

Industrial England in Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South

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ABSTRAKT

V této bakalářské práci se zabývám analýzou industriální Anglie v románu Elizabeth Gaskell North and South.

V první části předkládám charakteristiku industriální Anglie v devatenáctém století. Ve druhé části charakterizuji spisovatelku Elizabeth Gaskell a její dílo. V poslední části analyzuji román North and South, industriální Anglii a rozdíly mezi Severem a Jihem, které jsou viditelné v tomto románu.

Klíčová slova: Anglie, devatenácté století, Elizabeth Gaskell, North and South, dělnická třída

ABSTRACT

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyse the industrial England in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel North and South.

In the first part I submit the characteristic of the industrial England in the nineteenth century. The second part characterizes the writer Elizabeth Gaskell and her work. The last part analyses the novel North and South, industrial England and differences between the North and the South which are visible in the novel.

Keywords: England, nineteenth century, Elizabeth Gaskell, North and South, working class

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of my bachelor thesis is to analyse the industrial England in the nineteenth century in the novel *North and South* written by Elizabeth Gaskell.

The first part of the thesis characterises the industrial England in the nineteenth century generally. It can help better understand the novel *North and South*. The second part characterises Elizabeth Gaskell, her life, career and works. The last part focuses on the novel *North and South* in detail. It describes the industrial England and differences between the North and the South of England in the novel.

England in the nineteenth century became the foremost world's power. It was the first industrialised country and had the biggest economic power. After the Napoleonic wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century, England possessed many colonies and controlled the biggest part of the world. England was at its peak during the Victorian era. The whole world admired this country. English legacy from the nineteenth century is still visible in lives of many people all around the world.

Industry was developing during this time in England and led to the big urbanization and to the growth of working class. England changed itself from the agricultural to the industrial country. However in the factories the working conditions were bad and workers were often exploited. These facts led the government to publish many reforms to improve the situation.

The policy of England in the nineteenth century followed the idea of Laissez-faire, government interfered into the economic affairs of the state minimally. Also the ideas of liberalism, free trade and individualism were spread in England.

Many English writers wrote about this period, among them Elizabeth Gaskell. She is famous for her novels with strong women heroines and also for her short-stories. She was inspired by changing England and by the environment she lived in. Also her family influenced and inspired her.

To one of Gaskell's world-famous novels belongs *North and South*. It is an industrial as well as romantic novel. The main heroine Margaret faces a big change when her family moves from the South of England to the industrial North. Many differences of these two parts of England are visible in the novel.

1 ENGLAND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The following chapter outlines the political, social and economic situation in England in the nineteenth century. It will describe some issues which influenced and changed people's lives in this time.

1.1 Political situation

During the nineteenth century, there were four monarchs who reigned in Britain. It was King George III., King George IV., King William IV. and Queen Victoria.

Queen Victoria was the most significant monarch of the nineteenth century and also one of the most successful British monarchs ever. She reigned from 1837 till 1901. She took the throne when she was only eighteen years old after the death of her uncle William IV. Duration of her reign is the longest in the British history. In 1840 Victoria married to her cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

Victoria was very popular and successful monarch, she believed that monarch should set the example to people. Her family was the classic of religious family. In 1876 she became the Empress of India. The whole era is called after Victoria - "the Victorian Era."

"Her name also continues to live in the names of some institutions and geographical names, e. g. the Victorian Cross (the highest military decoration for bravery in battle), Victoria Station in London, the Victoria Falls on the Zambezi in southern Africa, Lake Victoria in East Africa, Victoria (one of the Australian states) and many others."¹

1.1.1 Victorian Era (1837-1901)

In the Victorian Era England became very successful country in many respects. It was number one in industry, colonization and finance and it had also very strong navy. National wealth of England as well as colonial possessions increased in this time. Victorian Era was also the period of many other changes in various sectors. Law, Economics as well as people's lives were improved. Big emphasis was put on education and women's rights. England changed dramatically and started to be a very modern country.

Although Victorian era was very successful period for the development of people's lives, for some of them it was also the period of agitation. There were significant

¹ Karel Veselý, *The English Speaking Countries- Reálle Anglicky Mluvicích Zemí* (Praha: Státní Pedagogické Nakladatelství Praha, 1983), 26.

differences among people. Some of them were rich but some lived in poverty. A lot of people were unemployed and the price of food was high. There was also dissatisfaction with working conditions and wages in manufacturies.

Victorian Era is also known as the time of the industrial and technological revolution. England changed itself from the agricultural to the industrial country. There were many inventions and innovations which helped to the industry and also to normal people.

The success of England during the Victorian era could reflect the first world's fair "The Great Exhibition" of 1851 which was held in Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London. The Great Exhibition lasted five months and had a great success, around six million people visited it. There was a large number of exhibitions, visitors could see for example electric telegraph, art from exotic countries or the biggest diamond in the world.

The Great Exhibition is also visible in the novel *North and South*. At the invitation of her aunt, the main heroine Margaret goes to London to see the Great Exhibition. Everybody talk about it in superlatives. Mrs. Hale tells to Elizabeth that she should go to London to see it because she can see the whole world there.

In the second half of the nineteenth century a lot of changes appeared in London, the new Houses of Parliament with the Big Ben were built and London subway system started to be constructed. Also in other English big cities such as Manchester new public buildings were built.

1.1.2 Wars

England was involved into some wars which ran in the nineteenth century. Some of these wars changed rapidly England's wealth as well as people's lives. It was also an inspiration for many English writers.

The Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) finished the fighting between France and Britain. During the Napoleonic wars, two battles were important and successful for Britain - the Battle of Trafalgar and the Battle of Waterloo.

The Battle of Trafalgar took place in Spain at the headline Trafalgar in 1805. It was a sea battle among Britain, France and Spain. The British navy was led by Admiral Lord Nelson and the French one by Napoleon Bonaparte. Spain was the French ally. At the end of the battle, Nelson died but thanks to him, Britain won and he became a hero. Trafalgar Square with Nelson's Column in London was named after him to commemorate the victory. In this battle Britain showed that it is the biggest sea power in the world.

The Battle of Waterloo took place in 1815 in Belgium.² "It was a battle between France, under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the allied armies commanded by the Duke of Wellington from Britain and General Blücher from Prussia."³ Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated again and Napoleonic Wars ended. After it, England's economy as well as the quality of life was flourishing.

Napoleonic Wars were an inspiration for Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Sylvia's Lovers* which is set into this period. These wars are also reflected in *North and South*. Margaret's brother Frederick joined to the British navy.

Between years 1854 and 1856, Britain joined to the Crimean War, especially because of the possibility of Russian Expansion to Britain. "The war lasted until 1856, cost Britain some 25.000 lives and cost 70 million Pounds, and gave her no clear advantages."⁴

The Crimean War was an inspiration for many novels published in this time, e.g. Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*. Also Elizabeth Gaskell was affected by this war. "The vision of young men dying in the Crimea had pursued her while she worked on *North and South*."⁵ The Crimean war is also visible in her letters.

1.2 Social situation

1.2.1 Population

During the nineteenth century, the population of England increased many times. At the end of the eighteenth century the estimation of the population of England was circa 7.1 million and according to the Census from 1801, 8.3 million people lived in England. In 1831 it was 13.1 million and the Census of 1851 showed that 16.9 million people lived in England. The population more than doubled. This Census also showed that around five million people attended the Church of England, around 4.5 million were Protestant Dissenters and around 380 thousand people Roman Catholics.⁶ By 1871, the population of England increased to 22 million. Better quality of life caused that birth-rate increased and the death rate was not

²Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).

³"The Battle of Waterloo,"

BBC, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire_seapower/battle_waterloo_01.shtml (accessed February 15, 2011).

⁴David Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999), 158.

⁵Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 498.

⁶Kenneth O. Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1996), 521.

as high as it was before. The population also increased due to the immigration, especially from Ireland.⁷

Nineteenth century was also the period of big urbanization. It means that people moved from the countryside to the towns and cities. This happened especially because of the growth of the industry in cities and towns, people moved there to get a job and to have better life.

Till 1830, some cities became larger two times or even more, e.g. Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. But the largest city with the biggest population was definitely London. "In 1820 London was home for 1.25 million people."⁸ And in 1851 this number increased almost twice.

Urbanization in England of that time was the biggest in the world. By the end of the nineteenth century, around 80% of people lived in cities or towns especially on the north-west of England. Also some conurbations grew in England, among the biggest belonged London and Lancashire.

1.2.2 Education

Another great progress of the century related to education. More schools were built and important reforms were issued in England.⁹

"The Education Act of 1870 set up locally-elected school boards which could compel attendance to the age of thirteen."¹⁰ In this time also the first colleges for women were established, the first one at Cambridge.

With the Education Act of 1880 elementary education became compulsory but not free. It became totally free with the Education Act of 1891.

1.2.3 Life and Family

For many people, life became easier in the nineteenth century. "People were already, on the whole, better fed, better clothed, less likely to contract disease and better cared for when they did, than during the eighteenth century."¹¹ Also the emphasis on individualism grew, people were more self-confident. But there were still people who were not satisfied with

⁷ Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century*.

⁸ David McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain* (New York: Longman, 1989), 134.

⁹ Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century*.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century*, 11.

their lives, especially people who belonged to the working class. This problem will be described in another chapter.

The approach to the family life was also different. People got married rather for love and happiness than for money and securing like was common before. However husband and wife were not equal. The head of the family and more important person was a man. Regarding children, parents were very strict to them and beating was absolutely normal.¹² "One should not be surprised that family life often ended when children grew up."¹³

As has been already mentioned, women in the nineteenth century were not equal to men. They did not have the same opportunities for studying as men had. Normally they did not have any job, they looked after the household. Therefore they did not have any money, a husband was the one who normally worked and earned money. "A wife was legally a man's property."¹⁴ In most cases woman's only duty was to give birth to children. If a man discovered that his wife was unfaithful to him he could get divorced. Women were not able to file for divorce.

Women were dissatisfied with these conditions. Since 1840s various movements for women's rights started to appear. Primarily they wanted better education and employment for women. The situation was gradually improving. Since 1840s they often worked as factory workers and servants so they could earn some money. In 1870s a lot of women had a clerical job and since 1880s they were becoming teachers.

1.2.4 Working-class

The society of England in the nineteenth century was highly stratified. Differences among the working-class, the middle class and the upper-class were considerable. You could see it at first side to which class a person belong. People from different classes wore different clothes, had different speech and manners. They had also different education and different jobs. Usually people from the working class did physical work, middle-class people did clean work, it means work without physical effort. People from the upper-class were normally aristocrats who were very rich, often they inherited some property and did not have to work for money.

¹² McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain* .

¹³ McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain*, 137.

¹⁴ Ibid

About 80% of English society in the nineteenth century were members of the working class. The industrial towns were expensive for workers and they earned only little money, which was not always sufficient for the whole family. In these cases also wives and children had to work to avoid the poverty.¹⁵ The example of this situation can be Bessy Higgins in *North and South* who works in the cotton factory.

More and more people worked in the factories because industry was growing very fast, especially the textile industry. Work in the textile manufacturies was demanding and injurious to health. "A spiritless and dejected air, a sprawling and wide action of the legs, and an appearance, taken as a whole, giving the world but "little assurance of a man," or if so," most sadly cheated of his fair proportions..."¹⁶ This work was really inconvenient for children, nevertheless a lot of them worked in these manufacturies.

The fastest growing industry in England was the cotton industry. Cotton technology spread to other textiles speedily to Yorkshire worsteds, slowly to linen and wool."¹⁷ People moved to the towns with cotton mills to get a better job. Because there were more people in these towns, the conditions for living were worse. This fact led to the spread of diseases. "In 1831, Manchester was hit by a severe cholera epidemic which claimed hundreds of lives."¹⁸ Also the long-working days and noise in the manufacturies were harmful for workers. "The passing of numerous Factory Acts over the years saw a gradual improvement in working conditions, but life as a mill worker was never an easy one."¹⁹

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, workers started to join into unions. The main goal of the unions was to convince their employers to raise the wages and improve working conditions of their workers. Sometimes workers also went on strike. But for employers it was not a big problem to break up a strike. Sometimes soldiers and violence were used. Joining into unions is again visible in the novel *North and South*.

¹⁵ Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* .

¹⁶ Laura Del Col, "The Life of the Industrial Worker in Ninteenth-Century England," The Victorian Web, <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/workers2.html> (accessed February 26, 2011).

¹⁷ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 480.

¹⁸ "A Factory Worker's Lot - Conditions in the Mill,"

BBC, http://www.bbc.co.uk/nationonfilm/topics/textiles/background_conditions.shtml (accessed February 26, 2011).

¹⁹ Ibid

1.2.5 Reforms and Laws

The nineteenth century in England was a period of many great reforms. The reforms were mostly issued under the pressure of the working-class people. Some of them were necessary for them.

In the first half of the century the government dealt with the Corn Laws because after the Napoleonic Wars there was a problem with higher prices of almost everything in England. The most serious issue was the corn imported from abroad. This corn was much cheaper than the corn from England. Because of this fact, farmers lost a lot of money and the price of bread rapidly increased. A lot of workers were not able to sustain their families and they were starving. This led to the introduction of the Importation Act in 1815. "Parliament passed legislation that stated that no foreign corn could be imported into Britain until domestic corn cost 80/- per quarter."²⁰

In 1828, the Corn Law was adjusted. "A sliding scale was introduced which allowed foreign corn to be imported duty-free when the domestic price rose to 73/- per quarter."²¹

However there was also a disagreement with the Corn Law. In 1836 the Anti-Corn Law Association (later renamed as the "Anti-Corn Law League") was established. The aim of the Anti-Corn Law League was to abolish the Corn Law. The members of this league thought that it is the only possibility how to obtain a free trade. Finally, in 1846 they were successful and The Corn Law was abolished.²²

Very important issues were also the Reform acts. The First Reform Act (also called the Reform Bill) was suggested by Whigs when Charles Grey was the Prime Minister. The act was also effected by many politicians, e.g. Lord Brougham. Tories strongly disagreed with the act. Nevertheless, it was accepted by the Parliament in 1832.

One of the biggest aims of the Reform Act was to transform the representation of the Parliament. The most discontented were industrialists. The approval of the Reform Act was necessary for political stability in England.²³ "Forty-one large English towns –

²⁰ Marjie Bloy, "The Corn Laws," The Victorian Web, <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/cornlaws1.html> (accessed February 15, 2011).

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1996).

including Manchester, Bradford and Birmingham got representation for the first time. England, with 54% of the population, continued to return 71% of the Commons."²⁴

Another aim of the First Reform Act was to extend the franchise. The Forty Shilling Franchise from 1429 was cancelled. Thanks to the Reform Act, new constituencies in England were established. "The First Reform Act also broadened the franchise's property qualification in the counties, to include small landowners, tenant farmers, and shopkeepers."²⁵ Also the amount of voters increased, it was near to one million.

Elizabeth Gaskell did not fancy the Reform Act. She declared: "Oh! How tired I am of Reform Bill – and my Aunt, and most of my cousins, are quite anti-reformers and abuse Lord Brougham and think him superficial."²⁶

In 1833, the Factory Act was issued in Britain. This act reduced the number of working hours for women and especially for children working in the industry. The basic of the act was that children could work from nine years, not before this age, and they could not work during the night. "Children from nine to thirteen years could not work more than nine hours a day and children from thirteen to eighteen years could not work more than twelve hours a day."²⁷

Another Factory Act was published in 1844. This act said that children who are not older than thirteen years cannot work more than six and half hours a day and women can work only twelve hours a day.²⁸

In 1834, the Whig government issued The Poor Law Amendment Act. There were four principles for this law: "the principle of less eligibility (workhouse conditions should be made less those of the lowest paid labourer), the prohibition of outdoor relief (relief outside the workhouse), the segregation of different classes of paupers (including the separation of

²⁴ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 495.

²⁵ "The Reform Act 1832," <http://www.parliament.uk>, <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/reformact1832/> (accessed February 15, 2011).

²⁶ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 68.

²⁷ "1833 Factory Act," The National Archives, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/lesson13.htm/> (accessed February 15, 2011).

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Marjie Bloy, "The Poor Law Amendment Act: 14 August 1834," The Victorian Web, <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/poorlaw/plaatext.html> (accessed April 6, 2011).

married couples, the abolition of the rate-in-aid (grants to supplement low wages)."²⁹ However it was impossible to fulfill all of these principles, thus the Poor Law Amendment Act was criticised by many people. People were dissatisfied because a lot of them did not receive any help and conditions in workhouses stayed dreadful. "They were crowded and dirty, with barely enough food to keep people alive. The inhabitants of workhouses had to work from early morning till late at night."³⁰

In 1838, there was a movement of working class in England, called People's Charter. Chartists demanded six main issues: "manhood suffrage, the ballot, equal electoral districts, abolition of property qualifications for MPs, payment for MPs and annual Parliaments."³¹

The movement was not successful in the House of Commons in 1839, mostly because of bad leadership of the People's Charter. But it definitely conduced to some of the following legislations, e.g. the Ten Hour Act which was issued in 1847. This Act said that children and women cannot work more than ten hours a day.³²

"In 1840, a cheap postage system was introduced. This system was called the Uniform Penny Post. For one penny a letter could be sent to anyone, anywhere in Britain."³³ Since this time the number of letters posted from Britain increased many times. This system also contributed to establishing of unions, the communication among its members was easier.

The Second Reform Act issued in 1867 extended the First Reform Act from 1832. "This act granted the vote to all householders in the boroughs as well as lodgers who paid rent of £10 a year or more. It also reduced the property threshold in the counties and gave the vote to agricultural landowners and tenants with very small amounts of land." ³⁴

In 1884, the Third Reform Act was published. This act increased the electorate to the considerable amount of householders.

³⁰ McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain*, 132.

³¹ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 498.

³² Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*.

³³ McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain*, 135.

³⁴ "Second Reform Act 1867," [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/furtherreformacts/), <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/furtherreformacts/> (accessed April 6, 2011).

1.3 Economic situation

1.3.1 The Industrial Revolution

"Industrial Revolution, in modern history, is the process of change from agrarian, handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacture."³⁵ This process began in England in the eighteenth century and reached its peak in the nineteenth century. New technology, materials and energy sources were used in the industry.³⁶

Also the transportation system in England was improved. The nineteenth century was the time of the railway boom. George Stephenson was the person who first invented the steam locomotive. He is also known for building a new railway lines in England. The boom of the railway transport was at the beginning of the Victorian Era. The railway system helped to the transportation of raw materials from mines and of manufacture products. For normal people, the railway system provided better and quicker transportation across the country. This system changed rapidly the landscape of England and became very popular among people. In the novel *North and South*, this railway boom is noticeable. It is mentioned there that people travel by train to go somewhere and also some railway tracks are mentioned.

England's main industries in the nineteenth century were textile industry, coal mining, production of iron and production of manufactured goods. Export rapidly increased. English trading was number one in the world. This fact also led to the increase of the real wages of workers. Some of them could for the first time spend some money on their leisure time.

In the second part of the century an innovation of the communication appeared. Telegraph and telephone were invented. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was possible to send a telegraph message to almost all parts of the world.³⁷

³⁵ "Industrial Revolution," Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/287086/Industrial-Revolution> (accessed April 6, 2011).

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Peter Atterbury, "Victorian Technology," BBC, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/victorian_technology_01.shtml (accessed April 6, 2011).

1.3.2 Liberalism and "Laissez-faire,"

"Laissez-faire is a policy of minimum governmental interference in the economic affairs of individuals and society."³⁸ This policy was used in Britain in the nineteenth century. It was a liberal doctrine which celebrated individualism. Supporters of this policy were British economists Jeremy Betham, Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill.

During the nineteenth century, liberalism was highly spread in England. It was grounded on the basis of Laissez-Faire and free trade. Free trade meant trading without state intervention and it improved the economic growth of England. Free trade and liberalism were results of freedom and solidity. "Individualism, self-respect, self-reliance, and the organisation of voluntary and co-operative societies, these were the keynotes of mid-Victorian liberalism."³⁹

1.3.3 Economic growth

England in the nineteenth century became the strongest and the most powerful country in the world. It was also the country with the biggest production. England was called as a "workshop" of the world. England gained this strong position after the victory in Napoleonic Wars. Also national income of England increased many times. England overtook its competitor – France. "Compared with any other country, the British economy in the period 1850-70 was extraordinary in its complexity and in the range of products and activities."⁴⁰

England was also number one in colonization. It occupied a lot of places in the world. This also led to better trading position. Among English colonies belonged for example New Zealand, Australia, India and Cyprus. England also gained a lot of other places during the Napoleonic Wars. "These included Mauritius (in the Indian Ocean), the Ionian Islands (in the eastern Mediterranean), Sierra Leone (western Africa), Cape Colony (southern Africa), Ceylon, and Singapore."⁴¹

³⁸ "Laissez-faire," Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/328028/laissez-faire> (accessed April 6, 2011).

³⁹ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 522.

⁴⁰ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 528.

⁴¹ McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain*, 131.

2 ELIZABETH GASKELL

A lot of famous writers lived in the nineteenth century and wrote about the society of this time. Probably the most well-known are Charles Dickens and Jane Austen. Another very well-known writer is Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865). This chapter will characterise her life, career and particularly her novel *North and South*.

"People may flatter themselves just as much by thinking that their faults are always present to other people's minds, as if they believe that the world is always contemplating their individual charms and virtues."⁴²

Elizabeth Gaskell

2.1 Life and career

2.1.1 Elizabeth's life

Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson was born in 1810 in Lindsay Row, Chelsea. When Elizabeth was very little, her mother died. It had a big impact on Elizabeth's life. After her death, she lived in a small town called Knutsford with her mother's sister Hannah. Their house was on the fringes of the town surrounded by the countryside. This place was an inspiration for a lot of Elizabeth's works (e.g. *Cranford*, *Wives and Daughters*). Elizabeth also spent some time in Newcastle upon Tyne and in Edinburgh with her father and his new wife Catherine.

Elizabeth's education began in her early years with teaching of her aunt and with attending the Unitarian Sunday school. From early years, she read many books. "At the age of eleven she went off to boarding school, then "Avonbank" in Stratford-upon-Avon."⁴³ After finishing the school, Elizabeth came back to her father because his health was not good. It did not last long and he died.

In 1832, Elizabeth got married to William Gaskell. She met him when she went to Manchester with friends. The couple settled in Manchester. Elizabeth was shocked by Manchester life and this place with its industry was an inspiration for her writing. The imaginary town of Milton in *North and South* has a lot of similarities with Manchester.

⁴² "Elizabeth Gaskell Quotes," Brainy

Quote, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/e/elizabeth_gaskell.html (accessed April 6, 2011).

⁴³ "Elizabeth Gaskell," [www.online-literature.com, http://www.online-literature.com/elizabeth_gaskell/](http://www.online-literature.com/elizabeth_gaskell/) (accessed April 6, 2011).

Manchester of this time was a city which was affected by the Industrial Revolution. Some parts were very dirty and poverty was visible. On the other hand "it was a great cultural and intellectual centre, boasting institutions like the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Mechanics Institute and the Athenaeum."⁴⁴

Elizabeth and William had five children – four daughters whose names were Marianne, Margaret Emily, Florence Elizabeth, Julia Bradford and a son named William. However her son "Willie" died when he was an infant. His death was a body blow for Elizabeth. It took her a long time to recover from it. "The delight of a first baby, nuzzling and cooing by one's side, which she recalled in her letters years later, is often expressed in Gaskell's novels: in the pictures of Sylvia Robson with her baby, of Mrs Hale remembering Frederick's infancy and, perhaps the most moving of all, of Ruth with her illegitimate son, a mark of shame in the eyes of society, but a source of wonder to her."⁴⁵

Elizabeth helped a lot to her husband with humanitarian and charity actions. These actions, care of her family and writing made her days very busy. She was also keen on travelling. It was an escape from the reality for her. She liked travelling on her own, it was some kind of adventure for her. "Elizabeth's diary and letters also continue the narrative of her outer life, showing, for instance, what a great deal of time she actually stayed away from Manchester."⁴⁶

Elizabeth was very interested in social problems, industrial life and workers. We can see it in her works. She wrote a lot of social and industrial novels (e.g. *North and South*, *Mary Barton*, *Ruth*).

Elizabeth was, to a considerable extent, a feminist. "Both Cranford and Ruth can be read, with qualifications, as feminist texts."⁴⁷ She also supported the movement of women who were united around the "Englishwoman's Journal" in 1850s. "She signed the petition for the amendment of the married women's property laws organized in 1854, and approved their campaigns for education and employment."⁴⁸

⁴⁴ "Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell-(1810-1865)," The Gaskell Society, <http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk/life.html>(accessed April 6, 2011).

⁴⁵ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 92.

⁴⁶ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 98.

⁴⁷ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 310.

⁴⁸ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 311.

Elizabeth was a friend with many significant people, e.g. Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Charles Dickens. Elizabeth and Charles Dickens were meeting quite often and Elizabeth also knew the Dickens family. Dickens was a big fan of Elizabeth's writings. "He also became the chief publisher of Gaskell's shorter works, and to start with he proved a shrewd and tactful editor."⁴⁹ However, sometimes they had some problems. From time to time, Elizabeth was fed up with Dickens but she had similar problem with all of her publishers. Elizabeth could be sometimes very irritable.⁵⁰

In 1865 Elizabeth died of a heart attack. She was only fifty-five. However her heritage still lives.

Very important component of Elizabeth's life was her family. It had a big influence on her and it was also an inspiration for a lot of her novels.

Elizabeth's father was William Stevenson. William was a radical man with modern opinions. He worked as a teacher, scientific farmer, minister at Unitarian Chapel and a writer.

Elizabeth's mother Elizabeth Stevenson came from the middle-class, traditional and conservative family. She died when Elizabeth was only thirteen months. The death of the mother could be a subject of *North and South* where Margaret's mother dies too.

Brother of Elizabeth's mother, Swinton Holland was put in jail when the "Franco-Austrian War" was running. It is possible that it was also the inspiration for *North and South*, speaking about Margaret's brother Frederick.

Elizabeth's parents were both supporters of Unitarism. "Unitarianism is an open-minded and individualistic approach to religion that gives scope for a very wide range of beliefs and doubts."⁵¹ This way of thinking influenced also their daughter's life.

Elizabeth's brother was John Stevenson. The siblings had very nice relationship. But John was just rarely at home. He loved sea and he was often on a voyage. Elizabeth and John did not see often but they regularly wrote letters to each other. However it was visible that Elizabeth felt lonely without him. Similar relationship has Margaret and Frederick in *North and South*.

⁴⁹ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 254.

⁵⁰ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*.

⁵¹ "Unitarianism," BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/unitarianism/> (accessed April 6, 2011).

John did not earn much money on his voyages. This fact led to his decision to leave England for India. After John arrived to India, his family did not know anything about him. Like the Hales in *North and South*, the Stevensons were waiting for news from their son.

In a lot of her novels, Elizabeth wrote about sailors. "Whether they return or not, they are figures of loss and longing, mingled fear and hope: Will Wilson in *Mary Barton*, Peter in *Cranford*, Frederick in *North and South*, Kinraid in *Sylvia's Lovers*."⁵² Also Elizabeth's father was inspired by his son and wrote about the sea.

Elizabeth's aunt – Hannah Lumb, a middle-class woman and Elizabeth's stepmother, was the daughter of a colonial official and had a big influence on Elizabeth when she was in her early years.

However the fatal person in Elizabeth's life was her husband William Gaskell. When Elizabeth met him for the first time, he was the assistant minister and was very attractive and educated. After their marriage he became a well-known person. He really loved his job of being a Unitarian minister of Manchester. Probably, William was an inspiration for a figure of Mr. Hale in *North and South*.

2.1.2 Elizabeth's career

Elizabeth Gaskell is famous for her novels, novellas, short stories and also one bibliography. She also wrote her own diary and letters to family and friends. From these writings it is possible to find out more about her life.

Novels which she wrote are: *Mary Barton*, *Cranford*, *North and South*, *Ruth*, *Sylvia's Lovers* and *Wives and Daughters*.

In 1848, Elizabeth published anonymously her first novel, *Mary Barton: A tale of Manchester Life*.⁵³ The novel was written after the death of Elizabeth's son Willie, her sorrow of this tragedy is reflected there (a lot of people dies in the story). The story of *Mary Barton* is set in 1830s in Manchester. It tells about two families, the Bartons and the Wilsons and the main plot of the story is an investigation of a murder. The novel also shows the life of people in an industrial town. "Mary Barton touched and shocked its middle-class readers to an unprecedented extent because it showed how the poor suffered

⁵² Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 54.

⁵³ "Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell-(1810-1865)," The Gaskell Society, <http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk/life.html>(accessed April 6, 2011).

not in the mill or the factory but in their homes, with their wives and children, as the settled rhythms of their lives were shaken and destroyed."⁵⁴

The novel *Cranford* was published in 1853. The story of the novel is set in the town of Cranford, which is very similar to the town of Knutsford where Elizabeth Gaskell spent her childhood. It is a funny story which tells about the life of the main character Mary Smith. "The Cranford stories were written to entertain, and Gaskell has fun adapting the stock conventions of serial fiction: the railway accident, the childhood sweet heart, the servant's romance, the bank failure, the long lost brother."⁵⁵

In the same year as *Cranford*, also the novel *Ruth* was published. The story tells about the main heroine Ruth who suffers from a loss of her parents in her early youth and becomes a mother. However her child is illegitimate. She becomes a "fallen woman," she is rejected by people. Victorian society did not accept woman with an illegitimate child, it was taken as a sin. At the end of the novel, Ruth dies from the illness.⁵⁶ "Many people did refuse to read it, or forbade their womenfolk to – and the author's own hesitation and fear of the subject can also be felt in this novel."⁵⁷

Another Gaskell's novel, *Sylvia's Lovers*, was published in 1863. "Sylvia's Lovers is a novel of longing for the irretrievable, in which energy and zest are slowly undermined and then suddenly destroyed."⁵⁸ The story is set in a town of Monkshaven in 1790s. The main hero of the novel Sylvia is engaged to sailor Kinraid. Before their marriage Kinraid is captured and Sylvia thinks that he is dead so she marries her cousin Philip. Philip knows about Kinraid and finally also Sylvia discovers the truth. After it, Philip goes to the army. However, Sylvia discovers that she is in love with him.

The last Gaskell's novel named *Wives and Daughters* was published in 1866. This novel left unfinished because Elizabeth died. "Wives and Daughters is a serious book but it is also immensely funny, and very moving, because it shows underlying structures of

⁵⁴ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 194.

⁵⁵ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 287.

⁵⁶ "Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell-(1810-1865)," The Gaskell Society, <http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk/life.html>(accessed April 6, 2011).

⁵⁷ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 322.

⁵⁸ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 505.

thought as they surface in manners, speech, dress and action."⁵⁹ The main character of the novel is a girl Molly Gibson and the story is set in England in 1830s. Molly lives only with her father because her mother died. This book shows a strong woman character.

Among Gaskell's novellas belongs for example *The Moorland Cottage* published in 1850. "The Moorland Cottage is a gentle book, with an interesting feminist tinge."⁶⁰ Another novella written by Gaskell is *Mr. Harrison's Confessions* from 1851 which is a humorous story. Next a feminine novella *My Lady Ludlow* from 1858 and *Lois the Witch* from 1859 can be mentioned.⁶¹

Elizabeth Gaskell wrote several short-stories. "In the Manchester Marriage (1858) the longed-for wandering sailor returns as a dreaded revenant to find his wife peacefully married to another."⁶² Among other Gaskell's shortstories belong *Christmas Storms*, *Sunshine* and *the Grey Woman*.

Elizabeth Gaskell also became famous for her article from 1849 *The Last Generation in England*. "In The Last Generation Gaskell describes the hierarchy of the small town of her youth from the top downwards: the landed gentry, the professional classes, the shopkeepers, the usual respectable and disrespectable poor, and the alienated fringe, hanging on the outskirts of society and every now and then dropping off the pit's brink into crime, attacking the old ladies on their way back from card parties."⁶³

The only bibliography which Gaskell wrote is *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Elizabeth and Charlotte were friends and they were writing letters to each other. After Charlotte's death, Elizabeth started to write a bibliography which was published in 1857. "Gaskell used her novelist's skill to create the atmosphere, setting and character which would frame Charlotte's own words in her letters."⁶⁴

Many Gaskell's stories were made into films or series, e.g. *North and South*, *Cranford*, *My Lady Ludlow*, *Wives and Daughters* and *Mr. Harrison's Confessions*.

⁵⁹ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 580.

⁶⁰ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 252.

⁶¹ "Elizabeth Gaskell," [www.online-literature.com](http://www.online-literature.com/elizabeth_gaskell), http://www.online-literature.com/elizabeth_gaskell (accessed April 6, 2011).

⁶² Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 474.

⁶³ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 279-80.

⁶⁴ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 407.

A lot of Gaskell's works were published at first at English and American magazines and journals. She also wrote several articles which were published there. I can mention Howitt's Journal, Sartain's Union Magazine, The Sunday School Penny Magazine, Household Words, The Ladie's Companion, Harper's Magazine and The Fraser's Magazine.⁶⁵

2.2 North and South

"I believe I have seen hell and it's white, it's snow-white."⁶⁶

North and South is a novel written by Elizabeth Gaskell. As has been already mentioned in the previous chapter, she was influenced by the Crimean War during writing this novel. At first *North and South* was published in Charles Dickens's magazine the Household Words. As a book it was published in 1855.

North and South is an industrial novel as well as Bildungsroman. The industrial novel is a literary genre of Victorian literature. It narrates about a life of working-class people and how the industry influenced them. Bildungsroman is a literary genre which describes social and psychological growth of a character. The character grows from a child to an adult person.

The main character of *North and South* is like in many Gaskell's novels a strong woman. "Gaskell had seen numerous idealistic young women, suffocated by the prospect of what her heroine comes to see as the eventless ease in which no struggle or endeavour was required, in which one could so easily become sleepily deadened into forgetfulness."⁶⁷

2.2.1 The Story of North and South

North and South is a novel which mixes various topics. It compares life in the North and in the South of England, tells about the beginning of industry and about its impact on people, describes family life and relations among its members and tells about love. Also death is visible in the novel. Many people dies there (e.g. Mr. and Mrs. Hale, Bessy Higgins, Boucher, Mr. Bell).

⁶⁵ Andrzej Diniejko, "An Elizabeth Gaskell Chronology," <http://www.victorianweb.org>, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/gaskell/chron.html> (accessed March 6, 2011).

⁶⁶ *North and South*, DVD, directed by Brian Percival (London, United Kingdom: BBC, 2004).

North and South narrates a story about various people who are connected by various situations. People from different parts of England as well as from different social classes are linked together.

The story of the novel is set in the nineteenth-century England in a fictitious town of Milton in the North of England. The main character is a nineteen years old woman Margaret Hale. At first she lives in the South of England in the town of Helstone with her parents. One of the main issues of the novel is their moving to the town of Milton in the North of England. The reason of their moving is that Mr. Hale, a priest of the Church of England, loses his faith.

At first Milton is described only negatively as an ugly smoky place. But throughout the story the perception of Milton is different. *North and South* partly becomes a defence of the industry via Margaret Hale.

In the novel we meet with John Thornton, an owner of the cotton mill in Milton. He and his workers demonstrate a relation between masters and workers in the nineteenth century. Also various perception of the industry among them is visible there.

Margaret's attitude on John Thornton is at first very negative. The most she does not like his approach to workers. But her attitude to him as well as to the industry and the North of England is changing throughout the novel.

Margaret becomes a friend with the Higgins family. This family belongs to working class. It embodies a working-class life and suffering following the growing industry. Bessy Higgins who is seriously ill and later dies is characterized as a victim of the industry.

The Hales and their relation represent the family life in the nineteenth century. After moving to Milton, Mrs. Hale's health is rapidly worsening. Her only wish before the death is to see her "lost" son Frederick. Frederick went to navy and took a part in a revolt action. If he came back to England, he would go to prison. Despite the fact that it is dangerous, Margaret writes a letter to him and he secretly comes to Milton. But at the railway station Frederick is seen by Leonard who was in the army with him. Frederick injures him because Leonard would reveal that Frederick is in England. Leonard dies after it.

⁶⁷ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 369.

Police start to investigate Leonard's death. Margaret claims that she was not there despite the fact that she saw he brother off and Mr. Thornton saw them. After Thornton's standing up for her she realizes that she loves him.

Another phenomenon in the novel is the formation of worker's unions and strikes. Milton workers get together into union and consult important issues. They are not satisfied with their wages and their masters do not want to higher them. This is the reason why the workers plan a strike. The strike breaks out and lasts several weeks. When the strike reaches its peak, Margaret is at Thornton's house. Workers riot and come in front of the house. Margaret behaves very bravely and at this moment Thornton realizes how much he loves her. Workers are very passionate and Margaret is hit by a stone and injured. Finally soldiers come and break the workers up.

After the death of his wife, health of Mr. Hale is worsening and he dies too. Margaret stays alone without her parents. This is the reason why she moves back to Helstone with her aunt.

Soon also Mr. Bell dies. He bequeaths his whole property to Margaret. Margaret becomes a rich person because Mr. Bell owned a lot of money and property in Milton.

Meanwhile in Milton a lot of bussinessmen suffer because of the bad situation in America. Margaret decides to buy Thornton's Malborough Mills. At the end of the novel, she and Mr. Thronton declare love to each other.⁶⁸

The novel for most of the time tells about three families – the Hales, the Thorntons and the Higginses. Each family is from a different social class.

2.2.2 The Hales

The Hale family consists of Margaret, Mr. Hale, Mrs. Hale and Frederick. It is the family coming from the South of England and all the members of the family are very close to each other. This family belongs to the middle class and reflects family values.

Margaret is a main protagonist of the novel. She is partly an embodiment of Elizabeth Gaskell, they have a lot of things in common, e.g. moving to the industrial town, a loss of close people, love, loneliness.

Margaret matures throughout the novel, she changes from a naive girl to an experienced woman. "At the beginning, although outwardly strong, she is inwardly

unseeing, childlike, inexperienced, constantly surprised by people – by Henry Lennox's proposal, by her father's religious doubt."⁶⁹ She also suffers from her own denial of her body. She, a girl with a maidenly dignity, does not understand that she is in love and that she feels arousal. However she learns how to manage these feelings and becomes a strong woman.⁷⁰

Also Margaret's attitude to the industry is developing in the novel. At first she is disgusted by Milton, she tells everybody about Helstone, how beautiful town it is compared to Milton. But gradually she changes her mind. We can see it especially when she comes back to live in Helstone and feels that the life in the South is not satisfactory for her anymore. *North and South* is partly a defence of the North of England via Margaret who has an experience with both parts of England.

Margaret has an extraordinary relationship with Mr. Thornton. She experiences love for the first time in her life. We can see gradual changes in their relationship. It begins with hate and ends up with love even though they have different approach to many issues. "The romantic, intensely physical tension between Margaret and Thornton becomes a way of suggesting other oppositions – between nature and industry, sympathy and authority, passion and reason."⁷¹

Mrs. Hale is depicted as a loving mother. Her maternal instinct is visible in *North and South*. Frederick is mentioned many times and is praised by Mrs. Hale. That evidences Mrs. Hale's speech to Margaret: "I remember when I first saw you in Dixon's arms, I said, Dear, what an ugly little thing! And she said, it's not every child that's like Master Fred, bless him! Dear! How well I remember it. Then I could have had Fred in my arms every minute of the day, and his cot was close to my bed, and now, now--Margaret--I don't know where my boy is, and sometimes I think I shall never see him again."⁷² Mrs. Hale is also depicted as one of many victims of the air of the industrial town. Her health is worsening after coming to Milton and she dies.

⁶⁸ Gaskell, *North and South*.

⁶⁹ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 376.

⁷⁰ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 372.

⁷¹ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 372.

⁷² Gaskell, *North and South*, 151.

Frederick is depicted as a "lost" son. He lives in Spain and cannot go back to England because he would go to prison. His behaviour is irresponsible, he does not face the consequences of his acts. But he is also depicted as a devoted son, he comes back to England to see his mother before her death even if it is very dangerous for him to appear in England again.

Mr. Hale is depicted as a reasonable and smart man and also as a loving parent and husband. He is a priest of the Church of England but he loses his faith and gives up this post. He is also very educated and works as a tutor in Milton.

2.2.3 The Thorntons

The Thornton family consists of John, Mrs. Thornton and Fanny. Mr. Thornton, a husband of Mrs. Thornton and father of John and Fanny, committed suicide. The reason was that his business was unsuccessful and he had debts. This family belongs to the upper class, they are very rich and have a big house. Mrs. Thornton and Fanny do not hide that they are rich. They wear ostentatious dresses and throw big parties. It is also visible from their behaviour. They are snooty and snobbish.

John Thornton is a young businessman. His mother is very proud of him because he was able to save up some money and set up his own business. Thornton's character is developing throughout the novel. At first he is seen as a negative person. He is a master and does not behave in the best way to his workers. However later in the novel he has better relations with them, especially with Nicholas Higgins. He becomes a positive character. He is also very proud Northerner, he is proud of the growing industry.

Also Thornton's attitude to Margaret is changing. At first he does not like her and her opinions. But when he gets to know her, he falls in love for the first time in his life.

2.2.4 The Higginses

The Higgins family consists of Nicholas, Bessy and Mary. Mrs. Higgins died when the children were little. This family belongs to the working class, they are poor and have simple dwelling.

Nicholas is a worker and supporter of the strike. He believes that the strike can improve the situation of workers. He cares for two children and he needs more money. It is difficult for him to live without his wife and to bring up two daughters. He tries to solve these problems by drinking alcohol.

Bessy is a nineteen years old woman. She works since her childhood because of the bad financial situation of her family. Work has a big impact on her health. It is caused by horrible working conditions in factories and Milton's smoky air. Bessy worked in a carding room. She describes the conditions like this: "Fluff. Little bits, as fly off fro' the cotton, when they're cerding it, and fill the air till it looks all fine white dust. They say it winds round the lungs, and tightens them up. Anyhow, there's many a one as works in a carding-room, that falls into a waste, sougning and spitting blood, because they're just poisoned by the fluff."⁷³ Bessy's next job is in the Malborough Mills where the conditions are a bit better but still not ideal. Milton's air also does not help to her health. These facts lead finally to her death when she is only nineteen years old.

2.2.5 The Environment of the North and the South of England

North and South deals in a large part with the contrast between the North and the South of England in the nineteenth century. These parts of England were in this time like two completely different countries. Their environment was different in many ways.

The model of the South in the novel is the town of Helstone. Helstone is a real town which lies in Cornwall. It is a hometown of the Hales. Margaret speaks about it many times throughout the novel.

The model of the North in the novel is the town of Milton. Milton is a fictitious town. However it has a lot of similiarities with Manchester. It is very possible that Milton is just a "nickname" for Manchester because Elizabeth Gaskell lived there and it had a big influence on her.

When the Hales move to Milton, nobody except Mr. Hale, cannot understand why he chose this town. It is recognizable from Mrs. Hale's speech when she compares Milton to Helstone: "You can't think the smoky air of a manufacturing town, all chimneys and dirt like Milton-Northern, would be better than this air, which is pure and sweet, if it is too soft and relaxing. Fancy living in the middle of factories, and factory people!"⁷⁴

Helstone is described as a lovely calm town with a beautiful countryside. Everything goes slowly in this town, nobody is in a hurry. Sometimes it can even appear as boring.

⁷³ Gaskell, *North and South*, 74.

⁷⁴ Gaskell, *North and South*, 31.

Milton is described as an ugly manufacturing town which is also smoky and foggy. There are many factories from which evil-smelling smoke is coming out. In the streets many vehicles stand and it is visible that they serve as means for transport of cotton.

It is noticeable that Milton is not a good place for people's health. A lot of people in the novel cough or have an illness from Milton's smoky air and from the bad conditions in the factories. The examples can be Mrs. Hale and Bessy Higgins. Mrs. Hale is ill before going to Milton but her state of health is rapidly worsening after the arrival to Milton and finally she dies there. Bessy is ill since her childhood because she had to work in a factory where the working conditions were very bad.

As opposed to Helstone, everything goes fast in Milton. It is normal that almost everybody rushes somewhere. People are busy with their jobs and life goes very quickly. This town is very energetic. For the Hales the Milton's life is a big change compared to life in Helstone. "After a quiet life in a country parsonage for more than twenty years, there was something dazzling to Mr. Hale in the energy which conquered immense difficulties with ease, the power of the machinery in Milton, the power of the men of Milton, impressed him with a sense of grandeur, which he yielded to without caring to inquire into the details of its exercise."⁷⁵

The Hales often discuss Helstone and Milton with the Thorntons and these discussions are usually a "fight" between these two towns. It can evidence Mrs. Hale's speech: "At any rate, Mr. Thornton, said Mrs. Hale, you will allow that Milton is much more smoky, dirty town than you will ever meet with in the South."⁷⁶

Margaret often enthuses about Helstone to Bessy: "Oh, Bessy, I loved the home we have left so dearly! I wish you could see it. I cannot tell you half its beauty. There are great trees standing all about it, with their branches stretching long and level, and making a deep shade of rest even at noonday, and yet, though every leaf may seem still, there is a continual rushing sound of movement all around—not close at hand. Then sometimes the turf is as soft and fine as velvet, and sometimes quite lush with the perpetual misture of a little, hidden, tinkling brook near at hand."⁷⁷ Bessy envies to Margaret that she lived in such a town, she knows only Milton, she has never been anywhere else.

⁷⁵ Gaskell, *North and South*, 49.

⁷⁶ Gaskell, *North and South*, 58.

⁷⁷ Gaskell, *North and South*, 73.

2.2.6 Differences among people in North and South

There are many differences among people in the novel *North and South*. There are considerable differences among people from different classes, cultures and religions.

The differences among classes can be visible in their housing. The Higginses as a working class people live in a small and simple dwelling. The Hales as a middle class family live in better house and have a housemaid. The Thorntons as an upper class family have a big mansion and more servants. However their house is described as an icy and uncomfortable one.

Another mention of the housing in the novel describes that people living in the town are so busy of the speed and hurry of the life that they do not mind that they live in so called "pent-up houses" which can cause depression and sadness. People living in the country spend more time outside no matter what the weather is and enjoy the happiness of life.⁷⁸

Another difference of people from the North and people from the South is the perception of classes. In *Helstone*, when a person from the lower class goes to the house of people from the higher class, he or she stays only downstairs and it should be an honour for them if they can go upstairs. In *Milton* there is no problem of lower-class people going upstairs.

North and South also looks into the differences among various cultures and religions. "Margaret's brother Frederick marries a Catholic and she herself befriends a poor Methodist, Bessy Higgins. After Bessy's death, we are told, Margaret, the Churchwoman, her father the Dissenter, Higgins the Infidel, knelt down together. It did them no harm."⁷⁹

Elizabeth Gaskell uses different speech for people from working class and people from other classes in *North and South*. It is visible in dialogues between Margaret and Bessy Higgins. Margaret's speech is formal and without any dialect while Bessy's speech is very informal and dialectical. There is an example of Bessy's speech: "He means well, as I telled yo' yesterday, and tell yo' again and again. But yo' see, though I don't believe him a bit by day, yet by night--when I'm in a fever, half-asleep and half-awake--it comes back upon me--oh! so bad!"⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Gaskell, *North and South*, 225.

⁷⁹ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 370.

⁸⁰ Gaskell, *North and South*, 73.

In the novel it is also mentioned that Milton people use a specific slang, a factory language, e.g. a word "knobstic" which means something like stick. Most people from the South do not like and accept this language.

"North and South literally embodies social and economic exploitation – in the factory, on the land, in the law, army or navy."⁸¹ The examples might be Frederick, Nicholas and Bessy. They present the cruelty of the industry and society of the nineteenth century.

In Milton, growing individualism of people is visible, not so much in Helstone. It is the reason why Margaret finds it difficult to meet some new people in Milton while in Helstone she was always surrounded by people. And when she wants to pay the Higginses a visit, they find it strange that she wants to visit them without any reason.

Milton people are proud that they live in their town, they think that life in the South is silly. This can confirm Mr. Thornton's words: "I won't deny that I am proud of belonging to a town--or perhaps I should rather say a district--the necessities of which give birth to such grandeur conception. I would rather be a man toiling, suffering--nay, failing and successful--here, than lead a dull prosperous life in the old worn grooves of what you call more aristocratic society down in the South, with their slow days of careless ease. One may be clogged with honey and unable to rise and fly."⁸² People from the North also believe that their manufacturing towns are an eminence of England. These towns had really potential and without the industry, England would not become the biggest economic power in the world.

People from the South are also proud of their country. Margaret thinks that people living in the South are happier, even the poor ones who live there. They do not have a sorrow in their faces like people from Milton have according to her.

There is a difference between people's interests in Helstone and Milton. People from Helstone have many interests, they are interested in many things. On the other hand people from Milton do not have many interests. According to Mrs. Thornton, Milton people should have only one main interest and be devoted to it.

The novel mentions that in both towns people have some difficulties in their lives. "Both must find it hard to realise a future of any kind, the one because the present is so

⁸¹ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, 372.

⁸² Gaskell, *North and South*, 58.

living and hurrying and close around him, the other because his life tempts him to revel in the mere sense of animal existence, not knowing of, and consequently not caring for any pungency of pleasure for the attainment of which he can plan, and deny himself and look forward."⁸³

The novel also says that Milton people have bigger courage than people from the South. People from the South are frightened of many things which are totally normal for people from the North.

Maybe because of their problems with low wages, hard work and bad living conditions, Milton people drink more alcohol than people from the South. There are many beer-houses and gin-shops in Milton. An example of a worker who drinks alcohol quite often is Nicholas Higgins. When he has some problem, normally he tries to solve it by going to the pub.

There is also a difference in the attitude to the education in the South and the North. People from the South are more educated and have bigger interest for it. People from the North are so busy and normally they do not have any interest of cultivating their mind. This is the reason why Mr. Hale has only few students in Milton. When he has a lecture, even if it is for free, there are not many people in the lecture room.

Also some manners of people from the South and people from the North are totally different, e.g. the handshake. Margaret is not used to do it, in the South it is not very common. That is why she rejects to shake Thornton's hand. But it offends him, the handshake belongs to good manners in the North.

After Margaret's stories about the South of England and after Bessy's death, Nicholas Higgins starts to think about the South, that it might be better place for living. He likes the facts that masters are much more amicable to their workers, rich and poor people are on the same level and people have calmer lives. But Margaret is convinced that it would not be the ideal place for him. He would not bear it because he got used to another style of life. He would have totally different job, he would be outside more often, food would be different and he would not stand it, especially the dullness of every day. He would be ill from it. Margaret also tries to explain him that people from the South are totally different than he is. "They labour on, from day to day, in the great solitude of steaming fields--never

⁸³ Gaskell, *North and South*, 225.

speaking of lifting up their poor, bent, downcast heads. The hard spade-work robs their brain of life, the sameness of their toil deadens their imagination, they don't care to meet to talk over thoughts and speculations, even of the weakest, wildest kind, after their work is done, they go home brutishly tired, poor creatures! caring for nothing but food and rest."⁸⁴ Her words prove that nobody can say that the South of England is better than the North and vice versa. Each part has its pros and cons.

After the death of Margaret's parents, Margaret's relatives from Helstone come to Milton, they are disgusted by this town, they cannot understand how somebody can live there. That is the reason why they take Margaret back to Helstone. "Mrs. Shaw took as vehement a dislike as it was possible for one of gentle nature to do, against Milton. It was noisy, and smoky, and the poor people whom she saw in the streets were dirty, and rich ladies overdressed, and not a man that she saw, high or low, had his clothes made to fit him. She was sure Margaret would never regain her lost strength while she stayed in Milton, and she herself was afraid of one of her old attacks of the nerves. Margaret must return with her, and that quickly."⁸⁵ However after few weeks in Helstone, Margaret is bored and misses Milton. She has so much time for rest and for thinking but she is not used for this kind of life anymore. She does not consider this place as her home like before. Now the home for her is Milton. The life in Helstone seems to her wanting and tedious. She also feels alone. She thinks of Milton and contrasts it with Helstone.

Also Mr. Bell compares Helstone to Milton in the novel. He knows both towns and he can see how they are changing during time. According to him, Helstone is always the same, almost nothing changes there. On the other hand Milton is changing all the time, there is always something new when he comes there. There are new houses, more people, the town is growing and developing all the time.⁸⁶

2.2.7 The Industrial England in North and South

There are many features of the industrial England which has been mentioned in the first chapter in the novel *North and South*.

⁸⁴ Gaskell, *North and South*, 228.

⁸⁵ Gaskell, *North and South*, 272.

⁸⁶ Gaskell, *North and South*, 285.

North and South deals with worker's unions and strikes. We can see there how the unions of workers were operated. It was normal that almost every worker belonged to the union. Worker who did not belong there was considered as a dropout and other workers did not speak to him. Also a worker who betrayed the union was not accepted by the others anymore. The example can be Boucher. He betrayed the union and the others behave to him in such a horrible way that he committed suicide.

Various people in the novel have various opinions on the strike. Some believe that workers strike for higher wage but some think that there is something more in it. Mrs. Thornton is of this opinion. "For the mastership and ownership of other people's property with a fierce snort. That is what they always strike for. If my son's work-people strike, I will only say they are a pack of ungrateful hounds."⁸⁷

Southern people are not familiar with striking, some of them have never heard of it, they think that there is no solution in it. On the other hand Northern people take strikes like an often issue and think that it can help them to improve bad conditions.

People from the South would also never think about soldiers breaking up the strike. Those soldiers were sometimes very aggressive. People from the South were not used for violence, if not necessary, they did not use it. However they did not understand that sometimes it was necessary to use soldier's help. Masters were not able to defend themselves on their own, workers were sometimes also very violent. We can see it in *North and South* when there is the strike and workers come in front of Thornton's house. They are very passionate and violent. Thornton tries to break them up but he is not successful. Without the help of the soldiers he would be lost.

There is also different understanding of business between workers and masters. Some workers cannot understand that sometimes masters really cannot help them. They also need money for running their business. And when there is a crisis somewhere in the world, the price of materials can increase. In these cases they cannot higher the workers' wages. Workers are not educated and do not understand how the trade works.

There were many movements and protests of working class people in the nineteenth century. We can see it in the novel. People were not satisfied with working conditions,

⁸⁷ Gaskell, *North and South*, 85.

living conditions and with their rights. This fact led for example to the People's Charter which has been already mentioned in one of the previous chapters.

The fact that the price of food was very high in the nineteenth-century England is visible in *North and South*. The South of England in the nineteenth century was rather agricultural. The climate for farming in the South was better than in the North. People had often their own little field and fruit trees next to their house. Thanks to this fact, they were not starving to death. The North of England was industrial, the most of people worked in the factories and had not any fields next to their houses. The farming was not common in the North. That led to the fact that some of the people living there were hungry, some of them could not sleep at nights for hunger. The issue of the Corn Law was necessary. It helped to normal people (bread was cheaper) as well as to farmers, they could sell their corn. However this law made it impossible to obtain a free trade which was also very important. It is visible in the novel. The manufacturers suffered from the higher taxes and some of them went bankrupt, among them John Thornton.

North and South also depicts the cruelty of the industry. The industry influenced many people in the novel, especially people from working class. Boucher, a worker with many children and without a wife has a very harsh life. He does not have enough money to support his family so he boycotts the strike. Finally he commits suicide because he cannot stand the cruelty of workers' behaviour. The progress of the industry and economy had a profit for some people but some people were victims of this progress.

Working class people had to work very hard in bad working conditions which endangered their health. They earned just little money and it had to be enough for their family. If it was not enough also children had to work. Often the workers were ill or had even a serious illness. They did not live to a great age.

As has been already mentioned in the previous chapter, many reforms trying to improve the situation were issued. The Factory Act is visible in *North and South*. Mr. Thornton speaks about it concerning the saving of coal in the factories. He also mentions that the owners of the factories have to buy a wheel which cleans the air from dirt. He adds that he bought the wheel before two years when it was not obligatory. He thinks that the health of his workers is very important. When they are healthy, they can work longer and better. The cleaning wheel was very expensive but he claims that it worth it. Unfortunately, not many manufacturers were of this opinion. The most of them wanted to save money and did not care about workers' health.

Also the regulation of working hours and better working conditions for women and children was very important in that time, also for the characters of the novel. It would help to people like Bessy Higgins. She was ill because there was no cleaning wheel in the factory where she worked, fluff was everywhere in the air. This led to the fact that she became seriously ill and later died from consumption. She also worked from her childhood and very hard, this fact also contributed to her illness. Later also the movements of dissatisfied women helped to situations like this. They could educate themselves and had better choice in finding a job.

As it is visible in the novel, many people in the nineteenth-century England were poor. A lot of them lived in workhouses. However the conditions in workhouses were dreadful. The issue of The Poor Law Amendment Act was necessary. After the issue of this act people expected that the conditions would be better but not everyone was satisfied.

In the nineteenth century, sending letters was very popular. We can see it in *North and South*, Margaret is sending letters to Edith, Mr. Hale to Mr. Bell, etc. The introduction of the cheap postage system contributed to this activity, sending letters was very cheap, it became the best way of communication.

CONCLUSION

England in the nineteenth century was typical for big differences between the North and the South. There were differences among the environment, people, speech, manners, etc. Many differences are visible in the novel *North and South*.

The North of England was industrial. The environment was destroyed, the air in the industrial towns was smoky and conditions in the factories were bad. It was not the ideal place for good health. People living there were always busy and their lives went quickly. Their environment was changing all the time, e.g. new houses were built. This part of England was more modern and had a big potential.

The South of England was agricultural. Southern people lived with the ease of life, the time went slowly there. The environment was less destroyed and nature was all around. Almost every family had its own garden with field and trees. Very often the family had its own house and it was bigger than houses in the North.

However the both parts of England had its problems. In both parts the wages were low and the price of food was high. Working-class people were exploited and their living and working conditions were often dreadful. Many reforms trying to improve people's lives were issued in the nineteenth century, e.g. Factory acts.

North and South has also a lot of similarities with Elizabeth Gaskell. The character of Margaret is partly an embodiment of Gaskell herself and the fictitious town of Milton has a lot of similarities with Manchester where Gaskell lived. The novel is partly a defence of the North of England and its industry. Thanks to the growth of the industry in the nineteenth century England became the richest country in the world.

Nowadays still the North and the South of England are different. They differ in relatively diverse issues but have their roots in the nineteenth century. Many other things have their roots in this period, e.g. the railway system. This period was very important for the history of England and it also influenced and changed a lot of things all around the world.

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