

A Study of Cultural Conflicts in Mrs. Gaskell's North and South

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Keywords: Elizabeth Gaskell; cultural conflicts; cultural identities; *North and South*

Abstract: In a dynamic process of social changes, both the writer Elizabeth Gaskell and main characters in her novel attempt to find out their own identities which are different from others. This chapter is mainly about the major manifestations of cultural conflicts reflected in *North and South* and self-assertion of main characters in their identity construction. As an emerging industrial nation, it must reconsider its aristocratic, paternalistic past, and at the same time must take on new responsibilities in order fully to mature. This thesis is divided into three sections to analyze three subjects that are gender, class and religious belief in order to elaborate the cultural conflicts. The emphasis here is on the multiplicity of identities and differences which lead to cultural conflicts. I try to reveal their true social and cultural identities in *North and South* through detailed analysis of the main characters by discussing the differences of behaviors and ways of thinking among the main characters in *North and South*.

1. Gender Roles in *North and South*

Unlike biological sex, gender includes a complex mix of beliefs, behaviors, and characteristics. In *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory*, Andrew Edgar mentions, "While our sex (female/male) is a matter of biology, our gender (feminine/masculine) is a matter of culture; gender may therefore be taken to refer to learned patterns of behavior and action, as opposed to that which is biologically determined"^[1]. That is to say, while what makes a person male or female is universally predicated upon laws of nature, the accurate ways in which women express their femininity and men express their masculinity will vary from culture to culture. For this reason, we can see clearly that culture determines gender roles and what is masculine and feminine. Therefore, the differences between men and women emerge constantly in the cultural conflicts especially the clash with their behaviors and ideas.

Sometimes, the features of gender role are decided by the activities that men and women engage in. These gender-related behaviors thus become part of a pattern accepted as masculine or feminine, not because of any innate reason for these differences, but because of the likely association with women and men.

From ancient times men always have held the upper status than women due to their superior positions in the male-dominated society while women have been confined to a small space without contact with the outside world. The cult of true womanhood is accordingly regarded as a criterion to judge the morality of a woman. It was first utilized in discussions of women's instincts and became

focus in most industrializing societies around 1820 and then arose between 1820 and 1860. In the nineteenth century of Victorian England, the views of gender role about women were reflected by most of British people. As the Industrial Revolution went on, the original positions of men and women as well as their spheres of activity began to change. It is due to this change that men and women begin to recognize and change themselves. The difference is, women's sphere of influence, is extended from home to the outside world in pursuit of a livelihood for the whole family. This transformation affects not only social views of gender, but also psychological formulation of masculinity and femininity.

In *North and South*, Gaskell lays a lot of emphasis on differences of gender roles through the comparison between the hero John Thornton and heroine Margaret Hale who are from diverse cultures and aims to explore the impacts of gender difference on behavior and idea in cultural conflicts.

1.1 Orthodox View under Patriarchy

In this part, we try to interpret the orthodox view in patriarchal society through the analysis of Thornton's masculine natures and his misunderstanding about heroine Margaret. First of all, we analyze men's view of gender with the interpretation of term "patriarchal." It refers that the man is in charge in the family and social environment. And the patriarchal attitude mainly expresses such ideas as a man should be head of the family and has authority over women and children; and also he has duty to serve a society or a community. In the patriarchal society, men dominate over the whole society including social norms and laws. In their minds, women are vulnerable members of society so that they need more protections. Being enslaved by this kind of ideology, the duty of women is to complete their housework so as to be an angel in the house. However, the appearance of heroine Margaret breaks the rule of traditional patriarchal society and makes a ripple effect on John Thornton's initial view on women.

When Margaret and John first meet in the hotel, Margaret proves herself to be a strong, outspoken, capable and irrepressible spirit. "Margaret opened the door and went in with the straight, fearless, dignified presence habitual to her. She felt no awkwardness; she had too much the habits of society for that"^[2]. This description of her behavior was more likely to be owned by a man which was seen as the superior gender at that time. For Mr. Thornton, he could hardly accept that a young lady he imagined as a little girl one second ago can entertain him alone by "a full measure of civility"^[2:58] with great facility. In contrast, Mr. Thornton feels a little at sea facing this "a young lady of a different type to most of those he was in the habit of seeing"^[2:58]. In the custom of patriarchy, woman should not appear in public without any companions. Here Mrs. Gaskell foreshadows the following conflicts by depicting Mr. Thornton's first impressions. "He almost said to himself he did not like her, before their conversation ended, he tried so to compensate himself for the mortified feeling, that while he looked upon her with an admiration he could not repress"^[2:59].

Then from the description of Mr. Thornton's appearance, we can see that Gaskell wants to show a masculine image to represent the advanced northern city to contrast with feminine south. "Tall, broad-shouldered man"^[2:60] reflects fully the typical masculinity of a northern man. For him only duty is to earn money to support family. Similarly, he is blindly addicted to machines which has enough power to change the world. From his description of "the magnificent power, yet delicate adjustment of the might of the steam-hammer ... one moment stretching from earth to sky and filling all the width of the horizon, at the next obediently compressed into a vase small enough to be borne in the hand of a child"^[2:76], we can clearly know that his masculinity is uncovered in the industrial city.

1.2 Women's Self-awareness

In *North and South*, the protagonist Margaret represents the earlier self-awareness of women without any intention. As a southern girl born and bred, she was brought up in traditional south of England dominated by the patriarchal system. Influenced by the women's self-awareness of Gaskell, Margaret believes that the social relation is based on the equality between men and women. Besides, Margaret thinks the true women should be laden with heavy responsibility the same as men in society, not just to stay at home to manage households with taking care of children, or try to please men with graceful dancing at the ball, or put on beautiful dresses to accompany them.

From this Mrs. Gaskell portrays Margaret as a strong character. She is still the unique mainstay of this family after her brother left home, although she stays in her Aunt Shaw's house in London for a long time. Without any sense of being, she starts for home of Helstone in where her parents and many peoples need her most. At this point, her potential feminist sense is completely exposed at beginning of this story. In Helstone, she can enjoy easy walking in the forest which she is pride of all the time. The "forest" here is not the simple object any more but represents the spirits of southern England, which contain the meaning of humanity and internality dominated by the women's culture. In the forest, Margaret feels like a queen of this kingdom that means "Its people were her people"^[2:16].

Margaret's a series of activities embody the attributes of maternal love and humanity all of which reflect traditional ideology in the south of England. To Margaret, these out-of-doors activities, truly perfect parts of life, can be defined as real value of a woman in human society. "Her in-doors life had its drawbacks" (Ibid.). Obviously, Margaret's consciousness of struggling for her rights to choose the proper living space begins awakening. On the other hand, while Mr. Hale implores his daughter to tell Mom that they have to leave Helstone just because he lost his job with religious doubts, Margaret's sense of being needed manifests itself. In contrast, as the head of the family, her father seems too coward to confront his wife.

In addition, Mrs. Gaskell describes Margaret as a girl "full of a soft feminine defiance, always giving strangers the impression of haughtiness"^[2:58]. This portrayal does not foreshadow too much about her growth in Milton, but provides a proof that she is so strong and independent to survive anywhere. Yet, her independent and active individuality is similar to masculinity which is a popular idea in the North. In addition, Margaret also shows a strong self-awareness in the social communication. Before Margaret's cousin's wedding day, she is asked to fulfill her aunt's request of getting her cousin's shawl with no protest. At the top of the stairs, she meets a servant with her cousin's things and without appearing anything less than friendly, offers to take them off of her hands. Margaret's easy way with people is apparent throughout, and, though Gaskell infers she has airs, these airs are only with people who threaten her need for control, a need that she does not limit to people below her in status. It seems as if Margaret is given a free hand to sort out the problem to select what she likes and dislikes.

Likewise Margaret fervently refuses Henry Lennox by saying "I have never thought of you but as a friend"^[2:87] when he asks for her hand in her house of Helstone, only because she is deeply frightened of losing her independence. When society expects women to marry and have children as soon as possible, the feminist consciousness reinforces Margaret's actions to become a strong woman.

2. Class Consciousness

Class division is typically seen as a fundamental to the stratification of the society, and is associated with differences in power and culture as well. In the late eighteenth century, the social class system began to replace classifications such as according to estates, rank, and orders as the

principal means of organizing society into hierarchical divisions. The concept of “social class” briefly refers to the hierarchical divisions of a capitalist society, in which wealth and occupation form the defining characteristics of each social group. Under the influence of this hierarchical division, people began to identify themselves and retain their places in society and the following class-consciousness appeared.

In Marxist viewpoint, class-consciousness means the self-understanding that members of the working classes in particular, have of themselves as members of a class. However, in non-Marxist sociology, class-consciousness is entirely different. It may be used, but is less well defined or focused.

It may refer to the perception that individuals have of their class position and the way in which they articulate that awareness. Thus, for example, elements of class consciousness may include one’s self-identification as belonging to a particular class, and thus accepting the label “working class,” or one’s awareness of another class (owners and managers) as constitutive of one’s opponents^[1:46].

In other words, class-consciousness is not restricted to working classes, but an awareness of such owners and managers whom they are opposed to. Thus, this kind of sense often becomes distinct when an individual moves from one region to another.

Before the industrial revolution, the class system in England was loose and relatively undervalued. The aristocrats ranged from the King or the Queen down to lesser peers that always lived on the rents collected from their lands, and then gentry, professionals and working classes. These four classes grew out of the traditional estate system that had been common in England since the Middle Ages. Most of aristocrats lived in southern England where agriculture was still the mainstay of the country's economy in that era and then they were admittedly the representatives of southern estate. However, the Industrial Revolution changed the traditional class system of England. A huge number of additional jobs sprang out overnight breaking the traditional class division. The new industry brought many different classes ranging from the owner of the mill to the lowest worker, to the traditional class system so that this old hierarchal system was invalid. These people were not landowners and also did not hold respectable jobs, but they got a smart chance of fortune through hard work. This community named middle class has been established in England for a long time. They broke the conventional rules and tended to a substitute for the dominant aristocracy of Old England. In a word, by analyzing the traditional formulation of social class in England, we can know that England is divided into three classes: working, middle and upper class /aristocracy.

In *North and South*, the whole story is set in the context of England in period of social transformation. Every class searches for self-identity and position in the social confusion. Different social classes can be distinguished by inequalities in such as power, wealth, working and living conditions, life-styles and so on. The class-consciousness is similarly, in itself, determined by the way of looking at things. Hence, in this section, we focus mainly on the differences of values held by aristocracy and middle class integrated with working class.

2.1 Southern Aristocratic Consciousness

With the sense of superiority, the aristocratic class is considered superior to other classes. In the analysis of master and slave morality, Nietzsche suggests,

The term “good” describes a certain class of people—namely, the aristocrats. It designates a certain class of people and not what ought to be done. Actions are judged good because aristocratic people perform in this way and not because those actions were good in themselves.^[3]

That is to say, the noble people experience themselves in their own values and morality to decide what is good or bad. They don’t need others to judge whether they are good or not. Although this

thought borders on paranoia, it reveals that this sort of superiority and arrogance was ingrained in each aristocrat at that time and as a matter of course, they could act by this standard of morality.

In Victorian England, those aristocrats also had their own morality and values: The beauty of nature and human feelings were important ideas in aristocratic ideology; they were fascinated by rationality and never acted in a rude manner by inhibiting their desires and emotions; they prefer to sacrifice all to their honors and duties out of a sense of noblesse oblige; they regarded the established social structure and discipline known as “fairplay” as the only criterion; they behaved in good manner and make an effort to be well-educated and noble individuals.

In the novel, Mrs. Hale is a daughter of Sir John Beresford, a northern landowner whose family traditionally “racked”^[2:122] or extorted rent from their tenants. In spite of this, the landowner’s family is branded with the aristocracy as the first estate. Mrs. Hale has lost status and wealth by marrying Mr. Hale regarded as beneath her, but she has not become one of working class. The members of the church as the second estate of Old England were virtually the only educated men, and thus acted as lawyers, doctors, teachers, and so forth. So it is clearly that these can be seen as educated professionals. The respectable “professional” classes including the church, the army and the law were still regarded as adjuncts of the aristocracy and many church “livings” were in the gift of local landowners. In that case, Mr. Hale holds a post of clergyman in church, so he is legitimately classified as educated professional.

Margaret could be identified as a “blue blood” owing to the patrician background of her mother. And this “blue blood” causes Margaret to derive the code of noblesse oblige (the conviction that those who possess wealth and power are morally bound to use it for the betterment of society). She has got a good education benefiting from her family. And also her contacts in the early chapters of the novel such as the gentry Aunt Shaw, the army and the law Lennox brothers indicates that she is descended from a noble family.

As an outsider from the agricultural south, Margaret is disgusted with the aggressive northerners of Milton and also this dirty and smoky industrial town. Her prejudice that has implanted in every southerner’s mind against the north reveals much of her inner superiority and arrogance. When Mr. Hale asks Margaret what the first impression of Mr. Thornton is, she underlines her disapproval of his behavior with describing in a series of adjunct words, “vulgar,” “plain” “inflexible” and even says “altogether a man who seems made for his niche...sagacious, and strong, as becomes a great tradesman”^[2:60]. Margaret’s class snobbism and biases on this class consisted mainly of tradesmen is blindingly obvious and she will not even tolerate the shoppy men as acquaintances.

However, in order to accommodate herself to the new circumstance of this industrial town, she defies social conventions with her ready sympathy and defense of the working poor. With the help of a worker Nicholas Higgins, she avoids being bothered by a number of men and thus has opportunity to meet and develop friendship with his daughter Bessy. Such behavior is inconsistent with Margaret’s class snobbism. But these cultivated individuals from aristocracy like her, especially women, had been imbued with a sense of social participation in their times. They did so without any hope of further profit but out of a sense of noblesse oblige, by which they could be distinguished from other class. Of course, she also has the rational choice to befriend and socializes with both ends of the social spectrum, mill owners and workers. In almost all cases, Margaret does not choose to get mutually dependent and beneficial relationships. Out of the sense of responsibility, she is even inclined to initiate a friendship between worker Higgins and owner Thornton, who even come up with a plan together to provide a canteen for the workers to get hot food.

In addition, the strike totally affects Margaret’s traditional reputation, especially as she clashes over the “fair play”^[2:126] with Mr. Thornton. When a crowd of angry strikers attempts to storm the cotton mill run by Mr. Thornton, who is employing Irish immigrants as “knobsticks”^[2:127], Margaret asks him to walk out to talk face-to-face with the workers, not to escape from the reality by saying

“If you have any courage or noble quality in you, go out and speak to them, man to man”^[2:165]. She thinks that Mr. Thornton calls the soldiers to put down the rioters without any prior warning is unjust and unfair play and also contrary to the aristocratic reputation. Her passionate advocacy of the lower classes leads her to repeatedly clash with cotton mill owner John Thornton over his treatment of his workers. The conflicts foreshadow the climax of their love story.

2.2 Northern Middle-Class Consciousness

Unlike the aristocracy, the middle-class grew up in a different condition of the nineteenth century that was a period of great opportunity for men of energy and intelligence. The class system itself is hard to define and always changes due to different social reforms. With the development of the middle class emerge subcategories such as the “upper-middle class” and the “lower-working class.” Being different from aristocrats, they had good careers and did not have heritages as the upper class, but were more affluent and comfortable in their life. They were the new gentry who owed their success to commerce, industry, and the professions. It was because the middle class gained hegemonic position in society that their sense of self-consciousness gradually developed and created common social values. Raynor defines: “Victorian middle class values as the belief in individualism, i.e. the belief that individual freedom produces a better society, and rationality, i.e. careful planning, maximizing of security and controlled behavior”^[4]. The Victorian middle class aims to maintain the status they tried their best to achieve. Being afraid of other lower classes that would threaten their position, the middle classes kept apart from those lower classes in order to keep them respectable. But in fact, the life of middle class was often typified by vulgar extravagance, conspicuous consumption and private opulence, and “individuality for the Victorian middle class meant self-righteousness and indifference toward other people in the pursuit of property and success”^[4:87-88]. On the positive side the middle class also had some unique features: they believed firmly that science and technology could help to develop productive forces; they stressed innovation and competition that revealed the spirit of capitalism; they paid more attention to economy and despised education; expressed their viewpoints freely, answerable to no one for their words.

In the novel, as a member of the middle class, John Thornton is a self-made man. He grew up in a typical middle-class family of Milton. But his father committed suicide as a result of failure in wild speculation when John was a teenager, forces John to quit school and work for his family. We can clearly know how he starts a business from Mr. Hale’s saying: “I knew he had gone into a shop, and that his earnings, with some fragment of property secured to his mother, had been made to keep them for a long time”^[2:82].

John is able to save money with the help of his mother so that he can pay off his father's debts and eventually runs his own cotton mill. In other words, John’s success and wealth mainly depends on his own efforts rather than inheriting fortune of his family. In this point, the middle class is different from most of the aristocrats. Besides, he can endure hardship and work hard to amass great wealth in this competitive industrial society. And because of that, he treasures his hegemonic position and will fight for it. When Mr. Hale has a grievance on suffering and exploitation of working classes, Mr. Thornton always explains “on sound economical principles”^[2:142].

As trade was conducted, there must always be a walking and waning of commercial prosperity; and that in the waning a certain number of masters, as well as of men, must go down into ruin, and be no more seen among the ranks of the happy and prosperous (Ibid.).

This is so entirely logical theory of John Thornton and even the whole capitalist society that “neither employers nor employed had any right to complain if it became their fate.” He thinks that working classes should accept the reality of their lower position and too much sympathy will be

harmful to the economic order. It reflects apparently the indifference from northern middle class toward the working classes.

Since agriculture was no longer the most profitable field in the country, even the average worker in a factory earned more than the average person on a small farm and the mill owners had tremendous amounts of newfound wealth. Most of middle classes are proud of their industrial and prosperous town.

In their opinion, the northern aristocracy is going downhill and “less adventure or less progress”^[2:76] because as the representative of advanced science and technology, the middle class has completely replaced aristocracy little by little with the development of industry in England. The sense of class superiority is thoroughly exposed. In a word, the middle class firmly believes in a lot of stereotypes held are of their social classes that the upper classes were snobbish and shallow, and the lower or working classes were dirty, illiterate and uneducated.

To the rioters in the strike, there is a very negative attitude expressed by Mr. Thornton when he faces the danger. The middle classes think that capitalism stresses innovation, competition and individualism. Then they think having hands from Ireland and asking the police to suppress the riot are the best methods to deal with the issue of the strike.

3. Religious Belief

This part manifests mainly the conflicts in religious belief between north and south in novel. Emile Durkheim (1973) claimed that the primary distinction between the sacred and the profane lies at the heart of all religious experience (xliv). In other words, the most profound distinction exists in people’s minds and behaviors. He defined religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them”^[5]. “Christianity was not the exclusive possession of any one social group: it was contested territory in nineteenth-century” (Ibid.). In particular, with the development of society the religious belief was widespread among the commoners. However, the Industrial Revolution brought about so many social problems and conflicts so that a number of social radicals began to show doubt about the Christian tradition, especially the biblical tradition for their cause. There was a great religious controversy in England during the period from 1850s to 1860s. The religious census of 1851 highlighted the national lack of church attendance. The orthodox Christianity states that social order and well-being were facilitated by religion and threatened by irreligion, and the measure of religiousness was church attendance. But the urban working classes were busy to work for bread and butter and at times too hungry to think about their belief. Therefore, the absence of a large number of the urban working classes from the worship of the churches pointed to their irreligion and also to their being a threat to social order and well-being.

This phenomenon not only dominated the increasingly pessimistic of churches, self-assessment of their mission to the Victorian working classes, but also became something of a historiographical orthodoxy in studies of the relationship between religion, class and society in Victorian Britain^[5:65]. It was not until the Christian Socialist movement of 1848-54 that such a prophetic social critique emerged from within the mainstream of Victorian Christianity. The appearances of subsequent events caused tempests in the religion of Britain:

F. D. Maurice was dismissed from his post at King’s College in 1853 for expressing doubts about the orthodox view of Hell; Darwin’s *Origin of Species* was published in 1859; then followed the controversial *Essays and Reviews*, published in 1860^[6].

These issues boiled over in the second half the nineteenth century and then more and more people began to concern on science with religious doubt. As a result, the emergence of individual

religious parties occurred with a variety of subtle distinctions between each group. It is obvious that the religious belief from different cultures and regions impacts directly on the main plot of *North and South* and indicates the cultural conflicts among the people.

3.1 Southern Religious Belief

In *North and South*, the southern religious belief is mainly represented by the Hales, especially Mr. Hale and Margaret. Born into a shepherd family, Margaret is a devout Churchwoman. However, Mr. Hale is seen as a dissenter since he aligns himself with the clergymen who were ejected from the Church of England by the 1662 Act of Uniformity—some of whom established the Unitarian church^[2:32]. That is also the reason why the Hales moved from parsonage of southern Helstone to rented house of northern Milton. In spite of this, as a microcosm of southern society, the Hales still keep their religious faith in any circumstances. Here, the religious doubt of Mr. Hale is a main plot through the whole story. It is not important to know what Mr. Hale's real doubts were; the point is that they emphasize the Unitarian principle of declaring one's beliefs, whatever they may be.

During that period, Unitarianism is a new religion with a very clear message: faith through whatever medium still reaches the source. That is to say, one person whose worships may use old rituals to worship, while another takes a very liberal form of worship, the belief is that your faith is what matters, not by what name you call God. The doctrine of orthodox Catholicism declared the Holy Trinity that God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost exist as three equal persons in a divine unity. Dissenting Protestants ejected from the Church of England in 1662 for refusing to accept it and believe that the language of the Bible spoke clearly of "one God." Although most anti-Trinitarians held that Christ was a divinely inspired guide and teacher, nobody regarded them as Christians even other Dissenters. It is the epitome of religious pluralism. As a Unitarian, Mrs. Gaskell is deeply influenced by Unitarian ideology. Her father and husband were devout Unitarian Ministers so that she held strong Unitarian opinions in her writing.

Ruth Jenkins (1995) suggests "Gaskell's beliefs provided her with an alternative vision of society and code of behavior"^[7].

There is a particular challenge to thinkers like Gaskell for whom tolerance of other people's views was an article of faith. Margaret's brother Frederick has conversion to Roman Catholicism to be enabling to marry his Spanish bride. Here, the oppressive history of Roman Catholicism raised the question of whether one had a duty to tolerate intolerance. In *North and South*, the southern religious spirit represents by many long dialogues and debates. It is thus characteristic of Gaskell that some of the novel's most thought-provoking scenes are those of dialogue. During Margaret's long conversation with Higgins on the rights and obligations of workers and masters, Mr. Hale declared himself three times: first to encourage her daughter to advise Mr. Thornton "not seeking revenge on the workers", then he states that "your Union in itself would be beautiful, glorious, —it would be Christianity in itself—if it were but for an end which affected the good of all, instead of that of merely one class as opposed to another"^[2:125], and finally to ask Higgins to join in family prayer. This final act is especially poignant, as the narrator says "Margaret the Churchwoman, her father the Dissenter, Higgins the Infidel, knelt down together. It did them no harm"^[2:126]. For Unitarians, the duty to "bear true witness"—that is, to tell the truth as you see it—does not imply that anyone has exclusive or infallible access to the truth, and this tolerance—remarkable in Victorian England—lies behind this scene. Here Gaskell sets up an unholy Trinity—heretic Father, un-feminine Daughter and the rough, uncivilized Spirit on whom the "gentility" of their class depends. As the Rev. Charles Wicksteed (1871) perceived it, the glory of Unitarianism was "to exercise a comprehensive sympathy and charity towards those who differ from us, to seize with delight the common ground on which we all can stand alike". The implication of equality despite

class and doctrinal differences is a clear refutation of the Trinity as perceived by Unitarian theologians.

3.2 Northern Religious Belief

The Victorian Era was known as not only the age of energy and invention but also the age of doubt in faith and industry. But, for the most part, this era was the age of prosperity and economic expansion causing the Victorians to struggle with many questions and doubts about religion, and life as they once knew it. This doubt led to the faith crisis in different classes and regions. The life in Britain had commenced its journey from being a predominantly rural, agriculturally focused economy to a more urbanized manufacturing economy. As an advanced industrial city, Milton is full of middle and working classes. In other words, the industrial workers and middle classes are the mainstays of northern belief. It would be truer to say that most of them cannot afford to worship than that they have no faith.

As has been shown before, the working class was busy to work for survival and the masters worked hard in their best interest, hence their belief was real entity but not intangible divinity. In their minds, God could not give them enough food or clothing or even the benefits but only afflict them so that they only believe in themselves and their hands. We could clearly see the northern realistic nature from Nicholas' saying while he talks with Margaret about Bessy, "I believe what I see, and no more. That's what I believe, young woman. I don't believe all I hear--no! not by a big deal"^[2:86]. In fact, they want to have belief or a god to bless themselves, but that is only wild wishes to them. Nicholas struggles to say something that "I could wish there were a God, if it were only to ask Him to bless thee"(Ibid.).

During this era church attendance lay on a family's social standing and the lower middle and upper working class felt left out because they were not socially accepted at churches with the upper class citizens. Most middle and working-class people still felt that they were not welcome. Therefore, attending church could bring them attention they did not want because they did not have the money to give the church like the upper class did. Many people today still do not attend church for this same reason. Certain churches are still considered for the "wealthy only" and those with a poorer background do not feel that they would be welcome. Religion was considered a middle-class proprietary or luxury, although most were still married in a church and children were still christened there. In the course of time, the urban working classes didn't attend the worship or any other activities of churches and thus they were regarded as an irreligious group.

They think the religious belief belongs to those people from upper class because they need not worry about bread and butter. If they live and are bred in the same environment, they must have not much belief. There is a long debate between Mr. Hale and Nicholas on what are "true things", "true sayings" and "true life" to the real folk^[2:209].

In Chapter Fifteen of this novel, "Masters and Men" is effectively one long dialogue between the laissez-faire of the north and the Christian charity of the south. The process of debate tests "principles" and "theories" against other people's different assumptions, revealing them to be not absolutely true but relative to the situation of the speaker.

Another central issue is about the debate between "gentle man" and "true man," which focuses on the conflicts between two different religious beliefs in England. And then, Mr. Thornton gives "true man" a completely new explanation to Margaret from a different perspective. He quotes a typical hero Robinson Crusoe sayings to illustrate his viewpoint on "true man": "A cast-away lonely as Robinson Crusoe—a prisoner immured in a dungeon for life--nay, even a saint in Patmos, has his endurance, his strength, his faith, best described by being spoken of as a man"^[2:153]. However, Margaret and even the whole aristocracy both know that "gentleman" is the only standard to

evaluate “true man.” On the contrary, Mr. Thornton takes it that “gentleman” is “a term that only describes a person in his relation to others” (Ibid.). He also feels rather weary of this word “gentlemanly” which seems to “be often inappropriately used”(Ibid.), and “with such exaggerated distortion of meaning” (Ibid.).

Under the influence of hidden religious belief, with the morality of the northern England, he defines the word “a man” that “not merely with regard to his fellow-men, but in relation to himself--to life--to time--to eternity” in a broad sense. This sort of interpreting has reflected the middle classes are pragmatic and innovative by nature. Certainly, Margaret’s attitudes to the North are changing slowly but surely influenced by those progressive notions of Mr. Thornton. And this part makes essential foreshadowing for their self-identity constitution and integration in cultural conflicts.

In general, by analyzing the cultural differences and conflicts between north and south of England from perspectives of gender, class and religious belief, we can see that self-recognition of main characters begins to emerge in the continuous interchange of ideas and cultures. In a dynamic process of social changes, people can adapt to the new environment by changing themselves which is the only way of self-affirmation. As an emerging industrial nation, England must reconsider its aristocratic, paternalistic and conservative past, and at the same time must take on new responsibilities in order fully to mature. And this is also the significance of research on cultural conflicts between two different regions.

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