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British Working Class in the Context of Deindustrialization
in the Works of Pat Barker

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Studentka ve své práci nejprve vysvětlí odpovídající terminologii, zejména v oblasti kulturních identit. Dále se zaměří na významné historické události tzv. dlouhých 80. let v Británii a jejich vlivu na tehdejší britskou společnost. Důležitým prvkem zde bude i odraz politického a kulturního vývoje v soudobé literatuře. Studentka se zaměří především na zobrazení britské pracovní třídy a jejích společenských problémů. Tyto aspekty pak bude analyzovat ve vybraných dílech Pat Barker. Vytvoří tak kulturně-historickou analýzu v kontrastu s literárním obrazem zvoleného období.

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Annotation

The bachelor thesis focuses on analytical research of cultural identities with emphasis on the British working class in the period of deindustrialization. The historical and cultural context, which, in some way, reflected in the development of this social class, is one the major aspects of the work. The analysis is based on the literary works by Pat Barker, who is one of the main representatives of the proletarian literature of that period.

Keywords

Cultural identity, social classes, deindustrialization, proletarian literature, analysis, literary image

Název

Britská pracovní třída v kontextu deindustrializace v dílech Pat Barker

Anotace

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na analytický výzkum kulturních identit se zaměřením na Britskou pracovní třídu v období deindustrializace. Důležitý důraz je kladen na historický a kulturní kontext, který se nějakým způsobem projevil na vývoji této společenské vrstvy. Analýza je vytvořena na základě literárních děl autorky Pat Barkerové, která je jedním z hlavních představitelů proletářské literatury tohoto období.

Klíčová slova

kulturní identita, společenské vrstvy, deindustrializace, proletářská literatura, analýza, literární obraz

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Introduction

In the context of the analysis of the Great Britain, there are many subjects related to its historical and cultural development. Although it is a rich and highly developed country, it is often associated with the theme of class division. There are only few places in the world which are linked with this phenomenon as closely as it is with the British Isles. Nevertheless, the work primarily focuses only on the identity of one of these social groups, the working class, which occupies the lowest position in the British society. The following text will be devoted to the analysis of this class from a cultural and literary point of view, especially in the context of the literature in the times of deindustrialization that hit Britain in the 70s and 80s of the 20th century. The works of the well-known British author Pat Barker, whose books are appreciated for the authenticity of her way of portraying the working-class environment and the people connected with it, will serve as a demonstration of the individual features of this proletarian literature. The thesis should provide a clear view of the issues of the working class, its impact on the contemporary literature and the analysis of cultural identities of this historically significant period.

The first part of the thesis is focused on the theoretical research, which consists of three individual chapters. The first chapter is devoted exclusively to the identifying of social class identities, with a focus on the working-class identity. Through specific terms and related studies, it explains the way class system is perceived by the surrounding society. For better understanding, there is also an explanation of the contrasting nature of the remaining classes that form the British society. The second part of the first chapter focuses on the historical development of the working class since the middle of the 20th century, thanks to which it is possible to look at the form it had before the period of deindustrialization. As a result, it should be easier to understand the working class and thus define its identity in social and historical terms.

In the second chapter, which is closely linked to the previous one, the work focuses on the characteristics of the historical and cultural context, which was one of the main influencing factors present in the formation processes of the working class. Essential historical, cultural and even political events are an integral part of the work and also help with the accomplishment of the analytical part of the work.

Finally, the last chapter of the theoretical part is devoted to the professional definition of the proletarian literature. It discusses the relevant themes and typical features that define this artistic

trend. In addition to all these important aspects, it is aimed at the most prominent writers who have made themselves known for their proletarian works. Among them is the author who has the most significant role in this thesis, Pat Barker, whose works are the main subjects of the final analysis. The chapter should primarily serve as an illustration of the literary style characteristic for the working class.

The second, practical part of the thesis consists of the main analysis of two proletarian literary works, the books *Union Street* and *Blow Your House Down* written by Pat Barker. The analysis is based on the theoretical research from the previous part of the thesis and its main essence is a comparison of the historical-cultural context of the deindustrialization period and the context of the chosen books. The analysis should also reveal individual aspects of the working class in the stories and evaluate the information collected.

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to create a professional theoretical research and then apply it in the case of creating the final analysis. It should serve as an illustrative demonstration of the influence of the contemporary environment and social development of the working-class literature, in this case represented by the works of Pat Barker. The whole work should be characterized by a professional data processing and its subsequent application.

1 Identity of working class

1.1 Definition

It is generally known that social status is a crucial part of British history. It basically divides the nation into several individual sections, all of them of different value and quality of life. Although those distinctions were changed and transformed many times throughout the time, the results of the division are visible to this day. According to a British historian Edward P. Thompson, working class is in many cases taken as a characteristic thing. Nevertheless, the truth is that it more resembles a diverse relationship between individuals who share the same or at least similar way of living.¹ How it is then possible to closer explain this phenomenon and what enables people to distinguish working class from other social groups?

As a matter of fact, British always had a high tendency to emphasize the division of social classes. With this in mind, it is important to determine what a class actually is. As historical sources claim, the first mention dates back in the early 19th century. Then it was primarily used by Western European societies as a designation of changes in the context of social structure.² From the highest rank to the lowest, working class, it reflected people's economic status and cast a negative shadow over the community, yet many sociologists believed in its importance for the development of civilization. According to a German theorist Karl Marx, whose theory of the class system persists as one of the most well-known, a dominant upper class has the control over other one and the charge over its gradual development and political mentality. As a result, it leads to the competition of those classes and their desire to gain a power over production.³

Nowadays, the idea of Marxism is often questioned in aspects of its functionality, since his studies were mainly based on an existence of only two social classes. Many other sociologists do not share the same conviction and tend to incline toward a different class analysis that describes the phenomenon as already mentioned 'relationship'⁴. Individual classes should not be referred to as statistical figures. In fact, they should be considered as types of human communities which distribute comparable signs. Those can be, for instance, their position in

¹ Edward P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 8-14, <https://uncomradelybehaviour.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/thompson-ep-the-making-of-the-english-working-class.pdf>.

² "Social Class," Social differentiation, Britannica, last modified 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-class>.

³ Britannica, "Social Class."

⁴ Britannica, "Social Class."

the society structure, type of profession, workplace, level of wages and people's reliance on it, amount of possessions, cultural status or other non-political aspects.

Regarding the society structure, there are usually highlighted three main types of classes that are recognized amongst both past and contemporary society – the upper class, middle class and the lower class or also called working class. However, according to the claims of the majority of British sources, the Great Britain's "lower class" term is often used in the context of long-term unemployed individuals.⁵ For this reason, the term "working class" is more adequate when describing the Britain's class hierarchy.

According to a recent study, the upper class, also referred to as "elite", is the top of the social structure ladder. People labelled as upper class members are distinguished by an extensive wealth and large-scale properties.⁶ Given that, they can afford a much more comfortable and superior ways of life compared to those of the people placed in the classes below theirs which makes it the group with the lowest number of people.

Next in the line comes the middle class. In connection with it there are sometimes mentioned three different levels making the block quite disparate. At the top of them there are people whose social background is almost the same as in the case of the elite.⁷ In spite of their cultural and educational commitment, their lack of elite's amount of properties still ranks them as the middle class. Then there is the "average" company of rich workers whose political engagement is even lower but still exceed the bottom of the middle class formed by people whose wages resemble more to the middle-classers' but their employment is rather a class below.

Lastly, there is the most discussed and no less important class – the working class. In contrast to other classes, this one provides the lowest values of wealth, engagement in cultural activities and amount of properties. It is predominantly formed by manual workers employed by versatile factories focused on manufacturing and production.⁸ The actions and workload of those workers are controlled by their supervisors who are parts of higher classes. In the past, a rebellious behaviour used to be put in the context with this class, as it was expected from people living at to bottom to try and reduce the impact of superior classes. Except for strikes, however, there

⁵ "What is the British class system?," British society structure, Great British Mag, last modified September 3, 2019, <https://greatbritishmag.co.uk/uk-culture/what-is-the-british-class-system/>.

⁶ "Britain now has 7 social classes," Social classes in Britain, Independent, last modified April 3, 2013, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/britain-now-has-7-social-classes-and-working-class-is-a-dwindling-breed-8557894.html>.

⁷ Independent, "Britain now has 7 social classes."

⁸ Britannica, "Social Class."

has never been a great rebellion. Those people who are not involved in the manufacturing process create the unfortunate unemployment percentile. It includes homeless people, prostitutes, criminals and those who weren't lucky enough to get a job etc. With this in mind, it can be claimed that the working class is as diverse as the other social classes.

1.2 History and evolution

The working class, as one of the most discussed topics in England, can be proud of its rich and diverse history. However, the most appealing parts of it are events of the second half of the 20th century. It began with the end of the World War II., which had shattered not only the Great Britain but also the rest of the world, continued with several revolutionary twists and reforms and ended with the current form as we know it. Therefore, the kinds of changes that have occurred and their way of affecting the face of the working class are the main topics of the popular subject.

1.2.1 Post war period

According to the data included in the book of Ellis Wasson, huge parts in the British Great Victory in the WWII was played by the advanced and fast industrial production, primarily of weapons and combat or defence aircraft. The reason for the production on this scale was the inclusion of women in the manufacturing process and creating of the "Women's Land Army". It was caused by the lack of manual workers, mainly men, who were drafted to fight in the war.⁹ Women's participation in the war led to the increase of the number of workers and hence the production. But this was not the only mentioned change brought by the war.

Over time, caused by the increase of taxes, wages of people in the superior classes began to decline.¹⁰ As a result, the differences between the wages in the working class and those of the superior classes were no longer as significant as they used to be, making the class system slowly dissolving. This was mainly caused by the actions of the Labour party which has been a member of parliament since the beginning of the 20th century.

As historical sources claim, the Party was formed as a result of persistent dissatisfaction of the working-class members with their inability to push through their candidates to the parliament. So-called urban proletariat was forced to merge all of their left-wing parties and adopt one common name – The Labour Party – which is since then one of the most important parties in

⁹ Ellis Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, trans. Tomáš Znamenáček, 1st ed. (Praha: Grada Publishing a.s., 2010), 319-320.

¹⁰ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 322.

the English Parliament.¹¹ It played a crucial part in the evolution of the working class and helped the urban proletariat to earn a great deal of achievement.

The post war period also brought a lot of revolutionary changes in the area of health management. The major one was commissioning of a new medical system called National Health Service which provided the working-class people with a free health care. Nevertheless, it did not complicate the existence of private clinics which provided priority service and basically no waiting periods for paying patients.¹² Even so, this new service was warmly welcomed by the workers.

1.2.2 The 60s

As mentioned by historian Wasson, the reform concerning accommodation must not be forgotten either, allowing even the poorest people to have their own housing in the new built prefabricated houses. Unfortunately, the first attempt of housing communities was a failure, since it caused an increase of vandalism and criminality. The long-awaited result was not achieved until the 60s.¹³

Another great boom of the working class was recorded in the late 60s in the area of education. The Labour Party was successful in the parliament; thus it was not that difficult to assert its own ideas about joint studying. As Wasson says, the idea of working-class children studying together with those of upper classes was an unexpected success. Accordingly, many new schools and universities were built and the quality of education improved.¹⁴ It helped to form the present-day form of British schooling system.

1.2.3 The 70s

The following 70s were marked by great problems in the area of economy. Within few years, a rapid increase of inflation nearly paralyzed Britain and people of the working class lost almost all of their savings earned in the previous decades.¹⁵ Outraged, workers were forced to launch series of large-scale strikes which resulted in significant losses for the British production, therefore economy. The government was weakened by the situation and resorted to some emergency solutions, such as using armed forces in order to suppress the strikes of workers.

¹¹ "Labour Party," Political party in the UK, Britannica, last modified December 13, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Labour-Party-political-party>.

¹² Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 325.

¹³ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 325-326.

¹⁴ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 332.

¹⁵ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 333-335.

Wasson further states that, while the country was in crisis, The Labour Party took an advantage of it and tried to obtain the power over parliament. They managed to do so, though on the second attempt and not for long. After rejecting the workers' request for wages increase, a new wave of strikes of the working class hit the country and The Labour party was outvoted by the Conservative party.¹⁶ Therefore, a brand-new era under the leadership of the first woman as a British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, began.

1.2.4 The 80s and 90s

It is generally known that Margaret Thatcher was not the working class' favourite but her believes were crucial for the country's future. The period of her parliamentary term is also discussed by the already mentioned historian, Elis Wasson. He mentions that one of the main goals of her reforms was a reduction of excess manufacturing factories that parasitized on the state's resources. It led to a steep increase of unemployment, especially noticeable in the working class. Workers, particularly, were considered as spongers which was the reason for cutting their numbers down. Under her supervision, almost all industry and manufacturing has been moved to Asia. Strikes were banned and the Labour Party was losing its ability to protect the people of the working class.¹⁷ Ongoing reformation processes led to a compelling reduction of taxes. Gradually, the working class was fading away and a new space for young businessmen and entrepreneurs was being formed. Altogether, this was the era of so-called deindustrialisation which stood as a main topic of the 1980s.

The next decade, the 90s, can be also referred to as "the classless society". After Margaret Thatcher's leaving of the post of Prime Minister, classes basically merged with each other and created something similar to the unite society as we know today.

¹⁶ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 335,351.

¹⁷ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 351-356.

2 History

Although Britain is often linked with the idea of power and authority, it has not always been this way. Since its initial existence, the country went through many severe modifications and it had its ups and downs throughout the way. Nevertheless, discussing all of the crucial breaking points in history of such a diverse country would be almost infinite. That is the reason why is this chapter primarily dedicated to the period of the great fall and remarkable rise – the 70s and 80s of the 20th century - era, which almost sank British history to the very bottom and also gave it the strength to bounce back to the top and transform itself to the form known today.

2.1 The way to the long 1980s

Before the country could register a significant success, it must have been preceded by so-called times of darkness and despair. The 1970s were known as a period of great depression which affected not only the British Isles but also other countries of Western Europe. With this in mind there remains a question, what the cause of so rapid dysfunction of the economy was.

Despite the government effort, there was still an intense increase of inflation. According to the records of the historian Wasson, people were losing almost all of their monetary and proprietary securities and, at the same time, the level of British economy dropped to the lowest values compared to the other European countries.¹⁸ All of that was accompanied by extensive strikes. As a result, the country was becoming poorer and people were more and more dissatisfied.

In the mid-70s, Harold Wilson, a Labour Party representative, took a lead as a Prime Minister, removing the power over government from the hands of Conservatives. During his period there have been many attempts to reduce the rising inflation, such as raising taxes or negotiating with unions. However, all of them were more or less failure which led to his resignation, followed by another Labour Party representative James Callaghan taking the lead.¹⁹ Callaghan continued the misery for another 3 years which resulted in the strategy of compromise being the symbol of the 70s. Almost everybody must have realised that there was a desperate need for change, otherwise the end was near.

¹⁸ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 333

¹⁹ Kenneth O. Morgan, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2009), 580–581.

Fortunately, the situation was about to change with the arrival of a new leader. In 1979, Margaret Thatcher won the election as a representative of the Conservative Party and became the first female Prime Minister.

2.2 The long 80s and Margaret Thatcher

The beginning of the 80s was an important milestone in the country's history, primarily thanks to a one particular person, Margaret Thatcher, the first woman to be a British Prime Minister and a daughter of a retailer. Taking that into account, it is necessary to look back at her journey that led to her become, besides the Queen, one of the most powerful women in the Great Britain and the importance of her 11-year career as a Prime Minister for the Isles.

When she took over the government, the country was in an impoverished condition and on the verge of crash. Also, it had a serious problem with frequent attacks which were committed by a well-known Irish terrorist organisation called IRA. According to sources, these attacks were responsible for many casualties, including Thatcher's close friend, and caused people to live in fear and uncertainty. In addition, there was another type of danger forming in the northern England in the form of a serial killer who, by that time, had been responsible for more than 10 victims.²⁰ In spite of all the inconvenience, the 'Iron Lady', as she was later called, seized the leadership and transformed the situation into something completely different.

The main problem, that needed to be eliminated, was the already mentioned increasing inflation. Thatcher was a promoter of free market and effective businessmen. She considered the state system to be too social and its industrial enterprises to be feeding on the state's economy, making it weak. That she confirmed in an interview for *Woman's Own* magazine in 1987, when she shared her opinion about society and stated "There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first."²¹ Her conviction ultimately led to her decision of the elimination of inefficient industries, such as mining companies, restricting the power of unions and limiting efforts of increasing indirect taxes.²² The Prime Minister showed everybody the reason for her being called the Iron Lady and did not surrender to any compromise which could question her judgment.

²⁰ Brian Moynahan, *Velká Británie XX. století*, trans. Ivan Brož, 1st ed. (Praha: Odeon, 1997), 276.

²¹ Margaret Thatcher, "Aids, education and the year 2000!," *Women's Own*, October 31, 1987. <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689>.

²² Moynahan, *Velká Británie XX. století*, 278–279.

After all, the inflation started to escalate down which was refreshing for the economy. On the other hand, Britain began to experience the highest level of unemployment of work-capable people. Thatcher tried to save the situation by offering a requalification for the people who had been fired from their work, but still, she earned a great deal of dissatisfaction and criticism and her popularity descended even more.²³ This was the first time her position as a Prime Minister was threatened. Fortunate for her career and unfortunate for Britain were the events of 1982. That year, small area - the Falkland Islands, belonging to Great Britain and located near the bottom of South America, were attacked by Argentines and became occupied.

After the British victory, the country had to recover from extensive financial expenses and Thatcher could continue in pursuing her next ideas and goals. One of them was, for example, reducing the number of people living in sublets and then proceeding with selling houses and flats to private ownerships. There was also recorded an increase in sales of shares which has multiplied several times since she took the lead.²⁴ Nevertheless, ruthless treatment of workers and miners went on and more strikes appeared despite the government's ban. Accordingly, the situation escalated in 1984 when IRA committed a bomb attack aimed on a hotel in Brighton, where the representatives of the Conservative Party had a conference meeting. As sources claim, Margaret Thatcher, who managed to escape the disaster unharmed, became a person of perpetual danger and a person most likely to be assassinated.²⁵

In addition, London suffered from ongoing struggles and strikes of young unionist and unemployed. However, their actions were no longer those of economic reasons as their situation had improved with time.²⁶ Some parts of the city were devastated, and the crime rates were quite high. At the same time, lots of abandoned and unmaintained houses were doomed for demolition. Also, as historians claim, the Church was rapidly losing its importance in the country and marriage was no longer the unspoken condition for having a child.²⁷ On the basis of those findings, it could be stated that the morale of British people was undoubtedly descending by the end of the decade.

In 1987, Thatcher won the election once again, which made her a record holder of the 20th century. Her third election period brought a creation of new job opportunities and a falling

²³ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 352.

²⁴ Moynahan, *Velká Británie XX. století*, 292.

²⁵ Moynahan, *Velká Británie XX. století*, 290.

²⁶ Moynahan, *Velká Británie XX. století*, 291.

²⁷ Moynahan, *Velká Británie XX. století*, 292.

number of unemployed individuals. Unfortunately, the officials had enough of Thatcher's steady hand and uncompromising approach, and they strived for change. Due to that, the Iron Lady was forced to step down as the Prime Minister and leave the beloved office of hers.

Regardless of all the shortcomings and negative comments that accompanied her career, Margaret Thatcher was a powerful figure who, as a Prime Minister, managed to influence the lives of millions of people throughout Britain. She was a valuable symbol of the late 20th century and an inspiration to many women who had no idea that hard work and determination can make one of them so influential.

2.3 The Falklands war

The event of 1982 that, for a moment, brought British people together and saved Margaret Thatcher from losing her election was the Falklands war. The war was a result of a long-term conflict between Britain and Argentina. The Argentineans had a wrong impression that the small archipelago located near their coast is rightfully theirs. In fact, the Falklands officially were and still are a part of the United Kingdom since 1833.

As historical sources declare, the Argentine junta landed and disembarked in the Falklands in April 1982 and claimed their ownership of it.²⁸ The soldiers, who could almost be considered amateurs, believed that Britain would resolve the situation diplomatically and would not get actively involved. However, the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who was the one to decide how to proceed, could not afford a mistake since she was, so to speak, putting her neck on the line. For the fear of losing dignity, the government has sent a relatively modest fleet to the coast of South America, all of that despite the long distance and lack of resources both material and financial. Still, it was not a one-sided decision. Thatcher had to seek the support from her friend, then President of the United States Ronald Reagan. Therefore, in this conflict the US became allies with the Great Britain.²⁹ Meanwhile, according to the data, the number of Argentines on the islands increased to several thousand which was a great deal compared to the number of local residents.³⁰

The war officially began with an attack of British submarine which sank an Argentine cruiser that was located outside the outlined war zone. The answer came almost immediately when

²⁸ "Falkland Islands War," *Falklands War*, Britannica, last modified March 26, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Falkland-Islands-War>.

²⁹ Britannica, "Falkland Islands War."

³⁰ Moynahan, *Velká Británie XX. století*, 284.

Argentines smashed British destroyer.³¹ During the war, Britain was quite lucky. It was due to their opponent's gear which mainly consisted of obsolete machines that were not working properly. If not, the British fleet would be in a great danger and even a loss of a single aircraft carrier would eventually mean their loss and the end of the conflict. Everything was over in mid-June, when British troops surrounded the occupied areas on the islands and their rivals literally scattered away. Also, according to sources, casualties were significantly lower on the winning side, with approximately 250 victims compared to less than 1000 on the Argentine side.³² This was the first direct military battle in which the Great Britain was involved since the end of the World War II. As historian Wasson declares in his book, the outcome of the war led to congratulations of Prime Minister's leadership and a growth her popularity, while the Conservative Party could celebrate another victory in elections. Furthermore, the British economy could finally register an improvement and the leading Party finally was finally able to get rid of one of its biggest enemies, a valuable union leader.³³

All things considered, some experts could argue that it was rather a matter of pride and arrogant character of the Prime Minister, but later would eventually turn out that even the honour of nation needs to be built up albeit at the expense of certain losses. Also, it demonstrates the reality that despite the little of importance of this territory to the British economy, this clash had an unexpected influence on the nation, and it would be irresponsible to not mention it.

2.4 Immigration

Migration has always been an often-discussed topic in many countries all over the world, both in ancient history and these days. As reported by many sources which focus on historical development, proper immigration in the Great Britain occurred after the events of the World War II, with the highest escalation beginning in the late 1990s.³⁴ Since this phenomenon has been taking place in many generations, it is a crucial part of the historical heritage and it is necessary to acknowledge its influence on the country.

A slight and steady increase of the level of immigration was already recorded in the 60s of the 20th century. According to sources, at the time, it primarily concerned migrants of the Commonwealth countries, including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Malaysia, Canada or India. Nevertheless, people from other countries were also heading to Britain, but unlike

³¹ Britannica, "Falkland Islands War."

³² Moynahan, *Velká Británie XX. století*, 285.

³³ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 353–354.

³⁴ "A summary history of immigration to Britain," History of immigration, Migration Watch UK, last modified May 12, 2014, <https://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/48>.

those of former British colonies, they did not have the lawful right to live and work there.³⁵ This situation was about to change. The reason behind it was one of the Conservative Party deputies, Enoch Powell, who was publicly expressing his negative attitudes towards the matter of migration.³⁶ Most of the government's attempts to silence him were a failure and his conviction was gaining more and more supporters. In 1971, the situation culminated when the Immigration Act was issued. As described by historians, it mainly affected immigrants from the already mentioned Commonwealth. From that moment on, they could no longer draw the benefits of their origin and had to adapt to the conditions of those people who were migrating from other countries around the world.³⁷ The Act had a little effect on the actual immigration. Although the number of immigrants slightly decreased, the numbers were still very close to the original values.

This topic has brought a number of significant disadvantages. Besides the blending of several different cultures, there were also issues that had a powerful impact on the British economy. Not only citizens were concerned, but also leading politicians, such as Margaret Thatcher. According to specialists, she even attempted to integrate the immigrant social groups into the British society through various cultural activities, for which a considerable financial capital was provided. Nevertheless, it basically had no effect.³⁸ The main concern was the unemployment that plagued the country even without the said immigrants. The arrival of new people was just another contribution to the already bad situation as it caused an increase of working competition. Historian Ellis Wasson also mentioned other problems that arose in the context of immigration. It was the lack of access to standard education or social services which should have been a matter of course for everyone. Furthermore, the lack of housing, as most of the immigrants logically headed for the large cities where they had greater chances of living. This even led to the formation of immigrant ghettos that were characterised by an apparent lack of knowledge of English and criminal activities which even multiplied social gaps.³⁹ All these things that somehow interfered with the lives of British citizens led to a strong racial hatred, which did not completely disappear even in the 21st century.

³⁵ "Five times immigration changed the UK," Immigration in UK, BBC, last modified January 20, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-51134644>.

³⁶ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 345.

³⁷ BBC, "A summary history of immigration to Britain."

³⁸ "The working class isn't as white as some would like you to think," Working class, Independent, last modified August 20, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/working-class-culture-race-not-as-white-as-you-would-like-to-think-a7903421.html>.

³⁹ Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie: Od roku 1714 po dnešek*, 345.

As can be seen, immigration undoubtedly had a serious impact on the life in the Great Britain and it has not changed even today. Despite all the different views among people living in the country, it has never been possible to get rid of it or reduce it effectively. This issue frequently appears as one of the major affairs of many European countries and still, Britain remains as one of the most affected ones.

2.5 Cultural character

Speaking of the 70s and 80s of the 20th century in the Great Britain, one cannot claim that it was the most culturally essential period. Yet many important changes that have contributed to the formation of British society have taken a place in those decades. What liberal turnarounds have occurred and what the true face of society was are the elements suitable for discussion.

Just like the other periods, this one has also brought numerous innovations. According to sources, for the younger generation it was the development of the gaming industry which started producing first computer games or, for little children, rubber space-hoppers. As for ladies, they could put a new miniskirt in their wardrobe. In terms of the fashion itself, the most popular colours of clothing were shades of yellow and brown that evoked a sense of elegance and a slight feeling of stereotype. As a result, this indirect possession with convention led to making some people feel the desire to escape from the monotony and so-called rebels were created. Meaning that the main aspect of their behaviour was to break away from the ordinary and be original. They wore eccentric clothes, accessories and were characterised by extravagant styling.⁴⁰

Similarly as fashion, the music industry has undergone a transformation, mainly thanks to implementing of new way of producing music and new interprets on the scene. As sources confirm, one of the most outstanding artists and a powerful figure of that time was musician David Bowie. He came up with a completely new way of creating music through computer technology.⁴¹ Many artists were inspired by his work and he had a great impact on the reshaping of pop music and directly raised the popularity of electronic music. The impact of it is evident even nowadays.

Another significant milestone, mainly concerning the 1970s, was the women's uprising. The main cause was the fact that women were still perceived only as household keepers and maids.

⁴⁰ "Life in the 1970s Britain," Culture in Britain, Bush Theatre, last modified April 24, 2015, <https://www.bushtheatre.co.uk/bushgreen/life-in-1970s-britain/>.

⁴¹ "England was convulsed by a social and political revolution," Culture in Britain, The Guardian, last modified April 19, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/apr/19/1980s-cultural-history>.

In accordance with the historical claims, the arrival of modernisation and a common possession and use of home appliances, that extremely facilitated women's housework, allowed women to spend their time in different ways and in other places than at home.⁴² Disputes over equality between men and women have been a part of history for many years, therefore, it was not surprising that wives wished to have a job and go to work just like their husbands. As stated by experts, the turning point for them was the Sex Declaration Act issued in 1975 which put women at the same level as men and it did not tolerate any kind of gender inequality.⁴³ This manifestation of feminism led to a further transformation of the British society and the so-called 'fair sex' began to step out of the shadow of men.

Following the topic of gender discrimination, the actions of the LGBT community have also been brought to the attention of the 1970s and 1980s. The first laws concerning homosexuality as a crime played its role already in the first half of the 16th century. Since then, many things have changed. However, these abnormalities in sexual orientation were still considered illegal in the 1960s. According to sources, a major change came shortly after the creation of GLF, stands for Gay Liberation Front, in the early 70s. It was formed as a reaction to police cruelty committed on gay protesters and its main purpose was to protect the members of LGBT community. Subsequently, in 1972, the first Pride march was held in the Great Britain, where the people of different sexual orientation publicly celebrated their sexuality.⁴⁴ Later, even some of the famous figures, such as famous extravagant British singer Elton John, joined the public coming out as a bisexual individual.⁴⁵ However, legal sexual equality was not achieved until the late 80s and it was under the supervision of the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.⁴⁶ Since then, sexual discrimination in Britain has been steadily decreasing; nevertheless, people are struggling with the remains of it even today.

As shown above, the culture of British nation is very diverse, and it is constantly changing. Plenty of the late 20th century's events have had an intense influence on the present form of the country. Whether it is a matter of personal nature, such as sexuality and gender, or topics involving the society as a whole, but none of them is less important than the other.

⁴² Bush Theatre, "Life in the 1970s Britain."

⁴³ Bush Theatre, "Life in the 1970s Britain."

⁴⁴ "A short history of LGBT rights in the UK," LGBT in the UK, British Library, last accessed March 18, 2020, <https://www.bl.uk/lgbtq-histories/articles/a-short-history-of-lgbt-rights-in-the-uk>.

⁴⁵ "Elton John Biography," Elton John, Biography, last modified March 31, 2020, <https://www.biography.com/musician/elton-john>.

⁴⁶ British Library, "A short history of LGBT rights in the UK."

3 Proletarian literature

Speaking of the working class, it must never be forgotten in the context of culture, specifically in the field of literature. The so-called proletarian literature is a product of this particular social class and it is a relatively extensive area. However, since it has very distinctive features, it is essential to identify the elements that distinguish it from the literature originated in different social sectors and to determine the reasons of its importance to the people of the working class.

3.1 Definition

The crucial thing that is necessary for the literature analysis is definition of the term. In this case, it is the concept of proletarian literature. The working class has been always known as the one that suffered the most and the same can be said of the literature it produced. Therefore, the major reason for writing these revolutionary works was particularly those life situations of the workers. What type of literature it actually was is the main subject matter of this subchapter.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the working class was afflicted by a huge wave of unemployment during the 1980s and thus, people were hit by a severe frustration. Of course, this also had an impact on the literature of that time period. As it was in the case of the post war period, when the independent group of young writers called Angry Young Men began to form writing their fiction in response to their historical context, the style characteristic of the period of deindustrialization appeared. According to historians, this era was also influenced by a new literary direction, postmodernism, which gradually replaced previous modernism and thus touched the writers of all social classes.⁴⁷ Postmodernism had also an impact on all other kinds of art, but its influence on literature was slightly different. As stated by authorized sources, it primarily changed the form of story building and processing. For example, it was the pursuit of faction, which represented a combination of real and fictional events, the mixing of various literary styles or intertwining different storylines.⁴⁸ These techniques, which distinguished it from the previous artistic movements, were also reflected in the works of the working-class writers, even though their literature was also conditioned by the tendencies of society.

In addition to the impact of artistic trends, there were also the demanding readers. Proletarian literary works were exclusively meant for the working-class people and it was for one simple reason, people of other social classes would never be able to fully understand its message. In

⁴⁷ "English literature: Literature after 1945," English literature, Britannica, last modified February 4, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/art/English-literature/The-literature-of-World-War-II-1939-45#ref13020>.

⁴⁸ "Postmodernism in Literature: Definition & Examples," Postmodernism defined, Study, last accessed March 20, 2020, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/postmodernism-in-literature-definition-lesson-quiz.html>.

this case, those are mainly manual workers who, in the difficult period of deindustrialization, experienced a sense of betrayal by the government, which deprived them of their jobs in order to revitalize the state economy.

3.2 Literary themes

Although the historical and social contexts are important for definition of contemporary literature, literary themes and motifs are also an integral part of writing. By their detection it is then possible to decide in what way the literature should be viewed and perceived.

As already mentioned, proletarian literature is written primarily for workers and for this reason, the themes must be adapted to their needs. In addition to social topics, such as personal stories based on own experience or fictional novels, readers could encounter literary works that were focused on real political events that, somehow, affected the working class. Another frequent motif was also the highlighting of the character of those who were the members of the proletariat. In fact, in this way they were shown their chances of revival of their social statuses. As the expert Kerry Hudson says, this type of perspective topics was certainly popular. At the same time, it also refuted the myths of proletarian literature being focused only on the suffering and shortcomings often associated with the environment of lower classes.⁴⁹ Of course, it was impossible to avoid some of the bleak topics or tendencies to encourage others to start a riot. At the same time, these are not the only aspects characterizing this area of literature.

The exact definition of the main motifs is, due to their diversity, almost impossible. Nevertheless, it is still achievable to get a general idea of what the works of proletarian literature were built upon.

3.3 Main representatives of the proletarian literature

In general, it can be argued that in order to become a writer writing about the working class, it is necessary to be a part of it. It is for one simple reason, this is the only way to empathize with proletarians and to understand their needs, so that it would be possible to choose appropriate themes which might interest them.

The first author worth mentioning, known for his working-class publications in the 1980s, is the Scottish writer James Kelman. As a former representative of the then working class and a postmodernist, he is a great example of this period's literature. According to relevant sources,

⁴⁹ "True grit: Kerry Hudson on books that show real working-class life," Working-class books, The Guardian, last modified May 17, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/may/17/kerry-hudson-the-best-books-to-explode-myths-about-working-class-life>.

his works from the period focused on anti-capitalist themes and were using the characteristics of the lower classes, such as the typical way of informal expressions. His novels, including collections of short stories such as the Not Not White the Giro and Greyhound for Breakfast, have been often criticised for his negative commentary on globalist ideas and refuting of stereotyped attitudes.⁵⁰ His works are generally regarded as a typical example of proletarian literature under the influence of the contemporary postmodernism and it is therefore important not to forget about him.

Another writer, son of a miner, who was an influential author at the time of deindustrialization is already deceased William McIlvanney. As for his work, it mainly consisted of stories from the harsh proletarian world, whose main characters were often influenced by the hostile and violent environment that shaped them into their final form. They were also often accompanied by a detective theme with elements of a classic thriller. His most famous works include, for example, the detective novel Laidlaw, which has even earned several sequels, and the classic proletarian novel Docherty, which follows the fate of a fictional mining family.⁵¹ Although his literary motifs were different from those of Kelman, he was also a great representative of the working-literature and his writings are still popular even today.

3.3.1 Pat Barker

Despite somewhat distinctive themes, one of the most important authors of proletarian literature is also a British professional fiction writer Pat Barker. It can be said that she represents the female writing in this sector of art and thus is a truly significant figure of the 1980s.

Barker, as a Yorkshire native, grew up in a typical proletarian environment. As sources claim, she was born into an incomplete working-class family and she has never met her biological father.⁵² Her literary work has begun at a young age, but at that time she focused more on the middle-class topics rather than on those of the area she came from.⁵³ However, these writings of hers has never been officially published. The first success was generally a long wait and it came in the form of her very first published book, the Union Street, and later her second novel, the Blow Your House Down, which saw the light of the day in the early 80s. According to the

⁵⁰ "James Kelman: Biography," Biography, British Council, last accessed March 20, 2020, <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/james-kelman>.

⁵¹ "William McIlvanney: Biography," Biography, The British Council, last accessed March 20, 2020, <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/william-mcilvanney>.

⁵² "Pat Barker: Dispatches from the front," Pat Barker, The Guardian, last modified August 16, 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/aug/16/fiction.featuresreviews>.

⁵³ "Pat Barker: Biography," Biography, The British Council, last accessed March 20, 2020, <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/pat-barker>.

information gathered by the British Council website, these works started her professional career. Over time, her writing gradually evolved and her popularity grew. She wrote works not only about people suffering in the shadow of their proletarian origin, but also books on war themes, such as the 1990s Regeneration trilogy, which examined the terrible context of the World War I.⁵⁴ As far as the subject of topics is concerned, Barker is not afraid to discuss the issues that then-society considered to be absolute taboo. Therefore, her works included motifs of homosexuality, violence, murder, prostitution, mental distress and explicit scenes from the battlefield.

Although she has achieved enough success in the field of the proletarian literature, her work is still not over. The author is currently publishing books that are translated into many languages and therefore, people will look up to her even in the future.

⁵⁴ The British Council, "Pat Barker: Biography."

4 Union Street analysis

There is no particular model of the British proletarian or any other literature that would determine the exact rules of writing a novel. Although the proletarian literature is characterised by certain themes and styles that dominate others, it is not a standard that everybody must necessarily follow them in the same path. Some of the books written by a British author Pat Barker can be included in these stylistic exceptions. Therefore, the main subjects of the following chapters are the analysis of the way how her books differ from a common proletarian literature and how the author succeeded in capturing the then-contemporary situation. Since both books are Barker's very first publications, it is also an example of the writer's early work.

4.1 The Plot

Although it may seem like it, the book *Union Street* is not based on the author's real-life experience. It is a fictional story with made up characters which were set in a real environment in the middle of British deindustrialisation during the turn of the 70s and 80s. Because of that, even the storyline is one of the crucial parts. All of it takes place in an unnamed city in the northern England. The story is divided into 7 individual chapters, each of them taking place in the same period during several autumn and winter months. In this case, it is concentrated on lives of 7 women of different ages living in the same city district, the street called Union Street. Their stories gradually intertwine and, in a way, follow each other, which was a typical feature of the postmodernism era. Despite the fact that the presence of women as the main characters may, at first glance, appear as an aspect of stereotypical feminist literature, the book is full of many shocking features that go beyond classic themes.

The plot starts with a story of the youngest character, 11 years old girl Kelly Brown who, shortly after the introductory part, has to deal with the fact that she has been raped. As she wanders around, she faces the various reactions of other peers and adults, some of whom show her some sympathy or express regret. Undoubtedly, it changes her viewing of the world and she begins to be empowered by the urge of rebel behaviour which is sometimes on the edge of the law. With each subsequent chapter that deals with the life of other women of the Union Street, the reader learns more and more about the previous story, which makes each of them an integral part that is necessary for understanding the book as a whole. The storyline closes with the passage of an old woman Alice Bell, who has previously been a middle-class lady. The fate brings her down to the poor working-class community, and although she is grateful to the people of the Union Street for being there for her, it takes all her vital force and joy away. In the last

moments of her life, she meets the young Kelly Brown, the main character of the first chapter, and both of them silently help each other to finally get their well-deserved peace, each in a different way. Thus, the central part of the book is rather an example and demonstration of the ways how the lives of specific individuals of the working class differed, albeit being on the same social level. Also, the contrast between them concerns their status in the workers' society, since they include, for example, an old prostitute or a mother of three taking care of her household.

The overall plot, though very engaging, may create a sense of disrupted connectivity. However, if all the relations, even the hidden ones, are given enough attention, it is clearly a very intriguing work, exceptional in its uniqueness. The final interconnection of the first and the closing story only confirm that this work has masterfully thought out storyline which definitely is one of the best working-class themed books of the late 20th century.

4.2 Cultural identity

One of the crucial aspects necessary for the analysis of a book from a literary point of view is the identification and designation of the cultural context of the work. Since, in this case, it is a work with realistic elements, it ought to be comparable to the cultural definition of the period in which the plot of the work is set and as has been already mentioned, the story takes place in the north of England in the 70s in the 20th century. Therefore, the extent of the influence on the cultural environment in this book is one of the most substantial issues addressed in this chapter.

First of all, there is the subject of cultural innovations that affected the lives of people from all social classes, even from the working class, though the influence there was not as significant as, for example, in the middle class. One of these innovations was the modernization of households which mainly concerned electronic equipment and home appliances. In spite of the working class in the seventies still being at the very bottom in terms of living standards, finances and property ownerships, it is clearly visible that even people of this class could also buy such devices. In almost every household mentioned in the book the family owns, for instance, a television set. Although this may, to someone, seem like a petty spending of those who need money the most, this appliance plays an important role in the book, especially for women. In the storyline, television represents one of the ways of a well-deserved relaxation. The characters take them as their companions, thanks to which they can for a moment, albeit a short one, break free from the everyday stressful situations and worries. According to sources, at that time, television broadcasting in the UK had not provide as many diverse programs as it does now, so

it really had rather a relaxing function. It began to serve as a form of entertainment approximately in the early 1990s when a satellite broadcasting was introduced.⁵⁵

Unlike the technical modernisation, the fashion innovation is in the book mentioned only marginally. Nevertheless, it may be judged by occasional references that the women characters are still attached to a rather conventional way of clothing. They wear dresses and knee-length skirts almost on every occasion, even though the trend of wearing trousers was already known in Britain. Still, the way of dressing is adapted to the cold climate conditions in which the whole story is set, so they often complement their winter coats and outfits by accessories, such as scarfs or hats, in order to prevent themselves from being cold. Regarding shoes, the most widespread footwear are so-called plimsolls, which are not as durable as other high-quality shoes, but they are comfortable and pleasantly cheap. In the book, they are worn mainly by children and adolescents are typical for working-class figures. Men's fashion is shown only in the form of heavy winter coats and hats. Everything that can be considered as extravagant, such as the 70's new miniskirt or high heels, is, in the context of the story, associated with the people at the very edge of the working class, prostitutes. They simply stray from a causal life and the extravagant or even vulgar fashion only draws the attention to it.

Taken from a completely different perspective, but still falling within the cultural identity, the way of depiction of typical working-class families in the book and, above all, the image of a woman's position in the family is also a crucial subject matter. It is primarily due to the fact that the book focuses mainly on female characters. Almost all those women from the story who are married describe their husbands as the creators of hostile environment. Men are portrayed as boors with an inclination to violence who undoubtedly follow a very stereotypical rule that says that they are the most powerful members of the family and thus, have virtually an unlimited power over other family members. Although this may seem to be an exaggerated assertion, frequent demonstrations of domestic violence in the story are a sufficient proof. An exemplary case of Pat Barker's viewing of husbands is a passage from the book in which a wife confronts her husband about something he did, and the story goes like this: "He had to silence her somehow. So he stood up and hit her, not very hard, on the side of the head. But the blow liberated something in him, an enormous anger that had been chained up waiting for this moment. He hit her again. And again. It was easier now."⁵⁶ As can be seen, women are really

⁵⁵ "A short history of British television," British television, Science and Media Museum, last modified April 2011, <https://blog.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk/chronology-british-television/>.

⁵⁶ Pat Barker, *Union Street* (London: Virago Press, 1982), 117.

being the victims in the story, though they try to avoid the idea of it. Men's behaviour is most likely influenced by a bad life situation, typical for the people of the working class, that causes their frustration which eventually results in violence. This negative feature of men makes them a common enemy of almost all female characters in the book. On the other hand, it also somehow connects these women. The idea is supported by many story sections where women help and support each other and confide their feelings. Another factor, priceless to them, is the welfare of their families. Although, as has been already said, men consider themselves the most important elements of a family, it is truly women holding the household standing. The prosperity of their children and basically the whole house are the absolute priority for all of them. These also function as the reason for women going to work and despite the fact that this period of time legally guaranteed the equality for both men and women at work, women of the story, though from the working class, do not long for building a career. These findings bring a new view on the fight for women's rights which was still not over in the late 20th century but, apparently, affected primarily women of upper classes.

The Union Street is a book that closely follows the cultural evolution of the time period in which the storyline takes place. The working-class identity is, due to the context-related circumstances and despite the modernization of the society, characterized by somewhat old-fashioned ways that are more typical for previous time period. This only highlights the fact that it is unable to keep pace with the cultural developments of upper classes.

4.3 Historical identity

Another essential procedure for making an analysis is to determine the characteristics of the book from historical point of view. Despite the fact that the work is focused more on the thought processes of individual characters, the influence of the environment, which is designed as a real period of time in the Great Britain, is very strong and it is possible to distinguish its separate elements.

As has been said, the story is set in the late 70s of the 20th century, i.e. the period of the greatest decline, just before the revolutionary era of Margaret Thatcher as a Prime Minister. Thus, Britain was struggling with its increasing unemployment and the economy was on the verge of collapse. This issue is mainly mentioned in the first chapter of Kelly Brown. During a harsh winter that afflicts the book's characters, the miners' strike takes place which complicates the lives of the working class. Therefore, the characters must face unpleasant lack of coal which is extremely important to them in the problematic conditions. In particular, young Kelly is sent

by her mother to nearby shops to look for the remnants of coal available, so that they have the opportunity to make a fire at night. This part of the story accurately depicts the level of despair that tormented the working class across the whole Great Britain. In addition to the strikes that crippled the economy, unemployment is another phenomenon in the book. In spite of being often mentioned in the context of men, it also has a negative impact on the female characters. In the story, there is several cases of a husband not being able to get a job and therefore being unemployed. The following frustration only intensifies the aggression of men who spend more time in local pubs, getting drunk, than in their own homes and thus becoming financially dependent on their wives. As for the family of Kelly Brown, her father even left them as a result of no longer being able to secure them financially and her mother was forced to take the role of breadwinner. The legacy of this period has left a dark memory in both, the book and the history.

On a somewhat smaller scale, the impact of immigration also appears in the plot. Throughout the story, the role of immigrants is portrayed by a West Indian woman Bertha who works, along with other Union Street women, in a local bakery. There is a conflict between her and one of the employees who, more or less, depicts the way British people thought of migrants. Bertha has to continually suffer frequent racist insults concerning her origin and skin colour and is even reproached for daring to work with them. None of the other women stand up for her, since there is the idea of a female togetherness. The more shocking is the moment when Bertha, no longer being able to bear the bullying, snaps and attacks her oppressor. The mere thought of one woman turning violently against the other was unreal. In society, such behaviour was expected from men. Therefore, this passage of the story, involving violence in the context of racism, is pretty much outrageous.

It is clear that domestic violence and the manifestation of socially unacceptable racism were not the only gloomy aspects of criminality within the working class and the questionable environment only enhanced it. Certainly, the strongest manifestation of illicit behaviour is the already mentioned motif of rape, whose vileness is reinforced by the reality of the victim being just a child. This part of the story takes place in a deserted district of the city, hit by the British economic crisis. An interesting feature about the whole scene is the fact, that the rapist is portrayed as a typical middle-class representative who probably has his own family somewhere. In this way, Pat Barker probably tries to express the attitude that working-class people had towards the upper classes, imagining them in the worst way possible. In the same manner as they despise the people whose life situation is better than theirs, they also resent those who have the lowest position in the working-class society. An example of it is the way one of the main

characters, the prostitute Blonde Dinah, is treated. She, primarily because of the type of her livelihood and criminal activities, does not fit into any community like other women living on the Union Street and is, as in the case of immigrants, socially tolerated but not accepted. The last but not less important phenomenon of crime is the illegal medicine provided by so-called quacks. In the story, the character of quack is held by a woman living in a very dubious neighbourhood, much poorer than the Union Street, who performs illegal abortions. Women ask for her service mainly, as it is illustrated in the book, because it was their only chance when the doctors refused to do it, or because of not being married. This only shows how important it was for women to have a child in a stable family with both parents. It was due to the fact that a woman who brought a child out of marriage, was pushed to the edge of society, almost just like prostitutes. According to sources, all of those are remains of the times when abortion was illegal in England and women, who had intentionally had one, were accused of committing a felony.⁵⁷

At the end of this subchapter there is a status and quality of the health and social services. As for the British health service, the story mentions several cases of hospitalization and surgical interventions that are performed on the characters of the book. However, still, despite noticeable progress in the area and the fact that, since the post-war period, they are allowed to use the services of health system for free, most of them avoid hospitals unless it is necessary. Within the improvements of the healthcare, the book mentions, for example, innovations that make it easier for women to give a birth such as substance inducing labour. The situation in the area of social services is very similar. The story mentions children's homes, mainly nursing working-class children coming from poor conditions, and providing of care service at homes, including taking care of people dependent on others. On the other hand, the book also describes the image of numerous homeless people living on the surrounding streets, evoking the extreme poverty that has hit some people in the times of crisis. It shows the reality that even though the social situation has improved for many in the working class, it still has its faults, since it has not affected all of them.

All things considered, historical context plays a very important role in this realistic literary work. The environment, as well as the characters in it, are strongly influenced by the events of the late 70s which gives the story a believable form. Despite all the authentic elements of realism, it is still possible to notice the author's common expression.

⁵⁷ "What are the UK's laws on abortion?," Abortion in the UK, BBC, last modified October 22, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-19856314>.

4.4 Stylization

Lastly, one more important way to analyse a book is to examine it from a stylistic perspective. It allows the reader to focus on those aspects that follow the literary work and have not been mentioned yet.

As far as the stylization of the work is concerned, both the language and the form of writing are strongly affected by the context of contemporary environment and class classification. The characters distribute typical features of the people from poor living conditions. Both men and women characters do not avoid excessive alcohol consumption and frequent cigarette smoking. Characteristic is also the way they speak. Slang expressions such as *nowt*, *owt*, *bugger*, *lass*, *summat* and other words associated with the people of the working class appear in the text quite commonly and enhance the lower-class stylisation that is served to the readers. Thus, the book serves as an illustration that can help readers to get the image of the life of the working-class community.

Also, the author often uses internal monologues in order to express and explain inner thoughts of individual characters. This makes it much easier to understand them and to emphasize with the story. However, some of these passages are too developed and have the opposite effect. It is mainly due to the retrospective views, when the main characters look back at their own past. Nevertheless, the text structure is done in an attractive form of division into individual stories and still, the storyline is not disrupted. As another element of stylization can be also considered the function of direct speech, which occurs less in the text than the internal monologues. It serves as an illusion which makes the story appear real.

Given these points, it can be safely claimed that the work has a relatively significant stylization, and it does not matter whether from the historical or literary point of view. All these individual characteristics transform it into a unique whole.

5 Blow Your House Down analysis

Another example of a literary work written by Pat Barker, once again set in the environment of the British working class which remains as the major topic, is the book called *Blow Your House Down*. Since it is only the second published book by the author, it is, just like *Union Street*, an illustration of her early work. The main aim of this analysis is to identify and highlight the working-class identity, especially from the cultural and historical point of view, and to define its specific features.

5.1 Plot

The story takes place, again, in the north of England in an average unnamed city. Unlike the previous book, this one covers rather the beginning of the 1980s. The theme of the plot is also very different, since it does not address the lives of the average women of the working class, but on a particular group of prostitutes that occupy local streets. Moreover, the story is enriched by the fact that it is a period of this part of Britain being jeopardized by a serial killer, whose victims are predominantly prostitutes. The storyline is no longer divided into stories of individual characters but into 3 parts, each describing a specific time period. The existence of these dissimilarities means that the analysis needs to be focused on slightly different aspects from those of the previous case.

The first part of the story is focused on one of the main characters, a prostitute named Brenda, who lives alone with her three children. She becomes a prostitute after her violent husband left her and the finances, she has from the Social Security Office, are no longer enough to cover all the expenses for the household and her children. At first, she finds a job in a local chicken factory, but it does not guarantee her enough security. Later she has no other choice but start working on the street. Through the busy beginnings, she is supported by already experienced prostitute Kath, who takes her under her wings. With the end of the first part also comes the first murder mentioned in the story and the victim is surprisingly Kath. This act of brutality, which hits strongly the main characters, triggers a panic fear affection their lives. All of sudden, the women are much more distrustful of their customers, writing down license plate numbers of cars and working only in pairs. The situation escalates even more when another body of one of them, of whom they all thought had gone to London in order to search for a better life, is discovered. Her death has the greatest impact on her ex-girlfriend Jane as they lived together before. In the final part, Jean, while being alone with her customer, gets overwhelmed by fear

caused by the previous events and man's suspicious behaviour and kills him. However, later it turns out that the man was innocent and not the feared murderer.

The whole storyline is gradually intertwined with individual retrospective episodes, reflecting the lives and fates of the main characters. With this in mind, it is safe to claim that the author of the book is trying to reveal a civilized side of the lowest layer of the working class.

5.2 Cultural identity

Cultural society has many different features, but they all define it in the same way and shape its final form. This fact can also be applied to the case of creating an analysis of cultural identity, which, under these circumstances, focuses on the gloomy street environment and the characters in it. The contemporary of the 1980s in the northern England, the motif of illegal activity and social aspects are the main subjects of this cultural recognition.

In the first place, there is the image of the world of prostitutes in the society. As it is usually apparent to everybody, prostitutes are and probably always will be referred to as those living outside the ordinary social life. However, this stereotypical assumption is, in a way, proven to be false thanks to the possibility to investigate their world. Through the stories of individual characters, one can be convinced that, despite all their differences, they still think of themselves as they were a part of the community. Most of them are not even reconciled to such a kind of a lifestyle and attempt to escape the streets and integrate into everyday society. In the book, there is an extraordinary figure of Jean, who even cherishes her status of being a prostitute. "I like this life. I'm not in it because I'm poor, deprived, inadequate, half-witted woman, whatever some people might like to think, I'm in it because it suits me. I like the company. I like the excitement,"⁵⁸ she says, and her attitude is totally beyond expectation. Although people have never been able to fully accept prostitution, there has always been the idea that the people of this environment were not enjoying themselves and meaning that Jean's mentality breaks the illusion about them that society has believed. Those prejudices even apply, not only to the civilian community, but also to the police forces. The book indeed depicts the way police despise this particular section of culture. It is clearly described in a situation in the story, where one of the prostitutes is beaten up by an unknown man and Jean is furious, thinking about all the dangers: "He can go up there and take his pick, and the police'll watch and wait and take down his number and watch him drive away, but whatever happens they don't interfere."⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Pat Barker, *Blow Your House Down* (London: Virago Press, 1984), 112.

⁵⁹ Pat Barker, *Blow Your House Down* (London: Virago Press, 1984), 98.

Thus, rather than helping as their job advise, they keep their distance and avoid any kind of association. Only in the case of murders the police are actively involved. Nevertheless, the murders of prostitutes do not receive as much attention compared to the case of the victim being an ordinary citizen. This reality is rather a tragic legacy of the modern society of the late 20th century.

Equally important as the social status is the way and level of life illustrated in the story. Generally speaking, the life situation of the main characters is on the verge of collapse. Women are still viewed as subordinates to men, in spite of the gradual development of the contemporary society. However, in the book, the unstable environment puts women in a completely different situation. It is caused by the fact that most of the prostitutes in the story are forced to rely only on themselves. They often find themselves in a complicated position as single mothers. It technically puts them in the roles of men, since they have to take over all functions in the household, including bringing income to the family. Nevertheless, this, also applying to Brenda's case, makes it difficult to get an ordinary job at the time when they cannot even afford a time flexibility. The difficult life situation, in the connection with the influence of inhospitable working-class environment also leads to a stronger aversion towards the upper classes. As in the case of the Union Street, there is an intense hatred for those people whose life is simply better. A compelling demonstration is, for example, the depiction of the man who is mistaken by Jean to be the killer and is subsequently murdered by her. His entire appearance repelled her, though, according to her description, he is formally dressed in a suit and has a brand-new car. He is simply her idea of what the killer must look like. Her contempt does not even change after she reads an article in the papers mentioning his family and house with garden that perfectly fits an upper-class person. Jean shows no remorse or sign of regret even though she ended an innocent human life. Therefore, it can be assumed that it was due to the fact the man did not belong to their world and thus, she had no reason to sympathize with him. This pitiless reality powerfully reflects the legitimate attitude that most of the people of this area take.

Next issue in the book is the clear evidence of the cultural revolution concerning the reference to the events regarding the LGBT community. In the story, the main subject of this topic are the prostitutes Jean and Carol, who, before the Carol's tragic death, form a couple of lesbians. An interesting detail of their relationship is the fact that, though the storyline takes place at the time of the homosexuality already being legal, both women insist on keeping their affair a secret. Leaving aside the reality of them being prostitutes, this is an impressive example of fear of a limited society perception. Unfortunately, this issue is also the subject of today's culture.

From a cultural perspective, it is still evident that the society illustrated in the *Blow Your House Down* does not significantly differ from the one of the *Union Street*. Although the plot takes place in a slightly distinctive environment, it still has rather negative social characteristics.

5.3 Historical identity

To create a complete analysis of the historical identity of this work, it is necessary to define the most important elements within the story. It is necessary in order to explain the individual aspects of plot development and with its help it makes it easier to empathize with the presented environment.

As the story takes place in the early 1980s, it can be safely assumed that it also concerns the period of closing of the industrial areas which was set up by the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The impact of her policy is reflected by the amount of job positions, which is, in the story, described near to zero. The only work opportunity the characters in the book encounter in the chicken factory which is portrayed as a nasty place surrounded by an unpleasant smell. Brenda, who has worked there for a while, describes the job as very poorly paid without any possibility to compromise concerning the duration of shifts. In the case of illness or long-term absence, employees are automatically replaced by someone else, all for a simple reason, the demand for work extremely exceeds supply. However, in addition to the problem of the lack of work for unqualified workers, there is an alarming inflation. Brenda, far from having enough money, is forced to claim social benefits. Unfortunately, these are at the time of crisis so low, that she is far from saving her and, as has been already said, she decides to become a prostitute. Out of this, it can be also concluded that the problematic times of adverse economy had devastating impact on the bottom of the working class. On the other hand, the effect of the early Thatcherism is in the story also manifested in another way. Almost all of the prostitutes, despite being a part of the lowest level of society, own their own flats and the story does not mention a single case of living in a sublet. The only exception is Kath, who became the killer's first victim in their district. Because of her lifestyle, she lost not only her children, who were taken from her custody by social workers, but also the roof over head. Later, she lives in one of the houses to be demolished, which is also another evidence of the country's decline.

As has been already mentioned in the chapter, a very important motif in the book is also the rampage of an unknown serial killer. Although, it initially does not appear to be a matter of the historical context, the opposite is true, since it is one of the most essential characteristics of the story. Indeed, both timing and the manner of execution are almost identical to the modus

operandi of the real serial killer who, according to sources, was killing and attacking mainly prostitutes during the 70s and the 80s era. During that period of time he murdered 13 women and seriously injured 7 more and due to his actions, he earned the nickname Yorkshire Ripper.⁶⁰ In this case, the author of the book took advantage of these events that had devastating impact not only on the Britain's working class, though slightly different in nature, and transformed them into this work. However, the period of deindustrialization is also associated with other forms of crime in the context of the working class. The prostitutes often mention frequent cases of thefts, assaults and even rape, which are related to their way of making the living. Nevertheless, it is clear that this book uses the motifs of illegal activity far more than the previous one.

The last theme associated with the influence of the historical events are the traces of immigration. In the story, there are, again, people who came from the former British colonies. In this case, they are primarily the Pakistani and West Indian families who own apartments in the same building as Brenda. There is already visible the slight change of British people's attitude towards foreigners. They have their own flats, albeit in a poor neighbourhood, and their lives are no longer defined only by urban slums. In one passage, Brenda even considers asking one of those families to look after her children while she is at work. The very idea of those previously absolutely different worlds being able to coexist is quite revolutionary, considering the historical context. It is also a positive change, considering the events illustrated in the Union Street, where the hostile attitude towards immigrants was represented.

To conclude, comparing the historical context to the book's story is not easy matter, as the analysis is limited only to the fragment of things actually mentioned in the storyline. Nevertheless, the plot is still incredibly well situated in the characteristic environment of the city streets of the early 1980s.

5.4 Stylization

Even in the case of the *Blow Your House Down*, its stylistic features cannot be forgotten. What the typical aspects and attributes of the story are and in which way they are represented in the book are the main motifs of this section of the chapter.

⁶⁰ "Story of a murderer: Who is Peter Sutcliffe and is the Yorkshire Ripper still alive?," *The Yorkshire Ripper*, *The Sun*, last modified January 13, 2020, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2431418/peter-sutcliffe-yorkshire-ripper/>.

The first thing, obvious from a stylistic point of view, is the form of language which is adapted to the conditions of the lower working class. It is not only about the verbal expressions consisting of the slang dialect of the prostitutes, including vulgar and other informal expressions, but also about internal monologues and thought processes, which take the vast majority of the whole text and thus push dialogues aside. Again, as in the case of the first book, it is made up of retrospective memories that reflect the events preceding the fundamental storyline. They often clarify the reasons that led the characters into this obscure society. Some of the parts are even written in such a realistic and common way that it is easy to forget they are concerning the characters of prostitutes. However, this method of a story structure is very engaging, and it vividly illustrates the characteristic social environment.

In addition to the extensive and alluring monologues, the text is characterized by yet another typical feature which is the description of individual situations and experiences. Events concerning motifs of rape and murder are explicit in themselves, but it is the author's vivid imagination that adds the reality factor to them. The book contains detailed descriptions of smells, visuals or tactile aspects that are experienced by the main characters. This allows the readers to better visualize the situation, although, in some cases, the accurate depictions are almost repulsive. This particularly involves the process of the murder, which is in the story so realistic that it is almost inappropriate. The author, however, enjoys that kind of explicit themes and she manages to create it surprisingly well.

In short, the stylization of the *Blow Your House Down* has similar characteristics to those of the *Union Street*. Nevertheless, it is due to the circumstances of the storyline, which are much more ominous and set in the bleak context and environment.

Conclusion

The bachelor thesis was created as a manifestation of portrayal of the British working class and its social problems. Its main aim was to create an analysis of cultural identities based on theoretical research of cultural and historical development in the period of the British deindustrialization. For this purpose, the works of the British author Pat Barker were used and served as the main source for the final analysis.

The theoretical part, which was focused on the explanation of individual terms, expert definition of cultural identities and the course and characteristics of the historical and literary development, offered a specific insight into the background related to the working-class environment. Thanks to its way of elaboration it was possible to understand the meaning of the concept of working class and therefore, it allowed its projection against the historical and cultural context, which was addressed in the second chapter of this section. There were discussed individual important events that, in some way, had influenced British contemporary society and thus, had an impact on the development of the social classes. The third chapter, which dealt with the identity and development of the proletarian literature, contributed the possibility of understanding in the field of literary works and, at the same time, enabled the analysis of the Barker's books.

As for the practical part, it was primarily devoted to the analytical study of the works of the author Pat Barker. The first chapter dealt with the identification of the working-class elements in the book called *Union Street*, which follows the lives of seven proletarian women. In this work, the cultural, historical and stylistic elements associated with the working class were analysed. The analysis also evaluated their direct influence on the development on the storyline, which, with its realistic elements, also reflected everyday events of the life in proletariat. These impacting aspects were mostly the status of the economic situation of that time, social attitudes and other motifs associated with this miserable environment. The second chapter, dedicated to the analysis of the second Barker's book, *Blow Your House Down*, was drawn up in a very similar way. Nevertheless, it differed in some way, majorly in the contextual sense, as the storyline takes place in the later time period, and in the typology of characters, which were in this book represented by the lowest level of the working class. Even so, both works were equally important, and their analysis was a great asset in defining the characteristic of cultural identities.

All the things considered, this work serves as an example of how the working class was perceived by the British society of the deindustrialisation period. It explains the circumstances

that influenced the development and formation of its contemporary form throughout the historical-cultural research, all reflected in the works of a proletarian literature author. Thanks to the final analysis, it is possible to examine this poor world of working-class society via an objective perspective and thus have an impartial image of the concept of cultural identities.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá analytickým rozbohem děl Pat Barkerové, se zaměřením na kulturní identitu pracovní třídy v kontextu britské deindustrializace, která sužovala Velkou Británii v průběhu 70. a především 80. let. Hlavními předměty, použitými pro realizaci finální analýzy, je vypracování historického a kulturního kontextu z daného doby a rozlišení znaků příslušné dobové literatury. Odborný výzkum je vystavěn na dvou ústředních složkách, na teoretické a praktické čili analytické části. Cílem této práce bylo především vytvoření analýzy skrze literární díla za pomoci aplikace teoretických poznatků, obsažených v první části práce. To vše s ohledem na dané období 20. století a klíčové události odehrávající se v něm, ať už kulturního, historického či politického charakteru.

Jak již bylo dříve uvedeno, práce se rozkládá na dvě části, z nichž první je teoretický výzkum v oblasti daného tématu. Ten je rozdělen do tří jednotlivých kapitol, které se věnují jednotlivým konkrétním látkám. Úvodní kapitola je zaměřená na definici identity pracovní třídy a na její vývoj od poloviny 20. století. Druhou kapitolou je výzkum historického kontextu, který je zaměřen, kromě podstatných historických událostí daného období, také na vývoj kulturního charakteru. Poslední, ale neméně důležitá, kapitola se zabývá britskou proletářskou literaturou a jejími hlavními představiteli, včetně nejvýznamnější spisovatelky 80. let Pat Barkerovou. Teoretická část slouží především jako podpurná součást práce, která zároveň vytváří podklad pro praktickou část.

Úvodní kapitola, jak bylo uvedeno v předchozím odstavci, je věnovaná identitě pracovní třídy v období deindustrializace. To ale není jediné téma, které je v jejím rámci rozebíráno. Jsou zde také vysvětleny způsoby chápání pracovní třídy a její důležitost pro společnost, podstata třídního rozdělení v souvislosti s hierarchickým uspořádáním ve společnosti a také proměna její podoby od konce 2. světové války. Bez těchto souvislostí, by nebylo možné této komunitě porozumět takovým způsobem, který je pro konečnou analýzu naprosto nezbytný. Její obsah je také důležitý z důvodu toho, že nabízí přehledný souhrn poznatků týkajících se specifického světa proletariátu.

Co se týče druhé kapitoly teoretické části zaměřené na historické souvislosti, její podstata je také mnohem zásadnější, než se na první pohled zná. Obsahuje detailní informace týkající se historických mezníků, které měly přímý vliv na podobu soudobé britské společnosti. Soustředí se především na časový úsek, který byl známý pro politickou činnost tehdejší premiérky Margaret Thatcherové, díky které došlo v 80. letech k závažnému přetváření tváře kultury a

státní ekonomiky. Tyto poznatky mají velký význam, podobně jako tomu bylo v případě předchozí kapitoly, především kvůli tomu, že dodává potřebný kontext a širší rozhled pro konečný knižní rozbor.

Posledním dílem této části je literárně orientovaná kapitola, zaměřující se především na dodání literárního kontextu. Její první úsek obsahuje charakteristiku proletářské literatury včetně definice tohoto pojmu a vyznačení nejčastějších knižních témat. Na jejich základě se dá určit typický vzhled proletářských literárních děl a jejich nejpravděpodobnější tematika. Dále také specifikuje, jaké vnější aspekty měly vliv na její tehdejší podobu v daném období a pro koho jsou tato díla určena. Poté se stáčí směrem ke spisovatelským osobnostem, které prosluly především díky literární tvorbě psané v duchu pracovní třídy. Úkolem této kapitoly je představení tohoto stylu literatury a definice znaků, které ji odlišují od ostatních. Tím pádem tak lze díky ní dosáhnout lepší orientace v poli tohoto uměleckého směru.

Druhou polovinu bakalářské práce zastává praktická část obsahující rozbor knih spisovatelky Barkerové, které jsou názornými ukázkami literatury proletariátu. Jádrem této analýzy je identifikace znaků a způsobů zobrazení britské pracovní třídy v knihách *Union Street* a *Blow Your House Down* a následné zhodnocení celkových výsledků. Vše je vytvořeno na základě poznatků nashromážděných prostřednictvím investigativního výzkumu v teoretické části, který se, jak již bylo zmíněno, skládá z definice třídních identit, historicko-kulturního kontextu a vymezení pojmu proletářská literatura.

Je důležité si uvědomit, že každé z těchto zkoumaných děl je odlišné svými typickými rysy, kterými jsou například dějové prostředí či literární typy postav. Zatímco v *Union Street* je příběh zaměřen na sedm rozdílných žen s různými charakterovými vlastnostmi, které řeší spíše existenční problémy, v *Blow Your House Down* jsou hlavními postavami prostitutky konfrontované, a dokonce i lovené neznámým vrahem. Na druhou stranu mají ale i mnoho společného, přesně tak jak ukazuje analýza. V obou případech je zřejmý silný vliv prostředí, který se odráží na znacích pracovní třídy v textu a reprezentuje se zde hned v několika podobách. Jednou z nich je například projekce ekonomické krize do života jednotlivých postav, které často trpí pod tíhou problematické atmosféry v kontextu s působením deindustrializace. Příčinou jsou neustále se vracející motivy nezaměstnanosti, nedostatku financí a rostoucí inflace. Kromě těchto ekonomicky zaměřených témat jsou dalším jevem sociálně a kulturně nasměrované znaky. Převážně se jedná o náměty vlivu imigrace, s ní spojeným rasismem a

vysoké kriminality. V případě druhé zmiňované knihy je dokonce kriminalita jedním z hlavních předmětů rozboru.

Mimo tematiku a motivy obsažené v dílech se analýza skládá také z rozboru ze stylistického hlediska. V jejím rámci jsou konkretizované různé vlastnosti díla, které jsou nějakým způsobem propojené se znaky proletářské literatury a jinými aspekty spojovanými s pracovní třídou, jako je například forma vyjadřování hlavních postav či praktiky použité autorkou pro navození dobové atmosféry. Nicméně i tato část práce má svůj vlastní účel a je proto také její důležitou součástí.

Dalším klíčovým bodem je samozřejmě i metodika práce. V tomto případě se převážně jedná o odborný výzkum v rámci příslušné dostupné literatury. Z nasbíraných dat byl poté vytvořen adekvátní přehled, složený z vlastních poznatků a názorů patřičných expertů. Tento teoretický výzkum byl následně uplatněn v případě vytváření finální analýzy, která tvoří dílčí část bakalářské práce. Celková práce je tedy produktem samostatného šetření v oblastech kulturních identit, historických témat, odborných i beletristických literatur, které bylo nakonec spojeno v analytický text.

Není pochyb o tom, že britská pracovní třída a vůbec třídní rozdělení obecně je nedílnou součástí historického odkazu Velké Británie, což ostatně dokazují i veškeré historické i kulturní zdroje, které nějakým způsobem komentují společnost této země. Nicméně rozhodně se nejedná o jednotvárné téma, ale spíše o rozmanitou oblast, která si rozhodně zaslouží značnou pozornost ať už v různých výzkumech či pouze z informativních důvodů. Tato práce je toho jednoznačnou demonstrací, neboť odhaluje aspekty týkající se právě tohoto konkrétního tématu v literárních dílech psaných na základě poznatků o této sociální sféře. To tento analytický produkt řadí mezi důležité manifestace projevu v kontextu kulturních identit.

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