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Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* and Naguib Mahfouz's *Bayn al-Qasrayn*: A Study of Realistic Analogy

By

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Abstract

Realism, in literature, is an approach that attempts to present life as it is. It seeks to explore experiences that are usual or typical rather than extraordinary or exotic. Charles Dickens's and Naguib Mahfouz's fictional works are faithful representations of their ages and their societies as they witnessed them; a matter that makes these two writers closely similar to each other in terms of realism. In fact, Mahfouz in so many times is called "Egyptian Dickens". Dickens's *Hard Times* and Mahfouz's *Bayn al-Qasrayn* are faithful representations of two societies that witnessed two revolutions in two different times. This research tends to examine within the scope of realistic analogy certain fictional elements in these two fictional works. The research is an attempt to answer the following questions: In what sense *Hard Times* and *Bayn al-Qasrayn* can be read as faithful realistic reflections of two societies that witnessed two different revolutions, and how did Dickens and Mahfouz employ setting and characters as mediums through which these two fictional works can be read as commentaries on the way British and Egyptian individuals are caught between what they want and what the social and ideological systems impose upon them. Although Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* and Naguib Mahfouz's *Bayn al-Qasrayn* are examined earlier before, this research is relatively new as these literary works were not examined together according



to the analogical approach of the American comparative literature. This research confirms that in these two fictional works, there are assimilations in the realistic treatment of certain fictional elements, especially setting and characterization, which need to be properly examined and commented upon.

Charles Dickens and Naguib Mahfouz's Realism

Humanity is the product of experiences and feelings mankind examines in his everyday life. A faithful recording and reflection of these experiences and feelings is the pursuit of realism which effectively and persuasively presents life as it is without any kind of idealization, partiality, and subjectivity. When a literary work is coined as realistic, it has to be so in terms of presentation and content. Realistic presentation depends on how things are presented to the reader and how the reader responds to such presentation. To clarify this, realistic presentation is the detailed physical description of places, characters and events and the way the reader senses how things and characters look like. Realism in content is expressed through the plot, whose events have to be true to life and can actually happen. C. S. Lewis adds that a psychological realism is one of the aspects which determine whether a text is realistic or not. Lewis explains that a psychological realist tries to give the reader a persuasive account of how characters think and feel. Psychological realists often trace feelings back to past experiences, suggesting that man's personality is formed in childhood and early adolescence. (Gajarawala, *Untouchable Fictions*, 15)

Charles Dickens is distinguished as one of the most important pioneers of realism and one of the social reformers of the Victorian age, in a sense that he tackled and brought the problems of poverty and the poor to the attention of his readers through introducing varieties of poor characters into almost all of his



novels such as *Hard Times*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Bleak House*. Dickens by portraying realistic characters, gives voice to those who had no voice, and establishes a link between politics and literature with his social commentary. Charles Eliot in *Charles Dickens: The Personal History and Experience of David Copperfield* says that: "Dickens, in many of his novels, criticized the bad managements of government, the unjust laws, especially the social ones" (4) He attacks the defects of certain institutions and creates a factious world that mirrors the real one. Therefore, it can be noted that Charles Dickens's novels played a tremendous role in the implementation of policies that changed the lives of the poor. Apart from his works, Dickens's active involvement in promoting social reforms raised public awareness in the fight against poverty, deprivation of education, child labor and prostitution. Hugh Cunningham in "Dickens as a Reformer" in *A Companion to Charles Dickens* states that: "Many have credited him with creating the climate of opinion that facilitated the reforms in education, public health, and criminal law that helped to make Britain a safer and less strife-ridden society" (159)

Naguib Mahfouz is an Egyptian writer who was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988, and whose realism as Matti Moosa says in his book *The Early Novels of Naguib Mahfouz*, " was his favorite technique... in many of his novels, he uses situations and characters drawn from real life and he devoted his time and energy to the domestic scene in Cairo." (54) Reading a fictional work of Mahfouz may give the reader an impression that it is not only a form of entertainment but also a potent vehicle for achieving moral reform and enlightenment. Cairo is Mahfouz's favorite setting in which he focuses upon the different sectors of the Egyptian society especially the middle and the lower classes. In *Midaq Alley*, *Khan al Khalili*, and *Thulathya*, the setting is a predominant element, in a sense that it explores the misery of the lower middle classes of Cairo during a specific time of the Egyptian history. Social conflict,



upheaval, and tragedy in the lives of the Egyptian individuals are portrayed with sensitive and realistic modes of narration that have won for Mahfouz the sobriquet "Dickens of the Arabs." This expression according to what Jimmy So believes in his essay "What the Dickens!", springs from the fact that: "Whenever an author is found chronicling the lives of ordinary folk with gripping prose and sprawling plots, a Dickens is rarely far behind" (2009) Mahfouz is dramatizing his social tales in such a way that showed the vivacity of Egyptians under the regimes they have endured. His novels, especially *Thulathia* is of great benefit to those who seek a deeper understanding of the long, tortuous course of Egypt's relations with Western world and the Egyptian's struggle to escape British hegemony.

Comparing Dickens' *Hard Times* to Mahfouz's *Bayn al-Qasrayn* in terms of realism is an attempt to present both of Dickens and Mahfouz as realists who were greatly related to their societies. Though portrayal of life in England or Egypt during the Victorian Industrial Revolution and the 1919th revolution are not exclusive to Dickens or Mahfouz, however, they are distinguished by their choice of themes and creation of character which are drawn from real life experiences. They similarly tackle how political and economic conditions of their countries are interwoven into the lives of many English and Egyptian individuals. This enables them to create characters which are typically Victorian and typically Egyptian.

Both Dickens and Mahfouz use fictional settings and characters as focal points through which they comment upon human nature. These settings and characters which are colored with tragic mood emphasize their engagement with the social problems and the social ills of their societies.

A realist novelist can never be isolated from the world he is surrounded by. The world for him is a source of inspiration from which he derives stories,



characters, names, incidents, and places. Sometimes, he depends upon his own life as a source of inspiration, and in some other times, he relies upon his own observations and upon what he hears from others. In both cases, he will establish his novel on a realistic ground which may effectively and persuasively reflect and present life as it is.

The writings of Charles Dickens were exceedingly influenced by his own experiences and the social and political conditions of England in the 1800's. Among the most important experiences that left their tincture upon his fictional works are poverty, and his employment in the blacking factory. Many descriptions of poverty in Dickens's novels are based upon the distressing period he lived, and the gloomy atmosphere that warped his novels resulted from the lesson he learned at the hands of poverty. Everett H. Rupert in *The Life of Charles Dickens and Favorite Stories* says: "In this atmosphere his body seemed imprisoned, his soul warped with hopeless and despair." (4) Poverty in Dickens's novels is responsible for many social diseases like crime, prostitution and wickedness. This is clearly embodied in *Oliver Twist*. In addition, one of the controlling ideas in this novel is the victimization of childhood at the hand of poverty and crime. Through this novel and through many other novels, Dickens brings the problem of poverty to the attention of his readers through showing how the poor are leading a brave struggle against the forces arrayed against them.

As a writer, Dickens was also influenced by his experience in the blacking factory when he was a twelve years old boy. This is partly reflected in *David Copperfield* when David is enforced to work in the bottling factory of Murdstone and Grinby. For David working there is traumatic, and there he examines feelings of loneliness and neglect. For Dickens, his experience in the blacking factory is "the secret agony of [his] soul" (ibid 6) He defined it as shameful, miserable, and cannot be written. In the blacking factory, Dickens



shared the fate of many working-class children who were employed because of their families' strained financial situations. Employment in the blacking factory introduced Dickens to the working class which enriched his imaginative storage with experiences of real blood and flesh. Everett explains: "one can easily see why, when Dickens came to write *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist*, he did not have to draw upon his imagination for material. He had only to call to memory the bitter struggle of his own childhood"(ibid7)

Dickens, all the time, shows his objection to the negative effect capitalism had on the lower classes, primarily because Dickens grew up in a lower class family, and as a member of this class, Dickens had a special empathy towards it. In *Hard Times* he asks, indirectly, people of England to examine the conditions of the lower class. He uses the power of setting and characterization as a medium to get inside peoples' heads, and deliver his powerful message. His message is weaved into a plot that involves characters to which members of every social class are able to relate. The importance of *Hard Times* lies in the way it strived to grab the upper classes attention and allowed them to understand the plight of the lower classes. Focusing upon the lives of the poor shows how capitalism and industrialization demeans humanity and subjugates it to poverty. Stephen Blackpool is one of the working class that is entitled "Hands". His name reflects his miserable conditions. Robert E. Lougy in "The Romance as Radical" believes that Stephen represents: "the struggle of an individual against a dehumanizing society" (24) This is confirmed by Dickens himself: "Stephen Blackpool, forty years of age. Stephen looks older, but he had a hard life. It is said that every life has its roses and thorns; there seemed, however, to have been a misadventure or a mistake in Stephen's case, whereby somebody else had become possessed of his roses, and he had become possessed of the same somebody else's thorns in addition to his own" (63) Life for Stephen is no more than a "muddle" and he, in this muddle, has no dreams, or



future to wish for. His tragic death as Lougy suggests, stands for the fact that: "in this world there is little room for love, goodness, and humanity, and that God of the poor is not much help to them while they are alive" (25) In fact Stephen's death reflects the pessimistic mood of Dickens which resulted from his experiences with poverty and with the blacking factory. It suggests that when one loses any touch with hope, he will spiritually die. Furthermore, Stephen's death may suggest that in the nightmarish world of Coketown, death puts an end to suffering, especially when standing against suffering becomes useless.

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, France and the French Revolution is one of the frames within which the plot is weaved. Dickens, in this novel sheds light on the lives of the poor. He, for example depicted their depending on fountains' water for drinking, cooking, and washing. He discussed the desperation that led to mobs that stormed the Bastille and wreaked havoc on Paris, and he didn't forget the scaffold by which lives of both guilty and innocent were ended.

Love was not isolated from the imaginative storage of Dickens who fell madly and hopelessly in love with Maria Beadnell. She was the daughter of a wealthy banker. Everett suggests that "The emotional storm through which Dickens passed during that romantic episode was later described with dramatic vividness in *David Copperfield*"(10) Dickens simply changed the real name of Maria Beadnell to a fictional one of Dora Spenlow.

Relying upon personal experiences isn't the only source of inspiration for a realistic novelist. For the sake of portraying a realistic scene of Cairo, Naguib Mahfouz depends on his own observations as well upon his own personal experiences. Matti Moosa says: "Realism was his [Mahfouz's] favorite technique ...in many of his novels; he uses situations and characters drawn from real life"(6) One of the places that enriched Mahfouz's realistic style is the old Fishawi Coffe House which was part of his daily life. There he met regular-



ly intimate friends with whom he shared news, and stories. He even used to hear jokes which left their signs on the realistic sense of humor that is founded in Mahfouz's fictional works.

The group of his friends was named by one of its members al-Harafish—a title used later on by Mahfouz to be of one of his most famous novel *Al-Harafish*. In this novel as well as in other novels like *Khan al- Khalili*, *al-Madaq Alley* and *Thulathya* Mahfouz sets his events within the atmosphere of *hara* which its depiction is based upon Jamaliya where he grew and was brought up. Mahfouz says" It seems to me that [a man-of-letters] must have a tie with a certain place or a certain object to form a point of departure for his emotions"(ibid2) Hara's world for Mahfouz is in fact a medium for rendering his vision of man in society. In other words, the *hara*, for Mahfouz, is the model of the Egyptian society and of humanity in general. Rasheed El-Enany in his book *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning* explains that during Mahfouz's childhood, the *hara* included all the classes of the Egyptian people, "from the very rich to the very poor and those blocks of flats where whole families lived in single rooms with common facilities stood in close proximity to majestic mansions surrounded by gardens" (2)

Like Dickens, Mahfouz reflects semi-autobiographical elements in his novels. Many of his novels' events are drawn from Mahfouz's life, his family, and his friends. Sayyid Ahmed character in *Bayn al-Qasrayn* is based on the personality of his brother. The story of *Bidaya Wa Nihaya* is based on an actual story of a family Mahfouz had known but, Moosa explains: "the story of this family had a happy outcome, but he preferred to end it with tragedy in order to arouse the sentiments of the reader" (6)

As it is said before, realistic presentation is the physical detailed description of places and characters, through which the writer creates by words visual pic-



tures that are seen and felt by the reader. *Hard Times*' events are set during the industrial revolution which transformed the English society from an agricultural one to an urban society. Under such transformational changes, mechanization and capitalism became the dominant forces of the Victorian scientific age, and the struggle between science and religion became one of the leading struggles during that time. The industrial system affected more than one side of the English society. It affected the system of education which was based upon fact as the only needful value in schoolroom, it affected personal relationships which dealt with love and marriage as tangible facts, and it affected the industrial workers who were dehumanized and who were treated as mere "Hands". The title of the novel may suggest the hard conditions England experienced during the Victorian age. Graham Law in his "Introduction" to *Hard Times* explains that the title is used: "particularly to describe the hardships of agricultural or industrial workers, and the associated conflicts with land and factory owners, during those periods when demand for labour slackened due to periodic downturns in the business cycle or to the introduction of new machinery" (7)

Hard Times' events are set in Coketown. It is a fictional industrial town created by Dickens who derived its image from many industrial cities he visited before writing the novel. Coketown is

a town of red bricks, or of bricks that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness (Dickens22-3)



For Dickens, the industrial revolution affected the town negatively in a sense that everything in the town lost its identity. Smoke and ashes of the factories change the color of the bricks from red to black. The color of the river is changed from blue to purple because of pollution. "The painted face of a savage" is Dickens' vision of the barbaric effect which the industrial revolution leaves on the town. The town is described as a "Triumph of fact" to indicate the fact that the town from A to Z is severely industrialized: "Fact, fact, fact. Everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial. The M'choackumchild school was all fact and the school of design was all fact, and the relationship between master and man were all fact, and everything was fact between the lying-in hospital and the cemetery" (23)

Within every corner of the town there are smells and sounds of industry. Everything is covered with black and grey dust. The circular motion of machines are everywhere in the town. This circularity is depicted through the novel's division into: "Sowing" "Reaping" and "Garnering", and through the way Dickens describes the town itself. He says that the town:

contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom everyday was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next. (23)

The repetition of words like "one another" and "same" emphasize the monotonous life style of this industrial town and its inhabitance that are completely colonized and dehumanized by industrialization. Lougy says that Dickens in this description mirrors the deadness of Coketown's citizens who are "engaged in the repetition of meaningless act within a world for which time no longer offers the possibility of growth and change" (22) Even time in Coketown goes on like its own machinery. Time in this industrial town "brought its varying



seasons even into that wilderness of smoke and brick, and made the only stand that ever was made in the place against its direful uniformity" (89)

The school of Mr. Gradgrind is one of Coketown's institutions through which Dickens criticizes the system of education during the Victorian age. The opening scene of the novel takes place in a classroom in where children are taught nothing but facts. They are saturated with information and any other wandering is suppressed. In the school, children are called by numbers rather than by their names. All the time they spend in school, is used solely to teach them subjects such as mathematics or science. When one of the students is asked to define a horse, he says: "Quadruped, Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth" (6) This scientific environment in itself suffocate the mind and isn't conducive to learning. Just as the workers are trapped in factories; the students are trapped in schools. Their identities are stripped, and they are trained as though they themselves are machines and their sole purpose is to compute and produce facts.

As a strong opposition to the factual industrialized world of Coketown and its institutions, the circus stands. It is a world of fancy and imagination. Its people have "an untiring readiness to help and pity one another" (31) They are good people whether or not they participate in the system of production. This is why they "deserve, often of as much respect, and always of as much generous construction, as the every-day virtues of any class of people in the world" (ibid). It is their compassion that Dickens consistently puts forward as their primary trait, and he makes use of it throughout the novel to move the plot forward. By using the circus as a sharp contrast to Coketown and its institutions, doesn't mean that Dickens wants to replace the world of fact by the world of fancy and it doesn't mean that Dickens suggest the life of the circus as a



model of a good life. It simply means that man's life can never be built upon facts alone or fancy alone, as man can never live by his mind only or by his heart only. To feel his humanity, he has to balance between the two. The circus suggests a solution to the prison of routine that dehumanizes man. It is a place of mental freedom through which man enjoys life to the full with all its spontaneity, unconditioned emotions, imagination, failing, shortcomings, and passion.

Moving on to Mahfouz's *Bayn al-Qasrayn*, Mahfouz reconstructs in great detail the everyday life of pre-independence Egypt through the story of one extended family. Like in Dickens' *Hard Times* setting and characters are not allowed to reveal themselves. The novel offers critical commentary on Egyptian society as a whole set against the backdrop of the 1919 revolution against the British occupation through its portrayal of the Abdel Gawad family unit, and from the very beginning of the novel the reader is given certain historical information through characters. For example, the reader is informed that Sultan Hussein Kamil died in 1917, and Prince Ahmed Fuad accepted the throne with the blessing of the British. Mahfouz through all these information demonstrates the social, political, and cultural trends in Egypt during the latter years of World War I.

The title of the novel refers clearly to one of the old Cairo's Alley's. A full description of the place is explored through narration:

The balcony overlooked the ancient building housing a cistern downstairs and a school upstairs which was situated in the middle of Palace Walk, or Bayn al-Qasrayn. Two roads met there: al-Nahhasin, or Coppersmiths Street, going south and Palace Walk, which went north. To her left the street appeared narrow and twisting. It was enveloped in a gloom that was thicker overhead where the windows of the sleeping houses looked down and less noticeable at street level, because of the light coming from the handcarts and from vapor lamps of the coffeehouses and shops that stayed open until dawn. To her right, the street was engulfed in darkness. There were no coffeehouses in that direction, only large



stores, which closed early. There was nothing to attract the eye except the minarets of the ancient seminaries of Qala'un and Barquq, which loomed up like ghostly giants enjoying a night out by the light of the gleaming stars. (2)

In addition to time and place, setting includes life style which the novel tackles in details that even include a description of meals and daily activities of the family. The breakfast for example includes "a large oval dish filled with fried beans and eggs,.. [and] hot loaves of flat bread...[and] small plates with cheese, pickled lemons and peppers, as well as salt and cayenne and black pepper" (20). One of the family's daily protocols is that the father and sons eat before the mother and daughters, and the sons aren't allowed to eat unless the father sits and with his authoritative voice utters the word "Eat". When this word is uttered: "Their hands reached for the bread in order of seniority: Yasin, Fahmy, and then Kamal. They set about eating without forgetting their manners or reserve"(20)

After men's departure, Amina, the mother, and her two daughters Khadija and Aisha sit alone round the table to have their breakfast. This daily breakfast was the most appropriate occasion for them to disclose and air secrets; especially about matters they would be embarrassed to discuss when the men of the family are present. Matti Moosa states: "Although women had to perform the daily chores, the home was their exclusive kingdom. Indeed, Amina regards the kitchen and the bakery as her personal domain, where no one, not even her domineering husband, can dare challenge her authority" (146) Saad N. Ahmed in "The Function of Space in Naguib Mahfouz Bayn al Qasrayn" says " since the rarely venture outside, the women more than men experience their home as a limiting and yet personal space, as if it were their own body" (43)

Moosa's use of the word "authority" may not suit Amina who used to obey her husband Sayyid Ahmed Abdel Gawad blindly and live under his shadow.



Their relationship is that of a master and a slave. All the time, he is reducing her to the level of an object in order to be the subject. He is the observer and she is the observed "without [any] reservation or condition"(4) She never tries to ask him about anything especially about his daily delay, because no matter what happens outside or even inside the house, she will remain "a loving, obedient, and docile wife. She [has] no regret at all about reconciling herself to a type of security based on surrender" (30) In the first year of their marriage she asked him about his coming home late. He answered her authoritatively, "I am a man and the only one who gives orders. I don't accept any remarks about my behavior. You should simply obey. Be careful not to force me to discipline you" (29). From then on she used to address him as "Si Sayyid" with great respect and reverence. In fact this obedience was a rule during that time. Moosa explains:

Egyptian society, like other Middle Eastern societies, was then exclusively a man's world. The ultimate objectives for a woman were to find a socially acceptable husband, raise a family, and become financially secure. The notion of a meaningful married life based on reciprocal love and sharing did not even cross her mind. A woman was merely the source of man's sexual pleasure. (147)

Within such a patriarchal system women were not allowed the same freedom men had. If a woman wanted, during that time, to step out of her husband, she had to follow the social constructions imposed on women. First: she must wear khimar, second: she must be joined by a man from her family and above all that, her stepping out must be permissioned. Amina's visits al-Hussein Shrine without her husband's permission, ends with her expels from the house. Moosa says: "Like many men of his generation, the Sayyid feels a sense of superiority and cannot bear to see his authority challenged by a woman" (151) His sense of superiority doesn't sound the same outside the house. He treats Zubayda, the artist and the prostitute, in a way that reflects the other side of his contradicted



personality. Tyrannical and dictatorial traits are replaced by tenderness, and curtsy and his dry facial features are replaced by a sincere smile. His religious devotion inside the house is replaced by seeking pleasure in drinking wine, and spending forbidden times with Zubayda who herself contradicted the image of his wife. She contradicts Amina in behavior and dress. One of the descriptions Mahfouz gives of Zubayda is: "Her red dress slipped back to reveal a strong fleshy leg which white brushed with pink where she had plucked the hair. The bottom of her leg was adorned with a gold anklet that could barely encompass it" (102). This description of Zubayda especially the way she is dressed contradicts the stereotypical model of women who is bashful, demure, chaste, and shy. By Portraying Amina and Zubayda, Mahfouz puts on the reader's table two different models of women that attract men's attention during that time.

The patriarchal authority of Si Sayyid isn't confined to his wife; it also affects the lives of his children. He constantly manages their lives in a sense that he appoints himself as the only leader and director of his children's lives regardless their ages, their dreams, their desires, and their demands. An example of this can be seen in his objection to Aisha's marriage to Hassan Ibrahim because "he may have seen her in person, violating a social taboo" (147) In addition, according to the social customs of that time, a younger daughter cannot marry before the older one. Fahmi's desire to marry Mariam, his neighbor, is also rejected by the father without giving any reason for this rejection.

Si Sayyid's divine authority is challenged at the end of the novel by Fahmi who is active in protesting against the British occupation of Egypt despite his father commanding him not to. Fahmi is swept up in the nationalist movement, protesting the British occupation because of his love for his country. He doesn't stand by and take his father's word as law like the rest of his family. He needs to speak out for his rights and for his country. In the traditional patriarchal family, this is something that is not often seen, especially for this time period. The



father's word is supposed to be seen as the law and Fahmi goes against this law, braving exile from his family to stand up for his country and nationalist beliefs. Even though Fahmi acts in spite of his father's words, he asks for his father's blessing: "I want your approval" "I can't live without your approval" (486) Fahmi's protest and death are the transformational events that took the family into a next phase. Fahmi can symbolically stand for all the Egyptian youths who stand against the tyranny of the British occupation, and his martyrdom can be seen as an act that paves the way for a new age filled with liberation and freedom. Through Mahfouz's description of an Egyptian family, he brings to bear how the revolution impacted Egyptian society, allowing for additional opportunities for women in the years that followed, such as increased access to education. Years after the revolution and including today, women were able to overcome the oppression imposed by a hypocritical patriarchy.

Yasin is the opposite of Fahmi. Though the two brothers are oppressed by their father's patriarchal system, Yasin has interests that differentiate him from Fahmi. He doesn't have political interests. Instead, he is interested in women. This sharp contrast has a symbolic indication. It indicates that Egypt's youths were divided into two types: those who are busy with Egypt's struggle against British occupation and those who are absent from the whole picture.

Within a patriarchal system, men act in a way that reflects their self-interest. This social system is embodied in *Hard Times* in the character of Mr. Gradgrind who imposes upon his children his utilitarian beliefs. For Mr. Gradgrind, children are no more than "vessels in which gallons and gallons of facts are poured" (3). He is a man who is "ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature" (4) His personal characteristics are confirmed by his outward appearance, which is described by Dickens as a "square wall of a forehead", "wide, thin, and hard set" mouth, and an "inflexible, dry, and dictatorial" voice. His house in Coketown is called "Stone Lodge" which represents his practical personality and the values of the philosophy of facts which he enshrined in it.



His deep believe in facts is the principle upon which he brings up his children who aren't allowed to examine their childish imagination:

No little Gradgrind had ever seen a face in the moon; it was up in the moon before it could speak distinctly. No little Gradgrind had ever learned the silly jingle, Twinkle, Twinkle; little star how I wonder what you are! No little Gradgrind had ever known wonder on the subject, each little Gradgrind having at five years old dissected the Great Bear like a Professor Own, and driven Charles's Wain like a locomotive engine driver. No little Gradgrind had ever associated a cow in a field with that famous cow with the crumpled horn who tossed the dog who worried the cat who killed the rat who ate the malt...(10-1)

Louisa and Tom, Mr. Gradgrind's children, aren't allowed to have their own way of thinking. They aren't even allowed to use certain vocabulary like the word "wonder" as wondering detach them from being stick to facts. They can't play or sing. They never read any amusing books. They never see any amusing sights. Their facial features reflect nothing of their childhood. On their faces one sees nothing but "dissatisfaction.., a light with nothing to rest upon [and] a fire with nothing to burn(50) Their faces don't reflect the natural brightness of cheerful childhood. Tom's only pleasure is Louisa whom he considers the only source of brightness in the house. His only wish is to: "collect all the Fact [they] hear so much about, and all the Figures and the people who found them out; and... put a thousand barrels of gunpowder under them and blow them all up together!" (52).

Louisa, as a daughter of a practical father, is not romantic and she is accustomed to view everything from the strong dispassionate ground of reason and calculation. From that ground she accepts Mr. Bounderby's proposal of marriage. She cannot know what does she want or how does she feel. She wavers between what was imposed upon her and what she really wants. Along her life she was trained to receive rather than to take or to act. Hence, every time she sits with herself in front of fireplace, she senses the same fire inside her con-



fused-self. Louisa's loveless marriage to Bounderby ends with a failure. This failure is a symbolic commentary on the devastating effects of the mechanized values on human relations. Gradgrind recognizes the failure of his philosophy through the failure of Louisa's marriage. He says: "Some persons hold that there is wisdom of the Head, and that there is wisdom of the Heart. I have not supposed so; as I have said, I mistrust myself now. I have supposed the Head to be all-sufficient. It may not be all sufficient..." (191) Louisa's failure leads him into rethinking and revising his selfish and irrational ways of the factual world. Law states that Gradgrind's tone which is changed from an authoritative one to a more passionate "articulate the private and the public dimensions of Dickens critique of a philosophical system that privileges fact over the imagination, quantitative value over the reality of experience, profit and production over the more intangible human qualities" (5) By referring to "Head and Heart" and "Coketown and the circus", Dickens puts two oppositional binaries on two sides of one balance. No each side weighs more than the other. This indicates that the reason and factual principles are not the only needful things in life. Love, passion, and imagination are other needful things that man can never live without.

Tom stands as a sharp contrast to Louisa though both of the two lived within the same factual atmosphere. He is described in the novel as "whelp"; a title that symbolically stands for his inability to govern himself. He is selfish and irresponsible. These two traits are revealed through the conversation he has with Harthouse about his sister Louisa. His cruelty and wickedness are revealed when he steals the bank and directs accusations against Blackpool. The contrast between Tom and Louisa stands for the contrast between those who are dehumanized by industrialization and those who don't lose their identities and humanities because of industrialization. This contrast embodies exactly human nature. Whenever and wherever there is good there is evil and whenever there is death, there is life.



Conclusion

Charles Dickens and Naguib Mahfouz are two realist novelists who dedicated their fictional works for portraying their societies as they witnessed them. Their works in so many times have semi-autobiographical elements. They relied on their personal experiences and observation to draw a persuasive picture of humanity. Many of their novels, if not all, have tragic mood to reflect man's struggle against many forces he confronts in his life. Middle class and the lower class take a large portion of characterization in their fictional works. Hence, they present characters which are typically Victorian and Typically Egyptian. They diagnose their societies' social diseases and employ their fictional works as commentators on them.

Hard Times and *Bayan al-Qasrayn* are two realistic novels that provide the reader an authentic insight into two different societies that witnessed two different revolutions. They are realistic in presentations and contents. In other words, through economic and political climates, Dickens and Mahfouz are introducing the reader to their societies through detailed descriptions of setting and characters, which are weaved together within believable events. The reader doesn't have the chance to discover anything by himself as both of Dickens and Mahfouz are in every corner of *Hard Times* and *Bayan al-Qasrayn*.

Both of *Hard Time* and *Bayan al-Qasrayn* tackle the concept of patriarchy through the characters of Mr. Gradgrind and Sayyid Ahmed. These two characters have dictatorial and authoritative personalities. They impose upon their families their beliefs which are not allowed to be discussed or refused. The main female characters of these two novels are directly affected by and imprisoned within this social system to the extent they don't know how to act, to choose, or even to show objection.



Exploring different characters in such a contrasted way has a similar indication in these two fictional works. For example, Fahmi contradicts Yasin in *Bayan al- Qasrayn* and Tom contradicts Louisa in *Hard Times*. This contrasted characters stand for the contrasted sides of humanity that can be in any society at any time. Moreover, Yasin's character parallel Tom's character, in a sense the two are presented as unaware of what they are surrounded by and the two are illusioned by their self-interests, and self-centered life.

In order to address a large number of readers, Dickens and Mahfouz use the language of every day speech to give the reader the chance to examine more than one sense while he is reading. The reader has to see, hear, touch, and smell every picture drawn by the writers. He has to believe what is written and this believe is the notion and the aim of any realist writer.

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