

The Ideological Discourse of Charlotte Brontë in *Shirley*

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Abstract. This paper analyses the linguistic changes arising from the formation of workers' culture during the Industrial Revolution, as well as the effects of the pastoral work of the Anglican church, and its reflection on the Victorian literature produced by Charlotte Brontë. Specifically, this analysis is based on the parallelism established by this novelist between the values that lie behind the concepts of *unionism* and *solidarity* and her fight against the social conventions concerning marriage, as reflected in the novel *Shirley*. In fact, the human values that derive from these concepts were an inspiration that Brontë uses to provide cohesion and coherence to the plot of the novel within a narrative framework in which she minimizes the class difference between two young women: Caroline and Shirley. Brontë thereby shows that this class difference is not an obstacle for both women to share and feel the positive effects of these values within a social context dominated by social conventions regarding marriage.

Keywords: democracy, culture, Luddites, unionism, solidarity.

[es] El discurso ideológico de Charlotte Brontë en *Shirley*

Resumen. Este artículo analiza los cambios lingüísticos derivados de la formación de la cultura del proletariado durante la Revolución Industrial, así como los efectos de la labor pastoral de la iglesia anglicana, y su reflejo en la literatura victoriana producida por Charlotte Brontë. Concretamente, este análisis se basa en el paralelismo establecido por esta novelista entre los valores que subyacen en los sustantivos sindicalismo y solidaridad y su lucha contra las convenciones sociales con respecto al matrimonio, tal como se refleja en la novela *Shirley*. De hecho, los valores humanos que derivan de estos conceptos fueron una inspiración que Brontë utiliza para dotar de cohesión y coherencia a la trama de la novela, dentro de un marco narrativo en el que minimiza la diferencia de clase entre dos mujeres jóvenes: Caroline y Shirley. De este modo, Brontë muestra que esta diferencia de clase no es un obstáculo para que ambas mujeres compartan y sientan los efectos positivos de estos valores en un contexto social dominado por las convenciones sociales relacionadas con el matrimonio.

Palabras clave: democracia, cultura, luditas, sindicalismo, solidaridad .

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1. Introduction

In the last decades of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century nouns that now point to concepts of capital importance, such as “*industry, democracy, class, art, and culture*” (Williams 1958: 13), became part of the common British language for the first time. On the other hand, along with these five words, the concepts *unionism* and *solidarity* also became common in the British language.

The concepts *unionism* and *solidarity* achieve an important relevance in the culture of the proletariat since they represent the most significant words that prove the paradigm shift in the culture of the guilds, which produced the ideological evolution of artisans and skilled workers. On these two words lay two of the fundamental values that underpinned the integration of the democratic union perspective between the artisans and skilled workers of different guilds within the Luddite Movement of the West Riding of Yorkshire. In fact, the democratic values that derive from the meaning of *unionism* and *solidarity* will allow us to clarify the process by which Brontë interprets the historical context in the West Riding regarding industry, labour troubles, religion and marriage during the Industrial Revolution

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at the beginning of the 19th century, and how she introduces that historical context in the novel *Shirley* to create a parallelism between the troubles of the working class and the middle class women situation regarding arranged or convenience marriage.

2. Geographical, labour, economic and political context of the action in the novel

Charlotte Brontë published *Shirley* in 1849, a year after the publication of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Brontë wrote this novel in the small village of Haworth, West Riding, about twenty-four kilometres from Rawfolds Mill, where his textile businessman William Cartwright had built his factory. The factory, demolished in 1870, was located next to the Spen Beck stream where ‘The Battle of Rawfolds Mill’ took place on April 12, 1812, which pitted a group of about 150 Luddites against William Cartwright himself, some employees from the factory, soldiers of the British army and the priest of Hartshead, Hammond Roberson, “who gave enthusiastic support to Cartwright, even going so far as to turn up at the siege at Rawfolds Mill with a sword in his hand” (Jones 1997: 102). A similar approach was expressed by the Spen Valley Civic Society (SVCS)² regarding the implication of that priest in ‘The Battle of Rawfolds Mill’: “Hammond Roberson supported mill owners during the Luddite uprisings and is said to have inspired the character of Reverend Matthew Helstone in Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Shirley*” (SVCS 2019).

However, first of all, it is important to take into consideration that the uprising of the Luddites in England started a year earlier by the stockingers in Nottinghamshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire. According to S. D. Chapman, the main cause that provoked this rebellion of the Midland weavers was the introduction of wide looms in the hosiery industry:

The wide stocking frame, a version of the traditional machine that enable the knitter to duplicate or triplicate his output [...] The other major factor was the attitude of the workmen to labor-saving innovation. Their antipathy to ‘cut up’ hosiery (stockings shape with scissors) can be seen in the ferocity of the Luddites attacks on the machinery offending hosiers. (1974: 28-32)

Therefore, the causes that provoked this violent opposition to the wide looms introduced in industrial surfaces was motivated because they doubled and tripled the production compared with the handling of a machine by a single weaver. That was why a good number of weavers who produced stockings on traditional looms inside their homes were left without work, which caused great turmoil among artisans and skilled workers in the Midlands.

At the same time, the mechanization of the textile industry in Lancashire and West Riding also put an end to the carding, spinning, weaving and cropping that was done manually inside homes and workshops. Consequently, the division of these tasks in the factories allowed the fabric production to be carried out by child labour, men and women who were not required to have any specialized skills. In this way, the industrial capitalist culture managed to achieve the objective of increasing the textile production with minimal costs, but also rendered unemployed a great number of artisans and skilled workers. For that reason, the government policies that supported this way of hiring were considered by the textile guilds in England to be harmful to their economic interests, and interpreted as immoral because of their arbitrary and discriminatory nature. Furthermore, the absence of any labour contract legislation in this field favoured the development of the industrial capitalist culture to the disadvantage of the culture of the guilds, because this way of hiring implied the invalidation of the sections 31 and 33 of the 5th Elizabeth Statute of Learning³:

By sec. 31, no person, after de 1st May, 1563, shall set any person at work, in any of the mysteries, arts, or occupations, *now used in England and Wales*, unless such person shall have served seven years’ apprenticeship. By sec. 33, cloth makers, fullers, shearmen, weavers, tailors, and shoe-makers, shall have for every three apprentices, one journeyman; and for every apprentice, above three, one journeyman for each apprentice, under a penalty of ten pounds.

Thus, the effects of the legislative work of the British Parliament favoured the exponential increase of the production in the textile industry. Additionally, as a result of the division of tasks, the stockingers of the Midlands as well as the weavers, carders, spinners and croppers of Lancashire and West Yorkshire were reduced to proletarians. This was the main effect that the industrial capitalist culture produced on the culture of the guilds. In fact, the interruption of the continuous and transparent communication that took place within the guilds while customary law⁴ was

² The Spen Valley Civic Society is an independent voluntary society formed over 40 years ago, dedicated to promoting high standards, public interest and pride in Spen Valley’s townscapes and countryside. It is formed by local people with a wide variety of interests including architecture, urban planning, history, nature conservation, walking & cycling. It belongs to the Yorkshire & Humber Association of Civic Societies and to Civic Voice. Its historical gems include over 100 listed buildings, many Brontë and Luddite connections, and sites where spirited free-thinking local people like Quakers, Chartists and Non-Conformists stood up to oppression and intolerance. <https://www.spennyvalleycivicsociety.org.uk>

³ 5th Elizabeth Statute of Learning, cap. 4, passed in 1563, sometimes called the Statute of Artificers, made apprenticeship compulsory for anyone who wished to enter a trade. See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Statute-of-Artificers>.

⁴ Report of the select Committee to Consider the State of the Woollen Manufacture. In *British Parliamentary Papers* (1802-3), Vol. 5, p. 268. Reports from Assistant Handloom Weavers’ Commissioners. In *British Parliamentary Papers* (1840), Vol. 23, pt. 8, pp. 439-441 and Vol. 24, pt. 5, pp. 369-374. See <https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/publications/parliamentary/>

in force was the consequence that abolished their culture and a good number of artisans and skilled workers were left without work.

On the other hand, the labour context in which the proletariat was forged, dominated the authority of a political regime that was incompatible with any combination. In fact, according to Kenneth and Carpenter, the British parliament created the *Combination Acts* in 1799 to prevent any organization not recognized by law from raising funds with which they could initiate legal actions to paralyze the mechanization of the industry:

Art. III. That every Journey man or Workman who shall enter into any combination to obtain advance of wages, [...] shall be confined in the common gaol.

Art. IV. That every person (whether employed in any manufacture) who shall attend any meeting for the purpose of entering into any agreement [...] shall be confined in the common gaol. (1972: 4-5)

In other words, according to Rule, the effects produced by the *Combination Acts* only favoured the employers:

The law was clearly on the employers' side [...] Such Acts, as indeed was the general Combination Act which had begun with the petition of millwright employers against the trade union activities of their journeymen, were passed by Parliament in response to employers seeking a speedier and more effective way of combating organisations of journeymen within their trades. (1986: 259)

In addition to this, it is worth remembering that, according to Smith, the liquidation of the 5th Elizabeth Statute of Learning and the culture of the guilds were inevitable so that the process of industrialization would not be paralyzed:

The trades which employ but a small number of hands run most easily into such combinations. Half a dozen wool-combers, perhaps, are necessary to keep a thousand spinners and weavers at work. By combining not to take apprentices they can not only engross the employment, but reduce the whole manufacture into a sort of slavery to themselves, and raise the price of their labour much above what is due to the nature of their work. (1976: 140-141)

Accordingly, Smith was openly opposed to the existence of any type of trade unionism, because it hindered the hiring of labour and the exponential development of industrial production based on the division of tasks and in a new model of employment in the textile industry.

However, the *Combination Acts* strengthened instead of weakening the British trade union, because the mechanization of industry, the division of tasks and the hiring of cheap labour, contributed to forging the *unity* and *solidarity* among the artisans and skilled workers of different guilds, who started to cement the bases of the culture of the proletariat within the Luddite Movement of the West Riding.

Therefore, "*Shirley* should not be interpreted as a romantic or sentimental novel, which uses the Luddites to create emotion within the story" (Robert 2014: 1-2), but Brontë's literary treatment of the Luddite Movement is part of the historical context that she introduces into the literary text to underline the working, social and political conditions of England during the first years of the Industrial Revolution.

3. The effects of the concepts *unionism* and *solidarity* arising from the formation of the culture of the proletariat

The effects of the proletarianization of artisans and skilled workers produced the creation of new words such as *unionism* and *solidarity*. Both concepts acquired an important relevance in the culture of the proletariat because the agreement of wills cannot be separated from the word *unionism*, and this agreement is in fact linked to the word *solidarity* to the extent that the proletarians collaborate together to achieve a common goal because, "who really matter, in any culture, are the active contributors" (Williams 1962: 110). For that reason, the democratic values that lay behind these concepts, as well as strengthening the culture of the proletariat, also underpinned the integration of the democratic union perspective within the Luddite Movement in the West Riding. Williams' analysis of cultural democracy is well-known:

the basic principle of democracy is that since all are full members of the society, all have the right to speak as they wish or find. This is not only an individual right, but a social need, since democracy depends on the active participation and the free contribution of all its members [...] In any system, if general democracy goes, cultural democracy will go too. (1962: 120-121)

The result of the integration of the democratic *union* perspective within the Luddite Movement in the West Riding is highlighted by Brontë in the novel in the fact that the primitive Methodism exerted a remarkable influence to organize that union movement. For instance, the involvement of those clerics with the working class became evident, according to the information offered by the following letter deposited in the files of the Home Office and published in Aspinall's (1949: 231) analysis of trade unions in England:

Major-General James Villoughby Gordon to Viscount Sidmouth (Confidential) Merthyr Tydvil, 14 March, 1817.

[...]

Hill, the late Sheriff, told me that all his men had struck work because he would not raise their wages, but he could employ the lowest labourer at 12s. a week, and some as high as 25s., but this it seems will not do. Mr. Bruce told me, in Mr. Hill's presence, that two of his (Mr. Hill's) men out of employ had called upon him that very day with their families for parish relief, which he refused, having heard from Mr. Hill that he had offered employment to these very men at 25s. a week!

[...]

I hear that Calvinistic Methodists⁵ have a great influence amongst these men, and that their doctrines are dangerous, while in other parts of this Principality, and particularly amongst the peasantry, the Wesleyan Methodists inculcate patience, resignation, and strict obedience of the laws. (H.O. 42/161)

From the first chapter of the novel Brontë underlines the negative effects that the industrial capitalist culture was producing in labour relations, describing scenes of violence carried out by workers against businessmen, their properties and specific industrial machinery.

One of the scenes in the novel features a group of masked men who in February 1812 destroyed the machines that were being transported in wagons from Stilbro to Hollow Mill to be installed in Robert Moore's factory. According to Kipling & Hall (1982: 34-35), this fictional action is a re-creation of the same event that took place in real life one February afternoon of that same year in Harsthead Common, where a group of Luddites destroyed the shearing machines that were being transported in waggons from Marsden to Rawfolds Mill to be installed in the William Cartwright factory.

In *Shirley*, Brontë attributes the responsibility of this violent action to primitive Methodism. In order to do this, Brontë uses the literary figure of Moses Barraclough, a primitive Methodist clergyman who is arrested by the judicial police in the courtyard of Moore's factory, and subsequently is accused of having directed the attack on the carts. Barraclough is arrested when he goes to the Moore factory together with eleven Luddites to ask Moore not to install machines in his factory and to reinstate the workers he had previously fired.

The arrest of Barraclough was planned in a meeting held in the Moore factory's office, in which Joe Scott (factory watchman and Moore's trusted man) said he recognized Barraclough leading the action of the men who had destroyed the machines in the wasteland of Stilbro: "he went there on horseback, that his leg might not be noticed: he was the captain and wore a mask; the rest only had their faces blacked" (Brontë 1979: 128). In Moore's factory office stood the following: Moore, Mr. Helston (the Rector of Briarfield), the Sheriff Sudgen of Whinbury⁶ and the businessman Christopher Sykes, who also resides in Whinbury. Barraclough is arrested by Sudgen⁷ who was carrying the warrant to arrest this clergyman. Brontë physically describes the character of the Sheriff Sudgen, the clothes he wears and the movements he makes in Moore's factory office as follows:

Mr. Moore raised not his eyes from the paper. A large man, broad-shoulders and massive-limbed, clad in fustian garments and grey-worsted stockings, entered, who was received with a nod, and desired to take a seat; which he did, making the remark, as he removed his hat (a very bad one), stowed it away under his chair, and wiped his forehead with a spotted cotton hand-kerchief extracted from the hat-crown, that it was 'Raight dahn warm for Febewerry' [...] The visitor now carefully deposited in the corner beside him an official-looking staff which he bore in his hand; this done, he whistled, probably by way of appearing at is ease. (1979: 126)

The conversation held in Moore's factory office that Brontë (1979: 596) introduces in *Shirley* is strikingly similar to the conversation that appears described in the letter that the Major-General James Villoughby Gordon sent to Viscount Sidmouth. A similar approach was expressed by Rosengarten, who underlines that in Chapter VIII, Vol. I, "Noah and Moses",

Charlotte Brontë, to describe the scene in which Barraclough is arrested, this could have been developed by the novelist for information who offered [*the Leeds Mercury*] about a plan that the authorities of Leeds discovered 'to destroy the machinery in some local cloth-mills; they surprised the conspirators, capturing one, who was taken into custody and examined the following day at the Rotation office in Leeds.'

However, in the *Leeds Mercury* Brontë did not find the information she needed to establish the connection between primitive Methodism and Luddism in the novel. Apart from that, according to the information offered by Smith (2000: XXIX), Charlotte and Ann Brontë travelled to London to visit their publishers and were there between July 7 and 11, 1848. Once in London, Charlotte would probably also be interested in consulting that evidence in the archives of the Home Office, because it cannot be coincidence. The parallelism is perceived between the scene described in

⁵ Primitive Methodists.

⁶ Village near to Briarfield and Moore's factory.

⁷ Brontë's literary figure, probably, inspired by the last Sheriff of Merthyr Tydvil, Mr. Hill.

the summary of the aforementioned document extracted from files of the Home Office by Aspinall, and the scene that Brontë described in Moore's factory office.

In fact, Brontë divides that parallelism into two parts within the novel. On the one hand, she establishes a connection between primitive Methodism, using the information offered in that letter, and the violent action carried out by a group of masked men in the wasteland of Stilbro. Although Brontë does not mention those men as Luddites in Chapter II, Vol. I, "The Waggon", there is no doubt that she had in mind while she was writing that scene that these men were Luddites, because in the following dialogue between Moore and the Reverend Peter Augustus Malone (coadjutor of Briarfield) extracted from that chapter, Moore identifies them as frame-breakers:

- Moore: "I only wish the machines-the frames were safe here, and lodged within the walls of this mill. Once put up, I defy the frame-breakers; let them only pay me a visit, and take the consequences: my mill is my castle." [...]
- Malone: "And you think there is the risk?"
- Moore: "What these fellows have done to others, they may do to me." (1979: 24)

On the other hand, Brontë describes the scene in which Barraclough is arrested, connecting the capture of one of the frame-breakers by the authorities of Leeds, according to the information she found in the *Leeds Mercury*.

Regarding the *solidarity* that Brontë establishes between primitive Methodism and the Luddites of the West Riding in the Chapter "Noah and Moses", that *solidarity* is described through a dialogue in which Barraclough makes it clear that, although he did not belong to the same union as those workers, it did not prevent him from joining them:

"I'm not a cloth-dresser myself, but by trade a taylor; howsiver, my heart is of a softest natur': I'm very feeling man, and when I see my brethren oppressed, like my great namesake of old, I stand up for 'em; for which intent, I this day speak with you face to face, and advises you to part wi' your infernal machinery, and tak' on morehands." (1979:135)

In short, the human and democratic values that derive from the *union* and *solidarity* between Barraclough and the Luddites are used by Brontë to introduce into the novel how the culture of the proletariat to defend the right to have a job was forged. Thus, Brontë manages to create a parallel in the novel between the problems of the working class, regarding the lack of jobs, and the problems of Shirley and Caroline to introduce the life conditions of women under a patriarchal system in a saturated marriage market.

4. The pastoral work of the Anglican church concerning marriage

Brontë situates the action of the novel in the geographical context of West Riding where the Luddite Movement was more belligerent, probably because this novelist found in this union movement the reference and the fundamental example to forge in Caroline's consciousness a feeling of opposition to the establishment of the Anglican church represented by the literary figure of her uncle and tutor Mr. Helstone. This character did not allow the feelings and conscience of his niece to guide her destiny, as Brontë underlines in Chapter X, Vol. I, "Old Maids", when she puts in the mind of Mr. Helston the suspicion that Caroline was seen in secret with Moore: "Some suspicion of clandestine meetings haunted his mind; having but an indifferent opinion of women, he always suspected them; he thought they needed constant watching" (Brontë 1979: 170). Following the same ideological feeling that novelist also forges Shirley's awareness of opposition to her uncle Mr. Sympson, an aristocrat from the south of England who wanted to order his niece's life through a marriage of convenience with a member of the Yorkshire gentry, as Brontë underlines at the end of Chapter VIII, Vol. III "Uncle and Niece", Shirley's opinion regarding the ideas of her uncle about marriage:

"Your god, sir is the World. In my eyes, you too, if not an infidel, are an idolater: I conceive that you ignorantly worship: in all things you appear to me too superstitious. Sir, your god, your great Bel⁸, your fish-tailed Dagon, rises before me as a demon. You, and such of you, have raised him to a throne, put on him a crown, given him a sceptre. Behold how hideously governs! See him busied at the work he likes best: making marriages..."

Your god rules at the bridals of kings. Look at your royal dynasties! Your deity is the deity of foreign aristocracies. Analyze the blue blood of Spain! Your god is the Hymen of France. What is French domestic life? All that surrounds him hastens to decay: all declines and degenerates under his sceptre. *Your* god is a masked Death [...] My heart, my conscience shall dispose of my hand, *they only*. Know this at last." (1979: 557-558)

⁸ Bel was an Assyrian-Babylonian divinity, corresponding to the Phoenician Baal. As for Dagon, see the story of Samson and the Philistines in Judges 16, where this divinity is mentioned. See in Moral (1999: 643).

On the other hand, the following dialogue between the coadjutor of Briarfield, Mr. Malone, and Moore extracted from Chapter II, Vol. I “The Waggon”, Brontë emphasizes that arranging marriages of convenience was an issue among the clergy of the Anglican church as important as that of ministers of the gospel in their pastoral work:

- Malone: “Do you know what I Heard, Moore, the other day? That you were going to take Fieldhead on a lease...and that it was your intention to settle a Miss Sykes there as mistress; to be married in short...”
- Moore: “I wonder how often it has been settled that I was to be married since I came to Briarfield! They have assigned me every marriage able single woman by turns in the district.” (1979: 23)

Brontë also introduces in Chapter IV, Vol. II, “Mr. Donne’s Exodus”, a scene on a day when Fieldhead⁹ met Shirley, Caroline, the vicar Mr. Hall, Mr. Sweeting (coadjutor of Nunnely), Mr. Donne (coadjutor of Whinbury) and Mr. Malone (coadjutor of Briarfield) to discuss, among other matters, the acts that were going to take place the day of Pentecost. In the course of that meeting, she introduces into the mind of the coadjutor Mr. Donne the desire to marry Shirley:

his notion was, when he should have formally visited he a few times, to write a letter proposing marriage: hen he calculated she would accept him for love of his office, then they would be married, then he should be master of Fieldhead, and he should live very comfortable, have servants at his command, eat and drink of the best, and be a great man. (1979: 280)

In addition, in a moment of that meeting Mr. Hall talks about his friendship with Caroline, and addressing the group he pronounces the following words: “The next thing I do for her will be to marry her to some curate or mill owner” (Brontë 1979: 284).

So, according to Russell, *Shirley* can be read as a critique of the hypocrisy of the establishment of the Anglican church concerning their pastoral work:

If the state of the English church were to be extrapolated from the behaviour of the three curates in the first chapter, the need for church reform would be very clear. They are socially condescending although, or rather because, as Brontë is at pains to show, their own claims to gentility are shaky. Instead of visiting the poor, they visit one another and engage in mean-spirited raillery. (2008: 390-393)

The dialogues and thoughts of the literary figures of Mr. Malone and Mr. Donne, mentioned previously, are references by means of which Brontë shows in the novel the asphyxiating atmosphere and the harassment that the Anglican church carried out on women like Shirley and Caroline. In this way, Brontë manages to string together feelings of freedom that nestles in the consciousness of Shirley and Caroline using the democratic values that derived from the *union* and *solidarity* created by the culture of the proletariat.

Therefore, Brontë’s ideological discourse minimizes the class difference between Shirley, an independent aristocratic heiress, and Caroline, who is forced to accept all the decisions of her uncle and tutor Mr. Helstone. In fact, Brontë achieves through the narration of the novel that the difference in class is not an obstacle for both women to share and feel the positive effects of these values within a social context dominated by social conventions regarding marriage, both faithfully protected by Anglican religious dogma and by the rationalist ideas of politicians, aristocrats, businessmen and some clergy men with scant scruples. These saw marriage as a convenient way of expanding properties and businesses because “las dos son conscientes de que es más lo que las une que lo que las separa” (Moral 1999: 1). A similar opinion is expressed by Muda (2011: 74) in the following paragraph:

With her appearance in the novel, Shirley seems to give support to Caroline, and Caroline hopes that in Shirley she has found a woman free from the constraints which threaten to destroy her own life. It is no coincidence that Shirley appears when Caroline has been completely immobilized through her own sensitivity and self-restraint.

Thereby, Brontë manages to combine in the novel the feeling of freedom of women like Shirley and Caroline, in spite of the fact that they did not have enough autonomy to choose a husband. This is a fact that throughout the novel draws a lot of attention, since that same feeling of freedom and the human values derived from the concepts *unionism* and *solidarity* were what stimulated the artisans and skilled workers of different guilds to integrate the democratic union perspective into the bosom of the Luddite Movement of West Riding. They were also aware that it was more what united them than what separated them from the abuses of the industrial capitalist culture, endorsed and protected by the legislative work of a despotic parliament guaranteed by the Anglican church.

From my point of view, the evidence that shows that *Shirley* is a story which is written following this ideological pattern is demonstrated by the fact of the union of the proletariat to deal with the abuses of the industrial culture,

⁹ Mansion in which Shirley lives in those days.

as well as the union of Shirley and Caroline to oppose the discretion of social conventions. They are linked by the democratic values whose human dimension is reflected in the affection created by *unionism* and *solidarity* in human beings. In fact, Brontë makes the *union* and *solidarity* between Shirley and Caroline the essence of their lives, creating feelings of friendship and trust between them. This sentimental relationship created by Brontë between these two literary figures to protect the dignity of women, is identical to that created within the Luddite Movement in the West Riding, where the Luddites “were connected with the risings numbers of weavers, tailors, shoemakers, and the representatives of almost every handicraft” (Peel 1968: 22-23), to protect the dignity of the proletariat.

This ideological discourse is reflected by Brontë in the following phrases that has been extracted from a dialogue between Caroline and Robert Moore in Chapter VI, Vol. I “Coriolanus”, in which Brontë highlights Caroline’s concern for the immorality implicit in the religious character of her uncle and tutor Mr. Helstone and in the despotic ideological profile of businessmen like Moore:

- Caroline: “I hear my uncle talk about you: he praises your hard spirit your determined cast of mind, your scorn of low enemies, your resolution not ‘to truckle to the mob’, as he says [...] I cannot help thinking it unjust to include all poor working people under the general name of ‘the mob,’ and continually to think of them and treat them haughtily.
- Moore: “You are a little democrat, Caroline: if your uncle knew, what would he say?”
- Caroline: “I rarely talk to my uncle, as you know, and never about such things: he thinks everything but sewing and cooking above women’s comprehension, and out of their line.” (1979: 93)

According to Pionke (2004: 85), by setting the plot of the novel in the industrial and labour context of West Riding, Brontë manages to create a parallel between the harshness of the situation of women like Shirley and Caroline, whose fate depends on social conventions, with the cruelty that the employers treated the proletariat. A similar opinion is expressed by Shuttlerworth (1995: 183), who considers that Brontë establishes the same level to situate the negative effects produced by social conventions on women, who were educated to accept that their affective and emotional stability depended on finding a husband in a saturated marriage market, together with the negative effects produced by the industrial capitalist culture in the working class by the excess of labour.

However, the goal of Brontë, according to (Zlotnick 1998: 99), is not to link her heroines with the struggle of the proletariat against businessmen and government policies, but to make this story an instrument of personal revelation to dignify women oppressed by the social conventions of the 19th century, as we see in the following reflection of Caroline that Brontë introduces at the end of Chapter XI, Vol. II “Two Lives”:

“I believe single women should have more to do-better chances of interesting and profitable occupation than they possess now [...] The great wish-the sole aim of every one of them is to be married, but the majority will never marry... The gentlemen turn them into ridicule: they don’t want them; they hold them very cheap: they say -I have heard them say it with sneering laughs many a time- the matrimonial market is overstocked... Men of Yorkshire! do your daughters reach this royal standard? Can they reach it? Can you help them to reach it? Can you give them a field in which their faculties may be exercised and grow? ... Keep your girls’ minds narrow and fettered –they will still be a plague and care, sometimes a disgrace to you: cultivate them –give them scope and work- they will be your gayest companions in health; your tenderest nurses in sickness; your most faithful prop in age.” reference

Thus, through the reflection that Caroline makes in the novel, Brontë brings to light the reality of the 19th century with regard to the conditions of women’s’ life, underlining the limitations that the patriarchal Victorian society imposes on them. She stressed that it is not fair for women like Caroline to be relegated to a life filled with anodyne occupations while seeking comfort in prayer. Specifically, through Caroline, Brontë criticizes the Victorian society which, by not facing the injustice of working-class unemployment or the injustice suffered by single middle class women because of social conventions, concealed or prohibited them from being made public.

In this way Brontë establishes a parallel with the situation in which the single middle-class woman like Caroline lived and the injustices suffered by the proletariat in the Victorian society; a society that hides the evils that it produces in the workplace and does not offer to the middle class woman any alternative other than praying, sewing or organizing useless meetings, in order to justify her plea in favour of overcoming the hypocrisy of a society that hides the evils that it produces. With this Brontë achieves the cohesion and coherence to structure her ideological discourse in the novel in which she gives a special preference to the freedom of Caroline’s own judgment and the independence of Shirley.

5. Differences between the religious discourse of Brontë and the discourse of the primitive Methodists

Brontë converts the prominence of the Luddites and that of the primitive Methodist clerics into transversal elements to underpin the plot of the novel; which is to ridicule the excess of reason that guided the harsh attitude of business-

men like Moore and feel the enjoyment of giving spiritual strength to her heroines so that they passionately defended the dignity of women. Therefore, this writer makes this novel an essential tool for developing a conscious critique of the anachronism of the values of the Church, advocating reform within the Anglican church. Brontë introduces that critique of the values of the Anglican church at the end of chapter XVI, Vol. II “Whitsuntide” in the following paragraph:

It was a joyous scene, and a scene to good: it was a day of happiness for rich and poor; the work, first, of God, and then of the clergy. Let England’s priests have their due: they are a faulty set in some respects, being only common flesh and blood, like us all; but the land would be badly off without them: Britain would miss her church fell. God save it! God also reform it! (1979: 301)

The religious faith of Brontë represents the feelings of a nineteenth-century, single, middle-class woman who does not believe in the logic of love that is based on conventionalisms. However, as Zlotnick has underlined, the goal of Brontë is not to link her heroines with the struggle of the proletariat against government policies. On the contrary, she always makes clear in the novel her confidence in the Anglican church as it is reflected in the following dialogue, extracted from the Chapter “Noah and Moses”, between Mr. Hall and William Farren, a Luddite who was fired by Moore. In that scene Brontë introduces Hall as the Anglican clergyman who is the bearer of Christian charity capable of alleviating the pain of his parishioners who for lack of work cannot feed their families:

– Mr. Hall: “And how are you all? How do you get on?”
[...]
– Farren: “We got on poorly, we’re all out of work. I’ve sold most o’ t’ household stuff, as ye may see; and what we’re to do next, God knows.”
– Mr. Hall: “Has Mr. Moore turned you off?”
– Farren: “He has turned us off”
[...]
– Mr. Hall: “Well, my lad, and so are you; I see you are [...] Sad times! and they last long. It is the will of God: His will be done! [...] And if somebody lent you a pound or two, could you make any good use of it? Could you get into a new way of doing something?” (1979: 140)

Brontë attributes to the character of Mr. Hall the ability to offer Farren an absolutely different approach to his union and solidarity with the Luddites to escape from misery. Consequently, we discover that Brontë’s ideological profile, by connecting with the hierarchical structure of the Anglican church, was incompatible with the cause of primitive Methodist clerics and Luddites, who did not advocate a reform within the Protestant church in 1812, but stimulated the proletariat to join the democratic trade unionism to obtain the right to have a job.

Therefore, Brontë uses the example of *unity* and *solidarity* within the Luddite Movement of the West Riding only as a transversal element to underpin the narrative structure of the plot of the novel. In this way, she manages to create a bond between Caroline and Shirley to introduce the social context in which the dignity of the single middle-class woman was offended, trusting in the reform of the Anglican church as the only alternative to overcome the anachronism of social conventions with respect to marriage. This fact highlights the lack of interest of Brontë in emphasising the democratic character implicit in the values that make up the *unity* and *solidarity* among the proletarians. In fact, Brontë by using an idealistic argument “for individual acts of charity towards select, spiritually deserving members of the working class, eschews the possibility of systemic reform and ignores the nexus of material and political circumstances pressing upon the workers” (Pionke 2004: 82).

Brontë introduces the reality of the political context in which she develops the plot of the novel with extreme prudence so that her Anglicanism prevails over any other pastoral work or political ideology. This fact is reflected in the final chapter XIV, Vol. III, “The winding-up”, in which she describes an idealized scene in the industrial and labour field taking as reference the repeal of the Orders in Council¹⁰. This fact allows Brontë (1970: 640, 641, 644) to create an unreal social atmosphere in which Moore comes to terms with the proletariat and Caroline manages to make her marriage based on love with the consent of her uncle and tutor Mr. Hestone:

– Moore: “The repeal of Orders in Council saves me. Now I shall not turn bankrupt; now I shall not give up business [...] Now, I can take more workmen; give better wages, lay wiser and more liberal plans; do some good; be less selfish [...] And *now* I can think of marriage; *now* I can seek a wife [...] Is Caroline mine?”
– Caroline: “Caroline is yours”
[...]
– Moore: “Caroline, the houseless, the starving, the unemployed shall come to Hollow’s mill from far and near; and Joe Scott shall give them work.”

¹⁰ Royal Orders (1807-1812) with which the Government imposed an export control to counteract the decrees of Napoleon of Berlin (1806) and Milan (1807), through which the continental ports were closed to the British merchant marine. See in *British and Foreign State Papers* (1812-1814), Vol. I, pt. II, p. 1263. See <https://books.google.es/books>

In short, from the point of view of primitive Methodism, the Anglican church was committing a sin of omission by not making a critical reflection on immorality coupled with industrial culture. In this sense, if we consider that from the point of view of the Gospel not doing good is synonymous with sinning, it is probable that the primitive Methodists saw that with this omission the establishment of the Anglican church was encouraging the industrial capitalist culture endorsed by the Government policies to destroy the fundamental values of Christianity. However, Brontë's religious discourse emerges triumphant at the end of the novel, when Brontë considers Moore among those chosen by God and makes him a conciliatory and sympathetic industrialist with the working class.

6. Conclusion

With this analysis the principle of economic liberalism is recognized as the key element of the industrialization of England for its significant contribution to the paradigm shift of the British economy during the period of the Industrial Revolution, specifically addressing the labour and cultural context in which words like *industry*, *democracy*, *class*, *culture*, *unionism* and *solidarity* began to be commonly used in the English language.

Therefore, this reflection stems from research framed within the analysis of the effects of industrialization in England from the perspective of its human consequences, taking into account the abolition of the culture of the guilds, the democratizing process of unionism, the origin of the culture of the proletariat, the negative effects of the pastoral work of the Anglican church on women's conditions regarding marriage and the pastoral work of primitive Methodism, as reflected in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*.

Shirley has been fundamental in supporting this thesis with respect to the importance of the nouns *unionism* and *solidarity* in the integration of the democratic trade union perspective within the Luddite Movement of West Riding. In fact, the lexicon used by Brontë in this novel confirms precisely that the paradigm shifts in the economy and culture of Great Britain produced by the Industrial and the Agrarian Revolutions was also reflected in the language of the British people. Consequently, these linguistic concepts also played an essential role in the syntax of the ideological discourse of this Victorian novelist.

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