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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

**The Position of Men and Women in  
Relationships in 19th-century British  
Literature**

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I confirm that this thesis is my own work written using solely the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited.

České Budějovice .....2023

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## **Acknowledgement**

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## **Anotace**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analýza prvků popisujících a kritizujících viktoriánskou společnost v Anglii v dílech *Tess of D'Urbervilles* od Thomase Hardyho a *Great Expectations* od Charlese Dickense. Bakalářská práce se skládá ze tří kapitol, z nichž každá se soustředí na určitou problematiku. První popisuje historický a literární kontext vybraného období a prostředí, viktoriánské Anglie. Druhá kapitola je věnována Thomasi Hardymu, jeho pohledům na zmíněné období a hlavní postavě, Tess, z analyzovaného díla *Tess of D'Urbervilles*. Poslední kapitola je zaměřena na Charlese Dickense a jeho přístup k popisu společnosti ve svých dílech, dále rozebírá postavy Pipa a Estelly z knihy *Great Expectations* a nastiňuje problematiku 'gentlemanství'.

**Klíčová slova:** Tess of D'Urbervilles, Thomas Hardy, Great Expectations, Charles Dickens, viktoriánská Anglie, viktoriánská společnost, britská literatura



## **Abstract**

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyse the elements describing and criticising Victorian society in England in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. The thesis consists of three chapters, each of which focuses on a particular issue. The first describes the historical and literary context of the chosen period and setting, Victorian England. The second chapter is dedicated to Thomas Hardy, his views on the mentioned period and the main character, Tess, from the analysed work *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The last chapter focuses on Charles Dickens and his approach to describing society in his works, further analysing the characters of Pip and Estella from *Great Expectations* and outlining the issue of 'gentlemanliness'.

**Keywords:** Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Thomas Hardy, Great Expectations, Charles Dickens, Victorian England, Victorian society, British literature

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## 1. Introduction

The Victorian period is one of English history's most frequently discussed periods. England came through many changes and reforms, both industrial and social. "It was a whole new order and disorder, a vortex which pulled into the cities' factories and workshops the surrounding population for both labour and consumption." (Davis ch1.1). While industrialisation was seen mostly as a positive subject, it directly contributed to the deterioration in the lives of common people. According to Davis:

"The invention of machinery offered men new power over matter, beyond all previous limits of nature itself. And yet this man-made world seemed to be gaining power over the men and women within it, like a machine that had developed beyond the control of its own inventors. In the very structure of industrial economy, both traditionally personal social relations, as between landowner and tenant, and visible direct causes, as between weather and harvest, were increasingly becoming the simple things of a past often viewed with nostalgia." (ch1.1).

But how poor the social situation was?

Answering that question is a complex task; however, one of the most valuable sources we can analyse is the then literature. Most famous Victorian writers, such as Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Elliot, Elizabeth Gaskell and Thomas Hardy, criticised the social structure and shared beliefs in their major works, providing us with a great insight into the lives of Victorian people.

This bachelor thesis is focused on two commercially successful authors – Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens – and their famous characters – Tess and Pip, from the works *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Great Expectations*. The chosen authors are known to be critical of the Victorian age and to challenge the stereotypical social constructs of the said period through their works and their characters. I carefully picked two characters who construct an archetype of people from the labouring class in the Victorian period, who faced many social injustices and suffered from typical Victorian attitudes towards the lower class, but both the characters faced different fates and aftermaths. As for Tess, she represents a person unsuccessfully fighting against her fate, as Spivey explains: “In his great novels – *The Return of the Native*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* – Hardy saw man beaten down by forces within and without himself and sought to record man's eternal struggle with fate.” (181). Pip, as a labouring boy who dreams of becoming wealthy, is another brilliantly written Dickens' character, as Benson says: “They are all perfectly defined stage-types.” (382). Dickens masterfully explains the Victorian age through his characters, which helps today's reader resolve the age by analysing the characters. Benson also says, “The characters are all typical figures, qualities personified.” (381).

The characters are of a different gender, and on both, the authors described the gender roles of their age and the obstacles in their way to persuade happiness. Tess as a girl, struggled with being seen as fragile, and her path was barricaded by a power of a wealthy man who took advantage of her; she was written by Thomas Hardy as a powerful heroine, defying her destiny and therefore achieving the title of a ‘pure woman’ in the author's eyes, even though for the Victorian society, she could never be seen as one, as a result of the unfortunate actions that had happened to her and their consequences. On the other hand, as a lower-class boy, Pip has, as the title of the book suggests, great expectations for his life and dreams of becoming a

gentleman, meaning becoming wealthy and distinguishing himself from his simple roots. However, on his journey, he meets the injustices of Victorian society and his opinion about gentlemen crumbles, which later leads him back to where he started and makes him appreciate the correct moral values more than just wealth. From this brief description, we can see that whilst Pip had a chance for redemption and, therefore, he could carry on with his life and possibly become a better man, Tess's way of getting rid of the suffering was her death sentence. These ultimately different ways in which the two authors described the path to freedom are, in my opinion, what makes it interesting to analyse these two particular characters side by side.

This thesis will provide a character analysis of the two mentioned characters and will put the results into a context of an age, revealing the aftermaths of the Victorian treatment of the labouring class and also showing how the two authors criticised society in their works. We will look closely into the characters' lives and mention some typical features of the Victorian period displayed on them. In the case of Tess, the key factor this thesis will focus on is her family since it was a crucial motive in her story and a paramount institution for the usual Victorian person. We will discuss why the family was such a critical unit, generally speaking, for the Victorians and how Tess's household differed from a typical Victorian one. In the story of Pip, this thesis will focus on the concept of being a gentleman, as it was something the main character wanted to achieve so severely, we can call it the central story-shaping aspect. We will address the difference between the Victorian and Dickens' gentleman and discuss who the real gentleman in the book probably is, according to the author himself. Furthermore, we will look deeply into the character of Estella and what is her purpose in the story, as she can be seen as the very beginning of Pip's life-changing journey.

## 2. Defining the Victorian Period

Traditionally, the term "Victorian England" is understood as the period under the reign of Queen Victoria; however, for the sake of this thesis, it must be taken from a broader point of view. According to James: "Queen Victoria's death in 1901 comes too long after her coronation in 1837 for the term 'Victorian' to have much precise significance, either for history or for literature." (1) For example, the major work of Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, sometimes also seen as the first major Victorian novel "appeared conveniently in 1837, in time for the future queen to be reading it on the night before her coronation." (James 1). On the other hand, *Oliver Twist* then stood alone for quite some time among many minor works. Therefore, the question of when exactly the Victorian period started and ended is problematic. As it usually occurs in the literature, we cannot precisely sort the authors and their works into exact time and thematic periods as the books may have more motives and may be suitable for different periods. Consequently, we must blur the sharp borders of periodisation and think in a broader range. However, this does not make the Victorian period and its writers any less attractive.

The Victorian era in England was a time of significant change and growth, characterised by industrialisation, urbanisation, and social and cultural reforms. The period saw significant developments in many areas of society, including politics, the economy, and the arts.

Industrialisation was one of the defining features of the Victorian period, with the advancement of cities and the expansion of industry leading to a shift from agrarian to industrial society. The period saw the introduction of new technologies and innovations, including the steam engine, the telegraph, and the railway, which helped to drive economic growth and connect people and goods in new ways. The expansion of industry also led to a growing middle class and an

increase in consumerism, with people having more disposable income to spend on goods and services.

At the same time, these times were also marked by significant social and cultural reforms, with progress being made in the areas of education, health, and social welfare. For example, the *Education Act of 1870* made elementary education available to all children, while the *Public Health Act of 1875* aimed to improve conditions in urban areas and reduce the spread of disease. Despite these reforms, however, poverty, inequality, and social unrest were also prevalent, and many workers lived in harsh conditions, with long hours and low wages.

The Victorian era was also a time of cultural richness and diversity, with outstanding achievements in literature, art, music, and architecture. In literature, the Victorian era shifted towards realism, with authors striving to accurately portray the complexities of modern life. At the same time, many writers used their work as a platform to address the social and political issues of the day, including poverty, inequality, and the condition of the working class. The Gothic revival, characterised by tales of horror, the supernatural, and the macabre, was also a prominent trend in Victorian literature.

Finally, the Victorian period was also defined by the expansion of the British Empire and the colonisation of many countries around the world. This time of imperialism was marked by a sense of national pride and mission, with the British Empire seen as a symbol of progress and civilisation.

The Victorian era was a crucial time in the history of England, shaping its identity and leaving a lasting impact on the country's cultural, social, and economic landscape. With its mix of

progress and inequality, of prosperity and poverty, the Victorian era was a time of great change and growth, which continues to influence the world today.

Since this bachelor thesis focuses on the literature of that age, we shall look into it more deeply. Literature in Victorian England was a period of great creativity, which saw the birth of some of the most famous works in English literature. The literary works produced during this time reflect the experiences and attitudes of the people who lived in this dynamic period.

It would not be possible for literature to blossom without technological progress. James states:

“Print had played an important role in previous social and religious developments in earlier periods of change. But what happened in early nineteenth-century England was different. The Industrial Revolution created cheap printing and papermaking, and rapid book distribution by rail, at a time when the reading population was rapidly expanding.” (4-5).

Thanks to the growing number of readers, new literary genres were able to sprout, and the authors were allowed to experiment more. The leading cause for spreading reading into the lower classes was the price. The material was getting cheaper alongside the transportation. “In the 1830s steam had replaced operation by hand in the printing trade. Paper, the scarcity of which had forced up the price of books earlier in the century, was in abundant supply once no longer handmade but machine-produced.” (Davis 202). To put this incredible growth into numbers: “Whereas between 1800 and 1825 only about 590 books appeared each year, by mid-century the figure had risen to over 2,600 titles and by 1900 it was over 6,000.” (Davis 201).

One of the most prominent literary genres during this time was the novel. Many of the great works of Victorian literature were written in this form, including some of the most well-known



novels in English literature, such as *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, and *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens and *Tess of D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, that this thesis is going to focus on more. These novels explored a wide range of themes and issues, including social class, love and relationships, and the human experience.

Another important genre during this time was poetry. Poets such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote works that reflected the changing times and the various cultural and political issues of the day. Their poems were often deeply introspective and dealt with themes of love, death, and the meaning of life. Many of these poets also wrote about the natural world and the beauty and majesty of the countryside, which was undergoing rapid change due to the Industrial Revolution. However, the Victorian period was specific by the rise of the novel, putting the poetry into shadows. As Davis explains:

“Victorian poetry was a poetry made self-consciously weak in an age that, because of vast social and economic changes, seemed ever increasingly in literary terms the age of the novel. The mid-century crisis of poetic confidence marked the point at which, in the history of English culture, poetry first began to lose its nerve and its place. ‘Show me the books... The books! The books!’ cries the ruined protagonist in the nightmare of Tennyson’s *Sea Dreams*’ (1860), knowing that the books are no longer biblical or literary but accountancy’s” (456).

The Victorian era also saw the growth of science and the rise of a secular, scientific worldview, which profoundly impacted how people thought about the world and their place in it. This new way of thinking was reflected in the literature of the time, as many works explored the idea of evolution and that humans were not the centre of the universe but rather just one small part of a vast, interconnected system.

In addition to the novel and poetry, other forms of literature also flourished during this time, including the short story, the essay, and the theatre; according to Davis: “With the rise of new theatres not only in the West End but also in the poorer East End of London and the increase of theatres royal and touring companies in the provinces, there were more theatres in existence in Britain than ever before.” (257). The Victorian period was a time of great innovation and experimentation in the arts, and writers and playwrights pushed the boundaries of what was possible and explored new and exciting ways of telling stories and expressing ideas.

In conclusion, literature in Victorian England was a rich and diverse period that saw the birth of some of the most famous works in English literature. The literary works produced during this time reflect the experiences and attitudes of the people who lived in this dynamic period and offer a window into the social, economic, and cultural changes that took place during this exciting time. The Victorian era will always be remembered as a time of great creativity and innovation in the arts and as a time when some of the most famous works of English literature were written.

### 3. Thomas Hardy

#### 3.1. Hardy's View of the Victorian Age

Thomas Hardy is one of the most known authors of the Victorian period, as Willeox claims: “No matter how we may rank Mr Hardy, whether we put him before or after George Meredith or George Eliot or Thackeray or Dickens, his place in the history of English literature is secure.” (423); however, he was considered controversial for how he was depicting the society in his works. Hardy was especially acknowledged for bringing a fresh view upon literature, according to James: “Other novelists had created imaginary landscapes for their novels, but Hardy, more than any novelist since Sir Walter Scott, grounded his fictional world on a living sense of the earth, of folk tradition and history.” (120). We can see this phenomenon in the book *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the main character, Tess, is a girl like any other, growing up in a relatively low-income family in the countryside. We can even see traditional folk celebrations on which Hardy explains folk customs and thus guides us through the ordinary life of Victorians. "He has given us an arraignment of certain social conditions, aye, in despite of himself he has given us an interpretation, if not a philosophy, of life." (Willeox 423). He also emphasises nature in his books, as Bonica explains:

“In May 1877, Thomas Hardy observed of himself, ‘I sometimes look upon all things in inanimate Nature as pensive mutes.’ And, nearly twenty years later, he confessed, ‘In spite of myself I cannot help noticing countenances and tempers in objects of scenery.’ The same tendency to imbue nature with human qualities characterises a well-known description of an August dawn in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.” (849).

“The sun, on account of the mist, had a curious sentient, personal look, demanding the masculine pronoun for its adequate expression. His present aspect and the lack of all human forms in the scene explained the old-time heliolatry in a moment. One could feel that a saner religion had never prevailed under the sky. The luminary was a golden-

haired, beaming, mildeyed, god-like creature, gazing down in the vigour and intentness of youth upon an earth that was brimming with interest for him.” (Hardy 100).

Thomas Hardy was not afraid of taboo; in fact, it occurs that he loved shocking people with controversial topics with even more controversial solutions, wittily criticising society by doing so. Therefore, it would sometimes happen that he got into an argument with publishers, who would then refuse to publish his books. Again, Hardy’s book *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is a great example as it contains many unthinkable aspects for the Victorian people, hence it nearly did not get published. According to Page et al.:

“The partial manuscript was sent by Tillotson’s to the printers before they had read it; when they did look at what they had bought they were horrified – sex in the wood, an illegitimate baby, and an unauthorised baptism were not the kind of incidents they were used to considering in fiction, even in 1889. They asked for changes, but Hardy demurred; they agreed to pay, but would not publish, and Hardy suggested cancelling the agreement altogether.” (414).

This shows Hardy’s approach to literature – he wanted to give an exact expression without softening anything, and his exceptional talent for writing allowed him to breathe life into his memorable characters.

The climax of the controversy was when Hardy gave Tess the title of a ‘pure woman’, as Davis W. E. claims: “Among the several aspects of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* to which readers of the 1890s objected, perhaps no other was more to blame for that indignant outburst than Thomas Hardy’s seemingly innocent subtitle: “A Pure Woman.” (397). Scandalous for the Victorian society, but crucial to proving the author’s point, as James explains: “In *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891) he directly confronted late Victorian attitudes to the ‘fallen woman’,

asserting that Tess, though not a virgin was a ‘pure woman’.” (122). He portrayed Tess as a ‘pure woman’, intentionally creating a paradox – an unmarried pregnant woman was worth nothing but shame in Victorian society, even though she had been seduced and left to her cruel fate.

Hardy's controversial writing also dealt with themes of religion and spirituality. In his novels, Hardy often depicted the struggle between religious faith and doubt. He explored the idea of a universe governed by fate and chance rather than by a benevolent deity. Once again, this can be seen in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, where the main character, Tess, is given an extraordinary mind, and she thinks about a world and space from a broader perspective. She does not blame the unfairness of the world on the omnipotent God, she creates an image of a world that either gives or takes. This was considered highly inappropriate and scandalous in Victorian England, where religious faith was still a central part of social and cultural life. Hardy's writing challenged this view, and it was often seen as an attack on religion and spirituality.

In conclusion, Thomas Hardy was a writer whose controversial writing challenged the dominant Victorian ideologies of his day. Through his focus on rural life and the struggles of the working class, his frank depiction of sexuality and desire, his exploration of religion and spirituality, and his use of unconventional narrative structures, Hardy's writing remains an important and relevant contribution to English literature. Despite the controversies surrounding his work in his own time, Hardy's writing continues to be widely read and highly regarded, and his legacy as a controversial and provocative fiction writer continues to be celebrated and revered.

### **3.2. Characteristics of the Main Character - Tess**

Throughout the book, what we can see at first sight is the transition from a teenager to an adult woman; however, after a closer reading, we recognise that Tess also shifts from being passive

to being fearless and powerful. Life was not easy for anyone, especially for young girls, and the incidents in her life changed her completely. A 'Victorian girl' was not supposed to think on her own or be seen or heard much. Hardy criticised this stereotype by showing the effects it had on girls. It was crushing and life-changing. By the end of the book, Tess was able to do things she would have never thought about, and we see her innocence fade away along with her naivety and shyness. However sad it seems, this was the reality, the influence that Victorian standards had on the lives of normal people. Hardy brilliantly and with no excuses described that in so many details, it still resonates with today's readers worldwide.

At the beginning of the book, Tess is depicted as the icon of a perfect young lady, a perfect daughter with love and respect for her close ones, especially for her family. While having a rich social life and being loved by many people her age, Tess also managed to balance fun with helping her parents with household chores and looking after her younger siblings: "I'll rock the cradle for 'ee, mother,' said the daughter gently. 'Or I'll take off my best frock and help you wring up?" (Hardy 19). This abstract describes Tess's feelings after coming home from a village party which seem nervous, guilty even. This young girl was so obedient that she felt guilty for having fun.

“The interior; in spite of the melody, struck upon the girl’s senses with an unspeakable dreariness. From the holiday gaieties of the day – the white gowns, the nosegays, the willow-wands, the whirling movements on the green, the flash of gentle sentiment towards the stranger – to the yellow melancholy of this one candled spectacle, what a step! Besides the jar of contrast there came to her a chill self-reproach that she had not returned sooner; to help her mother in these domesticities, instead of indulging herself out-of-doors.” (Hardy 18).

There is a clear contrast between the outdoors and the indoors. Thomas Hardy carefully chose the words to distinguish those two abstract places, painting them in the reader's head by using colours and linking them with feelings, such as "the whirling movements on the green" going in contrast with "the yellow melancholy." Yet, Tess chooses to leave the green happiness behind and step into the yellow melancholic place without hesitation, only with crushing chills telling her that she should have made this decision sooner.

Despite those characteristics, Hardy did not want to make Tess a typical 'Victorian girl'. He gave her strong common sense, curiosity and courage. She had respect for her family, but she was never afraid of speaking her mind, as we can see in her response to her mother forcing her to leave the house, hoping Tess would marry Alec: "I don't know what to say!" answered the girl restlessly. 'It is for you to decide. I killed the old horse, and I suppose I ought to do something to get ye a new one. But – but – I don't quite like Mr D'Urberville!'" (Hardy 51). She gave her mother full power over her fate, letting her decide whether she should leave, but not without an honest comment about how enzymatic Alec was to Tess.

Another strong characteristic trait of Tess was her tenaciousness, differentiating her from a typical 'Victorian girl'. She could possibly prevent the social judgement and the harsh criticism she got in her uneasy situation by denying herself and her beliefs by getting married to Alec. However, that would mean leading a miserable life in a lie for her. She chose what was right in her mind rather than what was easy, setting a tremendous moral example for generations to come. Instead of avoiding the problematic position she was in and hiding the truth about her child by pretending to be in love with Alec, the author describes her feelings towards him after the incidents such as:

"She had never wholly cared for him, she did not at all care for him now. She had dreaded him, winced before him, succumbed to adroit advantages he took of her helplessness; then, temporarily blinded by his ardent manners, had been stirred to confused surrender awhile: had suddenly despised and disliked him, and had run away." (Quoted in Davis W. E. 399).

Hardy also gifted Tess with an extraordinary mind and ideas. It was not usual for girls to think about hardly anything, especially about actions beyond human understanding, however, we can see Tess explaining to her little brother Abraham her view about space and world order:

" Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess? 'Yes.' 'All like ours?' 'I don't know; but I think so. They sometimes seem to be like the apples on our stubborn-tree. Most of them splendid and sound – a few blighted.' 'Which do we live on – a splendid one or a blighted one?' 'A blighted one.' 'Tis very unlucky that we didn't pitch on a sound one, when there were so many more of 'em!' 'Yes.' 'Is it like that *really*, Tess?' said Abraham, turning to her much impressed, on reconsideration of this rare information. "How would it have been if we had pitched on a sound one?' 'Well, father wouldn't have coughed and creped about as he does and wouldn't have got too tipsy to go this journey; and mother wouldn't have been always washing, and never finished.'" (Hardy 32-33).

In this abstract, we can see Tess thinking out of the box and imagining how the world works, which was not usual for Victorians, especially for girls. Another interesting point in this particular part is, that she does not blame her unfortunate faith on an omnipotent God like people in the Victorian period normally would. In that age, faith was still a strong part of people's lives and they believed that everything is in hands of God. By making Tess realise that there might be other powerful forces shaping the world, Hardy once again created a scandal,



but he also created a remarkably strong female character by doing so, completely outperforming his age.

### **3.3. Durbeyfield's Household in Comparison to Traditional Victorian Households**

The family was seen as an important unit for the Victorians, as James explains:

"Much has been written of why the Victorians made the family such a central institution of their society. The investment in the home came partly as a reaction against the moral laxity of the late eighteenth century and the Regency period, and the structured family unit reflected the self-discipline and organisation of a new era." (72).

The Victorian period, being the age of industrialisation, was highly demanding in terms of labour, the working hours were longer and so the people were trying to spend as much time with their families as they could as a form of escaping from their daily working routines: "Pressures of business and work increased, and the home became a refuge from public life." (James 72). The typical Victorian family was shaped by a complex set of social, economic, and cultural factors, including the influence of religion, the rise of the middle class, and the changing role of women in society. One of the defining features of the typical Victorian family was the strict gender roles that governed the behaviour and expectations of men and women. Men were expected to be the breadwinners and providers, while women were expected to be homemakers and caregivers. Women were also expected to be submissive and deferential to their husbands, and their primary role was to support their husbands and raise their children.

Despite these rigid gender roles, the Victorian era also saw the rise of the middle class and the emergence of a new ideal of domesticity. Middle-class families were seen as the model for society, and they emphasised the importance of the family unit as a source of stability and moral

values. The middle-class family was also characterised by a focus on education and cultural refinement, with parents often investing heavily in their children's education and upbringing. The children were usually sent to a boarding school, not having much contact with their parents, according to Tucker et al.: "Small children were cared for by nursemaids, older ones taught by governesses, who had some 50, 000 children in their charge in 1851; boys aged seven and older were increasingly likely to be boarders at preparatory or public schools." (70). This tendency resulted in the fact that children did not grow a strong bond with their parents as they were not present in their upbringing, according to Tucker et al.: "While Victorian writers on domesticity stressed the wonders of the parent-child bond within the privileged classes, in practice children belonging to those classes often had minimal contact with their parents." (70). This phenomenon and the difference between 'the privileged' and 'the poor' can be observed in the book *Tess of D'Urbervilles*, Tess, despite their unfortunate fate of not being born rich, has a very close relationship with both her parents and all of her siblings. The family spend most of their time together and they can rely on each other. This claim can be supported by the passage when Tess is supposed to leave the household and go to the D'Urbervilles and one of Tess's little sisters says: "I do want to walk a little-ways wi' Sissy, now she's going to marry our gentlemen-cousin, and wear fine cloze!" (Hardy 54). The little one is excited about the opportunity of becoming wealthy through her sister's marriage, however, Tess is not so pleased hearing such words from her sister's mouth and she replies with: "Now, [...] I'll hear no more o' that! Mother, how could you ever put such stuff into their heads?" (Hardy 55), indicating that this should be a rather sad and sentimental moment for the family. Later on, when Tess leaves with Alec, the little ones realise how much they are going to miss their sister in the household, even her mother, who originally had the idea to send Tess away, doubts her decision and regrets it:

“Directly Tess was out of sight, and the interest of the matter as a drama was at an end, the little ones' eyes filled with tears. The youngest child said, “I wish poor, poor Tess wasn't gone away to be a lady!’ and, lowering the concerns oh his lips, burst out crying. The new point of view was infectious, and the next child did likewise, and then the next, till the whole three of them wailed loud. There were tears also in Joan Durbeyfield's eyes as she turned to go home.” (Hardy 57).

In this part, Hardy shows how close the relations were in poor families in comparison to the privileged ones. The text does not say that the crying would be infectious within the children, like the reader may predict, it was 'the new point of view', ergo the realisation that the household is going to miss an essential member of the family that would now be incomplete without Tess.

Religion also played a significant role in shaping the typical Victorian family. The dominant religion of the time was Christianity, and many families were deeply religious, attending church regularly and instilling Christian values in their children. Religion provided a framework for moral and ethical behaviour, and it was seen as a source of guidance and comfort for families in times of hardship.

In addition to religion, the Victorian era was marked by a strong emphasis on respectability and propriety. The behaviour of family members was closely scrutinised, and social status was often tied to one's reputation and conduct. This emphasis on respectability was particularly important for women, who were expected to be virtuous and modest at all times. This is indicated slightly in the book when Mr Durbeyfield is telling his daughter goodbye and thinks about the hypothetical price of his 'title' to the rich D'urbervilles: "Yes, twenty pound – that's the lowest. Dammy, family honour is family honour, and I won't take a penny less!" (Hardy 55). The father,

although completely broken by the fact that he is sending his daughter away, knows that social status and honour are very important elements in Victorian society. That is the reason why Tess's story was utterly unacceptable. She, as a girl, was supposed to get married and be obedient to her husband, raising their children and taking care of the household, however, this is not what happened to her. Not only was she seduced and had premarital sex, but she also aborted her baby which made her the 'fallen woman' in Victorian society. Despite that, Hardy still characterised her as a 'pure woman' for fighting the unfairness of society's standards and expectations. She did not choose her destiny, she tried to do everything in her power to be the perfect representation of the 'Victorian lady' but failed miserably through no fault of her own. Society, nonetheless, did not see this as an unfortunate chain of events and did not give Tess a little bit of sympathy in her uneasy situation – for them, she was worth nothing now as she was not a virgin anymore while unmarried. As for the traditional Victorian norms, she disgraced herself and her whole family, but for Hardy, she was exceptionally strong for fighting for the right cause and he showed through her what the real moral matters should be about.

The Victorian era also saw significant changes in the role of women within the family. While women were still expected to be homemakers and caregivers, there was a growing recognition of their contributions to the family and society. Women were increasingly involved in philanthropic work and social reform, and they played a significant role in the education of their children. Despite these changes, however, women were still largely excluded from the formal political and economic spheres of society. They did not have the right to vote, and their opportunities for paid employment were limited. This gender inequality within the family was reflected in the legal system, where women had fewer rights than men in matters such as divorce and property ownership.

The character of Tess's family plays a central role in shaping her destiny and the events that unfold in her life. Tess's family is portrayed as a working-class family living in rural England, struggling to make ends meet and facing a range of challenges and hardships. While putting the working-class children in contrast with 'The privileged', Tucker et al. say that:

"Working-class childhood presented a darker picture. Although modern research suggests that working-class households usually accepted middle-class morality and ideas about marriage and parenthood [...], many nineteenth-century commentators painted family life among the lower working classes as damaged and damaging." (71).

And we can see that throughout the whole book. Tess, being the obedient daughter, tries so hard to please her parents. Her mother, in desperate attempts to provide for the family, forces Tess to do things that she does not like. And worse, she knows that Tess would not resist, as we can see in a part where she found out they might be related to the rich D'urbervilles. When asked about Tess's opinion on the whole situation, she replied: "I've not asked her. She don't know there is any such lady relation yet. But it would certainly put her in the way of a grand marriage, and she won't refuse to go." (Hardy 28). And Tess, with just minor dissent, did as was told.

At the heart of the family is Tess's mother, Joan. Joan is a woman who has been worn down by years of poverty and struggle. Hardy did not describe her as a common working-class Victorian mother, she is portrayed as a hardworking and loving mother and as Tucker et al. explain: "Working-class mothers were criticised as unversed in housekeeping and child nurturance, so that their offspring grew up puny and unfit" (71). We can see Joan care for the family at the very beginning of the book when Tess comes back from the dance: "They were a regular series of thumpings from interior of the house, occasioned by the violent rocking of a cradle upon a

stone floor, to which movement a feminine voice kept time by singing, in a vigorous gallopade, the favourite ditty of "The Potted Cow [...]" (Hardy 17). Joan is depicted as a hard-working mother, but also one who is prone to despair and hopelessness. Joan is not able to provide her children with the security and stability they need, and as a result, she often relies on her husband and children to help her cope with the daily struggles of life.

Tess's father, John Durbeyfield, is a man who dreams of a better life but is unable to make it a reality. He is portrayed as a proud man who is often delusional about his importance and status in the world. John is a heavy drinker, and his alcoholism contributes to the family's financial struggles. This, in some ways, correlates with the traditional portrayal of Victorian fathers: "[...] working-class fathers were characterised as abusive drunkards incapable of normal husbandhood and fatherhood." (Tucker et al. 71). Despite his shortcomings, John is a loving father who cares deeply for his children and wants the best for them. His drinking problems are indicated when Tess sees him before the dance at the beginning of the book: "Durbeyfield, leaning back, and with his eyes closed luxuriously, was waving his hand above his head, and singing in a slow recitative [...]" (Hardy 12). However, in that exact same moment is also indicated his good relationship with his daughter who, although a bit ashamed, stood up for him: "Look here; I won't walk another inch with ye, if you say any jokes about him!". (Hardy 12). And the fact that it was not only a one-time thing is indicated later when he goes drinking with his friends and his family struggles to drag him home: "This going to hunt up her shiftless husband at the inn was one of Mrs Durbeyfield's still extant enjoyments in the much and muddle of rearing children." (Hardy 21). The fact that Hardy uses the term 'this going to hunt up' as a set phrase means that for John and Joan, it became a habit.

Despite the love and affection that Tess's family members have for one another, their poverty and lack of social standing contribute to their downfall. The family's lowly status means that Tess is seen as a social outcast, and she is often the victim of prejudice and discrimination. The novel's tragic events, including Tess's rape and her eventual execution for murder, are in part the result of her family's poverty and social standing. This was the reality of working-class families in the Victorian period and Hardy described it precisely and with all the details, pleasant or not for society.

In the novel, Hardy uses Tess's family as a way of commenting on the social and economic conditions of rural England during the 19th century. He highlights the struggles of working-class families and the limited opportunities available to them. Hardy's portrayal of the Durbeyfield family is a poignant reminder of the impact that poverty and lack of social status can have on individuals and their families. Through Tess's family, Hardy offers a powerful commentary on the human condition and the ways in which the circumstances of their lives shape individuals.

## 4. Charles Dickens

### 4.1. Dickens' View of the Victorian Age

Charles Dickens was an extraordinary writer who was deeply critical of Victorian society, and he used his works to expose the many injustices and inequalities that were present in the society of his time. His works survived the challenges of time thanks to the author's magnificent world-building: "Again and again in Dickens, something hidden reveals itself, and then the novel gets itself made, its characters come to sudden life and focus, in front of our eyes, in a way that makes class and category and statistics give way to the reality of the individual." (Davis 313). This thesis will explore some of the ways in which Dickens criticised Victorian society in his works and how his writing played a role in exposing the social problems of his time.

One of the key issues that Dickens tackled in his writing was poverty. Throughout his novels, he portrayed the lives of the poor and working class in great detail, exposing the harsh realities of their daily lives. This topic was close to him since Dickens himself struggled with poverty growing up, as James explains:

“Dickens’ genius transformed the novel genre both in England and internationally. Establishing his brilliant career without the traditional advantages of class, money or higher education, he exemplified the new spirit behind the rise of nineteenth-century Britain, yet transcended his age, and remains a creative force to the present.” (111).

In works like *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*, Dickens highlighted the poverty, disease, and squalor endemic in Victorian England's cities and towns. He exposed the exploitation of child labour, the workhouses, and the rampant corruption that allowed the rich to grow richer while the poor struggled to survive. Child labour mainly was deeply explained in his work, which is not a coincidence; Dickens himself had experienced it: "From the age of 10 he



struggled to make his own way in the world against the background of his family's financial struggles and, briefly, imprisonment for debt." (James 111). Not only this situation helped him with giving the precise expression of what the society and situation looked like in the Victorian period, it was also his early career where he gained the experience: "Early careers in a legal office, and in journalism ranging from street crime to Parliamentary debates, gave him multiple insights into the stresses of a rapidly changing society, while his enthusiasm for the stage rooted his future writing in the energies of popular culture." (James 111). Given his harsh start, Charles Dickens was truly an extraordinary man for achieving such success in his writing career and giving the future generations such a precise image of what life was like in the Victorian period. However, this harsh start brought some advantages into Dickens' writing, for example, Dickens was a master of showing and describing different social classes in his works thanks to the fact that he knew them himself very well, as Hagan claims:

"Consider, for instance, how many different strata of society are gotten into the comparatively small number of pages that story takes up. In the first six chapters alone, we meet members of the criminal, the military, and the artisan classes, together with a parish clerk and two well-to-do entrepreneurs." (169).

Dickens was not afraid to show the explicit reality in his works, for example in *Oliver Twist*, he portrayed the life of a young orphan boy who was forced to live on the streets, where he was constantly subjected to the dangers and hardships of the urban environment. He exposed the cruelty and corruption of the workhouses, where the poor were forced to work long hours for little pay, and the conditions were often inhumane. According to James: "The dark mood of the story was intensified by George Cruikshanks's illustrations and introduced Dicken's vision of

the contrasting social worlds of London.” (112). By doing so, he shone a light on how the poor were treated, and the many challenges they faced in their daily lives.

Similarly, in *David Copperfield*, Dickens described the life of a young boy who was forced to work in a factory from a young age. As James explains: “*David Copperfield* (1849-50) followed, whose gallery of vivid characters shows Dickens brilliantly humanising the caricature method of his earlier work. Its sensitive evocation of childhood was to influence Proust and Graham Greene in the next century.” (112-113). Through the character of David, Dickens exposed the harsh conditions that many working-class children were forced to endure and how their employers often exploited them. He highlighted the fact that these children were denied an education and that they were often treated as little more than disposable labour.

Another issue that Dickens criticised in his writing was the class system. Throughout his works, he portrayed the vast division between the rich and the poor, and he highlighted the way in which the class system perpetuated social inequality. In works like *Great Expectations* and *Hard Times*, Dickens exposed the arrogance and self-importance of the upper classes and how they looked down on the poor and working class. The people of the upper classes were traditionally called ‘gentlemen’, Dickens, however, disagreed with giving such a noble title to people who did not carry the proper morals and essential character traits such as kindness or sympathy. In *Great Expectations*, he explores this phenomenon profoundly and, through the main characters, describes who truly is the real gentleman and who only carries this title thanks to class and money. A more thorough analysis of *Great Expectations* and being a gentleman will follow in this thesis.

Broadly, in *Great Expectations*, Dickens depicted the life of a young boy who, through a stroke of luck, was able to rise through the social ranks and become a typical Victorian gentleman. However, Dickens had a very different opinion about being a gentleman than what the stereotypical Victorian picture of a gentleman was so he exposed the hypocrisy of the upper classes and how social mobility was often dependent on wealth and status rather than merit or talent. As Hagan says: "Dickens is using his character to reveal some still more complex truths about society and its organisation." (169).

He also highlighted the way in which the rich and powerful often exploited the poor, and the many ways in which they used their wealth and status to maintain their position in society. Hagan finds this fact in the trial of Magwitch and Compeyson and claims that:

“The trial of Magwitch and Compeyson is so important a key to the novel’s larger meaning that the former’s description of it in the later pages of the book should be read in eternity. What the passage reveals is that impartiality in the courts is often a myth. Judges and jury alike may be swayed by class prejudice. The whole judicial system may tend to perpetuate class antagonism and hostility.” (170).

Dickens partly described Magwitch as a sinner; however, he knew that, in a way, Magwitch was just another victim of the evil of the social system. "From his very first appearance in the novel, when we see him shivering on the icy marshes, he is depicted with sympathy, and by the time we get to the end, he has risen to an almost heroic dignity." (Hagan 171).

The author uses the main character, Pip, to show through his character development how this attitude influenced the children of the Victorian period. He does so by inputting short essay-

like pieces that reveal the authentic stream of thoughts of little kids, for example, after Pip's first confrontation with the world of the riches he cries, thinking:

“My sister's bringing up had made me sensitive. In the little world in which children have their existence whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is small, and its world is small, and its rocking-horse stands as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter. [...]” (Dickens 88).

The speech goes on and it seems unlikely that the little, almost uneducated boy would come up with all these ideas, be that as it may, we can most probably see Dickens' own thoughts when he was growing up and facing all injustices and struggles, at the end of the day, as Davis explains: “Thinking in Dickens is very strangely placed, osmotic and phenomenally mobile in its movement between bodies and across boundaries. And it has to go on emotionally within whatever expressive medium or predicament characters have had to find for themselves.” (312).

One of the other important issues Dickens criticised in his writing was the treatment of women. Throughout his works, he portrayed the many challenges and hardships that women faced in Victorian society, and he exposed the many ways in which they were treated as second-class citizens. The awful treatment of women can be seen in the book *The Great Expectations*, where Charles Dickens introduced the character of Estella – a troubled girl who seems arrogant and mean, especially towards Pip for being poor, however when the character unravels, the reader understands how manipulated and broken she actually was from the Victorian treatment of women and almost feels sorry for her. Charles Dickens was an exceptional mind who would not give anything easily to the reader. And it pays off – the initial negative feelings towards

Estella for being so arrogant and mean to Pip, which led him to become the image of the ruined gentleman, help later to form new and positive relationship towards this troubled character. A bond much stronger than the reader would be able to compose if the character was good from the very beginning. Following this path, the reader can completely understand the aftermath of treating women the way they were treated in the Victorian period.

#### **4.2. Characteristics of the Main Character - Pip**

Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* is a novel that critiques the traditional Victorian values of social class, wealth, and gender roles. The protagonist, Pip, is a character who embodies these values, and throughout the novel, Dickens uses Pip's character development to expose the flaws in Victorian society. Pip's journey from a poor, working-class boy to a wealthy gentleman highlights the injustices and inequalities that exist in Victorian England and the harmful effects of prioritising wealth and social status over character and morality.

At the beginning of the novel, Pip is a young boy living in poverty with his abusive sister and her blacksmith husband, Joe. He dreams of rising above his station and becoming a gentleman, and this desire for wealth and status drives much of his behaviour throughout the novel. However, as Pip grows older and gains wealth and status, he begins to realise the negative effects of his ambition and the limitations of traditional Victorian values. Through this character development, Dickens shows the adverse effects of the traditional Victorian attitude. At the beginning of the book, Pip is a humble boy with respect for those who raised him, and his good morals slowly fade away the moment he gets the money and becomes a typical Victorian gentleman. By putting money and manners into contrast, the author challenges the unfairness of his age – those who were born wealthy were glorified for having good looks and expensive belongings. However, they usually had zero good deeds on their imaginary accounts. For

Charles Dickens, the true gentleman was someone humble and kind, no matter their wealth, because money cannot measure someone's worth, but one's morals and approach to others can.

One of the ways in which Dickens criticises Victorian values through Pip's character is by highlighting the class division that exists in society. As a poor boy, Pip is constantly reminded of his inferior social status, and he dreams of becoming a gentleman so that he can escape the limitations of his class. However, as he rises in social status, he begins to realise that the upper class is not as idyllic as he had imagined. He becomes ashamed of his humble origins, and he is embarrassed by Joe's simple manners and lack of education. Even though Pip as a little boy never minded Joe's simplicity and saw him as a father figure and someone whom he could always rely on, after his first encounter with the world of the wealthy, he starts to curse Joe for raising him without the proper education and for being poor. First, he becomes aware of all the things that he thought were normal up until the point when he meets Estella, who criticises him for being poor and straightforward: "I took the opportunity of being alone in the courtyard to look at my coarse hands and my common boots. My opinion of those accessories was not favourable. They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now, as a vulgar appendage." (Dickens 87). Then, Pip's mind is full of even worse thoughts, he starts to blame Joe for all the misfortune in his life and for not being able to provide a better life for him, despite the reality that Joe always did everything in his power to give Pip the most proper childhood he could afford. Yet, Pip being stupefied by Estella's mean comments and by Victorian standards, he says: "I determined to ask Joe why he had ever taught me to call those picture-cards Jacks, which ought to be called knaves. I wished Joe had been rather more genteelly brought up, and then I should have been so too." (Dickens 87).

The dark accusatory thoughts of the little boy are extremely upsetting, considering that Joe was always the only one he could rely on, even the contrast between the description of his sister, who had raised him and Joe, whom she had married shows how much was Pip looking up to Joe. Pip describes his sister as such: "She was not a good-looking woman, my sister; and I had a general impression that she must have made Joe Gargery marry her by hand." (Dickens 14) and such as: "My sister, Mrs Joe, with black hair and eyes, had such a prevailing redness of skin that I sometimes used to wonder whether it was possible she washed herself with a nutmeg-grater instead of soap." (Dickens 14). Those are not complimentary words, but it is not intended to portray Pip as rude; it only shows how tense the relationship between the two siblings was. And to make this tension bearable for Pip, Dickens gifted him with a hero – Joe, whom he describes in these words:

"Joe was a fair man, with curls of flaxen hair on each side of his smooth face, and with eyes of such a very undecided blue that they seemed to have somehow got mixed with their own whites. He was a mild, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish, deal fellow, - a sort of Hercules in strength, and also in weakness." (Dickens 14).

From this description, it is clear that Joe was very close to Pip's heart, he even described their relationship as: "Joe and I being fellow-sufferers." (Dickens 15). They both live with Pip's sister and they both withstand her behaviour which makes their bond incredibly strong because the only one who seems to be on Pip's side and who protects him is his fellow Joe. This makes the fact that Pip starts to turn his back on Joe when he meets Estella from the rich world extremely alarming, which exactly was Dicken's intention, to show how much can money change someone for the worst.

The pressure of Victorian society, where one must have been rich and have good looks, chased little Pip to the darkest corner of his mind. He turns his back to the only man who ever protected

him from all the unfairness performed on him and starts questioning every tiny bit of his life. Pip feels ashamed and alone.

“But when she was gone, I looked about me for a place to hide my face in, and got behind one of the gates in the brewery-lane, and leaned my sleeve against the wall there, and leaned my forehead on it and cried. As I cried, I kicked the wall, and took a hard twist at my hair; so bitter were my feelings, and so sharp was the smart without a name, that needed counteraction.” (Dickens 87).

All these unpleasant feelings consume Pip and here his transformation begins. Transformation for the worse, unfortunately.

The change in Pip's behaviour goes so far that when Pip comes to a fortune, he would rather completely forget about his humble origins. Not only he blames Joe for how simply he raised him, as this thesis mentioned above, but when Pip becomes rich, he is ashamed of him and would like to erase him from his life completely. This can be seen when Joe comes to visit Pip in London, who, surprisingly, is not excited at all and even says:

“Let me confess exactly with what feelings I looked forward to Joe's coming. Not with pleasure, though I was bound to him by some many ties; no; with considerable disturbance, some mortification, and a keen sense of incongruity. If I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money.” (Dickens 295-296).

Pip admits that he used to have a solid connection to Joe, however, now, when Pip is considered a gentleman, why would he be wasting his time by spending it with someone from the lower class? Further, his attitude can be seen in the usage of noble words in his speech, such as 'considerable disturbance' or 'incongruity', we can only hardly imagine someone from a lower class to be using such words. In this way, Pip wants to distinguish himself from his origins and wants to show that now he is above the lower class. This attitude is also reflected in his



treatment of his childhood friend, Biddy, who is also of a lower class. Despite her intelligence and kindness, Pip dismisses her as inferior and unworthy of his attention because of her social status. This illustrates how Victorian society placed great importance on social class, and how people were judged based on their social status rather than their character or abilities.

Another way in which Dickens critiques Victorian values through Pip's character is by exposing the flaws in the concept of 'gentlemanliness.' In Victorian society, being a gentleman was seen as the pinnacle of social status and respectability. However, as Pip gains wealth and status, he begins to realise that the characteristics that make someone a 'gentleman' are often superficial and have little to do with true character. For example, Pip is initially enamoured with the wealthy and haughty Miss Havisham, who represents the upper class to him. However, he later discovers that she is a bitter and vengeful woman who has used her wealth and status to manipulate and control those around her. This exposes the idea that wealth and status do not necessarily equate to morality and character. Likewise, the character of Bentley Drummer, the typical wealthy Victorian gentleman, is portrayed as:

“Heavy in figure, movement, and comprehension – in the sluggish complexion of his face, and in the large, awkward tongue that seemed to loll about in his mouth as he himself lolled about the room, - he was idle, proud, niggardly, reserved, and suspicious.” (Dickens 275).

Not-so-pleasant words for a gentleman, especially using the terms such as 'sluggish' or 'awkward' and 'suspicious' does not fit into the typical characteristics of a gentleman, hinting that being rich is not enough to be a good person. Pip even says about Bentley that: "He would always creep in-shore like some uncomfortable amphibious creature" (Dickens 275), making him inhuman in a way by using the term 'creature'. The world of wealth was not ideal as Pip had imagined it to be.

Furthermore, Pip's behaviour as a gentleman also exposes the flaws in Victorian values. As he gains wealth and status, Pip becomes arrogant and condescending, looking down on those who are of a lower class. He is embarrassed by Joe and Biddy, and he dismisses the kindness and love of his childhood friend, Estella, because of her lower social status. This behaviour illustrates the negative effects of social climbing, and how the desire for wealth and status can lead to moral decay and loss of empathy. According to Davis:

“A kind of allegory in Dickens means that in *Great Expectations* (1861) Pip's Ambition is set alongside Joe Gargery's Innocence in a kind of jarring attraction intuitive to Dicken's way of seeing. For suddenly those abstract nouns burst upon the reader's mind as though with moral capital letters; as though beneath all the psychological realism and despite all Pip's understandable defences and Joe's excuses for him, the space between the two figures becomes charged with the name of something absolute and primal at the level of family betrayal.” (310).

Finally, Dickens criticises the traditional gender roles of Victorian society through Pip's character. Throughout the novel, women are portrayed as either weak and submissive or manipulative and cruel. This is exemplified in the character of Estella, whom Miss Havisham raises to be cold and heartless in order to seek revenge on men. Pip is initially drawn to her because of her beauty and her status as a wealthy young woman, but he later realises that she is unable to love him because of her upbringing. This exposes the limitations that women faced in Victorian society and how they were often forced into specific gender roles that did not allow for individuality or autonomy.

### **4.3. The Importance of the Character of Estella**

Estella is a complex character who plays a significant role in the story. She is the adopted daughter of the wealthy and eccentric Miss Havisham, who raises her to be cold and heartless to seek revenge on men. Estella's beauty and demeanour captivate the protagonist, Pip, from their first meeting, and her influence on him drives much of the novel's plot. Her character is important because she represents the limitations and injustices that women faced in Victorian society, and her relationship with Pip exposes the flaws in traditional gender roles and expectations.

At the beginning of the novel, Estella is introduced as a cold and haughty young girl who is raised in isolation by Miss Havisham. Her visual, when Pip sees her for the first time, is described through his eyes as a: “young lady, who was very pretty and seemed very proud.” (Dickens 78). These lines are putting good looks and character traits in contrast, implying Dicken’s opinion about the typical wealthy people – although they may seem aesthetically pleasing, their hearts are usually rotten and their morals ruined. Her behaviour is indicated in her speech with one of the staff from Miss Havisham's house, who brings in Pip, who then recalls: "She said it so finally, and in such an undiscussable way, that Mr Pumblechook, though in a condition of ruffled dignity, could not protest.” (Dickens 78). Her appearance and demeanour are in sharp contrast to Pip's humble and friendly personality, and he is immediately captivated by her. However, Estella's behaviour towards Pip is cruel and dismissive, and she takes pleasure in belittling him and his background. She does so by, for example, calling him not by his name but simply ‘the boy’ as can be seen in their first interaction together: “Boy! Let your behavior here be a credit unto them which brought you up by hand!” (Dickens 78). Pip notices her cold attitude towards him, however, influenced by her higher social status, he still fails to see her flaws and for him, she represents something above him:

“Though she called me ‘boy’ so often, and with a carelessness that was far from complimentary, she was of about my own age. She seemed much older than I, of course, being a girl, and a beautiful and self-possessed; and she was as scornful of me as if she had been one-and-twenty, and a queen.” (Dickens 80).

In this stream of thoughts, Pip realises that Estella is not very different from him, they were both kids about the same age, yet her behaviour and the general knowledge that she belongs to a higher social class compelled him to believe that she is ultimately superior to him. This behaviour is a reflection of her upbringing, as Miss Havisham has taught her to hate and manipulate men as a means of seeking revenge for her own past heartbreak.

Estella's relationship with Pip is complicated and tumultuous throughout the novel. Despite her cruel behaviour towards him, Pip remains infatuated with her and yearns for her love and approval. He sees her as a symbol of everything he desires in life - wealth, status, and beauty. Pip never truly cared about such things, yet he started to notice the differences between Estella and himself when he first met with her. Estella harshly shows Pip the massive distinctions between the upbringing of the two of them in terms of wealth: “’With this boy? Why, he is a common laboring boy!’” (Dickens 84). Sadly, little innocent Pip starts worrying about being good enough after Estella’s comments and he starts doubting himself:

“’He calls the knaves Jacks, this boy!’ said Estella with disdain, before our first game was out. ‘And what coarse hands he has! And what thick boots!’ I had never thought of being ashamed of my hands before; but I began to consider them a very indifferent pair. Her contempt for me was so strong, that it became infectious and I caught it.” (Dickens 85).

The Victorian mindset represented through Estella’s judgement poisoned Pip’s mind in the worst way possible – he begins to see her as an icon, ignoring the importance of good manners

which Estella crucially lacked and he believes that he cannot match her and that he is only a peasant comparing to her. There launches Pip's character journey through which Dickens described typical Victorian gentlemen and their hypocrisy and arrogance and he was able to do so all because of the character of Estella., who unintentionally forced Pip to change completely and drastically over the book's plot.

When Miss Havisham asks Pip about his opinion of Estella, he remains humble and seeks no revenge whatsoever, which implies just how innocent and pure Pip was at the beginning of the book. However, being already infected by Estella's mean statements, he confesses to Miss Havisham that although he finds Estella rude, he cannot help but see her as beautiful:

"'You say nothing of her,' remarked Miss Havisham to me, as she looked on. 'She says many hard things of you, but you say nothing of her. What do you think of her?' 'I don't like to say,' I stammered. 'Tell me in my ear,' said Miss Havisham, bending down. 'I think she is very proud,' I replied, in a whisper. 'Anything else?' I think she is very insulting.' (She was looking at me then with a look of supreme aversion.) 'Anything else?' I think I should like to go home.' 'And never see her again, though she is so pretty? I am not sure that I shouldn't like to see her again, but I should like to go home now.'" (Dickens 85).

The sincere Pip spilt his still innocent heart in this part, all he wanted to do now was to go home and think about all the events that had happened, think about the charming Estella and even though he knows just how rude she is, he would like to see her again, because she is the icon of all the things that he would like to have in his life, just because he did not have them growing up. Her grace ultimately blinded him from seeing how vital are qualities such as kindness, generosity or sympathy – all the elements that Charles Dickens cherished dearly but the Victorian society lacked crucially.

However, as Estella grows older, she begins to realise the limitations of her upbringing and the negative effects it has had on her own emotional development. She admits to Pip that she has no heart, and she is unable to feel love or compassion for anyone. This realisation is a reflection of the constraints placed on women in Victorian society, where they were often forced into specific gender roles and expected to conform to societal expectations. The sudden change in her attitude is also an author's way of making a character truly important and exciting for the reader, according to Davis:

“In all this, a Dickens novel is not like a novel by George Eliot or Mrs Gaskell or Trollope. It is harder in Dickens to stop at some point and rest content in the depiction of a character or a scene seemingly equivalent to real life, which thus exists, intrinsically justified, for its own sake. There is a world in Dickens, at once strange *and* familiar, and within that medium, it is as though the reader only realises at a point much closer to the *end* of the process what vision those strange beginnings and modifying transformations have been in search of.” (311).

Furthermore, Estella's character is important because she represents the limitations and injustices that women faced in Victorian society. She is raised by Miss Havisham to be cold and heartless, and her only purpose is to seek revenge on men for their past wrongs. This behaviour is a reflection of the societal constraints placed on women during the Victorian era, where they were often viewed as inferior and subservient to men. Estella's inability to feel love or empathy is a result of the emotional repression she has experienced due to her upbringing, which reflects the limitations placed on women's emotional development in Victorian society.

Estella's relationship with Pip also exposes the flaws in traditional gender roles and expectations. Throughout the novel, women are portrayed as either weak and submissive or manipulative and cruel. Estella is a product of this society, where women were often forced into specific gender roles that did not allow for individuality or autonomy. However, Estella's character also challenges these expectations by refusing to conform to them. She rejects Pip's love and devotion, and she refuses to be controlled by Miss Havisham's desire for revenge. This behaviour illustrates the limitations that women faced in Victorian society and how they were often forced to choose between conforming to societal expectations or facing social ostracism.

Estella's character plays a significant role in the novel's plot. Her influence on Pip drives much of the story, and her relationship with him represents the struggle between love and ambition. Pip is torn between his love for Estella and his desire for wealth and status, and he sees her as the key to achieving his goals. However, as he gains wealth and status, he begins to realise the limitations of his ambition and the negative effects it has had on his relationships. He realises that his desire for wealth and status has caused him to overlook the people who genuinely love and care for him, including Joe and Biddy.

#### **4.4. Being a Gentleman**

The Victorian era is often characterised as a time of rigid social hierarchy, where one's status and position in society were determined by birth and wealth. The ideal of the 'gentleman' was highly valued during this time, and it was seen as the epitome of social status and respectability. A gentleman was expected to embody a particular set of virtues and qualities that were considered essential for maintaining the status quo of Victorian society.

At the heart of the ideal of the gentleman was the notion of ‘manners’ - a set of social graces and behaviours that were considered essential for interacting with others in polite society. These included things like dressing appropriately for different occasions, being punctual, using correct grammar and pronunciation, and exhibiting good posture and body language. Gentlemen were expected to be well-educated and well-read, with a particular emphasis on the classics and literature of the past.

One of the key virtues associated with the gentleman was ‘self-control’. A gentleman was expected to have a calm and collected demeanour at all times, even in the face of provocation or emotional turmoil. This was seen as a sign of strength and maturity, and it was highly valued in a society that placed a premium on maintaining appearances and keeping emotions in check.

Another important quality of the gentleman was ‘chivalry’. This referred to a set of behaviours that were seen as gallant and honourable, such as protecting women and children, being courteous to others, and acting with generosity and kindness. The ideal of chivalry was heavily influenced by medieval notions of knights and courtly love, and it was seen as a way of upholding traditional gender roles and expectations.

Finally, a gentleman was expected to be financially stable and socially connected. This meant having a respectable profession or occupation, being well-connected to other members of the upper classes, and having the financial means to maintain a certain level of lifestyle and comfort. Wealth was seen as an essential component of social status and respectability, and it was often used as a way of defining one's position in society.



However, the ideal of the gentleman was not without its critics. Many people saw it as an artificial construct that reinforced social inequality and encouraged conformity at the expense of individuality. Some argued that the strict adherence to social norms and expectations stifled creativity and innovation and that it prevented people from expressing their true selves.

Moreover, the ideal of the gentleman was often used as a way of excluding certain groups from full participation in society. Women, for example, were largely excluded from the ideal of the gentleman and were expected to conform to a separate set of expectations and virtues. Working-class men and people of colour were also often excluded from the ideal of the gentleman, as they were seen as lacking the necessary education, refinement, and social connections.

The ideal of the gentleman was a defining feature of Victorian society, and it played an important role in shaping social norms and expectations. The qualities and virtues associated with the gentleman - manners, self-control, chivalry, and financial stability - were seen as essential for maintaining social order and respectability.

That was the case of the traditional Victorian gentleman, however, Dickens presents a complex and nuanced portrayal of the ideal gentleman, one that stands in contrast to the more superficial and materialistic ideals of Victorian society.

The character of Joe Gargery is perhaps the most obvious embodiment of Dickens' ideal of the true gentleman. Joe is a simple and humble blacksmith who possesses all of the virtues that Dickens sees as essential for the true gentleman. Joe is kind, patient, loyal, and honest, and he treats everyone with the same degree of respect and dignity, regardless of their social status or

background. At the beginning of the book, as this thesis mentioned earlier, Joe is described by Pip as a: “mild, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish, dear fellow” (Dickens 14), which is exactly how Charles Dickens imagined a true gentleman. In many ways, Joe is the antithesis of the more superficial and materialistic ideals of the upper classes, embodying a sense of humility and authenticity that Dickens sees as lacking in the so-called "gentlemen" of Victorian society.

It is worth noting that Dickens' portrayal of the true gentleman is not limited to male characters alone, as it was in the real world. Through the character of Estella, Dickens presents a complex and nuanced portrayal of the ideal woman, one that is perhaps even more challenging and subversive than his portrayal of the male ideal. As the analysis above hints, Estella is beautiful, intelligent, and sophisticated, but she is also cold, calculating, and emotionally distant. Her character embodies the paradoxical nature of Victorian society, where women were expected to embody a set of ideals and virtues that were often at odds with their own desires and ambitions. However, as the novel progresses, Estella begins to show signs of compassion and empathy, suggesting that even within the constraints of Victorian society, there is still the possibility for individuals to break free from the limitations of their upbringing and social status.

Finally, the character of Pip somehow developed to the point where Charles Dickens would call him a gentleman. After Pip's downfall, we can see his redemption arch and the realisation that wealth and social status may bring him the title 'gentleman', however, the more money he had, the more ruined morals he tended to express and the less of a good man he was. When Pip is reunited with Joe and Biddy, he starts to look at them with a completely different point of view, he even claims that Biddy looks "fresh and pleasant" (Dickens 636) and says: "But Dear Biddy, how smart you are!" and: "And Joe, how smart *you* are!" (Dickens 636), which is an exciting

shift in opinion, considering that at the beginning of his gentleman journey, he regarded Joe as being simple and unintelligent. Then, when he hears the news that Joe is going to marry Biddy, he says to her: "Dear Biddy, you have the best husband in the whole world, and if you could have seen him by my bed you would have – But no, you couldn't love him better than you do." (Dickens 637), by which he proclaims Joe as the ultimate gentleman of the book and giving him all the credit that he deserves for always treating Pip nicely and not turning his back when Pip was a so-called gentleman. Pip then affirms his statement when he says about Joe: "And, dear Joe, you have the best wife in the whole world, and she will make you as happy as even you deserve to be, you dear, good, noble Joe!" (Dickens 637). By calling Joe 'noble', Pip finally admits that being a gentleman does not equal being rich but having essential character traits.

Pip's change for the better can be seen in his following speech to the couple:

“And Joe and Biddy both, as you have been to church to-day, and are in charity and love with all mankind, receive my humble thanks for all you have done for me, and all I have so ill repaid! And when I say that I am going away within the hour, for I am soon going abroad, and that I shall never rest until I have worked for the money with which you have kept me out of prison, and have sent it to you, don't think, dear Joe and Biddy, that if I could repay it a thousand times over, I suppose I could cancel a farthing of the debt I owe you, or that I would do so if I could.” (Dickens 637).

The phrase 'humble thanks' shows that Pip's opinion of himself changed drastically, he no longer saw himself above Joe and Biddy, but rather on the same level. He even recalls his wrongdoings, admitting it was improper by calling it 'I have so ill repaid!'. Pip then makes a promise to earn money through hard work and repay the debt, realising that getting money is not an easy job and that money righteously earned is way more valuable.

*Great Expectations* presents a nuanced and complex portrayal of the true gentleman, one that stands in contrast to the more superficial and materialistic ideals of Victorian society. Through characters like Joe Gargery and Pip, towards the end of the book, Dickens shows that true gentlemen are defined not by their wealth or status but by their essential virtues of kindness, humility, and compassion. In doing so, Dickens challenges the rigid class system of Victorian society and suggests that even within its confines, individuals still can rise above their circumstances and embody the ideals of true gentility.

## 5. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to provide an analysis of the two characters written by two of the most commercially successful writers, Tess from *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy and Pip from *Great Expectations* written by Charles Dickens. We could see that both the characters shared some significant features that defined their fates, such as being born into the labouring class. However, each of the chosen characters developed differently and their ways parted in many aspects, showing the two different approaches the authors used. For both characters, there were also different aspects of paramount importance that shaped their story and that we analysed in this thesis – for Tess, it was her family and for Pip, it was becoming a gentleman and Estella.

After defining the Victorian period in the first chapter, we moved on to the first chosen author – Thomas Hardy. The thesis explained how Hardy was seen as a controversial author, mainly it was because of his courageous depiction of religion and its influence on common folks. That was a torn topic in Victorian society, as there was still a huge base of Christians as well as the rise of Atheists. Another controversial aspect for that age was his description of sex and desire, which was an unthinkable topic to talk about publicly in Victorian society. He challenged the hypocrisy of his age by creating a heroine, who suffered the injustices of being taken advantage of by a wealthy man, who therefore could not be persecuted, and then being judged by society. It was so unacceptable that the publishers wanted to censor Hardy, yet he did not give up and he would rather bury the book as a whole instead of deleting the parts that were seen as problematic. The climax of his controversy was when he gave Tess the title of a 'pure woman', saying that it is not important what had happened to her but her approach to the whole situation.

The thesis then followed with a description of the heroine, Tess. We saw her transition from a passive obedient girl into a fearless and powerful woman. The changes in her character were mainly caused because of the unfortunate events in her life, forcing her to make hard decisions and leaving the 'good girl' behind. At the beginning of the book, she was so obedient that she would often forget her own desires in order to help her family. However, everything started to crumble when she met Alec – her ultimate destruction. After a series of unfortunate events, she found herself unmarried and pregnant, becoming what would Victorian society call 'the fallen woman', however, Hardy denied this approach by reason of Tess not being in charge of any of those incidents. He instead portrayed her as a 'pure woman' as a reminder that she did not let Alec break her down, and she fought for her destiny instead. Ultimately, Tess is a unique and powerful female character, mainly because of her belief that fate is not in the hands of an omnipotent God but rather in our own hands.

The comparison of a typical Victorian family with the Durbeyfield's household came after the description of the main character. In that chapter, we looked deeply into why was the concept of the family so important for the Victorians, how were the gender roles distinguished, and what were the differences between the classes. We then applied it to Tess's situation, explaining why the relationships in the family were so close and so crucial for the plot of the book.

Then the thesis shifted its focus from Thomas Hardy to Charles Dickens and explained the harsh beginnings of this remarkable writer, which later helped him in his literary career by familiarising himself with the streets of Victorian London and with the labouring class. The thesis mentioned his most used topics, such as poverty, and showed how he criticised aspects such as the class system, social inequality, child labour and the treatment of women through his unforgettable characters.

Then we moved concretely on the character of Pip and analysed his journey from a simple labouring boy to a wealthy gentleman, which was something he always dreamed of. However, his journey was not fully successful and according to Pip's expectations. The thesis mentioned how Pip's dream of becoming a gentleman started in the first place. It was not an idea from his head, it was more of a toxic thought that people around him put into his little innocent mind. First, it was his sister and her friends constantly commenting on Pip's appearance and behaviour, then it was Estella criticising his 'coarse hands' and 'common boots'. It was comments like these that led Pip to what started as a dream but later became the biggest disappointment of his life. He found out by himself just how corrupted Victorian society was and was, in the end, able to find a sense of peace with his common roots.

After the analyses of Pip, the thesis provided a deeper look into the character of Estella. She is depicted as cold and harsh at the beginning of the book. However, we found out that it was because of her caretaker, Miss Havisham, who tried to take revenge on men through Estella. On her character, Dickens masterfully explained the problematic gender roles in the Victorian period, as he described her, along with other women in the book, as weak, submissive, manipulating and cruel. She was also one of the main story-shaping elements in the book because it was her encounter with Pip that made him want to change completely.

Finally, we took a look at the concept of gentlemen in the Victorian period and the thesis explained that while the traditional approach to gentlemen was mainly about wealth and social status, Dickens emphasised right morality traits instead, such as being humble and kind. We then compared the attitude of Pip and Joe and explained that after Pip got the money, he could be seen as a gentleman in society, however, he lost all of the good traits that Dickens valued

along the way on his journey, therefore he could not be the gentleman of the book. Joe, on the other hand, always had the right morals and was always kind, which made him the ultimate gentleman in the book according to Dickens. This fact can be proven by their endings – while Pip had still a long journey before him, to get to know what is really important in life, Joe got himself the best wife he could ever have and lived with her happily.

In conclusion, both authors provided us with not only books but also with an extraordinary view of their age and the lives of people in the Victorian period, as it were, meaning with all the imperfections.



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