



Victorian Novels and Educational Reform: A Study of Dickens, Hughes, and Peacock

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Victorian Novels and Educational Reform: A Study of Dickens, Hughes, and Peacock

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes how Victorian novelists Charles Dickens, Thomas Hughes, and Thomas Love Peacock depict the influences of educational reformers in their three works: *Hard Times*, *Tom Brown's School Days*, and *Gryll Grange* respectively. Written in an era of rapid sociological and economic change due to the emergence of the middle class and effects of industrialization, these texts illustrate rising conflicts between a new scientific age and a legacy of traditional classical study. As a result of such transformational forces, these three novelists witnessed a shifting regard for the value of the humanities as scientific study became seen as the more “useful” form of learning. This new conceptualization of “useful knowledge” and its repercussions can be seen in the characters and plot trajectories of the three novels examined in this study.

Considering the term “useful knowledge” as it relates to purpose and content of characters’ educations, the present paper examines the impacts of educational reformers Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Arnold, and Henry Brougham as they appear in the novels’ public and private schools, as well as social and domestic spheres. As each work features extensive expository information on characters’ educational backgrounds, one can infer that the relationship between education, plot trajectory, and characterization is one that is deeply interconnected. A contextualized reading of the novels as products of the Victorian educational reform movement offers insight into the effects of an unbalanced education on characters’ intellectual, emotional, and moral development. Exploring the conflicts between science and the humanities, “useful knowledge” and classical learning, and the standardization of education by Competitive Examination, this project investigates how the novels offer commentary on the relationship between such tensions

and characters' morality, social relationships, and imagination within educational systems. Evaluating the novelists' varying depictions of reformers in their novels, we can see how such shifts in curricula could have significant consequences--either harmful or beneficial--for both the individual and society.

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Chapter I

Introduction

In his book titled *Useful Knowledge*, Alan Rauch discusses the emergence of a “knowledge culture” as it came about in the pre-Victorian era--a time that can be characterized by a reevaluation of ideas and skills deemed worthy of examination and instruction in schools. This reconsideration, he writes, led to a hierarchical regard for topics of study, and, it could even be argued, a commodification of knowledge itself. As this cultural shift “was proceeding at full speed...it was becoming clear that, to be successful in this new age, one had to keep pace or risk falling behind...A few facts, or even the semblance of facts, were beginning to go a long way in a culture devoted to knowledge, establishing a rudimentary level of authority, credibility, and status” (Rauch 2). Rauch writes of an influx in production of what he calls “*knowledge texts*” which, besides novels and tracts that already held a readership, expanded to “encyclopedias, instruction manuals, and didactic works for children” (Rauch 2).

While “knowledge” became seen as an article of commerce, desirable for the sake of improving one’s social standing, specific topics of study, “especially scientific knowledge, was held in high esteem in the post-Enlightenment period, and, although not always ‘pure,’ it was generally viewed as a worthy, perhaps even virtuous, objective” (Rauch 2).

Such favoritism is the subject of Charles Dickens’ novel *Hard Times*, a work written in response to publications such as Jeremy Bentham’s *Chrestomathia* which

proposed the teaching of scientific pursuits to the exclusion of literature, poetry, drama and philosophy. This era saw “a changing status of knowledge” where “a content-based set of ‘facts’” were considered “useful in the construction and development of disciplines” studied within organizations such as the Mechanics’ Institutes, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and public and private schools (Rauch 3).

With this changing emphasis on factual knowledge and its equation with social standing, we ultimately see an absence of what Thomas Love Peacock, in his “Prospectus on Classical Education” describes as “The principal object of education”: “to communicate to the youthful mind that love of mental and moral improvement, which will continue to act with a steady and permanent impression when no longer directed by the hand of the preceptor” (Prospectus). Published in 1813 at the start of a movement toward scientific and technological partiality, Peacock’s Prospectus argues for the value of studying the humanities as a method for self-improvement.

Here we see a fundamental digression in what was believed to be the value of knowledge. While pre-Victorians began to see knowledge as a pathway to “authority, credibility, and status,” Peacock saw knowledge as a gateway to moral development and a deeper understanding of the self (Rauch 2). Claiming that “this disposition is most effectively promoted by an intimate acquaintance with the poets, philosophers, and historians of antiquity,” he writes in great dismay at the “total neglect of classical studies among young men of the present age,” asserting the disappointing conclusion that “in the language of the time” such students “have finished their education;” a phenomenon that he describes as “some inherent and radical defect” resulting from the changing societal connection between education and social status (Prospectus).

Peacock's assertion reveals his lament concerning general attitudes about education in his day. Students' love of learning is sorely lacking, substituted instead for a view of education as a finite entity, an obstacle to be overcome in one's prescribed climbing of the social ladder. Peacock yearns for "the youthful mind" to "take pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge, and to pursue it for its own sake." He adds: "when this object has not been accomplished, the end of education has not been answered" (Prospectus). Analyzing his claim, we see a rather radical view of the purpose of education and the value of knowledge. According to Peacock's view, if a student has not acquired a love of learning--and lifelong learning, for that matter--then his education must continue; his "knowledge" is *useless*. His ideal is "The pupil who is made to feel the value of knowledge, and to pursue it for its intrinsic advantages and pleasures," who "is alone likely to become an accomplished and useful member of society" (Prospectus). He writes: "The mind must be excited and awakened before it can be cultivated to advantage" (Prospectus). He denotes "The principal object of study" to "be the Greek, Latin, Italian and French languages; [and] an intimate knowledge of the language and literature of England" as integral aspects of one's study of "mental and moral philosophy" (Prospectus).

Peacock's essay on the value of a classical education is a direct response to the changing regard for "useful knowledge" that occurred during the pre-Victorian and Victorian eras. He claims that students should not only receive a classical education, but also receive it in such a way that they develop an appreciation for their own development; a sentiment that is echoed in the character of Dr. Arnold in Thomas Hughes's famous novel *Tom Brown's School Days*. In addition to the question "What are students

learning?” Peacock also asks “Why are students learning what they are learning?” He inquires about both content and purpose in education.

Peacock’s essay grapples with the resistance to his beloved classical education that would continue in Bentham’s *Chrestomathia*, a book that equated the term “useful” with not only the sciences, but also vocational training and factual memorization. Henry Brougham, a subject of much satire in Peacock’s novels, was also a proponent of this notion of “useful knowledge” and was a well-known patron of the London Mechanics’ Institute, an organization that aimed to cater to the working class population from 1820 to 1860. This mission to define and spread “useful knowledge” continued with the founding of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in 1826, an organization that remained active to 1848. Under the guidance of Bentham and Brougham, the view that “The highest of all gratifications of learning science is [one’s] recognition of God’s design-plan” became a pervasive theory.

In 1836 Thomas Wyse further added to the changing attitudes about classical education when he cited “the inadequacy of classicism to meet the needs of the time,” warning others against an education that featured ““little else”” aside from ““the learned languages”” (Saffin 179). Such an emphasis on “usefulness” and vocational training would last well into the late nineteenth century with Herbert Spencer’s publication of “What Knowledge is of Most Worth?” in 1884. As Saffin writes:

His examination of the activities of man convinces him that ‘scientific culture is the proper preparation’. He therefore spurns the language-learning curriculum of the schools. Science could exercise the memory far more than the classics, it could, too, cultivate the judgment. The acceptance of authority, the submission to dogmatic teaching that typifies classical instruction is replaced, by science teaching, with a healthier moral and mental tone (Saffin 199, 200).

Thus, pre-Victorian and Victorian era educational reform can be characterized by changing opinions on curriculum focus as a result of new debates reevaluating the concept of useful skills for the middle class. Questions of what exactly constitutes “useful knowledge” became popular in the pre-Victorian and Victorian eras as a result of industrialization’s effects on economics and social structure. With manufacturing came the need for a reevaluation of necessary skills and a revision of educational institutions as well.

In his book *The Development and Structure of the English School System*, Keith Evans writes about the multiple dissenting opinions that aimed to change the structure of middle-class education by defining “useful knowledge:”

The utilitarians, hostile to the maintenance of outmoded practices and traditional institutions which no longer served the needs of contemporary society, condemned their useless curriculum. Supporters of the ‘scientific movement’ were particularly disgruntled at their almost total neglect of the natural sciences. The Evangelicals deplored the low moral tone and lack of Christian ethos displayed by some of them. The rising middle classes with their business interests and background demanded value for money in terms of educational relevance and efficiency (Evans 60)

While such groups called for a new curriculum, a model that outlined ways to implement such a transformation was in its beginning stages: “By the early nineteenth century there were thousands of non-classical institutions of every size, kind and quality aspiring to provide secondary-type education for the emerging middle classes” (Evans 58).

With changes in necessary skills and new curricula came reform of public and private schools, as well as the pedagogical practices of headmasters who oversaw them. Private schools began “offering an encyclopaedic range of subjects to the older student” to provide “a more practical education for the sons of merchants, manufacturers and superior tradesman” (Evans 58). While some “private schools...supported the few

educational experiments of the time...with [their] wide curricula, main and optional subjects, progressive teaching methods based on the spirit of emulation and pupil self-government in matters of discipline and control,” Evans writes, “The common elements which distinguished the majority of private schools from their endowed grammar counterparts were the close supervision of pupils and the teaching of non-classical subjects” (Evans 58). Several schools were “strongly subject to profit motives rather than educational considerations in their development” (Evans 58).

While a school’s new aim was to provide its students with “useful knowledge” and attend to “profit motives” simultaneously, “there was no clear conception of how to develop non-classical secondary education” (Evans 58). Evans asserts “It was all very well to condemn classical studies and exalt useful and practical subjects, but it was a much more difficult matter to develop the teaching of the latter in a way that was educationally beneficial” (Evans 58). While school reformers embraced a new conceptualization of content, the exact model one should use in the new era was unclear.

As Evans elucidates in his book, change in private school education came about largely due to the work of headmasters looking toward reform. One of the most well-known reforming headmasters was Thomas Arnold of Rugby School, whose systemic changes would go on to influence headmasters at several other institutions including Eton, Shrewsbury, Harrow and Marlborough (Evans 60). Within this shift was “A less arid approach to the teaching of the classics and some widening of the curriculum” (Evans 61). Not limited to academic study, Arnold’s work led to “marked improvement in the moral tone of the private schools” as “the reforming headmasters effectively used

the school chapel and the prefect system as a means of diffusing Christian values and responsible attitudes amongst the pupils” (Evans 61).

As a result, Arnold was able “to transform Rugby into the ideal to be followed by countless numbers of future private school headmasters and teachers” (Evans 61). Using “Christian faith and a liberal culture as the foundation stones of a satisfactory education,” Arnold additionally employed “the school chapel services and his own sermons, the study of the classics and the humanities” in order “to produce Christian gentlemen” (Evans 61). His relationship with his students consisted of “a strong sense of mutual trust and respect between himself and the senior pupils to support the operation of a proselytising prefect system” (Evans 61). Moreover, Arnold integrated “history, choir singing, and organised games” in addition to “the study of classics...as a vehicle for the teaching of ancient history, literature, philosophy, politics and geography as well as the Latin and Greek languages” (Evans 61). Due to the effectiveness of his model, he was able “to restore public confidence in the traditional secondary institutions and his broad Christianity encouraged a growing number of wealthy Non-conformists to support them” (Evans 61).

Such moments in educational reform made their way into the novels of the Victorian era. In his novel, *Hard Times*, for example, Charles Dickens depicts three children whose upbringing is the direct result of Benthamite educational philosophy. Thomas Hughes displays the significance of Arnoldian reform on the first page of his novel, signing *Tom Brown’s School Days* as written by “An Old Boy,” an alumnus of Rugby School and dedicating the novel to “Mrs. Arnold...By the Author, who owes more than he can ever acknowledge or forget to her and hers.” Hughes’s devotion to Thomas Arnold pervades the plot, at times presenting the work more like an elegy than a fictional

narrative. His illustration of Arnold's curriculum, likewise, shows an individual reformer's efforts to continue classical learning in an age when others had begun to actively question its relevance. In Peacock's novels we see a struggle to keep classical literature not only in one's personal education but also as the focus of one's social circle as well. A dinner conversation would not be complete without a reference to the "learned friend," or Henry Brougham, along with a heated debate about the effects of industrialization on educational reform.

Examining *Hard Times*, *Tom Brown's School Days*, and *Gryll Grange*, we see varying perspectives not only on public and private education and educational reform, but also on specific themes such as the role of rote factual memorization in one's education, the use of imagination, and the creation of community in creating a new ideal of the middle class. These novels discuss the varied opinions on a classical education, in addition to Benthamite philosophy, Arnoldian pedagogy, and the emergence of the Competitive Examination, offering insight into one of the most influential institutions in Victorian society. A study examining these three works within the context of Victorian education is yet to be found, and, as such, an analysis of such novels from a contextualist approach lends itself to a more nuanced understanding of a time of rapid economic and sociological change.

Published in 1854, Dickens' *Hard Times* features a school and a family struggling to adhere to the tenets of a Utilitarian educational philosophy. In an effort to raise his children with the ideal education, Thomas Gradgrind attempts to banish the word "fancy" from Louisa and Tom's vocabulary and insists that they think and learn only facts from the "ologies" to which they are restricted. Prohibited from reading poetry, playing, using

their imaginations, and expressing emotion, the children grow up within a system that oppresses nearly every aspect of their humanity. Instead of creating stories of play and wonder, Louisa and Tom dream of one day seeking revenge on the adults and systems that have oppressed them.

Sissy Jupe, a child raised by horse-riders and a foil to the Gradgrind children, enters the Gradgrind family after her father abandons her. As a member of the circus community, Sissy's early life consists of love, belonging, and storytelling. As a result, she struggles to assimilate to Gradgrind's ideal. Sissy's failure at rote memorization is a testament to her depth of character, and her inability to adopt the Gradgrindian philosophy protects her from the downfalls that plague the Gradgrind family.

Manipulated by Gradgrind's associate, Josiah Bounderby, Louisa grows up to enter a loveless marriage while Tom acquires a gambling addiction that leads him into a life of immorality. After Louisa experiences a breakdown and begs her father to help her end her marriage with Bounderby, Gradgrind comes to a devastating realization about the effects of an education solely based on factual memorization, placing *Hard Times* within the genre of a cautionary tale characteristic of a typical Dickensian fable.

As can be said of much of Dickens' work, *Hard Times* scrutinizes a system that affects the common man. The novel reads as a warning to educational reformers of the dangers of limiting one's education to the "ologies," or scientific knowledge that had gained considerable recognition at the time. Similar to Peacock, Dickens reminds readers of the importance of a balanced education: one that leaves room for poetry and imagination, and ultimately preserves one's humanity.

While *Hard Times* depicts the consequences of the wrong moral education, *Tom Brown's School Days* displays the advantages of a more supportive moral education from an Arnoldian pedagogical perspective. A proponent of Dr. Thomas Arnold's focus on Christian morality as developed through close male friendships, Thomas Hughes chronicles the coming of age of Tom Brown, a young, mischievous boy who becomes a refined gentleman as a result of his education at Rugby School. Upon his initial arrival, Tom befriends a boy named Harry East, an audacious and athletic student who becomes Tom's comrade in his numerous adventures in and around Rugby. In part two of the novel, Dr. Arnold assigns Tom a timid, pious boy named Arthur to his care with the intent of fostering maturity in his character. At first taken aback by the young boy's delicacy and studious manner, Tom's regard for the boy changes dramatically when he almost loses him to a dangerous fever.

Observing Arthur's dedication to the Bible and his academic studies, Tom develops in his own sense of morality and becomes a learned, empathetic gentleman, his maturity culminating in a school-wide cricket match at the novel's end. In the last chapter, Tom has become the well-rounded, introspective gentleman that Dr. Arnold had worked to create in his earlier years. Upon learning of Dr. Arnold's death, Tom visits the headmaster's tomb and meditates on the prominent role he had in his life. In his grief, Tom reflects on the school-wide "brotherhood" that Dr. Arnold created and marvels in the schoolmaster's seemingly ingenious methods in his teachings on Christianity through social relationships.

Comparing *Tom Brown's School Days* with *Hard Times*, we see a profoundly different perspective on Victorian education. As opposed to Gradgrind's philosophy and

strict monitoring of his children's activity, Dr. Arnold trusts the bond between boys to function as his main method of teaching. Through athletic activity, adventures through the woods, and intellectual discussions in the students' living quarters, the boys of Rugby become gentlemen by navigating the world without direct adult influence. Whereas Dickens responds to Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarian philosophy, Hughes responds to Thomas Arnold's, at times seemingly interrupting the story to sing the headmaster's praises. *Hard Times* features characters who are forbidden to use their imaginations throughout their education, while *Tom Brown's School Days* features characters who must use their imaginations to empathize with others, at times using their creativity to solve conflicts within the school culture.

A third example of Victorian perspectives on educational reform, Peacock's *Gryll Grange* likewise addresses the role of imagination in a time of immense historical change. The last novel in his literary career, *Gryll Grange* features a love story between two characters: Algernon Falconer, a worshipper of St. Catherine and classical aestheticism, and Morgana Gryll, an orphan and heir to her uncle Gregory Gryll's fortune. In his devotion to the patron saint of the arts, Falconer preserves his ideal world at the cost of developing actual intimate relationships with others. Although seven sisters live on his grounds, Falconer's marriage prospects are lacking until he meets Morgana, a young woman who has turned down numerous suitors as her uncle hopes for an heir. Upon realizing his love for Morgana, he discovers he must choose between his imagined ideal and imperfect reality. In Peacock's novel, imagination becomes an obstacle rather than a gateway to fulfilling one's intellectual and moral development. Yet like *Hard Times* and *Tom Brown's School Days*, *Gryll Grange* shares a similar message on the

significance of social relationships. Falconer reaches authentic fulfillment only upon solidifying his marriage to Morgana.

In addition to presenting both male/male and male/female connection as a way to achieve actualization, *Gryll Grange* also examines a new development in Victorian education: the Competitive Examination. The novel culminates in an Aristophanic play that features a cast of characters from classical literature who are “all subjected to competitive examination and [are] severally pronounced disqualified for the pursuit in which they had shone” (Peacock 218). Peacock’s portrayal of his beloved characters and their inability to “measure up” to the reforms occurring in Victorian education communicates a clear message in terms of his opinion on changes of the time. As the characters fail to meet the approval of the “examiners,” one wonders if Peacock was predicting a future in which classical education would fall by the wayside. Much like *Hard Times*, one can also consider *Gryll Grange* to be a cautionary tale about receiving an imbalanced education.

In conducting this study, I will analyze the characters’ development using a contextualist approach, viewing each character within the plot as directly influenced by educational reform practices in Victorian England. Although each novel is a work of fiction, the effects of such historical changes occurring at this time appear in the fictional characters’ psychological, emotional and moral development. As each character is a product of his or her education, the relationship between education, plot trajectory, and characterization is one that is deeply intertwined. Thus I will utilize both primary and secondary sources to illustrate how Dickens, Hughes, and Peacock used such novels to express their own opinions on Victorian educational reform. In chapter two, I will present

Hard Times as a commentary on the implementation of Benthamite philosophy in public schools. In chapter three, I will illustrate Hughes's depiction of Arnoldian methods in private schools. Lastly, in chapter four, I will investigate *Gryll Grange* as a work that satirizes the Competitive Examination. As the three novels incorporate commentary on imagination and the significance of social relationships, I will analyze such themes within each of the works as well.

Pertaining to research limitations, the major limitation of this thesis lies in the scope and time allotted for this study. While I would have liked to include other novels in this investigation, such as Peacock's earlier novel titled *Melincourt*, due to time constraints and the scope of this thesis, I have elected to examine the three works that I believe best exemplify views on public and private education. Furthermore, due to such restrictions, I am limited in my ability to include other perspectives on Victorian education, such as commentary on female schooling, as well as the education of the poor.

Chapter II

Public Educational Reform in Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*

Similar to Peacock's Prospectus on classical education, Dickens' *Hard Times* addresses the fear of a dwindling regard for the humanities. The novel depicts an education system in which authorities attempt to eradicate the act of storytelling in the name of "useful knowledge," presenting instead a curriculum limited to the memorization of facts. As educational authorities work to expunge tenets such as imagination, wonder, and curiosity from the public schools of Coketown, each character suffers as a result. Much like Peacock, Dickens asks us to consider what constitutes "useful knowledge," and more importantly, the purpose that underlies such a determination. Dickens' work suggests the idea that "useful knowledge" should emanate from a deep understanding of human nature and an appreciation for the intangible, the results of which contribute to the creation of an empathic and moral society.

The plot centers on what Dickens views as a Utilitarian educational philosophy, exemplified by the actions of Thomas Gradgrind. Gradgrind's two children, Tom and Louisa, are the recipients of this model, and illustrate what happens when educational theorists rigidly believe in a limited concept of "useful knowledge." Our introduction to the Gradgrind children's education begins in the first paragraph of the novel in which Dickens presents a Utilitarian mantra:

Now what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts; nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children, Stick to the Facts, sir!" (Dickens 1)

Within the first pages of the novel, we learn the definition of “useful knowledge” that so often appeared in educational reform theories of the Victorian era: that which is most “useful” is also that which can be measured. Here begins the conflict of Dickens’ novel. School children will not only have Facts “plant[ed]” in them; they will also have “everything else” “root[ed] out.” “Everything else” signifies that which comprises a developmentally natural childhood, including imagination, wonder, curiosity, playfulness, and creativity. The children of Coketown, however, are never to question, only to memorize. Dickens’ use of the word “root[ed] out” suggests the act of something natural being removed from its origins. With careful attention to language, he implies the wholly unnatural qualities that quantify this theory, suggesting a sense of disruption to one’s natural development. Thus the Gradgrind children grow up in a deeply unnatural state in which their humanity--their “natural” curiosity and imagination, or in other words, any inclination that would draw their attention from rote memorization--is forbidden.

Dickens continues on to depict the strangely inhumane setting as “a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom” led by a schoolmaster, or as he is referred to, “the speaker” whose “voice...[is] inflexible, dry, and dictatorial”(Dickens 2). Illustrating “the speaker’s” appearance he writes: “the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside...his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was--all helped the emphasis” (Dickens 1). The schoolmaster himself is almost strangled by the very education he is implementing, figuratively suffocated by the oppressive “emphasis” on “stubborn fact[s]” (Dickens 1). In essence, the foundation of the Utilitarian education--the fact, the cellular

building block--is itself “stubborn.”

Dickens’ use of the words “inflexible,” “dictatorial” and “stubborn” create a clear picture of the kind of upbringing the children of Coketown face. It is unrelenting, unforgiving, and thinks nothing of sacrificing one’s life to serve the purpose of its “dictatorship.” Indeed, Dickens’ choice of a character name for the schoolmaster-- “M’Choakumchild” leaves little to the imagination in terms of interpretation. The system restricts both the schoolmaster and its students in its rigid dependence on the measurable, as though squeezing the air from both the teacher and students’ lungs--ridding one of the very life force that enables survival.

By highlighting the oppressive education, Dickens, by default, highlights what is absent from the children’s education, insinuating that such missing material is the very essence of Victorian students’ mental and moral development. As he writes in a speech titled “Schools I Do Not Like,” delivered on November 5, 1875, the element missing from schools is “the bright childish imagination” (Dickens 310). He writes:

I don’t like that sort of school--and I have seen a great many such in these latter times--where the bright childish imagination is utterly discouraged, and where those bright childish faces, which it is so very good for the wisest among us to remember in after life, when the world is too much with us early and late, are gloomily and grimly scared out of countenance; where I have never seen among the pupils, whether boys or girls, anything but little parrots and small calculating machines” (Dickens 310-311).

Dickens’ speech shows the pitfalls of Victorian educational reform: what is “root[ed] out” is the “childish imagination” (Dickens 310). Children have ceased to be taught as “boys or girls” and instead have come to be regarded as “little parrots and small calculating machines” (Dickens 311). Such a depiction appears in the novel when Dickens refers to the students as “little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim” (Dickens

1).

In Dickens' understanding of Benthamite Utilitarian philosophy, children are passive recipients of a predetermined course of study. The individual is treated as a silent blank slate--a *tabula rasa*--waiting to be impressed upon. Information exists as a surplus that is easily transferred to the mental capacity of students, and knowledge is a material that is little more than "poured" into the mind (Dickens 1). Dickens' use of the words "vessel" and "poured" relate back to the "vault of a schoolroom" in which one receives a fact-based education. Analyzing the word "vault" as a place of storage, we see the student as an object, and the schoolroom as a place where the "vessels" are stored. While the Utilitarian education regards the student as a *tabula rasa*, the lessons are not easily ingested as we see in the interaction between the words "pour," "vessels" and the imagery of one choking on information.

In chapter two Dickens introduces the reader to the man who perpetuates this philosophy, Thomas Gradgrind: "A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations...With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket... ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic" (Dickens 2). Gradgrind adamantly believes that any aspect of "human nature" can be weighed, measured, and calculated. There is hardly any room for questions, as the only questions are those "of figures" that one can answer through deductive reasoning (Dickens 2). Dickens' use of the name "Gradgrind" evokes imagery of machinery that is unrelenting, ongoing, and "grinding" away the children's imaginative qualities. Dickens writes, "He seemed a galvanizing apparatus, too, charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the

tender young imaginations that were to be stormed away” (Dickens 2). The stark contrast in word choice between the “tender young imaginations” and the “grim mechanical substitute” of the fact-based education indicate a devouring of the children’s innate capabilities.

Gradgrind’s implementation of his philosophy most aptly appears when he asks Sissy Jupe, the daughter of a horse-rider, to provide him with a “definition of a horse” (Dickens 3). As she recounts her wealth of experience based on observations of her father’s vocation, she is quickly interrupted by Gradgrind who remarks ““Girl number twenty possessed of no facts in reference to one of the commonest of animals!” (Dickens 3) Searching for a model student, he calls on a young boy named Bitzer who successfully regurgitates a scientific definition: “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” (Dickens 3).

While Bitzer successfully fulfills Gradgrind’s expectations, the other children in the room become visibly confused as “a third gentleman,” continues in his unforgiving attempt to extract facts from the children. Upon being asked the hypothetical question ““Would you paper a room with representations of horses?”” the children respond as though on auto-pilot with an answer that audibly divides the room: “After a pause, one half of the children cried in chorus, ‘Yes, sir!’ Upon which the other half, seeing in the gentleman’s face that Yes was wrong, cried out in chorus, ‘No, sir!’—as the custom is, in these examinations” (Dickens 4). Within the first few pages of the novel, a fatal flaw within the education system appears. The children, frightened and ashamed, refer to the

“gentleman’s face” to gauge the correct answer rather than the lesson they have learned. Confusion ensues when the question--essentially based on an imaginative, conditional situation--inappropriately merits a factual response. Here we see a faulty circuit in the machinery of the “little vessels.” From the beginning chapters, the fact-based education proves to be ineffective as the children--despite Gradgrind’s insistence--continue to think in terms of their imaginations.

Gradgrind and the gentleman use this example of failure as an opportunity to quash the children’s inclinations, exclaiming, “...you musn’t fancy...you are never to fancy” (Dickens 5). Gradgrind and the gentleman go on to remind the children of their oppressive mantra: “Fact, fact, fact!...You are to be in all things regulated and governed...by fact” (Dickens 5). With the intent of solidifying their system, “the gentleman” explains their plan to create “a board of fact, composed of commissioners of fact who will force the people to be a people of fact, and of nothing but fact” (Dickens 5). Note Dickens’ use of the word “force” in their efforts to create a new collective, or “a people of fact” (Dickens 5). In a final attempt to eradicate the term, the gentleman outlines the full extent of banishing, or “root[ing] out” the word from the children’s vocabulary:

You must discard the word Fancy altogether. You have nothing to do with it. You are not to have, in any object of use or ornament, what would be a contradiction in fact...You must use...combinations and modifications...of mathematical figures which are susceptible of proof and demonstration. This is the new discovery. This is Fact. This is taste” (Dickens 6).

The “new discovery” of an unbalanced education that primarily focuses on “mathematical figures” is reminiscent of Bentham’s curriculum outlined in *Chrestomathia*, yet it also echoes similar tenets featured in one of the most popular textbooks of the day, *A Series of Lessons in Prose and Verse*.

First published in 1831, J. M. M'Culloch's book went on to be reprinted as fifty new editions. In its thirty-seventh edition, M'Culloch revised his preface to include an explanation of his success, citing "that the readings he had selected were designed to 'enrich the mind with the knowledge of useful and interesting facts'" (Ford and Monod 306). While providing examples of "useful knowledge," the preface also denotes what he believes is precisely outside the realm of knowledge. He describes "unsuitable exercises as enacting dramatic scenes, reciting parliamentary speeches, and reading the latest sentimental poetry" as detrimental to a student's education (M'Culloch 307). He includes the names of "Shakespeare, Chesterfield, and Hume" as examples of authors who are featured in "school-books" that contribute to "bad morality and false religion, disseminated among the youth of this country;" a notion that he finds "deplorable" (M'Culloch 307).

Contrasting such a curriculum with his own, he writes that the selections in his textbook have been compiled "to stimulate juvenile curiosity, and store the mind with useful knowledge" (M'Culloch 307). His use of the phrase "store the mind with useful knowledge" echoes the Dickensian image of the students as "little vessels," describing the act of transmitting knowledge in a similar fashion as "hav[ing] imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim" (Dickens 1). Included in the textbook are "Simple extracts, relating to Natural History, Elementary Science, [and] Religion" which "have taken the place of Dramatic Scenes, Sentimental Poetry, and Parliamentary Orations" (M'Culloch 307). His efforts to "take the place" of such materials appears in Dickens' schoolroom in which students are expected to "discard the word Fancy altogether." Gradgrind reiterates M'Culloch's specific disapproval of poetry

when he compares the children's transgression of "peeping at the circus" with reading the genre. He declares "I should as soon have expected to find my children reading poetry" (Dickens 13).

While it appears as though Dickens is responding to both M'Culloch and Bentham--the similarity between the names M'Culloch and M'Choakumchild being unavoidable--critics argue that Dickens' depiction of Victorian education was more reflective of a "crude half-knowledge of Benthamite ideas" than the reality of the English public school (Collins 313). E.P. Whipple, in his article published in *Atlantic Monthly*, argues that "Dickens did not understand Utilitarianism, and that the 'Grandgrind philosophy' misrepresents the philosophical position of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), the founder of the Utilitarian school" (qtd. in Ford and Monod 315). As Ford and Monod explain, "[Bentham] and his followers were responsible for many of the most important reforms in the nineteenth century, fearlessly investigating traditional procedures in law and government, and, on the basis of statistical evidence, pushing through drastic changes" (Ford and Monod 315). Yet "In *Hard Times*...Dickens is little concerned with the Utilitarians as reformers" (Ford and Monod 315): "Instead he concentrates on the basic Utilitarian views of human nature and man's economic drives, views often shared by many Victorians who otherwise considered themselves opposed to Utilitarianism" (Ford and Monod 315). Considering Ford and Monod's claim, it would perhaps be a slight fallacy, then, to view Dickens' novel as a direct commentary on Utilitarianism in its entirety. Perhaps it would be more appropriate instead to examine the work as a focus "on the basic Utilitarian views of human nature," namely, imagination, curiosity, empathy, and moral education.

Dickens' use of horse-riding may be a direct reference to M'Culloch as well, as on the title page of *A Series of Lessons*, M'Culloch "is described...as having been 'formerly Head-Master of Circus-Place School, Edinburgh'" (Ford and Monod 306). Due to the similarity between the name M'Choakumchild and the role of Mr. Sleary, in addition to the role of the circus in the novel, theorists believe that M'Culloch served as material for Dickens' characters and plot. Tom and Louisa's attraction to the horse-riders is hardly surprising given their monotonous daily ritualistic life, yet when Gradgrind finds them peering through a hole in the wall to watch the circus performance, he questions the success of his instructional plan and quickly resorts to expelling Sissy from the school, blaming her for dangerous influences on his children's minds.

Throughout the novel, the image of horses and horse-riding comes to represent all that is lacking in the Gradgrind children's upbringing: imagination, play, excitement, entertainment, and in terms of familial culture, love, belonging, support, comfort, and care, setting Sissy as a foil to the Gradgrind children. Dickens formulates such a contrast in his account of the circus people: "They cared so little for plain Fact, these people, and were in that advanced state of degeneracy on the subject, that instead of being impressed by the speaker's strong common sense, they took it in extraordinary dudgeon..." (Dickens 29). Sissy's origins make her the strongest representation of "fancy"--and the strongest opponent to Gradgrind's philosophy--in the novel. Upon admitting her into his family, he declares his plans for her reformation, saying "' I shall have the satisfaction of causing you to be strictly educated; and you will be a living proof to all who come into communication with you, of the advantages of the training you will receive. You will be reclaimed and formed..." (Dickens 37). Yet his determination to "reclaim" and

“[re]form” her is interrupted when Sissy begins to describe her literary education thus far. She reports that she has read “‘About the Fairies, Sire, and the Dwarf, and the Hunchback, and the Genies,’” (Dickens 37). Gradgrind becomes incensed and replies “‘Hush!...that is enough. Never breathe a word of such destructive nonsense anymore’” (Dickens 37). From the beginning, Gradgrind is determined to quash her interest in topics of “fancy.”

Due to the educational model enforced upon her in her father’s absence, Sissy wishes to run away in her first months with the Gradgrinds. Describing the torturous ritual, Dickens writes “It hailed facts all day long so very hard, and life in general was opened to her as such a closely ruled ciphering book, that assuredly she would have run away, but for only one restraint” (Dickens 42). While Sissy finds the Gradgrindian education to be almost unbearable, it is that very “fancy” or hope for her father’s return that prompts her to remain.

In her seemingly natural orientation for “fancy,” Sissy subsequently suffers in her ability to acclimate to Gradgrind’s school. Her failure is apparent as M’Choakumchild reports:

that she had a very dense head for figures; that, once possessed with a general idea of the globe, she took the smallest conceivable interest in its exact measurements; that she was extremely slow in the acquisition of dates, unless some pitiful incident happened to be connected therewith; that she would burst into tears on being required (by the mental process) immediately to name the cost of two hundred and forty-seven muslin caps at fourteen-pence halfpenny; that she was as low down , in the school, as low could be (Dickens 42)

The schoolmaster’s assessment of Sissy’s capabilities attests to her opposition in adopting the Gradgrind philosophy. Despite M’Choakumchild’s relentless examinations, Sissy is unable to deny her humanity and her attentiveness to the intangible: her love for

her father and grief over his absence, her indulgence in the stories that she inherits from the world of horse-riding, and her hope for her father's return. In Gradgrind's school she is "low down...as low could be," yet in her inner life she is rich in intuition, empathy, and history. Conversely, the Gradgrind children do not have a history or a family story--only facts and figures existing in a strange portal of an immediate present. They have no past, nor future. The fact at hand is the only information that holds value. Thus, the Gradgrind children are essentially devoid of an identity, despite systematic attempts to create a "people of fact."

Gradgrind expresses his disappointment in Sissy's academic failure and blames her upbringing for her inability to forget all that relates to "fancy" and the humanistic attributes of the horse-riders. Due to her origins, he believes, she is unable to adopt "the system." He says to her: "The course you pursued, you pursued according to the system--the system--and there is no more to be said about it. I can only suppose that the circumstances of your early life were too unfavourable to the development of your reasoning powers, and that we began too late. Still, as I have said already, I am disappointed'" (Dickens 70). Yet it is these very attributes, or her failure to assimilate to Gradgrind's wishes, that lead her to the most successful outcome of any character in the book. Sissy grows up to have "happy children loving her; all children loving her" (Dickens 270). By the end of the novel, Dickens has shown us that the very qualities that Gradgrind despised in Sissy's childhood led her to a life of fulfillment. Describing the course of her life he writes:

she, grown learned in childish lore; thinking no innocent and pretty fancy ever to be despised; trying hard to know her humbler fellow-creatures, and to beautify their lives of machinery and reality with those imaginative graces and delights, without which the heart of infancy will wither up, the

sturdiest physical manhood will be morally stark death, and the plainest national prosperity figures can show, will be Writing on the Wall,--she holding this course as part of no fantastic vow, or bond, or brotherhood, or sisterhood, or pledge, or covenant, or fancy dress, or fancy fair; but simply as a duty to be done...(Dickens 227)

In essence, Sissy is the messenger for Dickens' ultimate lesson. The "childish lore" that she acquires in her youth leads her to be an empathic creature whose "imaginative graces and delights" could not be entirely suppressed by the education she received.

In suggesting Sissy's resistance to her schooling, Dickens alternately portrays the detrimental potential of an unbalanced education. It threatens to rob one of the innate attributes that exist in "the heart of infancy"--the natural curiosity and imagination inherent in humanity. In this passage Dickens declares the moral danger of an education that strives to "root out" such qualities. Through Sissy's fate, Dickens seemingly shares his own sense of purpose in composing the novel--to expose Victorian audiences to the pitfalls of what he perceived to be a Utilitarian education; a very threat to the well-being and moral fabric of society.

Although some critics argue that Dickens misunderstood the complex philosophy of Utilitarianism, most readers agree that his novels indeed show the deep workings of human nature. Sissy's role as an empathetic and imaginative character combats the qualities of Jeremy Bentham's personality as they appear in John Stuart Mill's essay "The Mind and Character of Jeremy Bentham." In it he writes of the philosopher's shortcomings in terms of humanistic understanding, commenting on "the incompleteness of [Bentham's] own mind as a representative of universal human nature" (Mill 316). In *The Westminster Review* he argues that Bentham lacked the ability to understand and appreciate essential experiences of the human condition:

In many of the most natural and strongest feelings of human nature he had

no sympathy; from many of its graver experiences he was altogether cut off; and the faculty by which one mind understands a mind different from itself, and throws itself into the feelings of that other mind, was denied him by his deficiency of Imagination (Mill 316).

Mill's account of Bentham's personality closely mirrors what we see in Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby. Indeed, Bounderby's very character seems to display the epitome of the Gradgrindian philosophy. He appears "altogether cut off" from those in his surroundings in nearly every scene in which he is featured.

Such a lack of sympathy is vividly apparent in chapter eleven, titled "No Way Out," when Stephen Blackpool appeals to Bounderby for help in escaping the entrapment of his marriage to a woman who is mentally unstable, dependent on alcohol, and abusive. As Blackpool grovels for assistance, Bounderby shames him for his confession and insists on the "sanctity" of marriage that, despite his mental anguish, "must be kept up" (Dickens 57). Here it appears as though Bounderby, like Bentham supposedly was, is unable to "understand a mind different from itself" (Mill 316). His "deficiency of Imagination" prevents him from identifying with Stephen's suffering. In this instance, imagination is not just a quality of "wonder" and "curiosity" or "fancy"--it is an essential component of a character's ability to connect with another, and one that strongly impacts the plot. Due to Bounderby's "deficiency of Imagination," Blackpool is unable obtain assistance in divorcing the woman, and is essentially forced to stay in a "pool" of despair--or a "Black" "pool" as his surname implies.

The lack of empathy in Bounderby--as well as Gradgrind--affects the course of action for Stephen Blackpool's life, and also that of Louisa. She is arguably the character most sacrificed in the novel due to a lack of empathy. Louisa essentially loses her childhood and most of her adulthood, including her chances at romance, and moreover,

any hint of happiness. Unlike Sissy, Louisa is never granted the opportunity to indulge in her “childish imagination.” Dickens describes the restrictions set on her course of play early in the novel. Displaying Gradgrind’s proud tone, he writes: “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...” (Dickens 7). As our introduction to Louisa’s character, we learn that she has undergone an upbringing in which she has been deprived of the “childish lore” that Sissy inherits. The extent to which Louisa is forbidden to indulge in “fancy” is apparent in Dickens’ illustration of the Gradgrind household, where the children are only allowed access to “cabinets” that exemplify Gradgrind’s insistence on isolated scientific study:

The little Gradgrinds had cabinets in various departments of science too. They had a little conchological cabinet, and a little metallurgical cabinet, and a little mineralogical cabinet; and the specimens were all arranged and labelled, and the bits of stone and ore looked as though they might have been broken from the parent substances by those tremendously hard instruments their own names; and, to paraphrase the idle legend of Peter Piper, who had never found his way into *their* nursery, If the greedy little Gradgrinds grasped at more than this, what was it, for good gracious goodness’ sake, that the greedy little Gradgrinds grasped at! (Dickens 8).

Such emphasis on scientific study is a theme in the novel, referred to as the “ologies” by both the narrator and Mrs. Gradgrind. In this passage, the imagery of a cabinet holding multiple elements echoes the image of the “vault of a schoolroom” where the little “vessels,” or students are also kept. Dickens’ specific description of the cabinets and “ologies” contained in them is undoubtedly a reference to Bentham’s curriculum outlined in *Chrestomathia* with its mention of multiple courses of scientific study.

Contrasting the imagery of horse-riding--a performative act that encompasses movement, imagination, and a sense of freedom--with the restrictive setting of the schoolroom, we see the systematic oppression under which the children live. The theme

of oppression likewise appears in Dickens' frequent use of fire imagery throughout the novel. Observing patterns in the narrative, we see fire imagery during moments in which the Gradgrind children subconsciously experience oppression, the fire representing their growing resentment and anger that they cannot act out in response. Fire imagery first appears in the scene in which Gradgrind chastises Tom for watching the horse-riders. Dickens writes "Thomas stood sniffing revengefully at the fire" (Dickens 16). Similar to Tom, Louisa also looks to the fire when in the midst of tyranny. On the night before Bounderby's proposal, Tom, in a manipulative self-serving gesture, appeals to her affection for him as reason for her acceptance of his employer's hand. She looks at him, then "at the bright sparks as they dropped upon the hearth" (Dickens 39). In both passages, fire represents the destruction, or "burning up" of each child's youth, or in essence, each one's humanity.

Tom and Louisa look to the fire when their power as an individual is infringed upon; when the self is actively destroyed. Their tendency to glance at the fire in moments of oppression symbolizes a search for escape. When one is powerless, the image of nature's most powerful phenomena works to reinstate power in the mind. In a subdued fit of rage, Tom curses his upbringing, exclaiming "...all the Figures, and all the people who found them out...I wish I could put a thousand barrels of gunpowder under them and blow them all up together!"(40). In this example, Tom includes fire imagery in his rhetoric as a force of destruction, as a reaction to being "burned out" from the inside. Each child appears as figuratively empty--as though their destructive education has turned their very souls to metaphorical ash. Tom wants to light the world on fire just as he has experienced from the authorities in his life.

In a similar unconscious act of destruction, Gradgrind participates in a marriage arrangement between Louisa and the much older Bounderby at the predetermined conclusion of her childhood. As he informs her that she is of a sensible age for marriage, Dickens again shows her staring at the fire, as if in a few moments the last fragments of her existence will be extinguished. We see Louisa "...watching the bright ashes at twilight as they fell into the grate and became extinct" as Gradgrind notes "that from the period when her father had said she was almost a young woman--which seemed but yesterday-- she had scarcely attracted his notice again, when he found her quite a young woman" (Dickens 71). As her father reveals strangely sexual observations of her maturity, she sits motionless, as though she were being burned at the stake, sacrificed at the altar of Utilitarianism.

He begins the proposal by reminding her that she is "not impulsive...not romantic...accustomed to view everything from the strong dispassionate ground of reason and calculation" (Dickens 74). As she listens intently to his appeal, he is eerily proud yet disturbed by her stoicism. At the conclusion of his proposition, she asks a haunting question: "...does Mr. Bounderby ask me to love him?" (Dickens 75). Louisa's question leaves him feeling uneasy. He answers with characteristic avoidance, instructing her to dismiss any hope of Mr. Bounderby "pretending to anything fanciful, fantastic...or sentimental" (Dickens 75). He encourages her to remove herself, dismiss the question and instead accept Bounderby based on "tangible Fact" claiming that "nothing can be plainer" (Dickens 75, 76).

For a moment, Gradgrind expects her "to throw herself upon his breast, and give him the pent-up confidences of her heart," yet her response is a clear indication of the

effects of her education, or Gradgrind's insistence on what he deems "useful knowledge" (Dickens 76). He realizes "With his unbending, utilitarian, matter-of-fact face, he hardened her again; and the moment shot away into the plumbless depths of the past, to mingle with all the lost opportunities that are drowned there" (Dickens 76). The "lost opportunities" arise when the character of James Harthouse enters Louisa's sphere. Influenced by their secret discussions, Louisa begins to question her upbringing and subsequently feels the oppressiveness of her youth. As she waits for Harthouse before one of their many conversations, he finds her "...in an opening in a dark wood, where some felled trees lay, and where she would sit watching the fallen leaves of last year, as she had watched the falling ashes at home" (Dickens 129). Her relationship with Harthouse ultimately results in "the feelings long suppressed [breaking] loose" (Dickens 167). In a fit of desperate despair she appeals to Gradgrind to help her escape the marriage, crying "I shall die if you hold me!" (Dickens 167).

Here Gradgrind witnesses the breakdown of his system. Dickens writes "[Gradgrind] saw the pride of his heart and the triumph of his system, lying, an insensible heap, at his feet" (Dickens 167). In contrast to the "dispassionate" Louisa that evoked such pride and affirmation prior to her marriage to Bounderby, her act of defiant hysteria signals the disintegration of his system and a shift in his considerations. Realizing the consequences of her factual education he mourns in uncharacteristic regret, saying "My dear Louisa. My poor daughter...my unfortunate child" (Dickens 168). Gradgrind can no longer herald the factual education, as he is consumed with guilt over his daughter's fate. His transformation appears in his confession to Louisa: "I have a misgiving that some change may have been slowly working about me in this house, by mere love and

gratitude: that what the Head had left undone and could not do, the Heart may have been doing silently. Can it be so?” As he questions the relationship between reason and emotion, he begins to understand the effects of an unbalanced education, and seemingly comes to appreciate the importance of empathy as a form of “useful knowledge.”

In the dramatic fashion of a cautionary tale, Dickens’ characters learn the detriments of a fact-based education when it is too late. Gradgrind learns of the irreversible damage he has done to Louisa as she succumbs to an emotional breakdown, and Mrs. Gradgrind learns of the negligence in her final moments before death. As she lay on her deathbed, a frantic obsession falls over her, and she desperately attempts to figure out the missing “ology:”

But there is something--not an Ology at all--that your father has missed, or forgotten, Louisa. I don’t know what it is. I have often sat with Sissy near me, and thought about it. I shall never get its name now. But your father may. It makes me restless. I want to write to him, to find out for God’s sake, what it is. Give me a pen, give me a pen (Dickens 153)

The missing component over which Mrs. Gradgrind frets is revealed in the words of Stephen Blackpool as he speaks of his own awakening upon being brought back from the bottom of a well.

Gradgrind’s thoughts about “plumbless depths” and “lost opportunities that are drowned there” when Louisa accepts Bounderby’s proposal reappear in a symbolic event in which Stephen Blackpool literally falls into a well where he is left to die. On the brink of death he comes to the realization of the essence of humanity. It is essentially when he has reached the bottom--physically and mentally broken, isolated, and alone, with no one to hear his cries of pain, that he learns the truth of Dickens’ message. Due to an emphasis on facts, irrespective of the essence of humanity--empathy and connection--his life has been sacrificed. In his last moments, he recounts his revelation: “In my pain an’ trouble,

lookin' up yonder, --wi' it shinin on me--I ha' seen more clear, and ha' made it my dyin' prayer that aw th' world may on'y coom toogether more, an' get a better unnerstan'in o' one another, than when I were in 't my own weak seln'" (Dickens 207). In this passage, Dickens makes his message clear and completes Mrs. Gradgrind's search. She, along with Stephen Blackpool and Louisa, is a casualty of the Gradgrindian educational philosophy. They are a warning to educational reformers--and society as a whole--of the dangers of an unbalanced education, a system that regards factual knowledge too highly; information over people, reason over emotion, and the tangible over the intangible. Stephen Blackpool declares that his life would have been very different had those around him had a "'better unnerstan'in o' one another'" and specifically cites Bounderby's character flaw as the instigator of his fate. He dies, hoping that society can finally experience empathy for him in his final moments, and that his death can serve as a lesson.

Analyzing the unfortunate plights of such characters, one may ask: Why would Dickens write a novel that highlights such a strong need for empathy? Taking Dickens' biographical information into account, one may recall the incredible suffering that he endured during his father's imprisonment and his own time working in the London blacking factory as a child. Such experiences led to pervasive themes of the mistreatment of children and cruelty from authority figures throughout much of his work. Visiting the Charles Dickens Museum--formerly his adult home on 48 Doughty Street in London--one can see today the prison grille from the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison in Southwark where Dickens' most painful childhood experiences occurred. Next to the artifact is a quote in which Dickens expresses the effects that an absence of compassion had on his life:

It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such a young age. It is wonderful to me, that, even after my descent into the poor

little drudge I had been since we came to London, no one had compassion enough on me--a child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt, bodily and mentally--to suggest that something might have been spared, as certainly it might have been, to place me at any common school (Charles Dickens Museum).

Dickens himself seems to share commonalities with the character of Stephen Blackpool.

His use of the word “descent” echoes the image of Blackpool descending into the well as a result of society’s decision to look away from his suffering. Dickens’ claim that “no one had compassion enough on [him]” is reminiscent of the character’s wish that others had possessed a “‘better unnerstan’ in o’ one another’” (Dickens 207). Thus Dickens’ own “hurt, bodily and mentally” likely served as inspiration for the message that drives his fable.

Dickens’ novel shows what can happen when a society follows the wrong type of educational reform not only in terms of imagination and empathy, but moral education as well. As the second of the Gradgrind children, Tom, too, meets an unfortunate fate as he succumbs to a gambling addiction and, as a result, becomes desperate for money. In an effort to hide his identity as a “whelp,” Tom frames Stephen Blackpool for theft and attempts to run away from Coketown. Tom is the second example of failure on the part of a Utilitarian education, and his criminal actions serve as the final provocation for Gradgrind’s transformation. Dickens writes “Aged and bent he looked, and quite bowed down; and yet he looked a wiser man, and a better man, than in the days when in this life he wanted nothing but Facts” (Dickens 209). Gradgrind comes to value imagination and emotion over fact and reason as evidenced by his turn to Sissy--and her community--for help in concealing Tom’s identity. In a change of heart, he expresses gratitude for her, declaring “‘It is always you, my child!’” Identifying her as “my child,” we see a regard quite contrary to the “disappointment” he felt about her in her youth.

Examining Dickens' novel within the context of Victorian educational reform, one may view both Gradgrind and Bounderby as representations of excessive emphasis on factual memorization as suggested in Bentham's *Chrestomathia* and M'Culloch's *A Series of Lessons in Prose and Verse*. Analyzing the plot trajectory as a result of such characters' beliefs and actions, one can infer that Dickens was concerned for the future of the English public school system. In consideration of the proposals by Bentham and M'Culloch, one wonders if Dickens saw a dwindling of the humanities in the changing education system, leading to a view of Utilitarianism as a threat to the imaginations of young school children, and also to his art and readership. In the novel, "useful knowledge" is not just the opportunity to wonder; it is the ability to understand the plight of another. *Hard Times* may be a melodramatic portrayal of the dangers of educational reform, as Louisa and Tom ultimately become stories of hollowed out shells and missed opportunities, yet underlying such tragedy is Dickens' effort to remind readers of the power of empathy, a quality that affects the plot, and also our responses to such tragic characters. Indeed, no method is more effective at evoking readers to a call to action.

Chapter III

Private Educational Reform in Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days*

Whereas Dickens offers a look at public education specifically influenced by Benthamite philosophy in his novel, Hughes depicts the other side of private education, or what he refers to as “those much-abused and much-belauded institutions peculiar to England” (Hughes 62). He begins by summarizing the difference between public and private schools. Of the typical private school he writes:

It was a fair average specimen, kept by a gentleman, with another gentleman as second master; but it was little enough of the real work they did--merely coming into school when lessons were prepared and all ready to be heard. The whole discipline of the school out of lesson hours was in the hands of the two ushers, one of whom was always with the boys in their playground, in the school, at meals--in fact, at all times and everywhere, till they were fairly in bed at night (Hughes 62).

Hughes's description of the private school system echoes the type of close supervision that appears in Dickens' *Hard Times*. A close examination of Hughes's critical tone in this passage--exemplified in his use of overgeneralizations such as “always,” “at all times and everywhere”--suggests his disapproval for such close monitoring. He continues on to summarize the private school philosophy: “Now the theory of private schools is (or was) constant supervision out of school; therein differing fundamentally from that of public schools” (Hughes 62). This type of supervision, he argues, “ought to be the especial work of the head-master, the responsible person,” or as we see in his work, the beloved Dr. Arnold (Hughes 63).

From the start of the novel, we see an underlying bias toward Dr. Arnold's methods, framed within the context of public versus private school settings. The

fundamental difference, he explains, lies in the objectives of each system, or in other words, differing conceptions of “useful knowledge.” He writes: “The object of all schools is not to ram Latin and Greek into boys, but to make them good English citizens; and by far the most important part of that work must be done, or not done, out of school hours” (Hughes 63). This focus on developing the character of youth, he believes, is “the highest and hardest part of the work of education” (Hughes 63). Hughes’s assertion is reminiscent of the opinions put forth in Peacock’s *Prospectus* in which he argues “The principal object of education...is to communicate to the youthful mind that love of mental and moral improvement, which will continue to act with a steady and permanent impression when no longer directed by the hand of the preceptor” (*Prospectus*). Peacock, Hughes, and Dr. Arnold believed that the most important aspect of education--the cultivation of one’s character and passion for learning--happened in a natural fashion, most often outside of classroom walls: “Were I a private schoolmaster, I should say, let who will hear the boys their lessons, but let me live with them when they are at play and rest” (Hughes 63). Consequently, much of the novel takes place either in the residence halls, athletic fields, or woods surrounding Rugby. His interest in “play and rest” shows a distinct contradiction to the “root[ing] out” of natural learning processes and imaginative play that form the center of Gradgrind’s Utilitarian public school philosophy.

By setting most scenes in the novel in boys’ “natural” environments, Hughes’s work is essentially an homage to the headmaster of Rugby School, Thomas Arnold; a man who would go on to influence several private schools across England, including Eton and Harrow. Modeled after the tutelage of the influential headmaster of Rugby School, Hughes’s novel portrays a clear message when it comes to educational values in

the Arnoldian system. Although the school boys receive a classical education, as Peacock insists upon in his *Prospectus*, equal, if not more weight is given to the boys' moral development, with the most attention given to students' social relationships.

Arnold's emphasis on social relationships lends itself to an emerging consideration of character development and morality in education that came into both educational and political focus during the Victorian era. In his article "The Idea of 'Character' in Victorian Political Thought," Stefan Collini writes: "The ideal of character...enjoyed a prominence in the political thought of the Victorian period that it had certainly not known before and that it has, arguably, not experienced since" (Collini 31). While character became a topic of focus in political thought, the formation of one's character was believed to originate in the schools.

Yet what is "character," and moreover, what did the Victorians believe about its ability to be taught? Collini cites two definitions of the word as it is listed in the nineteenth-century *Oxford English Dictionary*. The first one defines "character" as "the sum of the mental and moral qualities which distinguish an individual or race viewed as a homogeneous whole; the individuality impressed by nature and habit on man or nation; mental or moral constitution" (Collini 33). Collini asserts that "This definition refers us to an individual's settled dispositions...but does not in itself involve a judgment on the goodness or otherwise of these dispositions" (Collini 33). The second definition describes "character" as "moral qualities strongly developed or strikingly displayed," a definition Collini notes as containing:

a potential ambiguity here, in that the term 'moral' itself can be used in two different senses: in the more inclusive, neutral sense the vices as well as the virtues are classified as moral qualities, while in the narrower affirmative sense 'moral' qualities are confined to those which meet with

ethical approval, and there can be no doubt that 'character' was used to refer to the possession of certain highly-valued moral qualities in just this way (Collini 33).

Hence, utilizing the idea of character to mean “the possession of certain highly-valued moral qualities” that can be “strongly developed,” I argue that the Victorians viewed character as an aspect of one’s personality that in fact could be taught.

Collini portrays character education to be a process of habit formation or as he writes, “a certain habit of restraining one's impulses” (Collini 34). The opposite of such restraint, he explains, was “behaviour which was random, impulsive, feckless; and where the impulses were identified, as they so often were, with the 'lower self' (conceived as purely appetitive and hence selfish)” (Collini 34). Thus, if we were to ascribe this definition of character to the figures in *Hard Times*, we would surely see a void in terms of character formation. Tom, for example, is extremely impulsive, the most vivid evidence being his inability to curtail his gambling habit and his reckless decision to steal from Bounderby to support his addiction. Tom consistently acts from the “lower self,” and in so doing, implies that Dickens, likewise, held strong opinions on the importance of character development in education.

Tom Brown's Schooldays, in contrast, is a *Bildungsroman* that shows the development of Tom Brown’s character and adoption of morality over the passing of time. The fact that the novel takes place over several years, presented in multiple phases of Tom’s life, attests to the Victorian belief in the “the shaping power of time” as Collini explains, or “the slow, sedimentary processes of development, be it of geological layers or legal customs or whatever, [which] produced an intensified awareness of the role of habit” (Collini 34). While a deficit in character can be described as impulsive behavior

emanating from the “‘lower self,’” proper development in one’s character appeared as “self-restraint, perseverance, strenuous effort, [and] courage in the face of adversity” (Collini 36).

In Hughes’s novel, the athletic field serves as the setting for which such skills could be most aptly acquired. The novel’s numerous references to ongoing cricket tournaments exemplify the educational reforms for which Thomas Arnold is most well-known. Such emphasis on athleticism displays “The potential anti-intellectualism and philistinism which Mill, Arnold and others had protested against in the ideal of character cherished among the dissenting provincial commercial classes” (Collini 47). Hughes’s use of cricket games as settings for character development shows “a new form;” one that became especially popular “once the cult of organised games got under way from the 1870s onwards” (Collini 37). As Collini writes: “Adopting Arnold’s terminology, this was very much a case of the Barbarians taking over an idol of the Philistines and re-making it in their own image. Part of the function of organised games was, of course, the artificial provision of adversity” (Collini 47). Character was “an expression of a very deeply ingrained perception of the qualities needed to cope with life, an ethic with strong roots in areas of experience ostensibly remote from politics” (Collini 48). Such training on the athletic field prepares Harry East for the challenges he will eventually encounter in his role as a military officer in India.

Arnold’s reforms included both a focus on athleticism and a renewed application of Christian morality to Rugby lessons. This shift is reflective of the “Evangelical moral psychology [that] penetrated the discussion of economic life early in the century” (Collini 39). While *Hard Times* shows the cost of a fact-based education at the expense of one’s

moral education, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, conversely, shows moral development as a foundational tenet of Tom's schooling. As we see in Hughes's novel, however, moral education does not occur in an individualized context, but from identification with others as part of a collective, or "Rugby Schoolboy" identity.

In fostering a "Rugby" identity, Dr. Arnold, and the school as a whole, became part of a socioeconomic movement through which England witnessed the creation of a new middle class gentleman. As William N. Weaver writes in his article "'A School-Boy's Story': Writing the Victorian Public Schoolboy Subject," books such as *Tom Brown's Schooldays* "were crucial in promoting Thomas Arnold and his Rugby schoolboy subjects as exemplary Victorian icons, and the Arnoldian ideal as a powerful, class specific Victorian ideology" (Weaver 455). The success of the school emanated from Arnold's efforts to create "the collective identificatory bond among Rugby schoolboy peers" (Weaver 455). Analyzing Hughes's novel not only as a commentary on public education but also as a text supportive of a specific educational model that promotes the creation of a newly defined middle class, I argue, is essential to our understanding of the evolution of Victorian educational reform.

So what characterizes the Arnoldian pedagogical model? Weaver cites educational historians David Newsome and J. R. de S. Honey in their summary of Arnold's values. Weaver writes that Arnold's philosophy consisted of a:

rethinking of the exclusively grammatical emphasis of the nineteenth-century public school classical curriculum; his reemphasis of the pastoral bonds between masters and boys, especially through the reinvigoration of the tradition of the headmaster performing the school's weekly chapel service; and his encouragement of mentoring bonds among older and younger boys through a revamped, and presumably meritocratic, prefect disciplinary system...(Weaver 455-456)

Weaver's description of "the pastoral bonds between masters and boys" as well as "his encouragement of mentoring bonds among older and younger boys" illustrates the emphasis Arnold placed on social relationships within his systemic changes. Here we see a stark contrast between the Utilitarian model presented in Dickens' novel and the Arnoldian model in that of Hughes. In the public school of *Hard Times*, children are at no point willingly left to their own devices, and thus never allowed to form meaningful friendships. In the private school of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*; however, students are left to govern themselves, and, as a result, view their schoolmaster with the utmost respect and admiration, having been granted autonomy in their formative years. As a result of such specific educational models, we see a vastly different trajectory in terms of characterization and plot in each of the novels. Students at Rugby School develop into well-rounded, ethical, and content citizens, whereas Tom and Louisa grow up to lead a life of turmoil, resentment, and regret. Thus, the relationship between pedagogical practices and character outcomes is clear.

Considering the importance of Dr. Arnold's methodologies, the novel is not only a coming-of-age story that shows Tom's transformation from boyhood to adulthood, but a story that shows Tom's evolution from a common boy to a Rugby gentleman, an individual to part of a collective, and a member of a new middle class. An in-depth study of what exactly constitutes a "Rugby boy" is significant, as the identity subsequently became a recognizable symbol in literature due in part to Arnold's reforms. Weaver states "the ways in which the boys associated their male/male identifications at school and their tastes in contemporary vernacular literature help articulate why the Rugbaean schoolboy subject subsequently became a specifically Victorian ideal of male development"

(Weaver 457). Ultimately, both Arnold and the students participated in constructing this ideal. Weaver writes that “Rugby boys sought to bring all schoolboys into the Rugby system and to manage their behavior. In so doing, they defined their sense of themselves as subjects” (Weaver 458). Consequently, “The ‘Rugby schoolboy came to embody Rugby and helped cement schoolboy society” (Weaver 458). In essence, the construction of such an identity depended on the friendships fostered between the boys themselves.

In Hughes’s novel, the most apt depiction of friendship shared between Rugby boys first appears between Tom and Harry East. Describing the two characters as “The new exemplars” of Arnold’s plan, Weaver claims that the boys’ adoption of Arnold’s school reforms shows a widespread transition from “allegiances to the old public school [in American terms, private school] system” (Weaver 483). Weaver argues that “East’s conversion to Arnold’s side...is what best prepares him for his eventual military service in India,” a shift that “helped justify the authority of the bureaucratic government that was staffed by such subjects and idealized the public school social ties that helped shape its increasingly autonomous culture (Perkin 319, 338)” (qtd. by Weaver 483). Thereupon Hughes’s depiction of the characters of Tom and East contributed to a new model of government contextualized within a changing social culture.

As such, an examination of Tom’s progression as an individual from a remote English village to a member of the Rugby system is needed for a full understanding of the novel as a commentary on educational reform, including the role of education in the development of social class. Ultimately, the most vivid depiction of the transformation in the new middle-class gentleman is embodied in Hughes’s main character. In the beginning of the novel, Hughes provides the reader with background information on

Tom's family clan, giving insight into the boy's early identity. Tom comes from "a fighting family...a square-headed and snake-necked generation" with "minds" that "are wonderfully antagonist, and all...opinions are downright beliefs" (Hughes 4). As a result, Tom is "a hearty strong boy...given to fighting with and escaping from his nurse, and fraternizing with all the village boys, with whom he made expeditions all round the neighborhood" (Hughes 17). Tom appears as a wild, mischievous boy who is young, headstrong, and self-indulgent. In essence, much of his behavior appears to derive from the "lower self." Such traits persist when he arrives at Rugby, and it is only when Dr. Arnold assigns him to be the mentor of a young new student, George Arthur, referred to throughout the novel as "Arthur," that Tom begins to mature. As a result of this mentorship, Tom's character undergoes significant changes in terms of character development and moral education.

Whereas Tom's friendship with East results in his transformation into an athletic, self-assured, and fearless "Rugby Boy," his friendship with Arthur leads him to become the Christian moral, nurturing, compassionate leader that qualifies as a "Rugby gentleman." Both friendships are equally important in fostering the well-roundedness that Dr. Arnold seemingly desires, and each relationship is mutually beneficial to the parties involved. As Weaver points out, one develops into a whole person through identification with one who holds characteristics that are lacking in the other. "In this symbiotic model, friends make up for each other's faults" (Weaver 468). Tom and Arthur's friendship became not only a symbol for a "symbiotic model," but Hughes's publication led to a "famous mid-century paradigm for Rugby school friendships and public school reform" (Weaver 469). In the first night of Arthur's arrival to the school, his role in uncovering

neglected aspects of Tom's character quickly becomes apparent. In an act of pious courage, Arthur kneels by his bedside to perform his nightly prayers; a deed that earns him ridicule from the surrounding boys in the quarters.

Hughes takes this opportunity to interject with Arnold's influence within Rugby School, citing Arthur's "act of courage" to be an example of the state of the school prior to Dr. Arnold's Christian influences. He writes of the changes that came under Dr.

Arnold:

It was no light act of courage in those days, my dear boys, for a little fellow to say his prayers publicly, even at Rugby. A few years later, when Arnold's manly piety had begun to leaven the school, the tables turned; before he died, in the School-house at least...the rule was the other way. But poor Tom had come to school in other times (Hughes 226).

Thus, in many ways, Arthur opens the pathways for Tom's induction into Arnoldian morality. Tom's immediate defense of Arthur implies his own early devotion to Christian practices. In an instant, Tom reacts by pulling off his boot and throwing it "straight at the head of the bully," solidifying his protection over the young newcomer (Hughes 225).

What ensues after the boys have gone to bed is a tirade of guilt in which Tom recalls a promise that he made to his mother to commit to his own prayers as a nightly ritual. Upon witnessing Arthur's devotion, he experiences "the first and bitterest feeling which was like to break his heart...the sense of his own cowardice" (Hughes 227). Tom reflects on his initial impression of the boy, "whom he had pitied and almost scorned for his weakness" and subsequently "swear[s] to himself that he would stand by that boy through thick and thin, and cheer him, and help him, and bear his burdens for the good deed done that night" (Hughes 227). Here we see the beginnings of evolution in Tom's character from their initial stages of their friendship.

As a result of Dr. Arnold's assignment, Tom returns to school with a renewed sense of purpose. His charge over Arthur evokes in him a "new character of bear-leader to a gentle little boy straight from home" (Hughes 231). Tom regards his responsibility over Arthur's acclimation to Rugby School with the utmost seriousness and devotion. "From morning till night he had the feeling of responsibility on his mind; and, even if he left Arthur in their study or in the close for an hour, was never at ease till he had him in sight again" (Hughes 231). As Tom witnesses Arthur's ongoing piety, his own devotion to Christian Arnoldian morality deepens. While Tom "train[s] little Arthur," so too does Arthur train Tom in Biblical studies.

Observing Arthur's nightly readings, Tom adopts his practice and finds himself "utterly astonished, and almost shocked, at the sort of way in which Arthur read the book, talked about the men and women whose lives were there told" (Hughes 242). The book becomes "to him...the most vivid and delightful history of real people, who might do right or wrong, just like any one who was walking about in Rugby--the Doctor, or the masters, or the sixth-form boys" (Hughes 242). He comes to view the book not just as a collection of stories, but as an outline for those within the collective of Rugby School. As a result, Tom matures in his intellectual ruminations. He finds himself quoting scripture in his discussions with East "as if they gave him actual pleasure, and were hard to part with" (Hughes 245). He extracts and shares messages reflected in both the Bible and Dr. Arnold's sermons. In a discussion with East he says "'There's always a highest way, and it's always the right one...How many times has the Doctor told us that in his sermons in the last year, I should like to know?'" (Hughes 245). Here we see Dr. Arnold's "paradigm shift" at work, his influence on public education evident in Tom's reference to the

sermons he was known to deliver as headmaster, inducing a shift in educational focus to teachings in Christian morality.

In witnessing Arthur's transition into Rugby, Tom comes to believe that the boy's social ties are due to his supervision. Hughes notes that "Tom felt that it was only through him, as it were, that his chum associated with others, and that but for him Arthur would have been dwelling in a wilderness" (Hughes 255). Hughes summarizes the development of Tom's "responsibility" in connection to Arthur:

This increased his consciousness of responsibility; and though he hadn't reasoned it out, and made it clear to himself, yet somehow he knew that this responsibility, this trust which he had taken on him without thinking about it, head-over-heels infact, was the centre and turning-point of his school-life, that which was to make him or mar him; his appointed work and trial for the time being (Hughes 255).

In this passage, Arthur's impact on Tom's becoming a "gentleman" is clear. To become a "gentleman" is signified by an "increased...consciousness of responsibility" which Tom "take[s] on him without thinking about it" (Hughes 255). Through such a social relationship, Tom unconsciously learns the meaning of the "Rugby gentleman's" identity. To be a "Rugby gentleman" is to assume responsibility for others, to read the needs of and care for others, and to act with integrity. Such an explanation is never directly mentioned in the novel, yet Dr. Arnold's model is clearly inferred.

Upon witnessing the developing friendship between Tom and Arthur, we come to understand what defines the new middle class gentleman. Tom's fulfillment of this role becomes "the centre and turning-point of his school-life" (Hughes 255). Whereas "the centre" of Dickens' private school education appears to be the mastery of "Fact, fact, fact!", Dr. Arnold's public school education denotes social responsibility and morality as the student's "appointed work" (Hughes 255). Such nurturing roles, coupled with

“frequent tumbles in the dirt” constitute the Victorian “daily growing in manfulness and thoughtfulness” that leads one to become a “high-couraged and well-principled boy” (Hughes 255).

While Tom’s public school education can be characterized as a fostering of social relationships, one would be remiss without the mention of the role that boyish adventures play in his development as well. The novel’s frequent scenes featuring the boys at play attest to the importance of imagination in the Rugby educational philosophy. Tom’s vivid imagination appears early in the novel as Hughes introduces the importance of storytelling in the boy’s upbringing. “What struck Tom’s youthful imagination most, was the desperate and lawless character of most of the stories” (Hughes 85). Tom, like the students featured in *Hard Times*, possesses an innate inquisitiveness for stories, and is led through his schooling by his seemingly innate curiosity. Yet as opposed to Gradgrind’s chastising of the children’s exploration of fanciful settings, such as the horse-riders’ circus, Dr. Arnold encourages his students to wander in his purposeful absence from the boys’ lives outside of school hours.

Indeed, Arnold’s laissez-faire attitude coupled with the boys’ curiosity appears often in the plot, leading them into skirmishes with nearby farmers, for example, and discoveries of the natural world. Dr. Arnold’s methods suggest an understanding of the innate learning process inherent in young students; a practice reflective of an appreciation for the natural world. In chapter three, titled “Arthur Makes a Friend,” Hughes begins with a poem by Wordsworth that depicts nature as an existing teacher, advocating for meditative appreciation rather than the “dissection” of factual memorization that appears in Bentham’s *Chrestomathia*. The poem reads:

Let Nature be your teacher:
Sweet is the lore which Nature brings:
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things.
We murder to dissect--
Enough of Science and of Art:
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

Hughes's use of Wordsworth's poem is a clear indication of Dr. Arnold's educational philosophy. Examining the imagery, we see a distinct conceptualization of teaching reflected in the verse. While Dickens' novel displays the results of "meddling intellect" and the dissection of "Science and of Art," Hughes's work shows the results of allowing the boys of Rugby the space to explore, as Peacock advocates, "the youthful mind" (Prospectus).

Perhaps the most vivid example of such a student is Martin, a young intellectual who takes great pleasure in his observations of the natural world. While Arthur represents Arnoldian Christian morality in the novel, Martin represents the autodidact of Victorian educational reform. With imagination and curiosity as driving forces for his studies, "Martin had a passion for birds, beasts, and insects, and knew more of them and their habits than anyone in Rugby...He was also an experimental chemist on a small scale, and had made unto himself an electric machine..." (Hughes 250). Martin's insatiable curiosity in the sciences makes him a welcome addition to Tom's circle. In connection to Arthur, Tom thinks 'The old Madman is the very fellow...[who] will take [Arthur] scrambling over half the country after birds' eggs and flowers, make him run and swim and climb like an Indian, and not teach him a word of anything bad, or keep him from his lessons. What luck!'" (Hughes 256)

Tom's good fortune in befriending Martin provokes a newfound appreciation for curiosity, or "fancy." Yet Hughes makes it a point to reveal Martin's difficulty in assimilating to the Rugbean collective due to that same endless yearning for discovery. "The aforesaid Martin, whom Arthur had taken such a fancy for, was one of those unfortunates who were at the time of day (and are, I fear, still) quite out of their places at a [private] school" (Hughes 250). While Arnold affords students significant amounts of unsupervised time to foster friendships among the Rugby boys, Martin has difficulty assimilating to the collective. Due to his seeming role as an outsider, one may wonder: Why does Hughes include his character in the novel? Upon close examination, Martin's status as an outcast reveals a flaw in the Rugby School system. While Rugby appears to turn out successful, athletic, confident gentlemen such as Harry East, it does not have the intellectual rigor required for someone like Martin: "If we knew how to use our boys, Martin would have been seized upon and educated as a natural philosopher" (Hughes 250).

Martin's turn to self-directed study is reminiscent of the educational undertakings that were happening within the working class in organizations such as the London Mechanics' Institute and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. In this sense, Peacock, Martin and members of the working class share a similar intellectual plight. Those who do not fit the mold of the new gentleman must slake their thirsts for knowledge by essentially leaving the system and pursuing their studies in private. For Peacock, this happens within the domestic sphere; for Martin, in the woodlands just (appropriately) outside of Rugby. Hughes's portrayal of Martin's passionate persona suggests that there are two types of knowledge that comprise one's education: the type of

knowledge presented within school walls, generally made up of rote memorization, such as the Greek and Latin “Vulgar books” that the Rugby boys dread, and the self-directed pursuits that appear in Martin’s woodland excursions. Coincidentally, the latter form happens in nature--a practice that not only appears in Wordsworthian poetry, but in Peacock’s novels as well.

Peacock’s novels are well-known for taking place in remote bucolic settings; places that function as safe havens for frequent dinner table discussions to occur, uninterrupted by the din of industrial life. The characters or “students” in his novels learn in an informal setting through lively debate, free to ruminate over any topic of their choosing (as a result, Peacock’s characters frequently jump from one topic to the next, a practice that has made the “heady” dialogue in his novels notoriously difficult to follow). Yet upon close analysis, we see similarities between the loquacious characters in Peacock’s novels and Hughes’s Martin. Both sets of characters obtain knowledge through what Rousseau termed “*amour de soi*” versus “*amour propre*.”

According to Robert McClintock, in his article “Rousseau and the Dilemma of Authority,” *amour de soi*: “leads one to seek fulfillment without measuring that fulfillment relative to others,” evoking “the positive affirmation of the self-defined goal” (McClintock 318). In contrast, “*amour propre* makes one unable to see others as autonomous, self-fulfilling beings; it’s an ‘owning’ love, and the person moved by *amour propre* expects that others will prefer him to themselves...[causing] one to feel envy, scorn, pride, resentment” (McClintock 318). As Rousseau believed, “In a legitimate society, public education would become a powerful means of imbuing people with patriotism and a character impervious to *amour propre*,” instead promoting “*amour de*

soi: the ingenuous affirmation of one's intrinsic personality...the source of human excellence " (McClintock 324). Analyzing Martin, the "Ishmaelite in the house" who maintains his own "den," complete with numerous animals, books of scientific study, and experiments in raising birds and field mice, we see a student who indeed subscribes to *amour de soi* in his learning. Martin's drive, his "pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge...for its own sake," in Peacockian terms, emanates from his "intrinsic personality." Thus, with Martin we see learning, essentially, in its purest form.

Hughes, interestingly, follows this scene with one that displays a distinct contrast to the type of learning that we see in the natural landscape. In a section titled "Vulguses," Hughes shows what sort of learning happens inside the walls of the Victorian private schoolroom. He depicts academic study at Rugby as a monotonous ritual which seems to pervade both public and private education, insinuating that such inspired learning that we see in Martin is rarely instigated within a school. Expressing a slight against private education's tendency to avoid innovation, he writes "...doubtless the method is little changed, for there is nothing new under the sun, especially at schools" (Hughes 259). He introduces the "time-honored institution of the Vulgus" which he notes was "commonly supposed to have been established by William of Wykeham at Winchester, and imported to Rugby by Arnold, more for the sake of the lines which were learnt by heart with it, than for its own intrinsic value, as I've always understood" (Hughes 259). The practice, he explains, "is a short exercise, in Greek or Latin verse, on a given subject, the minimum number of lines being fixed for each form" and was to be translated, memorized and recited in front of schoolmaster and pupils strictly from memory (Hughes 260). Yet as Hughes recounts "To meet and rebuke this bad habit of the masters, the schoolboy mind,

with its accustomed ingenuity, had invented an elaborate system of tradition” (Hughes 260). Just as Rugby holds the ritual of the Vulguses, so too do students hold a ritual to evade the dedication necessary to truly master the forced examination. Hughes discloses the well-known custom:

Almost every boy kept his own vulgus written out in a book, and these books were duly handed down from boy to boy, till (if the tradition has gone on till now) I suppose the popular boys, in whose hands bequeathed vulgus-books have accumulated, are prepared with three or four vulguses on any subject in heaven or earth, or in ‘more worlds than one,’ which an unfortunate master can pitch upon (Hughes 260)

The “considerable grief” that “was the result” when such use was discovered still did not “hinder boys...from short cuts and pleasant paths” (Hughes 261). Here we see two very different forms of learning due to two varying motivations: Martin’s, whose passion is seemingly underserved in Rugby School, and the boys’, whose required attention to Vulguses, has driven them to devise a system clever enough to promote mastery of avoidance rather than Latin.

Examining the differing systems--the former characterized by intrinsic motivation and the latter from extrinsic, we see an underlying shimmering quality in Martin’s autodidacticism: authenticity. Tom, East and Arthur share in Martin’s excitement due their intrinsic value of the lessons which occur far from the realm of supervision. Martin’s knowledge of animal life echoes that of another character who shares in his apparent intrinsic and authentic understanding of the natural world: Sissy in Dickens’ *Hard Times*. While Bitzer is able to recite the Latin name for a horse in response to Gradgrind’s inquiry, followed by a slew of facts, his understanding appears to be superficial next to Sissy’s lifelong association with the horses of her beloved circus. What Peacock, Dickens and Hughes all share here is essentially a common message concerning Victorian

education: too much of it relies on rote memorization, or in Roussevian terms, *amour propre*. Inherent in this message is the desperate call for imagination or “fancy.”

Ultimately, in expressing a call to action for greater authenticity in Victorian educational reform, Peacock, Dickens, and Hughes are calling for a Roussevian--and Wordsworthian--return to nature, or that which appeals to humans’ “natural” inquisitiveness.

While Hughes’s work displays the importance of authenticity and autonomy in Victorian public education, this thesis would be remiss if it did not offer a close examination Dr. Arnold’s role as a character who establishes this philosophy in the novel. A student of the real Thomas Arnold, Hughes, at several points, sings the renowned headmaster’s praises as only a devoted student could. Hughes’s account of Arnold’s reforms as a former student offers deeper insight, I argue, than one presented from an objective historian’s perspective. Through Hughes’s characters, we see how Arnold’s methodology functioned in fostering relationships between the boys of Rugby, or in other words, how his methods infiltrated into the schoolboys’ psyche.

Analyzing the language Hughes uses to describe Dr. Arnold’s character, we see the headmaster as an omnipresent figure. Hughes, indeed, portrays him as a god-like figure who embodies omniscience, compassion, and forgiveness. He describes him as:

a man whom we felt to be, with all his heart and soul and strength, striving against whatever was mean and unmanly and unrighteous in our little world. It was not the cold clear voice of one giving advice and warning from serene heights to those who were struggling and sinning below, but the warm living voice of one who was fighting for us and by our sides, and calling on us to help him and ourselves and one another (Hughes 142)

Hughes’s comparison of a bodiless “cold clear voice” delivered from “serene heights” to a “warm living voice” acting out and calling for kindness is reflective of comparisons

between the personas of God in the Old Testament and God in the New Testament.

Differing from the distant, wrathful God, or in educational reform imagery, the cold, distant headmaster, Dr. Arnold lives among the boys, the “sinners,” and calls on them to enact his teachings of kindness.

At several points throughout the novel, Hughes comments on Arnold’s “magnetic instinct,” which often appears in his seemingly innate ability to affect the boys at Rugby on a profound level. Tom is constantly in awe of the Doctor’s power and sees him as an omniscient figure, remarking “What didn’t the Doctor know? And what a noble use he always made of it!” (Hughes 221). Tom’s wonder for the Doctor’s methodology reaches its pinnacle when he has entered adulthood and learns of the Doctor’s death. Reflecting poignantly on the headmaster’s role in his life, he marvels how, in the midst of “teaching the sixth, and governing and guiding the whole School, editing classics, and writing histories” the Doctor “had found time in those busy years to watch over the career, even of him, Tom Brown, and his particular friends,—and, no doubt, of fifty other boys at the same time; and all this without taking the least credit to himself, or seeming to know, or let anyone else know, that he ever thought particularly of any boy at all” (Hughes 366). Such careful attention is a stark contrast to the way in which Sissy Jupe is referred to as “Girl Number Twenty” in *Hard Times*.

The difference in relations between students and authority figures in both novels inevitably contributes to vastly different trajectories in the characters’ lives. Because of Dr. Arnold’s educational philosophy, Tom Brown becomes a nurturing, moral and ambitious adult—in contrast to Dickens’ Tom; a gambling addict who dreams of seeking revenge on the authorities from his childhood. Tom Brown becomes an example of the

“new gentleman” of private education who “love[s] and reverence[s] his schoolmaster and desires “by God’s help” to “follow in his steps” (Hughes 374). Dr. Arnold’s character, in essence, provides important insight into the role of authority in educational reform. Gradgrind and Bounderby’s authority over the Coketown children leads them to become adults who are not only vengeful, but lack a skill set that enables them to make moral decisions due to a disconnect with their own emotions and with those of others. As a result, there is no collective identity in the private school of Coketown. The students are isolated in their seats, unable to formulate an understanding of what it means to even be a child. Dr. Arnold, however, as an authority figure, implements autonomy. As a result, the Rugby schoolchildren respect their headmaster, leading to the successful creation of a collective identity. Due to the Doctor’s emphasis on social relationships, a student in his public school is not simply a “student of Rugby” but a “Rugby boy,” endowed with characteristics that comprise the makeup of a middle class gentleman.

In juxtaposing *Hard Times* with *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, we see clear commentary on Victorian educational reform. In basic terms, educational systems that view authority in terms of rigidity and disconnection fail, whereas systems that view authority with flexibility and kinship succeed. While private school appears to offer more opportunities for the use of imagination in its reliance on self-governance, in terms of curricula, both private and public schools utilize rote memorization at the core of their lessons. Much to Peacock’s dismay, the result of such execution is a developing dislike for learning in students, and as we see in the two novels, the extent to which a student feels resentment towards learning exists on a spectrum. In *Hard Times*, Tom and Louisa come to resent learning so much that they desire to get revenge on the authority figures

who enact an oppressive educational philosophy. In *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, the students of Rugby come to dread their lessons in Latin so much that they devise a system that enables them to cheat.

Examining these two texts within the context of Peacock's prospectus, we see educational systems that ultimately fulfill the characteristics of Peacock's worst nightmare in terms of classical education; students who have come to associate learning with "weariness, pain, and privation" (Peacock, *Prospectus*). In *Hard Times*, there is no character who is able to overcome this association and find pleasure in learning; however, in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Hughes shows us an alternative to the Victorian school system through the character of Martin. Despite Martin's enrollment at Rugby, he is able to find "pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge, and...pursue it for its own sake" in the natural landscape surrounding the school grounds (Peacock). Martin's engagement of Tom, East, and Arthur in his self-directed scientific expeditions allows the boys to experience a type of intrinsic motivation and authenticity not found within the schoolroom. Hughes's choice in setting for the boys' learning echoes that of Peacock in his novels. In their call for a reconsideration of Victorian educational reform, Peacock, Dickens and Hughes all suggest a need for Victorian education to return to the "natural" elements of learning: imagination, curiosity, and the incorporation of social relationships into the learning process.

Chapter IV
Standardization and the Competitive Examination in
Thomas Love Peacock's *Gryll Grange*

Tom Brown's School Days was not only considered to be one of the first works to portray the new middle-class gentleman, but one of the first books that can be characterized as literature specifically written for schoolboys as well. Dickens and Hughes are well-known in the literary canon and, as such, an examination of their novels as commentary on Victorian educational reform has the potential to offer rich insight into an aspect of society ever in need of further study. However, in an effort to offer a glimpse into a lesser known, but, I argue, equally important writer on educational reform, I would like to include Thomas Love Peacock as an additional author who illustrates the themes I have examined in this study: imagination, authenticity, social relationships, and morality in Victorian education.

Peacock, as a whole, is a writer that I assert merits further study in terms of the literary canon. Although critics have argued that his work is irrelevant and confined to the "evils [that] were superficial" and later "eliminated" by later "reforms," I argue that Peacock's commentary is, on the contrary, very relevant to our time and thus deserves reevaluation (Brogan 529). Peacock's novels feature characters who actively debate about the merits of national education and the competitive examination. Moreover, his characters question the notion of "useful knowledge" put forth by Jeremy Bentham and Henry Brougham, and fiercely criticize the diminishing role of classical study in the Utilitarian movement. Much like Dickens, he resents the limited conception of "useful

knowledge,” arguing against the idea of a finite requirement that subsequently neglects the student in terms of his moral and intellectual development, advocating instead for lifelong study of the humanities.

Unlike Dickens and Hughes, however, Peacock extends his belief in moral and intellectual development through classical study to female education. While the Peacockian heroine was one of the earliest examples of educational egalitarianism in a novel specifically written by a male author, few critics have regarded him as the innovative satirist that, I argue, he was. As a result, I will analyze Peacock’s novel *Gryll Grange* as a representation of his ideas concerning educational reform, exploring topics such as the emerging emphasis on scientific study and the Competitive Examination, gender and morality in education, in addition to his views on imagination and its role in reform at the end of his literary career.

Throughout Peacock’s work, his “novels of talk” function as stages upon which dialogue about daily English life is set. Characters discuss corruption in politics, the changing economy, and the disintegration of morality in society, among several other subjects influencing the contemporary moment. Among the many topics that his characters tackle over dinner, one area of interest that remains constant throughout his writing is educational reform. In her dissertation titled *Satire in the Novels of Thomas Love Peacock*, Vera Lighthall summarizes Peacock’s stance on education:

In the discussions of national education, Peacock takes a common sense view. He saw the defects of the old system, realizing the need of reform, but he could still see inconsistencies in the reform when it came. This seemed to have been his conservative point of view on most questions of his day. The idea of education being ‘finished’ with college days was ridiculous to a man of Peacock’s training (Lighthall 38)

Considering Lighthall's claim, in addition to the objectives outlined in his prospectus, one can gather that Peacock's heaviest lament relates to schools' finite conception of education. A largely self-taught man, Peacock scoffs at the universities, ridicules the learning societies spearheaded by Henry Brougham--referred to in his novels as the "march of mind"--and mocks the Competitive Examination. Peacock asks us to consider the meaning of the word "education" while also provoking us to contemplate the role of authority in the shaping of the institution. Promoting self-directed study as the key to intrinsic appreciation, Peacock puts forth the true value of an education: to learn for enjoyment and to fulfill a sense of purpose.

Throughout his work, Peacock is especially critical of the educational systems that cater to female study. As such, Peacock's work highlights the relationship between the characters' education and plot, as the female figures in his work show a unique sense of development that is uncharacteristic of the novels of the era. In his dissertation titled *The Noblest Gift: Women in the Fiction of Thomas Love Peacock*, John Kenyon Crabbe notes that Peacock's "arguments were mostly over the inadequacy of female education and the crippling effects of marriage customs" (Crabbe 13). Describing his philosophy he writes: "Peacock's brand of feminism can be best understood as a reaction against the climate of opinion on the role of woman that prevailed in Regency and early Victorian England, a worship of female delicacy, submissiveness, and inherent inferiority which had been inherited from the eighteenth century" (Crabbe 3). *Gryll Grange*, he argues, "represents the highest point of Peacock's feminism" (Crabbe 35).

While this chapter mainly focuses on his last novel, a background in his earlier work would be helpful for a more comprehensive understanding of his stance on female

education: “Starting in his second novel with *Anthelia Melincourt*, he presents a procession of intelligent, physically vigorous, and self-assertive women who fearlessly argue their beliefs with men, face danger without terror, and make up their own minds who they will marry. A Peacock heroine may accompany her lover to the altar, but she will never be led” (Crabbe 14). In one of his earlier novels, *Melincourt* for example, Forester outlines the basic subjects that girls are typically taught: “The only points practically enforced in female education are sound, colour, and form, music, dress, drawing and dancing. The mind is left to take care of itself” (*Melincourt* 117). Here he suggests that female “education” is virtually devoid of intellectual and moral development, instead aiming to manufacture objects of aesthetic grace and beauty.

Forester’s commentary on curricula for girls seems to represent Peacock’s opinion:

If women are treated only as pretty dolls and dressed in all the fripperies, irrational education of the vanity of personal adornment and superficial accomplishments be made from their very earliest years to suppress all mental aspirations and to supersede all thoughts of intellectual beauty, it is to be inferred that they are incapable of better things. But such is the usual logic of tyranny which first places its extinguisher on the flame and then argues that it cannot burn (*Melincourt*, 117).

Forester describes female education as a tyrannical system that “supress[es]” female curiosities from a young age. Instead of learning about the “poets, philosophers, and historians of antiquity,” women learn that “they are incapable of better things” according to current curricula (*Melincourt* 117).

Peacock’s opinion on contemporary female education reappears in *Crotchet Castle*, when he refers specifically to Lemma Crotchet’s schooling as an example of an “expensive,” “complicated” and “superficial” education: “The young lady had received an expensive and complicated education, complete in all the elements of superficial display. She was thus eminently qualified to be the companion of any masculine luminary

who had kept due pace with the ‘astounding progress’ of intelligence” (*Crotchet Castle* 10). Analyzing his adjectives, we can infer that female education was an apparatus of appearance, and less of intellectual inquiry. In criticizing the “superficial education,” Peacock, similarly to Dickens and Hughes, ultimately expresses concern with the values that make up such a system. His use of the term “superficial” implies a lack of depth and meaning that is necessary for the “mental and moral improvement” outlined in his prospectus. Like Dickens and Hughes, he invokes us to consider the purpose behind the content in curricula, and the interconnection between one’s education and one’s character.

As Peacock shows, traditional female education--similar to the Utilitarian education of Gradgrind--is a form of manufacturing; a “superficial display” that is devoid of literary study and moral development, instead designed to create a product for marital consumption which he cheekily describes as “‘astounding progress’” (*Crotchet Castle* 10). Contrary to the preparation for domestic life that most women underwent in their schooling, women in Peacock’s novels receive a classical education equivalent to men and are considered equal partners in active debate. Peacock portrays his female characters as well-educated, independent thinkers who act on their own accord. Perhaps the most telling example of egalitarianism in his Victorian novel features Miss Gryll informing Lord Curryfin of the norms of dinner table discussion. In response to his hypothesis that certain discussions are “too recondite” for the women at the house, she says: “No, they never talk before ladies of any subject in which ladies cannot join” (*Gryll Grange* 89). Unlike Dickens’ and Hughes’s female characters--who either fit Victorian idealities by sacrificing themselves in subservience to the wishes and motivations of their male

counterparts, or are almost completely absent from the narrative--Peacock's characters represent a new concept of female education and display the innovative role of women in society that can occur as a result.

In contrast to the "irrational education of the vanity of personal adornment and superficial accomplishments" mentioned in *Melincourt*, Peacockian heroines such as Anthelia, Lady Clarinda, Susannah Touchandgo, and Miss Gryll possess extensive knowledge of classical literature and poetry, utilize their own libraries, regularly participate in dinner table discussions, exercise a quick wit and learn about nature as they wander through the mountains unaccompanied. As John Crabbe writes in his article "The Emerging Heroine in the Works of Thomas Love Peacock":

Peacock's heroes and heroines are self-educated, close to nature, and the most sympathetic of them share his veneration for books and his evident belief that one's education can never be 'finished. The most obvious indicator of a well-educated character in the novels is familiarity with and appreciation of Italian poetry, and associations with the works of Dante, Boiardo, Tasso, Ariosto, and Petrarch are often used to identify or to distinguish among sympathetic and unsympathetic characters (Crabbe 90)

In short, Peacock's characters live out the philosophy of his prospectus. Due to their "familiarity with and appreciation" of classical writers, they are well equipped to overcome the challenges they face--whether they be at the dinner table or out in the wilderness.

In his dissertation, Crabbe also describes Peacock's female characters as "intelligent and emancipated women who violated, with their author's approval, many of the prejudicial conventions which bound their real and fictional contemporaries" (*The noblest gift* 3). Due to her progressive education in which she learns to be an "intelligent and emancipated" woman, the Peacockian heroine is able to find her way through the woods in the midst of a storm, fight off a relentless kidnapper, or match wits with a

suitors, displaying the effects not only of both a classical and moral education, but also of an egalitarian education: “Peacock’s heroines deserve a place in literary history for their witness to the fact that women could be portrayed as simultaneously assertive, intelligent, physically vigorous, yet feminine and desirable” (*The Noblest Gift* 3).

Unlike Dickens’ Louisa, the epitome of “submissiveness, and inherent inferiority,” Peacock’s female characters--due to the education they receive--are discerning, confident, and fully capable of navigating the challenges that arise in their lives. In *Gryll Grange*, Miss Gryll has the freedom to choose a suitor for herself, and is unapologetic in her rejection of multiple suitors prior to her acceptance of Falconer’s hand. What is perhaps even more remarkable, however, is her uncle’s concession to her selectiveness. Despite his worry over acquiring an heir, his respect for Morgana’s discerning determination is understood by the community of Gryll Grange, and as a result, by the reader as well. Morgana is treated as an independent individual with full control over her life. On the contrary, Louisa is treated as a bartering token in the arrangement between Gradgrind and Bounderby. Due to her specific education, she knows nothing but to obey, having never developed a sense of self through the type of classical study and reflection that we see in Peacock’s characters. Morgana, on the other hand, possesses the value of intellect and morality herself, and also searches for it in her marital partner due to her educational experience.

Shifting to a more inclusive realm, I would like to examine Peacock’s commentary on education in terms of its systemic functioning. In terms of both male and female education, Peacock’s novels feature characters that undergo self-directed study; a stark contrast to Dickens’ and Hughes’s novels in which individuals follow a

predetermined curriculum, their own curiosities often sacrificed to a philosophical mode. In his novels, Peacock promotes the lifestyle of the autodidact while simultaneously dismissing the thinker who limits his own learning to the confines of a school room.

As J.B. Priestley writes in his book *Thomas Love Peacock*, the writer himself kept a rigorous schedule that consisted of “Latin and Greek in the morning, French in the afternoon, [and] Italian in the evening” (Priestley 8). Peacock never attended a university, instead “occupying a middle position between the desultory if enthusiastic reader and the close methodical scholar” (Priestley 9). As a proud self-taught man, Peacock seems to hold a particular sense of resentment toward those who limit their learning to formal schooling, specifically to the English university system. He “did seriously maintain that universities, at least in England, were futile where they were not definitely harmful in their influence, particularly where men of uncommon ability were concerned” (Priestley 9). In his introduction to *Gryll Grange*, George Saintsbury cites such discontent as a theme throughout Peacock’s work: “His antipathy to the English universities appears to have been one of the most enduring of his crazes, probably because it was always the most unreasonable” (Saintsbury 2).

Peacock often writes of the institution in a “bitter tone,” as Carl Van Doren notes in his book *The Life of Thomas Love Peacock*, describing the universities in *Crotchet Castle* as “a hundred years in knowledge behind all the rest of the world” (Van Doren 246). Such disillusionment appears in the character of Desmond as he reflects on his experiences as a university student:

My name is Desmond. My father...submitted to the greatest personal privations to procure me a liberal education in the hope that by these means he should live to see me making my way in the world...I profited little at the University as you will easily suppose. The system of education

pursued there appeared to me the result of a deep laid conspiracy against the human understanding, a might effort...to turn the energies of inquiring minds into channels where they will either stagnate in disgust or waste themselves in nugatory labour (*Crotchet Castle* 95).

Desmond claims that his university education, which he refers to as “the system,” has failed to harness a sense of true “human understanding,” to capitalize on the innate “energies of inquiring minds,” instead turning them “into channels” of “stagnat[ion]” and “nugatory labour”(*Crotchet Castle* 95). Desmond longs for a university model that encompasses intellectual development and purpose, yet instead finds an institution that stifles its students and quashes their natural curiosities. Such a statement echoes Hughes’s lament about Martin’s displacement in his public school setting. Peacock’s response seems to suggest that the only remedy for a dysfunctional education system is for the student to take matters into his own hands and pursue a course of self-directed study; a solution that is implied frequently in the dialogue of his characters.

Peacock’s criticism of education continues in *Gryll Grange* with specific attentiveness to national education. In chapter one Dr. Opimian claims “that the art of teaching everything except what be of use to the recipient is national education and that change for the worse is reform” (*Gryll Grange* 4). Peacock’s view of national education echoes Dickens’ argument against Jeremy Bentham and his opinions on “useful knowledge.” Here he insinuates that what is being taught, as a result of reform, is not what English students truly need for intellectual and moral growth. In *Gryll Grange*, Mr. Gryll accompanies Dr. Opimian’s comments with a sarcastic assessment of the nation’s progress in education. Imagining himself calling on spirits of the past, or “ancient specimens” as he refers to them, to give an appraisal of Victorian English educational reform, he says “...ask them what they think of us and our doings? Of our astounding

progress of intellect? Our march of mind? Our higher tone of morality? Our vast diffusion of education? Our art of choosing the most unfit man by competitive examination?" (*Gryll Grange* 7). Analyzing his inquiries concerning national education and the "march of mind," or organizations such as the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, we can infer his views of such movements as educational and philosophical failures. According to Crabbe, "Peacock...stood still against much of what he saw as the nineteenth century's 'march of mind,' to its relentless worship of progress" (*The noblest gift* 168). His use of the word "worship" in reference to the "'march of mind'" evokes an interesting point of contention in comparison to the type of "worship" that Falconer presents in his devotion to classical study.

In reading about Peacock's pride in his background as an autodidact, his dissidence against the "'march of mind'" is, on the other hand, somewhat surprising. His disapproval of Lord Henry Brougham and the educational changes he fostered is certainly no secret, as he frequently satirizes the politician in his work. Yet why would Peacock, a man who seemingly favored self-education himself, hold such ill-will toward the political figure who established such opportunities for the middle class? Why would he scoff at the developments that would allow for a greater population to embrace the opportunities that he championed for himself? If "the principal object of education is to communicate to the youthful mind that love of mental and moral improvement, which will continue to act with a steady and permanent impression when no longer directed by the hand of the preceptor," then why would Peacock mock a society that essentially promoted self-directed study? Revisiting his prospectus within the context of such questions, we see his support for education as it applies to certain curricula only. Delving further into this

passage, we see that Peacock is particular about the “knowledge” that one obtains as well as the conditions under which one embarks on such study. He recommends “an intimate acquaintance with the poets, philosophers, and historians of antiquity” and asserts that such a curriculum should be undertaken “amongst a limited number of pupils, not so small as to exclude emulation, nor so numerous as to prevent the most sedulous attention to any individual of the establishment” (*Prospectus*, para. 6). He “proposes [that one]...receive eight pupils, in a beautiful retirement in the county of Westmoreland, at 100Gs. per annum” and notes that such students “will be educated in the religion of the established church, and the same attention will be paid to their health and morals as to the improvement of their minds” (*Prospectus*, para. 7). Peacock’s stipulations for his ideal are clear--so what qualms could he have had with organizations such as the Mechanics’ Institutes of the working class?

In *Gryll Grange*, Peacock makes numerous slights against the unbalanced education, or in Victorian terms, programs of study that mainly focus on the sciences. His characters discuss how such an imbalance has redefined the concept of “wisdom.” Dr. Opimian cites that “wisdom” is now “used in a parliamentary sense,” implying that the idea of “wisdom” has now come under government determination (*Gryll Grange* 4):

It is not like any other wisdom. It is not the wisdom of Socrates, nor the wisdom of Solomon. It is the wisdom of Parliament. It is not easily analysed or defined; but it is very easily understood. It has achieved wonderful things by itself, and still more when Science has come to its aid. Between them they have poisoned the Thames, and killed the fish in the river. A little further development of the same wisdom and science will complete the poisoning of the air, and kill the dwellers on the banks (Peacock 4)

Dr. Opimian’s assertions present a chilling indictment of governmental authority in educational reform. He describes “the wisdom of Parliament” as an unfamiliar and rather

troubling new entity. It is a difficult abstraction to “define,” but one that is, simultaneously, “very easily understood.” Upon close reading of his description, Parliament appears as a creeping influence over the nation’s understanding of not just “useful knowledge,” but the “Capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgement in the choice of means and ends” (*OED Online*). Peacock’s use of the word “wisdom” functions as a euphemism, seemingly utilized by Parliament itself, in its efforts to reform education. Such a euphemism has blindly led supporters to the “poison[ing]” of the Thames, the longest river in England, a symbolic destruction of a nation’s resource.

Dr. Opimian continues, suddenly referring to “wisdom” as a personification, calling it “The Wisdom” as he describes its pestilential power:

The Wisdom has ordered the Science to do something. The Wisdom does not know what, nor the Science either. But the Wisdom has empowered the Science to spend some millions of money; and this, no doubt, the Science will do. When the money has been spent, it will be found that the something has been worse than nothing. The Science will want more money to do some other something, and the Wisdom will grant it (*Gryll Grange* 4).

Here we see a void in terms of humanity. Both “The Wisdom” and “the Science” appear as inhuman forms, operating blindly in their designation of government funds. In personifying these nouns, Peacock presents us with an unsettling absence, offering imagery suggestive of machines. Like Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times*, Dr. Opimian warns us of the effects of such relentless authority. He predicts “it will be found that the something has been worse than nothing” (*Gryll Grange* 4). Analyzing his prediction, we see a sense of urgency and desperation in his tone. Upon close reading, it seems as though Peacock saw the insistence upon scientific study as a significant threat to the sustainability of the humanities.

In his book *Science, Religion, and Education in Britain, 1804-1904*, N.W. Saffin describes the transformation of education in the scientific age from the publication of Bentham's *Chrestomathia* in 1816 through H. Spencer's essay titled "What Knowledge is of Most Worth?" in 1859: "Henry Brougham's works on the sciences are perfectly typical of the age. He had...been a prominent patron of the London Mechanics' Institute" and "[his] *Practical Observations upon the Education of the People* made it clear that religion and society would both benefit if science were more widely diffused" (Saffin 169). Bentham and Brougham considered scientific study to be "the highest of all gratifications of learning" and "our recognition of God's design-plan" (Saffin 170). Comparing the hierarchical regard for subjects among Peacock, Bentham, and Brougham, we see a clear divergence of opinion. Bentham and Brougham proclaimed the sciences to be the highest form of study, while Peacock clung to his beloved classics. Considering the vigor with which the middle class took to the Mechanics' Institutes, we can see how Peacock could view his advocacy for classical education as a losing battle.

Bentham and Brougham's argument was well-supported by others who saw the need for a changing educational model that moved away from the classics. J.T. Gray, a Utilitarian and critic of grammar school curricula, "praise[d] the classics for their effect on 'the capabilities of the mind'--the refinement of taste, the enlargement of conception, the tendencies counteracting narrowness of opinion" yet "condemn[ed] the 'exclusiveness of classics' at the expense of geography, chronology and modern history" (Saffin 179). In 1836 Thomas Wyse, MP, wrote about "the inadequacy of classicism to meet the needs of the time" and in 1859 Spencer worked to show "how the practical applications of chemistry, geology, [and] biology" altered people's lives. He argued that

“scientific culture [was] the proper preparation” for a productive role in society and claimed that “Science could exercise the memory far more than the classics” (Saffin 199). Thus contextualizing Peacock’s work within an age of a narrowing focus on scientific study, we can see how he would resent the “vast diffusion of education” happening around him.

Furthermore, underlying such attentiveness to science was a shift in thinking regarding the purpose of education. With talk of “proper preparation” and “practical application,” we see the ultimate goal of education to be centered on vocational training. Critics such as Gray, Wyse, and Spencer make no mention of Peacock’s “pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge” (*Prospectus*, para. 3). In fact, consideration of the “pleasure” of learning seems to be far from the “purpose” of “useful knowledge.” In the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “useful” is defined as “capable of being put to good use; suitable for use; advantageous, profitable, beneficial” (*OED Online*).

In 1846 the term “useful” appears in *Imaginary Conversations* from *The Works of Walter Savage Landor*: “We are not always to consider in our disquisitions what is pleasantest, but sometimes what is usefulest” (qtd. in *OED Online*). Here we see a distinct dichotomy in terms of the relationship between “pleasure” and “usefulness” that appeared fairly early on in the Victorian era. What is pleasurable is not considered to be useful and vice versa. Evaluating this statement further we see a deeper implication pertaining to self-sacrifice as well. Landor’s proverb suggests the idea that to surpass what is “pleasant” to one’s sentiments and to pursue what is “useful” serves a higher purpose to society. His use of the personal pronouns “we” and “our” suggest a sense of duty to the larger collective. The message is clear: It is more virtuous to sacrifice pleasure

for utility. Such a choice represents the difference between the self-centered and the selfless servants to society; in essence, a choice between low and high morality.

Out of all the shifts in focus on vocational training in Victorian educational reform, no implementation of instruction made this more apparent than the administration of the Competitive Examination. As mentioned in the glossary of terms in this thesis, the Competitive Examination was a multi-subject test that came about between 1850 and 1870 during the emergence of national education, designed to prevent abuses in public office and utilized in schools, universities, and government services to determine one's qualification for a vocation. Peacock was by no means secretive about his disapproval of the change, and subsequently made it the focus of *Gryll Grange*. Indeed, discussion of the Competitive Examination pervades the novel, and seems to serve as the scapegoat for the majority of society's issues in the characters' view. Dr. Opimian refers to the examination as "a recent exotic belonging to education" which Curryfin defines as:

Questions which can only be answered by the parrotings of a memory crammed to disease with all sorts of heterogeneous diet [that] can form no test of genius, taste, judgment, or natural capacity. Competitive Examination takes for its *norma* 'It is better to learn many things ill than one thing well'; or rather: 'It is better to learn to gabble about everything than to understand anything' (*Gryll Grange* 146).

Curryfin's description of Victorian learning as "parrotings of a memory crammed to disease" evokes images of Dickens' school of Coketown. One can almost hear the mantra of "Fact! Fact! Fact!" resonating from the Peacockian character's mouth. His depiction of "parrotings of a memory" resembles the character of Bitzer regurgitating his facts on horses like a well-oiled machine. Similar to the "root[ing] out" of children's imaginations and innate curiosities, Peacock's portrayal of the Competitive Examination as a "disease" that overpowers one's "natural capacity" connotes images of a foreign agent acting on the

mind and body, as though such a reform is a contaminant infecting education with its sickening defects. It is a “diet” that is not meant to nourish, but to stuff. In essence, his qualms with the Competitive Examination lie in its superficiality. Much like the “expensive,” “complicated” and “superficial education” he writes about in *Crotchet Castle*, the Competitive Examination drives one to memorize, not to learn, and to commit to memory only what is superficial in one’s study. As he explains in his prospectus, his sorrow lies in the consideration of one’s education as a program to be “finished.” As such, a reform that trains its students to “learn many things ill [rather] than one thing well” is the antithesis to his philosophy.

In *Gryll Grange*, the characters discuss their misgivings concerning the Competitive Examination over dinner and perform their satire in an Aristophanic comedy. Highlighting the system’s seeming failure to properly determine the correct vocation for its participants, the play features several scenes in which perfectly qualified candidates are denied “victory” due to groundless criteria (*Gryll Grange* 218). In one specific scene we see the “spirits all illustrious in their day but all appearing as in the days of their early youth before their renown was around them” (*Gryll Grange* 218): “They were all subjected to competitive examination and were severally pronounced disqualified for the pursuit in which they had shone” (*Gryll Grange* 218). Among the spirits

came one whom Circe recommended to the examiners as a particularly promising youth. He was a candidate for military life. Every question relative to his profession he answered to the purpose. To every question not so relevant he replied that he did not know and did not care. This drew on him a reprimand. He was pronounced disqualified and ordered to join the rejected who were ranged in a line along the back of the scene (*Gryll Grange* 218)

Peacock depicts the Competitive Examination as a system comprised of an authority that fails to act on reason. Despite the candidate's "promise" and ability to "answer" questions related to "military life" "to purpose," he is disposed of due to his show of disrespect toward an irrational jurisdiction. His admittance to a "line" of "the rejected" implies a failure within the system. In this commentary Peacock suggests that contemporary educational reform is deficient on a mass scale. If so many with "promise" are denied "victory," what does this say about the ones who succeed?

In many ways, *Gryll Grange* reads like the last rites of his educational ideal. While emerging emphasis on scientific study threatens to rule out the classics, and the Competitive Examination promotes a narrow definition of "useful knowledge," the characters in Peacock's work continue to study out of a deep respect and appreciation for classical literature, almost to the point of worship. Within the idyllic castles and abbeys of Peacock's novels, education exists not as a stage of life to be "finished," but as a deep love affair that lasts a lifetime. Such a love affair with education becomes personified in the relationship between Falconer and his imagined ideal woman, St. Catharine, the patron saint of "beauty, learning and discourse" (*Gryll Grange* 40). Falconer lives out his days devoted to the arts, literature, music, Classicism and chastity, worshipping "...the saint [who]...presents to [his] mind the most perfect ideality of physical, moral, and intellectual beauty" (*Gryll Grange* 61). His regard for St. Catharine is a continuation of the Peacockian heroine that we see in his earlier novels in characters such as Anthelia, Lady Clarinda, and Susannah Touchandgo. Peacock's incorporation of the "patroness of young maidens and female students" puts forth a new consideration of the Victorian

female as a strong, independent, well-educated, and moral character, and also suggests a symbolic motive behind Peacock's writing of *Gryll Grange* as well (*Catholic Online*).

The story of St. Catharine features a virgin martyr who is persecuted due to her heretical insistence on truth and justice. One wonders if, in the midst of the age of scientific study, Peacock saw himself as a heretic among worshippers of the church of "useful knowledge," the organizations where members would congregate to honor their own conceptions of the "divine plan." Examining the writings of critics of classical education, one wonders if Peacock saw the persecution of his own cherished ritualistic educational practices. *Gryll Grange* reads as a desperate attempt to revive a course of study that seems to be disappearing with the onset of the Competitive Examination, where "truth" is determined by a Utilitarian authority and "justice" is "pronounced" by a panel of "examiners" (*Gryll Grange* 218).

While Peacock's depiction of the fantastical relationship between Falconer and St. Catharine seemingly represents the idolization of learning, it also functions as a commentary on the role of imagination in one's education. Falconer worships his studies, yet his indulgence in the fictional world inhibits him from living in reality. His adoration of "the most perfect ideality of physical, moral and intellectual beauty" prevents him from accepting the imperfect materiality of Morgana Gryll. Indeed, *Gryll Grange* shows us the drawbacks of relying too heavily on one's imagination. Falconer's "ideality" does not exist, just as Peacock's ideal "disposition [which] is most effectively promoted by an intimate acquaintance with the poets, philosophers, and historians of antiquity" does not exist in an age of rote memorization and the Competitive Examination.

Just as Falconer struggles between his imagined perfection and imperfect reality, Peacock, too, seemingly struggled with his own worship of Classicism and its diminishing role in a world that was quickly embracing science and technology. Through Falconer's words, we hear Peacock's struggle: "We are all born to disappointment. It is as well to be prospective. Our happiness is not in what is, but in what is to be. We may be disappointed in our everyday realities, and if not, we may make an ideality of the unattainable, and quarrel with Nature for not giving what she has not to give. It is unreasonable to be so disappointed, but it is disappointment not the less" (*Gryll Grange* 20). As Dr. Opimian attempts to show him the surrounding beauty, Falconer continues to mourn the loss of a world that he cherishes:

Very beautiful for the actual present--too beautiful for the probable future. Some day or other the forest will be disforested; the deer will be either banished or destroyed; the wood will be either shut up or cut down. Here is another basis for disappointment. The more we admire it now, the more we shall regret it then. The admiration of sylvan and pastoral scenery is at the mercy of an Enclosure Act, and instead of the glimpse of a Hamadryad, you will some time see a large board warning you off the premises under penalty of rigour of law (*Gryll Grange* 30).

In this passage, Peacock suggests a diminution of the pastoral; a destruction of the natural state of England due to restrictions by its own government power. Again we see the implication of an uncontrollable authority cutting off the individual from his opportunity for "the admiration of sylvan and pastoral scenery." In essence, the individual is denied indulgence in his "natural" curiosities and the pleasure that accompanies such an experience.

Observing the trajectory of his commentary on educational reform and the way in which Falconer ultimately gives up his fantasy for marriage with Miss Gryll, one may wonder if Peacock wrote his last novel as a surrender of the imagination and the

educational ideal that he held. Peacock seems to be asking us if what he values will survive in the future, and if it does, will it be appreciated as he has had the opportunity to appreciate it? Will learning become about rote memorization, facts, science, technology, and the Competitive Examination, or will it strive to embrace passion and curiosity at its core? Much like Dickens, Peacock's novel serves as cautionary tale to an education system that is increasingly embracing standardization as its model at the expense of its participants' humanity.

While authorities were gaining more and more power in dictating *how* and *what* English citizens were studying, Peacock saw a growing loss of passion, authenticity, and intrinsic motivation when it came to learning. He lamented the shift in priorities that he saw when it came to prescribed curricula. In his view, people no longer read or studied for intellectual growth or personal improvement; instead, they learned in order to "finish their education"--a concept that he saw as a tragic misconception. From paper currency to national education, Peacock challenged his readers to question the changes that were happening around them and the consequences these reforms would have on society and the individual. Ultimately, Peacock was worried about the fate of his country and shared this anxiety with his fellow writers. Dawson places Peacock in the context of his contemporaries:

If he knew of political unrest and social injustice in earlier England, he looked back with reverence at its intact social fabric, its cohesive and meaningful life. The dream was a common one, shared by writers as disparate as Joseph Ritson, Wordsworth, and Scott. Even radicals like Hazlitt and Hunt subscribed to it in part. Essentially it represented a gilding of history and repugnance with its barren inheritance (Dawson 119)

Peacock's "reverence" for an "intact social fabric" is apparent in the choices he makes for his settings and plots. The title of each of his novels is the name of the domicile where his

characters congregate to share in a discourse about the state of English life. Peacock's characters do not learn in a school room, but in the domestic sphere. As a result, learning happens organically through social relationships, similar to the Arnoldian model. In this way, an "intact social fabric" is necessary for learning, which in turn makes for a "meaningful life." As he witnessed changes in Victorian education, Peacock feared the disintegration of such "cohesive[ness]" as education and standardization slowly became synonymous.

Examining the educational philosophies presented in his novels, we see a call for reconsideration of what constitutes "useful knowledge," in addition to the ways in which such knowledge is gained. Not limited to the content in one's curriculum, Peacock asks the reader to evaluate the purpose and method behind one's study. In *Hard Times*, the student's purpose is to become a "fact" machine; in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, a moral citizen who can recite Latin from memory. Yet in Peacock's novels, characters, both male and female, refer to their education with fondness, as if the very time spent in one's study is indistinguishable to meeting with an old friend. Such passion for learning is not readily apparent in either of the two novels previously mentioned in this thesis.

Throughout *Gryll Grange*, Peacock seems to wrestle with the idyllic world of his imagination and the reality of the Victorian era. As Priestley writes, "He could not accept the world and he could not begin to mend it; he could not help being drawn to the idealists and makers of systems and he could not help discovering how inadequate they were" (Priestley 108). In Falconer's character we see an attempt to preserve a bygone era and a love for classical learning that is so powerful, it proposes the possibility of one living one's life solely through the imagination. In the manner of Dickens, Peacock

challenges his readers to think critically about their society and to contemplate deeply the idea of “progress” as it is defined by figures of authority. Observing the way in which his characters participate in such discourse at the dinner table, we can gather that Peacock saw the notion of progress as an ongoing dialogue that would continue well beyond his literary career.

Chapter V

Conclusion

In his autobiography, Charles Darwin writes about the “Atrophy of Imagination in a Scientist,” describing the “great pleasure” he once took from reading the works Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, and the “intense delight” he felt in reading Shakespeare (Ford and Monod 311). As a result of “twenty or thirty years” of scientific study, he reports experiencing “a curious and lamentable loss of the higher aesthetic tastes” as his “mind seem[ed] to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts” (Ford and Monod 311). Bemoaning the “atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend,” he asserts: “if I had to live my life again I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week” so as “the parts of my brain now atrophied could thus have been kept active through use” (Ford and Monod 311). His final statement in the passage summarizes the message that I have deduced in my study of Peacock, Dickens, and Hughes: “The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature” (Ford and Monod 311). Undoubtedly, I cannot think of a more fitting culmination than Darwin’s hard-learned truth.

This study set out to examine the varying perspectives on public and private education, and educational reform in the Victorian novel. Analyzing the relationships between characters within each novel, in addition to the narrative arc within the various plots, we see how one’s education plays a significant role in the motivations, moral

development and psychological well-being of a character, contributing to the overall trajectory of one's life. While this thesis analyzed the connection between individual characters' schooling and their progression into adulthood, this study also investigated the reciprocal relationship between education systems and societal culture. Like any political institution, education both shapes and is shaped by the culture that it serves. By examining a society's educational model, we are able to deduce a society's values.

In order to establish a clear set of Victorian values through which I would analyze the three novels, I began with an examination of Peacock's little-known Prospectus on classical education. In his essay, he calls for an education system that works to preserve pleasure and passion for self-improvement as the "principle objects" of study. Citing a classical education as the primary source for the development of such ideals, Peacock totes the importance of the humanities in a rapidly changing age of scientific inquiry. His rather narrow insistence causes one to question what it is exactly about the humanities that Peacock believes is so essential to a healthy society. Observing his frequent references to earlier eras in conjunction with the lamenting tone in his writings, one sees an underlying appreciation for one's literary heritage and the value of living a ponderous life as the ultimate benefits to receiving a classical education.

Peacock covets a curriculum that reflects the essence of the human condition to its students, allowing for deep contemplation of the quandaries that make up one's life. He believes in the act of sharing stories; of maintaining a course of study that can be preserved among numerous civilizations and generations. Exploring the concept of classical education through such a lens, we see a definitive answer to the question: "What constitutes useful knowledge?" To Peacock, that which is useful is that which connects

across origins and ages, and in essence, creates a community of familiarity. Peacock seemingly longs for a culture that shares in the knowledge of a particular set of stories and philosophies. In the diminution of classical education, Peacock sees the diminution of a community

In *Hard Times*, Dickens works to expose the toxic effects of a Utilitarian education on the community, or societal culture of Coketown. Due to an educational model that only allows for the recitation of facts, the culture of Coketown becomes synonymous with tyranny, repression, disconnection, and isolation--the antithesis of community through education. His decision to set the first scene of the novel within a school room in which the indoctrination of young children takes place attests to the impact of such a system on a society's beliefs, decisions, and actions. The novel is a poignant commentary on the importance of consideration for the values enacted in educational reform due to their substantial effects on a community. As examined in the second chapter of this thesis, Gradgrind's insistence on factual memorization robs the school children of Coketown of the heritage that both Peacock and Dickens ostensibly harbor in their writings. By attempting to replace the children's propensity for "fancy" with "fact," forbidding them from recounting stories of any kind--poetic, fictional or nonfictional--Gradgrind deprives the youth of a heritage that Peacock and Dickens subscribe to as not only their vocation, but as a fundamental element in a society's sense of identity.

In *Tom Brown's Schooldays* we see a direct relationship between educational and cultural values in Dr. Arnold's influence on Rugby School and the creation of a middle-class gentleman ideal. Researching the public school climate prior to the implementation

of Arnoldian pedagogy, we see several indications of a more individualistic culture with multiple accounts of school-wide bullying and a vividly apparent disdain for authority. As they appear in Hughes's novel, Dr. Arnold's reforms--which included pairing older students with younger ones in mentorships, reviving the practice of headmasters delivering weekly sermons, and an emphasis on the "Rugby identity"--led to a renewed version of the public school boy as an upstanding, morally and emotionally competent gentleman of character. While *Hard Times* depicts an education system's potentially harmful effects on societal culture, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* shows improvements that can be made in a society from the same institution. Peacock, Dickens, and Hughes remind us that to reform an education system is to inevitably reform a societal culture, for better or for worse.

Continuing on to question the impact of Victorian educational reform on societal culture, Peacock's *Gryll Grange* depicts the topic of "usefulness" in education as it is taken to an extreme. Centering on the emergence of the Competitive Examination, the novel shows how the application of the term "useful" to school curricula can have pestilential effects on a culture of learning. In considering the question "What constitutes useful knowledge?" we also hear its antithesis: "What is *not* useful knowledge?" or, in regard to Peacock's quandary, "What is *no longer* useful knowledge?" *Gryll Grange*'s mockery of the Competitive Examination presents an underlying fear that pervades Peacock's work: that the classical education is dwindling in value. Peacock's final novel can be read both as a eulogy to a bygone era and a last attempt to restore devotion to "mental and moral improvement" through a study of the humanities for which he advocated throughout his literary career.

Contextualizing *Hard Times*, *Tom Brown's School Days*, and *Gryll Grange* within philosophical and educational movements such as Utilitarianism, Arnoldian pedagogy, and the standardization of education, we see the effects of such developments on topics such as the role of morality, social relationships, imagination, and curiosity within education systems. As we see in each of the novels I have analyzed in this thesis, Victorian educational reform posed a threat to the cultivation of such themes I have presented here. As a result, the message garnered from these works is clear: An unbalanced education that is solely based on fact and standardization, to the exclusion of the humanities, is a neglectful education that hinders students' moral, intellectual, and social development.

The underlying conception of standardization is the very picture we receive in Dickens' school room in which children are referred to and treated as "little vessels" that are manufactured to "finish" their education. As we see with the Gradgrind children, standardization leads to a treatment of the individual as less than human, devoid of emotional and psychological depth, or as we acknowledge in the humanities, stories. In *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Dr. Arnold reforms Victorian education by recognizing the importance of honoring and creating stories, giving his students numerous opportunities for adventure and male bonding. Hughes, along with Peacock, reminds us that it is not enough to simply memorize the Vulgus, finish the examination or complete one's schooling; education, if it is to be considered truly "useful," must emanate from a sense of purpose toward self-improvement. As I have outlined in this thesis, Peacock, Dickens, and Hughes call not only on their Victorian audiences, but on future societies to consider

the merits of curiosity, imagination, passion, and connection in their determination of “usefulness” in educational reform.

Conducting a close reading of the novels through this methodology allows us to view the literary contributions of Thomas Love Peacock--a writer who is still relatively unknown within the canon--alongside the more distinguished reputations of Dickens and Hughes. In addition, an examination of these works offers us insight into the history of educational reform and its prevalence in the novel--an area that, I argue, is in great need of further inquiry in the field of Victorian studies. A continued exploration of the themes I have presented within Victorian literature will have implications not only for the literary world, but to those in the contemporary field of education as well.

Glossary of Terms

In an effort to achieve clarity in this thesis, I have included a definition of terms:

educational reform: changes in private and public education systems that consisted of a shift in curricula from a focus on Classical literature, including poetry and the study of Latin and Greek, to a focus on the sciences during the Victorian era with emerging emphasis on the Competitive Examination

public school: in North America, schools that are supported by public funds. In England, this type of school is referred to as a private school

private school: in North America, schools that are supported by private individuals or organizations. In England, this type of school is referred to as a public school

Benthamite Utilitarian Philosophy: an educational curriculum featured in Jeremy Bentham's book *Chrestomathia*, written in 1816, in which he proposes a system that encompasses what he views as "useful knowledge," In it he prescribes the study of reading, writing and arithmetic with a heavy focus on the sciences in particular (Saffin 167, 168). As a result of his emphasis on sciences, such as mineralogy, botany, zoology, hydrostatics and hydraulics, among several others, theorists have pondered the question in regard to Bentham's ideal: "...is education to be a matter of training or a matter of factual accumulation?" (Saffin 168)

Arnoldian pedagogy: teaching methods utilized by Thomas Arnold in his days as headmaster of Rugby School that would go on to greatly influence private school as an institution. His practices could be characterized by "trust in the Christian faith and a liberal culture as the foundation stones of a satisfactory education" in which he used "the school chapel services and his own sermons, the study of the classics and the humanities"

as “central to life and work at Rugby where the aim was to produce Christian gentlemen” (Evans 61).

Competitive Examination: multi-subject tests that came about between 1850 and 1870 during the emergence of national education, designed to prevent abuses in public office that were utilized in schools, universities, and government services to determine one’s qualification for a vocation.

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