

# ***Surviving the Capital: A Darwinian Analysis of Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South***

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## **ABSTRACT**

The rapid progression of industrialism and capitalism in the Victorian era influenced the authors to reflect the changing human condition in their literary works. Questions about the borders of the relationship between capital owners and their workers, terrible conditions of the workplaces and the insignificance of human life started to be discussed widely in the Victorian literature. Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854) similarly reflects the radical contrast between the industrialized cities and the rural life through the eyes of the protagonist Margaret. Margaret's travel to an industrialized town and her curious gazes on the working-class people when she encounters them for the first time emphasize how industrialization trifles with human life, as Margaret and the working-class people observe each other as if they belong to different species. The confrontation of two alienated groups who examine each other in Gaskell's novel bears a resemblance to Charles Darwin's encounter with the indigenous people who live primitively and try to survive in the wild nature in *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839). To provide reasons for the alienation effect between the two groups, Marxist terms base, superstructure and hegemony will be used and explained. Furthermore, depending on the parallelism between the indigenous people and the working-class people whose only concern is to survive under harsh conditions, this article is going to connect Darwin's theories of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) with Gaskell's novel. In accordance with Darwin's theory, it will be pointed out that while physically weak characters cannot adapt to the harsh living conditions and gradually die one by one, Margaret and Thornton get married because they are

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preserved as the fittest members to create stronger offsprings for the next generation.

**Key Words:** *Victorian, North and South, Darwin, Marxism, Base and Superstructure, On the Origin of the Species*

## ÖZ

Victoria döneminde sanayiciliğin ve kapitalizmin hızlı ilerlemesi, yazarları eserlerinde insanlığın değişen vaziyetini yansıtmaya teşvik etti. Sermaye sahipleri ve çalışanları arasındaki ilişkinin sınırları, iş yerlerinin korkunç koşulları ve insan yaşamının önemsizliği ile ilgili sorunlar Victoria dönemi edebiyatında yaygın olarak tartışılmaya başlandı. Elizabeth Gaskell'in Kuzey ve Güney'i (1854) benzer şekilde, sanayileşmiş şehirler ile kırsal yaşam arasındaki radikal kontrastı kahramanı Margaret'in gözünden yansıtıyor. Margaret'in sanayileşmiş bir şehre taşınması ve ilk kez karşılaştıklarında işçi sınıfından insanlara karşı meraklı bakışları, Margaret ve işçilerin birbirlerini farklı türlere aitmiş gibi gözlemlemeleri sanayileşmenin insan yaşamını nasıl önemsizleştirdiğini vurgulamaktadır. Gaskell'in romanında birbirlerini inceleyen iki yabancı grubun çatışması, Charles Darwin'in Tazı Yolculuğu (1839) eserinde seyahat grubunun vahşi doğada hayatta kalmaya çalışan yerli insanlarla karşılaşmasına benzer. İki grup arasındaki yabancılaşma etkisinin nedenlerini ortaya sunmak için, Marksist terimler altyapı, üstyapı ve hegemonya kullanılarak açıklanacaktır. Ayrıca, yerli halk ile işçi sınıfının hayatta kalma mücadelesi arasındaki paralellığe dayanarak, Darwin'in en güçlüünün hayatta kalması ve varoluş mücadelesi teorileri (1859) ile Gaskell'in romanı arasında bağlantı kurulacaktır. Darwin'in teorisine paralel olarak, romanda fiziksel olarak zayıf karakterlerin sert yaşam koşullarına uyum sağlayamayıp tek tek yok olmalarına, Margaret ve Thornton'ın ise yaşam koşullarına en iyi ayak sağlayan bireyler olarak evlenmelerine ve gelecek nesil için daha güçlü yavrular üretebilecek olma potansiyellerine dikkat çekilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Victoria Dönemi, Kuzey ve Güney, Darwin, Marksizm, Altyapı ve Üstyapı, Türlerin Kökeni*

## INTRODUCTION

The poverty and unemployment experienced in the Victorian Era have been popular issues which are widely discussed in many different literary works such as Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*, George Eliot's *Felix Holt, the Radical* and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and *North and South*. The rise of industrialism and capitalism caused enormous changes in people's lives and

influenced every aspect of life. The increase in population as opposed to the lack of employment opportunities urged people to move from the countryside to the industrial towns, which brought about new serious social concerns such as poor housing conditions and severe poverty. In *The Victorian World*, Emma Griffin similarly suggests that “considerable change was occurring in rural areas throughout the nineteenth century, with a pronounced shift of workers out of agriculture into the service sector of the economy.” (Griffin, 2014, p. 103). In order to provide the daily needs of an ordinary family, even children had to work instead of going to school. The growing demand for jobs as opposed to the surplus population made it even harder for people to find a job and even if they did; they had to bear with grinding labour for very long hours. As stated by Jack Goldstone, in the 1800s the economy was significantly larger than the previous years, but there was a considerable rise in demographic growth too. “The outcome was an economy capable of feeding larger numbers, but not able to feed them very much better.” (Goldstone, 2002). Moreover, the invention of engines and machinery was also a challenge to the existence of the poor citizens, leaving no other choice for them other than working in the factories and mills even though they were abused or underpaid.

While the poor was battling with life and trying to survive under harsh living conditions, capital owners relished the perks of holding the socioeconomic power on their own. Though industrialism created a poor working-class at one extreme, at the other it enabled social mobility and gave rise to a new rich middle-class, which acquired wealth and power through their success in manufacturing and trade. Royden Harrison suggests that the decline in domestic production increased the number of “unskilled mass” and the distinction between the classes was revived, which consequently caused the employers to “enjoy greater social security than labourers” and “better prospects for upward mobility.” (Harrison, 1965, pp. 10-27). Such representation of the middle-class and their role in the expansion of the economy also marked a societal change, as the rise of the middle class depended on “the height and regularity of their earnings”, rather than a privileged state acquired by birth. (Harrison, 1965). Nevertheless, the rising middle-class and their self-made man principles prompted an ambitious competition environment to earn more money and to achieve more economic and social success for an upward mobility in society. This ambition, therefore, seemed to be the very reason why the working-class suffered under tough working conditions, as the aggressive attitude of the capital owners was more focused on their personal achievement “as far as property ownership was concerned”, rather than the conditions of the people working at their mills and factories (Harrison, 1965, pp. 33-34).

In *The Conditions of the Working-Class in England* (first published in 1845), Friedrich Engels demonstrates the pernicious human condition in England by

explaining his personal observations in order to draw attention to the social misery at the time. He claims that manufacture generates two different classes in general: the working-class and the middle class. However, he also adds that “the numerous petty middle-class of the ‘good old times’” have either lost their privileged position against manufacture and become a part of the poor workers, or they have adapted to the new social structure and found a place for themselves among the rich capitalists. (Engels, 1987, pp. 101-102). In the industrial towns, the difference between the working-class and the rich capitalists is so great and the distribution of the economic welfare is so unfair that, they exist in the same town completely as strangers. They do not even glance at each other and their only concern is to “keep to [their] own side of pavement” when they walk past each other (Engels, 1987, p. 106).

Engels proceeds his argument by criticizing the capital state which values the people who hold the means of production as the source of social welfare, yet which does not have the slightest interest in the condition of the poor. He finds it ironic that the capital owners consider providing opportunities to work in their factories as a favor, though they need the workers to enrich themselves. There is a mutual dependence between the two groups, yet the plain truth is not vocalized by anyone. The workers remain poor, and the rich get even richer thanks to the labor of the working-class. To emphasize this “hypocrisy”, Engels quotes a letter written to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*:

MR. EDITOR, For some time past our main streets are haunted by swarms of beggars, who try to awaken the pity of the passers-by in a most shameless and annoying manner, by exposing their tattered clothing, sickly aspect, and disgusting wounds and deformities...Why else do we pay such high rates for the maintenance of the municipal police, if they do not even protect us so far as to make it possible to go to or out of town in peace? I hope the publication of these lines in your widely- circulated paper may induce the authorities to remove this nuisance. (Engels, 1987, pp. 446-447)

As it is aptly written in the letter, the bourgeoisie regards it as a right not to see the condition of the poor in their towns, since they pay for the maintenance of the police. The harsh reality of the daily life on streets scares those who do not experience any financial difficulties. A certain part of bourgeoisie also seems to believe that the poor on the street can do anything to get financial help from the people they see outside, thus, they think that they are the ones who need protection, not the poor. The inhumane attitude towards the poor and the lack of philanthropy make it even harder for the poor to survive under these circumstances.

Although social issues, class struggles and the economic problems constitute a big portion of the daily life in the Victorian era, there were also other discoveries and developments that had a deep effect on science, knowledge, and philosophical thought in general. Through the mid-1800s Charles Darwin posited a theory which offered the idea that the physical world had been continuously changing and as the living beings on earth, we were the products of these changes. Even without any long explanation, the expanded title of his book on the origin of the species is very telling: “On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life” (Darwin, 1859). In other words, what he mainly argues in his book is that, in the continuous struggle for survival in the natural world, the species that are reproductively successful can be regarded as the fittest because they do not fall victim to natural selection. Charles Darwin explains the process as the following in his own words:

We have reason to believe... that a change in the conditions of life, by specially acting on the reproductive system, causes or increases variability; and in the foregoing case the conditions of life are supposed to have undergone a change, and this would manifestly be favourable to natural selection, by giving a better chance of profitable variations occurring; and unless profitable variations do occur, natural selection can do nothing. (Darwin, 2009, p. 82)

In literature, one of the novels that reflects both the industrial Victorian society by emphasizing the difference between the two classes and the influence of the scientific developments of the era is Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1854). Gaskell’s protagonist is a young woman named Margaret Hale, who moves from the countryside to an industrial town because of her father’s financial state. Neither Margaret nor her parents belong to the working-class. Nevertheless, they cannot be ascribed as an upper middle-class family either. Margaret’s in-between social status enables her to observe the two extremes in the industrial town Milton. Her first encounter with the working-class mirrors the alienation of the poor from the society, as Margaret and the workers observe each other as if they belong to different species. Similarly, Margaret’s initial impression of the capital owner Thornton is mainly about how different they are; Thornton is arrogant and reckless towards the other people while Margaret genuinely cares about them.

In *North and South*, the detailed depiction of the exclusion of the poor from social welfare and the inability of the working-class members to survive under harsh living conditions stand as the social reality of the Victorian time. Depending on the description of the struggle for survival in the novel, it is possible to suggest that surviving in the new industrial world depends highly on being able to adapt to the new economic condition which replaces manual labor by mass production

in mills and factories. Accordingly, to establish the connection between the dominant narrative of class struggle and the strain for survival in *North and South*, this article is going to refer to Marxist theory and two of Charles Darwin's works: *The Voyage of the Beagle* and *On the Origin of the Species*. After pointing out the basis of the difference between classes using Marxist terms base, superstructure, and hegemony, it will be argued in the last chapter that it is possible to find parallelism between the alienation of the indigenous group to the voyage group in Darwin's *The Voyage of the Beagle*, and the alienation of the working class to Margaret in *North and South*. Moreover, it will be asserted that in *North and South*, it is possible to find traces of the theories proposed by Charles Darwin, such as the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. In the end, the analysis of the article will reveal that the narrative of the struggle for survival caused by the changing economic condition in the novel is a reflection of Darwin's biological theories on literature.

## **MARX'S CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY**

It is a well-known fact that Karl Marx shares Friedrich Engels' concerns on a society which have proliferated materialist interests after the Industrial Revolution. Marx and Engels have significantly contributed to sociology by their theory that society should not be studied with what humans think or say but rather with their economic conditions. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx argues that "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness." (Marx, 1859, p. 4). Therefore, according to Marx, consciousness does not depend on human nature. Instead, the economic conditions and the financial situation that a human being lives in constitute the human consciousness. In that sense, even the people living in the same society are constructed differently, depending on their financial power.

To explain his theory further, Marx introduces two terms he calls as base and superstructure. The term base corresponds to the economic structure of a society, including the means of production, changes in technology and industry, and how work is organized. Superstructure, on the other hand, is a term which refers to the human consciousness and all the ideological forms that influence human psyche such as literature, politics, art, or religion. In other words,

For Marxism, getting and keeping economic power is the motive behind all social and political activities including education, philosophy, religion, government, the arts, science, technology, the media and so on. Thus economics is the *base* on which the *superstructure* of social/political/ideological realities is built. (Tyson, 2006, p. 51)

According to Marx's critique, therefore, the difference in people's economic reality, or their base, is the main factor that creates the variety in superstructure as well. Base influences every aspect of life, as Marx explains that "the changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure." (Marx, 1859, p. 4). To give an example from history, different modes of production created different types of societies such as the agricultural society or the feudal society based on their economic reality.

On the other hand, later Marxist Raymond Williams extends Marx's theory by suggesting that within a society, there might be multiple groups (hegemonies) that are in tension with each other. In his book *Marxism and Literature*, he defines three hegemonies: dominant, residual and emergent. As the name also suggests, the dominant hegemony refers to the ruling class, while the residual "by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process" (Williams, 1977, p. 122). In other words, residual hegemony embraces the reflections of the past. Finally, emergent hegemony means "new [...] values, new practices, new relationships, and kinds of relationship are continually being created" (Williams, 1977, p. 123). Considering the Victorian society as an example, it would be possible to say that members of the middle-class belong to the dominant hegemony, while the members of the working-class who cannot get used to the change from artisanship to mass production belong to the residual hegemony. The prominent difference between the economic power of different hegemonies result in a class consciousness as well.

In short, each society or each group of people have their own methods to produce commodities. In capitalist societies like the Victorian society, however, the production of commodities requires a relationship between the working-class and the bourgeoisie. Owners of the capitals hire the labour power of the working-class in return for a weekly or monthly wage. Nonetheless, the amount of wage the workers receive in return for their labour is not an equal exchange. For most of the time, surviving on the wage that is received from the factory is not possible for a family. Therefore, while capital owners enjoy the highest profits, the working class go through a struggle for survival.

## **FROM NATURAL LAW TO SOCIAL LAW: DARWINISM AND MARXISM**

As mentioned before, Charles Darwin and Karl Marx were each prominent figures in their own field during the Victorian era, and the influence of their theories on literature will be closely examined in this article. Although there is not much evidence of the private relationship between the two, there is a general belief that Marx and Darwin support distinct ideas that are disconnected with each

other. However in “Marxism and Charles Darwin”, Gerald Runkle provides evidence that Darwin’s biological theories are actually favorable for Marxist doctrines. He quotes from one of Marx’s letters saying that Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species* “serves me [Marx] as the basis in natural science for the class struggle in history” (Runkle, 1961, p. 114). The parallelism between the struggle in the nature and the society is pointed out by Runkle again when he highlights a passage from Marx’s *Capital*, saying that “The social division of labour confronts [...] the coercion exercised upon them by the pressure of their reciprocal interests—just as in the animal kingdom the war of all against all maintains” (Runkle, 1961, p. 116).

Consequently, the suggested relationship between Darwinism and Marxism could be interpreted as the reflection of natural law on social law. While the theories of Darwin endeavors to enlighten the origin of species, Marxist theories make effort to reveal the bases of societies. Additionally, “the active power” for both of the theories is “the urge for survival: the organism seeks to preserve his life; man tries to wrest a living from nature” (Runkle, 1961, p. 118). As the species struggle in nature, different classes struggle with each other. These struggles end in new species and new social classes. Namely, “although Marxism was not significantly influenced by Darwin, it is *confirmed* by Darwin’s work” (Runkle, 1961, p. 118).

### **SURVIVING THE CAPITAL: REFLECTIONS OF DARWINISM IN NORTH AND SOUTH**

Aside from the important political changes in the Victorian era, the important discovery in science brought about by Charles Darwin contributed greatly to the understanding of human life: the theory of evolution and natural selection. According to Darwin, offsprings of living beings inherit different aspects of their parents. Therefore, it is not possible to mention stability and singularity in life. Over a period of time, these variations turn into a struggle for existence, since only the fittest ones can survive.

Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* can be regarded as a social problem novel about the political clash between classes, yet it can be also argued that the reason for this clash can be attributed to a financial struggle to survive, which demonstrates parallelism with the Darwinian struggle for existence in nature. In her article “Gaskell, Darwin and *North and South*”, Carol A. Martin states that “Gaskell was a cousin of Darwin, a fact to which she refers in a letter from 1851 in which she records his coming to dine and meet her.” (Martin, 1983, p. 93). Therefore, depending on Gaskell’s and Darwin’s acquaintance it is not surprising to find traces of Darwinism in *North and South*.

One of the parallelisms between Darwin's writings and *North and South* is the encounter between two groups of people who are alienated from each other, which, depending on the reflection of their economic conditions on their social lives, breeds an environment of observation. Darwin's *The Voyage of the Beagle* narrates his journey to an untamed land, where he meets a group of indigenous people, whom he calls "savages" because of their animalistic aspects. (Darwin, 2008, p. 64). He writes about the tribal rituals of the people they meet, their mimicry skills and quick acquisition of the behaviours of the voyage group, their considerable strength and sharp sight. The reason why Darwin gives such detailed descriptions of the indigenous people is to emphasize the gap between the two groups. The visitors come from an industrial background, while the indigenous group leads a primitive life that depends on hunting and agriculture. In Marxist terms, their base is undoubtedly different from the tribe that lives on an untamed land, which results in two distinct superstructures. Darwin seems to be favoring their own superstructure over the other, as he comments on the capacity of the other group in a proud and arrogant manner, saying that Jemmy, a member of the tribe who starts to mimic the voyage group, "was thoroughly ashamed of his countrymen." and the "savages... immediately perceived the difference between... ourselves." (Darwin, 2008, p. 191). The lack of technological and industrial progress in the base of the indigenous group causes a sense of superiority in the visitors, feeling themselves modern and developed.

On the other hand, Margaret's voyage to Milton, which has nothing in common with her hometown Helstone, allows her to get to know a new group of people: the working-class. In her hometown, Margaret does not see a radical difference between the lives of people of Helstone. In Milton, however, the difference between the members of the dominant hegemony and the workers is huge. Margaret sympathizes with the working-class and though their living conditions are closer to Darwin's indigenous people, she does not consider them to be savages. Instead, she sees the masters of the capitals as more savage than the poor, as the capital owners are responsible for the poor people's bad living conditions. To exemplify, when Bessy, a girl from the working-class, shouts "I could go mad, and kill yo', I could" in a delirium, Margaret does not feel threatened at all. (Gaskell, 1973, p. 101). She just kneels down by her and says "Bessy-we have a father in Heaven." (Gaskell, 1973, p. 101). On the other hand, when Mrs. Thornton heroically describes how she would throw a stone to the rioters and advises Margaret to "learn to have a brave heart", Margaret answers her with a pale face, dreading Mrs. Thornton's savage ambition against the working-class: "I would do my best... I do not know whether I am brave or not till I am tried; but I am afraid I should be a coward." (Gaskell, 1973, p. 116). While she is frightened by Mrs. Thornton's strong ambition, she can empathize with Bessy's

anger towards life, and witnessing the terrible conditions that Bessy and her family live in, Margaret understands that,

The public and private spheres that seemed so clear cut in her southern life, with their demarkation of gendered behaviour and the class divide it implicitly supports, cannot be sustained. Whether for man, or woman or for middle class or for poor the world of work cannot be held apart from the domestic home in Milton (Dredge, 2012, p. 85).

Margaret's affection and understanding towards the working-class, and her willingness to have conversations with them creates a mutual observation environment. As the name of the book suggests, the North and the South of the country are as distinct as two opposite poles. Just as Margaret is a foreigner to Milton, the people of Milton are foreign to the Southerners as well. Therefore, when Margaret looks at the dresses of people of Milton, and observes their "loud spoken" and "boisterous" behaviours, at the same time people in Milton observe her manners and her style. (Gaskell, 1973, p. 131). They admire Margaret for her "bonny face" and fashionable clothes, which makes Margaret "glad to think that her looks, such as they were, should have had the power to call up a pleasant thought." (Gaskell, 1973, p. 72). However, Margaret does not claim to be superior than the working-class due to their admiration. On the contrary, their compliments create a bond between the two.

Darwin's voyage group also becomes the object of curious gazes. When the group arrives at the land, Darwin thinks the difference between the indigenous people and his own group "is greater than between wild and domesticated animal" (Darwin, 2008, p. 188). The group is always amazed by the animalistic aspects of the indigenous people, but it is important to note that while Darwin's group is performing the act of observation, they are also being observed. Although Darwin compares them with wild animals, they are human beings and curious as much as other people. They try to learn new things from the voyage group by mimicing their motions and speech, "view[ing] [their] dancing" and even trying to learn how to waltz. (Darwin, 2008, p. 189). Considering all the given details about Darwin's and Margaret's encounter with an alienated group of people, it might be suggested that the description of such otherness is an eminent part of both narratives, since it reveals the similarity between the variation in nature and the diversity in social constructions, which makes up the basis for Darwin's renowned theory, survival of the fittest.

Regarding Margaret's observations on Milton, the parallelism between Darwin's theories of survival of the fittest, struggle for existence and the lives of people in *North and South* is a crucial topic to elaborate. Darwin's terms are aimed to explain the natural phenomenon, but adapting these ideas to the industrial world and its influence on the lives of the poor is possible. Just like the animals which

strive to survive in their own ecology, in the industrial town, the working-class needs to battle for their basic needs in order to be able to survive. Furthermore, the state of the industrial town makes it even more difficult to survive with its filthy air, dirty streets and severe working conditions. Carol Martin agrees that the situation in the industrial town is “worse than the state of nature” (Martin, 1983, p. 95).

In Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species*, the term struggle for existence is used “in a large and metaphorical sense” to explain “dependence of one being on another”. (Darwin, 2009, p. 62). To explain the term further, Darwin exemplifies what we see in the face of nature, “that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and [...] their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey” (Darwin, 2009, p. 62). In such an industrial town as Milton, the struggle for existence in the meaning of mutual dependence can be observed in social life. Capital owners and the working-class need each other; without the workers there cannot be any production, and without production, the workers cannot receive their wages. Although the two classes are entirely co-dependent on each other, there is a complete lack of communication between them. Late Marxist Raymond Williams remarks that Gaskell “writes in a city in which industrial production and a dominant market are the determining features and in which... there is the new hard language of class against class.” (Williams, 1973, p. 261). Depending on the difference between the economic circumstances of the middle-class and the working-class, they do not even see each other. In *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Friedrich Engels argues that each class has its own specific territory to “remove [the poor] from the sight of happier class.” (Engels, 1987, p. 24). Consequently, the lack of harmony between the capital owners and the working class reinforces the gap between them.

Margaret tries to reconcile the two classes in *North and South* by pointing out to the fact that they are co-dependent on each other. She emphasizes their mutual dependency with the farmers in the South. While talking to Higgins about what a strike is, Margaret asks:

Suppose they could not, or would not do the last; they could not give up their farms all in a minute, however much they might wish to do so; but they would have no hay, no corn to sell that year; and where would the money come from to pay the labourers’ wages the next? (Gaskell, 1973, pp. 32-33)

On the other hand, while talking to Mr. Thornton about his business, she offers another perspective to think about by saying “On the very face of it, I see two classes dependent on each other in every possible way, yet each evidently regarding the interests of the other as opposed to their own.” (Gaskell, 1973, p.

118). Her speech is justified when Thornton's business radically changes and gets worse because of the strike, and Higgings remains unemployed for such a long time that he cannot even meet his family's basic needs.

Another important term from Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* is the survival of the fittest. Darwin defines this term in his book as follows:

Variations... if they be in any degree profitable to the individuals of a species, in their infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to their physical conditions of life, will tend to the preservation of such individuals and will generally be inherited by the offspring. (Darwin, 2009, p. 61)

In other words, Darwin's definition of the term suggests that, among the members of the same species, the ones that can adapt to the living conditions in their environment best manage to survive. Because of the radical change in the world order due to industrialism, the drastic difference between the living conditions of the working-class and the capital owners, and the pollution of the cities, there is a parallelism between the term survival of the fittest with *North and South* from the beginning to the end of the novel. Depending on Darwin's definition, it would be possible to say that the weakest member among the people of Milton is Mrs. Hale. She is constantly ill for different reasons; the humid air, moving to a polluted town, living in bad conditions and more. She doesn't make any effort to adapt to the new environment, instead, she lingers in self pity and blames others for forcing her to move to Milton. Consequently, as the weakest link of the community she cannot escape the inevitable death in relation to Darwin's assertion that only the fittest may survive.

Similarly, Mr. Hale is a character who cannot remain strong against the radical changes in his life. In addition to the changes in his physical environment, Mr. Hale goes through a mental and psychological transformation due to his "smouldering doubts [about] the authority of the Church" (Gaskell, 1973, p. 34). Therefore, he leaves his title as the Vicar of Helstone, and moves to Milton with his family to work as a private tutor. With his resignation, Mr. Hale willingly embraces a new lifestyle, but at the same time he feels the burden of exposing his whole family to the same changes he needs to go through. After Mrs. Hale's death, he admits that "if [he] could have known how she would have suffered, [he] would undo it" but he does not think that "God endued [him] with over-much wisdom or strength" (Gaskell, 1973, p. 349). Not feeling strong enough to endure his suffering, he dies soon after his wife's decease.

Another weak character is Bessy. However, contrary to Mrs. Hale, Bessy endeavors to survive as she has a family to look after. Her working conditions affect her health poorly, her lungs are filled with the fluff that she inhales while

working. Though she is not fit for working in this kind of environment, she has no other choice since she needs to work to be able to help his father support their family. Additionally, she is so fed up with the life in Milton and she is so weak in spirit that she does not even feel sorry for her situation. Unfortunately her death occurs as obscurely as her life. Bessy's family do not even find a proper chance to lament for their daughter, as they have to return to work immediately.

On the other hand, Margaret and Thornton are the survivors of the industrial world. Although Margaret is as sad as her parents to move away from their calm, quite Southern town, she is capable of taking control over her emotions and making all the necessary organizations. Perhaps, Margaret's ability to control her emotions at critical times is her biggest strength. It provides her big advantages in various parts of the novel; when she deals with her sick mother, when she is stuck amongst the angry strikers, or when she is questioned by a police officer about Frederick's crime. She is actually concerned about all these things as much as anyone, but she can remain calm during the events, which would suggest from a Darwinistic perspective that she is more advantageous compared to the other members of her family. Her physical strength for struggle and her ability to keep herself vital make Margaret the fittest member of her family to endure problems.

Thornton's life is a harsher struggle for existence. As a young boy, his family's well-being depends on his survival, and later in his life, he also has to survive in the industrial world to rise amongst his rivals. He is successful in both, because Thornton is a hardworking man and he knows how to adapt to the changes in his life. When he tells the story of his early life, he says the reason why he could make himself a fortune is "no good luck, nor merit, nor talent, - but simply the habits of life which taught him to despise indulgences not thoroughly earned" (Gaskell, 1973, p. 85). So he suggests that if he could not adapt to the conditions of his new life and give up his indulgences, he would not be able to establish his own business, which is the source of his fortune. His flexibility for changing life conditions and strong will in business life renders him fit for survival. Similarly, Anderson argues that,

Thornton, a self-made man assumes that every person has the ability to raise him-or herself to a better position. He has brought his family from poverty to success, and thus believes he has the right to do with his capital what he pleases. (Anderson & Satalino, 2013, p. 111)

As the strongest members of their own families, Thornton's and Margaret's marriage can be interpreted in parallel with Darwin's survival of the fittest theory. In his theory, Darwin mentions that "individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others would have the best chance of surviving and of procreating their kind", which means nature tends to preserve "favourable variations" and reject "injurious variations" (Darwin, 2009, p. 81). As the reflection of this

preservation in the Darwinian sense, it would be possible to argue that two fittest members of the novel are preserved and matched in order to create stronger offsprings for the next generation. Carol A. Martin similarly interprets this marriage as a part of the survival theory by writing that “Gaskell concludes her treatment of survival by hinting at the sexuality and fruitfulness of the union of these two powerful individuals... In the novel as in the struggle in nature, ‘the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply.’ ” (Martin, 1983, pp. 104-105). Although Margaret and Thornton seem distant towards each other at the beginning of the novel, their physical and psychological resistance against the adversities of life bring them together. They both reveal that they consider each other as the superior kind, when Margaret says “Oh, Mr. Thornton. I am not good enough”, and Thornton replies by confessing his “deep feeling of unworthiness” (Gaskell, 1973, pp. 435-436). Accordingly, it could be argued that both Margaret and Thornton tend to match with someone whom they consider to be advantageous even though they are aware of the reaction they will get from their families, who will belittle their choice exclaiming “That man!” and “That woman!” (Gaskell, 1973, p. 436).

## CONCLUSION

It would be possible to argue that Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* is a novel that is written under the influence of the prominent Victorian social and scientific issues. Gaskell reflects the gap between the working-class and the capital owners through the continuous clash between the two different hegemonies within the same society. The essence of the clash, however, depends on the inequality in the distribution of incomes. While the bourgeoisie enjoys getting the biggest piece of the cake, the working-class has to overcome a lot of hardships due to financial shortage. Moreover, lack of money affects all areas of life, including education, health and entertainment. Children of the working-class families can not receive proper education. They spend their childhood years working in the factories together with their parents.

In *North and South* as well, it is possible to observe how a typical working-class family lives, how they need to work as the whole family no matter how old they are, and how much their social lives are affected because of the poor working and living conditions. Thus, unintentionally, whether they are aware or not, every character in the book goes through a struggle for existence in their social lives just like the struggle for existence Darwin mentions in his theories. Based on the parallelism between the Darwinian survival efforts and the struggle for existence in social life, it is possible to say that Gaskell’s novel can be analysed as a reflection of natural law in social life. Just as different species struggle with each other in nature, different classes also go through a struggle for survival in society.

Moreover, the survivors in Gaskell's novel are not simply strong because of their biological advantages, but also because "they acknowledge the necessity of struggle" (Martin, 1983, p. 105).

Since there is an acquaintance between Gaskell and Darwin, it wouldn't be wrong to say that Gaskell has been influenced by Darwin's theories before writing *North and South*, and this seems why there are clear links between them. It can be also explained by the fact that similar ideas are discussed in literary works concerning the issues of industrialism, of scientific progress, crisis of faith etc. in the Victorian era, which are specifically associated with this period of time, therefore, it is possible to regard them as Victorian convention. Gaskell's and Darwin's works are also parts of the Victorian convention, demonstrating how scientific texts and the fictional novels are greatly influenced by each other.

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