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From Gradgrind to Brodie: Two Philosophies, One World!

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Abstract

Despite the big considerable differences between Charles Dickens' classic and most pedagogical novel *Hard Times* (1854) and Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), they have much in common as both feature an unorthodox theory of teaching, which turns out to be thoroughly detrimental to their students' independent, creative thinking. In their most extreme form, the teaching philosophies of their protagonists, Mr Thomas Gradgrind in *Hard Times* and the eponymous character of Miss Jean Brodie in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, though much different, lead up to one single result: they do obliterate students' free thinking and critical capacities. It is simply a system that does reduce students to "little vessels…arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts [or whatever] poured into them until they were full to the brim" (Dickens, 1994, p.2). This article is an explicitly comparative reading of Dickens' and Spark's responses to educational philosophies. Whereas Miss Brodie is a nonconformist who goes against the conventional educational methods, Mr Gradgrind relentlessly espouses the traditional education system verbatim by exalting reason and underestimating imagination.

Key words: Education; Imagination; Intellect; Nonconformity; Utilitarianism

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DISCUSSION

The very opening lines of *Hard Times* start with Gradgrind's most memorable statement of his educational views that emphatically exalt intellect over fancy:

> Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: Nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, Sir! (Dickens, 1994, p.1)

This oft-quoted admonition is important enough as it summarises Gradgrind's philosophy of education and its palpable rigidity, which aims primarily to produce emotionless, robot-like human beings who never think or wonder about anything. The moment one reads this passage and comes to hear of the only-facts-oriented education system espoused by Gradgrind, the thing that most immediately strikes one is that it is most probably that this is the very reason why the book is titled *Hard Times* rather than anything else. Likewise, this may be the reason why the overall tone of the book, unlike many other late Dickensian works, is sombre and a little bit sinister. For Sonstroem (1969), this very specific statement "discloses the villain of the piece: Facts—narrow, dry statistics and definitions imperiously presented as a sufficient, and the only sufficient, explanation of the world and all living things" (p.520).

For any polished reader of Dickens' *Hard Times*, the book is an apparent critique of Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian education, which had its basis in reason and led to "a reliance on statistics and the application of statistical methods to human affairs; statistics could be used to 'prove' almost anything" (Glancy, 1999, p.100), which is epitomised right here through the protagonist, Mr Gradgrind. In a letter to a friend, Dickens describes *Hard Times* as a satire against the utilitarian philosophy and the Victorian utilitarian education system:

> My satire is against those who see figures and averages, and nothing else the representatives of the wickedest and most enormous vice of this time the men who, through long years to come, will do more to damage the real useful truths of political economy, than I could do (if I tried) in my whole life. (qtd. in Glancy, 1999, p.93)

Like a statistician, Gradgrind reduces people to nothing but figures. As Dickens puts it,

> Thomas Gradgrind, Sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into for allowing anything else. Thomas Gradgrind, Sir—peremptorily Thomas—Thomas Gradgrind. With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, Sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic. (Dickens, 1994, p.2)

Meanwhile, his utilitarian philosophy and pedagogy do not give way to imagination, intuition and emotions. He tells the new schoolmaster in his school that facts alone are dearly wanted in life as they are valuable and lead up to social ends; nothing else is as important as facts. He exhorts him to uproot anything else which has nothing to do with facts. This is the principle on which he brings up his own children and it is the same principle on which he wants to bring up the throng of boys and girls attending his model school.

The novel is aptly divided into three different, yet relevant and suggestive, parts—namely, "Sowing", "Reaping" and "Garnering". As illustrated from the very name given to the first part, "Sowing", it basically revolves around the process of inculcating "Facts", which are regarded as the most important thing on earth by Mr Gradgrind, into the minds of the little helpless children destined to attend his school. Back to the aforementioned admonition given by Gradgrind to the schoolmaster, it is significant enough to note that the author has encapsulated the educational concept of Gradgrind and cast light on his character as well in this single paragraph. A thorough exploration of it shows that Gradgrind's deep devotion to "Facts" reaches to obsession, if not sanctification. This is manifested through the emphatic tone he pronounces the word, which is marked with capitalising the first letter, and its being repeated throughout his talk with the schoolmaster. Also, this is illustrated through his insistence that *nothing*, a word which is also thrice repeated, else is of value on earth except "Facts". This gives the immediate impression that he is speaking of a religious cult rather than guiding a new schoolmaster about an educational or teaching system to be followed in his school. The narrator goes further to emphasise this truth through his satiric description of Gradgrind's physique, which seems to have been molded on "Facts" alone, too:

> [T]he speaker's square forefinger emphasised his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders,— nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was,— all helped the emphasis. (Ibid., p.1)

As a corollary of his relentless philosophy and undeniably stiff educational system, Mr Gradgrind has been afflicted with satiric physiognomy and physique that make of him a mere caricature. This is reinforced through the repetition of the word *square*, which underlies the close connection between Gradgrind and mathematics and suggests his rigidity.

Likewise, for a man of calculations like Gradgrind, people are reduced to numbers. Rather than call people by their names, he assigns their numbers as he does with Sissy, whom he addresses, more than once, as "girl number twenty" (Ibid., p.4). Furthermore, in reducing Sissy to a number and calling Bitzer by name, Gradgrind reflects both his misogynistic attitude to women and the patriarchal society in which he lives. This is also illustrated through the character of Louisa Gradgrind who is not given a say over her own marriage.

The very name given to Gradgrind is also relevant to his rigid educational philosophy. It is constituted of "grade", which is taken from mathematics, and "grind", to crush into powder. This is also stressed by the narrator who describes him as such a man who "weigh[s] and measure[s] any parcel of human nature" (Ibid., p.2) in terms of figures. Likewise, he is described as "a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them clean out of the regions of childhood at one discharge" (Ibid.). It seems that his mission is to *grind* the imagination and creativity of little children attending his school. Dickens is wholeheartedly against such philosophy which 'grinds' human creativity and imagination. As Glancy states, "The idea of weighing and measuring human emotions, of refusing to acknowledge intuition, perception, or religious belief, and of discounting imaginative literature was to Dickens the most dangerous of philosophies" (1994, pp.92-93).

Gradgrind manages to inculcate his philosophy into the minds of some students, more specifically Bitzer whose memorable definition of a horse is adequate enough to show this fact: "Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely, twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth" (Ibid., p.4). This lifeless, machine-like definition regurgitated by Bitzer

does appeal to Gradgrind, who turns to Sissy and shouts: "Now girl number twenty…You know what a horse is" (Ibid., p.4). However, the situation is ironic enough right here as 'girl number twenty' turns up to be Sissy Jupe, the daughter of a horse trainer and circus-clown who spent all her life among horses in the circus. But she prefers to be silent in the presence of Gradgrind because she is frightened by the new atmosphere and is sure perfectly well that her imagination-based definition of a horse may anger her utilitarian pedagogues who want her to define a horse in accordance with facts. As Christina Lupton (2003, p.151) puts it, "[Sissy's] emotional involvement with the world of horses and horseriding proves useless in meeting this educational system's demand for facts about horses". Furthermore, it seems that Bitzer's definition is taken straight from one of the books or passages he read about animals, which he still memorises without even understanding what such words as "quadruped" or "graminivorous" mean. However, this is the sort of depersonalised people that Gradgrind seeks: he wants 'the empty pitchers' in front of him to be filled with mere facts.

Similarly, Bitzer's definition of a horse is exemplary of rote learning, which is sought and encouraged by Gradgrind. It is that kind of education that does not promote students' independent and critical thinking. Sissy has been reprimanded simply because she is unable to give a rote memorisation definition of a horse as Bitzer has done. This way, it is not a coincidence that the chapter in which the narrator describes Gradgrind is the very specific chapter aptly titled "Murdering the Innocents". To stifle one's imagination is tantamount to murdering them. And this is what Gradgrind and the cluster of men close to him literally do in his school. The superintendent asks the students if they are assigned the task to decorate a room, will they use representations of horses on them or not? Once half of the students reply in the positive, the superintendent seems much indignant and shouts "why you wouldn't paper a room with representations of horses. Do you ever see horses walking up and down the sides of rooms in reality—in fact? Do you?" (Ibid., p.5). The students are not given the right to object to or argue about what is said to them because this will rouse the indignation of Gradgrind and his companions. Thus, those who replied "Yes" to the former question switched abruptly to "No" once they felt that their answer has angered the gentleman who asked the question: "After a pause, one half of the children cried in chorus, "Yes, Sir!" Upon which the other half, seeing in the gentleman's face that Yes was wrong, cried out in chorus, "No, Sir!"—as the custom is, in these examinations." (Iibd.).

The superintendent goes further and asks a similar question to examine the students. He asks them if they will use a floral representation when they carpet a room to which almost all the students replied "No". As the narrator puts it, "There being a general conviction by this time that "No, Sir!" was always the right answer to this gentleman, the chorus of no was very strong. Only a few feeble stragglers said Yes: among them Sissy Jupe" (Ibid.). Unfortunately for Sissy, she is severely criticised for saying so. When asked why she will carpet her room with a floral representation, Sissy innocently replies she is very fond of flowers and, afterwards, uttered the word 'fancy' to which both Gradgrind and the superintendent vehemently objected. For Sonstroem (1969), this situation is ironical as the gentlemen preaching against stepping upon figurative flowers "are [themselves] stamping out the flower-like fancies of little children" (p.522).

Strangely enough, Gradgrind speaks of facts and fancy in a way that inevitably makes them seem enemies. Gradgrind and the superintendent order Sissy to stick to facts and discard anything else, especially fancy:

> You are to be in all things regulated and governed by fact. We hope to have, before long, a board of fact, composed of commissioners of fact, who will force the people to be a people of fact, and of nothing but fact. You must discard the word Fancy altogether. You have nothing to do with it. You are not to have, in any object of use or ornament, what would be a contradiction in fact. (Ibid., p.6)

Nevertheless, the dichotomy set between facts and fancy was quite ubiquitous in the nineteenth century. As Lupton (2003, p.153) states,

> The idea of an agreement between reason and feeling seems excluded by Dickens's strict nineteenth-century division of fact and fancy. This is not because *Hard Times* makes such a successful case for fancy. On the contrary, one need only point out the ironically totalizing terms of Dickens's most pedagogical novel, to see that his case for imagination is made in a highly factual way. Precisely because *Hard Times* seals the value of fancy within a system of rational critique, it seems to thwart the very quality of aesthetic experience that it sets out to promote.

This is the reason why Gradgrind is terribly shocked once he sees both his daughter Louisa and son Tom peeping through the flaps of a circus tent at the circus performances and once he knows that one of the girls attending his school is the daughter of a circus man. Angrily enough, he tells Sissy "We don't want to know anything about that, here. You mustn't tell us about that, here" (Dickens, 1994, p.3). He does so simply because he is sure that the circus people are the real antitheses of his philosophy and the education system. Likewise, he is stunned once he overhears Louisa say to her brother "Tom, I wonder" and shouts "Louisa, never wonder!" (Ibid., p.43). He does not want to see sensible pupils who wonder or think about anything; rather, he wants mechanised and robot-like pupils like Bitzer, who receive certain facts and vomit them up when necessary. Gradgrind himself is reduced to a weapon and a machine full of facts by the narrator,

> [H]e seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them clean out of the regions of childhood

> at one charge. He seemed a galvanizing apparatus, too, charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the tender young imaginations that were to be stormed away. (Ibid., p.2)

That's why a character like Bitzer and the like does appeal to him.

Mr M'Choakumchild is the name of the new teacher at Gradgrind's model school. Indeed, his name gives the reader a clue into his true character, since it gives the impression that he will "choke" the students and, as Dickens satirically puts it, kill "the robber Fancy lurking within" (Ibid., p.7), not lecture them. Like his master, he has been nominated for this task because he looks like a weapon stuffed with facts and is ready to explode on demand. He was chosen for this teaching mission because he was able to answer some questions in a variety of disciplines: "Orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody, biography, the sciences of compound proportion, algebra, land-surveying and leveling, vocal music, and drawing from models, were all at the ends of his ten chilled fingers" (Ibid.). Dickens stresses that he could have taught better if he had learnt less. This makes him well-educated but not apt enough for the teaching task assigned to him.

The first to fall helpless victims to Gradgrind's relentless educational system are his children whom he considers his model students. He has five children, all brought up on nothing but tangible facts:

> There were five young Gradgrinds, and they were models everyone. They had been lectured at, form their tenderest years; coursed, like little hares. Almost as soon as they could run alone, they had been made to run to the lecture-room. The first object with which they had an association, or of which they had a remembrance, was a large black board with a dry Ogre chalking ghastly white figures on it. (Ibid., pp.7-8)

At an early age, the Gradgrinds are taught to run to the lecture-room where their minds are filled with facts. But the only ones known to the reader are Thomas, who is always nicknamed Tom, and Louisa. Louisa is her father's favourite child and model student as well. She is introduced early in the novel, and the author describes her as a girl of "starved imagination" (Ibid., p.11). When she is caught peeping through a tent-hole at the circus performances along with her brother Tom, she is severely admonished by her father:

> You! Thomas and you, to whom the circle of sciences is open; Thomas and you, who may be said to be replete with facts; Thomas and you, who have been trained to mathematical exactness; Thomas and you, here! In this degraded position! I am amazed. (Ibid.)

But courageously enough, she tells her father that she is sick of her entire life: "I was tired, father. I have been tired a long time" (Ibid.). Nevertheless, her father cannot fathom the reason behind this tiredness and ennui and thus calls her behaviour childish. The master of utilitarian philosophy and facts is unable to understand that it is his philosophy that is the main reason for all this agony.

Louisa's life is ruined due to her father's educational theory. She is eventually prevailed upon to accept to marry Bounderby, whom she does not love at all and who is more than thirty years her senior. Even when she accepts to marry him, she does so only because her father wants it. No wonder she asks her father once he tells her about Bounderby's marriage proposal, "Father, do you think I love Mr Bounderby?... Father do you ask me to love Mr Bounderby?" (Ibid., pp.86-87). She seeks her father's help regarding this very important matter simply because she has never been taught independent thinking. Her question about love is much important right here as she is not taught love to give an emotional response. She, therefore, asks about it. Unfortunately for her, her father cannot understand the detrimental ramifications of his only-facts educational system so far. He expects her to have emotions and this is the reason he feels discomfited by her unexpected question. He is unable to understand that his educational system cannot produce a far better person than Louisa and that his most cherished model student is entirely incapable of taking a decision about her own marriage. Furthermore, he is oblivious that Louisa is simply what he has already made.

Louisa's marriage from Bounderby turns her life from bad to worse. As has already been mentioned, she has accepted this loveless marriage because it is prevailed upon her by her father. Her marriage is thus based on mere facts and calculations as Gradgrind puts it:

> Why my dear Louisa I would advise you (since you ask me) to consider this question, as you have been accustomed to consider every other question, simply as one of tangible Facts. The ignorant and the giddy may embarrass such subjects with irrelevant fancies, and absurdities that have no existence, properly viewed—really no existence but it is no compliment to you to say, that you know better. Now, what are the Facts of this case? You are, we will say in round numbers, twenty years of age; Mr Bounderby is, we will say in round numbers, fifty. There is some disparity in your respective years, but in your means and positions there is none; on the contrary, there is a great suitability. (Ibid., p.87)

Once again, this passage asserts that Gradgrind is a man of facts and statistics. For him, everything has to be considered from the perspective of facts and statistics. He tells his daughter that in utilitarian terms Bounderby is a suitable husband despite the disparity of age between them. Though Louisa is twenty, her upbringing makes her mature enough and beyond her age. This means that in terms of calculations of the age disparity here is irrelevant and that Louisa is a perfect match for Bounderby. Then, he goes further to add that marriage has nothing to do with love or emotions, which he stigmatises as "absurdities" that appeal only to ignorant and frivolous people. Outwardly, Gradgrind seems fair enough with his daughter as Louisa is given the opportunity to decide on or reject Bounderby's marriage proposal. But the polished analyst or reader knows perfectly well that she does not have the right to object to something proposed by her

father and that she is given no other alternatives but to marry Bounderby. Indeed, the decision is not for her to take.

In no time, Louisa falls helpless victim to hypocritical and unscrupulous, but honey-tongued, Harthouse, who does his best to seduce her. She takes his words of love to her on trust simply because of her callow nature. However, her dignity and integrity prevents her from initiating any illicit relationship with him. Once again, she turns to her father for help and advice, but this time her accusations of her father as the perpetrator of her tragedy are apparently evident. She ascribes her suffering and obliteration of her whole life to her father's matter-of-fact educational theory. She, therefore, implores her father to save her from her quagmire by some other means rather than his philosophy: "All that I know is, your philosophy and your teaching will not save me. Now, father, you have brought me to this. Save me by some other means!" (Ibid., p.196).

Like Louisa, Tom's life has been obliterated by his father's educational theory. At an early age, he shares with Louisa a distaste for his father's philosophy in life. He grows sick of facts and figures and those representing them. But he could not utter this in front of his father. Once he discloses to Louisa:

> I wish I could collect all the Facts we hear so much about,' said Tom, spitefully setting his teeth, and all the Figures, and all the people who found them out: And I wish I could put a thousand barrels of gunpowder under them, and blow them all up together! However, when I go to live with old Bounderby, I'll have my revenge. (Ibid., p.46)

He thinks of taking revenge on Bounderby because he realises that Bounderby is another replica of his father and that both stand firmly for tangible facts. Soon afterwards he turns into a gambler incurring heavy debts, something that drives him into thievery. To pay his gambling debts, he embezzles money from the bank of his brother-in-law, Mr Bounderby.

This way, the result is disastrous for both Louisa and Tom. In so doing, Louisa and Tom are not far better than the poor mill weavers Stephen Blackpool and Rachael who lead a miserable life at the factory of the bullying Bounderby. This association with the poor and downtrodden handworkers is once cited in the novel immediately before Gradgrind tells Louisa about Bounderby's proposal of marriage. The narrator says, "when she sat down near her father's table, she saw the high chimneys and the long tracts of smoke looming in the heavy distance gloomily" (Ibid., p.85). This statement foreshadows Louisa's future misery with Bounderby that was about to obliterate her whole life.

Fortunately for Sissy, she leaves the school of Gradgrind at an early age, thereby escaping from the yoke of his utilitarian education system. She fails at Gradgrind's model school because her performance there is reported by her teachers to be disappointing. Mr and Mrs M'Choakumchild report that "she has a very dense head for figures" (Ibid., p.49). Once she complains of her bad performance at school to Louisa: "You don't know what a stupid girl I am. All through school hours I make mistakes. Mr and Mrs M'Choakumchild call me up, over and over again, regularly to make mistakes. I can't help them" (Ibid., p.50). Actually, she is not a stupid student as she assumes herself to be; rather, she cannot cope up with the facts-based curricula taught at the school. A thorough exploration of her character shows that her imagination-oriented answers seem ridiculous and dissatisfactory for literal-minded people like Gradgrind, the M'Choakumchilds and their ilks. Likewise, though she lives in Stone Lodge attending to the Gradgrinds, especially the ailing Mrs Gradgrind, she is not affected by her life there. Rather, she spends her days in Stone Lodge thinking of the day on which her father returns and is reunited with her.

Despite her suffering and distress over the departure of her father, Sissy is more fortunate than Louisa and Tom who cannot escape their father's dominance. No wonder Sissy is the only character who leads a happy life at the end: she gets married and gives birth to children. Also, it is not coincidental that she is the one who helps Tom Gradgrind escape after his theft of the bank is discovered. She sends him to the circus, where he finds sanctuary away from the police. Ironically enough, Tom is saved by the very people whom his father used to criticise.

As the novel proceeds, Gradgrind is betrayed by one of his model students—namely Bitzer, who turns against his master. Despite his master's pleas, Bitzer refuses to let Tom flee London and insists on turning him over to Bounderby who then will promote him to Tom's post in the bank. He does not render this service to Mr Gradgrind because he is simply what Mr Gradgrind has made him. His strict adherence to the philosophical ideology of utilitarianism, together with his being mechanised, makes him lack the capacity to act otherwise with his mentor. Not surprisingly, when Gradgrind tells him that he is his mentor and that he is much indebted to him, he bluntly tells Gradgrind that he paid for his schooling and that it is from Gradgrind that he has learnt that life is based on self-interest. To quote his very words,

> I am sure you know that the whole social system is a question of self-interest. What you must always appeal to, is a person's self-interest. It's your only hold. We are so constituted. I was brought up in that catechism when I was very young, sir, as you are aware. (Ibid., p.258)

It is then that Gradgrind realises for the second time that he is not only betrayed by one of his closest protégés, but he is self-betrayed when he spent all his life privileging reason over emotion.

Nevertheless, Bitzer is himself a victim of Gradgrind's utilitarian education system. His problem is that he has got his education at Gradgrind's model school. As is cited earlier, he has become what he is at

the model school of Gradgrind. No wonder then his life is by no means better than that of Tom: He gets a menial job at Bounderby's bank and, afterwards, he turns into a spy informing Bounderby of the conditions of the factory handworkers.

Towards the end of the novel Gradgrind comes to the conclusion that his educational theory has been entirely invalid and that facts alone, if not tempered by fancy, are inadequate to create an ideal society. It is Louisa's dilemma that opens his eyes to this fact. Therefore, the once blind and strict adherent to tangible facts believes that both the intellect and imagination, which are used interchangeably for facts and fancy, are inseparable and that the gulf between them, if there is any, has to be bridged. This is the reason why the opening chapter of the concluding part is titled "Another Thing Needful", viz, imagination.

As for *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, it is Spark's *tour de force*. It is an in-depth study of an eccentric and idiosyncratic mentor clutching firmly at one side of life to the exclusion of the other, thereby ending with nothing but the mere loss. Unlike Mr Gradgrind, Miss Brodie adopts an educational policy different from that of the school in which she works. Instead of abiding by the official curricula, she projects on her impressionable adolescents, especially those who are known as the 'Brodie set', her ideologies. Spark uses this story to show the tremendous impact of teachers on their students and how educational theories could affect the lives of students negatively or positively. Like little boys attending the model school of Mr Gradgrind, the 'Brodie set' fall helpless victims to the educational theory of their mentor, the eponymous character.

In *The Prime*, Miss Jean Brodie is a nonconformist who intentionally goes against the conventional education system followed at Marcia Blaine School for Girls where she works. To the obliteration of her students, more particularly the 'Brodie set', she shows a total disregard and distaste as well for the formal curricula, choosing to teach her students, whom she regards "the crème de la crème" (Spark, 2012, p.8), a set of subjects that sometimes stand in stark contrast to such curricula. In so doing, she believes she broadens the horizons of her students and promotes their critical thinking. But it turns out that she denies them standard education. Regarding the 'Brodie set', it is a name given in scorn by Miss Mackay, the headmistress, to refer to a number of six girls taught and deeply influenced by Miss Brodie:

> [T]hey had been immediately recognisable as Miss Brodie's pupils, being vastly informed on a lot of subjects irrelevant to the authorised curriculum…and useless to the school as school. These girls were discovered to have heard of the Buchmanites and Mussolini, the Italian Renaissance painters, the advantages to the skin of cleansing cream and witch-hazel over honest soap and water, and the word 'menarche'; the interior decoration of the London house of the author of Winnie the Pooh had been described to them, as had the love lives of Charlotte Bronte and of Miss Brodie herself. They were aware of the existence of Einstein and the arguments of those who considered the Bible to be untrue. They knew the rudiments of astrology but not the date of the Battle of Flodden or the capital of Finland. (Ibid., pp.5-6)

As cited in the above quotation, Miss Brodie is an iconoclastic teacher who shows a disregard for the official curricula, since she teaches her class, more particularly the "Brodie set", about politics, art as well as her private life. This brings her into a direct conflict with the school administration, especially the headmistress, who tries to discard her out of the school. Even her colleagues hold her in suspicion. For the headmistress, the teaching method of Miss Brodie would be more suited to the system of one of the progressive schools than they are at her school. But Miss Brodie stands defiantly against such suggestions and refuses to resign. As the "Brodie set" put it, "She would never resign. If the authorities wanted to get rid of her she would have to be assassinated" (Ibid., p.9).

As early as the opening pages, the narrator stresses that Miss Brodie has the girls do things that go beyond the curricula and the school rules as well. For instance, she asks Sandy, who is famous for her vowel letters, to recite certain poems. As she puts it, "It lifts one up" (Ibid., p.7). Also, Eunice is frequently asked to do a somersault in order that Miss Brodie and the students have some comic relief. Likewise, she involves her set of six girls in her personal affairs. Once she feels that the headmistress is conniving to dismiss her from the school, she speaks to the girls and consults them about a solution: "I have to consult you about a new plot which is afoot to force me to resign. Needless to say, I shall not resign" (Ibid., p.9). Then, the narrator stresses that Miss Brodie does not entrust any other people with her secrets except her clique of students: "Miss Brodie never discussed her affairs with the other members of the staff, but only with those former pupils whom she had trained up in her confidence" (Ibid.).

The book abounds in lots of examples showing the unorthodox teaching method of Miss Brodie. For instance, instead of giving history or English lessons to her students, she preferred to speak of her fiancé, Hugh by name, who was killed at Flanders during the First World War. To quote her very words,

> He fell the week before Armistice was declared. He fell like an autumn leaf, although he was only twenty-two years of age… He was poor. He came from Ayrshire, a countryman, but a hard-working and clever scholar. He said, when he asked me to marry him, "We shall have to drink water and walk slowly." That was Hugh's country way of expressing that we would live quietly. We shall drink water and walk slowly. (Ibid., pp.12-13)

Such is the information given to the students in the history and English classes. Similarly, she takes her viewpoints for absolute truth. Her opinions are final, plain and unarguable. She asks her students a question about the greatest Italian painter to which the students reply "Leonardo da Vinci, Miss Brodie" (Ibid., p.11), but Miss

Brodie insists that it is an incorrect answer and that the greatest Italian painter is Giotto simply because he is her favourite.

The love reminiscences of Miss Brodie, which she used to reveal to her students in her classes, do arouse the sexual curiosity of her protégés, more specifically Sandy and Jenny who start talking about sex, writing about it and finally imagining their mentor having sex with both her fiancé and the music teacher, Mr Lowther. Jenny asks Sandy, "Do you think Miss Brodie ever had sexual intercourse with Hugh?", and Sandy replies, "I don't think they did anything like that….Their love was above all that" (Ibid., pp.19-20). Sandy goes further to say that Mr Lloyd, the art master, has just had a baby and that he must have had sex with his wife. Afterwards, the two girls decide to visit the museum in order to have a look at one of the statutes of one of the mythical Greek gods which stands up with nothing on. Jenny says she has been to the museum accompanied by her aunt but she did not see the statute well. Both girls decide to ask Miss Brodie to take them to the museum where they can see the naked statute. This way, Miss Brodie's love affairs have encouraged her students at an early age to embark on "a course of research" (Ibid., p.17) about sex. Likewise, Eunice, holding a copy of the Bible, approaches Sandy and Jenny and tells them about a biblical phrase which has a sexual connotation.

Miss Brodie adopts certain ideals and harbours beliefs—political, social and religious—which she projects on her set of inexperienced adolescents attending her class. If Mr Gradgrind is a proselytiser of utilitarianism as cited earlier, Miss Brodie preaches the cult of fascism to the detriment of her students, too. This is the reason why *The Prime* has extensively been analysed from a political perspective. Martin McQuillan aptly describes it as "Spark's novel of Fascism and fascisms" (qtd. in Suh, 2007, p.87). Sandy is sure that "Miss Brodie's proselytization for Mussolini's and Franco's regimes" verges on mania (Suh, 2007, p.86). As she puts it herself to Miss Mackay, "she [i.e., Miss Brodie] is a born Fascist" (Spark, 2012, p.125). Her admiration of Mussolini in Italy and his allies like Franco in Spain and Hitler in Germany has always been apparent from start to finish. She approves of Mussolini's cleanliness and termination of unemployment—privileges that blind her eyes to this dictator's moral failure and the enormity of his political regime's atrocities. Speaking of Mussolini, she says "Mussolini had put an end to unemployment with his fascisti and there was no litter in the streets" (Ibid., p.31). Then, she goes further to describe him as one of the greatest people in the world: "Mussolini is one of the greatest men in the world, far more so than Ramsay MacDonald" (Ibid., p.44).

Strangely enough, Miss Brodie approves of fascism and rejects any opposition of it. This makes of her a symbol of it. Like Mussolini whose men "were dark as anything and all marching in the straightest of files, with their hands raised at the same angle" (Ibid., p.31), Miss Brodie has her set of girls, too, who are different from all those close to them. For Sandy, "the Brodie set was Miss Brodie's fascisti, not to the naked eye, marching along, but all knit together for her need and in another way, marching along" (Ibid., p.31). No wonder, Sandy goes against the authoritarian practices of her mentor. She does feel a pang once she sees her mentor try to impart such ideas to younger generations of other "Brodie sets"; she has seen the detrimental ramifications of this on Joyce Emily who left for Spain and died there. This is the reason why she gives away her mentor's secret to her archenemy Miss Mackay. In submitting Miss Brodie to Miss Mackay, an action that leads up to the end of the former, Sandy defends the younger generation against the unorthodox teaching methods of Miss Brodie. This is the very reason why Sandy says "The word betrayed does not apply" (Ibid., p.126). Furthermore, as far as betrayal is concerned right here one may go further to claim that Miss Brodie is self-betrayed, since she has willingly chosen to adopt an unorthodox teaching policy to the obliteration of those predestined to be schooled by her. In so doing, she has betrayed the students' parents who trusted her with their daughters. She did not look like the sort of woman one should entrust one's children to. The narrator says that Miss Brodie has been keen enough on choosing her students, since she chooses those students whose parents will not complain of her educational method:

> Miss Brodie has already selected her favourites, or rather those whom she could trust; or rather those whose parents she could trust not to lodge complaints about the more advanced and seditious aspects of her educational policy, these parents being either too enlightened to complain or too unenlightened, or too awed by their good fortune in getting their girls' education at endowed rates, or too trusting to question the value of what their daughters were learning at this school of sound reputation. (Ibid., p.26)

The influence of the philosophy of Miss Brodie is detrimental to the future of her clique of girls along with many others. One such example is Joyce Emily, who is one of the girls at the Marcia Blaine School who craved the participation into the "Brodie set". She always boasts of her brother who has left for Spain to fight in the Spanish Civil War, and she wishes she would go there too to fight against Franco. Nevertheless, Miss Brodie's political ideas do urge her to travel to Spain to fight in support of Franco. But she is killed on the way when the train in which she travelled has been attacked. Regarding this girl, Miss Brodie tells Sandy "I admit, and sometimes I regretted urging young Joyce Emily to go to Spain to fight for Franco" (Ibid., p.124). Sandy, who is quite sure of Joyce's anti-Franco support, asks her if she has gone to fight for Franco and Miss Brodie answers "That was the

intention. *I made her see sense*. However, she didn't have the chance to fight at all, poor girl" (italics added; Spark, 2012, p.124).

The book ends with Miss Brodie self-betrayed. She is the one who has betrayed herself and lost everything at the end: She has been fired from the school and, furthermore, failed to be a moral role model. This way, M. S. Katz (2014) may not be exaggerating when he states that "As a result of this failure, Miss Brodie, in my view, does not deserve to be a trustworthy teacher" (p.622). Katz (2014) goes further to argue that Miss Brodie is one of those teachers who show "Kantian disrespect for her students" (p.624) — one who inculcates the minds of her students with controversial beliefs that do not conform to the established beliefs. Meanwhile, whether the beliefs she indoctrinates them are right or wrong, they have nothing to do with the official curricula imposed by the authorities:

> The case of Miss Jean Brodie is clearly a case where a teacher believed that her influence was essentially beneficial, but did not understand its potentially harmful aspects…Miss Jean Brodie, although heroic in some respects, ultimately betrays the trust the parents, the administrators, and her students placed in her and becomes a model of an untrustworthy teacher. (Katz, 2014, p.624)

Like Bitzer who lets his master down by refusing to let Tom flee London and insists on handing him over to Bounderby, Sandy hands her mentor to Miss Mackay, who dismisses her from the school in which she works. This way, both Gradgrind and Brodie fail to act as role models for their students. Nevertheless, the case of Gradgrind is a little bit different as he comes to understand towards the end that he was mistaken once he clutched at one side of life to the exclusion of the other. As for Brodie, she believes that she has been right and that she has been wronged and betrayed by one of her closest students.

Another point to be stressed is that Sandy defies the authority of her mentor simply because Miss Brodie has established herself, as termed by Simone de Beauvoir (2010), as "the One" who is knowledgeable and potent enough while the rest as "the Other" (p.27). For Brodie, she is "the One" who is knowledgeable about history, politics, art and religion; "the One" whose views about such disciplines have to be unarguably accepted without grumbling. For instance, she speaks about Mussolini and fascism in a way that makes her views about them final. This way, she looks upon her set of students as 'the Other', who is supposed to be the weak side and accept her views. But Sandy rejects this and, furthermore, goes against it. De Beauvoir (2010) writes,

> No subject posits itself spontaneously and at once as the inessential from the outset; it is not the Other who, defining itself as Other, defines the One; the Other is posited as Other by the One positing itself as One. But in order for the Other not to turn into the One, the Other has to submit to this foreign point of view. (p.27)

Nevertheless, Sandy seems from the very outset to contest the sovereignty of the One, which is not male sovereignty this time. This way, one may not be mistaken if one claims that Sandy's submission of Miss Brodie to the headmistress has something to do with her perception of her as being closely associated with patriarchy.

Further investigation into the novel proves that it also deals with patriarchy by exploring Miss Brodie's capacity for manipulating and dominating those close to her, especially her protégés. Ironically speaking, Miss Brodie, the one who is supposed to be a feminist, does manipulate her "Brodie set" as patriarchy does. This way, Sandy's "betrayal" of her, if it is in anyway meaningful to call it so right here, can simply be interpreted as a female quest for self-definition. In so doing, she has liberated herself and the other clique of girls from the shackles of a domineering woman, whose dominance verges on patriarchy, if not excels it. This role makes of Sandy the antagonist of Miss Brodie, if not the real protagonist of the work.

Sandy is the first to challenge the authority of her mentor and her interference into the personal life of her students. This is illustrated as early as the second chapter when Jenny comments, "My mummy says Miss Brodie gives us too much freedom", and Sandy replies, "She's not supposed to give us freedom, she's supposed to give us lessons" (Spark, 2012, p.25). Sandy prefers the science classes of Miss Lockhart, the science teacher to the master girls, to the classes of Miss Brodie simply because the classes of Miss Lockhart are more academic and more disciplined. This is the very reason why she intentionally used to spill ink on her blouse in order to go to the class of Miss Lockhart to have it removed. The narrator states that Sandy's sporadic visits to the class of Miss Lockhart were her joy:

> All the same, the visits to the science room were Sandy's most secret joy, and she calculated very carefully the intervals between one ink-spot and another, so that there should be no suspicion on Miss Brodie's part that the spots were not an accident…Sandy stood enthralled by the long room which was this science teacher's rightful place, and by the lawful glamour of everything there. (Ibid., p.25)

The idea that the classes of Miss Lockhart are more academic than those of Miss Brodie makes of Lockhart the perfect foil to Brodie. This is the very reason why Miss Brodie is a little bit jealous of Miss Lockhart, something that drives her to devalue science and exalt art. To quote her very words, "Art is greater than science. Art comes first, and then science" (Ibid., p.25). Again she states to her students, "Art and religion first; then philosophy; lastly science. That is the order of the great subjects of life, that's their order of importance" (Ibid.). Miss Brodie's understatement of science and exaltation of art is, indeed, reminiscent of that of Mr Gradgrind, who praised reason to the exclusion of imagination.

CONCLUSION

Though the educational philosophies of both Mr Gradgrind in Dickens' *Hard Times* and Miss Brodie in *The Prime* are entirely different, they lead up to the same result: they do obliterate the free, critical thinking of their protégés and deny them independence. Whereas Mr Gradgrind clutches firmly at the philosophical ideology of utilitarianism which was quite prevalent in Victorian England, Miss Brodie voluntarily chooses to be a nonconformist and teaches her students things that go in stark contrast to the official curricula and the school rules. No wonder both books end with the failure of the two protagonists who fail to be role models for their students. Nevertheless, the case of Mr Gradgrind is a little bit different from that of Brodie's as he comes towards the end of the novel to understand that he was thoroughly mistaken once he preferred one aspect of life to the other, whereas Miss Brodie keeps relentlessly loyal to her educational method.

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