The Strange Case and Hard Times of Dr. Jekyll, Sissy & Louisa

In the 1800s men and women had two totally different roles and views in society. In both cases some way they are both being repressed. If we look at the two female characters Sissy Jupe and Louisa Gradgrind from Charles Dickens story *Hard Times* it is apparent they both are being repressed from imagination and thinking outside the “facts”. Turning the page and looking at the male aspect, if we look at the character Dr. Jekyll from Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* it’s obvious he is battling himself and his self image, in turn repressing himself. Although these are three totally different characters, they all want to discover, however the force and view of society holds them back.

Looking at the first character, Sissy Jupe from Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times* she is one of the first characters we encounter in the story. Mr. Gradgrind, the school teacher calls upon Sissy stating:

> “Sissy is not a name,” said Mr. Gradgrind. “Don’t call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia.” “It’s father as calls me Sissy, Sir,” returned the young girl in a trembling voice, and with another curtsey.” (Dickens 2)

In this quote it is apparent Gradgrind does not think her name “Sissy” is real. However Sissy only responds to this name because this is what her father has taught her and has called her for most of her life. Gradgrind finds this to be unacceptable and to have nicknames as names to not be factual, making her less educated. In Coketown, the setting of *Hard Times* everyone focuses on the facts, this name she has been given is not a fact or a real name, so it is not accepted by most of the Coketown society. Gradgrind is putting Sissy down, as well as putting down her
imagination that this is her real name. Shortly after this encounter, Gradgrind continues to put
Sissy down which is demonstrated when Gradgrind states:

“Give me your definition of a horse.” (Sissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm
by this demand) “Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!” said Mr.
Gradgrind, for the general behoof of all the littler pitchers. “Girl number twenty
possess of no facts, in reference to one of the commonest of animals! Some boy’s
definition of a horse. Bitzer, yours” (Dickens 3)

Here it is obvious that Gradgrind does not know his “facts” about grammar, because if he did, he
would realize that you technically cannot define objects. Since Sissy does not answer, Gradgrind
immediately assumes that she is uneducated and passes the question off to a boy in the class,
making it seem as if males are better. This was a common theme throughout the story, and this
also shows Gradgrind repressing Sissy and her education and imagination, because he did not
give her a chance to answer. Sissy not answering and being alarmed shows that she is educated
enough to know that he is wrong by asking her to define an object. It also shows that she might
have been thinking of a different answer based on what she knows from her father and horses. If
Gradgrind was not so focused on the “facts” of the answer, and if he would have allowed Sissy to
formulate an answer using her imagination, she might have had a suitable educated answer, but
this is not the case.

Finally in a third quote pertaining to Sissy and her education, her father teachers her to
read from other books. These books are not acceptable to those of the community because they
encourage imagination and are not focused and surrounded by facts. A group of men to go
Sissy’s to confront her father about he education and find her abandoned by him. One of the
men named Childers states:

“that she was to be taught the deuce-and-all of education. How it got into his
head, I cant say; I can only say that it never got out. He has been picking up a bit
of reading for her, here---and a bit of writing for her there---and a bit of ciphering for her, somewhere else---these seven years.” (Dickens 25)

From this quote it is apparent the men from the community do not approve of the way that Sissy’s father was trying to educate her. The books were not good enough to teach her the facts she needed, however her father was trying to instill the importance of facts and not allowing her to imagine.

Even though Sissy is repressed with her imagination and discovery so is another female character in *Hard Times*, this character is Louisa Gradgrind. Louisa is the daughter of the school teacher Mr. Gradgrind, and from the previous encounters with Sissy, that he is only focused on facts, and this is how he brought up his daughter as well. However, Louisa wants to break the mold of only being focused on facts, and wants to discover and imagine. Louisa demonstrates wanting to imagine in the following quotes from how her father describes her:

> “You have been so well trained, and you do, I am so happy to say, so much justice to the education in your good sense. You are not impulsive, you are not romantic, you are accustomed to view everything from the strong dispassionate ground of reason and calculation.” (Dickens 72)

Gradgrind tells Louisa that she is a machine. She has been programed to have zero emotion, zero romantic side, she is the product of facts. She is not a human pretty much, her father programed her this way so she would never want to imagine like Sissy, or would never want to discover anything outside the facts. Louisa responds to her father by saying:

> “that I never had a child’s heart. You have trained me so well, that I never dreamed a child’s dream. You have dealt so wisely with me, father, from my cradle to this hour, that I never had a child’s belief or a child’s fear.” (Dickens 76)

It’s obvious that Louisa knows that she has been repressed of the normal childhood and the emotions that she should have learned and had. She uses sarcasm to try to show her father that
he really has made her have no childhood or life in general. However, he cannot even realize what she is doing, and thinks she is praising him for his “fathering” over the years. It’s evident that she has had zero room to imagine or become her own person she is a product of fact, rather than discovery and imagination.

Not only does her father repress her imagination, Bounderby does as well. He knows that Louisa is a smart women, however he knows that unless she is repressed her mind would run wild and that would not be acceptable for a women of her stature. Bounderby is quoted talking to Gradgrind saying:

“ In idle imagination, Gradgrind”, repeated Bounderby. “A very bad thing for anybody, but a cursed bad thing for a girl like Louisa. I should ask Mrs. Gradgrind’s pardon for strong expressions, but that she knows very well I am not a refined character. Whoever expects refinement in me will be disappointed. I hadn’t a refined bringing up.” (Dickens 14)

Bounderby knows that Louisa has a wondering mind, and knows that she wants to explore and discover outside what she has been taught. Dickens shows Louisa’s want to break out of the mindless ways of being surrounded by facts and discover what’s outside of the “facts” when he says:

“Louisa languidly leaned upon the window looking out, without looking at anything, while young Thomas stood sniffing revengefully at the fire. Adam Smith and Malthus, two younger Gradgrinds, were out at lecture in custody; and little Jane, after manufacturing a good deal of moist pipe-clay on her face with slate-pencil and tears, had fallen asleep over vulgar fractions.” (Dickens 15)

From this quote we can see the entire family is brain washed with the idea of facts. Louisa is the only one who is not surrounded by doing something with facts that her father would want. She is staring out a window, wanting to be anywhere but there, and obviously wanting to break the mold of being immersed in facts.
Much like Louisa and Sissy Jupe from *Hard Times*, Dr. Jekyll from Robert Louis Stevenson’s novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is also repressed by the views of society and wanting to discover outside these views. We see Jekyll’s first internal struggle when he is quoted saying:

“I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point.” (Stevenson 1709)

From this quote it’s visible that Jekyll knows that there are two sides of man whether they want to admit it or not, and he wants to, he is struggling because he wants this other side to be out rather than repressed inside of him. This is seen in a quote shortly after the previous when Jekyll writes:

“It was only the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognize the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved-day-dream, on the thought of the separation of these elements.” (Stevenson 1709)

Jekyll knows that there are two sides to every man. However in their society, much like the people of Coketown are programmed to think in one tunnel. Jekyll wants to break through this tunnel and separate the views of man into his two rightful sides. Although society represses him, he does bring out his other side, creating Mr. Hyde, but only in privacy does he let’s this side come out.

Dr. Jekyll uses his second personality to carry out what he would not normally be able to do in his public view because it would not be acceptable. He wants to be able to embrace both of
these sides, and wants them to be acceptable to society, however it is not. Jekyll shows how he does what would regularly not be accepted through society with Hyde when he states:

“Me have before hired bravos to transact their crimes, while their own person and reputation sat under shelter. I was the first that ever did so for his pleasures. I was the first that could thus plod in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and in a moment, like a schoolboy, strip off these lendings and spring headlong into the sea of liberty. But for me, in my impenetrable mantle, the safety was complete. Think of it—I did not even exist!” (Stevenson 1712)

In this quote Jekyll is describing how he knows that every man has two sides, but in the society surrounding the novel, the man’s reputation is more important than anything. While other men repress their inner Hyde, Jekyll lives it, and brings it out. No one will ever know it’s actually him, which makes this even better. Jekyll does not want to be repressed by the view of society and wants to have both sides apparent in the public eye but can’t.

Keeping both sides becomes overwhelming and eventually Jekyll knows that he is going to have to pick one side to keep as his public view. This eats away at him, and he contemplates both sides, and because his discovery, it ends up taking over. Jekyll states in the following quote his difficulty trying to choose which side:

“I now felt I had to choose.... Jekyll (who was composite) now with the most sensitive apprehensions, now with a greedy gusto, projected and shared in pleasures and adventures of Hyde; but Hyde was indifferent to Jekyll, or but remembered him as the mountain bandit remembers the cavern in which he conceals himself from pursuit. Jekyll had more than a father’s interest; Hyde had more than a son’s indifference. To cast my lot with Jekyll, was to die to those appetites which I had long secretly indulged and had of late begun to pamper. To cast it in with Hyde, was to die to a thousand interest and aspirations and become, at a blow and forever, despised and friendless. The bargain might appear unequal; but there was till another consideration in the scales; for while Jekyll would suffer smartingly in the fires of abstinence, Hyde would be not even conscious of all that he had lost.” (Stevenson 1714)
Jekyll here realizes that both sides are taking over his life, and because how he was brought up and through the views of society, he must pick a side. However he argues that they both are apart of him in a sense and either way no matter what side he would so choose would be repressed eventually by society.

Out of the three characters Jekyll is the only one who begins to step out of the repression that society has laid upon him by creating Hyde. However, Jekyll and Louisa have a very similar bond, Jekyll creates Hyde as a defiance to society trying to break away. Louisa does the same when she marries Bounderby, she knows that this is wrong, but she does it anyway, as well as when she thinks about running off with Harthouse. She creates an internal Hyde but never allows it to come out like Dr. Jekyll does. Being repressed by society and not being able to imagine and discover makes us tap into a defiant side in order to allow us to imagine. Sissy does this by supporting Louisa in her repression. Louisa does this by marrying Bounderby, and yet still trying to break the mold and discover but she never does, and finally Dr. Jekyll does this by creating Mr. Hyde to express his discovery and imagination without getting in trouble. If in today’s society our imagination and discovery was repressed, who knows what kinds of Hyde’s people would develop, or what lengths people would go to in order to discover and imagine again.