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LONDON IN VICTORIAN FICTION

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracoval/a samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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Jméno Příjmení

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis deals with the topic of London in Victorian era and depicts its atmosphere. It means that the work is focused on major problems which then occurred, concentrating on their affecting of living conditions and furthermore why those problems were so important for the great author, Charles Dickens. The crucial part of the thesis is issue of buildings and institutions connected to the author's creativity upon which he created the significant novels of the nineteenth century. The theoretical framework of Dickens' life is essential for better understanding of works cited which also served for the study of the reasons why he was so concerned with declining society.

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1. INTRODUCTION

London, as the capital city of England, has played a significant role in many different spheres throughout the centuries – it has been the centre of urbanization, industry, social and cultural life and, of course, literature. London also became the main source of inspiration for several British artists, poets and writers who either were born there, spent their life or died there, those were acknowledged authors such as Jonathan Swift, Rudyard Kipling, William Blake, for this thesis most important Charles Dickens and many more. For the purpose of this thesis I would like to describe one of the most peculiar periods of time in its history, the Victorian era. An era which was full of contradictions; on one hand London held its great upper class luxury, wealth, and economic as well as industrial development; and on the other hand, it suffered an omnipresent lower class' poverty, filth, diseases, labour work, and crime. Following this phenomena I will conduct a research on the life conditions of the lower class in Victorian London living in overcrowded slums and beside the description of a temper peculiar to the Londoners of that time I will outline the main events such as the Great Stink and Fog. These events will be searched in order to depict the city's background, several side effects of urbanization and growing population which doubled at the beginning of nineteenth century. I will also briefly mention the changes of industry which served as a basis for a great development of London's infrastructure, public lighting and sewage system and also as one of the several crucial themes used by Victorian writers.

Following chapter will introduce buildings and institutions which were fundamental for writing of Charles Dickens. Those buildings would be mainly prisons – Marshalsea, Fleet, Newgate and King's Bench – workhouses and houses in which his family either lived or visited. The quintessence of its works is London itself. The city played an enormous role in shaping his style of writing accompanied by his personal experiences gathered throughout his childhood and years of adolescence. For the support of the written information will be shown some selected passages, taken from his significant novels such as *Oliver Twist*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Bleak House*. The excerpts will be in mutual unity with just discussing matter and also satisfactory in showing Dickens' intentions. This whole chapter will contain short paragraphs dealing with Charles Dickens' biography in order to maintain understanding framework of the studied buildings and novels.

The issue I will pay attention to will be the credibility of London pictured in chosen Dickens' novels. What the thesis is going to be focused on will be the themes Charles Dickens had comprised among his writings and also areas of then London which had been far less mentioned there. For successful achieving of plausible information for the studied topic will help me the primary as well as the secondary bibliography. This whole issue will be summarized in the conclusion at the end of the thesis.

2. VICTORIAN LONDON

This chapter will focus on with brief definition of Victorian era; its beginning, crucial events, living conditions, growth of population, and its partition. The theoretical background will introduce river Thames, the Fog, prostitutions accompanied by murders, and children.

London is a metropolitan city, capital of England and place of many possibilities and woes. Some historians claim, that during the Victorian times, the city's atmosphere could be easily compared to the biblical Babylon. As a starting point, it is quite necessary to outline the notion that Victorian era represents. Official definition of this period of the British history is identical with the reign of Queen Victoria, the second longest-reigning British monarch – from 20 June 1837 till her death on 22 January 1901, who was undoubtedly one of the most significant personalities shaping history of Great Britain. (Interestingly, her great-great granddaughter, the current British sovereign Queen Elizabeth II, surpassed Queen Victoria's length of reign on 9th September 2015.) Several historians on the other hand believe that this period already started with a Representation of the People Act (Reform Act) in 1832, which caused major changes of the electoral system of England and Wales. Boris Ford claims that Victorian era should be rather divided into three parts as the mood of each of them was explicitly different. First period he dated from 1837 to 1851; the Great Exhibition was held, and the period introduced economic, social and political conflicts. The second period from 1850s to the 1870s has been named an "equipoise" age. Those were years of smoothen conflicts and on contrary, years of pressure for improvement. Novels written during this period were not focused on social drama favoured in the first period but they were rather fascinated by parochial and often political issues. The third period Ford introduces as one whose breaking point cannot be set precisely. It is called late-Victorian. Those were years of growth of militant trade unionism, a decline of British agriculture was under the pressure of foreign imports and also new heavy industry of coal mining was brought to the scene. (1992; p. 5-12) By the end of the first half of the 19th century London had become a worldwide known city, as it was the most populous and wealthiest city of England. It was one of the centres of an international European trade and this fact certainly helped in establishment of London as an important financial metropolis. The invention of steam-powered engine was one of the peaks England's Industrial Revolution of the early 19th century which led to the huge

growth of factories focused mainly on processing of textile also helped in the formation of London's fame.

Living conditions were not very satisfying - contemporary photographs of labour and suffering easily depict the picture of despair. As William Blanchard Jerrold, one of the many Victorian London poets and journalists once proclaimed: "The aged, the orphan, the halt, the blind, of London would fill an ordinary city." (Ackroyd; p. 573). The streets of London in this period were usually full of beggars, children, wanderers, street-sellers, prostitutes, criminals and diseased people. On the other hand, outskirts of London usually retained the peaceful image of the countryside with its strawberry fields. Living conditions undoubtedly went hand in hand with the growth of population. "Between 1831 and 1901 the number of people living in Great Britain increased by more than ten per cent each decade as measured in the annual census returns." (Ford; p. 19) When Queen Victoria came to the throne there was less than seventeen million people and over thirty-seven million when she died. The reasons for the growth of population were not quite clear but it has to be said the participants influencing the increase were people's extending average length of life, children were surviving infancy, there were larger families and also immigration came into an account, especially forced by the needs of employment.

2.1. River Thames

For centuries, the river Thames played a huge role for the entire city. It simultaneously served as a source of drinking water for London's population and as a sewer for human, animal and industrial waste. The river had been transformed into a disease-ridden open sewer floating through the city. "Enough waste and pollution had accumulated in the Thames to make it the most contaminated and unhygienic river in the world." ("The Great Stink": 2015)

In the summer of 1858 the catastrophic situation of the state of the river and its horrendous odour was finally brought to the attention of the lawmakers. "Centuries of waste were literary cooking in the monstrous heat." ("The Great Stink": 2015) The smell was so enormous that even legislators from the Parliament placed drapes soaked in a mixture of chlorine and lime over their windows to prevent it, and carbolic acid and chalk were thrown into the river in order to maintain a breathable air. When this proceeding failed, the members also considered moving the Parliament from Westminster area; this

was quite exaggerated suggestion due to the fact, that the Westminster Abbey was completely renovated after the great fire of 1834.

Several days later, when the situation was not better and crowds were complaining, the government chose to act instead of leaving the problem open for another year – they created a bill, passed it, and signed into a law in a record time of eighteen days. (“The Great Stink”: 2015) Reformation of the river Thames included an implementation of a sewage system designed by English renowned civil engineer Sir Joseph Bazalgette and a construction of embankments on its sides was provided. With those reforms approved by the Parliament, Thames evolved into one of the cleanest river floating through the city in the world and eliminated several waterborne illnesses such as cholera, typhus and typhoid, which had plagued the city for centuries.

Speaking of the Thames, Charles Dickens in his *Little Dorrit* wrote about the magnificence and tranquillity which spread through Amy’s mind while visiting the Iron Bridge over the river Thames - now Southwark Bridge, built in 1815-1819 designed by John Rennie and rebuilt in 1912. She even rejected her lover John Chivery who was going to propose her on the bridge with words full of trust that he will never again come there in order to search of her. Charles Dickens had a great talent in describing London’s nature as could be seen in the following excerpt from the novel concerning Amy and Mr. Clennam on their way from the Marshalsea Prison where Mr. Clennam accidentally had to spend a night.

“Thus they emerged upon the Iron Bridge, which was quiet after the roaring streets, as though it had been open country. The wind blew roughly, the wet squalls came rattling past them, skimming the pools on the road and pavement, and raining them down into the river. The clouds raced on furiously in the lead-coloured sky, the smoke and mist raced after them, the dark tide ran fierce and strong in the same direction.“ (*Little Dorrit*; p. 96)

Chapter forty-six in *Oliver Twist* tells a respectable event of Nancy who kept an appointment with Rose and Mr. Brownlow on one Sunday midnight. She told them all the secrets of Fagin, the Jew, and Monks concerning Oliver’s well being on the steps of London Bridge while there were observed by Noah Claypole. Again, Dickens admirably pinpointed the Victorian nature of the river in the area of Borough. London’s Bridge construction is dated from Roman times and up until 1750 it was the only bridge across the river in London. Since that time the bridge was rebuilt twice.

“A mist hung over the river, deepening the red glare of the fires that burnt upon the small craft moored off the different wharfs, and rendering darker and more indistinct the mirky buildings on the banks. The old smoke-stained storehouses on either side, rose heavy and dull from the dense mass of roofs and gables, and frowned sternly upon water too black to reflect even their lumbering shapes. The tower of old Saint Saviour’s church, and the spire of Saint Magnus, so long the giant-warders of the ancient bridge, were visible in the gloom; but the forest of shipping below the bridge, and the thickly scattered spires of churches above, were nearly all hidden from the sight.” (*Oliver Twist*; p. 367)

2.2. The All-devouring Great Fog of the Victorian London

Another side effect of pollution was the fog. Fog so dark that even “mid-day turned into twilight” (Ridenhour: p. 21) – also called the Pea Soup Fog caused by coal-burning factories, chimneys and London’s predisposition for mist. One of the worst fogs started in November 1879 and lasted until March 1880. Its colour variety was peculiar in shades of orange, grey-yellow, brown and black, containing soot particulates and poisonous gas sulphur dioxide. Charles Dickens in the third Chapter of the *Bleak House* perfectly expressed the surprise and perception to those conditions which an outsider of London must have experienced during his arrival to the city. In the novel the outsider is Esther.

“I asked him whether there was a great fire anywhere? For the streets were so full of dense brown smoke that scarcely anything was to be seen. 'Oh dear no, miss', he said. 'This is a London particular.' I had never heard of such thing. 'A fog, miss,' said the young gentleman. 'Oh, indeed!' said I. We drove slowly through the dirtiest and darkest streets that ever were seen in the world (I thought), and in such distracting state of confusion that I wondered how the people kept their senses.” (*Bleak House*; p. 26)

This environment proved to be a haven for dozens of murderers, rapists and pickpockets. The omnipresent darkness caused several deaths as well. Lonely wanderers often feared walking alongside the Thames “In 1873 there were seven hundred 'extra' deaths caused, nineteen of them the results pedestrians walking into the Thames, the docks or the canals.” (Ackroyd: p.432); others entailed chronic health problems as the air was

hard to breathe - “moist, thick, full of bad smells and choking” (Ridenhour: p. 21). Connection of fog to the lung tuberculosis and bronchitis was inevitable. Effects of fog, cold (November and December were the worst months with the highest amount of deaths), coal smoke and poor health system caused a huge mortality. “The fog was so thick that the horses pulling omnibuses and coaches had to be led by men carrying torches in order to warn of their approach through the murk.” (“Victorian History”: 2006) It can be said that fog is the greatest character for nineteenth-century fiction therefore Charles Dickens was influenced by this presence as well. In one of his great novels *Bleak House* he at the very beginning of the story mentioned the fog itself.

“Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defied among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. ... Fog creeping into cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yard, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; ... Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioner. ... Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.” (*Bleak House*; p. 1)

Other aspect of the fog was the darkness. Londoners had to lit their gas-lights in shops throughout the day in order to afford some light indoor. Streets had to be alighted also as lanterns were insufficient.

“Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongy fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time – as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.” (*Bleak House*; p. 1-2)

2.3.Prostitution and Murders

“To be alone or solitary, a characteristic symptom of city life, is to become an adventurer in search of brief companionship; it also is the mark of the predator.” (Ackroyd: 379) The author states that by 1870 “there were 20.000 public houses visited by 50.000 customers” (2000: p. 576). By the mid century the estimated number of prostitutes achieved 80.000. With the enormously growing population, finding a well paid decent job

proved to be almost unrealistic for a woman. They were usually working in agriculture spheres but also as shop girls, maidens, servants, milliners, seamstresses, laundresses, and even as factory workers. The difficult living conditions also forced many women to turn to prostitution for living. These harlots were mainly seen in the area of Bank of England, Haymarket and Soho; standing in a rows waiting for a customer like a cabs for their passengers. “The Great Social Evil” was the label which London’s society gave to the prostitution.

As the Great Stink and the Fog were results of a mass population, one of the main causes for huge amount of prostitutes was the urbanization so called clashes of classes. Richer men, now living in areas where prostitution had its tradition, supported its participants. Various other factors also contributed to the growing popularity of prostitution – according to tradition, middle-class men could not marry a woman until they were able to take the financial responsibilities over their families. Therefore their unfulfilled sexual needs and boredom led to the public embracing of prostitution. The connection between sexuality and disease was explicit. Many of the women associated with the world’s oldest profession were infected by syphilis. A characteristic metaphor which Ackroyd has used might be a perfect insight into the problematic situation which then London had to face. “As a heap of rubbish will ferment, so surely will a number of unvirtuous women.” (2000: p. 377).

Murders in Victorian London unfortunately also deserved their own place on an imaginary pedestal. In the middle of the century, criminals were concentrated in eastern suburb of London, later called “East End”. Also Bethnal Green district and its surroundings were famous for their presence of criminal gangs which competed in overtaking the districts and power. In autumn 1888 Jack the Ripper, a fanatic known for his brutal murders of prostitutes, raged throughout the City. Five murders were attributed to his person and the people of London became literary stunned from those events. Not only Whitechapel, an area where Jack the Ripper committed his acts, but the entire city, even the far suburbs of London, lived in fear for a long period of time. People were afraid of him; they restricted walking out the streets after dark to the minimum. Ackroyd claims that darkness and the ghastly atmosphere of London played a huge role in the motives of Jack the Ripper’s crimes. The dark corners, terrifying stairs and lightless narrow streets seduced his mind, as well as the minds of other disreputable people, to all kinds of perversions (2000). Many superstitions and strange stories are connected to the unresolved

murders of this period, as they were committed without any apparent motive and during special circumstances.

The city itself carries its own secrets from this period and one cannot be surprised that it had the power to induce anxiety, scares and paranoia into a weakened mind. With growing criminality the essential paganism of London with beliefs to the supernatural re-entered to the subconscious of people. The police did not have a great reputation, many of the officers came from the same class and neighbourhood as the people they were supposed to protect - this was one of the main reasons why they have often been denounced of controlling and arresting own people.

Areas of London where violent urban crime took its place such as Whitechapel, Islington and Spitalfields, have repeatedly witnessed murders and served as a fruitful inspiration for artists especially writers. The public enjoyed either watching of death agonies of men and women executions as well as reading of so-called Newgate Novels, stories about criminals and their low-life haunts. The novelists creating the stories became an unplanned movement.

2.4.Children of London Streets

The amount of children roving on the streets of the Victorian London was unbelievable and up until then unseen. They were expected to help their parents towards the family budget so they were searching for any kind of jobs. If they were fortunate, they took all the responsibility and dealt with it with pleasure and contentment. Children usually have not had a permanent job but they were used by street-sellers for “crying” the goods the master was selling or as errand boys. They held horses while their owners were busy, carried trunks or parcels on the railway station and for omnibus passengers or even cleaned the streets from horse manure (Ackroyd: 2000). Crossing sweepers (at that time described as “shit-rakers” and “sparrow-starvers”) had to ensure a dung-free passage for ladies and gentlemen. During the days, when they were not able to get any kind of job, the children went to the busy streets to provide some entertainment for the citizens such as walking on their hands with feet in the air or some theatrical spectacle. The favourite locality was Baker Street and its surroundings. As the streets were always busy it ensured even the smallest earning in form of a halfpenny. Another area for earning money was child labour. Children were forced to work long and dangerous shifts in factories (where they would

crawl down the heavy machinery to retrieve cotton bobbins), in coal mines their duty was to crawl through the tunnels too narrow for an adult and push trucks of coal to the surface, or as chimney sweepers (“Poverty and Families in the Victorian Era”: 2015). They were favoured for their tiny little bodies with which they were able to scrape through the narrow and strangely shaped chimneys. Those children were often sold by their parents to the employers at age of four and sadly, many of them did not grow to the adulthood either. Their everyday lives and health were exposed to the omnipresent filth, dust and smoke, piles of garbage laying on the streets and soot – for many of them these conditions led to chronic diseases and caused various physical disabilities. Their personalities were often shaped according to the circumstances of their upbringing. A young child, who had to take care of himself at such an early age, usually grew up to a premature impudent haggling and swearing teenager. Henry Mayhew’s observation mentioned in Ackroyd is that “London street children’s most remarkable characteristic is their extraordinary licentiousness.” (2000: p. 376). Despite legislation to prevent chimney sweeps using climbing tiny boys, this practise continued to mid 1870s. The sweepers were forced up the narrow chimney spaces by poking them with sticks or lighting fires beneath them. Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist* perfectly interpreted this gruesome practice in chapter dealing with selling young Oliver to a master.

“‘It is a nasty trade,’ said Mr. Limbkins... ‘Young boys have been smothered in chimneys before now,’ said another gentleman. ‘That’s acause they damped the straw afore they lit it in the chimbley to make ’em come down again,’ said Gamfield; ‘that’s all smoke, and no blaze; vereas smoke ain’t o’ no use at all in makin’ a boy come down, for it only sinder him to sleep, and that’s wot he likes. Boys is wery obstinit, and wery lazy, gen’lmen, and there’s nothink like a good hot blaze to make ’em come down vith a run. It’s humane too, gen’lmen, acause, even if they’ve stuck in the chimbley, roastin’ their makes ’em struggle to hextricate theirselves.’” (*Oliver Twist*; p. 17-18)

It is also necessary to pinpoint that the children in Victorian London played a huge role in criminality. For many of them this was the easiest way to earning some money while they saw the shadowy destiny of their fellow boys who were working in the factories, for masters or in mines. They robbed as individuals or in gangs; their targets were usually jewellery stores, handkerchiefs, snuffboxes, window panes, and drunkards and their

pockets, as can be wonderfully seen in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. The First third of the book describes how Oliver was introduced to the manners of thieves.

“Well,' said the Jew, glancing styly at Oliver, addressing himself to the Dodger, 'I hope you've been at work this morning, my dears?' 'Hard,' replied the Dodger. 'As Nails' added Charley Bates. 'Good boys, good boys!' said the Jew. 'What have you got, Dodger?' 'A couple of pocket-books,' replied the young gentleman. ... 'And what have you got, my dear?' said Fagin to Charley Bates. 'Wipes,' replied Master Bates; at the same time producing four pocket handkerchiefs.” (*Oliver Twist*; p. 66-67)

Jack Dawkins, called the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates are prototypes of streets pickpockets Charles Dickens used for describing the manners young children forced by the dark side of London had to face. Their characters are not much older than young Oliver but their behaviour is more likely to be the behaviour of adults. They drink, smoke and even talk in the manner of adult thieves' argot. What might seem interesting in the novel is that the thieves always count with and discuss the omnipresent possibility of being taken imprisoned and therefore being hanged. The satire, typical to Dickens' works, can be seen through the Dodger's always witty comments and comical behaviour, which he did not lose even at the court.

“I'm an Englishman, ain't I?' rejoined the Dodger. 'Where are my privileges?' 'You'll get your privileges soon enough,' retorted the jailer, 'and pepper with 'em.' 'We'll see wot the Secretary of State for the Home Affairs has got to say to the beaks, if I don't,' replied Mr. Dawkins. 'Now then! Wot is this here business? I shall thank to madg'strates to dispose of this here little affair, and not to keep me while they read the paper, for I've got an appointment with a gentleman in the city.'” (*Oliver Twist*; p. 355)

Little girls were often seen at streets where the prostitution was held. Their mothers brought them here to perform the same job as they did. It also was not unusual for the children of thirteen or fourteen years of age to live under one roof in terrible conditions - they usually ended up having children, even though they were not capable of supporting themselves nor they were engaged in the sacred bond of marriage which was so reputable at those times. Charles Dickens was, of course, aware of the issue which prostitution held. Later in order to help those women finding a decent place in society he with accompany of

Miss Angela Burdett-Couts established a new and innovative asylum for fallen women with whose would be treated in more sympathetic approach. The new institution was Urania Cottage in Lime Grove known also as a Home. (“Dickens and his Involvement in Urania Cottage” 2003)

This chapter dealt with the issue of London’s society mentioning the reasons why there were such problems and how they affected the living in Victorian era. As a base for approaching the manners and actions of Londoners served excerpts from Charles Dickens’ novels. They will be furthermore appended in the following chapter.

3. CHARLES DICKENS' BACKGROUND

Chapter concerning Dickens' background will be either informative as well as researching. It will contain author's years of familiarization of London and its society. Method used for the research was comparing of secondary with primary literature; into what extent the characters in Dickens' novels are similar or affected by author's childhood experiences and observations gained through the adulthood, and to what he paid greatest attention. Again, the whole chapter will be accompanied with snippets from the novels.

Charles Dickens, an acknowledged writer of Victorian era, was born on February 7, 1812 at Landport, Portsmouth. In 1821 his father was dismissed from the post of a clerk in navy pay-office and consequently the family lost most of its income. Dickens' family moved to Camden Town, London, where the father, John Dickens, was arrested and sent to the Marshalsea, accompanied by all members of the family except the little Charles.

3.1. Marshalsea Prison

Marshalsea was prison which in Victorian era held mainly debtors. In the eighteenth century there were arrested also pirates, smugglers, and politics accused of sedition. The worldwide knowledge of Marshalsea has its roots in imprisonment of John Dickens. His debt was £40 and 10 shillings to a baker James Kerr. David Rowland in his contribution to the Old Police Cell's Museum website claims "That was very large debt; these days that is roughly equivalent to the sum of some, £3.110." ("Marshalsea Prison, London": 2014). In 1831 John Dickens declared insolvent again. Debtors in the prison had to remain there as long as their creditors chose to have them incarcerated. "The Marshalsea, a prison in High Street, Southwark, attached to the King's House, and adjoining the King's Bench." (Wheatley; p. 475) with its own history reaching to medieval times it was a great source of inspiration for Dickens' novel *Little Dorrit*, which is believed to be semi-autobiographical. Young Charles visited his family in the prison quite regularly and during his visits he became acquainted with other debtor's families. The publication of the novel was between years 1855-1857, although its setting is in years of Dickens' childhood.

"Thirty years ago there stood, a few doors short of the church of the Saint George, in the borough of Southwark, on the left-hand side of the way going southward, the Marshalsea Prison. It had stood there many years before, and it

remained there some years afterwards; but it is gone now, and the world is none the worse without it.” (*Little Dorrit*; p. 57)

It might be suitable to point out that the first Marshalsea, built in the fourteenth century was over a hundred meters far from the one, known to the Victorian era, built in the eighteenth century. The building was in 1811 refurbished and then closed in 1842. Marshalsea was completely demolished but for two iron gates and a wall leading alongside present Borough High Street.

“It was an oblong pile of barrack building, partitioned into squalid houses standing back to back, so that there were no back rooms; environed by a narrow paved yard, hammed in by high walls duly spiked at top. Itself a close and confined prison for debtors, it contained within it a much closer and confined jail for smugglers. Offenders against the revenue laws, and defaulter to excise or customs, who had incurred fines which they were unable to pay, were supposed to be incarcerated behind an iron-plated door, closing up a second prison, ..., in which the Marshalsea debtors bowled down their troubles.” (*Little Dorrit*; p. 57)

What might seem interesting is that during the publication of *Little Dorrit* readers were not aware of the fact Dickens’ family had a close experiences with the institution. The author first revealed the truth to the public when a close friend and also Dickens’ first biographer, John Forster, published the biography after Dickens’ death in 1870. (“David Perdue's Charles Dickens Page“ 2016)

3.2. Warren’s Blacking Factory

Warren’s Blacking Factory at Hungerfort Stairs (place of nowadays Charing Cross station) for a shoe-polish is a place which was crucial experience of Dickens’ life. Young Charles had to attend the work six days a week for ten hours with a salary of six or seven shillings a week to help his family (which was, at that time, still living in Marshalsea where his father was imprisoned). It was gruesome period of his life which he did not mention until his late years. A fragment of memoir of his life published by his friend John Forster reveals the experience. “No words can express the secret agony of my soul at thus sinking into menial drudgery and low companionship, my whole nature was penetrated with the grief and humiliation.” (“The Life of Charles Dickens” 2016). In the factory he

was accompanied by rats and illiterate fellow workers with whose he had nothing in common. In Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*, Dickens' mentioned a young boy Bob Fagin whose name he later used in *Oliver Twist* for an old Jew, an antagonist, teaching young children how to pickpocket small items such as handkerchiefs, cigarette cases, and jewellery. And as Rosalind Vallance mentions in an introduction contributed to Dickens' essays, Dickens declared that his childish impressions of London's working-class background remained always the true ones. (*Dickens' London*; p. 6) The period of working in the factory had an impact on Dickens' life. As a child he sought for information and proper education which while working for Mr. Warren was taken from him. His mother, even after the dismissing from the Marshalsea, forced Charles to continue his shifts in order to raise family's finances spent on food, living costs, and clothes. As all the Dickens' works are partly based on his own experiences, in *David Copperfield* he mentions the feelings of a young boy, forced to behave as an adult.

“I was out at the warehouse all day, and had to support myself on that money all the week. From Monday morning until Saturday night, I had no advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no assistance, no support, of any kind, from any one.” (*David Copperfield*; p. 140)

In defiance of his parent's failure to educate him, young Dickens worked hard and became a clerk in a solicitor's office, worked as a free-lance reporter at the courts of law, and in 1834 as a parliamentary reporter, where he taught himself shorthand and became able to write speeches word for word. He adopted the pseudonym “Boz” which was derived from a nickname Moses of his younger brother Augustus and submitted first of his works in London's periodical *Monthly Magazine* and in other newspapers and magazines. In 1836 with his clippings published in *Sketches by Boz* the career of a writer had begun. At age of twenty-four, Dickens contributed texts for a series of sporting logs upon which he later wrote *The Pickwick Papers* in a form of monthly serial instalments. The novel was published between March 1836 and November 1837 and became a phenomenon. At this time Dickens also had become a publisher of a magazine *Bentley's Miscellany* and started to work on *Oliver Twist*.

3.3. Workhouse

Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is inevitably connected to workhouse system upon which he introduces to a reader the obstacles and hardship of those who were forced to be there – in this case young children suffering from bad conditions of living such as malnutrition and cold accompanied by mental as well as physical exhaustion and illnesses. I doubt that while Dickens was writing the novel he would not have even think of the phrase “Please Sir, I want some more.” (*Oliver Twist*; p.12), will become a classic. This sentence perfectly described the situation of already mentioned malnutrition. Little Oliver is forced to ask for one more bowl of diluted oatmeal under a threat of cannibalism pronounced by an older boy.

Before becoming a successful novelist, Dickens had time to set an opinion to tactics and decisions made by the Parliament while he was working as a parliamentary reporter. He had to listen to their speeches, make short notes and later rewrite them. Dickens encountered many debates therefore he had number of opportunities to set an attitude toward politicians which he later expressed in his works.

Workhouse system was implemented under the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 as a reaction to the old one from 1815 which was greatly criticized. Money was raised by taxes on middle and upper class citizens for supporting those who were unable to work. And with every year's increasing costs increased also the critics. The new Poor Law was passed by the Parliament to reduce the costs spent for the support of the poor. The result was stopping the passage of the money to the needed (with an exception of those suffering from the chronic conditions and the old) with the necessity of the poor attending the workhouses where they had to spend several hours providing a manual labour work. As a reward they received clothes in form of scruffy uniforms, blankets and only a little amount of food. Families were split up and housed in the different barracks of the workhouses. Even siblings could not live together. For the sake of terrible of conditions inmates rather found other insufficient work but outside the walls of workhouses. Due to the fact, the institutions were occupied mainly by the sick, the old, the insane or the orphans. Dickens was disgusted by the circumstances and he did not hesitate to alert for the persons in charge of this system. In the novel he mentioned members of the board and their unhealthy opinion to the situation of the poor.

“The members of this board were very sage, deep, philosophical men; and when they came to turn their attention to the workhouse, they found out at once, what

ordinary folks would never have discovered – the poor people like it! It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poor classes; a tavern where there was nothing to pay ... 'Oho!' said the board... 'We are the fellows to set this to rights; we'll stop it all, in no time.' So, they established the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick out of it." (*Oliver Twist*; p.10)

Dickens' family twice lived in the street few doors from a famous Cleveland Street Workhouse which is believed to be the particular one which has become the motif for the novel. Cleveland Street Workhouse, formerly the Covent Garden Workhouse under parish of St Paul, was built in the 18th century and after 1836 it became one of the Strand Union parishes. Under the new Poor Law parishes were grouped into unions which had to administrate the workhouses. According to website dealing with history of workhouses around the United Kingdom Cleveland Street Workhouse was four-storey U-shaped building where ground floor was used for housing women at the east side along with laundry with wash house, and workshops, the chapel and men wards were at the west side. ("Strand, Middlesex, London": 2016). After year 1870 the building was converted as infirmary for the Central London Sick Asylum District and until 2006 worked as a department of Middlesex Hospital. Five years later it was under imminent threat of demolition and became part of English Heritage. At present, the building is for sale.

Dickens' another speculative influence might have been St. Marylebone workhouse to which he described conditions of the poor in *Walk in the Workhouse* published in *Household Words*. *Household Words* was a weekly magazine edited by Charles Dickens between years 1850 and 1859. Though it favoured mostly the poor the magazine was addressed to a mere middle class. ("Household Words": 2004)

3.4. Dickens' House

Success as an author accompanied also years of jolly in his private life. In 1836 he married Catherine Hogarth, daughter of the editor of a journal *Evening Chronicle* into which Charles Dickens contributed up to twenty pieces. Charles felt affectionate towards Catherine; who was a loving mother to ten their children, but on contrary he found intimate and intellectual relationship with her younger sister Mary. "Mrs. Dickens was not of a jealous disposition, but she resented, as would any wife, being relegated to the

background.” (Page; p. 109) Charles, Catherine and Mary then lived together creating comfortable household. “Mary was gentle and engaging in manners. Her health was delicate. She was dazzled by the genius of her gifted brother-in-law.” (Page; p. 109) It is also believed that Mary was the first who heard fragments of *Pickwick Papers* Charles Dickens was writing, as he thought her opinions and reactions would be identical to those of a common reader. Mary after a short and unexpected illness suddenly died in Dickens’ arms at age of seventeen. Charles was such devastated by the loss so for the next thirty years he thought of her constantly. It is said she often became an inspiration for several Dickens’ female characters. (Smiley; Ch. 1) As it was Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Agnes in *David Copperfield* or Rose Maylie in *Oliver Twist*.

“The younger lady was in the lovely bloom and spring-time of womanhood; at that age, when, if ever angels be for God’s good purposes enthroned in mortal forms, they may be, without impiety, supposed to abide in such as hers. She was not past seventeen. Cast in so slight and exquisite a mould; so mild and gentle; so pure and beautiful; that earth seemed not her element, nor its rough creatures her fit companions.” (*Oliver Twist*; p. 277)

Dickens House – 48 Doughty Street, London, “The only survivor of the writer’s many London addresses.” (Nicholson: p. 172) is a place where Charles Dickens lived from April 1837 until December 1839 while he was working on *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Barnaby Rudge*. The museum guards the world’s most important and valuable collection with over 10.000 items, including manuscripts, many intimate reminders of his life, paintings, rare books, and photographs. (“Charles Dickens Museum London”: 2016). At present, the museum also serves as the head office of Dickens Fellowship, an organisation founded in 1902 with a purpose to unite supporters of the author as well as deniers of social hassle connected to Victorian era to which Dickens pointed in his works. (“History of the Fellowship”: 2016).

In Broadstairs, Kent, can be found another museum dedicated to Charles Dickens. It is a cottage the author visited with his son Charley and which was a great source of inspiration for the home of Betsey Trotwood, a character in *David Copperfield*. The house was bought by Tattam family in 1919 and when Dickens Fellowship purchased it six years later, they established a museum and library there dedicated to the author according to the terms of Dora Tattam’s will. (“Broadstairs”: 2016)

As Charles Dickens' international fame rose rapidly he travelled with his wife to the United States of America where he gave public readings, lectures, and also penned *American Notes for General Circulation*, travelogue detailing his travels with sarcastic criticizing American society, slavery and materialism. This journey was source of inspiration for the next novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*. His next novel *Dombey and Son* deals with business tactics and family finances. This work had been written under the railway boom which was distinctive for Victorian era. Following book *David Copperfield* had become Dickens' favourite one. He provided a plot following everyday's life of the main character with Dickens' own experiences from a difficult childhood. "Dark novel" period (probably caused by great loss of his daughter and father) contained *Bleak House*, *Hard Times* and *Little Dorrit* also. ("Charles Dickens": 2016) Following years produced *A Tale of Two Cities*, *All the Year Round*, *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*. In 1865 Dickens experienced a Staplehurst train crush from which he never recovered. Through the several next years his health was worsening, he had been slowly recovering from a bad cold and eye infection, he also collapsed during one of his public readings with signs of a mild stroke but despite doctor's suggestions he continued reading touring. In 1870 Dickens suffered his second stroke and died at 58 on June 9 at home in Gad's Hill Place, Kent. Charles Dickens was buried in Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey. His last novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* remained unfinished.

3.5. Fleet Prison

"The area formed by the wall in that part of the Fleet in which Mr. Pickwick stood was just wide enough to make a good racket-court; ... Sauntering or sitting about, in every possible attitude of listless idleness, were a great number of debtors, the major part of whom were waiting in prison until their day of "going up" before the Insolvent Court should arrive; while other had been remanded for various terms, which they were idling away as they best could. Some were shabby, some were smart, many dirty, a few clean; but they all lounged, and loitered, and slunk about, with as little spirit of purpose as the beasts in a menagerie." (*The Pickwick Papers*; p. 696)

Victorian London was famous for its prisons which became an often credited theme in Dickens' works. The Fleet Prison did not flee to his pen either. The prison was built in

1197 and during the centuries met several crucial catastrophes. First it was the Peasant Revolt in 1381, followed by the Great Fire in 1666, in 1780 it faced Gordon Riots and finally, the prison was demolished in 1846. Incarcerated were mainly debtors and bankrupts who lived there with their wives and children. Charles Dickens in the novel *The Pickwick Papers* showed his amazing power to force his readers in visualizing social problems. The representative object was the prison to which he had effectively drawn an attention. Readers seen the prison and its insufficiencies; this was what probably caused changing opinion of huge public leading to an increasing influence on the decisions of the authorities and their later reforms. The author himself indirectly contributed to a series of legal reforms. “Abolition of the inhumane imprisonment for debts, purification of the Magistrates’ court, a better management of criminal prisons, and the restriction of capital punishment.” (Diniejko; 2012) The main protagonist in the *Pickwick Papers* is Samuel Pickwick on whom the author showed the reality of the debtor’s prison.

“‘Oh,’ replied Mr. Pickwick, looking down a dark and filthy staircase, which appeared to lead to a range of damp and gloomy stone vaults beneath the ground, 'and those, I suppose, are the cellars where the prisoners keep their small quantities of coals. Unpleasant places to have to go down to; but very convenient, I dare say.’”
(*The Pickwick Papers*; p. 623)

Interesting fact known to Dickens’ readers who are aware of the satire and grotesque he used is that Mrs. Bardell, Mr. Pickwick’s landlady, who sent him to the prison under breach-of-promise caused by misunderstanding, is later in the novel also put into the prison where, finally, Mr. Pickwick is the one who was crucial in her releasing.

3.6. Newgate Prison

The prison was built in 1188 during the reign of King Henry I. The area of the prison was divided into two parts; “Common” which held mainly poor debtors and the “State area” with prisoners who could afford better cells. Men were separated from their wives and children as it was common in debtor’s prisons. In 1783 it became a place for public executions which were later, in Victorian era, Great social phenomena. Due to the fact they were public they met a huge popularity. Crowds watching the trials were enormous and to

this instance the Newgate prison held most of them. This Charles Dickens presented in the chapter dealing with Fagin's trial at the end of the novel.

“The court paved, from floor to roof, with human faces. Inquisitive and eager eyes peered from every inch of space. From the rail before the dock, away into the sharpest angle of the smallest corner in the galleries, all looks were fixed upon one man – the Jew. Before him and behind: above, below, on the right and on the left: he seemed to stand surrounded by a firmament, all bright with gleaming eyes.” (*Oliver Twist*; p. 426-427)

Philip Horne introduced Dickens' objections written as a letter to the *Daily News* concerning one of the trials. Horne pointed out that the author could not witness any sorrow, abhorrence or seriousness, hence, any facial expressions suitable to the occasion. (“Crime in *Oliver Twist*” 2016) This statement Dickens also used, again, in *Oliver Twist* when he was describing a scene counting the last minutes of the wicked Jew.

“Day was dawning when they again emerged. A great multitude had already assembled; the windows were filled with people, smoking and playing cards to beguile the time; the crowd were pushing, quarrelling, and joking. Everything told of life and animation, but one dark cluster of objects in the centre of all – the black stage, the cross-beam, the rope, and all the hideous apparatus of death.” (*Oliver Twist*; p. 436)

In Victorian era was another common source of enjoyment and it was reading of Newgate Novels. They were based on biographies of famous criminals and their acts. Apart from the novels there were compilations summarizing this issue – *The Newgate Calendar* published in 1773 and *The New Newgate Calendar* published from 1826 until 1828. Interesting is that the imprisoned villains could become heroes to the public as they showed a spectacles during their hearings and executions.

Charles Dickens in his *Oliver Twist* mentioned the Newgate Calendar as well. It was owned by the Jew who had many entertaining moments while reading it. Once he handed the compilation to the young Oliver and left him for a moment.

“He turned over the leaves. Carelessly at first; but, lighting on a passage which attracted his attention, he became intent upon the volume. It was a history of the lives and trials of great criminals; and the pages were soiled and thumbed with

use. Here, he read of dreadful crimes that made the blood run cold; of secret murders that had been committed by the lonely wayside: and bodies hidden from the eye of men in deep pits and wells.” (*Oliver Twist*; p. 157)

It has to be said that after the novel emerged many critics classified it as a Newgate Novel. It met a great indignation on the side of Charles Dickens as he did not intent to idealize the London’s criminals and underground; on contrary, he wanted to show the real life and existence of thieves and prostitutes to the world and that principle of good surviving through any circumstances with final triumph.

The chapter introduced main buildings and institutions connected to Dickens’ works and life. Studied issue was competed through the excerpts from the novels. It followed the settled aim and showed Dickens’ intentions.

4. CONCLUSION

London itself appears in almost all Dickens' novels (exception is the novel *Hard Times* which setting is in industrial Coketown) where the author illustrate the streets, public buildings, its atmosphere and citizens. Characters of Dickens' novels were drawn on his family and acquaintances with all their positive and the negative trait. London on the other hand was his muse. John Hollingshead, a co-author of *Houshold Words* said "His walks were always walks of observation, through parts of London that wanted to study. His brain must have been like a photographic lens." (Hawes; p. 26) When he was away on his travels (America, France, Italy) he struggled afterward. London was his source of imagination and called it his "magic lantern". (Dailey: 2005)

London's streets in Victorian era were crowded by horse traffic which led to thousands of tons a year of an unregulated pollution caused by horse's excrements and mud cleaned by crossing-sweepers. Of course, London held also much more agreeable areas such as Belgravia, Mayfair and several more parts of West End, nevertheless Dickens tended to focus on those with his personal experience. Those areas were for example Camden Town, where the author lived; areas of Holborn and Clerkenwell with their legal districts known to Dickens from years when he worked as lawyer's clerk; and City of Westminster known to him due to the job of a parliamentary reporter. His attention also captured areas of Seven Dials and East End with wretched poverty and criminals. (Hawes: 2007)

I would say that Victorian era was a period of great changes. At the beginning London still represented habits and society of previous Georgian times, as people were living in unimaginable conditions of dirt, fear and sicknesses which began to transform continuously into the city of a great possibilities and development, and furthermore into a financial metropolis. The 19th century was definitely connected with a new sewage and drain system, which gave the city a new opportunity to become significantly cleaner and healthier. Other innovations included the invention of public electric lighting, which superseded oil and gas lighting. Factories were now obliged to set several standards of construction. The railway also underwent a massive reconstruction - it was built under the ground in 1863 with the aim of connecting several major stations of suburbs. As the new way of transportation brought a great success, new lines had been put into an operation; "The City & South London Railway opened in 1890, and ran from King William Street in the City to Stockwell." ("Transport in Victorian London": 2015). Blackness of streets representing the omnipresent dirt was changed into the black colour of suits worn by

financiers, bankers and civil servants at the end of the century. And what else might seem worth noticing is that London was officially considered Christian city although the lower class and the poor were still atheists.

The last think I would like to pinpoint in thesis are excerpts that somehow touched me during the reading. What I admire in Dickens' work is his ability and perfection in describing a person's body language. He undeniably saw the great power of our body movements which, I believe, had not been well known and studied yet. For example in *Oliver Twist* is a passage where Noah Claypole meets an old Jew in a public house named "Three Cripples",

"[His] mind might have been at ease after this assurance, but his body certainly was not; for he shuffled and writhed about, into various uncouth positions: eying his new friend meanwhile with mingled fear and suspicion." (*Oliver Twist*; p. 345)

Another fact worth mentioning is definitely his description of the Stockholm syndrome which the reader faces also in *Oliver Twist*, this time from Nancy's point of view. She strongly denied any suggestions and opportunities for a better life given by Rose Maylie thus she saw herself as a part of the wretched population and as a vital supporter of her beloved criminal Sikes. This thinking of course led her to death committed by the lover.

"I don't know what it is,' answered the girl; 'I only know that it is so, and not with me alone, but with hundreds of others as bad and wretched as myself. I must go back. Whether it is God's wrath for the wrong I have done, I do not know; but I am drawn back to him [Sikes]* through every suffering and ill-usage: and should be, I believe, if I knew that I was to die by his hand at last.'" (*Oliver Twist*; p. 326)

Changing of tone in narration is visible during the reading of the novels. When Charles Dickens wrote about protagonist he used mild and usually very sensible words. On contrary when any chapter was dedicated to a villain his tone was overwhelmed with disgust and dislike and also the surroundings were described in a very dark mood. What the author intended was forcing the reader to become aware of the characters just the way he pictured them. This is also applicable to the characters through which Dickens expressed the satire so typical to his works. What cannot be forgotten is the development

of the protagonists through the novels what could be seen in the narrating. As young characters they use childish expressions and their point of view to the actions they are experiencing is often very different from the one the matured reader would expect. The complex unity of surroundings, characters and their incidents is what keeps Charles Dickens the well reputable writer for the centuries.

Dickens' main message to the world was alerting to the issues of social injustice and terrible conditions of living the poor had to face. He also pointed on those who considered themselves above others usually in the way of already mentioned satire.

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SHRNUTÍ

Tato práce pojednává o Londýně za viktoriánské doby a o jeho tehdejší atmosféře. Práce je zaměřena na hlavní problémy vyskytující se v dané epoše se zaměřením na jejich vliv k úrovni životních podmínek. Dále zmiňuje, proč tato problematika byla tak stěžejní pro tvorbu významného autora, Charlese Dickense. Zásadní částí této bakalářské práce je předmět budov a institucí spojených s autorovou kreativitou, díky níž sepsal významná díla devatenáctého století. Teoretický rámec probírající Dickensův život jsem zvolila za nezbytečný v důsledku lepšího porozumění citovaných ukázek z jeho děl. Tyto úryvky dále slouží ke studiu důvodů, proč se autor natolik věnoval upadající úrovni společnosti.