

**UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLMOUCI**

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Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Nicolle Knapová

Villains in Charles Dickens's famous novels

Bakalářská práce

Vedoucí: David Livingstone, Ph.D.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma “Villains in Charles Dickens’s famous novels” vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne .....

Podpis .....

Děkuji vedoucímu práce MA Davidu Livingstone, Ph.D. a svým rodičům, kteří mě podporovali při mém studiu.

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## **Introduction**

Charles Dickens is considered as one of the world's best-known authors and the great contributor to classic English literature. His talent to vividly depict human characters is unprecedented. Together with his deeply personal and authentic insights into social problems of the Victorian period, it makes him a master storyteller and his novels so unique. Dickens's portrayal of villains is particularly one of a kind experience. It is timeless and original.

This thesis is focused on describing the individual villain characters in Charles Dickens's novels *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times* and *A Christmas Carol*, and how much they were inspired by author's life experiences and views. It unveils reasons for why Dickens's traumatized childhood and specifics of the Victorian era – poverty, criminality and exploitation as results of the industrial progress – so intensively influenced his portrayal skills in his works.

The first part of this thesis introduces the Industrial revolution, its characteristics, impacts, and consequences in the context of changing the country's social and economic landscape.

The second part describes the Victorian period from the perspective of social contrasts, poverty, child labour, criminality, child pickpocket and Victorian prisons. It also provides a short insight into the Victorian literature and its key attributes.

The third part of this thesis presents Charles Dickens with his detailed biography, his writing and a summary of his famous works. In the biography, especially from his childhood, there are some important facts, that later inspired his well-portrayed characters and the most popular stories.

The next part brings on the theme of villain. It defines the term of villain and explores the reasons why villains, in general, get so much attention and popularity. It also presents why Dickens's villains became so memorable and famous.

After setting the theme into the context, the last part of this thesis presents and explores three villains from author's famous novels – Ebenezer Scrooge from *A Christmas Carol*, Fagin from *Oliver Twist* and Josiah Bounderby from *Hard Times*. Each villain's character is briefly introduced with his background and plot line. Finally, it describes the

differences and similarities between these Dickensian villain's characters and sets the important moral from their stories and behaviour that author considered worth taking.

## 1 Industrial Revolution

The industrial revolution is an era that began in England at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is defined as a rapid major change in an economy (as in England in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century) marked by the general introduction of power-driven machinery or by an important change in the prevailing types and methods of use of such machines.<sup>1</sup> Another view of this process could be defined as follows:

*“An industrial revolution at its core occurs when a society shifts from using tools to make products to using new sources of energy such as coal, to power machines in factories. It’s a shift from the home to the factory, from country to the city, from human or animal power to engines powered by fossil fuels.”<sup>2</sup>*

The industrial process occurred gradually, but the social and economic changes were so far-reaching over generations. The revolution started in England, with a series of innovations to make labour more efficient and productive. In the new industrial cities, advances in technology and organization allowed the average worker to produce much more than ever before. For example, one low—skilled worker in a spinning factory in Britain in 1820 could produce, with the help of a steam-powered spinning machine, a hundred times the spun thread of a pre-industrial worker.<sup>3</sup> Though it started with labour—saving devices in England, the revolution spread incrementally to other regions of the world.

There are three phases of the Industrial revolution in modern world history, based on when various countries and regions went through this process:

- **The first phase (1770s to 1860s)** started with Britain and then spread to other countries in Northern and Western Europe and the United States;
- **The second phase (1870s to 1950s)** brought in Russia, Japan, other parts of Eastern and Southern Europe, Australia and New Zealand;

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster, accessed July 10, 2016, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/industrial%20revolution>

<sup>2</sup> CLEARY, Vern, Modern World: Imperialism (Bellarmine College Preparatory, 2016), 6

<sup>3</sup> STEARNS, Peter, The Industrial Revolution in World History (Westview Press, 2012), 8

- **The third phase (1960s to present)** brought in the so-called Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea) and has seen tentative development in key economic sectors in Turkey, India, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina.<sup>4</sup>

The most important of the changes that brought about the Industrial Revolution were 1) the invention of machines to do the work of hand tools; 2) the use of steam, and later of other kinds of power, in place of the muscles of human beings and animals; and 3) the adoption of the factory system.<sup>5</sup> The industrial and economic developments of the Industrial Revolution brought significant social changes. It resulted in an increase in population and the phenomenon of urbanization, as a growing number of people moved to urban centres in search of employment. Some individuals became very wealthy, but some lived in horrible conditions.

The gap between the rich and poor increased even more rapidly. A class of prosperous industrialists, ship owners, and merchants dominated, accumulating great wealth, but at the same time, the working classes had to live with minimum comforts in overcrowded environments. Children were sent to work in factories, women experienced substantial changes in their lifestyle as they took jobs in domestic service and the textile industries, leaving the agricultural workforce and spending less time in the family home. This period saw the creation of a middle class that enjoyed the benefits of the new prosperity.<sup>6</sup>

Some innovative ideas in the textile industry came from a British silk mill worker, John Lombe. In 1719 Lombe patented the idea as his own in Great Britain and built a large building next to a river to use a water wheel to power the machines. That silk factory came into minds years later when industrial were looking for ways to power textile inventions at one location. Textile inventions grew in size so they could no longer fit in cottages. Just like Lombe's old silk factory, the new textile factories were also located on rivers.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> CLEARY, Vern, Modern World: Imperialism ( Bellarmine College Preparatory, 2016), 2-3

<sup>5</sup> History-World, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://history-world.org/Industrial%20Intro.htm>

<sup>6</sup> British Museum, accessed July 10, 2016,

[http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/publications/online\\_research\\_catalogues/paper\\_money/paper\\_money\\_of\\_england\\_wales/the\\_industrial\\_revolution/the\\_industrial\\_revolution\\_3.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/publications/online_research_catalogues/paper_money/paper_money_of_england_wales/the_industrial_revolution/the_industrial_revolution_3.aspx)

<sup>7</sup> CLEARY, Vern, Modern World ( Bellarmine College Preparatory, 2013), 36



The use of steam engines in coalmining ensured that a cheap and reliable supply of the iron industry's essential raw material was available.<sup>8</sup> The steam engine also sparked innovative methods of transportation. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were over 1000 railways. All of these were, however, drawn by horses. The first full-scale steam-powered locomotive took its voyage down the main street of Camborne in England on Christmas Eve in 1801.<sup>9</sup>

## **2 The Victorian Period**

### **2.1. General background of the Victorian era**

The Victorian era was a period of dramatic change that brought England to its highest point of development as a world power. The rapid growth of London, from a population of 2 million when Victoria came to the throne to one of 6.5 million by the time of Victoria's death, indicates the dramatic transition from a way of life based on the ownership of land to a modern urban economy. England experienced an enormous increase in wealth, but rapid and unregulated industrialization brought a host of social and economic problems. Some writers such as Thomas Babington Macaulay applauded England's progress, while others such as Mathew Arnold felt the abandonment of traditional rhythms of life exacted a terrible price in human happiness.<sup>10</sup>

The early Victorian period (1830 – 48) saw the opening of Britain's first railway and its first Reform Parliament, but it was also a time of economic distress. The Reform Bill of 1832 extended voting privileges to men of the lower middle classes and redistributing parliamentary representation more fairly. Yet the economic and social difficulties associated with industrialization made the 1830s and 1840s a "Time of Troubles," characterized by unemployment, desperate poverty, and rioting. The Chartists, an organization of workers, helped create an atmosphere open to further reform. The

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<sup>8</sup> British Library, accessed July 11, 2016, <https://www.bl.uk/georgian-britain/articles/the-industrial-revolution>

<sup>9</sup>WEIGHTMAN, Gavin, *The Industrial Revolutionaries: The Making of Modern World 1776-1914* ( Grove Press New York 2007), 48-49

<sup>10</sup> Norton Anthology of English Literature, accessed July 16, 2017, <https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/review/summary.htm>

“condition of England” became a central topic for novelists including Charles Kingsley, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Benjamin Disraeli in the 1840s and early 1850s.<sup>11</sup>

Although the mid—Victorian period (1848 – 70) was not free of harassing problems, it was a time of prosperity, optimism, and stability. The achievements of modern industry and science were celebrated at the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park (1851). Enormous investments of people, money, and technology created the British Empire. Many English people saw the expansion of empire as a moral responsibility, and missionary societies flourished. At the same time, however, there was an increasing debate about religious belief. The Church of England had evolved into three major divisions, with conflicting beliefs about religious practice. There were also rationalise challenges to religion from philosophy (especially Utilitarianism) and science (especially biology and geology). Both the infallibility of the Bible and the stature of the human species in the universe were increasingly called into question.<sup>12</sup>

In the later period (1870 – 1901) the costs of Empire became increasingly apparent, and England was confronted with growing threats to its military and economic pre-eminence. A variety of socialist movements gained force, some influenced by the revolutionary theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The literature of the 1890s is characterized by self-conscious melancholy and aestheticism, but also saw the beginnings of the modernist movement.<sup>13</sup>

The extreme inequities between men and women stimulated a debate about women’s roles known as “The Woman Question.” Women were denied the right to vote or hold political office throughout the period, but gradually won significant rights such as custody of minor children and the ownership of property in marriage. By the end of Victoria’s reign, women could take degrees at twelve universities. Hundreds of thousands of working-class women laboured at factory jobs under appalling conditions, and many were driven into prostitution. While John Stuart Mill argued that the “nature

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<sup>11</sup> Norton Anthology of English Literature, accessed July 16, 2017, <https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/review/summary.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Norton Anthology of English Literature, accessed July 16, 2017, <https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/review/summary.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

of women” was an artificial thing, most male authors preferred to claim that women had a special nature fitting them for domestic duties.<sup>14</sup>

## **2.2. Child labour**

Child labour was not an invention of the Industrial Revolution. Poor children have always started work as soon as their parents could find employment for them. But in much of pre—industrial Britain, there simply was not very much work available for children. This changed with industrialisation. Victorian Child Labour was the norm in the 1800’s. There was no such thing as Child Protective services like we have today. The new factories and mines were hungry for workers and required the execution of simple tasks that could easily be performed by children. The result was a surge in child labour – presenting a new kind of problem that Victorian society had to tackle.<sup>15</sup>

Until the use of children under the age of 16 years of age was prohibited for full-time work, the child labour in Victorian times was uncontrolled. Factory and mill owners saw children as cheap effective labour. They worked for a mere fraction of what an adult earned. And girls were even cheaper. Because of their size and youthful energy, there were jobs that children performed as good or even better than adults. Sometimes you would find more children than adults working at a factory.<sup>16</sup>

In towns, most boys were employed as errand boys or chimney sweeps, though once again finding employers who wanted to hire a child could be a difficult task. The average age for starting work was 11 and half years old. There was, therefore, considerable variety in the age at which children started work, with those in the industrial districts typically starting work the youngest. All children laboured under the same disadvantages, though, working for very low pay, performing work that was dirty and dangerous, and usually working long hours as well.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Norton Anthology of English Literature, accessed July 16, 2017, <https://www.wvnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/review/summary.htm>

<sup>15</sup> British Library, accessed August 1, 2017, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/child-labour>

<sup>16</sup> PRICE, Paxton, „Victorian Child Labour and the Conditions They Worked In“, accessed August 7, 2017, <https://victorianchildren.org/victorian-child-labor/>

<sup>17</sup> British Library, accessed August 1, 2017, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/child-labour>

At the factories, children had no rights. The dirtiest jobs were given to the children. Many times a child would be told to clean under machines even while they were running. There were little or no safety measures put in place in Victorian times so the occurrence of an injury and even death was not uncommon. Victorian child labor consisted of very long working hours. The normal work week would be Monday thru Saturday from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M. Children would be beaten or fined for falling asleep, making a mistake or being late.<sup>18</sup>

### **2.3. Criminality in Victorian England**

While the general pattern of crime was one of decline, there were occasional panics and scares generated by particularly appalling offences. In the 1850s and early 1860s there were panics about street robbery, known then as ‘garrotting’. A virulent press campaign against garroters in 1862 developed following the robbery of a Member of Parliament on his way home from a late-night sitting of parliament; and while the number of ‘garrotte’ robberies was tiny, the press created sensations out of minor incidents. Parliament responded with ferocious legislation providing for offenders to be flogged as well as imprisoned.<sup>19</sup>

The murders of Jack the Ripper in the autumn of 1888 were confined to a small area of London's East End but similarly provoked a nation—wide panic whipped up by press sensationalism. Violence, especially violence with a sexual frisson, sold newspapers. But violent crime in the form of murder and street robbery never figured significantly in the statistics or in the courts.<sup>20</sup>

Most offenders were young males, but most offences were petty thefts. The most common offences committed by women were linked to prostitution and were, essentially, ‘victimless’ crimes – soliciting, drunkenness, drunk and disorderly, vagrancy. Domestic violence rarely came before the courts. It tended to be committed in the private sphere of the home; among some working—class communities it continued to have a degree of tolerance, while amongst other classes the publicising of such behaviour, even, perhaps

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<sup>18</sup> PRICE, Paxton, „Victorian Child Labour and the Conditions They Worked In“, accessed August 7, 2017, <https://victorianchildren.org/victorian-child-labor/>

<sup>19</sup> Crime and the Victorians, accessed May 17, 2016, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/crime\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/crime_01.shtml)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

especially, in the courts, would have been regarded as bringing a family's reputation into disrepute.<sup>21</sup>

The press also made much of big financial scandals and frauds. A significant percentage of company flotation were fraudulent during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although the behaviour of the corrupt businessman provoked outrage and, when caught and convicted, a hefty prison sentence, he was usually described as an exception to the rule, a 'black sheep' or a 'rotten apple' in contemporary parlance. He was not conceived as a member of those who, particularly in the 1860s, the Victorians labelled as 'the criminal class'.<sup>22</sup>

### **2.3.1. Child pickpocket**

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century times were hard, and orphans, street children, or the very poor sometimes became apprenticed to men who dabbled in the art of pick pocketing. Two well-known, but fictional pickpockets, Fagin and The Artful Dodger, were made famous in Charles Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist*, and, similar to Dickens's characters, young pickpockets needed to be skilful so as to not find themselves sitting in jail or worse, hanging from a hemp noose.<sup>23</sup>

Many young pickpockets, often called natty lads, were extremely adept at sleight of hand. In 1811, Francis Grose described in his book titled *Dictionary in the Vulgar Tongue* the art of pickpocketing: "The newest and most dexterous way, which is, to thrust the fingers straight, stiff, open, and very quick, into the pocket, and so closing them, hook what can be held between them." These natty lads did not learn the art of pickpocketing on their own. Henry Mayhew claimed in his book *London Labour and the London Poor*, children, sometimes as young as five years older, were taught by older thieves. One method to train future pickpockets was to have "a coat... suspended on the wall with a bell attached to it... the boy [then] attempts to take the handkerchief from the pocket without the bell ringing. Until he is able to do this with proficiency he is not considered well trained."<sup>24</sup>

Child pickpockets abounded between the 1780s and 1840s, and they flourished in London where approximately one—tenth of all England's population resided. London

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<sup>21</sup>Crime and the Victorians, accessed May 17, 2016, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/crime\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/crime_01.shtml)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> WALTON, Geri, *Child Pickpockets of the 1700 and 1800s*, accessed August 2, 2016, <https://www.geriw Walton.com/pickpockets/>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

was the perfect site for pickpockets with its overcrowded streets, and as school was not compulsory and parents were working long hours, children were often left on their own. This freedom encouraged some children to spend time learning the lucrative trade of pickpocketing. Pickpockets knew if they were good, they had a slim chance of getting caught. However, if they did get caught, they might be executed, as England had no professional police force until 1829, and, to deter crime, they executed many petty criminals during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>25</sup>

Sometimes natty lads worked alone and other times they worked in swarms on Newton or Dyot Streets or in St. Giles Parish, which according to Grose were "the grand headquarters of most of the thieves and pickpockets about London." They also plied their trade at crowded venues, such as racetracks, festivals, Smithfield market, or at public lectures. In these crowds, natty lads misdirected and distracted unsuspecting victims so as to pick their pockets. Then they shared their proceeds or lack of proceeds, depending on their skill, with their accomplices.<sup>26</sup>

One famous London pickpocket during the Georgian and Regency Eras was George Waldron, alias Barrington. When he was sixteen he got into a quarrel with a school mate, stabbed him, and was flogged by the school master. He ran away, adopted the name of Barrington, and joined a travelling theatre company. When the company ran short of funds and needed travelling money, "the manager prevailed upon Barrington to undertake the profession of a pickpocket...He then commenced [in this endeavour by]... affecting the airs and importance of a man of fashion." The gentleman pickpocket, as Barrington came to be known, had some short-lived success, but he was also convicted several times, sentenced twice to hard labour on the Thames, and, finally, on September 27, 1798, transported to Botany Bay. On his way to Botany Bay he subdued a mutiny and because of this, when he arrived at his destination, he was "appointed superintendent of convicts." After that Barrington gave up his pickpocketing ways and led an exemplary life.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> WALTON, Geri, Child Pickpockets of the 1700 and 1800s, accessed August 2, 2016, <https://www.geriwatson.com/pickpockets/>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

### 2.3.2. Victorian prisons

Prisons at that time were often in old buildings, such as castles. They tended to be damp, unhealthy, insanitary and over—crowded. All kinds of prisoners were mixed in together, as at Coldbath Fields: men, women, children; the insane; serious criminals and petty criminals; people awaiting trial; and debtors. Each prison was run by the jailer in his own way. He made up the rules. If you had money to pay, you could buy extra privileges, such as private rooms, better food, more visitors, keeping pets, letters going in and out, and books to read. If you did not, the basic fare was grim. You even had to pay the jailer to be let out when your sentence was finished.<sup>28</sup>

Law and order was a major issue in the Victorian era. Victorians were worried about the new cities that had grown up rapidly following the Industrial revolution or how were the masses to be kept under control. They were also worried about the rising crime. They could see that transporting convicts to Australia was not the answer. By the 1830s Australia was already complaining that they did not want to be the dumping—ground for Britain’s criminals. The answer was to reform the police and to build more prisons. Between 1842 and 1877, almost 90 prisons were built or added to. It was a massive building programme, costing the society millions of pounds. You could see the big extension to Coldbath Fields prison in Source 1. People wanted to reform prisons for different reasons. Many Victorian prisons are still in use today.<sup>29</sup>

Christian reformers felt that prisoners were God’s creatures and deserved to be treated decently. Rational reformers believed that the purpose of prison was to punish and reform, not to kill prisoners with disease or teach them how to be better criminals. There was more to Victorian plans than just bigger and better buildings. In the 1840s a system of rules called “The Separate System” was introduced. This was based on the belief that convicted criminals had to face up to themselves. Accordingly, they were kept on their own in their cells most of the time. When they were let out, to go to chapel or for exercise, they sat in special seats or wore special masks so that they could not even see or talk to another prisoner. Not surprisingly, many went mad under that system.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> A Victorian Prison, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/victorian-prison/>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

By the 1860s opinion had changed, believing that many criminals were habitual criminals and nothing would change them. They just had to be scared enough by prison never to offend again. The purpose of the silent system was to break convicts' wills by being kept in total silence and by long, pointless hard labour. "The Silent System" was associated with the Prisons Act in 1865 and the Assistant Director of Prisons, Sir Edmund du Cane, who promised the public that prisoners would get "Hard Labour, Hard Fare, and Hard Board". Victorians were worried about the rising crime rate: offences went up from about 5,000 per year in 1800 to about 20,000 per year in 1840.<sup>31</sup>

They were firm believers in punishment for criminals, but faced a problem: what should the punishment be? There were prisons, but they were mostly small, old and badly—run. Common punishments included transportation – sending the offender to America, Australia or Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), or execution – as hundreds of offences carried the death penalty. By the 1830s people were having doubts about both sorts of punishments. So the correct answer was prison: lots of new prisons were built and old ones extended.<sup>32</sup>

The Victorians also had clear ideas about what these prisons should be like. They should be unpleasant places, to deter people from committing crimes. Once inside, prisoners had to be made to face up to their own faults, by keeping them in silence and making them do hard, boring work. Walking a tread wheel or picking oakum (separating strands of rope) were the most common forms of hard labour.<sup>33</sup>

#### **2.4. Literature of the Victorian Period**

Victorian literature is that produced during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837 - 1901) or the Victorian era. It forms a link and transition between the writers of the romantic period and the very different literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 19<sup>th</sup> century is often regarded as a high point in British literature as well as in other countries such as France, the United

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<sup>31</sup> A Victorian Prison, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/victorian-prison/>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Ibid



States, and Russia. Books and novel, in particular, became ubiquitous, and the “Victorian novelist” created a legacy of works with continuing appeal.<sup>34</sup>

The most significant development in publishing was the growth of the periodical. Novels and long works of non-fiction were published in serial form, fostering a distinctive sense of a community of readers.<sup>35</sup>

They were published in such literary magazines as *Household Words*.<sup>36</sup>

The literature of the Victorian age (1837-1901) entered a new period after the romantic revival. The literature of the era was preceded by romanticism and was followed by modernism and realism. It can also be called a fusion of romantic and realist style of writing.<sup>37</sup>

### **2.4.1 Characteristics of Victorian novels**

Victorian novels tend to be idealized portraits of difficult lives in which a hard work, perseverance, love, and luck win out in the end. They were usually inclined towards being of improving nature with a central moral lesson at heart. While this formula was the basis for much of earlier Victorian fiction, the situation became more complex as the century progressed.<sup>38</sup>

There are three general characteristics. Firstly, literature in the Victorian age tended to come face to face with realism. This reflected more on practical problems and interests. It becomes a powerful instrument for human progress. Secondly, the Victorian literature seems to deviate from the strict principle of “art for art's sake” and asserts its moral purpose. Thirdly, this was more like the age of pessimism and confusion. The influence of science was strongly felt here. Although characterized as practical and materialistic, the literature of the Victorian age portrays a completely ideal life. It was an idealistic age

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<sup>34</sup> University of Adelaide, Victorian Literature, accessed June 30, 2017, <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/literature/victorian/>

<sup>35</sup> Norton Anthology of British Literature, accessed June 30, 2017, <https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/review/summary.htm>

<sup>36</sup> University of Adelaide, Victorian Literature, accessed June 30, 2017, <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/literature/victorian/>

<sup>37</sup> Victorian Era, Victorian Era Literature Characteristics, accessed June 30, 2017, <http://www.victorian-era.org/victorian-era-literature-characteristics-html.html>

<sup>38</sup> Victorian Era, Victorian Era Literature Characteristics, accessed June 30, 2017, <http://www.victorian-era.org/victorian-era-literature-characteristics-html.html>

where the great ideals like truth, justice, love, brotherhood were emphasized by poets, essayists, and novelists of the age.<sup>39</sup>

Among the significant Victorian novelists and poets belong: Matthew Arnold, the Bronte sisters, Christina Rossetti, Joseph Conrad, Robert Browning, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Willkie Collins, Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot, George Meredith, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Gissing, Richard Jefferies, Thomas Hardy, A. E. Housman, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Philip Meadows Taylor, Alfred Lord Tennyson biography, William Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, George MacDonald, G.M. Hopkins, Oscar Wilde, Lewis Carroll.<sup>40</sup>

### **3 Introducing Charles Dickens**

#### **3.1 Biography of Charles Dickens**

Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, as the second child of John and Elizabeth Dickens.<sup>41</sup> The Dickens family never settled anywhere for very long. His parents were often evicted for the not paying the rent or were desperately attempting to keep ahead of creditors. John Dickens was in perpetual financial trouble and he was constitutionally unable to live within his means. When Charles was five, the family moved to Chatham in Kent, where John Dickens was employed in the naval dockyard.<sup>42</sup>

In 1822, the Dickens family moved to Camden Town – a poor neighbourhood in London. By then the family’s financial situation had grown awful, as John Dickens had a dangerous habit of living beyond the family’s means. Eventually, John was sent to prison for debt in 1824, when Charles was just 12 years old. Following his father’s imprisonment, Charles Dickens was forced to leave school to work at a boot-blackening factory alongside the River Thames. At the rundown, rodent-ridden factory, Dickens earned six shillings a week labelling pots of “blackening,” a substance used to clean fireplaces. It was the best he could do to help support his family. Looking back on the

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<sup>39</sup> Victorian Era, Victorian Era Literature Characteristics, accessed June 30, 2017, <http://www.victorian-era.org/victorian-era-literature-characteristics-html.html>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> CODY, David, Dickens: A Brief Biography, accessed July 2, 2017, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/dickensbio1.html>

<sup>42</sup> PETERS, Catherine, Charles Dickens (Stroud: History Press, 2009), 3

experience, Dickens saw it as the moment he said goodbye to his youthful innocence, stating that he wondered “how could he be so easily cast away at such a young age.”<sup>43</sup>

He lived in cheap lodgings and was hungry. It left him a lasting impression of misery, rejection and his humiliation.<sup>44</sup>

He felt abandoned and betrayed by the adults who were supposed to take care of him. These sentiments would later become a recurring theme in his writing.<sup>45</sup>

This experience defined his entire life with profound psychological imprints. His first short story A Dinner at Poplar Walk was published in the year 1833. It was later renamed Mr. Minns and His Cousin and it was included in Sketches by Boz, which was published in 1836. He also continued his success as a reporter, joining The Morning Chronicle in 1834.<sup>46</sup>

In April 1836, he married Catherine Hogarth, daughter of George Hogarth who edited 'Sketches by Boz'. Within the same month came the publication of the highly successful 'Pickwick Papers' and from that point on there was no looking back for Dickens.<sup>47</sup>

The Pickwick Papers started to be published monthly and gave him huge popularity. This extraordinary popularity lasted his whole life.<sup>48</sup>

After the success of Pickwick, Dickens embarked on a full-time career as a novelist, producing work of increasing complexity at an incredible rate, although he continued, as well, his journalistic and editorial activities. Oliver Twist was begun in 1837 and continued in monthly parts until April 1839. It was in 1837, too, that Catherine's younger sister Mary, whom Dickens idolized, died. She too would appear, in various guises, in Dickens's later fiction.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Biography, Charles Dickens, accessed July 1, 2017, <https://www.biography.com/people/charles-dickens-9274087>

<sup>44</sup> Encyclopedia, Charles Dickens, accessed July 1, 2017, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/children/academic-and-educational-journals/dickens-charles-1812-1870>

<sup>45</sup> Biography, Charles Dickens, accessed July 1, 2017, <https://www.biography.com/people/charles-dickens-9274087>

<sup>46</sup> PETERS, Catherine, Charles Dickens (Stroud: History Press, 2009), 18

<sup>47</sup> BBC History, Charles Dickens, accessed July 3, 2017, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/dickens\\_charles.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/dickens_charles.shtml)

<sup>48</sup> Charles Dickens Info, Charles Dickens, accessed July 2, 2017, <http://www.charlesdickensinfo.com/novels/pickwick-papers/>

<sup>49</sup> CODY, David, Dickens: A Brief Biography, accessed July 2, 2017, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/dickensbio1.html>

Dickens and his wife spent some time in America and Italy between 1842 and 1846.<sup>50</sup> As well as a huge list of novels he published the autobiography, edited weekly periodicals including “Household Words” and “All Year Round”, wrote travel books and administered charitable organizations. He was also a theatre enthusiast, wrote plays and performed before Queen Victoria in 1851. His energy was inexhaustible and he spent much time abroad – for example lecturing against slavery in the United States and touring Italy.<sup>51</sup>

In 1858, in London, Dickens undertook his first public readings for pay and quarrelled with his old friend and rival, the great novelist Thackeray. More importantly, it was in that year that, after a long period of difficulties, he separated from his wife. They had been for many years “temperamentally unsuited” to each other. Dickens, charming and brilliant though he was, was also fundamentally insecure emotionally and must have been extraordinarily difficult to live with.<sup>52</sup>

Dickens’s creative genius was fully recognized, not by selected readership but by a mass audience. His novels were read by rich and poor, the newly literate and the highly educated. He was a great entertainer, who could move from drama to comedy in a sentence.<sup>53</sup>

But Dickens was not only a novelist. In his fifty—eight years he wrote penetrating, investigative journalism. He was concerned with the major issues of his times and played a very active part in charitable enterprises and welfare schemes. Charles Dickens was in his own way the most popular novelist who had ever lived. He still holds his place as one of the greatest English writers, an original genius whose novels are an essential link in the canon of English literature.<sup>54</sup>

His farewell reading tour was abandoned when, in April 1869, he collapsed. He began writing another novel and gave a short farewell season of readings in London, ending with the famous speech, “From these garish lights I vanish now for evermore...”—words

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<sup>50</sup> PETERS, Catherine, Charles Dickens (Stroud: History Press, 2009), 35

<sup>51</sup> BBC History, Charles Dickens, accessed July 3, 2017, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/dickens\\_charles.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/dickens_charles.shtml)

<sup>52</sup> CODY, David, Dickens: A Brief Biography, accessed July 2, 2017, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/dickensbio1.html>

<sup>53</sup> PETERS, Catherine, Charles Dickens (Stroud: History Press, 2009), xi

<sup>54</sup> PETERS, Catherine, Charles Dickens (Stroud: History Press, 2009), xiii

repeated, less than three months later, on his funeral card. He died suddenly on June 9, 1870, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.2. Writing

Dickens is one of the novelists to write from the point of view of the lowest classes living in a large city. His descriptions of London are accurate, even when heightened for emotional effect. Dickens knew London neighbourhoods from long walks – sometimes over twenty miles, which he regularly took a relief while writing and as the way to work off pressure and energy.<sup>56</sup>

His comic characters have one outstanding trait, which may be a physical attribute, an attitude, or behaviour. Dickens told a friend that an expression or a part of a face "would acquire a sudden ludicrous life of its own" and overshadows the whole person.<sup>57</sup>

"Make them laugh, make them cry, make them wait," was Dickens's motto and his method. The techniques used in the execution of this method bear careful scrutiny for they were integral to the work of the master storyteller. Dickens was a master of high humour—satire, puns, wordplay, and a curious method of characterizing that poked fun at his own creations even as he fleshed them out with life and a persona all their own.<sup>58</sup>

Edmund Wilson's comment that Dickens was usually unable "to get the good and bad together in one character" has become almost a cliché in Dickens criticism. Dickens gives some of his villains dimension or complexity by presenting them humorously, that is, by making them funny as well as evil, but not by giving them any virtues. The existence of a shadow or dark side in his heroes is sometimes suggested by the use of a double.<sup>59</sup>

### 3.3. Dickens and the Criminal Class

Dickens began his writing, during a period in which social observers of the city began to fear that a separate and sinister underworld had developed in the heart of London.

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<sup>55</sup> Britannica, Charles Dickens, accessed July 3, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Dickens-British-novelist>

<sup>56</sup> Brooklyn College. Charles Dickens, accessed July 4, 2017, [http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel\\_19c/dickens/general.html](http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel_19c/dickens/general.html)

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> Writers Digest, There Are No Rules, accessed August 1, 2017, <http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/there-are-no-rules/write-like-charles-dickens>

<sup>59</sup> Brooklyn College. Charles Dickens, accessed July 4, 2017, [http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel\\_19c/dickens/general.html](http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel_19c/dickens/general.html)

Portsmouth was viewed in the same way. Victorians began to write of a “criminal class” who lived entirely on the proceeds of crime and preyed upon the respectable people of the West End of London. To make matters worse, this so—called criminal class lived undetected in the dark back streets and courts of the East End. That was a place where “civilised” people feared to go. However, the Victorian idea that an organised underworld separate from the rest of society was systematically preying on the wealthy was largely a myth and perpetuated by social researchers such as Dickens or Henry Mayhew.<sup>60</sup>

Dickens witnessed for himself the “dangerous” underworld of London and recounted his tour of the “plague pots” of the capital in his journal *Household Words*. On one expedition, he visited the underbelly of Westminster which he described as the “Devil’s Acre”. He informed his readers that it was an error to think of Westminster as simply a district of splendour and grandeur since in the back streets flowed “the blackest tide of moral turpitude” as it was “the most notorious haunt of lawbreakers in the empire”. In both *Oliver Twist* and his reports in *Household Words*, Dickens explicitly linked filth and squalor with crime, immorality such as prostitution and the “criminal class”. Dickens’s portrayal of a morally depraved underworld that lived in filth and squalor became an accepted view of the poor in the East End by the 1850s and led other social explorers to investigate similarly densely populated towns in Britain.<sup>61</sup>

### **3.4. A chronological summary of Dickens’s works**

His first short story *A Dinner at Poplar Walk* was published in 1833. Then he starts to publish “Sketches” using the pseudonym “Boz”(1834) and *Pickwick Papers* (1837). After that he wrote *Oliver Twist* (1838), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), *Old Curiosity Shop*, *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), *American Notes* (1842), *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), *The Cricket on the Heart* (1845), *Pictures from Italy*, *The Battle of Life* (1846), *Dombey and Son* (1848), *David Copperfield* (1850), *Household Words* – an English weekly magazine edited by Dickens begins publication (1850), *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great*

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<sup>60</sup> Dickens and the Criminal Class, accessed March 20, 2016, <http://dickens.port.ac.uk/crime/>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

*Expectations* (1861), *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). In 1870 he starts *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* but dies leaving *Drood* unfinished.<sup>62</sup>

## 4 The theme of Villain

### 4.1. Defining the term

The term villain is reportedly in use since the year 1822 for what we know it now but it was considered a surname in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and also a farmer.<sup>63</sup>

By the definition, the noun “villain” is presented as the main bad character in a film, play or story.<sup>64</sup>

### 4.2. Villains in Dickens’s world

The characters of villain play in Dickens’s novels a very crucial role even his good characters outnumber the bad one. Villains are usually presented without generosity, their feelings are frozen and their lives are dominated by the drive for personal gain. They are selfish and cynical, anytime ready to suppress their emotions.

Villains in Dickens’s world are portrayed as grotesque and picturesque monsters and rogues. Their hall—mark is their capacity to inflict pain without suffering a tremor of sympathy or remorse. Author presents them as essentially wicked men who have learnt from hardship to pursue evil rather than co—operate with their fellow men.<sup>65</sup>

In terms of artistic value, villains in Dickens’s novels are marked by exaggerated features, oversimplification and stereotyping. Dickens drew these detestable characters from the rising classes, especially those connected with trade. However, Dickens’s detestation was more likely motivated by psychological rather than social factors. It was a temperament, not a class that Dickens lashed. Even if the upper middle class most frequently appears to be the object of his satire, this is only because it offers the perfect environment for such natures to flourish in. The hated villain’s personality is very easily

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<sup>62</sup> PETERS, Catherine, *Charles Dickens* (Stroud: History Press, 2009), vii-ix

<sup>63</sup> Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. ‘villain, (n.)’, accessed May 2, 2017, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=villain>

<sup>64</sup> Online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, accessed June 6, 2017, <http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/villain>

<sup>65</sup> CAZAMIAN, Luis, *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850*, (London: Taylor&Francis Ltd, 2009), 152-154

described: it is the dry egoistic individualist, the man whose determined and realistic outlook has been distorted by industrial and commercial practices.<sup>66</sup>

Dickens's own nature was the reverse: he was a passionate and imaginative man. His spontaneous wish was to establish or restore moral harmony, and a profound intuition showed him that the improvement of human relations was linked to the improvement of human nature. His own experience had showed him the cruelty of social evils. Like all the idealists of his times, Dickens perceived moral questions at the heart of social questions.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore his villain characters became the most memorable and timeless caricatures in the history of literature.

## **5.1 Christmas Carol**

### **5.1.1. Background**

Wealth and poverty, indulgence and innocence, age and childhood, death and birth are Dickens' favourite themes. A Christmas Carol, a story about a moneylender named Scrooge interconnects all of them. He has his entire life reflected. He sees all the opposites projected right in front of him. He sees his lost childhood and his own innocence. Right in the deep core of this dream, Dickens sees through Scrooge an opposite, which followed him ever since his last days in the Warren polish factory.<sup>68</sup>

It shifts from a comfortable bedroom into a vicious darkness. It shifts from a warm fireplace into a hopeless gale. It also shifts from fancy Christmas tables to lost children – this boy is named Ignorance and the girl's name is Poverty. At that time, Dickens was strongly convinced that every crime, inequality or violence which he strongly hated and also feared, were the result of lack of education. He always believed in education, nevertheless his opinions and methods should have undergone some considerable changes. In A Christmas Carol the reader is thrown into a horrible vision of two little children who are actually Ignorance and Poverty. Scrooge is, in a way, last of those good

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<sup>66</sup> CAZAMIAN, Luis, *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850*, (London: Taylor&Francis Ltd, 2009), 152-154

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> WILSON, Agnus, *Svět Charlese Dickense* (Odeon, 1979), 161-165



philanthropists, who can change the society for better by individual charity and generosity.<sup>69</sup>

If I compare Scrooge with Mr. Pickwick, Scrooge also undergoes some sort of purifying flame of poverty and misery. He can understand such things only through his own childhood, via the childhood of Tiny Tim and childhood in general. It shows us how the people find themselves in death in the middle of our lives.<sup>70</sup>

It is the time of Christmas, when everyone thinks of those above of them, as if they were co—passengers on a road to grave and not just completely different creatures taking their own path.

Christmas Carol is not an attempt to make a countless list of vices of the society system like it happened in *The Chimes* and it also does not offer us any medicine. A Christmas Carol gives us a feeling of tension and uncertainty via a horrifying dream. In a way, A Christmas Carol is Dickens at the top of his chaos, but because this chaos is explained in a rather simple short story, its emotional effect is just as strong as with any other stories.<sup>71</sup>

### **5.1.2. Ebenezer Scrooge**

The main character of the story is Ebenezer Scrooge. He is first introduced to readers at the very beginning of the story as he sits in his counting house on Christmas Eve.

Scrooge is always described as a miserly old man with a mean spirit. Scrooge does not want to have anything to do with Christmas and if anyone wants to wish him a Merry Christmas he replies: „Bah! Humbug!“ Even though Scrooge is insanely wealthy, he refuses to donate any money to charity during the holiday season. He also refuses to spend money on the fire and therefore his clerk Bob Cratchit has to work in an incredible cold. The reader can sense Scrooge’s lack of Christmas spirit when he forces Cratchit to work even on Christmas Day and refusing to give him a free day to enjoy it with his family.<sup>72</sup>

Scrooge comes back to his cold empty home. At midnight he is visited by the ghost of Jacob Marley – who used to be his partner. He, as a punishment for living a greedy life

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<sup>69</sup> WILSON, Agnus, *Svět Charlese Dickense* (Odeon, 1979), 161-165

<sup>70</sup> DICKENS, Charles, *A Christmas Carol* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

<sup>71</sup> WILSON, Angus, *Svět Charlese Dickense* (Odeon, 1979), 161-165

<sup>72</sup> DICKENS, Charles, *A Christmas Carol* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

full of self—indulgence, is forced to wander this earth weighted down by heavy chains. Jacob Marley tells Ebenezer that he will, throughout the night, be visited by three Christmas spirits, who will try to help him change his ways so he does not end up like Marley. Even though readers can easily see that Scrooge is startled he thinks nothing of his strange visit and he simple goes to sleep.<sup>73</sup>

The Ghost of Christmas Past, which is the first spirit to visit Scrooge, takes him back in time to his past Christmas Days. When Scrooge sees his almost forgotten childhood he starts to realize how he sacrificed so many things in his life because of his greediness and obsession over money. Scrooge is brought to tears when he watches his fiancé leaving his adult self who did not fight for her. Scrooge is really hurt and back in his dark lonely room. The next hour he is visited by yet another visitor and that is Ghost of Christmas Present. Scrooge meets Bob Cratchit and his big and cheery family sitting down to their Christmas dinner that is far too small and not enough for such large crowd of people. Scrooge also sees Tiny Tim who is Bob Cratchit's crippled son. His family cannot afford money for a surgery that he needs. Scrooge also gets to see the Christmas party that Fred – his nephew – is having. Scrooge was invited to this dinner but he declined the invitation. He can see how merry everyone is and how much fun they have. But he missed all of this. He knew he made a mistake.<sup>74</sup>

Last of all, Scrooge faces the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. The spirit is mute and shows Scrooge a variety of different images and events that are all related to the recent death of an “unnamed man” – a man who was wealthy, yet never shared any of his money with anyone and never showed any mercy; thus it seemed as though no one was sad about that mysterious man's death. He is brought to a cemetery only to see a tombstone with his name on it. He was the man, who was the unnamed. Therefore, Scrooge begs the spirit to change his fate and save his life. He promises he will abandon his insensitive, greedy ways and honour Christmas. The next thing he sees, he is home in his bed, on Christmas morning. Now the once bitter, selfish Scrooge becomes unbelievably grateful and overwhelmed with happiness.<sup>75</sup>

Ebenezer starts being kind – he donates large amounts of money to charities, he attends his nephew's Christmas party, and he even sends a giant turkey to Bob Cratchit's family

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<sup>73</sup> DICKENS, Charles , A Christmas Carol ( Oxford University Press, 2008)

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

house. Scrooge also decided to give Bob Cratchit the day off he deserves and he even visits Cratchit's house to spread his Christmas cheer. Ebenezer begins and continues treating his fellow humans with compassion, kindness and affection. He also does so while honouring Christmas „, with all his heart“.<sup>76</sup>

The story of *A Christmas Carol* does not only stress the importance of empathy – appreciating what one has also stresses the value of giving to people who are in need or the less—fortunate. It is likely that with the creation of such egocentric and selfish character like Ebenezer Scrooge, Dickens hoped to show that one can really change. He shows that it does not matter how miserable or cold—hearted a person is, there is always hope that they can be transformed. Ebenezer Scrooge got his wake—up call and reached his turning point throughout a series of life reflections and a string of buried memories. Readers cannot really tell if these encounters are real or just a dream but they definitely sparked a desire to change a very rigid man and therefore it shows that even the most selfish and villainous of individuals have the ability to redeem themselves and change for the better. In this case, this change causes a strong need to help other people and make positive contributions in their lives.<sup>77</sup>

### **5.1.3. Lessons Ebenezer Scrooge learnt from the spirits**

The spirit of Christmas Past showed Ebenezer Scrooge how happy he used to be and the spirit also how caring he was to all people and animals. The spirit of Christmas Past also shows him that it is really important to be kind to others because it affects them.<sup>78</sup>

The spirit of the Christmas Present showed Scrooge that the way he behaves causes other people to suffer. The spirit also showed him that you do not need money to be happy.<sup>79</sup>

The spirit of the Future Christmas helped Scrooge see what was going to happen if he kept on being a mean and greedy person. It is only because of his behaviour that everyone he ever knew would hate him and forget him.<sup>80</sup>

Ebenezer Scrooge learned that it is essential to be kind and care about other people and yes – even for himself.

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<sup>76</sup> DICKENS, Charles , *A Christmas Carol* ( Oxford University Press, 2008)

<sup>77</sup> WILSON, Angus, *Svět Charlese Dickense*(Odeon,1979),161-165

<sup>78</sup> DICKENS, Charles , *A Christmas Carol* ( Oxford University Press, 2008)

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

## 5.2. Oliver Twist

### 5.2.1. Background

The novel was the first of the author's works to depict realistically the impoverished London underworld and to illustrate his belief that poverty leads to crime. While the novel is Victorian in its emotional appeal, it is decidedly unsentimental in its depiction of poverty and the criminal underworld. *Oliver Twist* is at once a picaresque story, a melodrama, and a fairy—tale romance in which the foundling is revealed to have noble origins. It is also one of the first novels to feature a child as the central character; though, in contrast with Dickens's later children, Oliver both stays a prepubescent and remains untouched by the traumas he experiences.<sup>81</sup>

Oliver's curious blankness is central to Dickens's multiple purposes. It enables him to remain the passive victim of institutionalized violence in the workhouse. It allows him to remain free of corruption when he falls in with Fagin's criminal gang, so that he can be recast as a middle-class child by his rescuer, Mr. Brownlow. The conspiracy between the wicked master of the den of underage thieves, Fagin, and Oliver's half-brother, Monks, to turn Oliver into a criminal produces the tension between imprisonment and escape that drives and unites the novel.<sup>82</sup>

Oliver escapes from the workhouse and from Fagin's underworld den, only to be recaptured until he is finally united with his aunt, Rose Maylie, and adopted by Brownlow.<sup>83</sup>

### 5.2.2. Fagin

Fagin is the main antagonist in the novel *Oliver Twist*. He is a hideous, sly and dishonest man. He is an important figure representing the criminal class in the Victorian England. Fagin controls a group of thieves in London. In the beginning he gives the orphans food on the street, place to stay and safety.<sup>84</sup>

*Oliver Twist* ends up working for him. Fagin trains young boys on the street so that they can become criminals. Every time Oliver gets caught, Fagin does not care about him and

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<sup>81</sup> TAYLOR, Jenny Bourne, accessed August 2 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Oliver-Twist-novel-by-Dickens>

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> DICKENS, Charles, *Oliver Twist*, (Oxford University Press, 2010)

he does not show any kind of affection towards him. He is only interested in his own well—being. This is where readers realize that Fagin is not a good person at all.<sup>85</sup>

When Fagin was full of himself unwrapping his stolen gems he says: “*What a fine think capital punishment is! Dead men never repent; dead men never bring awkward stories to light. The prospect of the gallows, too, makes them hardy and bold. Ah, it’s fine think for the trade! Five of them strung up in a row, and none left to play booty or return white – livered!*” I guess this implies that he thinks he is one step ahead of the law.<sup>86</sup>

In the novel, being afraid of getting hanged, the members of the gang are forced to betray each other. Fagin still believes that he can stay one step ahead of all of them. When Oliver Twist is sent to live in Fagin’s home, he initially gives him food and pretends that he wants to protect him. Fagin thought that by giving him a false sense of belonging, Oliver would be easily manipulated. Since Oliver is a different kind of character he can never become a fine thief. It simply never was in his character and therefore he fails to become a villain.<sup>87</sup>

It is only when the orphans get caught that we can see what kind of person he truly is. Fagin only cares for his benefit and not for children. Later, when Fagin gets caught, he is in a completely different level. He is afraid of his own life and completely petrified. When Oliver Twist comes to visit Fagin in the prison he tells him about his half—brother affair. In the end we do not see a tormentor to children who used to methodically push them to their limits, but rather a crying coward who is simply begging to be released. Fagin is portrayed as a humorous character, yet he is still a self—confessed scrooge who, despite the wealth he has obtained, does very little to improve the lives of children who live with him.<sup>88</sup>

Even darker sides to the Fagin’s personality are shown when he beats Jack Dawkins for not bringing Oliver back or in his attempted beating of Oliver when he tried to run away.

Fagin even causes death of Nancy Sikes. It might not have been directly, but it was clearly his intention since he falsely informed Bill about her betraying him. Through his

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<sup>85</sup> DICKENS, Charles, *Oliver Twist*, (Oxford University Press, 2010)

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

scheming manipulating voice, Fagin can very easily be a true form of evil itself. Fagin's overall look, methods, deception that he uses and the way how he trains the orphans for failure basically embodies this nickname.<sup>89</sup>

Fagin is completely out of any kind of dignity. There is no surprise when readers find how much Dickens dislikes him. At the very end of story when Fagin tries to flee in that frantic situation, Dickens himself concludes that Fagin has neither morality nor dignity.

### **5.2.3. Reality check for the character of Fagin**

When was Dickens 12 years old his father was arrested and sent to debtors' prison. Apart from his family, Charles started to work at the blacking factory for 6 shillings per week.<sup>90</sup>

Alone and abandoned by his family for several months, he met there a real senior boy named Bob Fagin, who was his supervisor. Later Dickens described him as follows: "*Bob Fagin was very good to me on the occasion of a bad attack of my old disorder. I suffered such excruciating pain that they made contemporary bed of straw in my old recess in the counting house, and I rolled about on the floor, and Bob filled empty blacking – bottles with hot water, and applied relays of them to my side half the day. I got better and quite easy towards evening, but Bob (who was much bigger and older than I) did not like the idea of my going home alone, and took me under his protection.*"<sup>91</sup>

The question is why the character of Fagin in Oliver Twist novel was named after real Bob Fagin. One explanation could be that Dickens associated his bad memories from the factory, the feeling of misery and excessive hard work with his supervisor.

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<sup>89</sup> DICKENS, Charles, *Oliver Twist*. ( Oxford University Press, 2010)

<sup>90</sup> SIMKIN, John , *Charles Dickens: A Biography* [online], accessed July 2, <http://spartacus-educational.com/PRdickens.htm>

<sup>91</sup> Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch , *Charles Dickens and other Victorians* (The University Press 1925), p.55

## 5.3. Hard Times

### 5.3.1. Background

*Hard Times* was written by Dickens in London and published in 1854. It was based on the Preston Lockout, which was the longest and most costly industrial conflict that occurred in Preston.<sup>92</sup>

Dickens poses Coketown, the main setting of the novel, as a town of facts and nothing but facts. However, he is trying to teach us that controversy between facts and fancy can indeed lead to one or many positive changes.<sup>93</sup>

*Hard Times* is a merciless book, but it definitely is not a socialistic tract, as it was sometimes called back in the day. Strikers are good people seduced by selfish, cunning agitator Slackbridge. There is something rather new in *Hard Times* – rejection of virtue, self—help, and heroism of a man who works hard to get to higher places. It is true though, that this rejection of Victorian capitalistic virtues easily questions the fact that the boasting of Mr Bounderby was something of a fraud.<sup>94</sup>

Readers might easily see the moral fable at the very beginning of the story. Sissy Jupe is scorned because she can't describe a horse. The conflict between the dead world of facts of Mr Gradgrind and Sleary's circus world of imagination is fixed.

Dickens's purpose in *Hard Times* was to expose England's industry in how they, the upper class and factory owners, mistreated their workers. As a middle class man and a writer, he tried to open the eyes of others to see what was happening. He had the talent to do so by writing fictional novels. To make it crystal clear for everyone, he tried to target each social class by using his fictional but very original and memorable characters.

Dickens's choice of words helps readers gather a perspective of the novel. The words he uses to describe the characters, as well as Coketown, allows readers to better comprehend the environment given by the town and its people on a more psychologically personal level.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Hard Times, Accessed July 22, 2017, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/hard-times>

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

<sup>94</sup> DICKENS, Charles, *Hard Times*, (HarperCollins Publishers, 2012)

<sup>95</sup> WILSON, Angus, WILSON, Svět Charlese Dickense (Odeon, 1979), 214-220

There was a major demographic increase. Victorian England was filled with economic turmoil. Factory workers known as “The hands” were exploited. There were dangerous factories, rigorous hours and cramped working space.<sup>96</sup>

Education is the main theme of the novel – but not just any kind of education. It is an education based on hard facts. Facts alone are wanted in life.

### **5.3.2. Josiah Bounderby**

Dickens portrays Josiah Bounderby as a prosperous capitalist who, despite of a factory owner and a banker in Coketown, conjures up the fiction of having grown up as an orphan. He wields this fable as a powerful weapon against his subordinates and their grievances while relying on the deceptive construct that he, who was once like them, is a self—made man through sheer hard work. Obsessed with trophies, Bounderby takes his friend’s daughter, Louisa Gradgrind, who eventually leaves him, as his wife. While overtime the detailed fabrications about his childhood are exposed as lies he dies in the street suffering from a fit, none the wiser, ignorant to the many truths revealed throughout the progression of the novel. In this sense he dies oblivious and unfulfilled.<sup>97</sup>

The novel validates the initial readers’ conjecture that Bounderby is an unpleasant character. He is portrayed as a classist, narcissistic, self—serving snobby character who overestimates his understanding of the intentions of the people that surround him. It is because of these and other such inferiorities of their employer that the factory workers keep on wanting to go on strike.<sup>98</sup>

While clearly misconstruing the vial intentions of Harthouse, who has his eyes set on Bounderby’s wife, Bounderby also completely ignores the loyalties of Stephen who happens to be the only genuine employee he has. The palpable actuality that Tom is the bank robber evades him till the very end. After waiting for a silver lining that might somehow morally advocate the actions of Bounderby, a silver lining that never actually manifests itself, the reader is bound to favour the side of the workers, regardless of their

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<sup>96</sup> VIGNEUX, Brandon, *Hard Times*, accessed July 23, <https://prezi.com/mluok7hnyf21/hard-times/>

<sup>97</sup> WILSON, Angus, *Svět Charlese Dickense* (Odeon, 1979), 214-220

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*



flaws and limitations. Bounderby fits into the role of a revolting capitalist master with relevant ease and never fails to demonstrate his shrewd nature, when tested. <sup>99</sup>

Between the realm of what transpires and what could have been, Bounderby is not lacking in aptitude. His constitution is not governed by emotions but rather facts and figures, which he heavily relies upon. He sees human beings as objects that can be used to gain something more – a means to an end – in his case an economic or social profit. He carefully invents his image into a tragic success story using an elaborate tale which revolves around the premise of him being abandoned by his mother as a child, a true “rags” to “riches” fairy tale. Regardless of being born to a loving and normal family he promotes himself as a sympathetic character, someone relatable, which clearly indicates that Bounderby is not an ordinary person. He artfully plays with the concept of humbleness and manipulates people so effortlessly to drown out their voices when they complain against his awful administrative policies. <sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> WILSON, Angus, Svět Charlese Dickense (Odeon, 1979), 214-220

<sup>100</sup> DICKENS, Charles, Hard Times, (HarperCollins Publishers, 2012)

## **Conclusion**

The main objective of this thesis is to identify and describe the villain characters in Charles Dickens's famous novels and put into prospective author's talent to depict these psychologically complex characters in his satirical portraits with wit, humour and authenticity through the prism of all major social and economic changes in the Victorian England he had witnessed and experienced first-hand during his entire life.

Social and economic impacts of the Industrial Revolution in the Victorian England were profound and dramatic, including poverty, child labour and criminality on one side and the rise of new upper middle classes with wealthy and spoiled lifestyle on the other side.

The theme of a villain in Dickens's novels is for the author very specific. It contains a lot of personal memories, experiences, and associations from Dickens's life and work – mainly the poverty, child labour and crime in Victorian England – that influenced and shaped his ability to create this character in unprecedented intensity and caricature. Villains in Dickens's world are portrayed as grotesque and picturesque monsters and rogues. Their hallmark is their capacity to inflict pain without suffering a tremor of sympathy or remorse.

The key part of this thesis consists of three sections where I focus on a description of three selected villains from Dickens's famous novels. The purpose of this practical part is to 'cut to the core of each character' and find what makes them tick and what makes them who they are.

The first villain is Fagin from *Oliver Twist*. Fagin is a typically mean and bitter villain, who only cares about himself and does not care who gets hurt in the process of him getting what he wants. Dickens really must have enjoyed creating this character, as Fagin remains as vivid as he would have lived today. Dickens did an excellent job with portraying this evil character in human flesh being rotten to the core.

The second villain is Ebenezer Scrooge from *A Christmas Carol*. He is a very complex character. He is not necessarily a simple 'black and white villain' like the other two. At some point, readers can also empathize with him when finding some similarities in their own lives. Such 'moments of truth' can make readers identify themselves with him. In the end, a positive moral comes out of it – even villain character can be turned and the

good part inside everyone may finally come to life and present itself – like here in the Christmas time when miracles happen.

The last villain is Josiah Bounderby from *Hard Times*. He is a completely different type of villain than Scrooge or Fagin. He is an egoistic narcissist with something of a God complex. This makes him a villain in his own sense of being. He lies and cheats to become the man who he is today. Nothing he says or does is sincere. Dickens masterfully portrays his character as he lives and feeds on all his chronic lies he tells.

Due to Dickens's creative genius can each of his villain characters be an integral part of the great story in his famous novels. With all credits to Dickens – they are really the most famous fictional villain characters ever created – at least for me.

## Resumé

Cílem této bakalářské práce je představení nejznámějších záporných postav románů *Oliver Twist*, *Těžké časy* a *Vánoční koleda* anglického spisovatele Charlese Dickense a jak moc byly inspirovány životními zkušenostmi a názory samotného autora. Odhaluje důvody, proč bolestné dětství autora a specifika Viktoriánské Anglie – chudoba, kriminalita a vykořisťování v důsledku průmyslové revoluce – tak významně ovlivnily jeho schopnost výjimečně vykreslit portréty svých záporných románových postav.

V první části práce popisují historické a společensko-ekonomické pozadí jeho tvorby – tzn. průmyslovou revoluci a Viktoriánskou dobu a jaký vliv měla tato doba na tehdejší populaci. Zmiňuji zde také život a dílo Charlese Dickense, včetně důležitých a problematických jevů, které se objevovaly během Dickensova života a kariéry spisovatele, zejména chudobu a dětskou kriminalitu ve Viktoriánské Anglii.

V hlavní části této práce rozebírám koncept záporné postavy ve slavných románech Charlese Dickense, včetně etymologie slova a představení Dickensova světa jeho postav.

Poslední část je rozdělená na tři části, kde se jsem se soustředila na popis každé z tří záporných postav ze tří vybraných románů. Jako první zápornou postavu jsem si vybrala Fagina z nejslavnějšího románu Charlese Dickense *Oliver Twist*. Fagin je typický zatrpklý, nevrlý a lakomý zloduch, který se stará jen sám o sebe a nikdo jiný ho nezajímá. Dickens si musel opravdu užívat vytváření této unikátní postavy, jelikož Fagin působí tak skutečně, jako by žil dnes. Tento padouch je opravdu prohnílý až na kost.

Druhou zápornou postavou je Ebenezer Scrooge z *Vánoční Koledy*. Je velmi komplexní postava, rozhodně ne ten černobílý padouch jako Fagin nebo Bounderby. Jsou momenty, kdy se čtenáři dokážou do jeho situace vžít a dokonce s ním i soucítit. V závěru přichází ponaučení, které je nadčasové v dnešní době.

Jako poslední zápornou postavu jsem si vybrala Josiaha Bounderbyho z románu *Zlé časy*. Dá se říci, že je úplným opakem jak Fagina, tak Scrooge. Bounderby je egoistický narcis a možná trpí komplexem Boha. Lže a podvádí, aby se stal tím, kým je. Vše, co říká, je neupřímné. Dickens zde mistrovsky vykresluje jeho charakter, jako by se ze svých lží skutečně živil. Už ani není schopen říkat pravdu.

Dickensova geniální kreativita při vykreslení jeho záporných postav je neopakovatelná. Jeho zásluhou se totiž staly nejslavnějšími zápornými postavami, jaké kdy byly napsány – tedy alespoň pro mne.

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## **Annotation**

Author: Nicolle Knapová

Supervisor: David Livingstone, Ph. D.

Department: Department of English and American studies

Title: Villains in Charles Dickens's famous novels.

Keywords: Charles Dickens, villains, Victorian England, Hard Times, Oliver Twist, Christmas Carol, Fagin, Josiah Bounderby, Ebenezer Scrooge

### **Abstract:**

The aim of this thesis is to introduce the reader with the most popular villains in the novels by Charles Dickens. The first and second parts are focused on the social and historical events associated with the Industrial Revolution and the Victorian England. In the next few chapters, I describe the elements Dickens liked to write about such as poverty and criminality.

In the last part, I break down the three notorious villain characters from Oliver Twist (Fagin), Hard Times (Josiah Bounderby) and last but not least A Christmas Carol (Ebenezer Scrooge).

## **Anotace**

Jméno autora: Knapová Nicolle

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Záporné postavy v nejslavnějších románech Charlese Dickense

Vedoucí práce: David Livingstone, Ph. D.

Klíčová slova: Charles Dickens, záporné postavy, Viktoriánská Anglie, Vánoční koleda, Oliver Twist, Zlé časy, Josiah Bounderby, Ebenezer Scrooge, Fagin

Jazyk práce: angličtina

### **Abstrakt:**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je čtenáře blíže seznámit s nejznámějšími zápornými postavami románů britského spisovatele Charlese Dickense. V úvodu mé práce se zaměřuji na popis Viktoriánské Anglie, kdy Dickens žil, včetně důsledků průmyslové revoluce na společnost. V dalších kapitolách pak rozebírám témata jako kriminalita a chudoba, o kterých Dickens sám zasvěceně psal ve svých románech.

V závěrečných kapitolách mé práce se věnuji psychologickému vývoji tří notoricky známých záporných postav v románech Charlese Dickense Oliver Twist (Fagin), Zlé časy (Josiah Bounderby) a Vánoční koleda (Ebenezer Scrooge).