

**Západočeská univerzita v Plzni**

**Fakulta pedagogická**

**Katedra anglického jazyka**

**Bakalářská práce**

**LONDÝN V PRÓZE CHARLESE DICKENSE**

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**Plzeň 2017**

**University of West Bohemia**

**Faculty of Education**

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**Undergraduate Thesis**

**LONDON IN FICTION OF CHARLES DICKENS**

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**Plzeň 2017**

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

*V Plzni dne 24. června 2017*

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Jméno Příjmení

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my supervisor, PhDr. Magdaléna Potočňáková, PhD., for her patience, ideas, advice and time.

## ABSTRACT

Rybárová, Kateřina. University of West Bohemia. June 2017. London in Fiction of Charles Dickens. Supervisor: PhDr. Magdaléna Potočňáková, PhD.

The thesis deals with the topic of London in the Victorian era and its occurrence in fiction of Charles Dickens. It means that the work is focused on significant problems with its effects on living conditions. Moreover, it states why those problems were such important for the grand author, Charles Dickens. The crucial part of the thesis conveys an issue of buildings and institutions connected to the author's creativity, upon which he created significant novels of the nineteenth century such as *Oliver Twist*, *Little Dorrit*, *Bleak House*, and many more. What I found essential, as to the structure and composition, to put historical facts drawn from secondary sources alongside relevant excerpts from novels.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	6
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. VICTORIAN LONDON	3
2.1. The River Thames	4
2.2. The All-devouring Great Fog of the Victorian London	6
2.3. Prostitution and Murders	9
2.4. Children of London Streets	12
3. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF DICKENS IN VICTORIAN LONDON	16
3.1. Marshalsea Prison	16
3.2. Warren's Blacking Factory	18
3.3. Workhouse	19
3.4. Fleet Prison	21
3.5. The Horsemonger Lane Gaol	22
3.6. Newgate Prison	23
3.7. Dickens' London	25
3.8. Covent Garden Market	27
4. CONCLUSION	29
BIBLIOGRAPHY	31
SHRNUTÍ	34



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Dickens, the very name is synonymous with London. The London of fogs, of lamplight, of pickpockets and of gentlemen and ladies in large hats. This is the London that is called to mind with the mention of the name Charles Dickens.

London, the capital city of England has played a significant role in many different spheres throughout the centuries – it has been a centre of urbanization, industry, social and cultural life and, of course, literature. It has been a source of inspiration for a vast number of British artists, poets and writers who were either born there, spent their lives or died there. To the spectrum of the acknowledged authors belong names such as Robert Browning, Rudyard Kipling, William Blake, and along with a host of others, most notably Charles Dickens. For the purpose of this thesis I will limit myself to one of the most vibrant periods in London's history, the Victorian age. It was an era full of contradictions; on the one hand, London had stupendous upper class luxury, wealth, and economic as well as industrial development; on the other hand, it suffered omnipresent lower class' poverty, filth, diseases, pitifully low wages, and crime.

I will discuss the living conditions of the lower classes in the overcrowded slums of Victorian London and give a description of the sensibilities particular to Londoners of that time. I will outline important events such as the Great Stink and the Great Fog which will be described in order to depict the city's background. It will detail several side effects of urbanization and growing population which doubled at the beginning of the nineteenth century. I will also briefly mention the changes in industry which served as a basis for the rapid development of London's infrastructure, particularly its roads and rail, its public lighting and sewage systems which also served as one of the central themes found in the works of Victorian writers.

The following chapter will introduce buildings and institutions helpful to a fuller understanding of the works of Charles Dickens. These buildings will be mainly prisons—Marshalsea, Fleet, Newgate, King's Bench, and Horsemonger Lane Gaol—workhouses, and Warren's Blacking Factory. The quintessence of Charles Dickens' work is London itself. The city played an enormous role in shaping his writing. Growing up in London formed his experience through childhood and adolescence and therefore it made him the man he was. Selections of passages from Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Bleak House* will highlight the influence of London on his work. These selections will be pertinent to an understanding of Dickens' literary intentions. This section contains short paragraphs



creating a framework upon which to build a better understanding of the city, its prisons, workhouses, factories, and streets in the novels under consideration.

I will try to assess the accuracy of Dickens' account of London. I will focus on the themes Charles Dickens dealt with as he worked them out in the London of his experience, and of his imagination.

## 2. VICTORIAN LONDON

This chapter will focus on a brief definition of the Victorian era; its beginning, crucial events, living conditions, growth of population, and its partition. It will introduce the River Thames, the Fog, prostitution accompanied by murders, and children for the purpose of all these factors became recurring themes in Dickens' works.

London is a metropolitan city, capital of England and place of many possibilities and woes. Some historians claimed 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 which the Victorian era represents. The official outline of this period, so crucial to the British history, is identical with the reign of Queen Victoria, the second longest-reigning British monarch – from 20th June 1837 till her death on 22nd January 1901. She 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 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015.) Several historians however 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. According to Boris Ford, the Victorian era should be rather divided into three parts as the mood of each of them was explicitly different. He dated the first period from 1837 to 1851. This period introduced economic, social and political conflicts and the Great Exhibition, first of such venue, was held. The second period dated between 1850s and 1870s has been named an "equipoise" age. Those were years of a conflict smoothening and on the contrary, years of pressure for improvement. Interestingly, novels written during this period were not focused on social drama (a very favoured theme in the first period) due to the fact that readers sought rather parochial and often political issues. Ford introduced the third period as one whose breaking point cannot be set precisely. It is called "late-Victorian". Those were years of growth of militant trade unionism, of a decline in British agriculture (at that time, being under constant pressure of foreign imports) and also a new heavy industry of coal mining was brought to the scene (1992, pp. 5-12). By the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, London had become a globally known city. Thanks to this fact it had become the most populous and wealthiest city of England. The city was one of the most prestigious centres of an international European trade and this circumstance certainly helped in establishing London as a very important financial metropolis. The invention of steam-powered engine was one of the peaks England's

Industrial Revolution held. It led to a huge growth of factories focused mainly on processing textile as well as to the formation of London's fame.

Living conditions were not very satisfying - contemporary photographs of labour and suffering precisely 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" (as cited in Ackroyd, 2000, p. 573). The streets of London in this period were usually full of beggars, children, wanderers, street-sellers, prostitutes, criminals, and diseased people. "The teeming population encouraged both prostitution and disease, and the dark, labyrinthine streets were perfect for criminals who would hide from the public eye" (Winchester, 2012, para. 1). Nevertheless, outskirts of London usually retained a peaceful image of the countryside. Living conditions undoubtedly went hand in hand with the growth of population. Ford (1992) stated, "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" (p. 19). When Queen Victoria came to the throne there were less than seventeen million people and over thirty-seven million when she died. Reasons for the growth of population were not quite clear but it has to be said that the participants influencing the increase were predominantly people's extending average length of life, children surviving infancy, larger families, and immigration forced by needs for employment came into an account as well.

## **2.1. The River Thames**

For centuries, the River Thames has played a huge role for the entire city. It was simultaneously used as a source of drinking water to London's population and as a sewer for human, animal, and industrial waste. The river transformed into a disease-ridden open sewer floating through the city. Lemon (n.d.) stated that "enough waste and pollution had accumulated in the Thames to make it the most contaminated and unhygienic river in the world" (para. 2).

In the summer of 1858 the catastrophic situation concerning the state of the river and its horrendous odour was finally brought to the attention of the lawmakers. According to Lemon (n.d.), "Centuries of waste were literary cooking in the monstrous heat" (para. 3). The smell was so intense that even legislators from the Parliament placed drapes soaked in a mixture of chlorine and lime over their windows to prevent it. Also carbolic acid and chalk were thrown into the river in order to maintain a breathable air. When these

proceedings failed, the members considered moving the Parliament from the Westminster area. Such suggestion was quite exaggerated due to the fact that the Westminster Abbey had been completely renovated after the great fire of 1834.

Several days later, as the situation worsened and crowds complained, 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 (Lemon, n.d.). 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 these reforms approved by the Parliament, the Thames become one of the cleanest rivers 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. Iron - now Southwark Bridge, over the river Thames, was built in 1815-1819 designed by John Rennie and rebuilt in 1912. Amy even rejected a proposal of her lover John Chivery there with words full of trust that he will never come again in order to search for her. Charles Dickens had a great talent for describing London's nature. That could be seen in the following excerpt from the novel concerning Amy and Mr. Clennam on their way from the Marshalsea Prison where, by accident, Mr. Clennam 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*, 2003, p. 111)

Chapter forty-six in *Oliver Twist* introduces a respectable event of Nancy who kept the promise of an appointment with Rose and Mr. Brownlow on one Sunday midnight. She revealed all the secrets of Fagin, the Jew, and Monks concerning Oliver's well being on the steps of London Bridge while they were, unaware, observed by Noah Claypole. In this chapter, Dickens, again admirably pinpointed the Victorian nature of the river in the area of Borough.

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*, 2003, pp. 380-381)

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.

## **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, 2012, p. 21). It was 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*, 2003, p. 42)

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; according to Ackroyd (2000), “In 1873 there were seven hundred 'extra' deaths caused, nineteen of them the results pedestrians walking into the Thames, the docks or the canals” (p. 432); others entailed chronic health problems as the air was hardly breathable - “moist, thick, full of bad smells and choking” (Ridenhour, 2012, p. 21). Connection of fog with 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. Rosen (2006) stated, “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” (para. 6). It can be said that fog had been the greatest character for the nineteenth-century fiction hence Charles Dickens was influenced by this presence as well. In one of his great novels, *Bleak House*, he described the fog itself at the very beginning of the story.

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*, 2003, p. 13)

Other aspect of the fog was darkness. Even throughout the day, Londoners had to light gas-lights in shops even throughout the day in order to afford some light indoors. Also the streets had to be additionally alighted, as lanterns were highly 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*, 2003, p. 14)

When speaking of the environment in the city, Charles Dickens uses a theme of air in his works repeatedly. The novel *Little Dorrit* might serve as an illustration. While planning its writing, Dickens had in mind a very contributing fact to the image of then London. It was the “dirty air”, a motif serving as both a “figure of speech and a phenomenon” (Yeats, 2011, p. 329). The air’s condition was of typical developing urban

environment, full of smog and with a sense of gloominess. Poorly combusted carbon, voiding flakes of soot or exhausting fumes and coal dust, coming particularly from industrial workshops and commercial premises, resulted in atmospheric contamination. Airborne pollutants had a dangerous influence on the respiratory tract and immune system of London's inhabitants. One of the most dangerous diseases, even though it was believed to be spread by ingesting contaminated water rather than inhaling, was cholera. The mid-Victorian synonym for this disease, attacking vast population, was a plague (Yeats, 2011).

In an essay depicting the atmosphere of London, George Yeats (2011) wrote, "Gloominess, at once natural and artificial, physical and psychological, also suffuses Little Dorrit's depiction of London" (p. 329). Not only that Dickens places emphasis on the air as a factor of dirtiness and its heavy circulation, he also uses it as tool for expressing corrupted economic system and qualities of predominantly bad characters. That literary atmosphere he creates follows especially moral terms via incorporating metaphors in the narrative. The air in *Little Dorrit* is, in a sense, omnipotent. It carries an expressive function supplementing qualities and effects on the actions and circumstances taking place in the novel. Basically, the darkness and the features that convey the dense air are consequently cleared and cleansed as soon as the ambience of a problem which is dealt with meets its solution. Henceforth, the characters seem to feel relieved and healthier and outlooks have a brighter perception. Such an example could be a situation at the end of the story when Amy pardons Mrs. Clennam.

The vista of street and bridge was plain to see, and the sky was serene and beautiful. People stood and sat at their doors ... numbers were walking for air ... As they [Amy and Mrs. Clennam] crossed the bridge, the clear steeples of the many churches looked as if they had advanced out of the murk that usually enshrouded them, and come much nearer. The smoke that rose into the sky had lost its dingy hue and taken a brightness upon it. ... From a radiant centre, over the whole length and breadth of the tranquil firmament, great shots of light streamed among the early stars, like signs of the blessed later covenant of peace and hope that changed the crown of thorns into a glory. (*Little Dorrit*, 2003, pp. 826-827)

### 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, 2000, p. 379). The author additionally states that by 1870 “there were 20.000 public houses visited by 50.000 customers” (Ackroyd, 2000, p. 576). By the mid century the estimated number of prostitutes achieved 80.000. With enormously growing population, for a woman finding a well paid decent job had proved to be almost unrealistic. Women were usually working in agriculture spheres but also as shop girls, maidens, servants, milliners, seamstresses, laundresses, and even as factory workers. Furthermore, difficult living conditions forced many to turn to prostitution for living. An extensive number of harlots often appeared in the area of Bank of England, Haymarket and Soho; the women were standing here in rows waiting for a customer like cabs for their passengers. “The Great Social Evil” was the label which London’s society gave to the prostitution.

Like the Great Stink and the Fog were results of a mass population, one of the main causes for such an amount of prostitutes was the urbanization - so called clash of classes. Richer men, living now in areas where prostitution had its practice, 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 had led to the public embracing of prostitution. The connection of sexuality and disease was explicit. A significant number of women, associated with the world’s oldest profession, were infected with syphilis - a highly contagious bacterial disease. A characteristic metaphor which Ackroyd (2000) used might be a perfect insight into such problematic situation which London of then era was facing, “As a heap of rubbish will ferment, so surely will a number of unvirtuous women” (p. 377).

From works written by Charles Dickens, one very significant example of author’s view on prostitution is represented by the character of Nancy from the novel *Oliver Twist*. The author’s romantic consciousness led him to present her in a very appealing way; giving her a great delicacy, leaving only little from a general picture a present reader might conceive under the term of prostitute from 19th century. Even though Nancy is introduced as a fallen woman, an important member of London’s evil, a drunkard and thief, her moral complexity and overall compassion persuades readers to feel sympathy for her. An



instance contributing to her visualization as a sensitive person may be the portrayal of her as a victim of the Stockholm syndrome - a situation when a person feels affection towards his or her assailant. Nancy strongly rejects any suggestions or opportunities for a better life offered by Rose Maylie, thus she saw herself as part of the wretched population and as a vital supporter of her beloved criminal, Sikes. This mindset eventually leads to a murder committed upon her 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*, 2003, p. 337)

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 suburbs of London, later called "East End". Also the Bethnal Green district and its surroundings were famous due to the presence of criminal gangs, which competed for the districts and for 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 citizens of London became literary stunned by those events. Not only Whitechapel (the area where Jack the Ripper was committing 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; the police restricted walking out the streets after dark to the minimum. Ackroyd (2000) claimed 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. As the techniques of the police forces were not highly developed, a great number of murders remained unresolved. Generally, as they seemed to be committed without any apparent motive and were often accompanied by unusual circumstances, many superstitions and strange stories entered the Victorian society.

London carries its own secrets from this period, and one is not surprised of its special power to induce anxiety, fear, and paranoia into the weakened minds. With the increasing criminality, the essential paganism of London indicating a cause of beliefs to the supernatural re-entered the subconscious of people. Unfortunately, the police did not have a great reputation. The fact that many police officers came from the same class and

neighbourhood as the people they were supposed to protect often led to a denouncement of controlling and arresting own people.

Areas of London, where violent urban crime took its place such as Whitechapel, Islington, and Spitalfields repeatedly witnessed murders and served as a fruitful inspiration for various artists, especially writers. The public enjoyed both watching the agonies of men and women executions and the reading of so-called “Newgate Novels”<sup>1</sup> - stories about criminals and their low-life haunts. The novelists creating the stories became an unplanned movement.

As indicated above, the fiction of Charles Dickens was inspired by a real murder as well. It was Eliza Grimwood’s case, a prostitute believed to be murdered by hand of her partner, William Hubbard. On May 1838, several months before *Oliver Twist* was completed, Eliza was found dead with her throat slit and stab wounds in her chest and abdomen area. The similarities of the characters from the novel to the ones that represent the real case are evident. Leafe (2009) commented that “Another striking similarity between the fictional Nancy and the real Eliza was the unusual position in which they were found - both lying on their backs and staring up at the ceiling, their legs tucked under them” (para. 29). Only the murder weapon Dickens chose was different. In Nancy’s case it is a club that is fatal to her.

The housebreaker freed one arm, and grasped his pistol. The certainty of immediate detection if he fired, flashed across his mind even in the midst of fury; and he beat it twice with all the force he could summon, upon the upturned face that almost touched his own. She staggered and fell: nearly blinded with the blood that rained down from a deep gash in her forehead; ... breathed one prayer for mercy to her Maker. It was a ghastly figure to look upon. The murderer staggering backward to the wall, and shutting out the sight with his hand, seized a heavy club and struck her down. (*Oliver Twist*, 2003, pp. 396-397)

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<sup>1</sup> The topic of Newgate Novels will be further described in a section concerning the Newgate Prison.

## **2.4.Children of London Streets**

The amount of children roving in the streets of the Victorian London was unimaginable and, up until then, unseen. They were often expected to help their parents towards the family budget therefore they searched for any kind of job. Once they were fortunate, they took all the responsibility and dealt with it with pleasure and contentment. Children, especially boys, usually lacked of a permanent job, but if lucky, they were used by street-sellers for “crying” the goods the master was selling, or as errand boys. They watched over horses while their owners were busy, carried trunks or parcels on railway stations and for omnibus passengers, or cleaned the streets of horse manure (Ackroyd, 2000). Crossing sweepers (at that time called “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 in order to provide some entertainment for the citizens. They practiced walking on their hands with their feet in the air or performed some theatrical spectacle. One of such locality was Baker Street and its surroundings. The fact that the streets were always busy ensured them even the smallest earnings in form of a halfpenny.

Another area of earning money was child labour. Among the commonest examples of child labour belonged factories where children would work long and dangerous shifts while crawling on their hands and knees to retrieve cotton bobbins from under the heavy machinery. In coal mines they would creep through tunnels too narrow for an adult worker and push trucks of coal to the surface (Daniels, n.d.). Or they would work as chimney sweepers, as they were favoured for their tiny little bodies, providing them an easy ability to scrape through the narrow and strangely shaped chimneys. These children were often sold by their parents to the employers at the age of four and sadly, many of them did not grow up to the adulthood. Their everyday life and health was exposed to the omnipresent filth, dust, smoke, piles of garbage covering the streets, and soot. Such distressing conditions often led to chronic diseases and caused various physical disabilities. Their personalities were inevitably 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 recited by Ackroyd (2000) is that “London street children’s most remarkable characteristic is their extraordinary licentiousness” (p. 376). Despite a legislation preventing chimney sweeps using climbing tiny boys, the practise continued to mid 1870s. The sweepers were forced

climbing up the narrow chimney spaces by their masters who were often poking them with sticks or set 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 a cause 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 sinned 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*, 2003, p. 21)

It is also necessary to pinpoint that children in Victorian London played a huge role in criminality. For many, thievery was the easiest way of earning money. Especially while witnessing the shadowy destiny of their fellow boys working in factories for masters or in mines. They robbed as individuals or in gangs. Their targets were usually jewellery stores, handkerchiefs and snuff boxes from the pockets of ordinary citizens, window panes, and belongings of inattentive drunkards. Such matter can be wonderfully seen again in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. The first third of the book describes how Oliver was introduced to the manners of skilful thieves.

'Well,' said the Jew, glancing slyly 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*, 2003, pp. 69-70)

Jack Dawkins, also called the Artful Dodger, and Charley Bates are the typical representants of street pickpockets Charles Dickens had used for describing the manners of young children forced by the dark side of London. They are not much older than young Oliver but their behaviour is more likely to be the behaviour of adults. They drink, smoke and even speak in argot – level of language represented by thieves. What might seem

interesting in the novel is that the thieves often discuss and even take into account the omnipresent possibility of being imprisoned, therefore being hanged. The satire, typical to Dickens' works, can be seen through the Dodger's witty comments and comical behaviour which he did not lose even at the court hearing.

'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*, 2003, p. 367)

Little girls were often seen in the streets where the prostitution was held. Their mothers brought them here to perform, perhaps, the same job as they did. It was usual for children of thirteen or fourteen of the opposite sex to live under one roof in terrible conditions without any parental care. As a result, they usually found themselves having own offspring even though they were not capable of supporting themselves, nor they were engaged in the sacred bond of marriage, so reputable at those times. As a reaction to such situation many of affluent Victorians decided to improve the city morally. Winchester (2012) stated, "There were new schools and police services, and ongoing modifications to labor and criminal justice laws" (para. 9). Charles Dickens, aware of the issue which prostitution held, later in order to help fallen women to find a decent place in society helped Angela Burdett Coutts with establishing of a very innovative asylum. The new institution was Urania Cottage in Lime Grove known also as a Home. It served as a place where women had been treated in more sympathetic approach (Rogers, 2003). According to Winchester (2012), "After the young women were trained and educated in the ways of ladyship, they were prepared for relocation to Australia or other colonies" (para. 9).

As was mentioned earlier, London went through radical changes of urbanization. Not only it had increased the number of inhabitants, it also had a significant influence on reshaping the city's areas. One change, undoubtedly important, happened to the very city centre. Metz (1990) commented that "While the slums filled up and outlining areas encroached on neighboring countryside, the population of central London, the ancient City district, decreased markedly" (p. 474).

As stated at the beginning of the thesis, London started to be reshaped into a modern metropolis. Winchester (2012) claimed, “Amid a welter of private and government-sponsored initiatives ... The city’s famed public transport systems-tube and train-were created in the middle of the century, as were many of the city’s vast series of public gardens and squares”. With a massive reconstruction of the railway, the tube’s underground construction served an aim to connect major stations of suburbs. At the end of the century, several new lines had been put into an operation, running from “King William Street in the City to Stockwell” (“Public Transport in Victorian London,” 2015, para. 16). Also a public electric lighting, which superseded oil and gas, is counted among those inventions commissioned in Dickens’ time.

This chapter dealt with the issue of London’s society introducing the reasons why there were such problems and how they affected the living in the Victorian era. Excerpts from Charles Dickens’ novels served as a base for outlining the manners and actions of Londoners. These phenomena will be included in following chapter also.

### 3. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF DICKENS IN VICTORIAN LONDON

The aim of this chapter concerning Dickens' background should be as informative as researching. Partly, it contains author's years of familiarization with London and its society. Method used for the research was comparison of secondary with the primary literature; into what extent the characters in Dickens' novels were similar or affected by author's childhood experiences and observations gained during the adulthood, and to what present phenomena he paid greatest attention. Again, the whole chapter will be supplemented with fragments taken from his novels.

#### 3.1. Marshalsea Prison

In the Victorian era, Marshalsea was a prison which purpose was to hold mainly debtors. In the eighteenth century, there were arrested also pirates, smugglers, and politics accused of sedition. The worldwide fame Marshalsea had received especially through the imprisonment of Dickens' father, John Dickens. In 1821, he was dismissed from the clerk's post in navy pay-office. Consequently, the family lost most of its income and moved to Camden Town, London. John Dickens was later arrested and sent to the Marshalsea, accompanied by all members of the family except little Charles. His debt was £40 and 10 shillings to a baker, James Kerr. David Rowland (2014), in his contribution to the Old Police Cell's Museum website, claimed "That was certainly very large debt; these days that is roughly equivalent to the sum of some, £3.110" (para. 6). In 1831, John Dickens had declared insolvency again and young Charles visiting his family in the prison on a quite regular basis had therefore become acquainted with other debtor's families during his stays. Debtors in the prison had to remain there, basically, as long as their creditors chose to have them incarcerated. According to Wheatley (1891), "The Marshalsea, a prison in High Street, Southwark, attached to the King's House, and adjoining the King's Bench" (p. 475), with its own history reaching to medieval times was a great source of inspiration for one of Dickens' masterpieces, *Little Dorrit*. The novel, published between 1855 and 1857, is believed to be semi-autobiographical and what supports this statement is also the fact that the novel is set 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*, 2003, p. 72)

It might be suitable to mention that the first Marshalsea, built in the fourteenth century, was over hundred meters far from the one known to the Victorian era. That was built in the eighteenth century, refurbished in 1811 and finally 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, hemmed 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*, 2003, pp. 72-73)

What might seem interesting is that during the publication of *Little Dorrit* readers were not aware of the detail that Dickens' family had close experiences with this institution. For the first time, the author had revealed the truth to the public while his close friend and Dickens' first biographer, John Forster, was collecting the stories of the author's life. Dickens' biography was then published posthumously (Perdue, n.d.).

Another surviving item from Marshalsea building, possibly a most touching one, is the prison's iron grille. It is placed in the nursery room of Dickens' House, 48 Doughty Street, London; "The only survivor of the writer's many London addresses" (Nicholson, 1988, p. 172). During his presence here he was not only working on *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Barnaby Rudge* but he had also created a language of young Pip from *Great Expectations*. The house has been turned into a museum which now 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 ("Victorian Museum," n.d.). 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 the Victorian era to which Dickens had often pointed to within his works ("History of the Fellowship," n.d.).



### 3.2. Warren's Blacking Factory

Warren's Blacking Factory at Hungerford Stairs (place of nowadays Charing Cross station) manufacturing a shoe-polish was a place which is counted among crucial experiences in Dickens' life. Young Charles had to attend the work six days a week. His shifts were ten hours long with a salary of six or seven shillings per week. By raising this money he had been helping his family (at that time, still living in Marshalsea where his father was imprisoned). It was a gruesome period of his life which he did not speak about until his late years. A fragment of memoir concerning this period published by John Forster reveals such experience. "No words can express the secret agony of my soul ... my whole nature was penetrated with the grief and humiliation" ("The Life of Charles Dickens," n.d., Hard Experiences in Boyhood section, para. 10).

It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. It is wonderful to me, that, even after my descent into the poor little drudge I had been since we came to London, no one had compassion enough on me – a child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate and soon hurt, bodily or mentally – to suggest that something might have been spared, as certainly it might have been, to place me at any school. ("The Life of Charles Dickens," n.d., Hard Experiences in Boyhood section, para. 7)

In the factory, he was accompanied by rats and illiterate fellow workers with whom he had basically nothing in common. In Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*, Dickens had mentioned a young boy Bob Fagin whose name he later used in *Oliver Twist*. The name was given to an antagonist, an old Jew, teaching young children how to pickpocket small items, such as handkerchiefs, cigarette cases, and jewellery. Rosalind Vallance (1966) implied in her introduction contributed to Dickens' essays that Dickens himself declared his childish impressions of London's working-class background had remained always the true ones (p. 6). The period regarding working in the factory had a real impact on Dickens' life. As a child he sought information and proper education which, while working for Mr. Warren, was unfortunately taken from him. Dickens' mother forced Charles to prolong his shifts in order to raise family's finances spent on food, living costs, and on clothes, even after their release from the Marshalsea. As all Dickens' works are partly based on his own experience, *David Copperfield*, possibly the author's favourite novel, is a work following an everyday life of the main character through whom Dickens expressed 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*, 1994, p. 140)

### **3.3. Workhouse**

Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is inevitably connected to the workhouse system upon which he introduces to the reader the obstacles and hardship of those who were forced to remain at such facilities. Connected to this issue were young children suffering from bad conditions of living such as malnutrition and cold accompanied by mental as well as physical exhaustion and illnesses. What the author probably could not have expected was that the phrase "Please Sir, I want some more" (*Oliver Twist*, 2003, p. 15), would become a classic. This sentence perfectly describes 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 fellow inmate.

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 political speeches, make short notes and rewrite them afterwards. Dickens encountered many debates and 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 on the old one from 1815, at that time, greatly criticized. Money was raised by taxes on middle and upper class citizens for supporting those who were unable to work. With every year's increasing costs arose also the criticism. The new Poor Law was passed by the Parliament to reduce the costs spent on the support of the poor. Infamously, it resulted in stopping the passage of the money towards the people in need. Another novelty was the necessity of the poor to attend the workhouses where they had to spend several hours providing a manual labour work. As a reward they were receiving scruffy uniforms which served as their only clothing, blankets, and a little amount of food. Families were separated and housed in different barracks of the workhouses. Not even siblings could live together. For the sake of the terrible conditions, inmates rather sought other unsatisfactory

work – basically anything but outside the walls of such institutions. Due to the fact that the workhouses were occupied mainly by the sick, the old, the insane, or the orphans, Dickens, aware and disgusted by these conditions, did not hesitate to draw attention to the people in charge of this system. In *Oliver Twist* he introduced members of the board as highly unappealing characters with twisted 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*, 2003, p. 13)

Dickens' family twice lived in the street few doors from a famous Cleveland Street Workhouse. This workhouse is believed to be a motif especially important for the novel. Cleveland Street Workhouse, formerly the Covent Garden Workhouse under parish of St Paul, was built in the eighteenth 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. Higginbotham claimed, Cleveland Street Workhouse was a four-storey U-shaped building where the east side of the ground floor was used as laundry with wash house – serving to house women, workshops, and the chapel. The men wards were situated at the west side (Higginbotham, n.d.-b). After year 1870 the building was converted into an infirmary for the Central London Sick Asylum District which until 2006 was in use as a department of Middlesex Hospital. Five years later it was under imminent threat of demolition and later became a part of English Heritage.

Dickens was also possibly influenced by 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 predominantly addressed to middle class (Allingham, n.d.). The workhouse operation is dated to 1730 with an initial purpose of accommodating infants and their nurses. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, as “the workhouse buildings gradually expanded” (Higginbotham, n.d.-a) the premises were serving as infirmary, boy's school and women's dormitory. Supporting

evidence to the thought of St. Marylebone workhouse being the possible source of inspiration might be the fact that Dickens himself had lived in Marylebone Road for several years.

### **3.4. 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*, 1994, p. 696)

Victorian London was undoubtedly famous for its prisons which became an often credited theme in Dickens’ works. Nor did the Fleet Prison escape the pen of our well-known author. The institution was built in 1197 and over the centuries it met a number of crucial catastrophes. At first, it was the Peasant Revolt in 1381, followed by the Great Fire in 1666, in 1780 the prison faced Gordon Riots and finally, it was demolished in 1846. The incarcerated who lived there were mainly debtors and bankrupts with their wives and children. Charles Dickens showed his impressive ability to convince his readers of a vivid view of social problems in the novel *The Pickwick Papers*. The prison itself was the representative object to which he had effectively drawn an attention. Thanks to his essentially descriptive techniques readers could see the prison and its insufficiencies; such instance had probably caused changes in opinion of the public at large, leading to an increasing influence on the decisions of the authorities and their later reforms. According to Diniejko (2012), “The author indirectly contributed to a series of legal reforms, including the abolition of the inhumane imprisonment for debts, purification of the Magistrates’ court, a better management of criminal prisons, and the restriction of capital punishment” (para. 2). The protagonist in *The Pickwick Papers* is Samuel Pickwick at whom the author showed not only the aspects of industrialization of Victorian times but also 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*; 1994, p. 623)

### **3.5. The Horsemonger Lane Gaol**

What was already mentioned in the thesis is Dickens' endless inspiration for his novels sought in the streets of the city. The author used the area of Horsemonger Lane as a setting in *Little Dorrit* for a place where Mr. Chivery had his tobacco shop.

The tobacco business round the corner of Horsemonger Lane was carried on in a rural establishment one story high which had the benefit of the air from the yards of Horsemonger Lane Jail, and the advantage of a retired walk under the wall of that pleasant establishment. (*Little Dorrit*, 2003, pp. 231-232)

The Horsemonger Lane Gaol was a prison constructed at the end of the eighteenth century. It was built in order to replace the older one called White Lyon. The facility, although being listed among less important prisons, had been incarcerating mainly local debtors and criminals. The prison is famous to us principally for Dickens' witnessing of one of the public executions which were practised on its gatehouse flat roof. The accused were Mrs. Manning and her husband. The couple became one of the biggest sensations of the century known as the "Bermondsey Horror". The pair was prosecuted of murder of Mrs. Manning's lover. From letter on public execution written by Charles Dickens addressed to *The Times* we know the author went to this event the night before with intention to observe crowds gathered there. He expressed his disgust on the fact that such venues were pastures for wickedness and atrocities. Words he used were as follows: "Fightings, fainting, whistlings, imitations of Punch, brutal jokes, tumultuous demonstrations of indecent delight when swooning women were dragged out of the crowd by the police with their dresses disordered, gave a new zest to a general entertainment" (as cited in Flanders, 2014, The Mannings murders section). Dickens, apart from being famous for his literary works, was also known for his campaigning against public executions. This letter written on November 13, 1849 is believed to be, among other significant factors, a

help in leading to abolition of public executions in the country twenty years later. He also stated, “I do not believe that any community can prosper where such a scene of horror and demoralization as was enacted outside Horsemonger-lane Jail is presented at the very doors of good citizens, and is passed by, unknown or forgotten” (as cited in Flanders, 2014, The Mannings murder section).

Consequently, from observing the case of the married couple he had found an inspiration for one of his characters – Hortense - in the novel *Bleak House*. Hortense is lady Dedlock’s former maid (born abroad as well as Mrs. Manning) who deviates by murdering a lawyer Tulkinghorn. The following excerpt reveals her accusation by Inspector Bucket.

'I take you into custody on a charge of murder, and you don't need to be told it. Now, I want to be polite to one of your sex and a foreigner if I can. If I can't, I must be rough, and there's rougher ones outside. What I am to be depends on you.' ... Mademoiselle complies, saying in a concentrated voice while that something in her cheek beats fast and hard, 'You are a devil.' (*Bleak House*, 2003, p. 831)

Dickens was also known for his use of real persons as templates for his fictional characters; and Inspector Bucket is no exception. It was Inspector Charles Frederick Field, one of the first famous Victorian detectives, who influenced Dickens’ writings. As Jones (2015) suggested, with their new friendship, Charles Dickens wrote several articles and essays about him.

Horsemonger Lane Gaol was closed in 1878 with a demolition coming two years later. On the ground where the prison has stood are Newington Gardens now commonly known as Gaol Park. Interestingly, the Gardens are just next to other public site contributed to our great author, Dickens Fields.

### **3.6. Newgate Prison**

Newgate prison was built in 1188 during the reign of King Henry I. The area of the facility was divided in two parts: “Common” which held mainly poor debtors; and the “State Area” for the prisoners who could afford cells in slightly better conditions. As it was customary in debtor’s prisons, men were separated from their wives and children. In 1783, the prison became a place performing public executions. Such venues created great social phenomena through the Victorian era (see Horsemonger Lane Gaol). Particularly due to

the fact they were public, they met a huge popularity. The growing commonness of these trials led to an increase in the amount of people watching the executions. With such occurrence and being the biggest prison Newgate held most of them. Charles Dickens portrayed this reality in the chapter dealing with Fagin's trial at the end of the novel *Oliver Twist*.

The court was 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*, 2003, p. 441)

Philip Horne (2016) introduced Dickens' rather concerned objections written in a letter to the *Daily News* regarding 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. Dickens also used this statement again in *Oliver Twist* while narrating 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*, 2003, p. 450)

During the Victorian era, the Newgate novels had become another common source of enjoyment. They were based on biographies of famous criminals and their acts. Apart from these novels, there were also compilations summarizing the issue of criminality – *The Newgate Calendar* published in 1773; and *The New Newgate Calendar* published from 1826 until 1828. Surprising is that the imprisoned villains often become heroes to the public as they showed fascinating spectacles during their hearings and executions.

Charles Dickens mentioned *The Newgate Calendar* in the novel *Oliver Twist*. The book was owned by the Jew and readers of the novel understand he had many entertaining moments while scanning it. Once, he handed the compilation to the young Oliver and left him free for a moment being allowed to enjoy the sudden privacy.

He turned over the leaves, carelessly at first, but, lighting on a passage which attracted his attention, soon 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*, 2003, p. 164)

It has to be said that after *Oliver Twist* emerged many critics classified it as a Newgate novel. From the point of view of Charles Dickens it met a great indignation. He did not intend to idealize the London's criminals and underground (a feature the Newgate novels provided) 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 will meet with the final triumph.

### **3.7. Dickens' London**

Under the term Dickens' London, one would immediately think of crowded streets, of horse traffic leading to thousands of tons a year of an unregulated pollution caused right by horses' excrements, of narrow passages with dark grimy buildings and barracks, and of course, people of deceitful as well as compassionate character. The atmosphere of London is described with great authenticity in Dickens' works. Even nowadays, the author is able to persuade reader of his intentions especially via mastering shifts in narration. It is often a social commentary, his own view on education, industrial relations, or his concern for well-being of the nation what concerned him and what happened to be expressed through his fiction. According to Smith (2000),

A heightening and exaggeration of reality ... has the effect of making the books appear to be more real than reality itself. This quality is quite compatible with the notion of a Dickens text as a giant mirror capturing the panoramic variety and intensity of urban life." (para. 6)

London was Dickens' muse. John Hollingshead, a co-author of *Household Words*, implied, "His walks were always walks of observation, through parts of London that he wanted to study. His brain must have been like a photographic lens." (As cited in Hawes, 2007, p. 26) When he was away on his travels through America, France, or Italy he struggled greatly. Dailey (2005) claimed that London was his source of imagination and



that he called it his “magic lantern”. Most compelling evidence is that the city itself appears in almost all Dickens’ novels; with the only exception being the novel *Hard Times* set in industrial Coketown.

Charles Dickens tended to focus especially on those parts of London with which he had a personal experience. Such areas were, for instance, Camden Town (where the author lived), Holborn and Clerkenwell (with legal districts known to Dickens from years while working as lawyer’s clerk), and City of Westminster (known to him due to a position of a parliamentary reporter). Hawes (2007) also claimed that his attention equally captured areas of Seven Dials and East End with wretched poverty and criminals. Of course, London had some more agreeable areas too. Those were districts of Belgravia, Mayfair and several more parts of West End.

Dickens reflects the living conditions of England in the nineteenth century with a great credibility. “Dickens’ fictional London is figured continually as a maze, a Piranesi-like confusion of alleys, steps and courts which mirror the mysteries of social and personal life” (Smith, 2000, para. 21). Readers of the novel encounter London’s real atmosphere through Oliver entering the city.

A dirtier or wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours. There were a good many small shops; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors, ... Covered ways and yard, ... disclosed little knots of houses, where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in filth; and from several of the door-ways, great ill-looking fellows were cautiously emerging, bound, to all appearance, on no very well disposed or harmless errands. (*Oliver Twist*, 2003, p. 63)

People living in slums or close countryside areas had to walk for long hours to get to work. Walking was undoubtedly the predominant way of moving from one place to another in the nineteenth century. “By mid-century it was estimated that 200,000 people walked daily to the City; by 1866 that figure had increased to nearly three-quarters of a million” (Flanders, 2012). Walks through London, especially in the evenings, provided a great number of ideas to our author. As “walking was the norm” (Flanders, 2012) it is not a surprise that Dickens uses such motif in a great extent in his novels.

### 3.8.Covent Garden Market

Covent Garden Market, a place numerously mentioned in Dickens' works, undoubtedly belongs among his often visited places. In *Little Dorrit*, it is a location where Mr. Clennam had his lodgings.

Little Dorrit looked into a dim room, which seemed a spacious one to her, and grandly furnished. Courtly ideas of Covent Garden, as a place with famous coffee-houses, where gentlemen wearing goldlaced coats and swords had quarrelled and fought duels; costly ideas of Covent Garden, as a place where there were flowers in winter at guineas a-piece, pine-apples at guineas a pound, and peas at guineas a pint; picturesque ideas of Covent Garden, as a place where there was a mighty theatre, showing wonderful and beautiful sights to richly-dressed ladies and gentlemen, and which was for ever far beyond the reach of poor Fanny or poor uncle. (*Little Dorrit*, 2003, pp. 181-182)

The Covent Garden Market of Victorian times was a plaza with buildings in the centre of London, with colonnade and gallery and at front facing Great Russell Street. Its central avenue was occupied by dealers with expensive fruits and vegetables. Northern and southern sides held predominantly shops with small dwellings, although more stalls with vegetables and fruits were there as well. It was especially summer season when the place provided a great object of attraction to those who sought and admired such variety of crops and flowers, "whether of foreign produce or of British growth" ("Covent Garden Market," n.d.). Judith Flanders emphasized a description of London's Covent Garden Market in its typical setting.

It is 2.30 in the morning. It is still night, but it is also "tomorrow". By this hour at Covent Garden market, in the centre of London, the streets are alive. Long lines of carts and vans and costermongers' barrows are forming in the surrounding streets. Lights are being lit 'in the upper windows of public houses – not the inhabitants retiring to rest, but of active proprietors preparing ... for the new day ... The roadway is already blocked up, and the by-streets are rapidly filling.' (Flanders, 2012, para. 1)

Sadly, and typically to the Victorian era, the place did not hold only variety of colourful vegetables, fruits and flowers. It had its darker side as well. It was right Charles

Dickens who expressed its unpleasant reality.

Desolate ideas of Covent Garden, as having all those arches in it, where the miserable children in rags among whom she had just now passed, like young rats, slunk and hid, fed on offal, huddled together for warmth, and were hunted about; ... teeming ideas of Covent Garden, as a place of past and present mystery, romance, abundance, want, beauty, ugliness, fair country gardens, and foul street gutters; all confused together. (*Little Dorrit*, 2003, p. 182)

The chapter introduced main buildings and institutions connected to Dickens' works and life. The studied issue of the London's influence on author's work was supported by passages taken principally from his novels. It also followed the settled aim of presenting London as a city connected to the author's experience and clarified Dickens' intentions when picturing it. The chapter also presented information explaining why London was repeatedly a centre of his work.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

First of all the thesis briefly outlined the period and the notion of the Victorian era. It presented its partition into three distinctive periods suggested by Boris Ford, giving each its significant characteristics.

The thesis developed an issue of urbanization with its real effects on massive growth of population. As the data obtained indicated, the increase was from seventeen million to over thirty-seven million people during the reign of Queen Victoria. Even though the area of London expanded it was still seen as place with streets full of beggars, children, wanderers, street-sellers, prostitutes, and criminals. In order to illustrate the situation prevailing at that time, the thesis discussed the important events such as Great Stink and the Great Fog. It expressed the river's transformation from a sewer into one of the cleanest rivers floating through a city. It outlined its infamous effects such as diseases, deaths and criminality provided by polluted air originating from imperfect combustion of carbon dioxide. Also urban phenomena such as prostitution and murders with links to their representation in Dickens' fiction had been developed and finally, the subject of children was clarified.

The following section introduced penal institutions and buildings significantly associated with Charles Dickens. In terms of significance, there have been chosen buildings directly linked to the author's life or buildings playing a major role in his creative work. Among these buildings there were listed mainly prisons; Marshalsea where his father was incarcerated, Fleet, The Horsemonger Lane Gaol, and Newgate prison; and institutions infamous for their gruesome practices; a blacking factory where the author was working as a child and workhouses pointing out the hardship of workers. Additionally, the chapter illustrated clarifying aspects to the notion of London as the author's muse. Parts of London, recurring in Charles Dickens' novels, have been pointed out and a factor of Covent Garden Market, an often visited place by our author, has been developed.

The thesis pointed out the city's great transformation in terms of infrastructure, sewage system and rapid social change with class divergence, naturally seen as a dominating fact of modern life. The beginning of the Victorian era still represented habits and society of previous Georgian times. People were living in unimaginable conditions of dirt, fear and illnesses. Nevertheless, London continuously started to be transformed into the city of great possibilities and development, furthermore, into a financial metropolis. The nineteenth century was definitely connected with a new sewage and drain system, with

the invention of steam-powered engine, and development in industry. Under those circumstances, the city has been facing a new opportunity to become cleaner, healthier and significantly wealthier. Especially at the end of the century, blackness of streets representing the omnipresent dirt has been changed into the black colour of suits worn by financiers, bankers and civil servants.

It has been demonstrated that London was a centre of urbanization, industry, social and cultural life, and last but not least, literature. But what is left to be summarized is Dickens' genius for expression. Via isolated abuses and shortcomings of individuals he conveyed a message to the world alerting to the issues of social injustice and terrible living conditions the poor had to face. Through social commentary and use of satire he also pointed at those who considered themselves above the others. From excerpts used in the thesis the author's intention to show London with its real variety is clearly visible. He presented it as a city of contradictions where good meets evil, the poor meet the wealthy, and where hope and pure spirit always finds its satisfaction.

London has changed greatly since Dickens introduced it but what is left clear is that Victorian London was immortalized right by the author's extraordinary description. The complex unity of surroundings, urban panorama, characters and their incidents is what keeps Charles Dickens being a reputable writer for centuries.

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## SHRNUTÍ

Tato práce se zabývá tématem Londýn ve viktoriánské době a jeho ztvárnění v románech Charlese Dickense. Práce je zaměřena především na problémy vyskytující se v dané epoše a jejich vliv na úroveň životních podmínek. Dále uvádí, proč tato problematika byla tak stěžejní pro tvorbu onoho významného autora devatenáctého století. Klíčovou částí bakalářské práce je předmět budov a institucí spojených s autorovým životem. Londýn se stal Dickensovou múzou díky níž sepsal romány jako třeba Oliver Twist, Malá Dorritka, Ponurý dům a mnoho dalších. Historická fakta jsou v práci doplněna o úryvky z právě zmíněných děl za účelem nastínění viktoriánské atmosféry.