

# A Comparative Study of *Oliver Twist* and *Jane Eyre* with the “Structure of Feeling” — The Contradiction Writing of the Victorian Era

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## Abstract

Raymond Williams, an important British Marxist literary theorist, coined the term “Structure of Feeling” to analyze the shared personal feeling and experiences of people during specific historical periods. This framework reveals unstructured yet pervasive social mentality and emotional responses, offering a unique perspective for interpreting literature from social transition periods. Based on this theory, this study compares Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* (1838) and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), two iconic Victorian-era (1837-1901) works, to explore the shared emotional tensions in 19th-century British industrialization and urbanization. The research demonstrates that both novels sharply criticize structural injustices like the Poorhouse system, class divisions, and gender oppression while compromising with mainstream ideology and values through magic solutions such as kinship redemption, unexpected inheritance of fortune, and marital order. These narrative modes reflect the dynamic tension unique to Victorian era’s transitional period between old and new values. This contradictory nature mirrors Williams’ “Structure of Feeling”, revealing the complex interplay between individual experiences and social structures, as well as the collusion between critical demands and ideological frameworks during social transformation.

**Keywords:** Structure of Feeling, *Oliver Twist*, *Jane Eyre*, contradiction

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Social Background of Both Novels

After the First Industrial Revolution, Britain underwent profound transformations in politics, economy, and social-cultural spheres. As the first nation to complete the Industrial Revolution, it became the “world’s factory” and rapidly amassed vast wealth. The bourgeoisie emerged politically and consolidated their power after several Parliament reforms. By the mid-19th

century, the constitutional monarchy in Britain entered its golden age, along with a period of intense industrialization and urbanization. While the economy grew exponentially, the moral order of traditional agrarian society clashed violently with the values of emerging capitalist society, resulting in severe class divisions and widening wealth gaps. Thus, social contradictions became increasingly acute. “On one side stood aristocratic manor houses, while on the other, farmers’ shabby cottages; on

one side, factory owners enjoyed comfortable lives, while on the other, unemployed workers struggled desperately for survival" (Chengdan, 2002). What's worse, the British Parliament enacted the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 under pressures from large factory owners, stipulating that "all relief work must be conducted in workhouses (indoor relief), where living standards must be lower than those of the poorest outside the houses" (Chengdan, 2002). As punishment, recipients of relief lost their voting rights. This legislation embodied Adam Smith's political economy philosophy: "The rich should remain rich and the poor remain poor, and the government do not bear social relief responsibilities towards the poor" (Hongtao, 2022). Working conditions in workhouses resembled hell, making poverty a persistent threat. The enactment of the New Poor Law further aggravated the already dire living conditions of the workers. As a consequence, more workers began to actively engage in labor movement in order to survive and protect their own rights, kicking off the vigorous Charter Movement. Literary works are rooted in life and, to some extent, mirror social realities. Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, both 19th-century realist works, target different social contradictions due to respective gender and life experiences. Yet, as they were written under the same social backdrop, they inevitably share similarities and both embody the same "Structure of Feeling", a cultural theory created by British Marxist cultural critic Raymond Williams to examine literary works.

### 1.2 Theory of "Structure of Feeling"

The term "Structure of Feeling", coined by Raymond Williams (1921-1988) in his book *Film: A Short Introduction* (1954) co-authored with William Michael, originally refers to the collective live experience of people in a given era. The connotation of this term underwent significant evolution in his successive works. In *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Williams expanded this concept by incorporating Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, transforming it into a critique of capitalist hegemony. He conceptualized Structure of Feeling as a mechanism for resisting dominant cultural hegemony (Yifan, 2017). Williams categorized social-cultural elements during critical social transformation period into three types: the dominant, emergent, and residual—corresponding to bourgeois,

working-class, and aristocratic cultures respectively in the 1840s. These cultural forces interact with each other, resulting in constant conflicts and clashes of values, which were reflected by the mindset and immediate experiences of people at that historical time. The Structure of Feeling, consisting of the universal experiences and perceptions of people, particularly the conflicts between people's actual experiences and the dominant moral values, is the preemergent stage of the fight against cultural hegemony.

Williams posits that the prevalent Structure of Feeling in popular culture "persist in nearly all the novels which are referred to as literary works." To elaborate his theory, Williams analyzed 19th-century British industrial novels (including Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and Charles Dickens' *The Great Expectations*) in *The Long Revolution* (1961), identifying a distinctive structure of characteristic of the period (Raymond, 2019), which is the tension between middle-class (bourgeois) ideology and novel writers' lived experiences and pursuit of life. Williams introduced the concept of "social character" to describe dominant social groups' moral values that embody cultural ideals, emphasizing how these characteristics interact. His analysis of mid-19th-century British society reveals: work as a value system where personal effort directly determines success; poverty attributed to personal shortcomings, necessitating punitive measures like the New Poor Law to motivate hard labor; hardship as a noble virtue cultivating humility and courage; and virtues like frugality, moderation, and piety being prioritized, with family as the central institution and marriage's sanctity inviolable (Raymond, 2019). To sum up, this framework, based on bourgeois work ethics and family-oriented values, promotes diligence and personal accountability while attributing economic achievement to moral superiority.

### 1.3 Research Framework and Significance

So far, there have been numerous studies on both *Oliver Twist* and *Jane Eyre* around the world. However, most of them focus on the class or gender issues of individual works, and there is still a lack of systematic comparisons on how they jointly reflect the contradictions in the structure of feeling in social transformation. This study adopts a method combining close textual reading and comparative analysis, and takes

Williams' theory of Structure of Feeling as the framework to interpret from two dimensions: "Institutional contradictions and personal redemption" and "magical solutions". By selecting the survival predicaments and endings of orphan characters in two novels as core samples and combining them with social backgrounds such as the Poor Law Amendment Act of the Victorian era, the reform of women status and property rights, the interactive mechanism between literary texts and social characteristics is revealed. By comparing two novels, this study aims to explore the explanatory power of the theory of emotional structure in analyzing literature during the period of social transformation, explain how the two works expose the same conflict between institutional oppression and individual moral redemption in the Victorian era through orphan narratives, and critically reflect on the masking and mediating functions of symbolic solutions in literary works on real-life contradictions. At the theoretical level, this study helps to expand the literary interpretation boundaries of Williams' theory of the Structure of Feeling. At the social and cultural level, it provides historical references for the study of cultural contradictions during the social transformation period (such as the predicament of class mobility and the reconstruction of gender identity) by decoding the collective anxiety and strategic ideological games in 19th-century Britain through text analysis.

## 2. Institutional Criticism and Personal Redemption

Guided by Adam Smith and Ricardo's "free economic theory" and Bentham's utilitarianism, Britain was the first to embark on the path of free capitalism and became the first industrialized country. In the 19th century, Britain witnessed tremendous changes in its social economy, politics and culture, and at the same time, intense social conflicts emerged, especially the large gap between the rich and the poor. The working class had long been exploited and oppressed, and was constantly at risk of unemployment due to the use of machines. Meanwhile, with the expansion of middle class, the significance of family was consolidated. During that period, confronted with discrimination and suppression, women were strictly confined at home by the role of "family angels" and had an obvious unfavorable social status. Their success depends on their

contributions to the family. Dickens and Charlotte lived in such an era. Their respective life experiences and genders enabled them to focus on different social contradictions. Both *Oliver Twist* and *Jane Eyre* expose the injustice of social systems from the perspective of orphans, yet they pin their redemption plans on individual morality or good luck.

### 2.1 *Oliver Twist: Hypocrisy of the Workhouse and Bloodline Redemption*

Dickens, born into the middle class, was forced to drop out of school and work as a child laborer in a blacking factory to help support the family when he was 12 years old because his father was imprisoned for debt. For several months, Dickens worked with children from poor families and experienced the hardships of the lower class, which directly inspired his writing of "David Copperfield". The darkness of society and the injustice of the system also frequently popped up as the major theme of his novels. *Oliver Twist* was born in a poorhouse, suffered severe abuse and went hungry all day long, rendering it a miracle that he should have survived and grown up. At the age of eight, he was sent to an undertaker to work as an apprentice because he was disowned by the house for a "crime" of asking for "a little more porridge" (Charles, 2004). Later, unable to bear the bitter treatment of the undertaker's wife, he fled to London and was lured into a theft gang, but he remained true to his kind nature. Finally, with the help of kind-hearted people like Mr. Brownlow, he regained his status as the heir of a rich man. The most significant change in the New Poor Law of 1834 was the prohibition of providing assistance outside of poorhouses to those who were capable of working, and those receiving assistance must participate in the work arranged by the diocese. The aim is to make the poor understand that they must rely on themselves rather than on the government and society to rid poverty, thus shifting the root cause of the poverty problem from the imperfect economic structure to the laziness and bad habits of the poor without any concern for the living conditions of the poor (Hongtao, 2012). The children in the poorhouse had been in a state of hunger for years. Most of them fell ill due to cold and hunger, or die accidentally because of negligence. More often than not, the dead children's stomachs were found to empty after dissection. The children were starving, but if they dare complain, they would be harshly

punished (Charles, 2004). The relief for each child was 6.5 pence a week, which was limited, but Mrs. Mann appropriated the greater part of the weekly stipend to her own use. Oliver's eight birthday found him a pale thin child, diminutive in stature and decisively small in circumference. At eight years old, he started working at six every morning but earned scarce food. When the undertaker's wife saw him, she kept complaining that he was too young, "I see no saving in parish children; for they always cost more to keep" (Charles, 2004). Through the life experiences of the protagonist Oliver, Dickens sharply criticized the cruelty and hypocrisy of the poorhouse system.

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens not only vividly depicted the living conditions of children in the poorhouse to expose the greedy and hypocritical faces of the poorhouse administrators (Mrs. Mann, Mr. Bumble), but also criticized the corruption in the judicial system (Mr. Fang the police magistrate). The novel delves into the darkness and hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie by depicting the overall survival predicament of children at the bottom of society during the process of industrialization. Oliver's salvation does comply with the middle-class values about the poor: outstanding people will eventually stand out (Yifan, 2017). Indeed, it was Oliver's integrity and kind nature that bond him with Mr. Brownlow, who in turn help him regain his middle-class status as the son of a rich man. However, it also reflects that the poor was not able to extricate himself from darkness, and the poor remains poor not because they do not strive hard enough or born with shortcomings but because of the unjust social structure. Consequently, the solution for the poor orphan arranged by Dickens deviated from the track of structural criticism by attributing Oliver's ultimate redemption to the compassion of the charity, his flawless morality and his accidental middle-class background (his blood relationship with Brownlow). This narrative strategy simplifies structural oppression into an opposition between good and evil, suggesting that the continuation of traditional bloodline order and moral conscience is the solution to social problems. At the same time, it also indicates the realistic predicament that individuals cannot break through class barriers through their own strength. This contradiction is precisely a typical manifestation of the emotional structure — the writer is aware of the

existence of social problems, but is unable to transcend the limitations of his time to propose more practical solutions, and can only resort to traditional moral resources and accidental luck. This compromising solution has, to a certain extent, weakened the critical nature of the novel, shifting the focus that should have been directed at the social system to the individual moral level.

## 2.2 *Jane Eyre: Hypocrisy in Charity Schools, Gender Oppression and Redemption*

Charlotte Bronte was born in a middle-class parsonage family at the end of the flamboyant Romanticism and the beginning of the tender Victorian culture. On the one hand, the factory system of the Industrial Revolution separated work from family, making the family a warm place free from external pressure and reinforcing its importance. On the other hand, after her marriage, Queen Victoria focused on family affairs and indifferent to politics, forming a pattern where women take care of the household and men work outside. Due to its alignment with the interests of the bourgeoisie and male chauvinism, the pattern was highly prized and became the unique Victorian value system that was popular among all social strata (Lanxin, 2017). Many elegant, pure and gentle "family angels" also emerged in literary works. Unlike the lower-class working women who were forced to go out to work, middle-class women were mostly confined to the family and are accessories without social functions who relied on their husbands (Chengdan, 272). Middle-class wives going out to work were likely regarded as losing dignity. Intellectual women like the Bronte sisters could only choose semi-servant work with an awkward social status as governesses like *Jane Eyre*, because the job did require public exposure. As petty bourgeoisie, the Bronte sisters had a very narrow path to personal success, nor career ladder to climb. Moreover, they did not have generous dowries and were unable to change their impoverished family situation through an upward marriage. Due to her solitary and proud nature, Charlotte found it hard to adapt to the insulting job as a governess. At first, she attempted to achieve a class leap by founding a boarding school, but failed. Later, she turned to writing, which were challenges to gender oppression and institutional injustice. In her work, *Jane Eyre* is a female brimming with romanticism. She is full of personal emotions



and passion and dreams of gender equality in love and marriage. The realistic novel criticized the class gap and gender oppression but still could not break off from the background of the time.

Jane Eyre, an orphan girl with no wealth, has no beauty nor status. However, with her independent will, spiritual strength and uncompromising resistance, she eventually becomes the mistress of Thornfield Hall. This growth trajectory is not only a reversal of an individual's fate, but also profoundly reveals how structural injustice permeated family, education, marriage and property systems in the Victorian era. Moreover, Jane's success also highlights the universal contradictions in the emotional structure of that era. The Lowood Charity School where Jane Eyre lived for eight years was strictly managed and adhered to the principle of "punishing the body to save the soul" (Charlotte, 2015). Students were short of food and clothing and lived in poor conditions. Mr. Brocklehurst, who was full of religious preaches and always giving moral talk, advocated "enduring hardship, patience and self-restraint". When students are hungry, he claimed to "endure hardship for a while to cultivate their spirit" (Charlotte, 2015). Under the pretext of saving souls, he ordered Jane Eyre to cut her hair and humiliated her in public, yet his wife and daughter were dressed in fancy clothes. His act of cutting off supplies and treating students harshly was not exposed until typhus broke out at the school and many students died. His pseudo-charitable nature and religious hypocrisy were exposed to the fullest. However, the final solution was that several wealthy and benevolent people donated money to rebuild the school. The Mr. Brocklehurst still performed his duties with a few broad-minded gentlemen assisting from the side, thus Charlotte's criticism of the institutional system was also incomplete. As an educated woman, although she had a certain degree of foresight and criticism, her solutions did not touch upon the essence of institutional flaws. She still placed her hopes on beneficence of some rich people and, to some extent, replicated the values of the middle class.

Jane posted a job advertisement in the newspaper, and was employed as a governess, the only job she could find in spite of her talent. At Thornfield Hall, Jane and Rochester fell deeply in love crossing the gap of status and

money. Later, Jane left because of the disclosure of his "mad wife". On the one hand, the author portrays Jane as a woman with a strong sense of self and an independent spirit. She declared, "We are equal", which not only challenged the values of the nobility and the middle class in the early Victorian era but also criticized the Victorian gender norms. On the other hand, Jane's resolute departure upon discovering that Rochester already had a wife was a defense of the middle class value towards marriage and family. "Marriage is absolutely sacred, and adultery and infidelity are unforgivable" (Yifan, 2017). Personal desires and traditional concepts are constantly in conflict and compromise with each other, and contradictory emotional structures are everywhere. When Jane receives unexpected property and returns to Thornfield in a Gothic plot at Rochester's call, the initially powerful male character is injured and blind. In marriage, the strength of men and women is swapped. Such a plot arrangement undoubtedly sends a certain signal challenging the patriarchal culture (Gengxin, 17). However, this romantic and radical gender and class stance relied on the concept of family in Victorian ideology to exist, while the romantic exterior was filled with a rebellious spirit against tradition. After marriage, Jane became a "family angel" and smoothly achieved a social class promotion in her life. This arrangement exposed the limitations of Charlotte as the son of her time: she could envision the spiritual independence of women, but found it difficult to completely break away from traditional economic structures and gender roles. As scholar Su Gengxin pointed out in the introduction of "British Fiction and Romanticism" when analyzing the gender roles in Victorian novels: In romantic novels, the more common reason for the dramatic change or transformation of characters' roles and status is that during a transitional period when old values are about to fade away and new values have yet to take shape, the author himself lacks stable values and ideological positions, and is indecisive in the face of two competing orders and systems. This contradictory mentality precisely constitutes the core features of the Structure of Feeling during this period described by Raymond Williams. As Williams put it, art is a living culture. On the one hand, authors challenge authority in pursuit of their ideals; on the other hand, they consciously or unconsciously uphold the values of the middle

class and strengthen the dominant culture. This is the most genuine interaction between literary texts and social reality.

### 2.3 Shared Contradictions in the Structure of Feeling

Both works take orphans, a marginalized group in society, as the main characters, exposing the flaws of the social system through their perspectives. However, they both coincidentally transform institutional contradictions into individual moral narratives, revealing the tension of criticism and compromise in the Structure of Feeling. This common narrative strategy is not accidental but a typical manifestation of the Structure of Feeling during the social transition period of the Victorian era when intellectuals were acutely aware of social problems, but were constrained by the mainstream ideological framework when it came to how to thoroughly solve these problems. Williams once pointed out that the characteristic Structure of Feeling lies in that it captures “the special and vivid results brought about by all factors in a general organization” (Raymond, 2019), which is a reflection of the constant conflict among the dominant culture, the emergent culture and residual culture in people’s mentality, rather than a solidified ideological stance. In this sense, both *Oliver Twist* and *Jane Eyre* have successfully captured the emotional contradictions brewing in Victorian British society — dissatisfaction with the traditional order and the yearning for new social relations, while at the same time being unconsciously constrained by the ideological limitations of the times. This contradiction precisely makes the two works appropriate for studying the Structure of Feeling of the Victorian era, as they not only record the social issues of that time, but also document people’s mental states and emotional responses when facing these problems.

### 3. The Ideological Function of Magical Solutions

Williams pointed out that literary works often compromise contradictions through magic schemes to meet the demands of mainstream ideology. “Magic is indeed necessary; it can be used to postpone the conflict between ethics and experience” (Raymond, 2019). When reality is too cruel and the protagonist is in despair, they often resort to the standard model to solve the urgent problem. Among the various magical solutions to the contradiction between personal

feelings and social characteristics, the most common arrangement is “an unexpected gift and the empire” (Raymond, 2019). Despite the increasingly acute social conflicts and the constant clashes between personal ideals and aspirations and popular values, middle-class values still dominate the field of cultural production, and fiction still serve the dominant culture. Both *Oliver Twist* and *Jane Eyre* offer emotional comfort in the form of moral fables, weakening the radical criticism of social issues and bridging the gap between reality and ideals through magic solutions. This narrative strategy not only reflects the writer’s personal choices, but also embodies the deep-seated anxiety over the collapse of social order within the emotional structure of The Times.

#### 3.1 The Magical Plan of *Oliver Twist*

In *Oliver Twist*, Oliver was unfortunately drawn into a den of thieves. Facing Fagin’s threats and inducement, he remained as kind-hearted as a child from a wealthy family. It was his kindness that enabled him to meet Mr. Brownlow and receive help to escape the abyss. Dickens simplified the complex social collisions into the issue of moral purification by eliminating the villains (Fagin being hanged and Sykes falling to his death) and restoring to family order (Oliver’s return to his middle class family). This black-and-white moral view undoubtedly satisfies the psychological needs of middle-class readers for order and justice while concealing the structural roots of poverty (such as the flaws in the New Poor law). When Oliver was finally revealed to be a middle-class heir and recovered his legitimate social position, Dickens strengthened the legitimacy of the class essence theory, suggesting that a person’s social status is ultimately determined by their birth.

This narrative arrangement is no accident; it closely aligns with the ideology of the middle class in the Victorian era when social discourse often attributed poverty to individual moral flaws rather than institutional injustice. Although Dickens felt deep sympathy for the poor, he ultimately failed to completely break free from the shackles of mainstream thinking. Through the magical plan of bloodline redemption, the novel ingeniously avoids fundamental questioning of the capitalist system and transforms possible social criticism into moral exhortation. This strategy to some extent weakened the critical nature of the work, but perhaps it was precisely his compromise that

enabled *Oliver Twist* to gain widespread resonance at that time.

### 3.2 The Magical Plan and Imperial Imagination of *Jane Eyre*

On her path to becoming the wife of a noble estate owner, Jane Eyre's main obstacles were money, status and morality. In the 1840s, the concept of family status was deeply rooted in people's minds, which indicated that the influence of the residual noble culture was still profound. However, the mainstream middle-class concept began to embrace money determinism — tying money to success and status. Jane's financial problem was the first to be resolved. The author arranged for Mr. Eyre, who was doing business in the Madeira Islands, to pass away and leave all his property (a total of 20,000 pounds) to his niece Jane, who became rich overnight from poverty. Williams believed that the empire was a broad and circuitous route, "often an unexpected source of wealth" (Raymond, 2019). In Charlotte's description, opportunities were abound overseas, colonies were full of wealth, and the depiction of empires also appeared repeatedly in her works.

Jane's wealth still lagged behind that of Rochester to some extent, so the author arranged for a fire at Thornfield Hall. This magical plan achieved three goals at once. Not only did it reduce Rochester's wealth and cause him to lose his eyesight, but it also cleared another obstacle to their marriage — Rochester's mad wife Bertha died in the fire, resulting in a happy ending for all. Bertha was the daughter of Mason, a plantation owner and merchant in the West Indies. To enhance her family's status, she married Rochester, the second son of a nobleman who lacked property, with a dowry of 30,000, which solved Rochester's financial problem as a second son to his noble father. However, the author arranged for Bertha to dehumanize and set herself on fire to fulfill the love story of Jane and Rochester. Spivak believed that "when female authors of published works come from the ruling 'culture', they sometimes, like male authors, have a tendency to create a vague 'other' (often female)" (Spivak, 2014). As a Creole from the West Indies, Bertha embodies the colonial other, female desires and madness. Bertha's death symbolized the suppression of the colonial other and female desires, thereby achieving the self-redemption of Jane Eyre, suggesting that female independence comes at the cost of excluding "irrational" others. This

magical solution reflects the inner predicament of middle-class women in the Victorian era: they longed for equality but were afraid of the consequences of completely breaking away from traditional gender roles. By externalizing the inner conflicts with Bertha as the other and achieving psychological balance by eliminating her, Bronte actually found a narrative path that expresses women's demands without completely subverting social order.

Both the beautiful imagination of colonial wealth and opportunities and the narration of other colonial 'barbarians' in literature directly or indirectly promoted the construction of the British Empire.

### 3.3 The Historical Context of Magical Solutions

Both works exchange the sacrifices of marginalized groups (such as lower-class criminals and colonial women) for the redemption of the protagonists, exposing their common structure of feeling, which is the coexistence of radicalism and conservatism. This narrative mode needs to be examined within the specific historical context of the Victorian era when British society was in a crucial period of transition from tradition to modernity, and various social conflicts intensified. For instance, workers' movements such as the Charter Movement (which started in 1839) occurred one after another, causing widespread concern in British society about the situation at that time. Against this backdrop, cultural works often assume the function of a safety valve for social anxiety. From the perspective of structure of feeling, these magic solutions are not only the narrative choices of individual writers, but also projections of the collective psychology of the time. They reflect the contradictory mindset of Victorian British society in the face of the pains of modernization: both longing for change and fearing disorder, criticizing the current situation while also being attached to tradition. Williams emphasized that the value of Structure of Feeling lies in its ability to capture common experiences that have not yet been explicitly expressed but are already taking shape. In this sense, the symbolic solutions of *Oliver Twist* and *Jane Eyre* precisely document the complex emotional responses of people in the Victorian era when facing social transformation — a delicate state between hope and fear, criticism and compromise.

## 4. Conclusion

From the perspective of the theory of emotional structure, when reinterpreting *Oliver Twist* and *Jane Eyre*, we can find that at the level of social system criticism, both novels keenly capture the social problems of the Victorian era (class oppression, gender injustice), but both rely on individual morality and accidental opportunities to solve the structural contradictions. They jointly reflect the contradictory mentality of individuals during the social transformation period — both longing for change and fearing disorder, demonstrating the limitations of the ideology of the time. As carriers of the structure of feeling of the Victorian era, the two works reveal the oppressive nature of industrialization and patriarchy but maintain the traditional order through moralized narratives. This contradiction is precisely the embodiment of what Williams called the outcome of “fighting between old and new cultures”. The conflict between individual experience and social structure, the collusion between critical demands and ideology jointly constitute the complex aspects of literature during the transitional period. At the magic solution level, both works have reconciled real contradictions with fulfilled ideological functions by eliminating marginal others (lower-class criminals, colonial women) and maintaining the core order (family, marriage).

The limitation of this study lies in that it mainly focuses on two novels and have not fully examined the depiction of the working class in other important Victorian texts such as Mrs. Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*. Future research could further explore how other Victorian texts (such as *Mary Barton* and *Mill on the Floss*) responded to the dynamics of structure of feeling in different forms, thereby deepening the understanding of the cultural transformation in 19th-century Britain. Just as Williams reminds us, the structure of feeling is always in a process of flow and formation. Only through multidimensional and multi-textual examination can we have a more comprehensive grasp of the spiritual outlook of an era.

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