North And South Novel By Elizabeth Gaskell

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Do you find the ending of the novel contrived?

One of Elizabeth Gaskell's most appreciated novels, "North and South", is based on the contrasts between the two social classes and the environments of Northern England and Southern England, and how two people found love on the opposite side(Gaskell, 1855/2005). The era shown in the story is the peak of the Industrial Revolution and its adverse effects on the residents of Milton, a town situated in the north.

Gaskell introduces the protagonist, Margaret Hale, as a noble, gentle and lady-like young girl who is caring, loving and sympathetic towards the people around her because of her tough childhood staying away from her parents with her cousins in the city. Living most of her life in the modern and developed city of London and belonging to a beautiful and peaceful village in the southern side, Margaret initially fails to adjust to the congested and polluted town of Milton, where most of the working class lives.

The story builds up to Margaret getting along with the local workers and their families. She recognizes their hard work and struggles. She also meets the other lead of the story, Thornton, who has risen from poverty and runs a mill to provide for his mother and siblings. Initially, the characters are at odds with each other due to the differences in their upbringing and general personalities. Thornton begins to acknowledge Margaret's undeniable beauty and grace, while Margaret, away from Milton, realizes her love for Thornton and his robust masculine features.

Both of the characters fall in love with each other but take too long to accept and admit it while they are pulled apart by their life struggles and mishaps, primarily by the social classes of England. They eventually find love, which they never expected, on the other side of the land.

Gaskell initially grabs her readers' attention through the captivating struggles of the residents of Milton, the privileges of the Southerners, and the contrast between the two main characters and their falling in love. However, the ending of the novel is considered to be predictable and conflicting with the initial description of the characters and their side plots.

Margaret inherits Mr. Bell's enormous wealth, while Thornton faces bankruptcy and is forced to shut down his mill. Thornton visits Margaret when she proposes to invest in her business, and Thornton, still mesmerized by Margaret's beauty and loving nature, makes a marriage proposal, which she

accepts this time as she has realized her love for him.

Gaskell made a rushed ending which included some unrealistic concepts that conflict with the first concept of the novel, i.e., a reflection of the real issues faced by the people of England during the Industrial Revolution. Secondly, the author has shown Thornton as a proud and masculine man who'd never accept help from a woman he intended to marry. His immediate acceptance of the business proposal from Margaret is a rushed ending that confuses the reader.

Mr Bell's sudden death and leaving behind his legacy to Margaret is another contrived plot, which is an ending that is meant to satisfy the readers' fantasy, which is a forceful happy ending to the tragic climax.

On the other hand, the novel managed to get to the point where the reader doesn't believe that the two characters will ever be together and have a realistic approach towards the social classes set during the era of the Revolution. Thus, the ending of North and South might be a contrived approach by Gaskell, but the story was carefully crafted to manage its finale (Gallagher, 1985).

References

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