

JIHOČESKÁ UNIVERZITA V ČESKÝCH BUDĚJOVICÍCH  
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA  
ÚSTAV ANGLISTIKY

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

DICKENS'S CHARACTERS

Vedoucí práce: doc. PhDr. Ladislav Nagy, Ph.D.

Autor práce: Bc. Barbora Černošková

Studijní obor: Anglický jazyk a literatura – Španělský jazyk a literatura

Ročník: 5.

2020

Prohlašuji, že svoji bakalářskou práci jsem vypracovala samostatně, pouze s použitím pramenů a literatury uvedených v seznamu citované literatury.

Prohlašuji, že v souladu s § 47b zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. v platném znění souhlasím se zveřejněním své bakalářské práce, a to v nezkrácené podobě elektronickou cestou ve veřejně přístupné části databáze STAG provozované Jihočeskou univerzitou v Českých Budějovicích na jejích internetových stránkách, a to se zachováním autorského práva k odevzdanému textu této kvalifikační práce. Souhlasím dále s tím, aby toutéž elektronickou cestou byly v souladu s uvedeným ustanovením zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. zveřejněny posudky školitele a oponentů práce i záznam o průběhu a výsledky obhajoby kvalifikační práce. Rovněž souhlasím s porovnáním textu mé kvalifikační práce s databází kvalifikačních prací Theses.cz provozovanou Národním registrem vysokoškolských kvalifikačních prací a systémem na odhalování plagiátů.

České Budějovice, 25. července 2020

.....  
Barbora Černošková

## **Poděkování**

Ráda bych poděkovala vedoucímu své práce doc. PhDr. Ladislavu Nagyovi, Ph.D. za podnětné rady, cenné připomínky a také za vstřícnost, trpělivost a ochotu při vedení této práce.

## **Anotace**

Tato práce se zabývá postavami ve vybraných dílech Charlese Dickense. Jejím cílem je ukázat, že existují typické postavy, jakési archetypy, které se v Dickensových dílech opakují. Jsou to například chudé děti stíhané osudem, kterému nemohou vzdorovat. Tyto postavy budou analyzovány i na základě života samotného autora, poněvadž z něj vychází velká část jeho inspirace. První část práce pojednává o dobovém kontextu, ve kterém se děje románů odehrávají, dále se zabývá jazykem, kterým autor dokresluje své postavy a některými sociálními otázkami, jako například život v tzv. slumech či rozdílném postavení mužů a žen. Druhou částí je samotná typologie, která se zaměřuje především na dětské postavy, jež hrály v Dickensově tvorbě důležitou roli; dále rozebírá například postavy žen, loajálních sluhů, „dobráků“ či zločinců.

**Klíčová slova:** Charles Dickens, Viktoriánská doba, děti, postavy, typologie, chudoba, společenské třídy

## **Abstract**

This thesis deals with the characters in the chosen novels of Charles Dickens. Its aim is to show that there are some typical characters and certain archetypes that repeatedly appear in Dickens's books, such as poor children draped in a destiny they cannot resist. These characters are analyzed based on Dickens's life because it is a major source of his inspiration. The first part of the thesis deals with the period in which the novels take place, the language of the characters that is often used to enliven them, and with social questions, such as life in so-called slums or the different roles of men and women in society. The second part consists of the typology itself with the focus on children characters which played an important part in Dickens's work. It also examines female characters, loyal servants, poor good guys, or criminals.

**Key words:** Charles Dickens, Victorian period, children, characters, typology, poverty, social classes

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	7
1. Dickens and the Victorian World .....	10
1.1. From Romantic to Victorian Period .....	10
1.2. Two Sides of Prosperous England .....	11
1.3. Crime, Slums and Reform Bills.....	12
1.4. Gender and Class.....	13
1.5. Victorian Literary World .....	15
2. Dickens's Characters .....	16
2.1. The World of Charles Dickens .....	16
2.2. Language in Dickens .....	18
3. The Typology of Characters .....	21
3.1. Children .....	21
3.2. Portrait of a Young Lady .....	26
3.3. Loyal Servants.....	30
3.4. Stiff People .....	32
3.5. Foxes and Evils.....	34
3.5.1. The Sly One, or the Fox .....	34
3.5.2. Pure Evil and Gothic Imagery .....	36
3.6. Poor Good Guy and Nagging Shrew .....	39
3.7. Prisoners and the Law .....	42
Conclusion.....	45
The works cited .....	48

## Introduction

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an opinion can be heard that Charles Dickens's novels are too long and dull. This century might resemble a futurist painting: so many events are happening simultaneously, people are constantly multitasking, and our communication became an online shortcut – the briefer, the better. People seem rather reserved and restrained, not willing to show their true emotions. The Victorian era, in which Dickens lived, was reserved as well. However, he did not let its stiffness swallow him: he fought against it with his creativity and imagination.

He saw the world more vividly than other people, and reacted to what he saw with laughter, horror, indignation – and sometimes sobs. He stored up his experiences and reactions as raw material to transform and use in his novels, and was so charged with imaginative energy that he rendered nineteenth-century England crackling, full of truth and life, with his laughter, horror and indignation – and sentimentality. (Tomalin xlvi-xlvii)

And this is exactly what this century needs: more laughter, more indignation, more truth and life. Sometimes it seems that we have even lost the capacity to sit quietly and enjoy a small piece of a proper novel. This is where Dickens proves helpful: reading his novels can get us out of never-ending shortcuts, calm our restless minds and fill our hearts with vivid emotions.

This thesis deals with the typology of Dickens's characters. It is based on the presupposition that there are certain types that repeatedly appear in his novels. In one Italian type of drama, called *Comedia de' ll arte*, we may find specific types of characters, like *Pantalone*, *Arlecchino*, *Zanni*, etc. These types have their own typical qualities and with some slight variations, they reappear in every play. Something similar can be observed in Dickens's books. Although he does not have these exact types, there are characters that with slight variations appear repeatedly in his novels. The reason for this is that a major source of inspiration for his work comes from his personal life and experience<sup>1</sup>, which is seeping through every one of his books. Many situations described in his stories are ones that he personally experienced. However, the purpose of this thesis

---

<sup>1</sup> This opinion is based on the comparison of his biographies (by Tomalin, Wilson, Wing, e.g.) and his novels.

is not to retell Dickens's whole life story but to show the important snippets that influenced him and are reflected in the characters that were chosen for this work.

The focus will be placed on children characters. Dickens's biographies show us that his youth was so painful for him that he kept returning to it. Also, the position of children in Victorian society was somewhat antithetical: on one hand, children were the embodiment of the good and the pure and on the other, they were used for hard work in inhumane conditions. All of this is reflected in his novels. Dickens believed that he could help them as a writer who draws attention to their condition. (Tomalin 44) Other types of characters worth mentioning are, among others, young ladies, loyal servants, prisoners, poor good guys, and nagging shrews. Although some of his characters are criticized for their superficiality, exaggeration, or lack of depth, his novels are full of life – as much as Dickens himself. He was so full of life, that it was impossible for his friends and supporters to imagine that he could die. (Tomalin 399) He did die in the end, but not entirely; his imagination, energy and soul live on in his stories.

The thesis thus has two main focal points: the first one is a typology of characters based on Dickens's life and experience with a focus on children characters. The second is to show that Dickens's work has something to say even to a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience.

The first part of this thesis deals with the Victorian period, an era which put an emphasis on social class and status. This is something that had a huge and inevitable impact on Dickens's writing; each of his books represents a miniature of the Victorian world. Two sides of Victorian prosperity will be discussed as well: the industrial revolution on one hand and poverty and life in slums on the other. Also, topics of class and gender will be addressed briefly. Then, we will move on to some characteristics of Dickens's world, including the use of language and after that, we will present the typology of characters.

Concerning the bibliography, this thesis is primarily based on chosen Dickens's novels, for example *The Pickwick Papers*, *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, and others. Secondary sources include some of his biographies; *Charles Dickens: A Life* by Claire Tomalin and *The World of Charles Dickens* by Angus Wilson. Tomalin gives us a detailed description of Dickens's daily life, thanks to which we can better understand his motives and maybe the imperfections of his work, while Wilson brings some interesting insights and comments on what his novels bring us, show us or for example how Dickens stands amongst other authors. Neither Tomalin nor Wilson stay uncritical:

among other remarks, both criticize his portrayals of women, but despite that, they belong to his admirers. Some critics argue that authors and their life should be left out of the interpretation of a book, such as Roland Barthes in *The Death of the Author*. While this is an interesting concept of close reading, focusing only on the book itself and leaving out the authors' life, in Dickens's case it would be a great loss because it is his biography that often sheds a light on his motivation as a writer and greatly enriches the interpretation of his work.

# 1. Dickens and the Victorian World

## 1.1. From Romantic to Victorian Period

Before we start talking about characters themselves, it is appropriate to say something about the world they live in. Charles Dickens (7.2.1812 – 9.6.1870) was born when the period of Romanticism was in its last stage. According to Marc Conner, although Dickens was not a romantic author, he was indisputably influenced by this era. The notion of romanticism is admitted for example in *David Copperfield*, Dickens's most autobiographical book, when he talks about his *undisciplined heart*. The stress on emotion, feelings, and nature, so typical for Romanticism, can be sometimes seen in Dickens's work. Moreover, Wordsworth's *recollection in tranquillity* is important for the way he worked. Romantic novels also use gothic imagery, by which Dickens was fascinated; Conner gives as an example the mysteries of *Bleak House* or "the storm at the end of *David Copperfield* at Yarmouth that takes the lives of Ham and Steerforth". (Conner) The influence of the gothic novel will be discussed later in the typology itself.

However, romanticism has only a marginal influence on Dickens's writing; he is known as an author of the Victorian Era, which is rather the age of realism. The literal meaning of the term "Victorianism" implies the dates of Queen Victoria's life (1837–1901) and it is the age of a highly structured and highly mannered society. It is a period of opposites that push one against another. The industrial revolution that culminated in The Great Exhibition in 1851 and that made Britain a great empire contrasted with the terrible poverty of its people, who often lived in slums. Religion and faith played an important role in people's lives, but there were also new findings in science and evolution. On the one hand, Victorian society is very conservative and sometimes even repressive, cruel, and patriarchal, as Dickens shows us in the example of the tyrannical Mr. Murdstone (*David Copperfield*). On the other hand, it is the age of great imagination, creativity, and play, which is represented for example by Mr. Micawber (*David Copperfield*). (Conner)

It is also the era of doubts and questions about society and its structures, religion, women's status, gender in general, sexuality and also the era of the great questioners, whose books influenced the age: Charles Darwin (*On the Origin of Species*) – the questioner of religion and the place of human beings in creation, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (*Communist Manifesto*) – the questioners of social structures and class, and by

Friedrich Nietzsche (*The Birth of Tragedy*) – the questioner of power.<sup>2</sup> It is also the Freudian era: there are several studies that say that Dickens is a psychoanalytic novelist. (Conner)

## 1.2. Two Sides of Prosperous England

In Great Britain, there was the expansion of cities, industrial development and a chain of revolutions, of which the ultimate is the “Industrial Revolution”. The gradual process of this industrial development, which already started in the previous century, changed Britain throughout the nineteenth century and caused the division of England. The industrial north was endowed with cotton mills and iron works, while the south was the centre of commerce. It was dominated by London with its population of over a million (more than a third of England’s urban population) at the beginning and four million by the end of the century. But industrial development was not only a matter of cities; 8 000 miles of railways linked Britain from Aberdeen to Plymouth and altered the English landscape along with the concept of time and space. This also enabled a rapid distribution of books and periodicals across the nation and an extension of libraries, which used trains to transport books. (James 11-12)

But there was also the other side of reality found in rural areas. The industrial boom caused an agricultural depression, which was further intensified by game laws and enclosures. Cottagers had to emigrate unless they wanted to become exploited labourers. Many people lived in terrible conditions: not only was there massive unemployment, lockouts and strikes, but many people also suffered from diseases like cholera. (James 13)

Dickens used to walk with his father through the streets of London and what he saw influenced his future work:

The streets through which he walked beside his father were crowded, noisy and dirty. There was smoke in the air and filth on the ground, but also excitement and bustle. Carts, horses and pigs were part of the scene (...) and among the throng of men and women there were a great many children, mostly poor, ragged and bare-foot. The streets were their playground (...) and their workplace too. (Tomalin 17)

---

<sup>2</sup> Also, Charles Lyell and his *Principles of Geology*.

During the Napoleonic wars, Britain was selling clothes, guns, bread and other supplies to armies. After the declaration of peace in 1815 such goods were no longer needed, so many people lost their jobs. The unemployment was further intensified by about 300 000 men from Britain's army and navy who were also in need of a job after the war. In response to cheap imported corn, landowning farmers pushed the government to protect their locally grown grains and their selling price. Not only did the cost of bread rise, but so did the price of everything else, while wages remained the same. Many people went hungry and began to hunt wild animals in the forests, but the woods soon became enclosed and hunting was banned. Being caught hunting or stealing was punished by hanging, which became another reality of the already miserable living conditions. The New Poor Law from 1834 was meant to help the needy, but the government provided too little money, and peoples' livelihood further deteriorated. Yet, the worst of it all were the crowded and dirty workhouses, which were lacking in food. Starving workers started early in the morning and ended late at night, and men and women worked separately, so families were divided. In search of a better life, many people left the countryside and tried their luck in towns. For this reason, towns grew into cities and many cities doubled (or grew even more) in size. In 1820, the population of London reached 1,25 million. However, the conditions of workers did not improve, which led to a chain of small riots in which several people died. One of the things that helped the situation was the impact of Dickens's books, which treated the topic of the poor and their conditions. (McDowall 132-134) The transition from rural to urban is depicted in the microcosm of *Great Expectations*, where Pip leaves the rural world of Joe Gargery and moves to industrial London. (Conner)

### **1.3. Crime, Slums and Reform Bills**

Another unpleasant consequence of poverty was crime. In response, a regular police force was established in London in 1829 and in other towns and cities over the following thirty years. (McDowall 136) Again, the problem of crime is well portrayed in Dickens's work, especially in *Oliver Twist*, where the main character becomes a part of a group of criminals; thieves, murderers and a prostitute. Besides their routine, readers can see their living conditions and become visitors in their abode, a place of "crazy wooden galleries (...) with holes from which to look upon the slime beneath; windows, broken and patched (...) rooms so small, so filthy, so confined, that the air would seem too tainted even for

the dirt and squalor which they shelter (...) dirt-besmeared walls and decaying foundations". (Dickens)

This passage from *Oliver Twist* provides a proper description of the so-called slums. These mainly became a home for drinkers and thieves. They were built around dead-end courtyards and were originally designed for access to the stables. Windows were usually only on one side or sometimes there were none. A major problem was a lack of clean water and sanitation: there was only one outdoor water tap for hundreds of people and no more than two toilets. It is not surprising that such places were full of diseases like cholera, etc. (Flanders)

Although the police force was somewhat successful in diminishing the crime, a reform to improve the social conditions was needed anyway. Not only the working class but also the middle class called for a change. Thus, three Reform Bills that changed the electoral system were passed in 1832, 1867 and 1884. Due to these bills, the representation in Parliament was redistributed so it represented the citizens more accurately and also voting rights were extended to the middle class, working men and agricultural labourers, making them no longer the property of the privileged. Women, however, were not allowed to vote until the Act of 1918. (Everet)

#### **1.4. Gender and Class**

Concerning the topic of women, their position was particularly dire. Although they became a companion to their husband, we certainly cannot speak about equality since it was the man who was the head of the family. Also, women were recommended to work only if necessary and their role was mainly to be a good mother and wife. (McDowall 137) Basically, men and women were meant for different things. The former was strong, independent, belonged in the public sphere and participated in politics and in paid work whereas the latter was weak, dependant, destined for the private sphere, households and raising children. (Steinbach) As we will see later, Dickens's view of women was flawed as well as their portrayals in his novels. Part of the reason might be that men spent most of their leisure time with other men and also, they lived in the intellectual world from which women were usually excluded. (Tomalin 84) However, his ideal of woman did not differ much from the Victorian one; a good but rather passive housewife, mother and someone to entertain his friends. Such portrayals will be discussed more in the following chapters.

As regards classes, there were three: the working class, the middle class, and the upper class. The working-class people were the lowest on the social ladder and they worked as factory labourers, craftsmen, coach makers or also in agriculture and domestic service. Their rights were limited, and it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that they could vote. As mentioned above, by the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, their working conditions were terrible. However, they were able to create friendly societies for mutual help for loans, illnesses, and burials. Also, they had cheap working-class press and a footballing culture. (Burn 167-168)

The middle class experienced a significant growth during the nineteenth century. Not only were they the small merchants, traders, and farmers but also, they could work in the law, medicine, civil and diplomatic services, banking, navy, army or the Church. Often, they were “self-made” men, who originally came from the poor environment. Some of the mid-class families were able to send their sons to fee-paying schools, where they got a good education and training in leadership in hard conditions. (McDowall 140) Such schools are portrayed in Dickens’s novel; for example, the academies of Dr. Blimber or Creakle.

The upper class, or the aristocracy, had a powerful position amongst other classes. Their living conditions were the best; they did not need to work since they received the regular income from the money saved by the previous generations. Also, they got the best education and tutors. Some of them were in charge of large industries, for example the mining or the shipping industry. (“Social Class During the Victorian England”)

In Dickens’s novels, we can often see toxic envy between classes. People from the middle class are trying to reach or copy the ones from the upper class (e.g. Mr. Carker or Joseph Bagstock) and they represent the same for the people from the lower class (e.g. Uriah Heep). We can often see that power is appealing almost like Bilbo’s ring and so the characters turn into Gollum in their effort to get it. Moreover, if they are malevolent enough, they exercise power over everyone they can. Therefore, children, especially orphans, become a common target for the corrupted and envious ones from the lower classes. The harsh treatment of Oliver Twist in the workhouse, undertaker’s house or even amongst Fagin’s gang might be a good example.

## 1.5. Victorian Literary World

In case of the literary world, for better understanding, we have to go back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the age of the rise of the novel as the only secular literature form (both lyric and epic poetry, as well as drama, developed from religious rituals). It was also connected with the rise of the middle class, the increase of the literacy, mass production and therefore the rise of the newspapers and journalism all of which led to the boom of the readership. Thus, the following Victorian era then was defined by its novelists. That was really important for Dickens; since he was dependant on his weekly instalments for the newspaper and his readership, he could not have chosen a better age to be born in. What is important is the shift from the aesthetic of romance to the aesthetic of realism; the novel becomes the document of society; it examines society under the microscope as if it was science. Unlike a romantic focus on one's self, in Victorian literature the focus is on the relationship between the self and society and finding one's place in the world. Also, there was the thought that the novel could serve as a kind of mediator of tensions within the society and so that it could explain what is wrong and how to deal with it. The important genres that we can also find amongst Dickens's novels were *bildungsroman* that focuses on the character's development and *künstlerroman*, which deals with the portrait of the artist. *David Copperfield*, for example, belongs to both of these genres. (Conner)

## 2. Dickens's Characters

### 2.1. The World of Charles Dickens

As we will see, the literary world of Charles Dickens is closely related to the real world of Charles Dickens. Since he was a very sensitive person with not exactly the best but definitely interesting background, his personal experience must have reflected in his work. However, we are not going to write down his biography from birth to death, but rather, we will examine the impact of the important events of his life on his characters. Partly, we will let his characters to tell us the story.

As it was already mentioned, Dickens provides us with the microcosm of the Victorian world. Unlike Hardy, who usually depicts the countryside, he was an author of the city. As for many Victorian writers, London became a huge source of inspiration.

The rapid pace, variety and restless movement of the city became reflected in its literature. (...) With its contrast of wealth and poverty, London provided a social and moral map for the novelist. (...) In a city of contrasts, *Oliver Twist* could have trotted in ten minutes from the respectability of Mr Brownlow's Bloomsbury residence to the dark alley-ways of Safron Hill where Dickens placed Fagin's den, just below the present Holborn Viaduct. (James 99-100)

There was the idea of the so-called "self-made men", who worked their way up from poverty, amongst whom Dickens himself belonged. "Through his own energy and exceptional gifts he had raised himself out of poverty. But he neither forgot it nor turned aside from the poverty about him." (Tomalin xliii) In different stages of his life, he met people from different social environments. Therefore, it is possible to meet with people from all of the classes; thieves, prostitutes, murderers and homeless people next to the manual workers, small businessmen, bureaucrats, politicians and property owners. In the preface of *Oliver Twist*, Dickens says that there were objections to his choice of "the most criminal and degraded of London's population" (5) However, he says that there is no reason why such people may not teach us a moral lesson. Moreover, he had never met before a portrait of a thief which would be real. There is always something good or satirical about them. Therefore, he decided to paint them in "all their deformity, in all their wretchedness; to show them as they really are, skulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life (...) which would be a service to society. (...) It is useless to discuss whether the conduct and character of the girl seems natural or unnatural, probable or improbable,

right or wrong. IT IS TRUE. Every man who has watched these melancholy shades of life knows it to be so.” (Dickens, “*Oliver Twist*” 6-7) Furthermore, there are many characters from the lower social classes or even from the bottom of society who prove to be morally superior to the educated and wealthy ones. For example Cpt. Cuttle who openheartedly welcomes Florence after Dombey has kicked her out from her home, Nancy, who, in the end, decides to help Oliver, or the family and friends of Sissy Jupe, whose bonds surpasses those of Gradgrind’s family.

Another important feature of Dickens’s world is the injustice that comes from the class-driven Victorian world. People from the upper class had more privileges than those from the other two, as we can see for example in *Hard Times*, when Stephen Blackpool wants to divorce his wife. At first, he is told that there is no chance for him and that a labourer like him has no right to ask this. Basically, he is told that this law enabling divorces is only for the rich. Almost everything is ruled by classes, as if nothing else matters. If one is born into the worst conditions, they have a little chance to change their destiny. We can look at poor Oliver Twist, who was born in a workhouse and since that time he was treated very poorly. And practically, he could not do anything about that; being good did not help and misbehaviour made everything even worse. Ironically, what saved him, in the end, was his noble origin.

Another and somehow funny feature of Dickens’s world that will be mentioned here is the artificial coincidence that often happens in Dickens’s novels. Strange as it may seem, the murderer who is helped by Pip in *Great Expectations* happened to have a huge amount of money and he decided to give it to Pip because of the small amount of food he gave him years ago. Moreover, he turned out to be the father of Estella. Or for example in *Oliver Twist*, we find out that one of the thieves of the gang by which he is caught is his brother, and that in the house he was supposed to rob lives his half-sister. And there are even more of them, but we let it for the reader to find out.

Some critics argue about whether Dickens is *the laughter-maker*, *the spine-chiller* or the *tear-jerker*. Wilson concludes this dispute to be pointless because it is the combination of play and terror that is typical for Dickens’s world; he is able to provoke all of these emotions and some of them even at the same time. There is always the shadow of death penetrating bright or funny scenes. “(...) the essence of Dickens’s world – its delight

charged with terror (...), its reality threatened by deception; its childhood ringed by mortality; its absurd, hilarious fancies proposed with gravity.” (Wilson 11-12)

The last feature of Dickens’s world to be mentioned is the omnipresent narrator, who hardly stays neutral. He is ironic, sarcastic, making comments on his character’s behaviour and sometimes, he gives hints about what will happen. Besides that, Dickens’s reader is most fascinated by his compassion. His own experience, feelings of abandonment, shame and loneliness got imprinted deep down into his mind and heart, so he was able to identify with the outcast. Because of this he can be put amongst the writers such as Dostoyevsky, Gissing, and London. (Wilson 58-59) Wilson also brings an interesting insight when he compares the worlds of Dostoyevsky and Dickens. Whereas the latter experienced hard times only as a child and kept returning to those memories, the former suffered from extreme human misery also as an adult, therefore, he did not focus on the child suffering only and his world, although more repulsive, is more universal and mature. The obsession with childhood is marked by Wilson as a primary defect of Dickens’s world. The second one is the lack of sympathy with or understanding for women, which was probably caused by the relationship with his mother and the deception of his first love for Maria Beadnell. (59) These issues will be discussed later.

## 2.2. Language in Dickens

Dickens and language: one of the great love-matches of literary history, with a bottomless dowry to boot. It often seems as if the untapped reserves of the English vernacular were simply lying waiting for Dickens to inherit them – by marrying their riches to his story-teller’s instinct. (Garett 215)

First, we will look at the names that Dickens gave to his characters; he uses a transparent allegory to give hints about their dispositions. Often, he operates with *phonotactics*: “the rules or patterns governing the combination of sounds in a given language”. (Ingham 126) Therefore, Chuzzlewit is the combination that is reminiscent of *puzzle* and *halfwit*, and that makes Martin someone who needs to be enlightened. Mr. Carker’s typical behaviour is being troublesome, which is hinted from the word *to cark*, Murdstone is probably half *murderer* and half *heart of stone*, etc.

Besides describing their disposition by name, Dickens uses various forms of speech to indicate the speakers’ class or the area they belong to. Therefore, we may come across the frequent use of Cockney or northern and eastern forms of speech. There are certain

spelling indications; for Cockney, there is *v* instead of *w* or vice versa and the loss of the initial *h*. Both Wellers are typical Cockney speakers. (Ingham 128-129)

“Vell, there’s somethin’ in that,” said Sam. “If your gov’ner had been a coachman,” reasoned Mr. Weller, “do you s’pose as that ‘ere jury ‘ud ever ha’ convicted him, s’posin’ it possible (...).” “Wot you mean (...) nobody takes advantage on ‘em, p’raps?” said Sam.” (Dickens, “The Pickwick Papers” 660)

Another dialect used by Dickens’s characters (e.g. the Peggotys’) is East Anglian, which is known for using certain word forms, such as: *fust* for fist, *arks* for asks or *bahd* for bird.

“Not along of my being heer, ma’am, I hope?” said Mr. Peggotty. “Unless my wits is gone a bahd’s neezing” – by which Mr. Peggotty meant to say, bird’s-nesting – (...). (Dickens, “David Copperfield” 591)

The vocabulary of the thieves’ slang in *Oliver Twist* was found by Dickens in the glossary of “Flash language”, which includes words like *crack* (burgle), *swag* (loot), *conkey* (informer), etc. Interestingly, Dickens avoided the usage of the flash term *oliver*, which means moon, keeping it for his main character, who represents the good (and good is associated with light).

Also, the dialect speakers’ syntax shows poor control. There are double negatives, the use of *and* instead of other links as *but* or *if* and non-standard forms like *know’d*, *a-going*, *draw’d*, etc. All of these show that the speaker is socially and intellectually inferior. (Ingham 129) We will see more examples in the typology itself.

To complete the readers’ vision of characters’ speech, Dickens also uses the so called “visible and audible oddities”, which includes forms of body language, aspects of voice quality, vocabulary, sentence structure and other effects. Some of them we have already mentioned. What we would like to highlight here is the narrator’s descriptions of characters’ temporary mood or their dispositions. Therefore, “the innocent inventor Doyce in *Little Dorrit* (...) speaks ‘in that quite deliberate manner, and in that undertone, which is often observable in mechanics who consider and adjust with great nicety (...)’, Steerforth’s wily servant Littimer ‘makes no use of superlatives’ (...), the jealous Headstone (...) is heard ‘grinding his words slowly out, as though they came from a rusty mill’.” (Ingham 127) Due to these descriptions of visible and audible qualities, a reader gets a better and more vivid image almost as if he could hear the characters speaking.

It is interesting that Cockney and the non-standard forms were seen as inferior. However, many of Dickens's characters that are therefore marked by their way of speech as inferior are in fact often morally superior to those who speak the standard form; for example, Stephen Blackpool or Cpt. Cuttle. Furthermore, there are even characters who should be using some dialect but they do not. Lizzie Hexam from *Our Mutual Friend* is a working class woman and she is expected to use a substandard form like her father. However, Dickens decided to "show an integrity and selflessness (...) and dissociate her from the vulgarity implied by Cockney". (Ingham 130) Similarly, Oliver Twist, who grew up in a workhouse and then wandered the world, encountering people from lower classes, speaks like a noble man, which may seem illogical.

Regarding the narrator, there is sometimes the notion of a mock-heaviness, for example in the opening scene of *Oliver Twist*. Oliver is born with the assistance of a drunken surgeon and nurse to a pauper woman who dies not very long after the childbirth. Such a scene is described with "the pompous exertions of adult discourse counterpoint a birth scene to suggest the human struggle, which the newborn hero is slow to accept, for there was 'considerable difficulty in inducing Oliver to take upon himself the office of respiration – a troublesome practice, but one which custom has rendered necessary to our easy existence'". (Garrett 216)

### 3. The Typology of Characters

#### 3.1. Children

The major source of inspiration comes from Dickens's childhood. It influenced him so much that we meet many children throughout his work. *Oliver Twist* was the first novel in the history of English literature that had a child as the main character. In his lecture *Charles Dickens and the 19th-century British Novel*, Marc Conner talks about so-called echo chamber of Charles Dickens because when it comes to children, there are always echoes from Dickens's own life; the feelings of abandonment, and the sense of childhood as the wonderful innocence on one hand and the terrible suffering on the other. (Conner) Now we will briefly examine Dickens's childhood, so we can understand where such feelings come from.

His first childhood memories, as well as the memories of David Copperfield from Kent or Chatham, were seen as the idyll time of his life. Young Charles used to play with his two sisters and neighbour's children amongst hills and farmlands and for the first time, he fell in love with his little friend Lucy. His family life was blessed with love and security; his mother would teach him to read and would take him to see a royal carriage passing through town, his father had a stable job. He enjoyed studying and he was his teacher's favourite pupil. (Tomalin 10-15)

However, such pleasant times were to end. As we will discuss later, Dickens's family had several money issues. Hence the young and intelligent Charles, who was keen on studying and reading (the same as for David Copperfield, amongst his favourite books, belong novels such as *Gil Blas*, *Don Quixote*, the *Vicar of Wakefield* or *Robinson Crusoe* (Wing 2)), had to start working in Warren's shoe-blackening factory with common men and boys. This was when he realized, he was just a small lonely boy, underfed, wandering the streets of London without anyone to help, encourage or support him. Even after a long time, it was hard for him to visit all of these places that reminded him of such hard times. Soon after, his father was removed to Marshalsea debtor's prison together with his mother and siblings. Since Charles had to work, he was not obliged to live in prison as well as his sister Fanny, who studied at The Royal Academy of Music. Instead, he lived with another three unwanted children in Mrs. Roylance's house (this establishment is portrayed in *Dombey and Son* as the Brighton household of Mrs. Pipchin). Sundays he liked

the most because this was the only day he could spend together with Fanny and his family at the Marshalsea Prison. (Wilson 51-53)

When one reads Dickens's biographies, they must feel how painful his childhood was. It links him with many of his children characters like Oliver, Nell, Florence, David, etc. John Forster said that his fictional children were nothing else than his very self. (Tomalin 26) Therefore, many similarities with his life can be followed in his novels.

First, we will look at the child labour that is well-portrayed in *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*. As well as young Dickens, David Copperfield, a well-read and very intelligent boy, is taken out of school after his mother's death and forced to work in a wine-bottling warehouse ("When the empty bottles ran short, there were labels to be pasted on full ones, or corks to be fitted into them (...). All this work was my work (...)." (Dickens, "David Copperfield" 136)) for a minimum wage with the sons of bargemen, firemen or watermen.

No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sank into this companionship; compare these henceforth everyday associates with those of my happy childhood – not to say Steerforth, (...); and felt my hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed into my bosom. (136)

Such feelings expressed through his most autobiographical character were probably the ones that Dickens felt during his labour period. The resemblance with Dickens's life is even more accurate due to the fact that after work David often pays visits to his friend's - Mr. Micawber's family in prison. (Similar theme may be seen in *Little Dorrit*. Amy Dorrit goes from the prison every day to earn money for her family and comes back in the evening. This topic will be discussed more later.)

The injustice and horror of child labour in the Victorian world are also depicted in *Oliver Twist*.

"Well! You have come here to be educated, and taught a useful trade", said the red-faced gentleman (...). "So you'll begin to pick oakum tomorrow morning at six o'clock." (...) For the combination of both these blessings in one simple process of picking oakum (...) Oliver hurried away (...), on a rough hard bed, he sobbed himself to sleep. What a noble illustration of the tender laws of England! They let paupers go to sleep! (31)

The irony and sarcastic note of the narrator suggests Dickens's attitude towards child exploitation for hard work in warehouses and factories. By such depictions, he wanted to show the other side of prosperous England and make people realize how terribly children could be treated. As mentioned earlier, there was a sharp contrast between wealthy people and paupers and therefore, children from poor families or orphans had to work, and they were usually getting the worst jobs possible, for example chimney sweeping which almost became Oliver's destiny. (Also, they usually had to work from Monday to Saturday and got minimum wage. David Copperfield works in the wine-bottling warehouse for a shilling a day, surviving basically on bread and milk.) (140)

“It's a nasty trade,” said Mr. Limbkins (...). “Young boys have been smothered in chimneys before now,” (...). “That's acause they damped the straw afore they lit it in the chimbley to make 'em come down agin,” said Gamfield; “that's all smoke (...) it only sinds him to sleep, and that's wot he likes. Boys is wery obstinit, and wery lazy (...). It's human too, (...) if they've stuck in the chimbley, roasting their feet makes 'em struggle to hextricate theirselves.”<sup>3</sup> (Dickens “Oliver Twist” 39-40)

As well as Dickens, both Oliver and David suffered from loneliness while wandering aimlessly through the streets after they had escaped from the place where they were forced to work. Here we get to the important attribute of children characters. A happy childhood sounds almost like an oxymoron in Dickens's world; rather, they suffer from alienation from their beloved (if they have one), from the society and from what we can call a decent life. It does not matter from which class they come and whether they are rich or poor. There is always an obstacle that separates them from the happiness and this obstacle is usually emotional deprivation. Interestingly, although he felt compassion for his children characters, Dickens's early treatment of them was as if they were puppets, passive figures and mere creatures acted upon. (Wilson 205-206) We watch a malnourished and terrified Oliver, crying in the corner of the parish, or Pip, who is scared of his selfish and heartless sister. We read about David who lost his mother and became an orphan in an unfriendly environment. We simply cannot understand how Mr. Dombey can constantly reject the warm heart of his daughter as if she did not exist.

---

<sup>3</sup> Here we can see another example of Cockney.

“Papa! Speak to me, dear Papa!” (...) She was close before him with extended arms, but he fell back. “What is the matter? (...) What has frightened you?” If anything had frightened her, it was the face he turned upon her. (...) There was not one touch of tenderness (...), interest, parental recognition or relenting in it. (...) But love is quick to know when it is spurned and hopeless: and hope died of hers (...). “Oh, dear Di <sup>4</sup>! Love me for his sake!” (Dickens, “*Dombey and Son*” 277-279)

What is interesting about the portrayal of Florence is that there is something like a duality of portraying a child and a woman. As we will see later, Dickens did not understand women well. Therefore, we see the typical portrait of a suffering child full of emotions and thoughts and later, the plain picture of a passive and obedient young girl.

Going back to topics such as poverty, orphaned children but also childhood death, drunkenness, rape, and seduction, Dickens was not the only one to cover them since they were typical Victorian themes. Therefore, “the happy families in Dickens’s novels are far outnumbered by the orphans, lonely children and oppressive parents.” (James 78). Despite the terrible circumstances they are experiencing, most of his child characters are innocent, preserving their pure souls, while being the ones to often stay uncorrupted. Dickens wanted “to show (...) the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance and triumphing at last.” (James 156)

It is known from the times of ancient drama that a pure and innocent soul cannot suffer infinite injustice. If it were so, there would not be any hope left. The same applies to Dickens’s children. They always break through the hard times; find a home and someone to love them. As seen above in the extract from *Dombey and Son*, the narrator makes us feel compassion for these children, as Dickens probably felt himself. According to Wilson, his biggest desire was to wake the child in the parents, so they could return to the time of their first toys. There is the intuitive tone at one level of Dickens’s writing and rational and didactic at another. However, “only the intuitive life can make a deadened materialistic world flower again”. (Wilson 15) And this is what Dickens’s children teach us. For example, when little Florence finally succeeds in gaining her father’s love, she gives us proof that her natural and intuitive love is able to win over pride and materialism.

---

<sup>4</sup> Diogenes, the dog of Florence.

Oliver Twist stays a child during the whole book, however, in some of Dickens's novels his characters grow up; such novels are called 'bildungsroman' (i.e. *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*). Most of his child characters stay pure in their heart and innocent even as adults. As we mentioned earlier Dickens uses language as a tool to highlight such qualities, which is most noticeable in the case of Oliver Twist, an orphaned boy who grew up in a workhouse. We may feel a little discrepancy between his language and the environment he came from. Although this uneducated boy works with an undertaker and then ends up amongst thieves, he speaks and behaves, as Wilson points out, with absolute gentility. Oliver represents an image of humanity constantly dominated by external forces. (Wilson 131) He also awakens the memories of childhood in the reader, which is usually remembered as the time of innocence and the first fears of demons and monsters hidden under our beds. Such demons are represented by Fagin and his gang. Nevertheless, not all of Dickens's child characters are alike. There is an exception to the idealized childhood that gets broken in *Great Expectations*; the main character Pip becomes egoistic in search of a better and luxurious life to be worthy of Estella and he despises Joe, one of the few people who always cared about him and also he loses the hand of Biddy. (James 171)

It was already mentioned that the narrator in Dickens is sometimes ironic or sarcastic. Also, he often expresses sympathy for his characters, especially for children. "Poor Oliver!" (Dickens, "Oliver Twist" 31) comments the narrator, when the members of the board decided about his future. We can also imply his sympathy from the way he describes Oliver's states of mind.

He only cried bitterly all day; and when the long, dismal night came on, he spread his little hands before his eyes to shut out the darkness, and crouching in the corner, tried to sleep (...) drawing himself closer and closer to the wall, as if to feel even its cold hard surface were a protection in the gloom loneliness which surrounded him. (37)

Part of the reason, why he probably could not help himself expressing sorrow for "his children" besides his hypersensitivity, sentimentality and indignation at the current workhouse situation is that it was in fact sorrow for his younger self. The period of his life spent at Warren's, while his family was living in prison, affected him as well as the attitude of his mother, who would have left him working there even after the family was set free.

### 3.2. Portrait of a Young Lady

If there was something that Dickens probably did not understand (and portray) well it was women.<sup>5</sup> However, the reasons for this are obvious; the flawed portrayals that he offers us are influenced by the flawed relationships he had with the most important women of his life. First of all, his selfish mother, who insisted that young Charles continue working in a factory instead of allowing him to get a proper education. Secondly, the unfulfilled love for Maria Beadnell that haunted him even as an elderly man. Lastly, his dysfunctional marriage and the women gang of his wife's family. All of these are the reasons, why there are more women characters that are warped, idealized or foolish, rather than the competent ones.

Now we will look closer to his love life. First of all, we will shortly examine his big but unfulfilled love to Maria Beadnell, whom he met when he was just seventeen. He immediately fell in love with her, but her parents disapproved of the relationship. Although she exchanged several letters with Dickens, she was rather noncommittal and really left a mark and probably some scars in Dickens's mind. Later, she even became a model for Dora Spenlow (*David Copperfield*) and Flora Finching (*Little Dorrit*). (Wilson 100-103) As well as Copperfield, Dickens wandered many a night past her house as a sort of tribute to her (although she had no idea) even if it meant for him to arrive home early in the morning. After her rejection, he kept writing to her, telling her that he could never love anyone else. Nevertheless, he could not forgive her rejection and later, he blamed her for becoming a cold-hearted and reserved man. (Tomalin 45-46)

Another woman who influenced Dickens's writing and the way he portrayed women was his wife and the mother of his ten children, Catherine Hogarth. The marriage was not happy; Catherine was jealous of his work and the time he spent on writing as well as of the society he became a part of when he became famous. Dickens, on the other hand, was rather authoritarian and tried to make her more disciplined, which only led to the opposite. (Wilson 105-107) Another reason for their separation might be Dickens's secret relationship with the young actress Ellen Ternan.<sup>6</sup> There were also rumours about him having an affair with his sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth, but they had no factual basis. So after

---

<sup>5</sup> Such opinion is shared by Dickens's critics and biographers, e.g. Angus Wilson, Claire Tomalin, John Wilson and also by his daughter Katey Dickens.

<sup>6</sup> This relationship is described in the book *The Invisible Woman* by Claire Tomalin.

approximately 20 years of unhappiness, quarrels and legal threats from the Hogarth family, the couple finally split up. (Simkin)

According to Wilson, all of this brought consequences; Dickens sorted women into categories such as half girl half angel ones, vain or silly ones, dangerous ones or thrifty housekeepers. Wilson also adds that although there are many different types of women in Dickens's world, there is none that would possess "the true dignity of a whole body and a whole mind". (103)

The first type to be discussed is the half-angelic woman. She is like Dante's Beatrice who, due to her love and purity, can lead a man to paradise. Into this group belongs, for example, Rose Maylie (*Oliver Twist*), Arabella Allen, later on Winkle (*The Pickwick Papers*), Florence Dombey (*Dombey and Son*), or Emma Haredale (*Barnaby Rudge*). They are usually of a good origin or at least, under the protection of someone rich. Sometimes, they are surrounded by a haze of mystery, regarding their origin (Rose, Arabella, Emma). The model for this type was probably Dickens's wife's sister, Mary Hogarth. For some time, she was living with the young married couple and Dickens told his friends that "from the day of our marriage, the dear girl had been the grace and life of our home (...)" and also "so perfect a creature never breathed. I knew her inmost heart, and her real worth values. She had not a fault." (Simkin) Unfortunately, in 1837 Mary collapsed probably because of some undiagnosed heart problems. She died literally in Dickens's arms: "Mary died in such a calm and gentle sleep, (...) I had held her in my arms (...) to support her lifeless form, long after her soul had fled to Heaven." (Simkin) After her death, she kept appearing in his dreams.

It is no wonder that the women characters based on his memories of Mary are usually described as embodied angels. (In loving memory, Dickens probably wanted to tenderly capture her beauty and purity; however, although these women are loveable, they usually have not much of a character.) When she died, Dickens was working on *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*. So it is highly possible that in those two books we may find the true projection of Mary in the portrayals of Arabella Allen and Rose Maylie:

The younger lady was in the lovely bloom and spring-time of womanhood; (...) if ever angels be for God's good purposes enthroned in mortal forms, they may be (...) supposed to abide in such as hers. She was not past seventeen. (...) So pure, so beautiful, that earth seemed not her element. (Dickens, "Oliver Twist")

Apart from being exceptionally beautiful and often described and seen by other characters as sweet, pure and innocent, they are also hard to refuse if they are in trouble and ask for help.

“If my brother hears of this first from you, I feel certain we shall be reconciled. (...) Mr. Pickwick, unless you plead for me, I fear I have lost even him....” Here poor Arabella (...) wept bitterly. (...) when Mrs. Winkle, (...) took to coaxing and entertaining in the sweetest tones (...) he became particularly restless (...). And at last Mr. Pickwick (...) said he could never find it in his heart to stand in the way of young people’s happiness (...). (Dickens, “The Pickwick Papers” 596-597)

However, this character type suffers certain violations. There is another type of charming beauty in Dickens’s stories but this one is far from being this ethereal and sweet creature. Rather, these women are cold-hearted and vain and able to break men’s heart. As for example Estella (*Great Expectations*), who is raised by Miss Havisham to act this way, or Lady Dedlock (*Bleak House*), who wears the mask of a cold-hearted woman to hide her secrets from the past. Also, there are the cousins from *Dombey and Son* Edith Dombey and Alice Marwood, who both, due to their mothers, became what they are. What is interesting about these women is that their behaviour is partly driven by some kind of bitterness and the feelings of injustice that has been done to them (apart from Estella, who serves as Miss Havisham’s tool to repay the men for her pain). Can such feelings be the reflection of Dickens’s inner child, which has not healed from its own childhood feelings of injustice?

“A child!” said Edith, looking at her, “when was I child? (...) I was a woman – artful, designing, mercenary, laying snares for men – (...). Look upon her. She is in her pride tonight.” And as she spoke, she struck her hand upon her beautiful bosom, as though she would have beaten down herself. “Look at me, (...) who have never known what it is to have an honest heart, and love. (...) taught to scheme and plot when children play (...).” (Dickens, “Dombey and Son” 418)

We have already mentioned the violation of child purity in Pip’s character. Similar violation can be seen in *David Copperfield*, where Emily, who, similarly to Pip, is not satisfied with her social status and so she betrays her beloved ones and runs away with her wealthy lover in search of a better life. However, as well as Pip, she realizes in the end that true happiness means to be with one’s family.

Biddy (*Great Expectations*), Agnes Wickfield or (*David Copperfield*), Esther (*Bleak House*), Ruth Pinch (*Martin Chuzzlewit*) or partly Amy Dorrit (*Little Dorrit*) belong to another type of young woman, who is appreciated more for her kindness than beauty. She is warm, friendly and caring. According to Wilson, Dickens's idea of success was connected with the domestic ease including a wife who could keep an orderly household, a hostess and an entertainer for his friends, a lover and a mother for his children at the same time. Also, she should be intelligent, hardworking and modest in every word she says. However, as well as the previous "angel type" of woman, this one is rather idealized. This ideal of the bright but passive and obedient wife, who supports her husband in his life's journey without asking anything in return, violates, according to Wilson, Dickens's work of genius. (Wilson 104, 234, 174)

Let us remember Agnes Wickfield. She was always there for David, never complained and she kept waiting calmly for him to come to her. A reader must always like Agnes better than Dora. And it was only after Dora's death when David finally realized, what she is worth. Does she not deserve more? How about her feelings, dreams, and desires? Dickens let her be exactly this obedient and passive ideal which only shows women a bad example of how to find happiness in the end. For a woman, as can be seen for example in Jane Austen's books, should not be afraid to express her opinions, she should know her needs and if they are not met, she had better move on. A woman is a living person as is a man and waiting silently for happiness to maybe fall into her lap or not, that is actually very distant from the idea of a happy life. Rather it is the idea of self-sacrifice that leads almost to masochism and has its origin in the Victorian way of up-bringing and the training of women. (Tomalin 242)

The inspiration for this type of obedient woman was probably another member of the Hogarth family, Catherine's sister Georgina, who helped in Dickens's household after he came back from America. Not only did she take care of the house to which she brought order; she was also a favourite aunt to her siblings, and she spread the well-being around. Moreover, she unreservedly admired her brother-in-law and so she kept his household in return for nothing, as well as the women characters we have just described. (Wilson 173)

A few words of this chapter will be also dedicated to prostitutes since they have a special place in Dickens's life. The overall reception of them is obviously not good. However, the portrait of the prostitutes in Dickens's world of fiction is benevolent, sympathetic,

and again idealized rather than disapproving, the same as was his own perception of them. The reason for this is probably that Dickens was the manager of Urania Cottage, a home for all of these fallen women, where he got the chance to know them. He believed that society used ill every woman that came to his asylum and then turned away from her. His idea was to help them become virtuous wives again. (Tomalin 179-180) Such opinions can be seen also in his novels. According to Wilson, Dickens's prostitutes are not quite saint, but they are rather victims of Victorian society. Let us remember Martha from *David Copperfield* or Nancy from *Oliver Twist*. We do not perceive them as complete villains. "They merely cross the stage, delicate-speaking allegories of Woman made Victim." (Wilson 96) The reason for his sympathy might be that according to Tomalin, they stand in parallel to his imagined children. When he met those girls before they became members of his asylum, they were half-starved, detached from their family, and they came from the workhouse or even from the prison. (Tomalin 233-234) Such conditions could bring his childhood memories back and therefore also the feelings of sympathy. Although Dickens's perspective might be somehow romanticized, naive and not complete, he shows us that sometimes there is no devil behind deplorable behaviour, but just a broken person who cannot seem to find their way.

### **3.3. Loyal Servants**

Another secret that surrounded Dickens's family was the origin of his father's parents. It was known that his grandmother was a wealthy and respectable woman, living in Oxford Street, London. Before she retired, she had been working as a maid for the fine English marquises, Blandford and Crewe. Dickens's grandfather worked for the Crewe family too, as a butler. Both of them (although servants) were respected by their employers. (Wilson 18)

Despite the fact, that Dickens's parent tried to keep the origin and occupation of his father's parents in secret, it probably influenced Dickens's writing, since the theme of loyal servants is present in his novels in characters like Clara Peggotty, Sam Weller, Mrs. Richards, Susan Nipper. (Another source of inspiration might have been Dickens's nanny Mary Weller, but the pieces of information we have about her are inconsistent, once Dickens gives the impression that she was as nice as Clara Peggotty, and then he says that she had no mercy (Wilson 28), therefore we do not conclude her to be any serious source of inspiration.)

All of these characters are kind-hearted and protective:

“My good fellow,” said Mr. Winkle (...) “I respect your attachment to my excellent friend” (...). “Well,” said Sam, “(...) if I can help it, I won’t have him put upon by nobody, and that’s all about it.” (Dickens, “The Pickwick Papers” 486-487)

However, sometimes they might give the impression of being impudent or “cheeky”, especially when they want to express their disapproval with something concerning their master. According to Wilson, the reason for this might be that Dickens was also inspired by his childhood reading such as Don Quijote for Sam reminds us of Sancho Panza, a loyal clown who teaches his master about the world around. (35) Despite certain inappropriateness of these impudent expressions, they always come from the heart and are well-intentioned. It is a sign of their lower social status because people from the upper classes usually tend to say only things that are appropriate (which can also mean to say nothing, even though they are dying inside to show their true emotions). So even though the servants are normally obedient, sometimes they get to the point when the urgency of their pure feeling cannot be held back anymore because they are not fettered by upper class stiffness.

“Don’t witness nothin’, Sir,” interposed Sam. “Shut your eyes up tight, Sir, I’d pitch him out o’ winder, only he couldn’t fall far enough (...).” “Sam,” said Mr. Pickwick in angry voice. (...) “Hold your tongue, (...).” (Dickens, “The Pickwick Papers” 504)

This is probably one of the reasons, why they have such good relationships with children. They share the untouched purity of feelings, not corrupted by social rules and taboos. It could be also due to their care and loyalty, which is often greater than that of the parents and children are naturally more attached to those who take an interest in them.

The servants’ loyalty, says Wilson, is one of the most important virtues in Dickens’s books, as well as in his life. However, they hardly surpass their social class barrier with the exception of Susan Nipper, who marries the wealthy Mr. Toots. Although she becomes a socially equal partner to Florence, in her heart, she remains a loyal maid to her lady. (20)

“But Susan, dear, you must not speak to me as you used to speak. And what’s this?” said Florence (...) “Your old dress?” (...) “My dear Miss Dombey” said

Toots (...) “She said before we were married, and has said to this day – that whenever you came home, she’d come to you in no dress but the dress she used to serve you in, for she fear she might seem strange to you and you might like her less. (...) My dear Miss Dombey, she’ll be your maid again, your nurse, all that she ever was and more. There’s no change in her.” (891)

Yet there are not only such warm and protective servants in Dickens’s literary world. Their loyalty must be underlined, and it is done by the means of presentation of their rather selfish comrades, who care about their well-being above all. To give an example, there is Miss Miggs from *Barnaby Rudge*, who is always exaggerative and hysterical and who is in love with Simon Tappertit, because of whom she betrays the family she serves. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, we meet with “Mrs Gamp, the drunken, greedy and corrupt private nurse. She will collude with any malpractice for a price and plenty of spirits on the mantelpiece.” (Ingham xiv) The last mentioned servant will be the fat boy from *The Pickwick Papers*. He is rather a comical character who devotes his life to pleasures such as sleeping, eating or drinking. He is, therefore, whenever he can take advantage of the situation and get some sleep or food, unstoppable in doing so.

“Do you ever drink anythin’?” “I likes eating better,” replied the boy. “Ah”, said Sam, “(...) but what I mean is, should you like a drop of anythin’ as’d warn you?” (...) The Blue Lion tap was soon gained, and the fat boy swallowed a glass of liquor without so much as winking. (...) “Can you drive?” said the fat boy. (...) “It’s as straight as you can go; you can’t miss it.” With these words, the fat boy laid himself affectionately down by the side of the cold fish (...), fell asleep instantaneously. (339-340)

But as we know, there is no black without white, no love without hate, no yin without yang. Similarly, there is no loyalty without betrayal in Dickens’s world, for they complete one another so that the world can be whole.

### **3.4. Stiff People**

“Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. (...) Nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring these children. Stick to Facts, sir!” (Dickens, “Hard Times” 3)

Every now and then, we meet such people as Thomas Gradgrind in Dickens's novels. People who try to stabilize their lives by sticking to something permanent, invariable, and given. Such a stability can hardly be disturbed because, if threatened by any emotional misbalance, they simply turn back to rational thinking and hold on to it. Although such behaviour is probably an attempted self-protection, it definitely cannot safeguard everyone; it can, in fact, possibly do more harm than good.

If we look back at the first paragraph, Thomas Gradgrind says it precisely; this is his way of upbringing the children. However, due to the belief in the rightness of his conviction and this education, he misunderstands his children and grows away from them. Only after his daughter Louisa has confessed to him, he realizes he was wrong.

“How could you give me life, and take from me all the inappreciable things that raise it from the state of conscious death? Where are the graces of my soul? Where are the sentiments of my heart? What have you done, O father, what have you done, with the garden that should have bloomed once, in this great wilderness, here!” (...) Her father's face was ashy white (...) And he laid her down there, and saw the pride of his heart and the triumph of his system, lying, an insensible heap, at his feet. (Dickens, “Hard Times” 231-235)

A similar disposition might be found in Dombey's family. According to Dombey's sister, Mrs. Chick, (and this is one of the merits of the Dombey's) we have to have the “power to rouse ourselves and to make efforts in time where they're required of us. There's a moral in everything, if we would only avail ourselves of it.” (15) In her opinion, it was due to the lack of this effort that Mrs. Dombey was in such a critical health condition before her death. Moreover, Florence should have roused herself after Little Paul died and her father rejected her.

Also, Paul Dombey lived in this 'stiffness', but the reason why he could never understand his wives and, more importantly, his daughter, was the combination of such stiffness and his enormous pride, cruelty and arrogance. He has to pay an even higher price than Mr. Gradgrind to realize his mistakes. To become aware of the lie he had been living in, he has to lose his wives, his son, his company and his daughter, the only one who always loved him.

He did remember it. In agony, in sorrow, in remorse, in despair. “Papa! Papa! Speak to me, dear Papa!” He heard the words again and saw the face. He saw it

fall upon the trembling hands, and heard the one prolonged low cry go upward. He was fallen, never to be raised up any more. (...) He knew, now, what it was to be rejected and deserted: now, when every loving blossom he had withered in his innocent daughter's heart was snowing down in ashes on him. (...) She had never changed to him – nor had he ever changed to her – and she was lost. (Dickens, "Dombey and Son" 870-871)

This stiffness might be found also in Dickens's depiction of schools and teachers (as we could already see in Thomas Gradgrind's case). At schools, there is no place for imagination and ideas, and teachers (such as for example dr. Blimber) care only about objective knowledge. However, as we could see above, Dickens shows us that facts and objectivity do not always serve for the best purpose. Therefore, we often meet people in Dickens's world who contradict such a world view like Sissy Jupe and the circus performers (*Hard Times*) or Glubb; the old man, who told little Paul Dombey stories about oceans and fish and monsters, living in the deep blue underworld, climbing the rocks on sunny days. Dickens, says Wilson, is always set against Blimber's academy, "not the place for Glubbs of any kind". (28)

What we can see here is the impact that romanticism had on Dickens. He despised some intellectuals who did not take feelings into account when it came to questions concerning human beings. Not only little Paul Dombey is viewed as a potential economic unit by his father, but also Gradgrind siblings and other children in Dickens's novels are rather taken as something that must be filled with as many facts as possible, so they can become a useful part of a money-driven society. (Wilson 206, 222) All of his life Dickens fought against people who reduce others to figures; the only possible way to answer moral and social questions was to rely on one's personal experience and impressions because "our eyes tell our hearts, our hearts our heads". (Wilson 84)

### **3.5. Foxes and Evils**

#### **3.5.1. The Sly One, or the Fox**

While hunting, foxes tend to use a particular pouncing technique, such that they crouch down to *camouflage themselves* in the terrain and then use their hind legs to leap up *with great force* and land on top of *their chosen prey*. Using their pronounced canine teeth, they can then grip the prey's neck (...). (Lloyd 21)

Although the word fox itself suggests what type of character will be discussed in this paragraph, the quote about foxes was borrowed to underline their personality. The key term here is *camouflage*. Foxes attack their victim without the victim expecting it. They wait calmly for the opportunity to deal them a death blow. The same applies to these characters. Often, they are very unctuous, obsequious and they act as if they were the most trustworthy person in the world, but the opposite is true. Everything that they manifest by means of their behaviour is done on purpose. It is nothing more than camouflage of their genuine intention. “‘Uriah,’ she replied, (...) ‘has made himself indispensable to papa. He is subtle and watchful. He has mastered papa’s weaknesses, fostered them and taken advantage of them, until-(...)-until papa is afraid of him.’” (Dickens, “David Copperfield” 306-307)

And as well as the foxes, they are able to wait still to surprise the unsuspecting victim, when they finally throw off the mask. Masks cause, for many different reasons, the feeling of uncertainty and somehow, they might be unpleasant and one cannot say exactly why. This applies for the fox-characters as well, due to some kind of disturbing and sometimes terrifying aura that surrounds them. Fox-characters can be found mostly in the lower and middle classes, which is logical because regarding the upper class people it would make no sense for them to fawn over someone with lower social status. They are usually interested in money and in gaining a better social position. Although their games are played very well, in the end, they are brought to justice.

As representatives of this group, we chose Mr. Carker from *Dombey and Son* and Uriah Heep from *David Copperfield* because they are perfect examples of the calculating mind. Moreover, Mr. Carker is even portrayed as a cat or some kind of beast.

(...) feline from sole to crown was Mr Carker the Manager (...) with hair and whiskers (...) in the rich sunshine, and more like the coat of a sandy tortoise-shell cat; with long nails (...), Mr Carker the Manager, sly of manner, sharp of tooth, soft of foot, watchful of eye, oily of tongue, cruel of heart, (...) as if he were waiting at a mouse’s hole. (321)

Another important characteristic of the fox-characters is acting as if they were of no importance. They tend to refer to their lower social status and also, they flatter the people they plan to betray, as we can see when Carker is talking to Mr Dombey: “‘Oh! I!’ returned the other, with ready self-disparagement. ‘It’s quite another matter in the case of

a man like me. I don't come into comparison with you.” (388) Or the constant self-humiliation of Uriah Heep: ““Oh, no! I'm a very umble person. (...) I am well aware that I am the umblest person going (...). We live in an umble abode, Master Copperfield, (...).”” (Dickens, “David Copperfield” 200) In the presence of the chosen victim, they usually play the game well. However, it is never possible for them to deceive everyone, due to that aura we discussed earlier.

As a victim, they choose either someone who is too good (Uriah's case) or too proud and vain (Carker's case) to see who they really are (but in the end the betrayed ones learn the truth). Uriah's origin belongs amongst the lowest ones, whereas Carker comes from mid-class but he worked his way up and became a man of fortune. So, whereas Uriah's motivation we might understand, in the case of Carker it is just envy of possessions and fame of Mr. Dombey and probably pure malice. Although the act is the same, the motivation is not exactly the same but there is always a presence of consuming envy.

As Mr Dombey dropped his eyes (...) the smiling face of Mr Carker became (...) transformed into a most intent and frowning face, scanning his closely, and with an ugly sneer. As Mr Dombey raised his eyes, it changed back, no less quickly, to its old expression. (...) “The faint-hearted, fawning knaves (...). there's not one among them, but if he had the power, and the wit and daring to use it, would scatter Dombey's pride and lay it low, as ruthlessly as I rake out these ashes.” (Dickens, “Dombey and Son” 388, 671)

There was no need for Dickens to go far for the inspiration. His mother's father Charles Barrow was found guilty of embezzling almost 6 000 pounds in nine years and then he fled abroad and died on Man island, out of the reach of the English legal jurisdiction. (The escape over the sea was omnipresent not only as a theme in Victorian books but also in Victorian life. It is also a favourite Dickensian theme; let us remember Steerforth, Carker or Magwitch, although his escape was thwarted in the end.) Dickens's parents used to avoid questions about Mr. Barrow by mentioning him as the father who lives abroad. Since Dickens was surrounded by secrets and mysteries from his early childhood, it is no surprise that they have a place in several novels of his. (Wilson 18-20)

### **3.5.2. Pure Evil and Gothic Imagery**

Similar to the previous type of characters but a few steps closer to hell are the evil characters. They also play their games with others and they try to get some wealth for themselves. But while this is the ultimate goal for the fox-characters, these devils are able

to go beyond the financial concerns. They are driven by the malice, the hatred for everything and everyone and they are able to commit the worst things one can imagine. For example, in *Oliver Twist*, we meet the scary character Monks or the malicious Bill Sikes, who cold-bloodedly murders his lover Nancy. Unlike fox-characters, “devils” do not even try to pretend good intentions. In the following example, we can see a hatred-driven Hugh burning the city during riots in *Barnaby Rudge*:

He headed two attacks upon the Bank, helped to break open the Toll-houses (...) fired two of the prisons with his own hand (...) striking at the soldiers, cheering on the crowd (...) never hurt or stopped, (...) mad man with liquor and excitement, and hallooing them on like a demon. Through the very thickest of the press, over dead bodies and burning fragments (...). (Dickens, “Barnaby Rudge”)

Another important theme for Wilson is that many respectable people have some kind of relationship with “devils” (and also “foxes”), due to which their lives are under the constant threat. (20) This is the destiny of Mrs. Rudge or Betsy Trotwood, whose terrible husbands are extorting money from them or for example Pip, who unconsciously accepts money from the murderer Magwitch which makes him Magwitch’s debtor.

The inspiration for these characters was probably one of Dickens’s toys, “a demoniacal Counsellor in a black gown, with an obnoxious head of hair, and a red cloth mouth wide open (...) could not be put away either; for he used suddenly (...) to fly out of Mammoth Snuff-Boxes in dreams when least expected.” (Wilson 9) Those dreams were a very significant source for Dickens’s writing. Although there is not exactly a sadistic quality in his writing, we can observe a certain devilish delight in the effects he can produce, and an almost childish enjoyment of the badness of his villains. It is a kind of comic and admiring amazement for all the black horrors his mind is able to produce. (Wilson 29)

Speaking of terror, we should mention the gothic imagery that is occasionally found not only in Dickens’s but also Victorian novels in general. Whereas the dreadful atmosphere of Emily Brontë’s windy moors with Heathcliff cruising them, or later, Bram Stoker’s mysterious Count Dracula, accompanying us throughout the whole book, Dickens’s gothic imagery is rather present in specific moments, descriptions or characters’ features. In *The Pickwick Papers*, the gothic imagery appears frequently in several stories which are usually told by random travellers, drinkers and lawyers or accidentally found as for

example *A Madman's Manuscript*. This story introduces the reader to a man who is convinced about his own insanity and due to whom his wife dies. This is the demonstration of his thoughts during the fight with his dead wife's brother:

“Damn you,” said I, starting up, and rushing upon him; “I killed her. I am a madman. Down with you. Blood, blood, I will have it.” (...) but on I bounded (...) with a wild shout which was taken up by the strange beings that flocked around me on every side (...) I was borne upon the arms of demons who swept along upon the wind (...). (133-134)

After the death of his father, Dickens described in his letters the absurdity of the fact that his mother, who was supposed to be in a strange mental condition, kept wearing the mourning dress, as somehow terrifying. (Wilson 60) This reminds us of two scenes to which Dickens adds an extra feeling of terror. The first one is the first family gathering of Arthur Clenman and his mother in *Little Dorrit*.

Arthur followed him up the staircase, which was panelled off into spaces like so many mourning tables, into a dim bed-chamber, (...). On a black bier-like sofa (...), propped up behind with one great angular black bolster like the block at a state execution in the good old times, sat his mother in a widow's dress. (Dickens, “Little Dorrit”)

In this scene, we see Arthur's mother who, as well as Dickens's mother, keeps wearing her mourning dress. The strangeness of this woman develops as the story continues; her reading from the Bible a few paragraphs later, wishing her enemies' bones to “be ground to dust” (Dickens, “Little Dorrit”), etc. gives us somehow psychopathic impression.

The second example will be given from *Great Expectations*, where another extreme is shown. The main character Pip meets Miss Havisham, who has been wearing her wedding dress since the day of her wedding ceremony that actually never happened. Pip's entrance into her room might remind us of an entrance to the room of the *Corpse Bride*. However, later on, we find out that Miss Havisham is only a very lonely and heart-broken woman.

I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress (...). I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure (...) that (...) had shrunk to skin and bone. Once, I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork (...) to one of our old parish churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress (...). Now,

waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. I should have cried out, if I could. (Dickens, "Great Expectations")

As we can see, Dickens uses the gothic imagery to enrich his descriptions with some scary or maybe transcendent elements. Both Mrs. Clenman and Ms. Havisham could have been described as crazy old lonely and bitter women but instead, due to such an introduction, we might be a little more lenient with them, because of their suggested contact with the world beyond. According to Wilson, this belongs to the characteristics of Dickens's fictional world. On the one hand, he is able to see life in inanimate objects; he can bring clothes, furniture, etc. to life. On the other hand, he is able to reduce a living person to a corpse and see the skull beneath the skin. (88)

### **3.6. Poor Good Guy and Nagging Shrew**

There is one thing, says Wilson, in which Dickens remained absolutely consistent; he always respected and trusted the English working class. After one of his readings in Birmingham in 1853 for around two and half thousand working-class people he claimed, that never had he met such attentive listeners before who would understand him so much and would not misinterpret anything. (220-225) These qualities, as well as the trust, Dickens put in their owners are reflected in the portrayal of the loyal servants that have been mentioned earlier. They understand more than one may think; for example Susan, who was aware of the complicated relationship between Mr. Dombey and his daughter, etc.

Another group of characters that fall into this category are, as we called them, *poor good guys* as Joe Gargery (*Great Expectations*), Cpt. Cuttle and Sol Gills (*Dombey and Son*), Tony Weller (*The Pickwick Papers*), Mr. Peggotty (*David Copperfield*) or Stephen Blackpool (*Hard Times*). All of these men are middle-aged/elderly workers, who come from a poor and uneducated environment. Despite their life being sometimes uneasy and hard to handle, they are kind, warm-hearted, friendly, and helpful. They would live and die for their beloved ones, always supportive and protective. Although they sometimes seem to be of a lower IQ and also a little crazy, they all have more than an ounce of common sense and furthermore, they rely on the truth that was so important for Dickens, the truth of the heart. Because of that, they are often treated with respect, especially by their beloved ones.

"Vy, Sammy." "Who's that, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick. "Why, I wouldn't ha' believed it, Sir," replied Mr. Weller, with astonished eyes. "It's the old 'un." (...)

“My father, Sir,” (...) “How are you, my ancient?” And with this beautiful ebullition of filial affection, Mr. Weller made room on the seat beside him, for the stout man, who advanced pipe in mouth and pot in hand, to greet him. (Dickens, “The Pickwick Papers” 243)

These “old ‘uns” represent a good example of the father figure either for their own children or for any child who needs it. Thus, Cpt. Cuttle and Sol Gills take care of Walter and later on they help Florence, who runs away from her father. Joe Gargery protects Pip and supports him no matter what and Mr. Peggoty never gives up on Emily and he travels the world for her.

In one package with these good guys something usually comes, that Wilson calls one of Dickens’s hobbyhorses. And this something is a shrewish and bossy wife. Such portrayals belong to Dickens’s cheap jokes at women’s expense; in his opinion, a woman dominating household leads inevitably to social dissolution. (148) Although this opinion, in general, is not exactly flattering for women, we must conclude that these wives are portrayed as a walking disaster.

“I wish I could hope that it would do your father good,” said Mrs. Weller. “Thankee, my dear,” said Mr. Weller, senior. “How do you find yourself after it, my love?” “Scoffer!” exclaimed Mrs. Weller. (Dickens, “The Pickwick Papers” 571)

These women are hardly ever satisfied with anything and they are always complaining mostly about their husbands. Mrs. Blackpool (*Hard Times*) is even addicted to alcohol and most of the time she is gone. Whenever she comes back, she steals things from Stephen, makes him even more miserable and then she disappears again. Cpt. Cuttle is being constantly pursued by his desperate landlady:

“Who says he don’t live here?” retorted the implacable MacStinger. “I said it wasn’t Cap’en Cuttle’s house – and it ain’t his house – (...) for Cap’en Cuttle don’t know how to keep a house – and don’t deserve to have a house – it’s my house – and when I let the upper floor to Cap’en Cuttle, oh I do a thankless thing, and cast pearls before swine!” (Dickens, “Dombey and Son” 351)

This type of women is portrayed in such a way that readers cannot feel any sympathy for them, and they are an example of Dickens’s caricature. Their portrayals are very simplified and we can only see the tip of the iceberg. If they were painted, they would

probably have those big heads and also big mouths because they talk so much. Yet, the reality behind any kind of behaviour is always more complex. No one acts like a fool or a dummy for nothing. There are always motivations that can have the origin even in early childhood. Therefore, the question is, up to what extent are these portrayals fair. We often see only one side of the truth; we have no idea what Mrs. Blackpool went through, how Cpt. Cuttle keeps his household and how he treats Mrs. MacStinger in private (as well as we know only Dickens's side of the truth regarding his mother). Obviously, their reaction is often exaggerated and not pleasant to anyone, but it is often the case that one's rudeness comes from the roaring pain and only kindness can sooth it. However, such a claim can be made about Mr. Dombey, Uriah, Hugh and other characters as well. It is for a reader to decide up to which extent they will try to analyse Dickens's characters' psyche and the motivation for their actions.

Sometimes, when we know someone's background, we can forgive them their mistakes. But then we come across a serious ethical problem. Both Mrs. Weller and Bill Sikes probably carry something from their past that makes them who they are, and they are not aware of it. Also, there is no one who would tell them that they should try to find that something that indicates their patterns of behaviour, so they do not know it is possible to change these. Would we forgive Mrs. Weller if we knew she lived in terrible emotional deprivation? If we knew that her parents did not like her? (It is naive to assume that everyone can handle it as well as Florence Dombey.) And would we forgive Bill Sikes, if we knew that his father beat him and his mother was an alcoholic? It is interesting that we can feel the sorrow if we imagine the little child, but we can hardly ever feel the same for an adult. It is often the case that if not helped, adults bear the hurt child in themselves and act as one. They are angry and they blame everyone around – such childish behaviour – because no one really told them how to grow up. Maybe all they really need is, as we have said, kindness and someone who listens.

Angus Wilson wrote:

It is hard, I think, to forgive the self-centeredness of the Dickens parents that never considered how the small Charles was living from hand to mouth (...). Indeed it is easy to believe him when he wonders why the Dickens parents did not have what is now called 'a delinquent' on their hands. (...) How could he utterly refuse a sentimental forgiveness to evil men who had not shown the willpower by which

he had survived (...) without losing the tender feeling which should have made all hearts melt at his childhood plight? It was an insoluble dilemma (...). (54)

Wilson calls the forgiveness to evil men sentimental but there is nothing sentimental about carrying along someone's childhood wounds. Such people would probably never admit not even to themselves that they are hurting and to condemn them is the easiest thing to do. Therefore, we should maybe not try to forgive them but to understand them.

As we have seen, Dickens could not feel for the adults but kept the tender feelings for the children. He was probably so influenced by the injustice he had to experience as a child both from society and, more importantly, from his parents, especially his mother. When John Dickens was finally out of prison and his financial situation looked more or less stable (he was graded a pension from the Pay Office), he quarrelled with James Lamert, who helped young Dickens to get a job in the blacking factory, about Charles's position there and it ended up with Charles being sent home. His mother wanted him to go back and she decided to make up the quarrel, but John Dickens decided that Charles had to get some education. However, Dickens never forgave his mother; "(...) but I never afterward forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back". (Tomalin 29)

Dickens was insulted by her greediness when she could not see the reason why he should stop working at Warren's. According to George Wing, this greediness of his mother could probably be the cause of Dickens's emotional insolvency and some of the cruel comments in his novels. (4) Therefore, the portrayals of the greedy shrew that have been described are probably the reflections of his mother and are interwoven with Dickens's anger and miserable memories.

### **3.7. Prisoners and the Law**

The last group of characters will be somehow different from the other ones. The members of this group (i.e. Alfred Jingle, Wilkins Micawber, William Dorrit and also Mr. Pickwick but in his case, it was rather a mistake) do not share so many common features. Nevertheless, this topic is very important for Dickens. He was fascinated by the criminal world and part of the reason is that his own family had to spend some time in the Marshalsea. (Wilson 89)

(...) he walked to and from the Marshalsea, the debtors' prison, where his father was detained and his family lived, when he worked among rough mates at Warren's blacking shop for twelve hours a day a shilling a day. (Wing 1)

As the reader may notice, this picture from Dickens's life corresponds to what happens more or less both in *Little Dorrit* and *David Copperfield*. Amy Dorrit leaves the prison daily to earn some funds for her family and she comes back in the evening. David Copperfield works in the wine-bottling industry for a minimum wage and he pays visits to Micawber's family in the prison. According to George Wing, a template for both Mr. Micawber and Dorrit might be Dickens's "improvident but affable father". (Wing 2) Angus Wilson claims that the portrait of Amy Dorrit is that of someone Dickens wished to have been; a persistent and loyal child, standing by his father. Rather than wandering alone freely and struggling through life (this is what we can see in *David Copperfield* and it actually depicts reality better) he would have loved to sit with his family even though between the prison walls. (54) John Dickens grew up at Crewe Hall (where his grandparents were employed) amongst men who were gamblers and drinkers on one hand, but very eloquent ones on the other. All of this influenced him; not only did he develop his own elaborate manner of expression (which entertained his son who used it in his writing, i.e. Mr. Micawber's letters) but also habits of extravagance and debt, which got him imprisoned. (Tomalin 6)

Interestingly, in Dickens's time, this story of his family was not known. It was only after his death when people got to know this secret. Dickens's feelings of shame are probably reflected in *David Copperfield*; when David starts to visit Doctor Strong's class, he fears that his classmates may find out about his past.

My mind ran upon what they would think, if they knew of my familiar acquaintance with the King's Beach Prison? Was there anything about me which would reveal my proceedings in connection with the Micawber family (...)? Suppose some of the boys had seen me coming through Canterbury, wayworn and ragged, and should find me out? (...) I felt distrustful of my slightest look and gesture (...), afraid of committing myself in my response to any friendly notice or advance. (195)

According to Wilson, Victorian world was a cruel jungle, especially for people (such as the Dickens's) who tried so hard to give a better impression about their origin. All of

these artists, music teachers, small tradesmen, clergymen etc., Micawbers, Dorrits and Jingles... spread through nineteenth century literary world with their boastful dreams of social status. For Wilson, they are naked, comic, repulsive, and pathetic and they try to persuade themselves that the Victorian world should take care of their well-being. Dickens's parents belong amongst such people, they wanted Christmas everyday but unfortunately, his father could not find the right balance between work and play which turned out to be fatal. (48-49)

Dickens's early adulthood and his first jobs represent another source of inspiration. He worked as an office boy in a firm of attorneys, Ellis and Blackmore of Gray's Inn. Since he did not expect any promotion, he decided to try a journalist career, but first, he had to learn Gurney's system of shorthand. Once he mastered this skill, he became a free-lance reporter in the Consistory Court of Doctor's Commons and he stayed in this job for seven years, until he wrote *The Pickwick Papers*. (Wing 4-6) This part of his life is portrayed more or less in *David Copperfield*. As well as Dickens, while working in Gray's Inn, David learned how to write shorthand, after that he became a journalist and ended up as a respected novelist. Not only did the court environment inspire him, but also the lawyers and attorneys he met were templates for some of his character (i.e. Mr Ellis from Gray's Inn may be caricatured as Mr. Perker – *The Pickwick Papers* (Wing 4)). Due to the knowledge of different cases, Dickens was able to portrait these prisoners and their breakings of the law.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to show that there are certain types of characters that repeatedly appear in the novels of Charles Dickens and analyse them on the basis of his life and the era he lived in. Dickens presents to us the 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian Britain in all its colours, its richness but also its poverty and dirty streets, with all the victories and failures of its inhabitants, and also shares with us his own life and experience.

The first part of the thesis depicted the Victorian era and showed the two sides of The British Empire; the prosperous one with the industrial boom and the growth of cities on the one hand, the poor one where people lived in slums and terrible conditions on the other. It also discussed the class division and the gender differences; we have seen that men and women did not have the same rights and social position during the Victorian era. All of these facts were important because they make a background for Dickens's stories; he covered the topics of poverty and social injustice, he fought against the Victorian stiffness and was to some extent trapped in the concept of Victorian gender roles, which was probably one of the reasons why he misunderstood women.

The second part discussed the general characteristics and features of Dickens's world; his depiction of people from various social classes, the special artificial coincidence that often happens to his characters, the omnipresent narrator who hardly stays neutral and frequently becomes the means of the expression of Dickens's opinions. The language of characters was also mentioned, as it is used to complete their personality.

The typology itself offered nine types of characters: *children, young ladies, loyal servants, stiff people, fox-characters, evils, poor good guys and nagging shrews and prisoners*. We have seen that most of them are based on real people from Dickens's life or on himself. It was mentioned that his experience made him sympathetic with some of them but also that it warped his objectivity. The focus was given to children because they are the most typical of all his characters and because his childhood is what apparently influenced him the most. The list of characters that has been offered is definitely not complete; there are many more types that would be worth scrutiny and many more connections with Dickens's life to be found and examined. We have presented only a small piece of a topic that would be worth at least a dissertation.

There is another interesting thing to be seen ‘between the lines’. Although his characters have their own story, in reality it is always the story of Charles Dickens. It is amazing to observe how all these pieces, such as the events from his life, his opinions expressed through his characters, or his imagination and feelings merge together and give us the vivid portrait of a man. Although his view is sometimes maybe a little too naive, exaggerated or warped, it always comes from his heart. According to John Ruskin:

(...) the essential value and truth of Dickens’s writings have been unwisely lost sight of by many thoughtful persons merely because he presents his truth with some colour of caricature. Unwisely, because Dickens’s caricature though often gross, is never mistaken. (...) The things he tells us are always true. (qtd. in Bloom 11)

The thesis also wanted to show that Dickens still has something to say to the readership of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and attempted to prove that it is true. In his novels he tells us a beautiful story of a poor, half-starved and broken child who, due to his diligence, effort and courage managed to become a famous and financially secure writer and therefore, “it has always been turned to for comfort by those who have suffered in childhood loss or unhappiness, unkind or unjust treatment.” (Tomalin 223) One of the things that Dickens’s stories give us is, therefore, hope.

Also, the destinies of his characters evoke several emotions in us. Sorrow, when we read that the child characters are alone and alienated from everything they love, anger about omnipresent injustice, fear of the dark London corners, admiration for the loyal and faithful servants and comfort in the presence of all the Joes and cpts. Cuttles. We can identify with many of the characters and it may happen that our emotions come to purification and purgation and this is what Aristotle calls *catharsis*. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Last but not least, Dickens teaches us about the truths of life that are valid even nowadays. As for example, that we can find the good in the bad and vice versa. That intuition and imagination are more important than the facts. That sometimes people who seem as villains are just broken. That the purest heart is the one of a child, that hatred and malice serve no useful purpose, or that such qualities as loyalty and faithfulness make the world a better place.

The lasting legacy of Dickens is the wonderful, shaped vitality of his novel: a life so strong and so individual that it could feed writers following him (...) and yet be accounted, as he rightly called himself, "Inimitable". (Wilson 297)

## The works cited

### Primary sources

- Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol*. Project Gutenberg, 4 March 2018. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46/46-h/46-h.htm>, Accessed 10 May 2020.
- Dickens, Charles. *Barnaby Rudge*. Project Gutenberg, 25 September 2016. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/917/917-h/917-h.htm>, Accessed 14 July 2020.
- Dickens, Charles. *David Copperfield*. London: Penguin Books, 1994.
- Dickens, Charles. *Dombey and Son*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2007.
- Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations*. Project Gutenberg, 27 April 2020. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1400/1400-h/1400-h.htm>, Accessed 14 July 2020.
- Dickens, Charles. *Hard Times*. San Diego: ICON Group International, Inc. 2005.
- Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. New York: James G. Gregory, 1861.
- Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Project Gutenberg, 10 October 2008. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/730/730-h/730-h.htm>. Accessed 1 April 2020.
- Dickens, Charles. *Little Dorrit*. Project Gutenberg, 25 September 2008. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/963/963-h/963-h.htm>, Accessed 28 May 2020.
- Dickens, Charles. *The Pickwick Papers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

### Secondary sources

- Bloom, Harold, editor. *Charles Dickens*. New York: Chelsea House, 2006.
- Burn, William E., *A Brief History of Great Britain*. New York: Facts on File, Inc. 2010.
- Garrett, Steward. "Dickens and Language." *Charles Dickens*, edited by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House, 2006, pp. 215-232.
- Ingham, Patricia. "Introduction." *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Charles Dickens, London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2002. xiv.
- Ingham, Patricia. "The Language in Dickens." *A Companion to Charles Dickens*, edited by David Paroissien, Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 126-141.
- James, Luis. *The Victorian Novel*. Hoboken: Blackwell publishing, 2006.
- Lloyd, H.G., *The Red Fox*. London: Batsford, 1981.

McDowall, David, *An Illustrated History of Britain*, Harlow: Longman Group UK Ltd., 2006.

Wilson, August. *The world of Charles Dickens*. London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1970.

Wing, George. *Dickens*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1969.

Tomalin, Claire. *Charles Dickens: A Life*. New York: Penguin Press, 2011.

### **Electronic sources**

Conner, Mark. "Charles Dickens and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century British Novel." *Youtube*, uploaded by Washington and Lee University 20 October 2014.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrIHjsgtFTk> Accessed 3 May 2020.

Everett, Glenn. "The Reform Acts." *Victorian Web*.

<http://www.victorianweb.org/history/hist2.html>, Accessed 3 May 2020.

Flanders, Judith. "Slums." *British Library*,

<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/slums>, Accessed 5 May 2020.

Simkin, John. "Catherine Hogarth Dickens." *Spartacus Educational*.

<https://spartacus-educational.com/PRhogarthC2.htm>, Accessed 11 April 2020.

Steinbach, Susie. "Victorian Era." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Victorian-era#ref343820>, Accessed 6 July 2020.

"Social Class During The Victorian England." UKEssays.com. 11 2018. All Answers Ltd. Accessed 6 July 2020.

<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/history/a-persons-social-class-during-victorian-england-history-essay.php>, Accessed 5 May 2020.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Catharsis." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

<https://www.britannica.com/art/catharsis-criticism>, Accessed 18 February 2020.