mr.

Trafford’s mill. (Disraeli 83)

Before starting his story with the separate parts of his solution, Disraeli has laid the groundwork for his theological consolidation in Book I. In his semi-fictional history of England he includes an ancestor of Egremont’s who uses the name Greymount. This ancestor is made the Ecclesiastical Commissioner for King Henry VIII and acquires a vast land holding during the confiscation of Catholic property. Between the Protestant Reformation and the rise of Protestantism after William III, the Egremonts use their real name and their senior holds the title of Baron and they convert to Catholicism under the reign of King James. After William III is crowned, the senior Egremont is demoted to Earl. It isn’t until the (fictional version of the) Reform Act of 1832 that Charles’s older brother is made Earl of Marney. At the death of their father, “it was yet destined for him to achieve the hereditary purpose of his family, he died in the full faith of dukism; worshipping the duke, and believing that ultimately he should himself become a duke. It was under all the circumstances a euthanasia; he expired leaning as it were on his white wand and babbling of strawberry-

leaves” (Disraeli 25). Disraeli must continue with the circumstances that lead to the deaths of Walter Gerard, the Earl of Marney and then the marriage of Sybil and Charles Egremont for readers to infer his solution to the Condition of England. Becoming Duke is important in Disraeli’s plan for Charles because this puts him one promotion away from the King. It also ennoble him to the highest position in the House of Lords.

The novel ends once Charles Egremont lets his sister-in-law, Arabella, and the eldest Mowbray daughter, Lady Joan, reside with him after his brother’s death. Egremont’s brother had refused to pay his election creditors until he married Lady Joan to gain her vast estate. Egremont refused the marriage after seeing Sybil. Arabella is Lady Joan’s best friend. Readers by this time are also aware that Sybil has acquired the papers to her father’s property, legally proclaiming her as owner of the Mowbray estate, replacing Lady Joan as its heir. In a severely ironic conclusion, Disraeli writes:

Between Marney Abbey, where he insisted for the present that Arabella should reside, and Mowbray, Egremont passed his life for many months, until, by some management which we need not trace or analyze, Lady Marney [Joan] came over one day to the convent at Mowbray, and carried back Sybil to Marney Abbey, never again to quit it until on her bridal day, when the Earl and Countess of Marney [Egremont & Sybil] departed for Italy, where they passed nearly a year and from which they had just returned at the commencement of this chapter. (419)

This excerpt is interesting because it leaves time for the reader to contemplate the possibilities alluded to by Disraeli. There were “many months” before Egremont and Sybil married after the deaths of the important estate holders. This may have been over legal

concerns. After the marriage the two of them spend a year in Italy. This offers the possibility of an alliance with the Catholic Church. At the “commencement” of the chapter two Ladies of aristocracy make their first public visit to the Egremont estate. They discuss Charles Egremont’s earnings: “‘You may well say immense,’ said Lady Bardolf. ‘Mr. Ormsby, and there is no better judge of another man’s income, says there are not three peers in the kingdom who have so much a year clear’” (418). This puts Egremont in the position of Duke. For the most part, Disraeli has created his fictional solution, consolidating the monarchy with his theology, but must still create a direct connection between the nobility and the industrial complex of England.

Disraeli gives readers a preview of how England mixes peerage and politics at the beginning of *Sybil*. Charles Egremont does not want to be a member of parliament when he comes home from an extended trip. His brother, Earl of Marney, convinces him to run for a position in the House of Commons. The Earl of Marney can hold a place in the House of Lords, but not in the House of Commons. To gain vertical influence in government Lord Marney needs Egremont in the House of Commons. In his conclusion Disraeli has put Egremont in the position of Duke in the House of Lords, highest rank, and must now complete the task of uniting him with the industrial complex. In order to gain the documents that returned Sybil to her estate, two men desiring to be her suitors, Baptist Hatton and Stephen Morley, agitate the Chartists to sack Mowbray castle, gaining access to the muniments room. During the siege of Mowbray Castle, two factory workers, Dandy Mick and Devilsdust, help retrieve the Gerards’ documents. The siege of Mowbray Castle and the saving of Sybil by Egremont on its grounds is an allegory in reverse of the siege at Marney Church by Greymont (Egremont’s forebear). This works well when considered with Sybil’s

observance of the abbot's sixteenth century tomb at the Church of Marney with her father's name on it. Now Egremont has atoned for his forebear's sins and the estates are united with the Catholic theology returned to dominance. This of course is symbolized by the marriage, but Disraeli is not done yet. After Egremont and Sybil have achieved higher peerage, he writes:

Dandy Mick was rewarded for all the dangers he had encountered in the service of Sybil, and what he conceived was countered in the service of Sybil, and what he conceived was the vindication of popular rights. Lord Marney established him in business, and Mick took Devilsdust for a partner. Devilsdust, having thus obtained a position in society, and become a capitalist, thought it but a due homage to the social decencies to assume a decorous appellation, and he called himself by the name of the town where he was born. The firm of Radley, Mowbray, and Co., is a rising one; and will probably furnish in time a crop of members of Parliament and peers of the realm. (Disraeli 420)

As Egremont's forebear, Greymount, was given title and property by King Henry VIII, so too Egremont grants his "Commissioners," titles and property. Readers should be able to infer a possible solution to the Condition of England. Disraeli consolidates his theology with the monarchy, and then closes by directly connecting his symbolic monarchy with industry. While his solution has material world potential, given the cooperation of his fictional characters and society, the possible material-world history he fictionalizes is reversed in his solution suggesting that any progress made by Europe's existing society has been futile. Disraeli's use of Chartism, Chartists and the Plug Riots of 1842 fit well with his allegory,

considering that they are led by Bishop Hatton, but Cazamian writes of the haphazard reality of the lower-class, civilian movement:

the second petition in 1842 was as badly received as the first had been; and the final act in the drama of Chartism was played out on 10 April 1848 as the movement, weakened by quarrels among its leaders and damage by O'Connor's revolutionary rhetoric, collapsed among ridicule. . . . The momentary reanimation of Chartism by the European struggles of 1848 did not survive the general reaction which followed.

(75)

While Chartist demands of removing the property requirement, instating universal suffrage, and having salaried members of parliament would be legislated into law in future English governments, Disraeli's view of the proletarian struggle was more concerned with the treatment of workers rather than progressive politics in a changing parliament. Conservative views of change rely on leadership decisions more than government expansion and/or introducing radical policies. Disraeli's fictional solution relied on England's pre-industrial and feudal government to improve workers' lives based on decisions made by a Tory parliament loyal to the landed aristocracy or lords as they are still known. England's history and its system of peerage can be followed in Disraeli's fiction. The peerage of his fictional characters follows the English system. In researching Disraeli's novel, it is the peerage system that allows for an understanding of character's decisions based on political and personal agendas. The political parallax of Disraeli's fiction is a result of his conservative view within a changing society moving toward democracy. There is not anything prescriptively wrong with his fictional solution, but it does give control to the landed aristocracy. The difficulty with his solution is that the English system of government and its

policies do not change, only its members. And it is these members who must oversee the redistribution of wealth, improperly handled by their peers.

Chapter 4

Gaskell: Ontological Parallax

Paralleling Margaret's Stoning & Frederick's Mutiny

Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *North and South* is the most philosophical of the three novels investigated in this writing. Rather than discuss politics in partisan rhetoric and present its theology in a totalizing way, Gaskell probes situations experienced by her characters in a narrative that gives readers only a basic argument. Characters turn the arguments over in dialogue or later, when they have time to think. They justify arguments from their own experience and afterward ponder other people's thoughts and reactions. Gaskell's feminist argument in the novel values persistence and open communication once characters perceive their failures. Eventually characters find common ground and make progress. Like other industrial novelists of the period, Gaskell read blue books, reports and news about the lower class; she lived in Manchester, however, and had direct experience of English industrialism. Married to a Unitarian minister and having a strong background in religion, it is likely Gaskell was familiar with feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, as would most literati of the period. The failures and misunderstandings of patriarchal culture analyzed by Wollstonecraft are depicted by Gaskell in her characters, who then persist until finding fictional solutions. Wollstonecraft and Gaskell try to make an intellectual argument that levels the sexes in a patriarchal culture, but then, as now (the twenty-first century) such valid arguments remain elusive, banished into a gap of ontological parallax periodically challenged.

Wollstonecraft claims, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* that the majority of enlisted men in the military are like women in patriarchal culture, at the bottom of a male

hierarchy where they must follow orders. She compares young soldiers to idle young women. Like soldiers in uniform, women must dress and appear proper to impress the higher ranks of the male sex because they have neither the education nor the opportunities offered to their counterparts. Wollstonecraft points out women have only “the desire of establishing themselves, —the only way women can rise in the world, —by marriage. And this desire making mere animals of them, when they marry they act as such children may be expected to act: —they dress; they paint, and nickname God’s creatures” (10). Without education and options, women to Wollstonecraft are like young men in uniform left to the wisdom or vice of a chain-of-command, a man or group of men more easily tempted to corruption by power. Wollstonecraft writes of common people impressed by uniforms and formal etiquette, saying:

nothing can be so prejudicial to the morals of the inhabitants of country towns as the occasional residence of a set of idle superficial young men, whose only occupation is gallantry, and whose polished manners render vice more dangerous, by concealing its deformity under gay ornamental drapery. An air of fashion, which is but a badge of slavery, and proves that the soul has not a strong individual character, awes simple country people into an imitation of the vices, when they cannot catch the slippery graces, of politeness. (17)

Wollstonecraft’s argument is humorous in its candid comparison of women’s dress and men’s uniforms, but her main reasoning for the comparison is education and lack of it for women. Further, she makes a direct comparison of women’s education with that of soldiers:

As a proof that education gives this appearance of weakness to females, we may instance the example of military men, who are, like them, sent into the world before

their minds have been stored with knowledge or fortified by principles. The consequences are similar; soldiers acquire a little superficial knowledge, snatched from the muddy current of conversation, and, from continually mixing with society, they gain, what is termed a knowledge of the world; and this acquaintance with manners and customs has frequently been confounded with a knowledge of the human heart. But can the crude fruit of casual observation, never brought to the test of judgment, formed by comparing speculation and experience, deserve such a distinction? Soldiers, as well as women, practice the minor virtues with punctilious politeness. Where is then the sexual difference, when the education has been the same? All the difference that I can discern, arises from the superior advantage of liberty, which enables the former to see more life. (Wollstonecraft 23)

Wollstonecraft's pointing out of weakness associated with lack of education shows a reinforcement of belief in the adage of "women as the weaker sex." As information is parsed out in a disciplined military fashion, leaving the lower ranks at a disadvantage, so women, like soldiers, must remain conditioned to their social positions in the patriarchy.

While it is difficult to know whether Gaskell alludes directly to Wollstonecraft's argument in *North and South*, the arguments and figures employed by both authors are similar. Gaskell, for instance, compares Frederick Hale's mutiny with his sister Margaret's defense of Thornton at the Milton strike. This reenacts Wollstonecraft's comparison of women and soldiers. In Gaskell's novel, readers can make a direct comparison between a woman and a soldier along with the reactions of their peers. Wollstonecraftian questions of education are tested in *North and South*, as factory laborers and enlisted navy hold similar class positions. Both Wollstonecraft and Gaskell are concerned with the appearance of

women and reaction to them by the public, especially when women assert their ideas and justify them without male support.

The difficulty investigated by Gaskell in her novel by paralleling Frederick and Margaret is that of public support after confronting authority. If gender is overlooked, then the only difference between Frederick's participation in a mutiny against oppressive authority, and that of Margaret against Thornton's subjection of his workers, and his workers' reactions should present a philosophical parallax. The views and/or ideologies should consist of comparable circumstances with different conclusions. After Mrs. Hale tells Margaret the story of how she and Frederick's father found out about the mutiny in the newspaper and what the circumstances were, Margaret supports her mother's defense of Frederick's actions, saying: "Loyalty and obedience to wisdom and justice are fine; but it is still finer to defy arbitrary power, unjustly and cruelly used—not on behalf of ourselves, but on behalf of others more helpless" (Gaskell 109). In their resistance, Frederick and the crew had put Captain Reid and his followers on a dingy and sailed off. The Captain had pressured the crew into making fatal mistakes trying to cut down their rigging time and had a man whipped after he nearly fell from a mast. The navy, after receiving Reid's report, didn't see his behavior as life threatening and brought the crew up on charges of mutiny. Frederick was no longer seen as a productive member of society or even acceptable. He becomes an exile in Spain. Margaret's situation, like her brother Frederick's, is in defense of the helpless workers in Thornton's factory. The striking workers are gathered outside the factory threatening Thornton and the Irish workers he has imported to replace them. Angered by Thornton's decision, Margaret tells him to go out and confront the English workers. Outside, Thornton attempts to settle the crowd that is threatening him with "clogs." Margaret stands in front of

Thornton and puts her arms around him, a “clog” misses her and then she is hit by a “sharp pebble” that scratches her head. After recovering from the incident and discussing it with her mother in the evening, Margaret lies awake pondering the event:

She could not be alone, prostrate, powerless as she was, —a cloud of faces looked up at her, giving her no idea of fierce vivid anger, or of personal danger, but a deep sense of shame that she should thus be the object of universal regard—a sense of shame so acute that it seemed as if she would fain have burrowed into the earth to hide herself, and yet she could not escape out of that unwinking glare of many eyes. (Gaskell 191)

Like Frederick, secretly returning to Milton, hiding from the public because of his participation in the mutiny, Margaret feels as though she has been exiled. She has the sense that she has done something wrong, yet has no justification for it. Like Frederick, she has stood up to a higher ranking oppressor and tried to defend people she believed helpless. The soldier and the woman in Gaskell are similar, but the results differ in that Frederick is exiled from society and, later, Margaret is revered within the same society. Frederick is exiled because of military bureaucracy, but Margaret’s acceptance is philosophical. Assuming her story got out in the public, there are a few conspicuous reasons she may have been well regarded after the strike incident: one, she did not reveal her feelings for Thornton and based her protective behavior of him and the Irish replacement workers on principle; two, she and Higgins acted as agents between Thornton and the striking workers. These reasons support Gaskell’s philosophy of persistent communication toward problem solving, but again, like Gaskell, readers must infer that Margaret’s reasoning regarding her actions is public knowledge. The philosophical parallax between Margaret and her brother is vague, but within reason when considering the military’s due course of action and Frederick being

brought up on charges of mutiny. Both Frederick and Margaret defend helpless people, but Frederick's actions are defined by the military while Margaret's are in a public suspension of acceptable behavior.

Like Gaskell, Wollstonecraft writes about the helplessness of subordinated culture that leads people like Margaret and Frederick to feel guilty for standing up to authority. Wollstonecraft believes that there is a gap in education that leads the oppressed into a state of fealty. She writes:

The great misfortune is this, that they both [soldiers & women] acquire manners before morals, and a knowledge of life before they have, from reflection, any acquaintance with the grand ideal outline of human nature. The consequence is natural; satisfied with common nature, they become a prey to prejudices, and taking all their opinions on credit, they blindly submit to authority. So that, if they have any sense, it is a kind of instinctive glance, that catches proportions, and decides with respect to manners; but fails when arguments are to be pursued below the surface, or opinions analyzed. (24)

And this is where parallax exists between Wollstonecraft's and Gaskell's arguments.

Gaskell's characters, Margaret and Frederick, are middle-class characters. Margaret is an educated woman living well with her mother and father, and Frederick was an officer in the English navy. There is a paradigm shift between the lower class as discussed by Wollstonecraft and the middle-class fictionalized by Gaskell, but according to Wollstonecraft education allows its holders to speak out against authority (24, 77). It allows people to defend themselves, and this explains why Margaret and Frederick both stand up against authority.

Their guilts seem to stem from subverting the system of social class: Frederick and his higher-ranked crew members, Margaret and the male factory workers of her patriarchal culture. This occurrence in human nature, guilt for stepping out of the class hierarchy to challenge accepted practices, must be overcome with persistence and communication, key factors in Gaskell's solution to the Condition of England.

Chapter 5

Scientific Parallax

Misunderstanding Natural Capitalism & Implied Paternalism

The scientific parallax in its purest form occurs in *North and South* as an advanced attempt at counterargument by Margaret Hale. Often discussions related to scientific parallax will get caught in futile discussions of nature versus nurture. Gaskell is concerned with the paternal metaphor, as part of the “nurture” side. The paternal metaphor uses a same power borrowed from the patriarchal family to place a male figure in charge of others lower in the hierarchy, women and children. During the European Industrial Revolution it wasn’t uncommon for the upper echelon of the manufacturing industry to speak about their workers (or hands as they were called) as if they were all children. The male dominated field of manufacturing during the period can be thought of as a patriarchal structure, without the biological ties; thus, a paternal metaphor. In *North and South*, the paternal argument is built by five characters: Captain Lennox, Margaret, Mrs. Hale, John Thornton, and Mr. Hale. Mrs. Hale begins the argument by quoting Captain Lennox: “I heard, moreover, that it was considered to the advantage of the masters to have ignorant workmen—not hedge-lawyers, as Captain Lennox used to call those men in his company who questioned and would know the reason for every order” (Gaskell 119). Mrs. Hale compares factory workers to soldiers. Her comparison is similar to Wollstonecraft’s comparison of women and soldiers, but Margaret picks up where her mother left off and pursues the paternal metaphor, further defining what Captain Lennox meant, “But he—that is, my informant—spoke as if the masters would like their hands to be merely, tall, large children—living in the present moment—with a blind unreasoning kind of obedience” (119). Here, the rhetoric of slavery can be perceived, but obedient children are the vehicle of the metaphor. Margaret changes the metaphor from that

of soldiers and their captain to workers and their master. Thornton, finding a way to bolster his position agrees with Margaret. He says, “Indeed, long past infancy, children and young people are the happiest under the unfailing laws of a discreet, firm authority. I agree with Miss Hale so far as to consider our people in the condition of children, while I deny that we, the masters, have anything to do with the making or keeping them so” (120). Thornton agrees with the parent/child metaphor, but makes sure to add that the workers have free will. They may or may not work for him in his factory. Mr. Hale acknowledges Thornton by agreeing with the metaphor and suggesting factory owners have a responsibility for their workers, like parents with teenagers, to help them reach independence and attain an adult self-awareness that does not require orders. It is here in the conversation that Margaret intervenes by introducing a purely philosophical argument regarding self-awareness, a purely scientific view of human reason and adaptation along the lines of Descartes (evil genius argument) and Putnam (brain in a vat argument). Margaret says:

I heard a story of what happened in Nuremberg only three or four years ago. A rich man there lived alone in one of the immense mansions which were formerly both dwellings and warehouses. It was reported that he had a child, but no one knew of it for certain. For forty years this rumor kept rising and falling—never utterly dying away. After his death it was found to be true. He had a son—an overgrown man with the unexercised intellect of a child, whom he had kept up in that strange way, in order to save him from temptation and error. But, of course, when this great old child was turned loose into the world, every bad counselor had power over him. He did not know good from evil. His father had made the blunder of bringing him up in ignorance and taking it for innocence; and after fourteen months of riotous living, the

city authorities had to take charge of him, in order to save him from starvation. He could not even use words effectively enough to be a successful beggar. (Gaskell 121)

When considering Descartes and Putnam, the fiction or plausibility of their accounts is questioned, but is this so with Margaret's story? Her story of a well-meaning father seems more plausible than Descartes's evil genius or Putnam's computer creating a virtual world in the child's/man's brain. What is important to notice in Gaskell's novel is the note associated with the city of Nuremberg. Easson's and Shuttleworth's note observes that this is "possibly an allusion to the famous case of Kaspar Hauser, who was found, and brought before the Nuremberg authorities, on 26 May 1828" (Gaskell 442). The case of Hauser can be posited for all three arguments, but Margaret's embellishments suggest some reason for the treatment of the child in her story, "ignorance" is mistaken for benevolent "innocence." Contrary to Margaret's story, Hauser was brought up in a small dark compartment by a stranger over the course of many years. The reasons for his horrifying treatment are unknown. His case, with all its contradictions, does offer a prime example for philosophical discussions concerned with behavior related to lengthy isolation and social adaptation, possibly the direction that Margaret/Gaskell is taking the argument in.

To understand Gaskell's approach, it is important to know Hauser's history and the conditions of England's working class. Once the history of Hauser and the English-working-class of the mid-nineteenth century are compared then they can be analyzed with Margaret's story. This results in multiple transitions of scientific parallax, transitions which are different between individual and social rationalizations in cognitive awareness.

Given the case of Hauser, a parallax can be viewed between Margaret's story and that of Hauser. The case of Kaspar Hauser begins with a strange boy, assumed 16 years of age, arriving in Nuremberg with a note claiming he wanted to join the "light cavalry" like his father. Strangely, the boy couldn't answer any questions and only knew a few enigmatic phrases that he seemed to parrot repeatedly. His limbs were weak, as if unused, and he was taken to the mayor's where his case was recorded before he was reintegrated into society. According to the "Proclamation" of mayor Jakob Friedrich Binder in 1828: "The fact that in his prison he was able to speak with his toys, before he had seen the unknown man and had been instructed by him in language, proves that the crime against him goes back to the first years of his childhood, perhaps between his second and fourth year, and therefore had begun in a time when he was able to speak and was perhaps already the object of a noble education" (Masson 170). Kaspar had a limited vocabulary and his toys consisted of two wooden horses and a dog. He had these in his prison where he was raised on black bread and water. Later, Kasper would speak of how his water tasted and it was inferred he had been dosed with opium or the like and his prison cleaned, along with himself, while he slept. His prison is described as, "a small, narrow, low room at ground level, without a hardwood floor, it would seem, just hard-packed earth, but whose ceiling consisted of two slabs of wood that were pushed and tied together. Two small, oblong windows were shuttered with wooden logs and therefore let in only a few weak rays of hazy light. Never did he see the sun" (164). Kaspar was raised in perfect solitude with the barest essentials. His only necessary movement was positioning himself to expel bodily waste. Binder writes, "In the ground of his prison there was, so it seems, a hole dug out to form a kind of pot or some similar receptacle, with a cover, in which he could perform his bodily necessities. Not far from that, lying on the

ground, was a sack of straw that he at first called his bed” (164). Minimal movement and food were conditions of his imprisonment, but something that is difficult to comprehend and must be imagined is, “He was in this prison for a long, long, time, but how long he does not know, for he has no concept of divisions of time. He saw nobody in there, no ray of sunlight, no shimmer of the moon, no light, heard no human voice, no sound of a bird, no cry from an animal, no footstep” (165). Even more bizarre than all the troubles faced from his sensory deprivation, Binder writes, “the greatest lack of guile in his nature, which still does not distinguish [between] the sexes, cannot fathom that there is a difference, and even now is only able to tell people apart by the different kinds of clothes they wear” (169). Kaspar’s case is extreme, even more so than that described by Margaret. Kaspar had no father to raise him and little more room to do more than roll over. According to Margaret the victim in her story lives to be forty and causes trouble. Kaspar has no sense of evil, is lured into a park three years after he is found and stabbed to death. Strangely, Kaspar’s case seems to show immorality is learned in society which coincides with the intentions of the father to keep his son in a state of benevolent innocence. Margaret’s story explains how “bad counselors” were able to provoke the boy-man in her story to cause a disturbance for “fourteen months.” In view of the parallax between these stories, Margaret’s has been adjusted to fit the parent/child metaphor in society being explored by Gaskell. Her forty year-old boy-man was able to have a period of “riotous living” before “city authorities” had to take charge and feed him. He was also raised in an immense mansion that used to be an industrial warehouse. This helps contextualize her story to fit with Thornton and his workers. Even though Margaret’s story is fiction and derived from an actual account, the stories have enough in common to carry her point.

When read alongside Engels's accounts of impoverished society, the stories of Margaret and Binder take on new meaning. Engels's accounts build a societal allegory of an isolated lower-class trapped in poverty and oppression by a privileged upper-class. Looking at some passages from Engels, a similar story can be seen with a multitude of people in the child's role of the paternal metaphor rather than Kaspar or Margaret's boy-man. Engels describes the way that poor immigrants from Ireland lived in the industrial slums, writing:

It often happens that a whole Irish family is crowded into one bed; often a heap of filthy straw or quilts of old sacking cover all in an indiscriminate heap, where all alike are degraded by want, stolidity, and wretchedness. Often the inspectors found, in a single house, two families in two rooms. All slept in one, and used the other as a kitchen and dining-room in common. Often more than one family lived in a single damp cellar, in whose pestilent atmosphere twelve to sixteen persons were crowded together. To these and other sources of disease must be added that pigs were kept, and other disgusting things of the most revolting kind were found. (77)

Further, Engels describes tiny courtyards where the poor collectively piled their refuse into a festering "dung-heap" that fouled the air in the unventilated spaces where they lived (108). The description of the families in cellars works comparatively well with Hauser's tiny prison, except that his keeper cleaned out his hole, whereas the poor in Engels's description lived with their refuse and contracted diseases. Groups of filthy people in their unchanged clothes huddled together on straw beds, maybe with their pig, in a heavy atmosphere of effluent stench. Engels describes stagnant pools in these slums where there is no drainage (108). It is evident that there were many children living in these conditions, probably helping to support

their families with a meager wage. Such children had no chance of an education. Engels explains:

Moreover, a mass of children work the whole week through in the mills or at home, and therefore cannot attend school. The evening schools, supposed to be attended by children who are employed during the day, are almost abandoned or attended without benefit. It is asking too much, that young workers who have been using themselves up twelve hours in the day should go to school from eight to ten at night. And those who try it usually fall asleep, as is testified by hundreds of witnesses in the Children's Employment Commission's Report. (121)

Of course, when compared with Hauser, the obvious circumstances are that the children have access to human contact. There seems to be some variety in sleeping in the family huddle and working at the busy factory. In a way, this activity can be more like Hauser's, in that the children are too weak and ignorant to leave or do anything else. What job can a weakened child without education do?

In most branches the worker's activity is reduced to some paltry, purely mechanical manipulation, repeated minute after minute, unchanged year after year. How much human feeling, what abilities can a man retain in his thirtieth year, who has made needle points or filed toothed wheels twelve hours every day from his early childhood, living all the time under the conditions forced upon the English proletarian. (Engels 130)

Suddenly these children, these generations, recall the boy-man in Margaret's story. The "proletariat" in Engels description is brought up from an early age, like Hauser, without

civilized contact in an isolated culture and attains an advanced age like Margaret's boy-man, unable to communicate beyond rudimentary desires. Here, Gaskell has made her point. She has created a layer of lenses by which similarity magnifies the problems of society in the circumstances of an individual. The child is left isolated by the parent, exploited by industry, until it reaches a mature age, unable to grasp adult thought and communication, becoming a burden to society. Failure is perceived and now society must persevere with its mistakes until a solution is found.

Gaskell's analogy of society attaining awareness of itself like that of an individual is important to her solution, important in that all participants have enough knowledge to introduce open communication and resolve *The Condition of England*, but is society in 1855 anything like the conditions advanced above? According to Engels, the proletariat isn't really as ignorant as Hauser or Margaret's boy-man. Engels believes that the proletariat is aware of politics and economy in a way that lends simple explanation to their oppression. He writes:

The English working man, who can scarcely read and still less write, nevertheless knows very well where his own interest and that of the nation lies. He knows, too, what the special interest of the bourgeoisie is, and what he has to expect of that bourgeoisie. If he cannot write he can speak, and speak in public; if he has no arithmetic, he can, nevertheless, reckon with the Political Economists enough to see through a Corn-Law-repealing bourgeois, and to get the better of him in argument; if celestial matters remain very mixed for him in spite of all the effort of the preachers, he sees all the more clearly into terrestrial, political, and social questions. (Engels 124)

Seemingly, according to Engels, the proletariat was aware that corn prices were too high and that exported corn would lower prices. He also seems to suggest that the landed aristocracy and the church were in league to convince the proletariat of the importance of having the Corn Law. This fits Disraeli's politics, but it seems quite a generalization, certainly one that a person used to overhearing political conversations of the period could make. But it must be pointed out that Engels wrote his book, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, in 1844. Gaskell's novel wasn't published until 1855. In this time the working conditions of the proletariat changed drastically and while Gaskell's novel reflects this change, the parent/child metaphor used during the period did not. According to literary critic James Richard Simmons Jr.:

During the 1840's and 50's, with the ill-used factory child now essentially a figure of the past, sympathetic writers turned to adults as the focus of their industrial novels. This posed a new problem, however, as novelists now had to produce works that would interest readers through other means than merely appealing to their sympathy: a dirty, cold, poor child living in the streets excites sympathy, while a dirty, cold, poor adult living in the streets is a ne'er-do-well who needs to get a job. (344)

The turn toward adults in industrial novels is likely due to the Factory Act of 1834. This legislation supposedly banned hiring children under nine, limited the hours of child workers ages 9 to 13 to nine hours during the day, and those ages 13 to 18 to approximately fourteen hours during the day, along with a mandated two hours of school a day (Engels 180). Engels tells readers that factories got around this legislation by hiring "operatives" from the plant to teach and kept enough children working long enough to let profits far exceed penalties (182). The legislation that eventually led to the removal of children from factory work was a bill

passed in 1844, limiting children ages 8-13 to 6 and a half hours a day, and the Ten Hours Law, which forbade children under 18 from working 10 hours a day (Gaskell 442, Engels 178). But the Ten Hours Law would not be passed until 1847 (Simmons 340). In Gaskell's novel *Bessy Higgins* is the only child worker, but she lies in bed all day due to her bad lungs from breathing too much "fluff" from carding cotton in a factory. She is eighteen—hardly a child, still representing the short life and family hardship experienced by many lower-class people of the period. The scientific parallax exposed by Gaskell in her novel is the rising awareness of society regarding the working class and old arguments still propagated among some upper and middle-class capitalists. This is made clear by the paternal metaphor spoken about by the five characters that ends with Margaret's story about the boy-man. In Margaret's allegory, the difficulties experienced in society caused by the boy-man are taken care of by public servants: "the city authorities had to take charge of him." Like the difficulties caused by Margaret's boy-man: difficulties in society associated with young, uneducated people, raised in mills, had to be slowly legislated away by the English Parliament.

Chapter 6

Political Parallax

Advocating Social Responsibility in the Factory Work Place

Gaskell's fictional solution for the Condition of England must be inferred by readers along with Margaret's and Thornton's marriage. Much of Gaskell's solution depends on Thornton's theories that have been influenced by his association with Margaret. This is emphasized by their inferred marriage and Margaret's loan proposal of 18,057 pounds at 2% interest for Thornton to continue manufacturing. If readers believe the marriage to take place and the theories of Thornton to be continued, a social responsibility toward the employees of Thornton's Mill will result in industrial reforms like those leading to the ways of organizations in the twenty-first century. But Gaskell's solution is small in scale—only one factory. Anything larger must be further inferred by readers. This reasoning suggests that the political parallax in *North and South* is temporal and that society lagged behind reforms theorized in the novel. Gaskell's solution is not entirely new. Her solution is much like Disraeli's in that it includes a marriage. Much like *Sybil*, Margaret inherits land and wealth, positioning her with the landed aristocracy. Like *Devilsdust* in parliament and *Dandy Mick* with his company, Colthurst in parliament and Thornton with his mill are a direct line from aristocracy to industry. Gaskell's resolution varies from Disraeli in three ways: scale, indirect politics, and personal theology. Unlike Disraeli, Colthurst's politics are never discussed, and Gaskell has removed her theology from her solution, but kept it implied within society. Discussing Gaskell's theology, Lansbury writes:

Elizabeth Gaskell believed that ministering to the needs of society was the most practical form of religious expression. It was no longer permissible in her opinion for

a practicing Christian to divorce his religious beliefs from an active commitment to social reform. It was because so many had been guilty of this failing in the past, that men like Higgins had lost all faith in Christianity and turned to militant socialism. Charles Kingsley wrote Christian Socialist tracts disguised as novels, but Elizabeth Gaskell defines the social and psychological implications of religion in society and to the individual. (103)

Gaskell believed that religion was an individual experience to be shared with society, but not a political tool or regulated belief system that could be enforced upon society. Lansbury claims that Higgins reacted with “militant socialism,” which is an oxymoron. Gaskell’s writing in *North and South* is socialist in nature, but her depiction of the strike is militant; yet, Higgins does not take part in the militant activity. Gaskell’s way of writing protagonists like Thornton, Higgins, and Margaret, who persist in attempting to solve problems, lends itself to a collective communication, an interactive discussion that promotes social openness rather than immediate and violent reactions. There is a psychological aspect to her attempts at solving the Condition of England, an assumed openness of good intentions like that presumed by Disraeli, of people cooperating on a large scale.

Although Gaskell’s novel has all the attributes of socialist literature, it is not propaganda, nor is it as subversive about its socialist aspects as Marx and Engels like to believe socialist literature is. Margaret is aware of the contingent affects and effects of living in human society and expresses her opinion regarding Thornton’s defense of free-labor over an employer’s social responsibility for instance, hiring Irish immigrants for less pay to replace his striking workers. Thornton says, “Given a strong feeling of independence in every Darkshire man, have I any right to obtrude my views, of the manner in which he shall act,

upon another . . . merely because he has labor to sell and I capital to buy?" (Gaskell 122).

Margaret answers:

Not in the least, not in the least because of your labor and capital positions, whatever they are, but because you are a man, dealing with a set of men over whom you have, whether you reject the use of it or not, immense power, just because your lives and your welfare are so constantly and intimately interwoven. God has made us so that we must be mutually dependent. We may ignore our own dependence, or refuse to acknowledge that others depend upon us in more respects than the payment of weekly wages; but the thing must be, nevertheless. Neither you nor any other master can help yourselves. The most proudly independent man depends on those around him for their insensible influence on his character—his life. (Gaskell 122)

Gaskell is less concerned about any government's social agenda regarding Margaret's reaction than making a behavioral point about human interaction. Margaret's opinion is collectivist in nature. She believes in a psychological connection shared between all people, "God has made us so that we must be mutually dependent." Her conclusion is that there are no "independent" people, but that people are reliant upon others for "influence" which determines their "character." It is probable that Gaskell was attempting to make a providential argument here. She attempts, through Margaret, to suggest a determined state for "masters" influenced by other people, a state of determinism. There is a fine gap between human interaction and consequential means. Such arguments are difficult to make because the leveling of intellect can be associated with the leveling of material resources or capital, education being purchased as well as intellectually earned. In Thornton's case, he purchases education from Mr. Hale and Thornton's factory labor is given value by the market rather

than collectively determined by him and his employees. With Margaret's and Higgins's influence, after the strike Thornton becomes acquainted with his employees and a cooperative understanding results in a more tolerable work place and livable wages. But the cooperation understood by Thornton, the union, and his workers does not always translate well in the material world. Marx and Engels point this out in *The Communist Manifesto*, describing what they refer to as utopian-socialist literature, which will "pave the way for the new social gospel":

Such fantastic pictures of future society, painted at a time when the proletariat is still in a very undeveloped state and has but a fantastic conception of its own position, correspond with the first instinctive yearnings of that class for a general reconstruction of society. But these socialist and communist publications contain also a critical element. They attack every principle of existing society. Hence they are full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working class. (*Manifesto* 111)

Gaskell comes very close to meeting Marx and Engels's description of utopian-socialist literature when she has Thornton refer to his social acts of responsibility at the close of the novel as "experiments" (Gaskell 431). In this excerpt, Volume II, chapter XXVI, Thornton is discussing with Colthurst his cooperative interaction with his employees, such as matching funds for and attending their potlucks. In his interest with Thornton, Colthurst asks him about strikes from the Union workers. Thornton's answer is a counterargument to the utopian-socialist literature referred to by Marx and Engels. Thornton answers:

My utmost expectation only goes so far as this—that they may render strikes not the bitter, venomous sources of hatred they have hitherto been. A more hopeful man might imagine that a closer and more genial intercourse between classes might do away with strikes. But I am not a hopeful man. (Gaskell 432)

Thornton is well aware of the need for a political body, such as the Union, to represent the workers in their negotiations with him and other mill owners. He shuns violence, but recognizes the employees' recourse to striking as a necessary action after diplomacy fails rather than a way of encouraging violence. Gaskell avoids directly writing a socialist novel by encouraging a collective cooperation influenced by Margaret and implemented by Thornton.

The collectivism expressed by Gaskell through her characters is a reaction to Thornton's argument regarding free labor. The word "free" in this circumstance is referring to a worker's right to work anywhere for any price. With this argument industrialists passed the blame of poverty on the lower class laborers and set their wages freely according to material and manufacturing costs along with competitor's prices. Marx and Engels were interested in what is referred to as "labor surplus" or "commodity surplus." This surplus should be inherent to the retail price of a commodity. In twenty-first century marketing it can be figured as labor's wages. It is then added to the price of the commodity. Theoretically, all things nominal, the commodity's surplus should allow workers a livable wage with the current rate of inflation. Many other variables can affect the commodity's surplus (such as number of children a worker has). The difficulty with the free-labor argument is that in the process of undercutting competitors, industrialists reduced the commodity surplus to poverty levels. They formed an industrial monopoly and could shrug off any social responsibility

with a free-labor argument. This resulted in a laissez-faire capitalism that only benefited people at the top, mainly owners, of an organization. In her study of English industrial novels of the period, Gallagher writes:

Richard Oastler forthrightly claimed that even adult male workers needed to be shielded from the consequences of an unregulated labor market: “Yes, the poor Factory Child *does* want a Friend . . . and her Father too, although a ‘free-born’ Briton . . . *he* wants a ‘Protector’ to find him work that *he* may toil, and let his children rest.” To many reformers, free labor was not only a myth but also a dangerous ideal, for it implied a society in which the classes were connected only through the “cash nexus.” (122)

Gaskell was well aware of the material connection of the cash nexus. With an abundance of labor, to the extent that it cost near nothing to replace workers, manufacturers had no reason to feel responsible for using people up and hiring more at barely livable wages. It was arguably worse than slavery, because slaves at least were considered capital, whereas the destruction of people living under a cash nexus became a necessary evil of doing business. In *North and South*, Margaret argues for a collectivism that recognizes an improved standard of living through social responsibility, much like Higgins and the community taking care of Boucher’s children after he commits suicide. Margaret’s persistent arguments with Thornton regarding employee hardship cause him to test her theories and change his mind about accepted factory practices. Influenced by Margaret, Thornton has seen an improvement in his immediate society, his relationship with the workers and their high praise circulated up into bourgeois social circles like the Lennox’s dinner party at the conclusion of the novel. It is

during this gathering that Thornton reveals the climate of business and his ideas for improving it:

My only wish is to have the opportunity of cultivating some intercourse with the hands beyond the mere “cash nexus.” But it might be the point Archimedes sought to move the earth, to judge from the importance attached to it by some of our manufacturers, who shake their heads and look grave as soon as I name the one or two experiments that I should like to try. (Gaskell 431)

Gaskell reminds us that her resolution seeks collectivism, which was not in vogue in the period. The idea of social responsibility coexisting with profit was a new idea for her historical time. Now, in the twenty-first century it is not unusual for companies to be involved with their employees’ medical insurance and retirement strategies. Companies in this century even adopt charities and fund scholarships. The cash nexus discussed by Gallagher and fictionalized by Gaskell has not disappeared, but the collectivism sought by Gaskell in Thornton’s Mill is not unusual in twenty-first century England and America.

The philosophy of Gaskell relies on recognition of failure and persistent communication regarding solutions. Gaskell’s fictionalized communication between her characters is not always direct. For instance the final scene is nothing more than Thornton and Margaret perceiving romantic advances in each other’s behavior between a series of silences. Marriage, or any resolution to the Condition of England, must be inferred by readers. Gaskell’s philosophy in the realm of nineteenth-century politics was as elusive as Marx’s and Engel’s communism. But the difference is that Gaskell’s collectivism has evolved into a corporate socialism, while communism still remains elusive. If Gaskell’s

characters, Margaret and Thornton, are followed, her philosophy unfolds, but the politics is questionable. The questionable difficulties are not only the temporal parallax of England's Parliamentary lag regarding hiring practices mentioned before, but a political parallax present when the novel was published, impairing Gaskell's fictional solution. Margaret and Thornton fail to reveal their desires which will allow them to pursue a mutual solution for Gaskell. After asking Mr. Bell to disclose her brother's identity as the man at the train station to Thornton, Margaret is upset and goes to her room. Margaret's recognition of failure is a call to God to recognize her need for another, her love for Thornton. She lies in bed saying to herself:

I am so tired—so tired of being whirled on through all these phases of my life, in which nothing abides by me, no creature, no place; it is like the circle in which the victims of earthly passion eddy continually. I am in the mood in which women of another religion take the veil. I seek heavenly steadfastness in earthly monotony. If I were a Roman Catholic and could deaden my heart, stun it with some great blow, I might become a nun. But I should pine after my kind; no, not my kind, for love for my species could never fill my heart to the utter exclusion of love for individuals.

Perhaps it ought to be so, perhaps not; I cannot decide to-night. (Gaskell 400)

Margaret is very indirect, but with help from Gaskell's narration readers are able to put Margaret's self pity into context. She has taken an interest in Thornton and his business and misses the people in Milton that she now identifies with. Since Mr. Bell is the connection between Margaret and Thornton, he owns the land Thornton's Mill is on and Margaret is his god-daughter, he must die and bequeath his capital to Margaret before Gaskell's solution can be inferred. It is after Bell's death that Higgins accidentally reveals to Thornton that the man

at the train station was Margaret's brother, but now Thornton's factory faces imminent bankruptcy. Thornton recognizes his own failure. Rather than invest the money he has set aside for factory debts and employee payroll into his brother-in-law's speculation Thornton tells his mother that he will:

Be always the same John Thornton in whatever circumstances; endeavoring to do right, and making great blunders; and then trying to be brave in setting to afresh. But it is hard, mother. I have so worked and planned. I have discovered new powers in my situation too late—and now all is over. I am too old to begin again with the same heart. (Gaskell 424)

It is with the recognition of their failures that Margaret and Thornton meet at the Lennox's dinner party. There, Gaskell has created the circumstances to bring her romantic characters together so that they may impart their knowledge and mend differences. Margaret speaks with Henry Lennox and is able to devise a plan that will allow Thornton to maintain his business. When Margaret and Thornton meet again, she proposes a loan, but rather than accept, he makes his move and the scene closes with a romantic embrace. Gaskell's ending leads readers to infer optimistically that the problems at Thornton's Mill have been resolved and a new collectivism will allow an open communication to take place. But Gaskell's solution is not so simple given the law of marriage at the time. In her study of fictional Victorian families, Penny Kane writes:

The concept of wife-as-property was further challenged by two legal initiatives. The first, in 1857, was that divorce became a recognized legal process, rather than something which required a special act of Parliament. For the first time it became

possible—though not easy—for couples to achieve an absolute divorce, with a license to remarry, instead of merely a judicial separation. (111)

This leaves three possible solutions for Gaskell's novel. Margaret and Thornton marry and he acquires her inheritance from Bell. They marry and have an open enough marriage and communication to exercise their business separately. They do not marry and Thornton accepts the loan. While the first solution by marriage is likely, it is interesting to think that the final two options are consistent with Gaskell's business philosophy and are like a modern form of corporate socialism. If not married, Margaret and Thornton run their company in a fashion that is socially responsible. As can be seen from the first and most likely choice a political parallax occurs. Questions about whether the marriage is an answer to *The Condition of England* or an opportunistic move on Thornton's account are clear. Not only is there a patriarchal question, but women are held to the same cash nexus as factory labor under the English law until 1870. Gaskell was ahead of her time, but her fictional solution is never resolved on account of the legal circumstances of the period. While Thornton accrues Margaret's fortune from their impending marriage, readers never learn if he is successful with his new factory and its operations.

Chapter 7

Dickens: Introduction

Hard Times makes a counterargument against the solutions of industrial novels; yet, it promotes them by upholding a fictional escape from reality and the Condition of England. Unlike the fictional solutions of other industrial novels, the solution of *Hard Times* is hidden in plain sight and occurs when readers become engaged with it or other novels. Dickens does not come out and boldly say that reading fiction will free the lower class from the Condition of England. He works it into the plot of *Hard Times* as a metaphysical destination to be pursued and determined by the reader. Every character in *Hard Times* is trapped, either in a utilitarian nightmare or a socialist farce and the only means of escape is by domestic fancy. The novel shows that in a Utilitarian society (Coketown) or in a society where family and capitalist ideology are merged (a circus) people are kept in a state of oppression and must escape within their imaginations. Unlike Disraeli and Gaskell, Dickens does not give readers political and theological solutions. In fact, Dickens doesn't even give readers enough to reason a material solution of their own. By satirizing a bleak, apathetic reality, Dickens promotes imaginative education and storytelling as the only escape from the Condition of England that his contemporaries were writing about from their own rational and material, middle-class experiences.

As a promotional work of literature, *Hard Times* was written to advocate Dickens's weekly literary journal along with its authors. During 1853 his journal, *Household Words*, dropped in profits from 900-1,300 pounds to ~527 pounds and his publishers suggested he write a novel in twenty installments, amounting to 5 months, to increase readers' interest (Schlicke 260, 262). In a letter to Angela Burdett-Coutts, Dickens writes, "there is such a

fixed idea on the part of my printers and co-partners in Household Words, that a story by me, continued from week to week, would make some unheard-of effect with it, that I am going to write one” (Flint xiii). It was in Dickens’s best interest to create something that promoted reading and storytelling in general. One of the difficulties faced by Dickens was promoting literature and satirizing the system of education being promoted by the Utilitarians in parliament. In his biography of Dickens, Fred Kaplan cites an article by Dickens in

Household Words:

In 1853, in “Fraud on the Fairies,” he had criticized utilitarian efforts to rationalize fairy tales and to use them for propaganda. “Kaye-Shuttleworthian” social and educational reformers, associated with Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, and John Stuart Mill, had been reforming the educational system to take the “fairy” out of “tale,” the fanciful out of literature and life. In the presence of “the supernatural dreariness” of such people, he felt as if he “had just come out of the Great Desert of Sahara where my camel died a fortnight ago.” The imagination was treated as a poor second cousin of reason, logic, and science. (305)

The character Cecilia Jupe personifies this problem. While at Gradgrind’s school, Jupe is the least academically successful student: “she . . . was as low down, in the school, as low could be” (Dickens 58). From this it seems difficult to read *Hard Times* as promoting education and literature, although Cecilia Jupe is literate and able to choose books that are intellectually stimulating. While her choices do not fit with what Gradgrind and M’Chokumchild would consider factual or educational, they do promote a fancy, an inspirational, imaginary way of thinking that separates her and her father from a strict Utilitarian or Socialist way of thinking. Apart from the education promoted by Coketown’s representatives and the oppression of the

circus, Juep's choice of books counters the Utilitarian education argument and promotes a more humanitarian education when Cecilia tells Louisa about the "wrong" books that she read to her father:

They kept him many times, from what did him real harm. And often and often of a night, he used to forget all his troubles in wondering whether the Sultan would let the lady go on with the story, or would have her head cut off before it was finished.

(Dickens 62)

This refers to *The Arabian Nights* in which the princess Scheherezade marries a sultan who beheads his wives the next day after marrying them. The princess escapes by telling a new story every night for 1,001 nights (Flint 310). This is the very same plot device that Dickens uses for *Hard Times*, but it is elaborated into a social metaphor. Rather than escaping an evil sultan, Cecilia escapes the Utilitarian society of Coketown and the socialist facade of Sleary's Circus, where public and private spheres are merged into capitalist entertainment. When readers understand that *Hard Times* was written to promote fanciful literature, writing with optimistic determination rather than hard facts, and that it also promoted *Household Words*, a publication with the same ideology, the layered metaphors of Dickens show a harsh reality only tempered by the most sophisticated imagination. This is evidenced by an opening statement from the first issue of *Household words*:

No realities, will give a harsh tone to our *Household Words*. . . We would tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast; which, according to its nurture, burns with an inspiring flame, or sinks into a sullen glare, but which (or woe betide that day!) can never be extinguished. (Davis 171)

That *Hard Times* is an extension of *Household Words* is made obvious by its repetition of fire as a driving image, “the furnaces of Coketown present us with a larger image, representing the passions, and sometimes specifically the resentments, of its inhabitants. Fire is anathema to the forces of Fact: there is ‘a row of fire buckets’ in Bounderby’s bank (Sonstroem 523). Readers familiar with *Household Words* who followed *Hard Times* were escaping a hardened bourgeois, profit driven, industrialized, patriarchal machine that threatened to suck the essence out of every form of life that didn’t correspond to a political economy which rationalized them like gears in Paley’s watch. Dickens knew if he could write a story that showed them how to escape from the gods of the cash-nexus that readers could raise their humanitarian conscious and he and his fellow artists/authors could profit.

With an overall scope of *Hard Times* there is less chance of readers and critics losing themselves in what seems to be a paradoxical narrative compared with the more direct materialism of other industrial novels. With regard to Zizek’s modes of parallax, three foundational characteristics of Dickens’s novel can be identified and analyzed to reveal an artistic insight into nineteenth century England unlike that of other novelists. Like Bitzer and his endless reductions, these three characteristics viewed with their corresponding bits will reveal separate reasons and realities that help define a whole animal, a metaphorical horse rather than physical bits to be criticized independently. The three characteristics are as follows: an analysis of marriage, the circus metaphor, and Utilitarianism versus domestic ideology within *Hard Times*. The Dickens portion of this thesis will conclude with a brief discussion of the author’s metaphysical destination: his readers’ inferred resolution should they be so astute to recognize Cecilia Jupe’s immaterial escape from the confines of Coketown and Sleary’s Circus.

Chapter 8

Ontological Parallax

Dickens's World of Totalitarian Marriage

One of the interesting aspects of *Hard Times* is Dickens's approach to marriage. Dickens criticizes the English Government, the English Church, and Utilitarianism in general for creating an oppressive environment for institutional marriage. The lack of happy marriages in Coketown is important because it helps show a loveless world from which the characters desire to escape. The Condition of England was more than an industrial problem that separated the classes. It brought on hardship for members of all classes trapped in incompatible marriages, but burdened women more than men by incorporating repressive legislation and endorsing the social stigma of divorced women. By not having any happy marriages in Coketown, Dickens emphasizes the difficulties of incompatible marriages in Victorian Society, purposely creating a fictional parallax to support a solution. Two marriages become instances of domestic tragedy in *Hard Times*. Blackpool's and Louisa's (Gradgrind to Bounderby) marriages become scenes of incompatibility. With these two characters, Dickens shows that the marriage problem affects all classes and is gender biased. Like the structure of nineteenth-century English society, marriage is patriarchal. The benefits of marriage for women during the period are having a man's source of income to sustain themselves and a recognized place in society as a wife. Fifteen years after *Hard Times* was published, John Stuart Mill wrote:

Marriage being the destination appointed by society for women, the prospect they are brought up to, and the object which it is intended should be sought by all of them, except those who are too little attractive to be chosen by any man as his companion;

one might have supposed that everything would have been done to make this condition as eligible to them as possible, that they might have no cause to regret being denied the option of any other. (30)

Some critics have tried to parallel the marriages of Blackpool and Louisa. This stems from the divorce issue explored in the novel and the building of irony between Bounderby and Blackpool. Some critics that create parallels between Blackpool and Louisa are Gallagher (64), Thomas (96), and Friedman (96). While not without possibility, these parallels seem to gloss the details of the period and do not fully account for Dickens's subplots for these characters. Dickens had reason for writing the subplots of their marriages differently and these subplots support his grand vision of an oppressive reality from which they cannot escape. These subplots and marriages in *Hard Times* will be examined along with their ontological parallaxes created by Dickens.

Most critics associate the characteristic of incompatible marriage in *Hard Times* with Blackpool's and Bounderby's discussion of divorce. It is where the legality of divorce is outlined by Bounderby as being too complex and expensive for Blackpool to undergo. Along with Blackpool meeting his drunken wife beforehand, Dickens includes this scene to help show Blackpool's further oppression by the English government beyond his lower-class status and to keep him from Rachael, the woman he really loves. It also develops the irony behind Bounderby's separation from Louisa when "Gradgrind, defending his unhappy daughter, quotes to Bounderby the phrase, 'for better for worse': 'Mr. Bounderby may have been annoyed by the repetition of his own words to Stephen Blackpool, but he cut the quotation short with an angry start'" (Baird 410). It is logical to believe the scene of Blackpool's discussion of divorce with Bounderby, important to the plot of *Hard Times*, is

story driven, but critics have also discussed it as presenting Dickens's own experience. Davis writes:

Blackpool's frustration at being trapped by the marriage laws has sometimes been seen as representing Dickens's growing unhappiness in his own marriage at the time. . . . When Dickens's marriage disintegrated in 1857 he ruled out a divorce as too expensive. He was thinking both of the money an action would cost and of the damage to his reputation and career. (106)

The trouble with divorces was that they were a bureaucratic affair of both the church and state and the legal fees for council were beyond the means of the lower class and much of the middle class. People seeking divorce had to have it approved in an ecclesiastical court and then have the church's approval contested in the House of Lords (Baird 402). When Boudierby tells Blackpool, "and it would cost you (if it was a case of very plain sailing), I suppose from a thousand to fifteen hundred pound," he is in the right range (Dickens 76). Baird, in his article, "Divorce and Matrimonial Studies" in *Victorian Studies*, estimates from 700 to 5,000 pounds. If divorce was out of the reach of Dickens, for Blackpool it was impossible. For English men whose marriages were never compatible or whose marriages became so after time, being trapped in a "muddle" left them able to identify with Blackpool.

Unlike Blackpool, Louisa's separation from Boudierby is not so straightforward. While the same laws of divorce pertain to her, they are not applied in the same way. Baird writes, "The reason for this discrimination was the feeling that divorce must be discouraged. A woman who committed adultery lost her position in society, but a man did not" (403). Unlike Blackpool's wife, there is no chance Louisa has committed adultery, so Boudierby

has no acceptable reason to claim a divorce in the English system. This is puzzling because Louisa could simply have sex with Harthouse and escape her marriage, but she runs home to Stone Lodge and tells her father, “This night, my husband being away, he [Harthouse] has been with me, declaring himself my lover. This minute he expects me, for I could release myself of his presence by no other means” (Dickens 211). Inquisitive readers may wonder what social position Louisa has to lose, reliant entirely on Bounderby with no property of her own and only her brother for a friend. In the preceding paragraph Louisa tells her father, “I have not disgraced you” (211). This is important, for Gradgrind is now a member of parliament. It is quite possible that Louisa remains trapped in marriage to sustain her father’s good standing in the English Parliament. This is further evidenced by the fact that Bounderby is left to incite the separation. After long and heated discussion with Gradgrind, Bounderby says, “As to your daughter, whom I made Loo Bounderby, and might have done better by leaving Loo Gradgrind, if she don’t come home tomorrow by twelve o’ clock at noon, I shall understand that she prefers to stay away, and I shall send her wearing apparel and so forth over here, and you’ll take charge of her for the future” (237). There is no reason for Bounderby to be concerned with Louisa for her place in society is locked and while Bounderby has not committed adultery either, it would not be considered reason enough for Louisa to claim a divorce. According to Baird:

women could and frequently did win divorce *a mensa et thoro* from adulterous husbands in the ecclesiastical courts, the House of Lords steadfastly refused to pass a divorce act in favor of a wife on the ground of her husband’s adultery alone. A wife could win a complete release only when her husband’s adultery was compounded with some aggravating circumstance, such as incest, or cruelty. (403)

Without an awareness of nineteenth-century-English social status and marriage legislation, the sub-plot of Josiah and Louisa Bounderby's marriage seems enigmatic. When Dickens was writing *Hard Times*, the barriers to women created by society and the legal system were well known to him and the readership of *Household Words*. Working the boundaries of English society and law into his story was likely not difficult. But what was obvious to him during the period has become something undetectable in an age with eased marriage laws and less repression for women.

The Bounderby marriage was not unique to his story, but was a way of working the repressed status of women into his greater plot and garnering the attention of readers and writers of *Household Words* with controversial material. Dickens often published other people's articles next to the weekly installments of *Hard Times* that corresponded with its topics. In her study of Victorian marriage, *Dickens and the Rise of Divorce*, Hager responds to a writer of topical articles printed with *Hard Times* by the name of Elyza Lynn Linton: specifically to the articles "The Rights and Wrongs of Women," with the first installment; and "One of Our Legal Fictions," with the fifth installment (173). Kelly Hager writes:

Linton's essays in *Household Words* rail not against Robert Desborough [man in "One of Our Legal Fictions"], but against the doctrine of coverture that gives him the power to persecute his wife; they identify the system itself, "the laws which deny the individuality of a wife under the shallow pretence of a legal lie" as "the real and substantial Wrongs of Women." Linton's diatribes against the doctrine of coverture shed light on the failed-marriage plots of the wives in *Hard Times*, just as Mill's identification of the patriarchal nature of marriage sheds light on Louisa's confession and helps us understand why she returns to her father. (178)

“The doctrine of coverture” that Hager points out refers to the English laws that repressed women, not only in their lack of education and exclusion from government and exclusion from higher careers where such education is needed, but laws that were used against wives to keep them servile to their husbands. Hager’s use of the word “coverture” suggests that the English campaign of repression of women was covert or secret in its legislation and enforcement, but literate people such as Linton and Dickens saw through the bureaucracy and were well aware of how women were being treated or discussed behind closed doors. Hager’s reference to Mill is in regard to the second chapter in his book *The Subjection of Women* (published 15 years after *Hard Times*). Along with the passage first cited in this Dickens analysis, Mill describes the legal repression of women:

If he [the husband] chooses, he can compel her to return, by law, or by physical force; or he may content himself with seizing for his own use anything which she may earn, or which may be given to her by her relations. It is only legal separation by a decree of a court of justice, which entitles her to live apart, without being forced back into the custody of an exasperated jailer—or which empowers her to apply any earnings to her own use, without fear that a man whom perhaps she has not seen for twenty years will pounce upon her some day and carry all off. (32)

Hager’s analysis is revealing along with Linton’s and Mill’s work. Wollstonecraft not only pointed out the repression of women in England in her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, but suggested ending such repression by educating women and lifting them into the government. Sixty-two years before Linton and Dickens, she wrote:

Let an enlightened nation then try what effect reason would have to bring them [women] back to nature, and their duty; and allowing them to share the advantages of education and government with man, see whether they will become better, as they grow wiser and become free. They cannot be injured by the experiment; for it is not in the power of man to render them more insignificant than they are at present.

(Wollstonecraft 167)

Here readers can understand that with the English social system, such a trap as that fictionalized by Dickens for Louisa lends itself to popular discussion and advocacy for the freeing of women from such oppression. It would be interesting to hear the discussions between readers of *Household Words* and *Hard Times* during Dickens's lifetime. While it seems such a case would fuel discussion in parliament, Mill's book and the Married Women's Property Act of 1870 suggest something different, an extended "muddle" for women.

The fictional world of Coketown in *Hard Times* created by Dickens is unusual, for it not only traps Blackpool and Louisa, but it traps all of Coketown's characters in a world without romantic love up until the very end. Notice in Hager's excerpt from page 178 of her study on Victorian marriages that "Linton's diatribes against the doctrine of coverture shed light on the failed-marriage plots of the wives in *Hard Times*." Throughout the novel all the marriages in Coketown are flawed. As pointed out by Hager, Mrs. Gradgrind's views her own marriage as tedious and painful: "'If your head begins to split as soon as you are married, which was the case with mine,' Mrs. Gradgrind replies, 'I cannot consider that you are to be envied, though I have no doubt you think you are, all girls do'" (162). It is bad that Mrs. Gradgrind is not even aware of her own daughter's feelings about Bounderby. She

thinks that Louisa believes herself in an enviable position. Even worse than having no clue about her children's lives, Mrs. Gradgrind lives her life in a state of terminal regret telling Louisa, "yes, I really do wish that I had never had a family, and then you would have known what it was to do without me!" (Dickens 58). Dickens creates an oppression passed in ignorance from one generation to the next. More than a trap sprung upon an innocent young woman, it is an unavoidable destiny, like an elusive conversation about the dying pet of a child. Mrs. Sparsit's marriage fares no better. She marries a man deep in debt who is 15 years her junior and the marriage is referred to as "mercenary" on account of it being arranged by her great aunt who knew about the man's debt (Hager 162). Sparsit's husband didn't even stick around for the honeymoon (162). Another marriage that has trouble, maybe not of incompatibility, but trouble nonetheless, is that of Bounderby's mother. Her husband dies when Bounderby is only eight years old, leaving her to fend for young Bounderby until she can apprentice him out (Dickens 253). At the end of the novel Louisa remains trapped in her separation from Bounderby, Mrs. Gradgrind dies, Pegler (Bounderby's mother) returns to her rented residence, and Sparsit lives in a closet with Lady Scadgers arguing her life away. After Blackpool dies, his love interest, Rachael, toils her life away in the factories. The only character that escapes is Cecilia Jupe. It is reasonable to believe that she still lives in Coketown: she "trying hard . . . to beautify their lives of machinery," lives with her "happy children loving her" (Dickens 287). She seemingly has not fallen into the same traps as all the other characters. Like the other industrial novels of the era, readers are left to infer a solution.

Compared with *Sybil* and *North & South*, society during the period and in general, the city of Coketown in *Hard Times* shows a limited range of success in marital relationships.

Much of the incompatibility with the Coketown marriages results from repressed communication: Louisa's parents have no awareness of Louisa's interests, Mrs. Blackpool is only concerned with her immediate needs, and Sparsit and Mrs. Gradgrind have simply married for economical "figures." In *Sybil* Lord Marney (Egremont's brother) and Lord Mowbray both have compatible marriages, their wives organize and attend social events with their husbands. In *North & South*, Edith (Margaret's cousin), Frederick (Margaret's brother), and Fanny (Thornton's sister) are all in compatible marriages: Edith wonders why Margaret can't have a marriage like hers, Frederick adopts Spanish citizenship and is concerned about his wife when in England, Fanny's husband is successful in business and can afford her maintenance. These seem like fictional circumstances, but if the standard of incompatibility among marriages for the characters in Coketown is representative of its population then statistics from the period show it is unlikely that an entire city would only have incompatible marriages. Baird gives the marriage statistics for England:

In the fifteen years from 1 January 1841 to 31 December 1885, the Registrar-General recorded 2,144,825 marriages in England and Wales, an annual average of 142,988.3. During the same period, sixty-six divorce acts were passed, an annual average of 4.4.

(404)

On average, in the entire country there are only 4.4 divorces per year. Out of the 142,988.3 marriages per year it is unlikely they are all between unhappy or dysfunctional couples. In *Hard Times* Dickens exaggerates the repression of unhappy couples by not allowing for any successful marriages. For instance the marriages of Blackpool, Louisa Gradgrind, Thomas Gradgrind Sr., Mrs. Sparsit, and Signor Jupe add up to five. If they all ended in divorce they would account for England's entire divorce rate for one year. While it

is possible for five marriages to be dysfunctional in a single city, for all of the people in them to be in the same social context would be unusual and for them all to add up to one country's divorce rate is even more so. Dickens is only using a small circle of characters, but it must be within the average reader's experience to be aware of a compatible marriage and even speak of one; yet, no such compatibility exists in Coketown or is even spoken about. It is this extreme view of incompatible marriage that Dickens uses to impress upon readers a fictional society from which characters cannot escape. He gives readers an ontological parallax between his conceived vision of Victorian Society's extremes and readers' own interpretations of social reality. For instance, Catherine Gallagher attempts to create parallelism between Louisa and Blackpool's marriages writing:

The parallels are implicitly developed in the interviews between Stephen and Bounderby in chapter eleven and between Louisa and Gradgrind in chapter fifteen. In each interview, the topic is marriage; in each the "father" is called on to give advice to the "child," and in each the former fails to give the proper advice, leaving the latter with a diminished sense of life's possibilities. (151)

If metonymy is rationalized from "implicit" to relative, then the laws and social attitudes inherent to The Condition of England make way for any social conditions and psychology demonstrated in the context of the criticism. The difference discussed between English laws and attitudes regarding male and female separation and divorce become irrelevant in Gallagher's parallel. She has stretched the paternal metaphor from worker to child for Blackpool and then reversed it for Louisa. A rhetorical question to consider seriously is does Louisa represent the worker in Gradgrind's family? Dickens was well aware of what he was doing when he wrote *Hard Times*. He set the conditions of his fictional world so that there

was only one way out. Like the people living in nineteenth-century England, Dickens's characters were trapped by their own metaphors. Dickens trapped his readers with his characters in both real and fictional worlds and the complex, yet, irrational resolutions of his readers to save his characters are still resonating into the twenty-first century. The parallax of Dickens's fiction is unrealistic in its extremities, but practical considering his solution. If it were possible to unite the classes by marriage, like in *Sybil* and *North and South*, and then solve The Condition of England by mending a magical social chain, why reform the marriage laws? People could live through the hard times to cure society. They could still be waiting for that magic moment.

Chapter 9

Scientific Parallax

Misunderstanding the Metaphor of Sleary's Circus

With scientific parallax it is easy to become confused with first-person experience and a cognitive third-person explanation. This problem is readily apparent in *Hard Times*. Dickens's shortest novel is by no means simple or easy to grasp. Not only is an awareness of mid-nineteenth-century English politics and society needed, but a complex interpretive ability for deciphering metaphors must be practiced throughout the novel. Short in prose, but thick with Dickens's metaphors, analogies, and allegories, it is easy for passive readers to comprehend material descriptions and physical verbs while completely missing the depth of Dickens's messages: such as marriage laws, women's oppression, isolation within society, and promotion of what he terms as fancy. When discussing scientific parallax it seems as though defining what a metaphor means and what it is used to represent literally in the material world should explain ontological difference, but Dickens's metaphors are not always so plain. His use of a circus in *Hard Times* has been the subject of many interpretations. Some critics believe that it represents "fancy" and is the means of escape for the Gradgrinds from the Utilitarianism of Coketown. For instance: Gallagher writes, "The circus embodies fancy. . ." (160); Cockshut writes, "From it [circus] comes Sissy Jupe to save the Gradgrind family; and Tom, the disgraced product of a politico-economical education returns to it to make his escape" (140); and Manning writes, ". . . Dickens's Fancy has been criticized as merely a temporary escape which shows up as "bread and circuses" beside the Romantic assertion of man's need for poetry" (142). These explanations are the most straight-forward, but they do not seem logical in the full context of the novel. The Gradgrinds really do not escape from the oppression of Coketown, while Cecilia and her father do escape from the

circus. So what is going on here? The circus in *Hard Times* represents something more than an antithesis to Coketown. It is likely a satire of the socialism expressed in novels like *Sybil* and *North and South*. This would suggest that it is an escape from the ideology represented by Coketown. But in a living society where work and family—public and private life—are mixed, are people better off than if they were to compartmentalize their working and family relationships? This is the question or ideology that Dickens is satirizing with the circus. It is his elaborate metaphor and is difficult to rationalize in third-person language. Critics are put-off by *Hard Times* and much of their criticism can be confusing because they search for something absolute when something socially subjective is in order. Leavis points out the reaction of critics writing:

If, then, it [*Hard Times*] is the masterpiece I take it for, why has it not had general recognition? To judge by the critical record, it has had none at all. If there exists anywhere an appreciation, or even an acclaiming reference, I have missed it. In the books, essays on Dickens, so far as I know them, it is passed over as a very minor thing; too slight and insignificant to distract us for more than a sentence or two from the works worth critical attention. (187)

The modern success of *Hard Times* could be said to rest on its short length, making it more practical for teaching in undergrad and even high-school classes. But as a critical success, *Hard Times* misses the mark, even taking a backseat to *A Christmas Carol*. It can be depressing to think that the cyclical nature of history and economics pointed out by Marx and Engels is still ignored or taken for granted by the majority of common people, but worse, the arguments regarding an accepted isolation of people within society and the uniting of public and private spheres into a transparent society, a circus, discussed by Dickens go completely

unacknowledged by scholars and critics. The uncritical approach to *Hard Times* is to analyze it literally. It is possible that the only way for some people to understand the novel is to discuss its absurdities seriously: *Hard Times*'s radical exaggeration of Utilitarianism in marriage and education, and its martyrdom of the common man (Stephen Blackpool) and trained animals helping Gradgrind Jr. to escape his Utilitarian nemesis, Bitzer. Leavis is partial, biased to the novel *Hard Times*. It is a "masterpiece" in his opinion. Leavis understands that there is something beneath all the silliness and absurdity presented by Dickens, that Sleary's circus is more than an escape and cheap form of entertainment. Leavis writes:

The virtues and qualities that Dickens prizes do indeed exist, and it is necessary for his critique of Utilitarianism and industrialism, and for (what is the same thing) his creative purpose, to evoke them vividly. The book can't, in my judgment, be fairly charged with giving a misleading representation of human nature. And it would plainly not be intelligent criticism to suggest that anyone could be misled about the nature of circuses by *Hard Times*. The critical question is merely one of tact: was it well-judged of Dickens to try to do *that*—which had to be done somehow—with a travelling circus? Or, rather, the question is: by what means has he succeeded? (194)

Dickens has left his readers with a viable metaphor for a transparent society and, at the same time, a silly story, a literal joke to share with the children during bed-time stories. This double solution makes possible both material and ontological aspects that can be shared by generations. His commentary on society seems to remain hidden for those who want to escape, but for the determined critic, the cynicism presented by Dickens's satire is as revealing as it is desperate for those characters trapped within its absurdities, those

absurdities inspired by a less than perfect society. The scientific parallax is sustained by rationalizing an attempted solution for Victorian Society within the circus metaphor and in a literal story telling that entertains the same society. The circus metaphor is Dickens's interpretation of Victorian society's mixing of business with family life. The story he tells, using the circus, is a possible allegory and possible reality literally told to the reader. It is a perfect fiction inspired by a living society.

To believe that Sleary's circus is signifying fancy is to ignore the facts Dickens gives readers that it is a business. From Gradgrind senior's first acquaintance with the circus, readers are shown its capitalist conventions, "Sleary himself, a stout modern statue with a money-box at its elbow, in an ecclesiastical niche of early Gothic architecture, took the money" (Dickens 17). The Gradgrind children, like other children, are aware of paying to get in the tent to see the show and have no means to purchase their way in. Gradgrind sees them, "his own metallurgical Louisa peeping with all her might through a hole in a deal board, and his own mathematical Thomas abasing himself on the ground to catch but a hoof of the graceful equestrian Tyrolean flower-act!" (18). And while the children outside the circus struggle to get around its access fees, the children working in the circus are apprenticed and must learn their trade, like young people in any technical or industrial trade. The narrative describes Sleary's daughter, "a fair-haired girl of eighteen, who had been tied on a horse at two years old, and had made a will at twelve, which she always carried about with her, expressive of her dying desire to be drawn to the grave by the two piebald ponies" (41). At twelve years old Josephine is already responsible for her future drawing up a will, in case she should have an accident performing her dangerous job. Later, near the end of the novel, Cecilia has grown up with the Gradgrind children and has told Thomas that Sleary's circus

will help him get away from the law after he has been discovered as the robber of Bounderby's bank safe. Cecilia and Louisa arrive at the circus and see Kidderminster, the dwarf who played cupid, now aged with beard attending the ticket booth, "In the extreme sharpness of his look-out for base coin, Mr. Kidderminster, as at present situated, never saw anything but money; so Sissy passed him unrecognized, and they went in" (269). These examples show very plainly that the circus is not pure fancy. There is a material, monetary motivation behind its performers and its operation. Sleary's circus, like those existing in the material world outside of Dickens's fiction, is a business.

More crucial to the capitalist aspect of the circus metaphor is the story of Cecilia's father, Signor Jupe. Mr. Jupe is a clown with a trained dog, Merrylegs. According to Childers and Kidderminster, Jupe has been "short in his leaps and bad in his tumbling" (Dickens 36). Jupe has been "goosed," hissed at, by the audience the last three days and is embarrassed and ashamed. He feels that he has failed Cecilia and has "cut" from the circus according to Childers. Signor Jupe believes Cecilia to be better off without him. Signor Jupe is shunned by the public and realizes he will be a burden on his daughter if he is unable to make a "living" with his act: Childers tells Gradgrind and Bounderby, "His joints are turning stiff, and he is getting used up. He has his points as a Cackler still, but he can't get a living out of *them*" (37). The paternal metaphor, as discussed in the "Gaskell" section, can be literally seen in one of the circus performances. Like the diagram of an organization, it is shown by the narrator's description of the male performers and their pyramid act as they enter the room with their families, all curious about Cecilia: "The father of one of the families was in the habit of balancing the father of another of the families on the top of a great pole; the father of a third family often made a pyramid of both those fathers, with Master Kidderminster for the

apex, and himself for the base” (40). The paternal metaphor is extended to Cecilia during her decision to stay with the circus or leave with Gradgrind. Sleary says to her, “Emma Gordon, in whothe lap you’re a lyin’ at prethent, would be a mother to you, and Joth’phine would be a thither to you” (43). Like her father, Cecilia “cuts” from the circus, avoiding a public life. The paternal metaphor in the Jupe story, as well as in businesses among living societies, is pervasive. It is never extended equally to nor accepted by all employees. Discussing the metaphors of *Hard Times*, David Sonstroem writes:

The real difference between factory and circus is not that between labor and idleness, as Bounderby would have it, but rather that between self-seeking, exploiting management and kindly, paternalistic management. The difference is an accidental one, and shows factory and circus to be more closely related than one might first expect. (525)

Sonstroem seems to favor paternalistic management, but is still aware of business as usual in the realm of capitalism. The importance of Signor Jupe’s story is often overlooked by critics for the pursuit of the paternal metaphor and escape through fancy. It is tempting to see the circus as symbolic of fancy and overlook Cecilia’s reminiscence about reading to her father and helping him escape from it in fiction. What is difficult to understand is overlooking the Jupes’ escape from a public life. Like the Utilitarian symbolism of Coketown, the combining of private and public life in a capitalist venture, socialism if the metaphor is stretched, offers no escape for the novel’s protagonists.

The complexity of Dickens’s metaphorical style is carried further by the circus when, near the end of the novel, Sleary informs Cecilia about the marriages that have taken place

among the performers. Unlike the marriages in Coketown, there is ambivalence about those in the circus. There is the possibility of some happiness within the circus marriages, but it is conditional and left to the reader for consideration. Childers has married Sleary's daughter, Josephine, and their three year old boy performs on horseback. Kidderminster has married a tightrope walker. Kidderminster's wife gained weight after having two children and is unable to perform on the tightrope. Emma Gordon, the woman that was like a mother to Cecilia, lost her husband when he fell from an elephant. She then married a cheese-monger who turned out to be rich and is somewhere undisclosed making a fortune (Dickens 271). Emma Gordon is supposed to have escaped from the circus into a happy marriage. If Gordon is considered Cecilia's mother, logic suggests that Cecilia's entire family escaped from the circus. The circus, like Coketown, doesn't offer good marriage prospects. Sleary tells Cecilia that Gordon's husband was a man in the audience. If we read the description of Coketown from the chapter titled "Keynote" alongside the accident that befell Gordon's first husband, we can link the symbolism of Coketown and the circus with the eminent failure of marriages among their constituents. Dickens describes Coketown as: "a town of machinery . . . where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness" (27). The elephant as a metaphor for the endless drudgery of factory life could just as well work for that of a low paid entertainer unable to escape from a public life. Dickens divides his fictional world into two metaphorical societies, like subcultures in the physical world, and finds a universal flaw that each has in common. Like Cecilia's escape from Coketown and her happy marriage, Gordon may have escaped the circus to drink fine wine and eat cheese, happily married to her new husband.

The scientific parallax in Sleary's Circus occurs as a difference between a literal show where people pay to be entertained and a Dickensian metaphor for mixing family and business into a public life. As a literal show, the circus is nothing more than a capitalist venture, but as a socialist metaphor its entertainers represent a family structure in publicly governed society. The complexity and depth of Dickens's style, his use of metaphor and symbolic manipulation of culture can be difficult to grasp, even justify beyond literal interpretations. It is the literal interpretation of *Hard Times* that leaves some critics and readers believing the text is a jumble of paradoxes and thinly connected subplots that seems jagged or clunky in its entire structure. Leavis may be on to something, believing *Hard Times* to be a poetic masterpiece. If the conjunction of Coketown and Sleary's circus are read as an inescapable trap influenced by the material world, and if Dickens is promoting his fanciful literature and that of his contributors to *Household Words* as the only escape from the Condition of England, then how far from the overall human condition was Dickens? In the twenty-first century the greatest political concern is about jobs, not life enriching careers, just plain jobs that pay. The majority of people in England during Dickens's life had only fanciful stories through which to escape. The world in the twenty-first century is not so different. When interpreting Dickens's vision and intent, the scientific parallax of the circus seems to make it vaster. It is difficult for readers to claim knowledge of Dickens's fictional intentions, but his cynical slant on society shows that there are social-spheres or sub-cultures that should be avoided. Considering the development and rise of Internet communication, people in the twenty-first century do not even need a job to lead a public life. People in England and America are now more connected with living society and the world than ever before. Like the

characters in *Hard Times*, many people will search for ways out of their environment, but few will escape.

Chapter 10

Political Parallax

The Withdrawal of Louisa Gradgrind

Many of the extremes that isolate characters and cause class oppression in *Hard Times* can be collectively associated with the philosophy of Utilitarianism. Utilitarianism was founded by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and taken up by his cohort James Mill (1773-1836). James passed this philosophy on to his son, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), who would revise the philosophy to reflect more liberal attitudes adopted by English society in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Dickens, in *Hard Times*, was reacting to his own extreme interpretation of Utilitarianism conceived by Bentham and James Mill. This is made apparent by John Mill's comments from *Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy*, published in 1833. Mill writes of Bentham's work, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*:

It is not the less true that Mr. Bentham, and many others following his example, when they came to discuss particular questions of ethics, have commonly, in the superior stress which they laid upon the specific consequences of a class of acts, rejected all contemplation of the action in its general bearings upon the entire moral being of the agent, or have, to say the least, thrown those considerations so far into the background as to be almost out of sight. And by so doing they have not only marred the value of many of their speculations, considered as mere philosophical inquiries, but have always run the risk of incurring, and in many cases have in my opinion actually incurred, serious practical errors. . . . As an analyst of human nature (the faculty in which above all it is necessary that an ethical philosopher should excel) I cannot rank Mr. Bentham very high. (24)

The utilitarianism conceived by his father and Bentham emphasized human pleasure and pain as the primary motivation of the human species. There was a tendency in its practitioners to measure morality based on pleasure and pain as a cause as opposed to understanding them as an effect, resulting in a philosophy that could be conceived as pure self-interest. Dickens saw this early utilitarianism as an influence on the upper-class and English government, referring to its practitioners as “hard-fact-men,” who reduced the world and humanity to mathematical computations and statistics. When Dickens wrote *Hard Times*, he used his extreme view of early Utilitarianism to frame its plots and satirize authority figures and the stereotypes they propagated within English society. Critic John Holloway writes:

That *Hard Times* is a novel which embodies a moral problem, an issue between ways of living, is by now familiar knowledge; and so is it, that one side of the issue, in some sense or another, is “Utilitarianism”. But the ideas and attitudes which that word most readily calls up today prove not to be those which were most prominent in Dickens’s own mind or own time; and to trace the exact contour of significance which ran for Dickens himself, as he wrote the book, through the material he handled, will turn out to be a more than merely historical accumulation of knowledge: it determines the critical position which one must finally take with regard to the novel.

(159)

To reduce the controversies of *Hard Times* to a single “critical position” may not be possible, but Dickens, in his writing of the text, was opposed to everything utilitarian and took liberty to express his opinion in the narrative of his novel. After his character, Blackpool, finds he is unable to get a divorce, he and his love-interest Rachael walk together in the street and at

their parting the narrator, disgusted at Dickens's conception of a utilitarian aristocracy at work behind marriage laws and inflexible social institutions, tells his audience:

Utilitarian economists, skeletons of schoolmasters, Commissioners of Fact, genteel and used-up infidels, gabblers of many little dog's-eared creeds, the poor you will have always with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections to adorn their lives so much in need of ornament; or, in the day of your triumph, when romance is utterly driven out of their souls, and they and bare existence stand face to face, Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you! (Dickens 160)

Dickens vents his frustration against the cold, calculating, system of bureaucracy he believes withholds any potential of love and romance from Blackpool and Rachael, a system he believes sucks the fanciful life out of the lower-class in its interest to maintain a material order, beneficial to the aristocracy's pleasure.

Like the scientific parallax associated with Dickens's circus metaphor, the political parallax associated with the Utilitarianism in *Hard Times* must be viewed as an expression of Dickens's bias. While the circus metaphor could be understood as a pure creation of Dickens's, the Utilitarian politics of England was present, not to the extent that Dickens fictionalizes, but certainly enough to trace its influence on political economists such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and, to a lesser extent, Robert Malthus. The philosophy of Bentham and James Mill, also a political economist, was influential in English politics and John Stuart Mill became a member of the English Parliament from 1865-1868. If the extremity of Dickens's view of Utilitarianism, inspired by Victorian society, is considered in the context

of *Hard Times* as ontological among his fictional characters, *Hard Times* becomes an example of subcultures within society struggling with political parallax. Blackpool and Rachael are examples of lower-class characters trapped alone, unable to marry because of Utilitarian bureaucracy. Gradgrind Jr., Louisa, and Bitzer are examples of middle-class children raised in households of self-interest, where empathy has been phased out by stressing competition among peers and family. Bounderby is an upper-class character isolated by his own self-interest. He is surrounded by hired acquaintances and loses his only friend, Gradgrind Sr., on account of the children's bad experiences and disassociation from him. These are some of the most obvious cases of political parallax presented in the novel. The circumstances of Dickens's characters could be questioned in the context of living, Victorian, society as having resulted strictly from Utilitarianism, but in *Hard Times* these circumstances become instances of evidence, in Dickens's view, showing an oppressed society under a corrupted hierarchy of societal governance.

The inspiration for Dickens's extreme take on Utilitarianism came from the actual hardships being faced by English society during the period. For instance the inability of Blackpool and Rachael to be married or experience a romance beyond their mere acquaintanceship could be traced not only to marriage laws, but also the difficulties faced by couples working long hours in the factories. This is also the inspiration for the marital difficulties faced by Stephen Blackpool and his wife. There is a lack of romance between Blackpool and his wife, not to mention a lack of children. In his study of the English working class, Engels discusses the difficulty faced by factory couples who work excessive hours and allow their children to be raised without any parental figures. The difficulty he discusses is generational, leading to what was considered a lack of domestic skills by women caused by

their decision to work rather than marry a man of means and raise their own children. Engels writes:

The Unmarried women, who have grown up in mills, are no better off than the married ones. It is self-evident that a girl who has worked in a mill from her ninth year is in no position to understand domestic work, whence it follows that female operatives prove wholly inexperienced and unfit as housekeepers. They cannot knit or sew, cook or wash, are unacquainted with the most ordinary duties of a house-keeper, and when they have young children to take care of, have not the vaguest idea how to set about it. The Factories' Inquiry Commission's Report gives dozens of examples of this, and Dr Hawkins, Commissioner for Lancashire, expresses his opinion as follows: The girls marry early and recklessly; they have neither means, time, nor opportunity to learn the ordinary duties of household life; but if they had them all, they would find no time in married life for the performance of these duties. The mother is more than twelve hours away from her child daily; the baby is cared for by a young girl or an old woman, to whom it is given to nurse. (156)

The difficulties experienced by factory couples working excessive hours can be rationalized as behavior inflicted upon them by industrial interests. The pleasures of profit experienced by industry in league with the liberal Whig Party, practitioners of Utilitarianism, was certainly an inspiration for Dickens's view of the Utilitarian philosophy. Unlike Disraeli, Dickens had little faith in all government and wasn't influenced by the Tories and their association with the landed aristocracy. It is probable that Dickens linked rental profit gained by the landed aristocracy and sales profits gained by the industrialists with Utilitarianism. Under Bentham's and James's pleasure principle, justified by the upper classes as contributing to a

greater good, Dickens had a valid argument. Dickens's vision of Utilitarianism predicted the lower classes would live to see the day when "romance is utterly driven out of their souls." Like Engels, Dickens believed that domestic life was being removed, but not by industrialism or the bourgeois, but by an extreme form of Utilitarianism.

The removal of domesticity in *Hard Times* is best exemplified by Louisa Gradgrind. Her father has raised her in such a way as to leave her without any domestic skills or fancy: family-shared optimism and imagination. She has become the embodiment of fact, a fact machine whose only purpose is to fulfill the patriarchal pleasure of her father and brother who seek only the approval from factory owner and banker Josiah Bounderby. Gradgrind senior has raised his children by the same principles extolled by him in his classroom at the beginning of the novel when he tells his students, "You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!" (Dickens 9). Gradgrind senior has narrowed his perception by excluding anything outside an empirical assertion. Emotions, wonder, aesthetics, and optimistic dreaming have been phased out of his life. The attributes needed for healthy, mental, nurturing lives have been removed from his family, leaving utilitarian shells, related only by birth, without any domestic ideology to define the Gradgrinds as a loving family. Literary critic, Leavis, describes Gradgrind senior and the circumstance into which he has led his daughter:

What Gradgrind stands for is, though repellant, nevertheless respectable; his Utilitarianism is a theory sincerely held and there is intellectual disinterestedness in its application. But Gradgrind marries his eldest daughter to Josiah Bounderby,

“banker, merchant, manufacturer”, about whom there is no disinterestedness whatever, and nothing to be respected. Bounderby is Victorian “rugged individualism” in its grossest and most intransigent form. Concerned with nothing but self-assertion and power and material success, he has no interest in ideals or ideas—except the idea of being the completely self-made man (since, for all his brag, he is not that in fact). Dickens here makes a just observation about the affinities and practical tendency of Utilitarianism. (188)

It is in this loveless marriage to Bounderby that Dickens reveals the effects of Gradgrind senior’s Utilitarianism on Louisa. Her marriage to Bounderby is strictly divisive with regard to her father and brother, she has no romantic feelings for Bounderby, nor does she know anything about him. She is a placeholder connecting Gradgrind and Bounderby for mutual advantage. Her father has become a member of parliament and with Bounderby’s banking and industrial interests the two men share great influence in their community. Gradgrind Jr. is employed by Bounderby at his bank and sees Louisa as a distraction that can keep Bounderby off his back. It is through Bounderby’s earlier live-in companion, Mrs. Sparsit, that readers discover the indifference shared by Bounderby and Louisa:

“Oh, sir?” said Mrs. Sparsit. “Not your sherry warm, with lemon-peel and nutmeg?”
 “Why I have got out of the habit of taking it now, ma’am,” said Mr. Bounderby. “The more’s the pity, sir,” returned Mrs. Sparsit; “you are losing all your good old habits. Cheer up, sir! If Miss Gradgrind will permit me, I will offer to make it for you, as I have often done.” Miss Gradgrind readily permitting Mrs Sparsit to do anything she pleased, that considerate lady made the beverage, and handed it to Mr Bounderby. “It

will do you good, sir. It will warm your heart. It is the sort of thing you want, and ought to take, sir.” (Dickens 183)

Sparsit not only continues to refer to Louisa as Miss. Gradgrind, but she is familiar with Bounderby’s earlier “habits.” It is not until Harthouse enters the story and becomes acquainted with Louisa that she becomes aware of her apathy, realizing the unromantic marriage she has been trapped in. It is when she runs from a rendezvous with Harthouse and returns to her father that Dickens shows readers the result of not having any domestic ideology. Even though Louisa has avoided an affair with Harthouse, she has no reason to return to Bounderby and begs her father to stay at her old home, having no comprehension of romance, courtship, or marriage. Absent of any domestic skill and barely aware of her own presence with Bounderby, she says to her father:

“What you have never nurtured in me, you have never nurtured in yourself; but O! if you had only done so long ago, or if you had only neglected me, what a much better and much happier creature I should have been this day!” On hearing this, after all his care, he bowed his head upon his hand and groaned aloud. “Father, if you had known, when we were last together here, what even I feared while I strove against it—as it has been my task from infancy to strive against every natural prompting that has arisen in my heart; if you had known that there lingered in my breast, sensibilities, affections, weaknesses capable of being cherished into strength, defying all the calculations ever made by man, and no more known to his arithmetic than his Creator is,—would you have given me to the husband whom I am now sure that I hate?”
(209)

Further, Louisa speaks about her avoided rendezvous with Harthouse and her confusion. She is unable to secure any reasoning in herself or her father beyond the moment and has no optimism for any future. She breaks down and lies on the floor. Like Engels's example, Louisa marries young, but unlike his example, Louisa is middle-class and has no husband and children that need her to work for support. Dickens has taken his view of Utilitarianism, what he believes is its effect on the lower-class and attributed it to a young middleclass woman. Raised in the same governing-agency that has encouraged an industrial lower-class to abort their domestic ideology to survive, the character of Louisa can only fixate on the empirical forces unrelated to a healthy family life. She is unable to cope psychologically with her own feelings and interact with her father, brother, and later her husband. In his rendition of Utilitarianism, Dickens has transposed the circumstances of the Victorian lower class, without their material causes, upon a fictional character. For Louisa, the factories, rents, children, and capitalist competition that motivate lower-class families to struggle for survival do not exist, but Utilitarianism does—because of Dickens's appropriation of the Condition of England conventions.

Chapter 11

Dickens: Conclusion

In his promotion for *Household Words*, Dickens created a counter argument against the industrial fiction of his rivals by writing a novel that trapped all his characters in the plots and politics found in the fiction of his rivals. Marriage didn't bridge the oppression of classes and open a door for a new socialism. The landed aristocracy is reduced to a live-in companion, Mrs. Sparsit, debased rather than humbled to accepting charity because of her indebted husband. The industrial complex is a paragon of isolationism driven by a utilitarian philosophy that cannot be softened by any union or lower-class martyr. The only way out of *Hard Times* is the fanciful stories read by Cecilia Jupe to her father, and later, to her children and children of others. By not accepting familiar solutions to the Condition of England and then promoting fanciful literature Dickens created a paradox that invalidated the fiction of his rivals while advocating it. If readers of such works as *Sybil* and *North and South* found ways to escape from the Condition of England, all be they imagined, then Dickens's fictional solution was manifested. His solution did not solve the material disparity of the classes nor did it predict any political solutions. It did increase the sales of *Household Words* which promoted the publication of novels for *North and South* and *Hard Times*; thus to an empirical degree, it can be said to have worked.

Chapter 12

Conclusion

Having read the previous investigations of the three industrial novels by Disraeli, Gaskell, and Dickens, using Žižek's three modes of parallax, scholars and critics aware of these novels should have further insight into the issues presented here and in their texts. To clarify, a recap of each mode of parallax, one from each author covered, will discuss what information has been gained from discovering gaps in the investigated texts. These gaps, interpretations, and contrasts of Victorian Society, revealed by each mode, will disclose alternatives, furthering reader's insight into the conditions that influenced each author's fictional narrative.

In reference to the cited excerpt of Egremont's defensive dialogue from *Sybil*, using Žižek's mode of scientific parallax, "the irreducible gap between the phenomenal experience of reality and its scientific account/explanation, which reaches its apogee in cognitivism, with its endeavor to provide a 'third-person' neuro-biological account of our [Disraeli's] 'first-person' experience" readers are indirectly led to the Tory party's stand on Chartism during the mid-nineteenth century (10). Disraeli and his fictional character, Egremont, Tory Members of Parliament, can only argue abstractly, in defense of delaying the entire English Parliament until a Tory majority can pass legislation for charitable reforms, rather than accept the Chartist's demands. Disraeli's and Egremont's inability to directly discuss their party decisions results from a gap between Egremont's stance handling lower-class policies and that of Sybil's father Walter Gerard. In an attempt to woo Sybil, Disraeli must depict his fictional character, Egremont, as sympathetic to Sybil's and Walter's ideals while maintaining his decision to keep the landed aristocracy in power. Scientific parallax occurs

when Disraeli must confront his position in relation to that of his fictional characters and his audience. As an author, Disraeli must approach his fiction as believable by both sides and maintain his own position on lower-class policies enough to avoid confronting members of his own party.

With Žižek's description of philosophical/ontological parallax it can be said that there is a gap between retroactive determinism and material/physical world events. Žižek writes: "Philosophy revolves around ontological difference, the gap between ontological horizon and 'objective' ontic reality. It is not enough merely to insist on the fact that the ontological horizon cannot be reduced to an effect of ontic occurrences" (10). This can be understood in the discussion of Gaskell's characters, Margaret and her brother, Frederick. Their circumstances, her incident at the strike, his on board ship, are parallel, but have different results. While Frederick's charge of mutiny has left him in exile, Margaret's actions have left her as a well regarded member of the community. The philosophical gap occurs when comparing military bureaucracy with civilian ethics. There is an ethical gap between the two groups that results in two different "ontic realities." The determinism of military bureaucracy does not allow for the weighing of life versus the chain-of-command, while Margaret's value on life is recognized with time and communication among her civil community.

Žižek's final mode of parallax is best represented by Dickens. Political parallax, in Dickens's novel, *Hard Times* is "The social antagonism which allows for no common ground between the conflicting agents ('class struggle'), with its two main modes of existence. The parallax gap between the public Law and its superego obscene supplement. The parallax gap between the 'Bartleby' attitude of withdrawal from social engagement and collective social action" (Žižek 10). This "attitude of withdrawal" in *Hard Times* begins with Utilitarianism in

the Victorian Government. It can be seen as a gap between the classes, and as a plot device for Dickens to isolate Louisa Bounderby from society. The Victorian upper class can be said to derive their pleasure/wealth from the labor of the lower class; thus, exercising the utility of English workers for a greater pleasurable benefit according to an aristocratic view of Utilitarian society. The Utilitarian gap between English aristocracy and workers is translated by Dickens into an extreme Utilitarianism existing between Louisa, her family and society. Louisa has been lured into a Utilitarian marriage without any need for domestic ideology or romance. She simply exists to make others happy. Readers who empathize with Louisa's social immobility struggle against Dickens's depiction of Victorian Society, searching in fiction, philosophy, and their own immediate society to find a more optimistic future for women like her. Political parallax occurs when the "public Laws" that isolate and repress women, such as Louisa, during the period, are understood as absolute and women can only "withdraw from social engagement"; unlike men, of the period, who have careers and political mobility along with social position regardless of extra-marital affairs.

With the three modes of parallax discussed by Žižek, gaps in individual and collective reasoning serve as contrast that can further define aspects of the material world and fiction. As forms of analysis or tools the three modes of parallax offer readers, critics, and scholars, manageable boundaries for discussion, not only leading to further insight about the Condition of England, industrial novels and their authors, but fiction in general.

Three approaches focused on using Žižek's modes of parallax are: parallelism used with ontological parallax, misunderstandings identified with scientific parallax, and withdrawal associated with political parallax. Ontological parallels discussed deal with the parallelism of subcultures. Circumstances among Victorian subcultures discussed in the

investigated novels arise in the context of democratic controversy: Disraeli argues for an aristocratic government with direct control of the industrial complex rather than a democratic form of capitalism; Gaskell argues for a female inclusive democracy rather than a militaristic patriarchy; and Dickens warns readers against marriages of self interest in a totalitarian state. Scientific misunderstandings discussed arise from mixed attitudes about what should be public and what should be private knowledge. Disraeli's protagonist Egremont must weigh his politics and feelings for Sybil to arrange a dialogue that is publicly acceptable. Gaskell's heroine Margaret wrestles with paternalist and pure capitalist arguments trying to decide if family and business should coincide. Dickens creates a circus metaphor to warn audiences against mixing private family life with public business practices. The discussions of political parallax explore the ambivalent stages of contemplation before withdrawal. Disraeli's novel is an example of such contemplation. It is Disraeli's attempt to argue for an aristocracy rather than the impending democracy influenced by the industrialists. Later in his political career, Disraeli would have to withdraw from his aristocratic stance to attain his position as prime minister. The political parallax for Gaskell arises when she tries to alleviate the problems of labor as a cash nexus by suggesting corporate social policies in the form of a new factory funded by Margaret and run by Thornton. While it is likely that Gaskell never withdrew from her ideal, it is clear from the positions of companies in more progressive countries in the twenty-first century that some withdrawal from laissez-faire capitalism has occurred. It is not unusual for modern American companies to have employee benefits and advocate green packaging and other practices. Political parallax in *Hard Times* occurs paradoxically in the form of Utilitarianism and matriarchal domesticity. Unable to escape her marriage from Bounderby, Louisa completely withdraws, to live with her father. Sissy on the other hand,

marries and raises her children. During the course of her life, Sissy reads fanciful works of fiction to people she loves, enabling them to escape the Utilitarian dystopia envisioned by Dickens. The similar circumstances revealed by the three forms of parallax discussed by Žižek help to guide authors in their creative efforts to form solutions to England's condition during the Victorian era.

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