

Politics and Literature English Literary Work as a Model

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Abstract

This paper tries to tackle the political aspects in literature during the 19th century, and to reveal the political tendency in the literary work, which means shedding lights on the effect of the environments and the political atmospheres during the 19th century in shaping the aesthetic work.

On the other hand, the paper takes a specific literary work during this era and reveals its relation with the political events. In addition, we expostulate the strong relation-ship between the socio-economic status of the writer and literature. Meanwhile, the paper relies on the systematic analysis of the political scientist David Hirst in explaining the issue in question. We are going to reveal this tendency in the second chapter.

Introduction

The relationship between politics and literature can be seen as two aspects related to each other, some analysis claims that politics has a great impact on literature in terms of the great influence of the political events in creating the aesthetic works, that is to say, the political situation and the whole environment has an influential impact in shaping the literary works.

The Marxist literary criticism and many other schools which share the same Marxist ideas claim that individual consciousness and its literary manifestations are bounded with the political environment.

The question of whether literature should tackle just the aesthetic and imaginative things and not the political aspect is not a good choice because literature is open toward all knowledge that has been created by human beings, so it can tackle anything such as the big band or how to smuggle illegal immigrants to reach western countries. on the other hand, literature has been always open to politics in its broad sense, that is to say, the issues that have been mentioned in a variety of literary works in England or France in the 19th century or 20th century is totally related to the whole environment where those characters lived, which is almost represented by the image of suffering and hard living circumstances in general, otherwise the narrow politics which is concerned with the legitimacy of the state doesn't interest the writer, because his interest mostly resides on the power of relations between social groups that are not mediated through institutions but tough in attitudes[1].

Among the characteristic to distinguish between the political and the non-political literary work is that the work must be concerned with a social arena otherwise we cannot say that the work is political if it doesn't refer to that specific issue[2].

Furthermore, the relationship between politics and literature is one of the most important points that we need to understand in order to find out more about the conception of politics inside the literary work. Many scholars see literature as a part of the product of sociological and political factors (John D.Lindberg).

The study of political aspects in literature will focus on the 19th century because of the richness of this era in terms of the huge political and economical changes.

At that time Europe was in a transition period seeking the political and social change. This transition was not an easy period; in fact, there were struggles to achieve the stability within society but most of the time the lower classes were paying much more for this transition.

During this struggle and political instability, some writers emerge to tackle the issue of the suffering of the voiceless people who don't have the power to speak for themselves; my paper would shed light on that specific point in order to show how the political atmosphere creates such a literary work.

The problematic

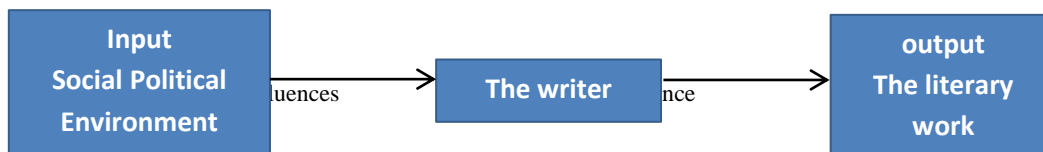
Many scholars argue that politics in its general meaning has great effects on any kind of writings but these thought has not been proven by an academic research.

In order to prove the idea of scholars, the problematic of this research would focus on the effect of the big political events on writers who writes literary text that reveals some political aspects, it is otherwise the political view which pushes the writer to write about his experience within his society, this dialectical relationship would be proved by shedding light on literary text during the 19th century. The study would investigate in political science to reveal and to see to what extent the social background affects the writers to write passionately about his social class. In addition, the use of political science can help us in determining the meaning of the word Politics, and also relate political science and sociology in its Macro term with literature to say that these sciences could be explored in the literary work in order to prove that literature is inclusive.

We are going to try to answer that principal problematic: to what extent the input which are the political and social environment pushes the writer to create an output which is the literary work?

The Hypothesis

Diagram sums up our Idea about the research.



According to this diagram, we hypothesize that the input which are the social and the political environment pushes and influence the writer who gathers experiences through the previous elements, and those elements creates the output or the literary work, so they are crucial elements to understand the literary work.

Key concept: political aspect- literary work – systematic analysis

Chapter 1: the political background during the 19 century as an input

The political atmosphere during the 19th century in Britain was one of the most significant era that shaped the modern Britain of today. During this century Britain went through huge changes in its social and political institutions. Furthermore, new class emerged inside the British society; this new class was one of the most subordinated classes during this time by the owners of means of production. Due to the suffering of the newcomers which was known by the working class huge amount of writers emerge to voice the voiceless people and to react against the political and economic dominance of the upper classes.

Meanwhile, there were some institutions which tried hardily to convince people to accept their current situation. For instance, the British church played this role by convincing the people that they ought to be content with what they have. The church used the tendon of faith to prove its ideas and tried to benefit from the high amount of illiteracy[3] among the British society[4].

On the other hand, the political institutions were too close and were too far from democracy. At the beginning of Victoria's reign, about a fifth of adult males was entitled to vote. That proportion increased, through parliamentary reform acts passed in 1867 and 1884, to one-third and two-thirds respectively. No women could legally vote in parliamentary elections until almost 18 years after Victoria's death - and the queen herself was no suffragist. Women did, however, play an increasingly influential role both in locally-elected school and poor law boards and in local government from the 1870s onwards.[5]

1. The political atmosphere and literature in the Victorian age

The British literature in the 19th century was affected in a huge part of it with the Victorian age, at that time there was a queen whose name is Victoria governed from 1837 until she passed away in 1901.

At that period of time, England went through huge changes in the social background, the growth of the economy and the rise of new philosophical ideas.

IN this huge changes that were in the 19th century within British society, many literary works rise to argue about the dangerous sides of the industrial revolution, some of them like Mathew Arnold claim that this huge changes brought nothing just chaos because the people were not interested in pondering the aesthetic

works anymore, at the same time they were seeing the new industrial age as a threat to the social stability and the political order.

On the other hand, there were some writers who tried to reflect new themes in their work such the theme of conflict between classes in order to tackle the suffering of the lowest classes versus the upper classes who benefited from the whole situation that has existed at that time.

Furthermore one of the themes that were tackled frequently is the issue of morality and the heroes who are treated as oppressed characters by the society such as the poor people.

At that period of time, there were some writers who focused on revealing the true side of darkness in the system, Charle dickens is one of them, He tried in his novels to criticise the social problems of the time.[6]

1.1 The industrial revolution as a fundamental feature of the political situation

The industrial revolution took place between 18 and 19 the century in Britain, from that period of time the British society become urbanised and industrialised. Industrialisation marked a shift to powered, special-purpose machinery, factories and mass production. The iron and textile industries, along with the development of the steam engine, played central roles in the Industrial Revolution, which also saw improved systems of transportation, communication and banking.[7]

Before the advent of industrial revolution, people were living in rural areas and mostly working in farming. Life at that period of time was harsh for individuals due to the circumstances of working for long hours without any kind of rights in the master's farms. They were working under the feudal system where the interaction between farmers was banned which may explain the farmers failure in shaping a political union to speak for themselves. Meanwhile, the political thought of the medieval period was prevailing at that time, thus the workers should accept their inferiority towards their masters because it is a result of the divine law which creates different classes in society. This political thought was shaped by some political scientist like Thomas Hobbes in his book leviathan who once said that the people should follow the will of their masters because without them chaos would prevail on earth. Due to theses prevailing doctrine at that period farmers and individuals, in general, were surrounding themselves to the authority that takes everything even their lives.

After this period of time, the industrial revolution emerge and brought the concept of big cities, thus a huge amount of farmers escaped toward cities seeking a new life without suffering.

The farmers who were once separated in different farms were gathered in small factories in order to work in industries to change their social status, but their hope totally vanished when they realise

that the same circumstances were repeating itself, the bourgeois who governed the new way of production wanted an effective manner in working in order to rise and double their wealth, thus they oblige the workers to work for long hours without rest, and in a dangerous work conditions, and being threatened as be laid off. The workers in reaction to this situation and because of their gathering in manufactories, they decided to take action.

1.2 Labor unions in the 19th century

Labor unions arose because there were many who found difficulty in accepting how “big businesses” was run; on the backs of the workers in the factories who saw very little in compensation. Along with less money, mechanized production of goods replaced household manufacturing, but these machines were difficult to use and could be dangerous to work with. Labor unions helped spread the balance of power more evenly so that laborers could bargain for more rights such as more pay and better working conditions.[8]

In 1829 John Doherty led the way for unions to found the first union in Britain known as “Grand general union of all the operative spinners of the united kingdom”.

At the same time there was a union in the USA called “the knight of labor”, this union was at first a secret organization lead by Terence Powderly, and this leader opposed the wage system. One of the demands of the knights was eight-hour workday to replace the twelve- or fourteen common in many industries as one labor said:

“We mean to make things over;
We're tired of toil for nought
Eight hours for work, eight hours ...
For rest, eight ours for what we will.”[9]

As a reaction, people joined the political unions despite the job loss, facing jail and even there were big problems with authorities that had banned the political unions at that time. The authorities replayed negatively at the beginning because in their former thought this situation could threaten the political and social stability, but after a deep struggle for so many years of the labor unions, the parliament repealed the act in 1824, and allow them by 1825 to express their political views and defend themselves against the greediness of the power owners.

On the other hand, In the middle of the industrial revolution, there was huge debate about the term culture. This debate has been revealed because of the political changes that were established in the political structure of Britain. The old structure was defended by the aristocrats and the new culture was defended by the new working class.

2 The impact of the political situation on literature: the old versus the new culture as a case.

The Political situation at that era brings another competitive culture, which was known as folk culture[10], this new wave was against the set of values and norms of the old culture, because for the new culture, the old one was restricted to a minority of people, and thus exclusive.

2.1 The old culture

The old culture represents the values and norms that were restricted to the upper classes in Britain. The term culture at that time was related relatively with the aristocrats who are the only class who can understand the aesthetic work of art, otherwise, the other classes are ignorant especially those who belong to the working class. At the time of the industrial revolution, there were huge mass of working class who shape their own identity with the help of a mass of writers who wrote about their struggle, suffer, and their hope to establish a better life. Meanwhile there were also some writers who tried passionately to defend their aristocrats class against this new wave, for instance Mathew Arnold is one of them. Mathew Arnold explain that the term culture has to be defined in two ways, first, is that culture is sweetness and light, which means intelligence, second, to make the will of God prevail.[11] Mathew in his definition relayed on the thought of Montesquieu who said that man has to look for the truth and has to have the curiosity to know more about this world, furthermore, this curiosity should combined with the true believing in the supernatural powers.

It seems that the meaning that Mathew gives to the term culture has no problem, but in fact, he uses this meaning in his article to prove that culture is sublime and no one can understand it unless he is a high brow.[12] That means, culture is totally restricted to the aristocrats class which has got the ability to understand the aesthetic work.

Mathew continues to explain that the industrial revolution brought nothing but chaos, the new class was seen as a threat to the old class and its old values and norms. Furthermore this new class cannot understand the aesthetic work because they have the mentality of the mob. Meanwhile, Matthew criticized the political authority because they didn't react against the new threatening wave, which may destroy the political stability in Britain.

Mathew suggested in his article to build segregated schools for the different social classes in order to teach their kids that they would remain in the same social class and to teach the kids of the bourgeois and aristocrats that their own social class would vanish in the future if they don't react against the new wave.

It seems that the suggestions to rescue culture from vanishing has got political beliefs, indeed, his ideas is a representation of a political view. Mathew in that sense defends his own social class because he sees that his class is losing power against a huge mass of workers who succeeded in forming their own identity especially when they created the labor unions. As result, this idea prove that our principal hypothesis which tackles that probably the political atmosphere pushes the writer to react positively or negatively to the new political issues is right in this regard.

2.2 The new culture

The new culture represents the new wave that comes with the emerging of the working class. They shape their own understanding of the term culture which can be noticed in their own aesthetic work such us the folk music and the new literary work that tackles their suffering with the dominant social classes.

Theses literary work represents the strong relationship between literature and society, As De Bonald said, “literature is an expression of society”[13], for instance, Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838) is a literary work that informs the reader of an important social issues Londoners faced before mid-century.

Eagleton argues that the reader has a “socially structured way of seeing the world”, what Eagleton wishes to illustrate is that literature is part of superstructure of social oppression and “thus literary work...forms of perception ... and as such they have a relation to the dominant way of seeing the world which is “the social mentality” or ideology of the age[14]”. So that means, to some extent that the writers and the readers are at least in some degree prisoners of their own time, history, and their social system[15].

Dickens in his novels brings to light the concerns of the working class. He reveals the worst conditions experienced by the output of the industrial revolution. He especially criticizes the Poor Laws and depicts the deplorable conditions of the workhouses and the corruption of the government officials. Dickens graphically describes the horrendous conditions of the workhouse where Oliver is forced to work. In a famous scene, Oliver is given an insufficient amount of food, and when he asks for more, he is punished.[16]

The novel depicts the corruption in the city through the actions of Mr. Bumble, the Beadle of the parish. Mr. Bumble is easily influenced by money, power, and sex. Dickens also depicts the vast amount of crime in London through Oliver’s involvement with the criminals Fagin and Bill Sykes. Even though Oliver is forced into a life of crime to survive, the novel still conveys the traditional message of good triumphing over evil. Obviously, Dickens was greatly influenced by the reform efforts. Dickens describes the aspects of society that the more fortunate in society did not believe existed and gives the reader a more accurate depiction of the life of the lower classes in London.[17]

The tackling of the suffering of the working class doesn’t mention only by novels, but also different painting at that time represents these conditions. For instance, the Victorian London drawn by Ford Madox Brown represents this issue.



Ford Madox Brown, detail Work, 1852-65, oil on canvas, (Manchester City Art Galleries)

Ford Madox in his painting represents how the working classes work hard for just to live; our eye is immediately drawn to the young man in a striped hat effortlessly lifting a shovel high in the air, and the well-muscled forearms of the other workers in the middle of the painting.[18] Then we can notice other figures who are just watching the hard work of the lower classes which suggest that they belong to the upper classes and they don’t have to work since they are wealthiest, thus instead of working they spent their time in luxuries.

By this painting, brown wants to show the differences between the working class, the middle class, and the wealthiest.[19]

Those examples mentioned so far explain how there is a great relationship between the literary work and the political context, it is the political context that pushes Mathew Arnold to write about the huge threat of the new cultural wave that may vanish Mathew Arnold's social class, otherwise the new wave that brought the new culture, norms and values of the lowest classes create its own understanding of the world[20]. The new wave tried to enlighten the audience through literary work about the suffering of these lowest classes in contrast to the upper classes who still control the means of production.

Chapter 2: the political aspect in Jude the obscure novel as an output

The novel of Jude the obscure was written during the Victorian age by Thomas Hardy. This novel was written during the great conflict between the new comers who seek for recognition inside the Victorian society and the old orthodox social class that had dominated all the aspect of life in Britain.

In this chapter we are going to examine the political aspect in literature and we are going to take the example of Jude the obscure because it represents the great relationship between the human work of art and the political situation inside the British society at that time.

On the other hand, we are going to examine how the political atmosphere and the social background of the writer pushes him to tackle the issue of the protagonist who struggles in his whole life in pursuing the institutions of illusions.

In order to come up with such a conclusion we are going to borrow the system methodology from political science discipline. The analysis of the system was tackled by David Easton an American political scientist. David Easton suggest that we can analyze Phenomenon through a system of relationship between different variables inside the society.

In his theory the political scientist suggest that the political system react with the demands of the people or the civil society, he considers those demands as an inputs that goes to the political system to produce public policies. Once the public policies get implemented we have the output of the whole process.[21]

It seems that this methodology is too far away in being implemented in a literary work but our interpretation would bring this concept to understand more this issue.

As mentioned above in the Hypothesis we are going to examine how the political environment and the social background of the author as an input create an output which is the literary work.

1 The social background and the political situation

In this section we are going to discuss the impact of the social background and the political situation on the writer to come up with such a literary work. Our interpretation as we have discussed so far would tackle this issue by using the system analysis of David

Eastone. Thus the whole environment in where the writer lives in is a crucial element to understand the literary work, first we are going to tackle the social background of the writer and its impact on his works, and then we are going to tackle the second element that is the political environment that can interpret the issue in question.

1.1 The social background of Thomas Hardy

The social background of the writer is a crucial element to understand his literary work. Thomas Hardy was born in Higher Bockhampton, Dorset, England in June 2, 1840, the eldest son of Thomas Hardy and Jemima (Hand) Hardy. His father was a stonemason and builder; his mother passed on her love of reading and books to her son.[22] "Hardy's education was interrupted by his work as an architect. He had wanted to attend the university and become an Anglican minister, but lack of funds and his declining interest in religion swayed Hardy away from that avocation and more toward a self-study of poetry and writing".[23] Thus, we can say that Thomas Hardy belonged to a modest social class, this belonging are going to be tackled in a verity of his literary work like Jude the obscure. Meanwhile, according to the Marxist criticism the writer cannot escape from being shaped by the socioeconomic factors of his society. That means, the writers from poor social background would defend their social belongings, while the writers from prestigious social class would defend the upper classes to prevail economically and politically. This approach proves that our hypothesis is right. Otherwise there were some critics that shed light on that the social background of the writer does not give us a clear image about his/her tendency in the literary work, for instance the case of Carlyle, Shelly, and Tolstoy are obvious examples of such 'treason' to one's class. Outside of Russia, most communist writers are not proletarian in origin.[24]

On the other hand this finding may restrict our hypothesis. The social background does not always function as the motivator in defending the class in the literary work. Even though it is the case for Thomas Hardy, but it is not for other writers as we have mentioned so far.

1.2 The political situation as an interpretation

The political sittings in where the writers raised may give us a clear interpretation between literature as an output and politics as an input. The writer at that sense is ready to be influenced by the political background of his time. The writer has been a citizen, has pronounced on questions of social and political importance and has taken part in the issue of his time.[25]

If we look at the case of Thomas Hardy, he was experienced the political issue during the Victorian age, so this huge division between social classes at that time may affect Thomas Hardy to reveal this unfair society in his novel "Jude the obscure". Thomas Hardy finds himself in an exclusive society; his education was interrupted by his work and He had dreamed to attend a university to become an Anglican minister, but unfortunately, due to lack of funds and resources he finds himself obliged to give up this dream. The exclusiveness of his society does not stop at that point, Thomas's first novel "The poor man and the lady (1867-68) was rejected by several publishers.

Thus, the political atmosphere could interpret the reaction of the writer against the exclusiveness of the society. Olive Senior in the world writers' conference said "politics determines the price of bread or the availability of guns or whether one lives in splendor or the squalor of a refugee camp. Closer to home, it might be a

Caribbean mother having to choose between bread today and scoop fees tomorrow, Politics shapes the world into which we are born", she continues in explaining that the writer cannot escape from being shaped by politics because all of us are citizens of somewhere and we are being affected by the whole environment that we live in, we are political animals.[26]

Thus, to some extent the political atmosphere in where the writer lives may gives a clear image about his literary work, in order to see clearly how the writer was affected by what was happening around him, we are going to see the output which the literary work itself.

2 The output: Jude the obscure and the political institution

The story of Jude the obscure is about "Jude" the protagonist who is constantly struggling to look for his place inside the society. At the beginning Jude is attending the departure of his school master, he looks very sad. He is urged to work in order to bring money for his aunt, His work was limited to scare birds and get them away from the master's farm.

Jude didn't continue in this work because he feels pity toward these little creatures, due to his frugality the master fired him from his farm. Our protagonist is alone again meditating the awful world. One day, while he was walking in the village a bad part of a big smacked his face, then he saw three girls among them Arbela Don mocking him, he falls in love with her and get married later on. Jude wanted to learn books and words but Arbela Don didn't appreciate the husband's passion toward the beauty of wards, due to that passion she left him alone with his books. Our protagonist decided to resume back to his earliest dreams, thus he decided to go to christminster, the city of light and knowledge, within this city Jude encounters Sue bridhead his cousin, He falls immediately in love with her because to him, the woman was totally different from the others, she is lucid, intellectual and very pretty.

Our protagonist is impressed by the new encounter. Jude went also to christminster in order to become a university teacher but he just receives rejection. Our man is alone again, Jude decided to leave his beloved city toward Malchester, there he decided to be a clergy man, he is going to forget about knowledge to become a man of religion but he discovers that all the systems are fake because he is going to be hurt by everybody even from his beloved sue Bridhead who chooses Richard phlitson jud's former teacher to marry him.

2.1 The institution of education

Jude has dreamed of becoming a university teacher since his childhood, he was influenced by his school teacher who has left Marygren toward christminster to be a university teacher. The dream has grown since the departure of his teacher. When he went to christminster he studied hardly in order to be enrolled in the university. He was working at the same time as stone mason. He thought that he could be part of a very prestigious society; he was mastering the Latin language and philosophy. At that period of time only few people who could enroll to the university, the chance to get involved in these kinds of institutions was very rare and restricted only for the upper classes. Thomas Hardy wanted to show how it was extremely hard for poor people to get a free education. We can notice that from the university's responses

toward Jud's request of belonging. They reject his request by mocking him and reminding him of his social class.

2.2 The institution of religion

The institution of religion was tackled in the novel to show its fakeness. Thomas Hardy wanted to show to what extent all the systems are fake even the pure institution which claims in every moment that it is fair with everybody.

Jude, after the frustration of Christmas, he went to Malchester. Our man is no longer wants to fulfill his dreams; he wanted just to do good for humanity. He becomes the savior in a sense because he crucified himself to restore churches for the sake of humanity.

Our man redeemed himself and he sought just for redemption of going changing his life. He wanted to belong to a system because he knew that the world outside is just fake. During his serving inside the church, he encountered a composer of religious chorus. Jude discovered that the musician made music just for the sake of money and he didn't care about the spiritual lyrics. The composer didn't only do that job but he also sailed wine. These discoveries pained Jude; he found that this institution is like the other institutions inside the British society. Thus, he found the church which represents the picture of religion is just a hypocrite institution. Another deceit which is going to urge him to quit Manchester.

2.3 The institution of marriage

The institution of Marriage was tackled in a prominent way in the story. In the Victorian era marriage was one of the most rigid institutions; marriage was restricted; no one from the lowest classes could marry a woman from the upper classes or the opposite. Meanwhile, getting a divorce was to some extent forbidden inside the society unless there is proof of adultery.[27] Jude married in Marygreen Arabella Don and as we've mentioned Arabella escaped with her parents to Australia, On the other hand Arabella stayed the legitimate wife of Jude in law, Jude in that sense couldn't do anything to get divorced from his wife. He was deceived by the institution of marriage.

Once he went to Christmas he encountered his cousin Sue Bridehead, he fell in love with her but once she knew that he had been already married she left him and married his former teacher Richard Phillson. Our protagonist drew in a state of melancholy and meditating that this situation could be due to the marriage institution.

Later on Sue Bridehead confessed that she was not happy with Richard, and she would like to continue her life with her cousin. The reaction of Richard was extremely wise; he let the two lovers to continue their path without interfering.

Even though it was against the rigid law, Richard let them to leave because he was an intellectual and he was too against the fake system. But everything went upside down when Arabella came to England with a little child claiming that he is Jud's child, Sue reacted immediately and accepted to bring the child to leave with her three children.

The reaction of the society was too harsh for the two lovers; they were constantly changing the places and cities in order to escape from the neighbor gossiping. At the end they went to Christmas and there were a little conversation between Sue and

the child "little father time" about their poor current situation if it is due to their number, Sue tried to convince the child that it is not true. When Sue went outside with Jude, little father time hang his two sisters and himself and let a written note "Done because we are too many". Sue interpreted this tragedy as a punishment from God because she didn't obey the rules of the Victorian age, at the end she decided to turn back to her legitimate husband Richard Phillson. Our man is deceived again by the marriage institution and realized that this system relies on fallacies.

Conclusion

Through this paper, we have seen the relationship between politics and the literary work. Our principle Hypothesis suggest as the diagram shows that the political and the social atmosphere influence the writer to come up with a literary work in which he defends the lowest classes. We have analyzed this hypothesis by borrowing the systematic analysis from the political science discipline.

On the other hand the finding shows that the output is to some extent could explain the political tendency in the literary work; that is to say, that the social background of the writer is a crucial element in understanding the text itself. Meanwhile, we have shown that our hypothesis in that regard is quite restricted because there were some writers who belong to a very sophisticated social classes and who defend the lowest classes in their work, for instance many Russian writers defended the proletarian values while they were belonging to a different social class.

On the other hand we find that the second part of our hypothesis could explain this relationship between politics and the literary work. In this regard the writer can't escape from being shaped by the political atmosphere in which he raised. That's prove that our thought, feeling and believes are gathered through the process of socialization.

Furthermore, we examined to what extent the element of input creates another elements which the output or the literary work; we have seen that all the element of the input joined together to shape the literary work that tackles a life of a protagonist who was rejected by the Victorian society; he was constantly struggling and seeking for a recognition but the Victorian society didn't give him this chance to fulfill his dreams.

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