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The Great Fire of London in Literature

Diplomová práce

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Studijní program: N7504 Učitelství pro střední školy

Studijní obor: Učitelství pro střední školy – dějepis

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Cíl, metody, literatura, předpoklady:

Diplomová práce se zaměří na zpracování tématu velkého požáru Londýna 1666 v krásné literatuře. Autor stručně popíše průběh celé události a následně se bude věnovat jejímu literárnímu zpracování ve zvolených dílech anglické literatury. Vybrané aspekty mohou být porovnány i se zobrazením požáru v odborné literatuře. Práce bude psána anglicky.

ACKROYD, P. Londýn: biografie. Praha: BB/art, 2002. COWARD, B. The Stuart Age: England, 1603-1714. New York: Pearson Longman, 2012. EVELYN, J. Diaries and Correspondence, Vol. 1 - 4, Londýn 1882. HANSON, N. The Great Fire of London: in that apocalyptic year, 1666. New York: John Wiley, 2002. KOVÁŘ, M. Stuartovská Anglie: stát a společnost v letech 1603-1689. Praha: Libri, 2001. PEPYS, S. The Diary of Samuel Pepys. Vol. 8, 1667. Londýn 1975.

Anotace:

Diplomová práce zpracovává téma velkého požáru Londýna 1666 v krásné literatuře. Historický popis událostí je porovnávaný s vybranými díly anglické literatury pojednávajících o dané události. Práce poukazuje na to, jak jednotliví autoři poezie a prózy zobrazují dny velkého požáru, zdali se drží soudobého výzkumu, co popřípadě akcentují, a jak se díla odlišují v čase.

Garantující pracoviště:	Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury, Pedagogická fakulta
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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracoval pod vedením vedoucího diplomové práce samostatně a uvedl jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne

Anotace

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Klíčová slova: Velký požár Londýna, odraz v literatuře, poezie, próza

Annotation

Diploma thesis deals with the topic of the Great Fire of London 1666 in belles-lettres. Historical description of the event is compared with some selected works of English literature on the theme of the Fire. It is pointed out, how individual writers and poets reflect the days of the catastrophe; whether they follow contemporary research, what they accent and how their works differ in distinct periods of time.

Key words: The Great Fire of London, reflection in literature, poetry, prose

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že diplomová práce je uložena v souladu s rektorským výnosem č. 13/2017 (Řád pro nakládání s bakalářskými, diplomovými, rigorózními, dizertačními a habilitačními pracemi na UHK).

Datum: ……..

Podpis studenta: ……..

Content

Introduction

The Great Fire of London was a significant event not only of the Restoration era, but of the whole 17th century, and it has been described innumerable times by historians. The origins of the Fire have been clarified, the impact on society, city, reigning dynasty were scrutinized by historians, but its portrayal in fictional literature has been put aside.

There have been several poems and books written on the event of the Great Fire. The aim of this thesis is to show how selected books and poems use the topic of the Fire in 1666; how it is processed by the authors, for what purpose they utilize the events of September 1666, and which aspects are mostly accentuated in selected literature. Although it will be also compared to historical literature in various periods and their scientific conclusions, which may differ, authors´ approaches will be examined: to what extent they follow historical sources, or whether they are influenced by a conspiratorial theory or whether they created their own completely new reality in purpose to create a brilliant story.

The Great Fire is commonly put together with another catastrophe which was the Great Plague of London, and the main source for description of the events are diarists, who eye-witnessed both the destruction of London as well as the deaths caused by the outbreak of bubonic plague. Therefore this connection of the Fire and the plague will be foreshadowed, as historians have applied this linkage, and additionally, many authors of fiction have frequently depicted these two topics simultaneously.

My previous experience with analysing and examining Samuel Pepys´ diary and my interest in the Restoration era introduced me to the topic of this current diploma thesis. The period of the Second Anglo-Dutch war was the subject matter of my bachelor thesis and it was viewed from a historical perspective. Pepys´ diary may be understood as a certain part of literature, which had been previously analysed in extensive detail and had become of interest to many social scientists, mainly historians, which is understandable for Pepys´ account of the Fire for example.

Although the diaries of Pepys and his contemporary do not belong to fictional literature, they will be an indispensable part of analysis, as they are valuable sources for the historical reconstruction of the Great Fire, and an inspiration for prosaic writers and poets, whose works in which the Great Fire of London appears will be analysed and compared.

I suggest that my combination of the historical thinking and critical analysis of given literature, may well be beneficial to provide another external view on the Great Fire of London in literature.

This work is divided into three sections. The first is a description of the Fire which is based on historical sources and non-fictional literature. The second part deals with reflection of the Great Fire in poetry, while the third one is focused on prose related to the Fire.

1. The Great Fire of London – Historical Perspective

Prior to analysing fictional literature concerning the Great Fire, it is necessary to state the conclusions of some current historical research, to provide a chronological overview of single events and place them into a historical context. This will prepare the soil for further examination of belles-lettres and poetry dealing with the Great Fire and will make comparison of reality and fiction possible.

London in the first years of the Restoration

The Restoration of the Stuarts was preceded by The English Civil War, a conflict between Parliamentarians and Royalists over the reign of power in England. It, amongst other things, resulted in the execution of the king Charles I, and the establishment of a republic. The Commonwealth and later the Protectorate with Oliver Cromwell in the lead existed until the end of the 1650´s. In 1659, after Oliver Cromwell´s death, his son Richard was not capable of carrying on his father´s politics and eventually formally renounced power. George Monck, who was a general who had seized London in 1659, then facilitated the return of the king Charles II. This monarch, who had been living in French exile, restored the House of Stuarts on the English throne. He was the son of the beheaded Charles I, and with his profile and personality England gained a ruler who might have additionally been influenced by Baroque art, as he had spent a considerable amount of time in France (Chisholm, 1911, p. 108).

The Baroque, which originated at the beginning of the 17th century in Italy, replaced the ideas of previous eras by accentuating more social stress on direct, obvious and theatrical production. It appeared to have evoked and reflected God´s greatness, which could have been a reaction of the Roman Catholic Church to Reformation and Protestants, which was emerging in Europe in those times. It naturally spread to other countries, for example to France, where Charles II was exiled.

In the decade of Charles´ return, London was unquestionably the largest city in England, with the population at that time of around half a million inhabitants. Although the City of London was the centre of trade populated by trading and manufacturing classes, with largest market and busiest port in England; it was not described in a flattering way by contemporaries (Hanson, 2001, p. 80).

For example, John Evelyn compares it to Baroque Paris and assesses the unplanned, provisional and unregulated urban sprawl in London as "*inartificial*". He literally calls it

"*wooden, northern, and inartificial congestion of Houses*" (Keyte, Brown, 2003, p. 22). This indicated a certain vulnerability and a threat by fire, with some support by the fact that the city experienced several conflagrations before the Fire in 1666 (Hanson, 2001, pp. 77 – 80).

In the Baroque period, London still consisted of a medieval character (no broader streets, disorganized construction of wooden houses, etc.). On the one hand, London was blooming and expanding throughout the 16th and 17th centuries thanks to both centralized administration and intercontinental trade, but on the other hand the accelerated growth naturally resulted in an unarranged and disorganized urban area, whose chaotic character was described above, providing perfect fertile ground for the unfortunate fire (Roy Porter, 1995, p. 131). Most of the buildings were also constructed of wood which provided the basis for a potentially serious problem in the spread of any fire.

Picture 1: Plans of the City of London before the Great Fire in 1666

The Fire

The blaze lasted from Sunday to Thursday and in the following text the origins and the development of the Fire will be introduced, and individual days will be highlighted for better orientation in the text.

The Great Fire burst out at the bakery of Thomas Farriner on Pudding Lane after midnight on **Sunday**, 2 September. According the later Farriner´s testimony, he had taken several steps to prevent the Fire; however he was woken by smoke early in the morning and in one hour the Fire spread to neighbouring buildings.

Perhaps, the blaze could have been stopped by demolishing adjoining properties, which was not done. The Lord Mayor, who was called out refused to pull down houses, although he was advised to do so. This point is at least questionable. Bloodworth did not want to be responsible for destroying somebody´s property and the context was that fires in London were nothing exceptional, but he should have obeyed the direct order. Later it was agreed that the chance to stop the Fire which had already caught several buildings was minimal (Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 35). Not only had the mayor wrongly evaluated the situation, but also many others underestimated it. Pepys had also been mistaken as he admits: "*thought it (*the Fire*) far enough off; and so went to bed again and to sleep*" (Wheatley, 1911, p. 417).

Development of the Fire

One factor which contributed to the quick spreading of the Fire was a warm and exceptionally dry summer. Even though there had been heavy storms in July, the water levels were low in the rivers. By contrast the temperatures had not been low in the months preceding the Fire. It was noted that summer months in 1666 were considerably warmer than any of the corresponding months of the last decade. We are not referring to any record-breaking figure, but it was 1.7°C above the average temperature and together with high wind and wooden houses which acted as tinder, it assisted the Fire to spread quickly by mid-morning on Sunday. Hanson emphasizes the significance of stored goods in the riverside district, because coal, tallow, fats, sugar, alcohol, turpentine, and gunpowder fed the Fire as well as the wooden houses, especially during the first day of the catastrophe (Hanson (2001), pp. 326 – 333). Furthermore, due to the given weather conditions the blaze swept through the city.

The conflagration expanded northward and westward where the whole streets were in flames despite unwilling Bloodworth´s effort in pulling down houses to halt the Fire. At this stage it

was an ineffective attempt, which the mayor himself summarised accordingly: "*I have been pulling down houses, but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it.*"

By the end of the day the Fire had already engulfed about a one and half mile long area along the riverfront from Queenhithe to London Bridge. The northernmost point reached by the Fire on Sunday was Canon Street, and the whole area struck by the Fire looked like an arc. However, the blaze held inside the Roman city wall for now (Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 39).

Fortunately, on **Monday**, after the mayor took his leave, King Charles II assumed the responsibility and ordered demolishing the houses. His brother Duke of York, who replaced the Lord Mayor in his role, assisted people with saving their belongings, controlled supplying and kept order (Pearson, 2001, p. 168). The help was organized from eight bases called ´fire posts´, which were set up around the city (each with 30 soldiers and 100 local volunteers) (Hanson, 2001, p. 76). Unfortunately, this effort was inadequate and Pepys, who had inspected the Fire from the boat on the Thames the previous day, expressed his hopelessness that there was "*no likelihood of stopping it*" (Wheatley, 1911, p. 420).

On Monday the Fire principally maintained its direction and continued northward and westward. In this situation, it was crucial not to allow the Fire to cross the river to the south. Several buildings on London Bridge flamed up and the Fire might have cross the Thames and endanger the south bank of the river. Luckily, Londoners on this side of the river were preserved thanks to a firebreak on London Bridge. The Thames and its south bank, therefore, remained the direction to save people´s belongings.

According to John Evelyn the Great Fire made no difference between the poor and rich. "*The conflagration was so universal, and the people so astonished"* (Bray, 1901, p. 20). It was true and in the afternoon all Lombard Street and Royal Exchange were already in flames. This part of the city was its financial centre with the bankers´ houses and their wealth, which together with Royal Exchange reflected the wealth of the nation (Roy Porter, 1995, p. 85). The Royal Exchange in Cornhill, which was not only the bourse locality but also the shopping centre, was razed to the ground as well as the East India Company´s store with imported spices (Hanson, 2001, p. 87).

The burning arc seen by Evelyn was much larger now. "*The whole City in dreadful flames near the water-side; all the houses from the Bridge, all Thames-street, and upwards towards Cheapside, down to the Three Cranes, were now consumed"* (Bray, 1901, p. 20). For now

Cheapside, home to the goldsmith, was only threatened by fires and stood on the edge of burning area which had expanded a little bit to east.

The disaster was the greatest on the **Tuesday**, which was the most destructive day. The People in charge of fire-fighting intended to halt the Fire using Fleet Street as a natural barrier. At night they had ordered to demolish houses in Whitefriars between Fleet Street and the river, hoping that this firebreak could stop spreading the Fire to the city walls. Unfortunately, this effort had no effect (Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 50). From both a symbolic and realistic point of view, it was a significant failure. They did not succeed in halting the Fire, and it then progressed to Whitehall. It also caused panic at the court and the king with courtiers started to move their goods and property away by river. Evelyn evidenced the rush in Whitehall by following words. "*Oh, the confusion there was then at that court*" (Bray, 1901, p. 22).

In midday shocking news came, when Lord Arlington sent a dispatch, in which he wrote: *"…the fire has burnt as far into the body of the City as St Paul's with such violence*" (Hanson, 2001, p. 129). It was another unfortunate coincidence. Ordinary inhabitants had thought St. Paul´s was perfect refuge and suitable place to hide their goods for the cathedral had thick stone walls and there was an empty space between the cathedral and the houses around. It had been thought that the plaza could be a natural firebreak, but the wooden scaffolding around the cathedral caused its quick destruction supported by burning possessions inside the cathedral. It is a paradox, that scaffolding with original purpose to restore the cathedral had a completely different impact. The melting roof of the cathedral and its stones exploding "*like grenados*" made citizens´ fear and horror even worse (Hanson, 2001, pp. 136 – 137).

The strategy used at night from Monday to Tuesday in Fleet Street was repeated as the Fire was closing in on the suburb of Cheapside. The Duke of York´s firefighters tried to hold the conflagration to the north by a large firebreak, but again, unsuccessfully. Late in the afternoon on Tuesday, the flames spread into Cheapside and started destroying luxury shopping streets.

"*Above one million two hundred thousand pounds*" of the goldsmiths' money had been moved to the Tower as the Fire reached Cheapside. From today´s perspective it was not the luckiest solution (Hanson, 2001, p. 138). In spite of prevailing eastern wind, the Fire changed its direction to the east towards the Tower, in which were stores with gunpowder; so the money and jewels had to be move away again. Eventually, the danger of a massive explosion was

warded off, when the garrison of the Tower took advantage of the present gunpowder and used it to create firebreaks – successfully. In some places, houses were demolished even by cannon fire from Tower. This improvisation without assistance of James´ firefighters working in the west helped to prevent further spread (Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 53).

On **Wednesday** the Fire did not spread significantly and due to the wind, which had dropped on Tuesday evening, the situation began to improve (Tinniswood, 2003, p. 101). Although the conflagration had been expanded beyond the city walls and had destroyed three city gates on west (Ludgate, Newgate, and Aldersgate), the changed conditions helped to tackle the Fire. Pulling houses down continued for example at Cripplegate, but finally by the Wednesday evening all the fires, which had formed the burning lake the days before, were extinguished (Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 54).

One last outbreak at the Temple (on **Thursday**) with the one remaining local fire at the Cripplegate was the Great Fire´s final swan song, as these fires were put out eventually and the horrors of those days were finally away. Samuel Pepys now was able to walk over the smouldering city, feeling the high temperature of the ground (Wheatley, 1911, pp. 400 - 401), but the Great Fire was definitely over.

The Aftermath

There were only a few deaths officially recorded and some historians (e.g. Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 87, Tinniswood, 2003, p. 131) mention the figures which do not exceed ten. However, side effects of the Fire have to be considered. It is usual that there are deaths from smoke inhalation but it is not stated anywhere in official documents. Roy Porter also mentions the fact that there was a mass of beggars, vagrants and homeless people who of course were not included in the reports (Roy Porter, 1995, p. 58).

Hanson evolves contemplations regarding the number of deaths as he deconstructs "*the scarcely credible claim that only a handful of people had actually died in the inferno that swept London*." (Hanson, 2001, preface) It is also determining that in London´s churches, plenty of parish records usually used for the Bill of Mortality were burnt (Hoďák, 2013, p. 67).

While the official figure of deaths was quite low, the material destruction was enormous. More than 370 acres of the city were burnt and it was computed that 13,500 houses, 87 parish churches, 44 Company Halls, 400 streets and three city gates were engulfed by the flames.

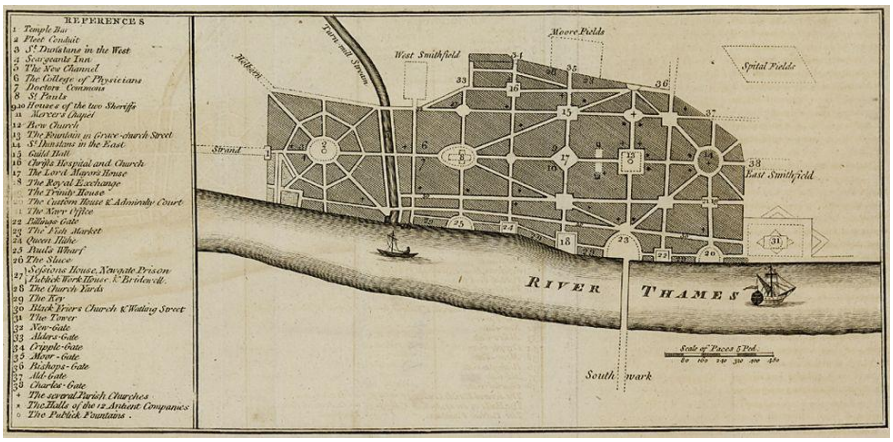
The overall monetary value of the loss was estimated at £10,000,000 in the currency of the time (Bell, 1920, p. 174). Among other losses, there were also mentioned Royal Exchange, St. Paul's Cathedral, the three western city gates (Ludgate, Newgate, and Aldersgate) with the Custom House and the Bridewell Palace.

According to Evelyn ´s account from Friday 7 September in the fields towards Islington and Highgate, there were "*200,000 people of all ranks and degrees dispersed and lying along by their heaps of what they could save from the fire, deploring their loss, and though ready to perish for hunger"* (Bray, 1901, p. 25).

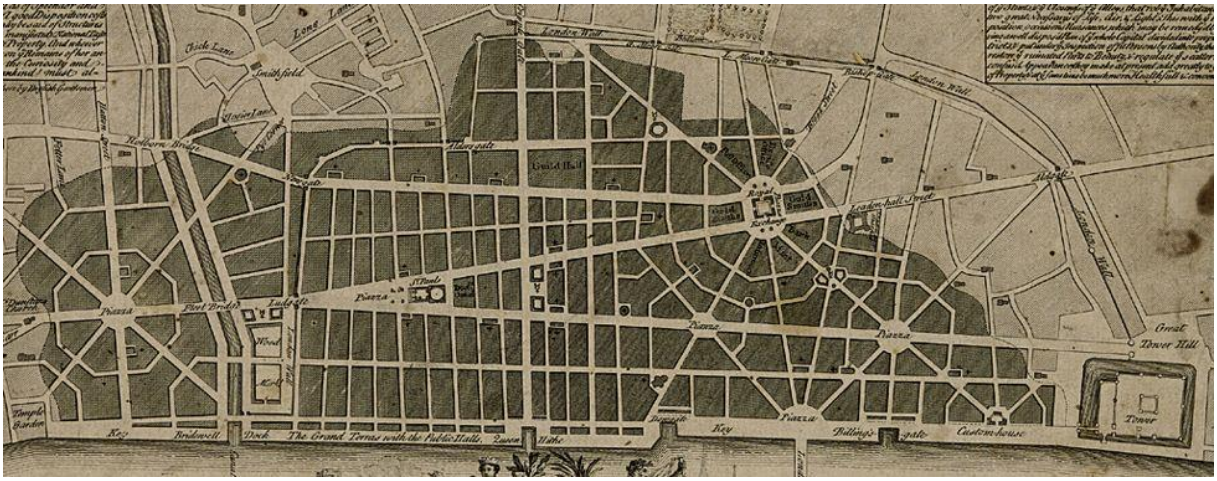
The relevancy of the cataclysm illustrates the fact that French king Louis XIV was quick to send messages of sympathy to Charles II in spite of being at war with him. He even forbade "*any triumphalism in his court at the crippling of France´s traditional rival*" (Hanson, 2001, p. 180). The only possible explanation could be the possibility of certain mercy with his cousin (Pearson, 2001, p. 1).

The city destroyed by the Fire had had medieval character. When we look at Wenceslaus Hollar´s panorama of 1647, there were one hundred city parish churches (with dominant Old St. Paul´s), city walls and a central part of the London with crammed houses. Only several churches were spared with a resulting huge empty space left (Hoďák, 2013, p. 70). On the other hand, there was an opportunity to rebuild the city and create London with a new face. London was offered the possibility of radical and purifying change as several magnificent and monumental plans were presented. Wren submitted his plan to the king almost immediately (11 September) and was followed by Evelyn and Robert Hooke.

Nevertheless, these ambitious proposals with apparent continental inspiration could not be realised and regrettably they were rejected. Instead, a major part of the burnt area was recreated following the old street plan (Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 87). The new and safer city arose along the Thames with wider streets, better accessible riverbank and improvements in fire safety. The new houses were constructed of brick and stone as well as public buildings such as the notoriously known St. Paul´s cathedral by Christopher Wren. The latter mentioned building together with other 51 churches, for which Wren was accorded responsibility, can be perceived as a little satisfaction for his rejected renewal plans.



Picture 2: John Evelyn´s rejected plans for the rebuilding of London



Picture 3: Sir Christopher Wren´s vision of the rebuilt London

In the context of the Bubonic plague, the Great Fire has often been described as one factor which purified the city from this insidious disease. There is a probability the Fire had the effect of saving many thousands of lives later. An expert from Museum of London claims that "*the flames destroyed vast areas of unsanitary housing, killing rats and purging the capital of infection*" (Web Archive, [online]). It is a fact, that in the post-fire years plague did not reoccur and the year of 1665 was the last epidemic of its kind. On contrary, Roy Porter suggests the Fire was not as beneficial as it had been thought. The impact on spreading disease wax minimal as the most contaminated slums (Holborn, Shoreditch, Finsbury, and Southwark) were on the suburbs of the city, which were not touched by the Fire (Roy Porter, 1995, p. 80).

People´s Reaction to the Fire

People´s consternation caused by such a sudden fire eruption was followed by typical human reaction. Their main concern was to get as much goods and belongings as possible out of reach of the Fire. The removal of their possession was often done at the last possible moments when the destruction of a house was inevitable. As the Fire grew in scale, the fewer and fewer citizens stayed and tried to douse the Fire. Perhaps, basic instincts affected the reasoning behind this unenviable dilemma (Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 38).

Nonetheless, in the first stages of the blaze there were two ways identified how to save people´s belongings. The first was the Thames River, which according to Pepys was full of lighters and boats laden with goods[1]. Obviously the river was used as the escape from hellish flames principally by inhabitants living near the river bank. The rest of the citizens were forced to move away their goods by their own or to hire a cart. Therefore, streets became crowded as some householders, whose property was endangered, move their goods relatively short distances only to realize it will not be enough. When quickly spread Fire came closer the same process was repeated (Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 40). That was the reason why the streets were so crowded and firefighters were not allowed to tackle the Fire or they had troubles to get there. The saved goods were often stored in churches built of stone, surrounded by plazas. But as it has been stated, most of these buildings, promising a save shelter, were burnt.

Profiteering was another phenomenon which appeared during the Great Fire of London. There was a noticeable demand for cart to be hired as well as porters. Thanks to the exceptional demand with the rising sense of urgency the prices were extremely high. Although the common prices had been around £4 or £5 for a cart and 9s or 10s for a porter, now it raised up to £30 per load (Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 42). One merchant paid even £400 for the removal of his goods (Hanson, 2001, p. 80). The same principle could be seen on the river, where lighters and boats were much more expensive than it used to be.

In this situation there was a serious chance that the city could descent into chaos. Conditions were perfect for pilfering and looting in both empty shops and abandoned houses. These socio-pathological phenomena were happening, but the presence of the king and soldiers might have prevented an outbreak of greater levels of collective violence.

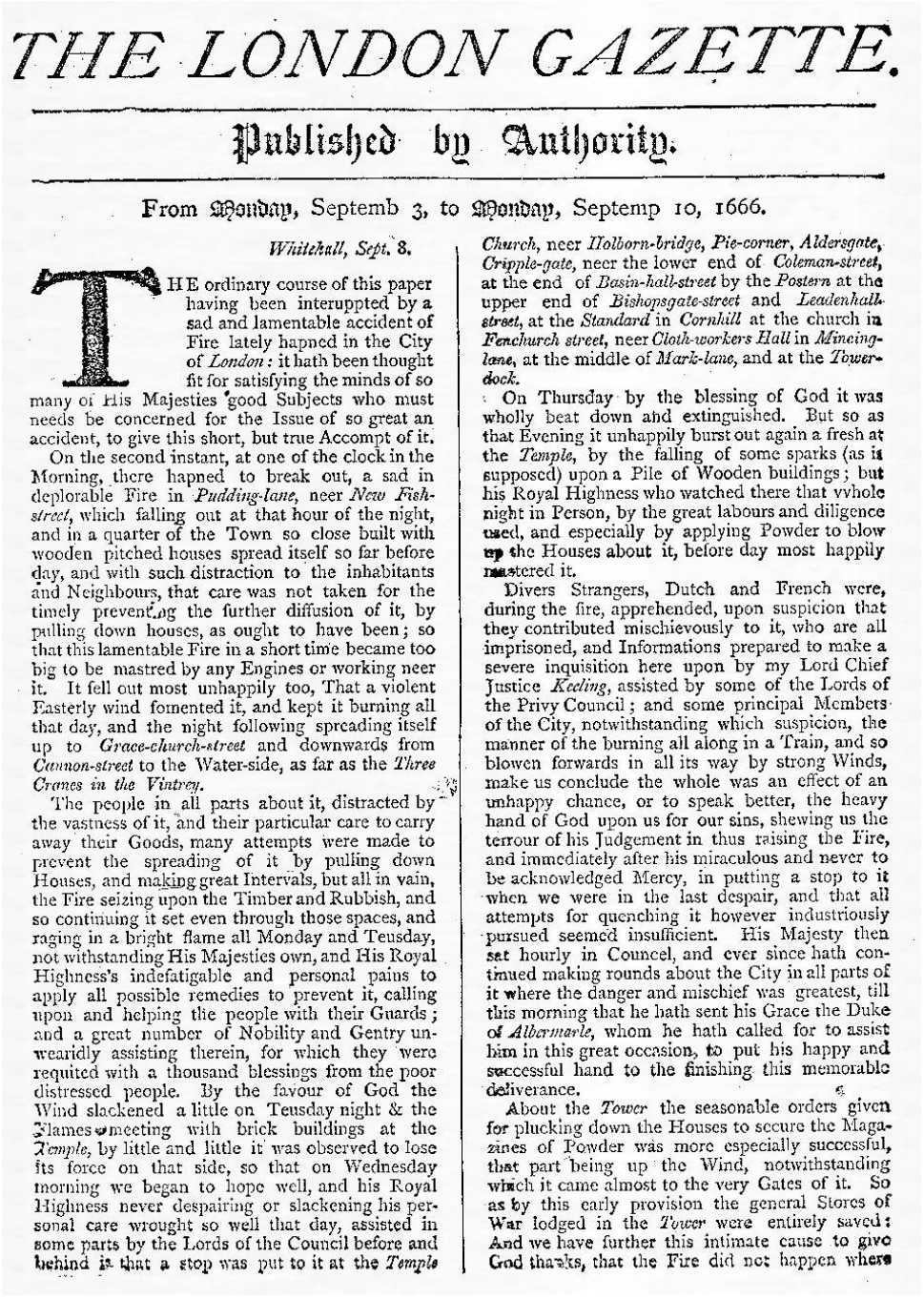
[1] Wheatley, 1911, p. 418: "*…everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river or bringing them into lighters that lay off…*"

Despite this, there were some isolated examples of violence. People felt frustrated and it was needed to point at somebody and find potential suspects at least. There were a few groups that were going to be blamed. French and Dutch were the first on the list because England had been at war against these nations and it would be quite logical if they had set London alight. The Dutch appeared to be perfect arsons with motivation to retaliate Holmes´ raid, which had burnt tens of Dutch ships in 1666.

For example a blacksmith battered a Frenchman, "*felling him instantly to the ground with an iron bar . . . the innocent blood of this exotic flowing in a plentiful stream down to his ankles"* (William Taswell bibliography in Hanson, 2001, p. 102). Another Frenchman was beaten in Moorfields for he was reportedly carrying "*balls of fire*" which was later proved to be tennis balls.

Without the intervention of the Duke of York, a crowd would probably beat to death a Dutch baker. Unfortunately the following accident does not a have happy ending. A woman, who had been "*walking in Moorfields [with] chickens in her apron, was seized by the mob who declared that she carried fireballs and not only did they violently abuse her but they beat her with sticks and cut off her breasts*" (Hanson, 2001, p. 102).

Some foreigners were even imprisoned, which was confirmed in London Gazette. This news contained certain calming aspect, which helped to ease the tension in London´s society and the imprisoning itself should have protected foreigners from attacks.



THE LONDON GAZETTE.

Published by Authority.

From Monday, Septemb 3, to Monday, Septemp 10, 1666.

Whitehall, Sept. 8.

THE ordinary course of this paper having been interuppted by a sad and lamentable accident of Fire lately hapned in the City of *London*: it hath been thought fit for satisfying the minds of so many of His Majesties good Subjects who must needs be concerned for the Issue of so great an accident, to give this short, but true Accompt of it.

On the second instant, at one of the clock in the Morning, there hapned to break out, a sad in deplorable Fire in *Pudding-lane*, neer *New Fish-street*, which falling out at that hour of the night, and in a quarter of the Town so close built with wooden pitched houses spread itself so far before day, and with such distraction to the inhabitants and Neighbours, that care was not taken for the timely preventing the further diffusion of it, by pulling down houses, as ought to have been; so that this lamentable Fire in a short time became too big to be mastred by any Engines or working neer it. It fell out most unhappily too, That a violent Easterly wind fomented it, and kept it burning all that day, and the night following spreading itself up to *Grace-church-street* and downwards from *Cannon-street* to the Water-side, as far as the *Three Cranes in the Vintrey*.

The people in all parts about it, distracted by the vastness of it, and their particular care to carry away their Goods, many attempts were made to prevent the spreading of it by pulling down Houses, and making great Intervals, but all in vain, the Fire seizing upon the Timber and Rubbish, and so continuing it set even through those spaces, and raging in a bright flame all Monday and Teusday, not withstanding His Majesties own, and His Royal Highness's indefatigable and personal pains to apply all possible remedies to prevent it, calling upon and helping the people with their Guards; and a great number of Nobility and Gentry unweariedly assisting therein, for which they were requited with a thousand blessings from the poor distressed people. By the favour of God the Wind slackened a little on Teusday night & the Flames meeting with brick buildings at the *Temple*, by little and little it was observed to lose its force on that side, so that on Wednesday morning we began to hope well, and his Royal Highness never despairing or slackening his personal care wrought so well that day, assisted in some parts by the Lords of the Council before and behind it that a stop was put to it at the *Temple Church*, neer *Holborn-bridge*, *Pie-corner*, *Aldersgate*, *Cripple-gate*, neer the lower end of *Coleman-street*, at the end of *Basin-hall-street* by the *Postern* at the upper end of *Bishopsgate-street* and *Leadenhall-street*, at the *Standard* in *Cornhill* at the church in *Fenchurch street*, neer *Cloth-workers Hall* in *Mincing-lane*, at the middle of *Mark-lane*, and at the *Tower-dock*.

On Thursday by the blessing of God it was wholly beat down and extinguished. But so as that Evening it unhappily burst out again a fresh at the *Temple*, by the falling of some sparks (as is supposed) upon a Pile of Wooden buildings; but his Royal Highness who watched there that whole night in Person, by the great labours and diligence used, and especially by applying Powder to blow up the Houses about it, before day most happily mastered it.

Divers Strangers, Dutch and French were, during the fire, apprehended, upon suspicion that they contributed mischievously to it, who are all imprisoned, and Informations prepared to make a severe inquisition here upon by my Lord Chief Justice *Keeling*, assisted by some of the Lords of the Privy Council; and some principal Members of the City, notwithstanding which suspicion, the manner of the burning all along in a Train, and so blowen forwards in all its way by strong Winds, make us conclude the whole was an effect of an unhappy chance, or to speak better, the heavy hand of God upon us for our sins, shewing us the terrour of his Judgement in thus raising the Fire, and immediately after his miraculous and never to be acknowledged Mercy, in putting a stop to it when we were in the last despair, and that all attempts for quenching it however industriously pursued seemed insufficient. His Majesty then sat hourly in Councel, and ever since hath continued making rounds about the City in all parts of it where the danger and mischief was greatest, till this morning that he hath sent his Grace the Duke of *Albemarle*, whom he hath called for to assist him in this great occasion, to put his happy and successful hand to the finishing this memorable deliverance.

About the *Tower* the seasonable orders given for plucking down the Houses to secure the Magazines of Powder was more especially successful, that part being up the Wind, notwithstanding which it came almost to the very Gates of it. So as by this early provision the general Stores of War lodged in the *Tower* were entirely saved: And we have further this intimate cause to give God thanks, that the Fire did not happen where

Picture 4: London Gazette published a day after the Fire outbreak

The spreading of information, heard on the grapevine, was an important factor that determined people´s behaviour in relation to foreigners. The news about the Dutch and French invasion was diffused by letters written in a hurry or by word of mouth. These rumours that the Frenchmen and Dutchmen were coming on Wednesday fuelled citizens´ panic and aggression (Stephen Porter, 1996, pp. 44 - 55).

All these lamentable examples are nothing to be proud of, but can serve as a plot in a book and may be developed significantly. There was one more conspiracy theory which was grounded in English society and it was Popish Plot – also suitable for a storyline.

Anti-Catholicism was present in England during the 17th century and it escalated into a fabricated Popish Plot several years after the Great Fire, which had supported anti-popish hysteria too. After the Fire, rumours and propaganda floated around about arson and Catholics were the first to be blamed. Anti-Catholic sentiment was stimulated by questioning the King´s loyalty to the Church of England as he had married catholic princess and his brother was a practising Catholic (Kenyon, 1985, p. 10). According to current research it was disproved and the version with Thomas Farriner´ causing is still valid.

Another phenomenon, or more likely a spontaneous and natural reaction, appeared. When it was clear that the Fire would not stop as easily as it had been thought, and running away to the nearby streets, showed as an ineffective and witless strategy, crowds of inhabitants started to escape metropolis. Their final destinations were fields (Moorfields, Finsbury Fields) which surrounded London. There, they were surviving for several months with their bare possession (Bell, 1920, p. 89).

The Great Fire of London was a watershed moment that both destroyed most of the city, but at the same time allowed it to be modernized into a prosperous modern capital of the world´s leading country. Let us now analyse whether it had a similar impact in the literature as well.

2. The Great Fire of London in Poetry

In this part of the thesis individual poems which were written by contemporaries of the Fire will be analysed and it will be focused on: In comparison with historical research, the objectivity of the poems, plus the figures of the authors, indicated an ability to see positives sides of the disaster. Except for a poem by John Dryden, all poems were edited by Robert Aubin in his *London in Flames, London in Glory*.

The selected poems by contemporaries of the Fire will be compared to historical research, whether they follow verified facts or not, and the analysis will be conducted in consideration of the first part of the thesis to find some concrete examples of verified facts. The hypothesis is that, given the nature of poetry, it will focus on poets´ impression and astonishment instead of depersonalized descriptions of events. Emphasis will be placed on the poet´s inner experience, and the emotional level will overshadow a rational and critical view.

Another aspect which is going to be examined is to what extent poems on the Great Fire of London are objective or subjective. Poetry is typical of subjectivity, but in case of such a significant disaster it could be the exact opposite. This view can be broadened with an additional perspective, whether the poems are lyrical (more subjective) or epic (more objective). The development of the Fire and single events related to the Fire offer the opportunity to create a (chronological) storyline with causal link and a setting, which would be the features usually attributed to an epic. Therefore, the individual poems are going to be analysed in order to decide what the authors of the poems on the Fire tended to and what was more frequent.

The authors themselves are going be described as well. It is necessary to define when those poems were written and whether their authors were pioneers or they were inspired by someone else who had adapted the topic of the Great Fire. It is worth mentioning whether an author followed somebody´s work or created his own original piece of writing.

The figure of the author determines his work, and therefore it is needed to state his or her gender, religion or profession especially if the poet is contemporary and was affected by the events of the Great Fire. All of these shape author´s perspective and perception.

The conflagration of London was, indeed, one of the greatest catastrophes of the city, but the later research revealed some positive sides such as the possibility of rebuilding London or the (discussed) decline of the plague etc. The last part of the analysis is going to be focused on

these aspects. It will be demonstrated if the authors are able to see these positives or if they only lament on the Fire.

2.1. *annus mirabillis* by John Dryden

This epic poem written by John Dryden (1631 – 1700) was published a year after the catastrophe and despite the topic of the poem, it is titled as "*a year of miracles*", which attributes a positive connotation to the content.

The poem is structured into 1.216 lines of verse, ordered in 304 quatrains. Each line consists of ten syllables (so called decasyllabic quatrain), and the whole poem is written in an "A, B, A, B" rhyme scheme. Rather than writing in the heroic couplets[2] found in his earlier works, Dryden used the decasyllabic quatrain. According to A. W. Ward *annus mirabillis* is a bit exceptional because of its structure as the decasyllabic quatrains were used, while Dryden´s earlier works were written in the heroic couples (2000, [online]).

It has to be mentioned that the Great Fire is not the only notable event described in the poem. In the beginning, it also deals with some battles (Battle of Lowestoft, Four Days Battle) of the Second Anglo-Dutch war which took place simultaneously in 1666.

The city of London as a metropolis is worth adoration and stands at the forefront with an apparent patriotic tone. London is depicted as an important centre with developed trade.

"*The diligence of trades, and noiseful gain,*

And luxury, more late, asleep were laid" (Hooker, Swedenberg, 1956, p. 92).

But on the other hand, the medieval character of the city was illustrated as the city was likened to a shepherdess who later (thanks to the Fire) became a queen.

"*Before, she like some shepherdess did show,*

Now, like a maiden queen, she will behold" (Hooker, Swedenberg, 1956, p. 103).

The conflagration is perceived by Dryden as an opportunity to purify London and build a new and opulent metropolis on its ruins. The massive damage is therefore understood in the most positive sense and the poem itself is not based only on mourning and desperate feelings which could come out of author´s despair. Dryden was not swallowed by sadness and he saw consequences in the long term. The poet´s hope in renewal of London and consequent growth

[2] **Heroic couplet** is a form for English poetry, commonly used in epic and narrative poetry, and consisting of a rhyming pair of lines in iambic pentameter.

is obvious. This suggests that the poem must have been composed in the months when plans for rebuilding were discussed.

Hoping for better tomorrows is understandable, but some passages in which Dryden expresses his beliefs sound naive. Some superlatives and hyperbolic expressions probably result from author´s patriotic way of thinking, which was determined by his position in society.

His transferred allegiances to the new government after the Restoration was reflected in *annus mirabillis* as he admired the figure of the king:

"Now day appears, and with the day the King,
Whose early care had robb'd him of his rest;
Far off the cracks of falling houses ring,
And shrieks of subjects pierce his tender breast" (Hooker, Swedenberg, 1956, p. 95).

Although Charles II is idealized in the poem and he has the role of a perfect and flawless ruler which is exaggerated, it is an indisputable fact that his part in this tragedy was crucial.

Dryden does not contribute either to the theory of the alleged Popish Plot or speculations about a culprit. He does not even blame any social or religious groups or nations (which would be unsurprising in the context of the Second Anglo-Dutch war which is subject of the poem, too. Nevertheless, the Fire and the war are not linked thereby). The part of the poem regarding the Fire is more likely a description of the Fire with some additional comments and lyrical figures. It can be said it is to a large extent objective and it could even serve as a rhymed overview of the events during the Fire, accompanied by lyrical passages and poetic language with the person of the poet entering into the "story" and being embodied in the text.

Both the development of the Fire and prevailing conditions are recorded in the poem. Dryden speaks of eastern wind and dried houses.

"*In vain: for from the east a Belgian wind,*
His hostile breath through the dry rafters sent" (Hooker, Swedenberg, 1956, p. 92).

The Fire itself is portrayed as a monster, or more specifically as a hydra, whose increasing number of heads is an eloquent simile. There is also a visible and slight inspiration in classical

mythology with referring backwards to ancient Greek for the mention of Simois[3]. This is how Dryden may suggest between the lines a certain parallel with the end of Troy.

London in ruinous flames is recounted by Dryden without sorting the events strictly in chronological way into single days. Despite this, there is an intimation of advancing development of the events.

Described disorder, efforts to douse the flames or Londoners´ despair form a static part which is put forward by concrete referring points such as progress of the Fire near the London Bridge (witnessed by executed people accused of treason: "*The ghosts of traitors from the bridge descend*" (Hooker, Swedenberg, 1956, p. 93).), destruction of Lombard street and Royal Exchange, progress of the Fire towards to Tower and to Whitehall, or engulfment of St. Paul by flames. When we approximately know the sequence of events, we can easily orientate in the timeline of the Great Fire.

Last but not least, Dryden captured the moment when crowds of Londoners were running out of the city surrounded by city walls; Londoners heading to the fields (Moorfields, Finsbury Fields) which are not specified by name – understandably with regard to chosen form (poem).

"*The most in fields like herded beasts lie down,*

To dews obnoxious on the grassy floor" (Hooker, Swedenberg, 1956, p. 98).

This of course contributes to overall desperate mood caused by conflagration and supports the gloomy atmosphere which is, however, changed into a glorification and adoration of London which is supposed to come and to be built on the ruins of old mediaeval capital.

"*Already, labouring with a mighty fat,*

She shakes the rubbish from her mounting brow,

And seems to have renewed her charter´s date,

Which Heaven will to the death of time allow" (Hooker, Swedenberg, 1956, p. 103).

[3] Simois was a River-God in Greek mythology and a river of the Troyan plain.

2.2. *The Londoners Lamentation*

The anonymous poem *The Londoners Lamentation* is of those anonyms which were written as the reaction to the Great Fire. Although the unknown author cannot be analysed, his motivation is quite clear and still, there is the content which has much to offer.

In general anonymous poems on the topic of the Fire started to appear in the weeks after the Fire. The spontaneous and quick production of these verses suggests that the authors were amateurs, whose simpler composition full of poetic exclamation and structure of the poems help to spread them several days after the conflagration. In contrast to amateurs, reputable poets had to keep their level of quality and their untimely reaction could naturally decrease to the exclusion of swiftness. Poets like Dryden also composed much more complex and sophisticated works.

The Londoners Lamentation is structured into 114 lines of verse which are rhymed in following scheme: "A, B, A, B, C, C."

"*Let water flow from every eye,*
Of all good Subjects in the Land,
Mountains of fire were raised high,
Which Londons City did command;
Waste lye those buildings were so good,
And Ashes lye where London stood" (Aubin, 1943, p. 85).

In spite of the title of the poem, it does not consist only of mourning and hopelessness. Of course some negative expressions as "*misery"* or "*mourn*" are present but the whole gives the impression of more or less detached view. Pragmatic description of the development of the Fire is captured within the lines of the poem with apparent sadness, which, however, is not fatal and infinite. We can find there the author´s undisguised feelings which were expected but still he kept certain level of objectivity. Pudding Lane, Fish Street, Cannon Street, Exchange, Tower, Aldersgate or Cripplegate were skilfully wrapped into verses and the unknown author gives us a ´rhymed list´ of destroyed buildings and he even states the day when the Fire started or conditions which cause the effortless spreading of the Fire as he stated eastern wind or materials which became the fuel for the flames ("*Pitch, Tar, Oyle, Flax and ancient wood did make the raging Fire so rant*"). All these aspects are not grounded in

historical research as it was written in the days early after the fire-storm. It consequently has to be an eye-witnessed account or retelling of well-known facts.

The poet uses things which really could be seen in burning London such as the inability to use fire engines, exaggerated prices of carts to hire or "flying" stones:

"And massy stones like shot lets fly,

Out of its own Artillery" (Aubin, 1943, p. 86).

The King´s assistance during the Fire is also integrated into the poem and again his figure is perceived as a saviour pulling down houses with his brother Duke of York. People escaping to the fields are mentioned too.

In the cataclysmic event the author saw a glimmer of hope which was the fact that the Fire was held within the walls and did not spread further, for it could reach Whitehall and suburbs.

"*Then let us with hearts undefiled*

Thank God his Mercies are so great,

As that the Fire hath no spoyld

The Suburbs and the Royal Seat" (Aubin, 1943, p. 87).

It is worth noticing how the author perceives the people´s behaviour in regard of foreigners when he literally denounced London´s crowds which violently took revenge on French and Dutch.

"*But I fear*

Our sinful hearts more guilty are" (Aubin, 1943, p. 87).

He also feels it could have consequences which might lead to the fourth catastrophe ("*Grim Famine"*). The Fire is placed beside the Civil War and the plague and maybe therefore the poet ends with moral, which probably should have fended off another disaster.

"If we still hate each other thus,

God never will be frinds with us" ((Aubin, 1943, p. 88).

2.3. *London Undone*

London Undone or a Reflection upon the Late Disasterous Fire is the complete title of a poem on The Great Fire and as well as *The Londoners Lamentation* its author is unknown. According to the text of the poem, the unidentified poet was an eye-witness of the events ("*and, as Eye-witness, I may well report…*") of the blaze.

The anonymous poet chose "A, A, B, B, C, C, D, D ..."rhyming scheme within which he succeeded to express certain fatefulness which pervades the whole text, where the author makes reference to God or heavens. The present inevitability of the fate is accompanied by mentions of Trojan themes or reference to the Old Testament.

"*For now, like Israelites, we dwell in Tents…,*

I shall with David see the angles Sword" (Aubin, 1943, p. 56).

This is too supported by the title of the poem and there is also perceptible patriotic adoration of London, which is evidenced by the way London is called. The author uses personal pronoun of different gender.

"***She*** *was not so much ruin´d, as refin´d*" (Aubin, 1943, p. 56).

This time the figure of the king is omitted and replaced by religious segment, which could be indicative of different approach to the Restoration of Stuarts. While *The Londoners Lamentation* works with the king´s engagement, *London Undone* does not mention the king at all. It might suggest that the author is not as loyal royalist as the previous unknown poet, who probably used to be more orthodox sympathizer of the king. At least comparison of the written verses suggests that.

The destruction of the St. Paul´s is not missing this time and it is even depicted in detail how people tended to hide their belongings in churches as they trusted to their stone constructions, (see p. 13) which unfortunately showed as wishful thinking described in the poem.

"Their Goods (alas!) en knew not where to carry,

For even the Churches were no Sanctuary:

Such as convey´d their Treasusre to St. Paul,

In hope they there were safe, even they lost all" (Aubin, 1943, p. 54).

St. Paul´s is undoubtedly a symbol of the huge devastation in September 1666 and represents more than one hundred churches burnt to ashes. While St. Paul´s symbolizes the fall of church, the destruction of Royal Exchange meant the paralysis of London as a financial centre and it is not omitted in the poem either.

"*Ah lovely London! cruel Fate, and strange,*

Beaty for Ashes, ´tis a sad Exchange" (Aubin, 1943, p. 56).

Although the rhymed reality is not based on historical research, it confirms some later verified facts concerning the Fire. Facts are nicely surrounded by metaphors and other figures of speech but do not represent the principal part of the poem.

The text itself does not deal with a conspiracy theory how the Fire started, who is the arsonist and who ought to be blamed. No foreigners or religious movement are mentioned as a potential culprit. Only the devastation by the Fire is the subject of the matter together with the citizen´s reaction as they try to rescue their properties ("*to the Water*") and flee into the fields.

"…Take up your Bed and walk,

Into the Fields on the bleak dew-dropt Grass,

Where the Earth Bed, and Heaven its Teaser was" (Aubin, 1943, p. 55).

In the end the poem turns to a positive track, when the conflagration is likened to a phoenix, which is, as we know, a symbol of rebirth from its own ashes. This simile refers to the planned rebuilding of London´s streets which were expected to be spectacular as well as new public buildings. Author also concedes benefits of the destruction:

"*Then you´ll conclude with me, the Flames were kind,*

She was not so much ruin´d, as refin´d" (Aubin, 1943, p. 56).

2.4. *Londons Second Tear* by John Crouch

The poem which was written by John Crouch consists of 234 lines of verse in rhyme pattern "A, A, B, B, C, C, D, D ..."and its first part is aimed at London itself. The city is noticeably at the forefront and is extolled by the author. It can be illustrated on the following example:

"London! that word fill´d the vast Globe; Japan

Saluted Londoner for English man" (Aubin, 1943, p. 46).

The poet had probably intended to point out England as an emerging superpower, which had trade contact even in distant Japan as well as in the rest of the world. The matter of prospering English trade is developed further in comparison with Dutch merchants. These are not considered to be real traders from author´s perspective.

"*When the false Dutch more known in Forreign parts,*

Buy scorn with gold; Merchants of wealth not hearts" (Aubin, 1943, p. 46).

It is obvious that John Crouch puts stress on the Second Anglo-Dutch war even though it is not directly mentioned. Certain grudge against Dutch supports this claim, because at the time when Crouch composed the poem, England was still at war against the United Provinces and France. Apparently, the war and trade rivalry had an impact on poet´s thinking and writing process.

The Great Fire of London stands between two major events which are the Civil War and the Second Anglo-Dutch war: *"…neither Ferreign nor Domestic Wars…*" These are part of the list of inauspicious events which London had gone through.

London is several times compared to ancient Rome, which also suffered from a great urban fire in 64 AD, but there is a tendency to place London "above" Rome as the more positive qualities are attributed to the capital city of England. To support the fictitious image of Rome, the river Thames is replaced by Tiber which gives the impression of Roman capital.

"*Had Tyber swell´d his monstrous Waves, and come*

Over the seven Hills of our flaming Rome,

´I had been in vain" (Aubin, 1943, p. 52).

It is expected by the author that his "Jerusalem" which burnt in three days was going to be resurrected in three years, which is apparently only playing with numbers. The Fire of London, in fact, lasted for four days and this is just an author´s construction. Nevertheless, then the author deals with the Fire itself.

The author laments over the Fire and his grief is explicitly expressed in lyrical adaptation, therefore we cannot talk about an objective review as well as in case of part regarding Dutch and English tradesmen, when the poet does not keep the distance and noticeably is biased in favour of English merchants. The poet suggests that there is a possibility of Dutch and French being guilty of setting London ablaze.

Although it is not easy to follow the chronology of the events (thanks to author´s use of poetic language or symbols), the development of the Fire is described quite in detail and individual partial sub events are hidden in the verses. For example the endangered London Bridge and neighbouring Southwark are stated. Then, the places afflicted by the Fire are mentioned such as Cannon Street, Lombard Street or Cheapside. The spread of the flames thanks to the "*heated wind*" as well as the approximate direction are also described which corresponds with the historical research (see p. 12). Change, Temple, St. Paul´s or even city gates like Ludgate or Newgate are captured by John Crouch in their destruction:

"By this time Lud with the next Newgate smokes,

And their dry Pris´ners in the dungeon chokes" (Aubin, 1943, p. 51).

In the case of Exchange, the poet points out the exotic spices stored there which is in accordance with the first chapter of the thesis. He might have emphasized the fatal losses of the wealth of the nation, which, according to historians, the destruction of Change really was (see p. 12). The matter of the royal family is used a bit differently than in previous poems. The figures of the king and his brother Duke of York are omitted despite the author´s positive attitude to monarchy. However, the English queen Catherine of Braganza represents here the reigning dynasty in context of saved king´s residence.

"*But when she saw her Palace (*Whitehall*) safe, her fears*

Vanish, one Eye drops smiles, the other tears" (Aubin, 1943, p. 51).

In the end, the ´reason´ of the Fire is suggested from the perspective of a superior power. The author appears to consider that it could be a penalty for Londoner´s disloyalty during the Civil

War. It is also necessary to add that London was the centre of republican forces and opposition against the king, which was given by the previous development of the London´s society which had formed to liberal. The Fire ended the period of disloyalty and made place for the new London devoted to the king.

"*Now Loyal London has full Ransome paid*

For that Defection the Disloyal made:

Whose Ashes hatch´d by a kind Monarch´s breath,

Shall rise a fairer Phoenix after Death" (Aubin, 1943, p. 52).

Again, there is a symbol of the phoenix which is more than convenient in case of such a fire and the symbolism was explained before. However, more important thing is what the lines above express. It is definite loyalty to the king and the author´s conviction. Although this time the assistance of the royal family is not described, the lines bear the same meaning.

2.5. *On the Burning of London* by John Tabor

John Tabor as a contemporary of Black Death (Byrne, 2012, p. 285) and the Great Fire was probably an eye-witness of the events. It can be deduced from his style of writing and expressing of certain ideas that he was at least a tacit supporter of restored monarchy. However, we cannot objectively say to what extent he was or was not emotionally affected by the Fire. It may be only presumed from his verses that he was touched by the event.

The poem itself with the complete title *Seasonable Thoughts in Sad Times, Being some Reflections on the Warre, the Pestilence, and the Burning of London (*1667*),* has 276 lines of verse in rhyme pattern "A,A, B,B C,C D,D ..." and the primary topic, The Great Fire, is introduced in the context of the Second Anglo-Dutch war and the plague. The poem is enriched by specific vocabulary taken from Old Testament or antiquity (Noah, Sodom, Gomorrah, Troy, Judea etc.). The purpose of this might be uplifting the imaginary level of the poem.

From the historical perspective, the poet follows the verified facts but he gathered only a few of them and did not cover the whole event. It starts with a general overview and continues with more developed details. The cause of the Fire is not mentioned but it is suggested that some "*foes*" might have ignite it.

"*Our Soveraign was among the rout of men,*

When any foe had opportunitie

To act a not to be thought of Tragedie" (Aubin, 1943, p. 64).

As it was stated previously in this thesis, the involvement of some religious or national groups was disproved and therefore it remains as an author´s speculation.

The origins of the Fire from Pudding Lane are completely omitted as well as the general context of dry and warm summer; and the spread of the flames is not stated chronologically and systematically. However, it is accompanied by the claim that the wind was a key factor, which helped the Fire to spread. Although the poet does not operate with conditions which preceded the Fire, he links it with two major events of the 1660´s, the plague, and the Second Anglo-Dutch war, which forms background for the poem.

John Tabor lists the types of destroyed buildings such as churches, public buildings, hospitals and citizens´ houses. The general listing is extended by concrete examples of St. Paul´s, Royal

Exchange and the city gates (Newgate and Ludgate) with escaped prisoners: "*Newgate can't hold This fire, it broke the Prison*" (Aubin, 1943, p. 66). The author of the poem also works with the etymology of ´London´ using the latter mentioned gate – Ludsgate. According to him the genesis of ´London´ is that it is derived from the expression "*Luds-Town, which time hath chang´d to London*" (Aubin, 1943, p. 70). Nevertheless, Tabor gives us an evidence of an averted threat, when another concrete example of a building - Tower with stored gunpowder was saved from flames which would have led to another partial catastrophe within the days of the Fire. The poet´s description of this ´episode´ is based on real events as it is written in the first part of the thesis (see pp. 13 - 14).[4]

"*The fury of this foe, and in one hour*
Gunpowder cool´ed his courage, sav´d the Tower" (Aubin, 1943, p. 66).

The author works with matters which are quite frequently used in previous poems. These are: perception of the Fire as an element which purified the city from the plague, effort to halt the flames – the use of fire engines and the pulling down of the buildings, evacuation of people and their final destination, figure of the Charles II and the poet also pays attention to St. Paul´s which is almost typical for poets writing on the Great Fire of London.

Tabor suggests that London affected by Black Death should have been purged which was, however, not carried out and at this stage Tabor sees the salvation in God´s intervention in form of the Fire:

"*Such houses should be burned down with fire:*
So when the Plague of Sin could not be purg´d
From out that sinful City, sharply scourg´d
By that of sickness, God himself in ire
Burnt down their Houses with consuming fire" (Aubin, 1943, p. 61).

This thought of connection of these two cataclysms appears to be logic and many examined writers naturally put it together. However, the truth is somewhere else. According to prevailing opinion among historians, the Fire had "*minimal impact as the most contaminated*

[4] Eventually, the danger of massive explosion was warded off, when the garrison of the Tower took advantage of the present gunpowder and used it to create firebreaks – successfully.

slums (Holborn, Shoreditch, Finsbury and Southwark) were on suburbs of the city, which were not touched by the Fire" (see p. 16). Tabor himself support this as he admits that the "*greatest part of that (*was*) within the Wall, and much beside of that we Suburb call*" (Aubin, 1943, p. 61).

Innumerable times the mentioned effort of pulling down houses, as the only possibility how to tackle the Fire, is also included in the poem by John Tabor. He adds fire engines too and the ordering to demolish the houses links with the figure of the king. Charles is perceived as a flawless with no negative attributes. He of course controls firefighting which is inspired by real events. King´s sentimental and naïve selflessness is depicted in Tabor´s verses:

"*Rode up and down from place to place, to stay*
By all means possible the running Flame:
Giving forth orders look´t to see the same
Effectually performed, ventring where
Inferior persons dar´d not to come near" (Aubin, 1943, p. 63).

Citizens´ reaction to the Fire corresponds to current historical research. The author of the poem utilizes all aspects of the subtopic. It could serve as an artistic evidence of the historical event in this case. People´s hesitation and subsequent hurry and saving their belongings and goods (when we are talking about merchants) are illustrated in the lines of the poem.

"*Their Goods away like Plunder now are packt:*
But many, whom the Flame surpris´d before,
Out of their Houses they removed their store
Lost all their Goods, and in one hour were some,
Wealthy before, mere beggars now become" (Aubin, 1943, p. 65).

It is shown how people had not expected such a disaster and even when they moved their belongings from their houses, they were later forced to move it farther away. Some could hire a cart which is also a phenomenon the poem deals with. As we know the immense demand of hiring carts (or boats) caused several times higher prices, "*although the common prices had been around £4 or £5 for a cart and 9s or 10s for a porter, now it raised up to £30 per load*"

(p.12). Tabor follows the conclusions of research and in his work talks about "*excessive rate of Carrs* ". However there is one part ("*Wealthy before, mere beggars now become")*, which is not one hundred percent true. The Fire, indeed, destroyed much of people´s property and rid them of fortune, but most of them were not as wealthy as it is described in the poem. The richest citizens had plenty of time to save their property and capital. It can be illustrated on the example of bankers from Lombard Street, which was long way from epicentre of the Fire. Therefore the wealthiest ones stayed as rich as before.

Londoners´ "*final destinations were fields (Moorfields, Finsbury Fields) which surrounded the city*" (see p. 20). Tabor does no skip this either and he lavishly develops the evacuation into the fields around London. Unlike the other poets, Tabor states the exact name of the destination:

"*Moore-fields with piles of Goods are fill´d, and there*
Their Owners lie abroad in th´ open air" (Aubin, 1943, p. 65).

He skilfully links the preceding effort of people to save their belongings using carts and following tendency to leave the city for they thought "*the whole City would wast and no other refuge sought but open fields*" (Aubin, 1943, p. 65). There, given the overcrowded place, the citizens experienced suffering which is described in the poem and it also corresponds with the reality then (see p. 15).

Apart from hunger and hardship, the poet even adds one phenomenon which has not been described in available historical literature yet; and either Pepys or Evelyn does not mention it in his diaries. Tabor points out the difficulties of pregnant women.

"(What´s yet forgot) the sad condition
Of women then in travail, and such there
As in this time sick, weak, and dying were" (Aubin, 1943, p. 65).

He literally talks about "*births, and deaths each day and night*" (Aubin, 1943, p. 66). We do not have needed evidence available to support this claim but considering the huge number of refugees in the fields (Evelyn reports more than 200,000 Londoners, p. 10), it is probable that some women who were expecting a child gave birth there.

Because ´traditional´ ways how to save someone´s life or belongings had failed, people were forced to flee beyond the city walls. Common practise when goods and belongings were being hidden in churches turned out to be ineffective. Even John Tabor suggests between lines that it could be one of the factors why Londoners were heading to the fields. The poet pays more attention to St. Paul´s and gives ´him´ apparently more space. He also poetically portrays how its stones were exploding because of the extremely high temperature during the Fire which reached the church (see p. 13).

"*The Organs could not pipe, though* ***the Stones dance****:*
Paul falls away in´s old age, the Saint hath" (Aubin, 1943, p. 70).

John Tabor several times speaks of the "*Resurrection*" of St. Paul´s and hopes it will be repaired or rebuilt. The author passes these hopes on the city of London and the whole country as he believes in better tomorrows. It is, again, put in context of the war and the plague which are also supposed to vanish.

"*Nor noise of War our borders terrifie:*
The killing Plague should in all places cease" (Aubin, 1943, p. 72).

The poet, therefore, sees positives of the Great Fire in the possibility of rebuilding it even though he does not express it directly. The benefits of the Fire in case of the plague are overrated. Tabor perceives the Fire as a purifying element which had an enormous impact on raging Black Death and its eradication. As it was shown, these deliberations appeared to be incorrect. However, it is important to say that as a contemporary, John Tabor was able to see both negative and positive sides of the blaze which he composed into the poem.

2.6. *Upon the Late Lamentable Accident of Fire* by John Allison

Although we know the author´s name, the poem could be classified as a poem of an unknown author. There are no sources which could give us any information about John Allison, a poet. Therefore we cannot reveal possible hidden motivation in his writing, which could have been deduced from his life and ideological stance.

The poem *Upon the Late Lamentable Accident of Fire. In an humble Imitation Of the most Incomparable Mr. Cowley his Pindarick Strain* has no periodic structure in rhyme pattern. Nevertheless, it consists of 327 lines of verse which are divided into 15 sections which tend to be more coherent and related to one unifying unit. These sections have different numbers of lines (usually around 20, maximum is 26) which naturally results from the total number of lines. Irregularity would be the word that could characterize the formal structure of the poem, then.

From the analysis of the content, we can see how religious it is. The author works with causality of human´s sins, which are, according to him, the reasons of origins of such disasters.

"*Awake proud Man, and take a view,*

What miseries thy sins persew" (Aubin, 1943, p. 73).

In contrast of the Great Fire, there is the opposite element – water, represented by cataclysmic floods especially the one linked with Noah. Allison uses rhetoric of Old and New Testament, but he completely omits ancient authorities and reference to Greek or Roman mythology, which were quite popular with some other poets writing on the Great Fire of London.

It is relatively complicated to find some concrete information in the text. Rather than being concerned with facts, Allison´s writing is superficial and very general. The result is that the reader can be easily overwhelmed by the overall atmosphere and his or her final impression might be realizing certain fatefulness. Despite this, an effort has to be made to find something factual which could be comparable with current research.

Firstly, the poet does not deal with the origin of the Fire or a potential arsonist or a group of people which could be blamed. He only highlights the eastern wind, which really affected the spread of the Fire and the direction remained the same for the days of the conflagration of London (see p. 11).

"*Like the warm Guest*

That takes his journey from the blooming East" (Aubin, 1943, p. 73).

Allison adapted people´s hesitation at the first stages of the blaze. The swiftness was crucial and decided whether their property would be saved or not. This is one of the parts which make the crushing impression and show the individuals not the masses:

"*I know not but the Man that own'd the wood did wake,*

(A seasonable time when life's at stake) And so amaz'd did hardly know

Whether he still did Dream or no;

His suddain, and surprising fear" (Aubin, 1943, p. 75).

At the beginning of the disaster, one of the determining factors was also fact that houses were crammed and close to each other. It is something which most of the poets do not deal with, but it had a significant role in spread of the Fire as some historians claim. Even Evelyn calls it "*wooden, northern, and inartificial congestion of Houses*" (see p. 9). Allison as a poet describes it differently:

"*Now first the people understood*

The ill consequence of neighbour-hood" (Aubin, 1943, p. 77).

An effort to fight the Fire is not mention at all and Londoners give the impression of resigned victims of such a disaster, who at least try to save their belongings or wares in case of merchants and wealthier citizens ("*And when their costly Wares were gone,…, Gresham's famous building fell.*" [5]) In the poem, nobody pulls down houses or makes firebreaks to halt the Fire. The only passing reference of a resistance is the mention of fire engines, whose efficiency is doubted:

"*Now all the foolish Engines play,*

And all the water they convey,

Will not half its thirst allay,

[5] **Thomas Gresham** - an English merchant and financier who lived in the 16th century and was a founder of Royal Exchange. Therefore, this part may refer generally to merchant class or the building of Exchange specifically.

So far they are from lessening its heat" (Aubin, 1943, p. 78).

It is necessary to add that these proto-fire engines were not as effective and helpful as it had been thought (Hanson, 2001, p. 58).

Neither Charles II nor his brother Duke of York occurs in the poem, which could refer to author´s antipathies towards restored monarchy or he simply regarded the king´s part as dispensable, but as stated above, we cannot judge for the lack of evidence of the poet´s life. However, this omission makes Allison´s poem different compared to the others.

Regarding the afflicted area and its description, it is partially depicted when the author speaks of destruction of houses and churches, but nothing is mentioned by name (except for Royal Exchange, where it can be deduced from its founder´s name). Then the area of riverside is said to be burned ("*It gain'd along the River side, And roar'd*.") as well as typically ´popular´ St. Paul´s, whose admiration by other nations is stressed to accent its monumentality.

"*And think, Great Paul's upon thy Fate,*

Whom all the world, not only we admir'd" (Aubin, 1943, p. 82).

On its fall, people´s despair and grief is demonstrated, which could relate to their unfulfilled hopes when they had expected to save themselves and their property in the God´s temple. Therefore, this connection of St. Paul´s fall and citizens´ resignation is not misleading at all. The last examples of some burned buildings are the city gates, whose importance from the poet´s perspective is in the fact that "*Thieves and Murderers*" imprisoned in the gates were liberated thanks to the Fire.

The poem tends to be more lyrical rather than epic. It is very subjective and certain emotions and feelings are stressed. It is not structured in chronological way and that is why the reader´s orientation might be more difficult. Only few concrete facts appear in the text, there is lack of names of the public or religious buildings, with no reference to the cause of the Fire, or an explanation how it ceased.

"In its own ashes it expir'd,

How I can't tell, I only know,

It begun strangely, and it ended so" (Aubin, 1943, p. 83).

It is the poet´s lamentation with strong emphasis on lyric and religious themes rather than objective report of the events. Nevertheless, it would be absolutely inappropriate to demand this from Allison, who was under the weight of the cataclysm and under the influence of the form which he had chosen for his adaptation of the Fire.

2.7. *The Dreadful Burning of London* by Joseph Guillim

The whole title of the poem sounds indicative of the poet's feelings as *The Dreadful Burning of London: Described in a Poem* which was written by Joseph Guillim and published the year after the catastrophe in 1667.

The author is said to grapple the nocturnal image of the Great Fire of London both in literature (mainly in poetry) and in visual art. He wanted to distance himself from perception of the Great Fire of London as an event in "the deepest silence of the night" and depict it in the light of day (Monteyne, 2007, p. 130). This is worth looking into, because most of the paintings related to the Great Fire of London take place in the night. For example Jan Griffier the elder´s or Lieve Verschuier´s works can illustrate this thesis (see p. 58). With regard to the poet´s presumed attitude, there will be an additional aim - to prove his tendencies of reflection burning London by daylight.

The poem consists of 388 lines of verse and the author chose regular "A,A, B,B C,C D,D ..." rhyming scheme with 194 couples. The terms he uses are mainly from antiquity which is mixed together with Christian themes. Therefore, we can find culturally inconsistent expressions such as "*God, Heaven, Troy, Neptune or Hector*" next to each other. There are also two similes to some other significant fires from history and again it is taken from ancient environment. The first one is the fire of Rome from the second half of the first century under the reign of *Titus*, who is likened to Charles II. The second one is the fall and fire of Troy, which only supports the tendency of using ancient motives as well as Neptune fighting against Vulcan, which could have probably illustrated the battle of elements.

"*Vulcan against Neptune seem to rage,*

Who with his Waves could not his ardours swage" (Aubin, 1943, p. 36).

Greek mythology is also represented by a creature perfectly suitable for likening to the Fire, a Hydra. The use of Hydra, whose heads ought to symbolize the flames, is identical to Dryden´s poem *annus mirabilis* (see p. 24).

The poem compared to historical research shows some points of concurrence, but many things are left out and some do not follow the conclusions of historians and relativize them to a certain extent.

At the beginning, there is no cause of the Fire stated as well as no culprits. Even further in the poem, Guillim does not deal with arsonists and Londoners who would wreak their anger on foreigners or people of different confession. Even though the conditions which affected the cause of the Fire are not mentioned, the eastern wind which had crucial role in spread of the flames is contained in the poem.

"*Before the Sun, an Eastern Wind doth rise,*

Which made the flames shoot sparks up to the Skies" (Aubin, 1943, p. 37).

Guillim may have attached significant importance to the wind, because he repeats one couplet which refers to an eastern gust twice.[6] The bigger significance in the eyes of the poet may be one of the possible explanations, which translates to be a logic regard to research (see p. 11).

In the adapted streets, which "*became As fuel but to feed this greedy Flame*" and where citizens tried to pack and save their belongings, there are also those who tackle the flames and the fleeing masses with their properties are just a hindrance to their firefighting.

"*Who onely striving to secure their Goods,*

Justle down those who bring opposing Floods" (Aubin, 1943, p. 32).

It corresponds with the reality as well as the using of fire engines, whose effectiveness is, however, a bit overrated and this way of firefighting is the only one described in the poem. Water as the opposite element has an essential and exceptional role there and for example pulling down houses is not present at all as well as king´s ordering so. He is only portrayed as an emotionally stirred monarch likened to the Roman emperor Titus, but the author sharply reject any similarities with negatively perceived emperor Nero.

"*A shower of tears straight from the Kings eyes fell.*

So Titus wept, as Salems Temple burn'd" (Aubin, 1943, p. 43).

It has never been confirmed, and for example king´s contemporaries Pepys and Evelyn say nothing about it. Therefore, it is more likely Guillim´s means how to express unfortunate

[6] *„Cold gusts of wind, these ardors more intend;*
Which make the flames their Ruines forward send."

situation and hopelessness. As it was described before in this chapter, the king is definitely accepted as a positive character of the poem.

The rage of the Fire ruined churches, public buildings, dwellings or even hospitals ("*th' agil Fire preys on the Hospital*"), which is expressed in the lines of the poem. Not all damages are mentioned, but the most significant ones are such as Lombard Street, Royal Exchange, Newgate and of course St. Paul´s. To each described engulfed place some extra information is added by the author. Treasures of Lombard Street are stressed as "*they* (flames) *the Jewels, and rich Stones out-shine*" and Newgate is mentioned in context of prisoners who fled during the conflagration.

"*Reaching to Newgate, there they soon set free*

The Pris'ners by a Goal-delivery" (Aubin, 1943, p. 45).

Joseph Guillim seems to be interested in reporting of criminals, because he also presents felons hung near the London Bridge, who were too adapted by John Dryden as witnesses of partial success when a firebreak averted the danger of the Fire and saved London Bridge (see p. 25).

St. Paul´s is typically a matter which is more developed and becomes a symbol of the desolation, especially the destruction of churches. The author poetically talks about a victory of the Fire over time as it consumed churches with their clocks through which he accents the massive devastation of London´s parishes (see p. 14).

"*What Fire is this, makes the Bells cease to chime?*

Destroyes the Clocks, so triumphs over time" (Aubin, 1943, p. 41).

In case of St. Paul´s, the ancient influence is demonstrated again. Guillim expresses and complains about the impossibility to hide inside the temple, which is, according to him, something natural when a fire rages. He refers to old Greeks who used to use their temples as refuges. People really could not count with St. Paul´s as a sanctuary for the reasons described several times (see p. 13).

"*Where shall we refuge seek, and pray? while thus,*

Heaven takes the very House of Prayer from us" (Aubin, 1943, p. 44).

Despite these gloomy lines, there are also bright sides in the poem such as the suggested tendency to view the burning London in the light of day. Guillim managed to incorporate some passages set in the daytime changing the typical nocturnal atmosphere of the catastrophe. In the poet´s interpretation, there are flames which out-blaze sunshine and in the night they "*supply'd absence"* of the Sun. Although there are only a few mentions of daytime, still, compared to the rest of previously examined poems, this one has the strongest inclination to a reflection of the burning of London by day. Depiction of London did not become the leitmotif, but the author added something new which was not common until then.

Surprisingly, no other discussed poem tries to portrayed London as Guillim tended to, except for Dryden´s *annus mirabillis*, where he mentions the sun alongside the moonlight at least.

"*And now four days the Sun had seen our Woes;*

Four nights the Moon beheld th' incessant fire" (Hooker, Swedenberg, 1956, p. 101).

The author is quite accurate in his narration of the events with the exception of fire-engines, whose impact was overrated. His lines objectively inform the reader about some crucial points of the Fire, the poet follows the verified facts but he does not utilize the whole extensive topic as he concentrates on several issues only. Despite Guillim´s desperate feelings for London in flames, he is able to perceive some positive effects, for example an opportunity to rebuild London (supported by Monteyne, 2007, p. 130).

"*Thus from our Ruin'd City may arise,*

Another, whose high Towers may urge the Skies" (Aubin, 1943, p. 45).

Guillim also expresses hopes for renewed London which would rise from the ashes like a Phoenix and would be loyal to the king. At the end, the author thus reveals his sympathies for Charles II.

2.8. Poems – the Comparison

One part of the analysis of the poems was the figures of their authors, whether they entered the work with their own stands and opinions. There is not much reference of lives of the poets except for Dryden´s and thus their possible motivation had to be found in the lines of verses. According to them, most of the writers seem to be supporters of the restored monarchy. We could even claim that, with an exception of *London Undone* (in which the author does not openly express his sympathies towards the reigning dynasty, but he also does not criticize or speak of it in a negative way), the poems are fairly patriotic and are expressing allegiance to the royal family. Very often the king and his brother are depicted as ´saviours´ and this portrayal only supports loyalty of some poets. Although Allison´s poem tends to be patriotic, he does not mention English ruler and differs from the others in this respect.

Nevertheless, the poems are not depersonalized at all, as the authors´ opinions are reflected there and the verses mirror their beliefs. Additionally, they lament over the desolation and so they inevitably become a part of their own poems. Because of this, a strong and noticeable imprint of the figures of the authors can be discovered in the poems and the poets are integral to their works.

The most popular and most frequented rhyme pattern in selected poems was "A,A, B,B C,C D,D ..." and the length of individual poems differed between each other. The shortest one had 114 lines while Dryden´s *annus mirabillis* consisted of more than thousand lines of verse, which was, however, caused by the fact that Dryden processed many events of the 1660´s, not only the Great Fire. There is no evidence that any of the authors would be a priest or would be connected with the church, but there are religious themes which are contained in all the poems. However, this is determined rather by the era than by the authors themselves. In the 1660´s, we simply cannot expect strictly atheistic poems without references to God and other authorities. Some poems, for example Allison´s *Upon the Late Lamentable Accident of Fire* or anonymous *London Undone*, stress the religiosity.

The Old and New Testaments are often accompanied by Greek mythology or reference to ancient Rome, whose function in the text might have been to present a wishful sumptuousness of London. Fading Renaissance could have its own role in this as it was derived from the concept of Roman civilization and the rediscovery of classical Greek philosophy. However, it is also necessary to state that the influence of succeeding Baroque is substantial, too. It is supported in the passages in which the fate and fatefulness are accented in their

monumentality. For instance, Allison and the anonymous author of *London Undone* approach Baroque interpretation of fatefulness the best. The former mentioned too does not mention any Gods, creatures or figures from Greek mythology. Everywhere else we can find several names from this environment at least.

Selected poems deal mainly with the Fire and sometimes they are only extended by adding the context of the Second Anglo-Dutch war, the plague or the Civil War (*London Undone, Londons Second Tears*). From this point of view, Dryden´s *annus mirabillis* stands aside a bit, because it is focused not only on the Fire but also on the other events of 1660´s and its complexity makes it markedly different from the other poems.

An essential part of the analysis was in comparing the poems to the current historical research which is considered to offer the only true interpretation of those days in September 1666. The assumption was that historical facts would not be reflected in the texts and the poets would concentrate on their inner experience rather than on portraying burning London corresponding with historians´ conclusions.

Of course, there are the poets´ feelings which are projected in the poems but this emotional level is usually a background for a dominating description of the conflagration. Eventually, when the selected poetry on the Great Fire of London is put together, it forms an outline of what Londoners could have witnessed. So the poems together may inform the reader quite well about the Great Fire, when we imagine the texts without authors´ entering and when their emotions are filtered out together with poetic language and some similes to mythical figures.

Nevertheless, each poem naturally accents different partial topics which are developed and extended according to the author´s interests. Despite this, there are definitely some unifying points and sub events, which each poet occupies himself with.

Firstly, St. Paul´s must be stated for it has become a symbol of the blaze. Its fall has a unique role which has been formed, besides other things, by the poets writing about the Great Fire. The church is prominent feature of all selected poems and embodies the suffering and desolation. Secondly, the city gates are pervading the poetic texts except for *London Undone*.[7] The mention of Ludgate, Cripplegate etc. can have a function to call attention to the enormous impact of the Fire which reached medieval walls and city gates. Then, another public building – the Royal Exchange is what the poems have in common. If St. Paul´s represents London

[7] Dryden does not mention city gates either, but he speaks of city walls, which are likened to Theban ones.

churches, the Royal Exchange necessarily has to be a symbol of wealth of the nation and prosperity resulting from trade. Its destruction then symbolizes the terrific material and financial losses.

The unifying features are simply the destroyed public buildings which were according to poets essential for their importance and also some phenomena occurring during the Fire such as eastern wind, use of fire-engines, saving people´s belongings and their subsequent escape to the fields. We are basically talking about significant buildings which were burnt or events which are traditionally highlighted by historians as well.

Last part of the analysis is the degree of objectivity. Most of the analyzed artists did not strictly follow the imaginary time axis and sometimes it turned to chaotic and unsystematic description but still, it has to be stressed that quite high percentage of individual sub events of the Great Fire are stated even though we are dealing with poetry. Objectivity is necessarily associated with authors themselves and their opinions being displayed in the texts. As it was stated (see p. 46), the poems are not depersonalized and the poets´ subjectivity is easily noticeable, but on the other hand on the wave of emotions they bring us quite accurate testimony of those days. Many authors are even able to see positives of the Fire and they regard future rebuilding of the city as beneficial aspect.

3. The Great Fire of London in Prose

The last part of the thesis is going to examine how the subject matter is approached in prose in different period of time. Selected literature was taken from the 19th century, the first half of the 20th century and from its second half. Individual works are analyzed and compared to each other. There are several points which are going to be considered.

First, the authors of the books must be introduced and their motivation to write a novel on such a topic should be exposed. Also the era in which they composed could have been reflected in the particular book as well as the research (which differed throughout the centuries) back then might have inspired them. Therefore it should be revealed and a comparison should be drawn.

General information about the books such as their publishing, success or response should be stated and their plots should be foreshadowed too. All of this will introduce the reader into the context.

The next section deals with the way how the theme of the Fire is processed. Whether the conflagration is the principal topic and no other themes are included in the book or the Fire is only a partial theme forming a complex sequence of events. Another aspect will be if it follows the described reality from the first part of the thesis or not. In case of a truthful record of the blaze, it will be pointed out what is included in the book and what is not. If the writer bases the storyline on his own fantasy or a phenomenon which occurred during the Fire and is developed by the author, it should be shown how he works with that. Both variants will be covered.

The following part focuses on the places, which are described and in which the plot is set. There can be two options – static and dynamic portraying of those days and the hypothesis is that the novels will be more dynamic. The main character may for example stay at one place or he can as well be moving and may be an eyewitness of more sub events of the Fire.

The last thing, on which it is going to be focused, is a possible application of the books as a source of objective knowledge of the Great Fire of London. It is going to be examined if a reader can gain or extend his knowledge on the basis of reading the selected prose. The conclusions will also be confronted with researched poems.

3.1. *Old St. Paul´s* by William Harrison Ainsworth

Old Saint Paul's: A Tale of the Plague and the Fire is a novel which was serially published in 1841 when it started to appear in *The Sunday Times* and later it was completed as an illustrated book (Carver, pp. 232 - 272). The author of this historical romance William Harrison Ainsworth had previous experience with the genre for he wrote *Guy Fawkes* and *The Tower of London.*

However originally, before Ainsworth devoted himself to writing, he was pushed to study law. He variously avoided working and he rather spent his time reading at home or in libraries, instead. There he came into contact with some writers from literary circles for example John Ebers or Mary Shelley. (Ellis, 1979, pp. 74 - 93) He not very successfully tried to run his publishing business as a partner of mentioned John Ebers and was also politically active (a pamphlet *Considerations on the best means of affording Immediate Relief to the Operative Classes in the Manufacturing Districts* addressed to Robert Peel). After he ceased to be engaged in politics, he flirted with an idea of composing poems (*Letters from Cokney Lands*), but since 1829, he worked in the legal profession and travelled a lot to draw inspiration for his first historical and gothic romance, *Rookwood*, which was followed by 39 novels until his death in 1882 (Ellis, 1979, pp. 128 - 134, 181 - 184).

Among other things, one of the aims of the analysis will be examining Ainsworth´s transient engagement in politics and his poetic episode. Together with his profession, it will be assessed whether it had an impact on his prosaic writing, especially *Old St. Paul´s*.

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The story of *Old St. Paul´s* takes place in London between April 1665 and September 1666 and apparently, two major events of these years are adapted there – The Great Plague and the Great Fire of London. However, the major part is about the former disaster during which the author deals with Leonard´s (Mr. Bloundel´s apprentice) endeavor to attract Amabel Bloundel, the pretty daughter of a London grocer. While Leonard is rejected, the spendthrift Earl of Rochester succeeds in obtaining her possession after he marries Amabel, who later dies from the plague. Her former admirer Leonard contracts the plague too, but he recovers from it and meets a woman who falls in love with him and is later revealed to be Lady Isabella Argentine. The storyline is developed on the background of the horrific effects of Black Death. Therefore, the reader can come across the dead-carts, the pest-houses, the

common burial pits and some socio-pathological phenomena like when two important characters, Anselm Chowles and Judith Malmaynes, go around killing and robbing the sick.

The lengthy ´plague part´ is replaced by the Fire on last one hundred pages, where the blaze forms the setting for the protagonists and the plot is noticeably accelerated. In Ainsworth´s book, the Fire is started by religious zealots led by Solomon Eagle [8](who was a real figure and his personality is reflected in *Old St. Paul´s*). The events of the Fire are described from their point of view, which is later interrupted by Leonard´s perspective. He achieves to expose one of the arsonists, who is imprisoned in Newgate where he eventually dies. Leonard has a role of a ´hero´ as he plans to destroy buildings using gunpowder, which he successfully present and explains to the king. Charles II is even saved by Leonard in burning London and is granted a title, which allows him to finally marry Lady Argentine.

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Although the Fire is a partial theme in the book, it cannot be denied its significance for it enabled Leonard to show his qualities and it closes the plot. The events of the Fire are very accurately portrayed because the description is based on previous research. According to Carver (p. 270), Ainsworth gathered information about the events of the plague and the Fire from Daniel Defoe´s *Journal of the Plague Year* which resulted in the story following the contemporary research on the Great Fire.

For example, the group of fanatics initiates a conversation about ´favorable´ conditions, which means dry weather and eastern wind in this context. The Fire really begins on Pudding Lane in Thomas Farriner´s house and subsequent chaos and spread of the Fire are described. Then, citizens care rather about saving their belongings (lighters on Thames or Spitalfields and Finsbury fields are mentioned) than about saving the city, but there are some attempts of authorities to halt the flames – using fire engines or firebreaks. Ainsworth (p. 557) also works with Londoners accusation when "*it was supposed that it must have been caused by French or Dutch, with both of which nations the country was then at war*" (Ainsworth, 1841, p. 557). Another person who is blamed in the novel is a catholic professor (Catholic Church or Papists

[8] Both in reality and in the book, Solomon Eagle was a Quaker who, according to Defoe, predicted the plague and run naked in the streets telling them that their sins will be punished. Historical account does not state that he could have a connection to the Great Fire, but when he moralized in the streets, he had a pan of burning coal on his head (Defoe, 1896, p. 98). This might have inspired Ainsworth to make Solomon one of the villains in his book.

were blamed in reality too) who was imprisoned in Newgate. Perhaps, the author refers to news in London Gazette (see p. 19).

The important buildings which were burnt or saved are stated too, such as the Royal Exchange, Newgate, the Tower, London Bridge or St. Paul´s. The latter one is exceptional, because it is the center-point of the entire novel's action and its silhouette in flames symbolizes the prophesied fall of London.

Nevertheless, there are some points which were modified by the author and do not correspond with the reality. First, the Fire is not ignited accidentally, but is caused by the arsonist, which is a crucial and essential moment in Ainsworth´s story. The author chose one of the groups (religious one) which were publicly accused from setting London on fire. The conflagration was, indeed, hindered by firebreaks using gunpowder, but it was not an innovation introduced by an individual – Leonard in this case. As Reddaway states, it was common practice how to tackle the fires years before the Great Fire (1940, p. 24). Also the saving the king´s life by Leonard is there only to serve as an element which points the ending of the novel and we have no evidence about such an event available. Furthermore, Ainsworth portrays Charles II very subjectively as he stresses only the good qualities of his personality and again we can see the tendency to present him as a flawless monarch.

The overall impression of the depicted days of the Fire is very dynamic. It is not a narrated form perspective of one place and the locations change so the reader can witness most of the events through the lines of the novel. The writer also tends to synthetize the development of the Fire on different cardinal points as he describes reports of authorities or Leonard´s view from places where he can see greater part of London. The second aspect which contributes to dynamics is pursuing different characters.

If the beginning of the blaze was disregarded, Old St. Paul´s could be a valuable source of knowledge about the catastrophe and could be an alternative to historical literature for the novel is written in more engaging way. In fact, the author created a literary image of burning London, which is almost precise and follows the reality to a large extent. The mentioned writer´s temporary involvement in politics is not displayed there and only his really positive attitude towards the king could be criticized.

3.2. *Forever Amber* by Kathleen Winsor

The author of *Forever Amber* made a breakthrough with this romantic novel which was also her debut, published in 1944. Neither being a historian nor a writer with previous literary experience, she managed to process the Restoration period very precisely from a historical perspective and used this era as background for her sophisticated love story. She claimed to have read more than 300 hundred books on the topic of the Restoration and such a research enabled her to set the story into the years after 1660. The fifth draft of the novel was accepted by editors and the book could be published. Despite the fact it was a bestseller, it also caused considerable controversy because of "*70 references to sexual intercourse, 39 illegitimate pregnancies, seven abortions, 10 scenes in which women undressed in front of men.*" Therefore, it was labeled as pornography and banned in several American states, which however, did not avert the enormous success of the novel with more than three million copies sold (Homberger, 2003, [online]).

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The plot is basically about a young orphaned woman, who uses love affairs or marriages to markedly richer men, in order to achieve wealth and higher social status. She even becomes the king´s mistress but she still keeps her feelings for a man she can never have and who she met as her first one. The fabricated story is situated in fixed historical sceneries, which give impression of real events. It is also believable thanks to the fact, that there are real and famous figures side by side with fictional ones. One of events which form the historical background is the Great Fire, which has only an episodic role in the novel. Amber is on her way to London after her son was poisoned by Earl of Radclyffe (Amber´s then husband) and she hears about the Blaze. Being afraid of loss of her fortune in her residence in London and being desperate for revenge she hurries to the capital with her servants. There, she witnesses horrors of the conflagration and finds her husband, who is left to die in his burning house after the confrontation with Amber.

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The description of the Fire is closely bound with the main character and her way to Radclyffe´s house which was near St. Paul´s cathedral. She was heading there from west and her eye-witness account consists only of the things from the western part of London. This was widened by Winsor with her summary what the Fire caused. The author´s description of the Fire makes the overall impression more static even though she informs the reader about the

broader context in this way and about some buildings and specified areas which were laid in ashes. Concretely she talks about the streets hit by the Fire at the first stages of disaster – Pudding Lane, Cannon Street. Then, engulfed London Bridge is stated as well as whole Cheapside and the western area outside the city walls. On the other hand, the undamaged parts of London inhabited by nobility like Covent Garden and St. James are mentioned in the chapter which follows the one about the Fire. Nevertheless, the writer focuses rather on individual phenomena occurring during the Fire such as hiring out carts for exaggerated prices around 40 pounds, loaded lighters on Thames, using fire engines or citizens´ initial hesitation and their subsequent escape to the fields (overcrowded Moorfields). Winsor illustrates the profit motive of people who offered their carts for rent and demonstrates it on the comparison of the prizes with annual peasant´s earnings. Individuals who are actuated by desire of enriching themselves and begin plundering are mentioned too.

Because Amber did not witness the first days of the conflagration, there are foreshadowed some rumors which were spread in reality (see p. 19), for example an alleged Popish Plot or flaming London Bridge which was saved in fact. Citizens´ behavior towards foreigners is described too in the ´Winsor´s´ part, where she enters the story and presents the summary of facts. All blamed groups of people are covered (French, Dutch, Catholics) which only supports the words about Winsor´s exhaustive research on the subject. The way how Londoners treated these groups is illustrated with concrete examples: a Frenchman battered by a blacksmith using iron bar, another Frenchman beaten in Moorfields for he was reportedly carrying “balls of fire” which was later proved to be tennis balls or a woman who was crippled by a crowd (see pp. 19 - 20).

The king´s role is accented for he imprisoned all these endangered people and deputized a Lord Mayor, who was shown to be incompetent in handling the situation saying that "*a woman might piss it out*" (Hanson, 2001, p. 49). Charles II and his brother Duke of York are portrayed in the book in compliance with current research.

Generally, the author incorporates effortlessly and non-violently many essential historical facts into the book. It can be shown on the example of Amber rushing to London and becoming conscious of the prevailing eastern wind. It is really very accurate and the stated facts are not inconsistent with historical literature, but Winsor did not utilize the potential of such a topic exhaustively. She, unlike other writers or poets, does not mention dominants of the city like St. Paul´s, Royal Exchange or the endangered Tower and the length of the ´Fire

part´ is noticeably shorter than in *Old St. Paul´s*. Although it is not that extensive, the ´Fire´ part helps to escalate the action as well as in *Old St. Paul´s* where it is necessary for gradation and the ending.

Discussed points connected to historical accuracy imply that this book is usable as a truthful source of information, but not all events are covered so it offers only constricted perspective. Despite this and the fact that the novel belongs to ´women´s literature category´, a reader can get to know historical background, which (considering the genre) could be expected not to be as precisely processed as it is.

3.3. *Restoration* by Rose Tremain

The last examined novel which includes a part about the Great Fire of London is *Restoration* by Rose Tremain. The female author, who gained her education both in England and France and had an academic career, has written many other historical novels, for instance when she later developed the main character from *Restoration* in its sequel titled *Merivel: A man of his time*. Except for novels, she has written collection of short stories or a children book and has been awarded several times for example for this analyzed book.

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The novel is, again, set in the Restoration period, precisely speaking in the 1660´s when the greatest catastrophes of the decade are utilized and have their own role in the plot which is about a young physician Merivel. He becomes a surgeon of the king´s dogs after a surgery of one of them and joins the court. There, he meets his future wife Celia Clemence who is the king´s mistress and the marriage is arranged only to trick another of Charles´ mistresses, a real historical figure Barbara Palmer. Merivel is given the Bidnold estate in Norfolk, while Celia stays in a house in London where the king can visit her in secret. The turning point is when Celia comes to the Bidnold and Merivel makes inappropriate advances to her which leads to the confiscation of Merivel´s obtained possessions because of the king´s jealousy.

The protagonist then joins his old friend John Pearce, a Quaker who works in a hospital for mentally ill. However, after a lapse of time, Merivel is expelled from the hospital for he had an affair with a patient, who was expecting his baby. They travel to London where he continues in his profession and Kathrine gives a birth to Margaret but dies in childbirth. During the Fire, Merivel´s intentions are to save his daughter who is near the Tower in a family of a money-lender. On his way to Margaret he rescues the wife of Arthur Goffe Esquire and this regains him the king´s favor, who allows him to return to Bidnold as its owner and is allowed to live there with Margaret.

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Although the topic of the Fire is partial and covers two chapters of the book, it is has a crucial role in the plot. It is used as an event in which Merivel gives a good account of himself when he selflessly helps the elderly woman. Tremain develops the story on the background of real events of the Fire and except for characters, nothing is fictional there. Described development of the blaze corresponds with the conclusions of the historians mentioned in the first part of

the thesis. There is, for example, the situation when "*the clerk from the Navy Office*" (Tremain, 1989, p. 343) (in all probability Samuel Pepys) and some others are vehemently discussing the issue of the Fire and when the king orders to demolish houses to halt the flames. This would suggest the author´s previous examination of historical sources, diary of S. Pepys especially. The following pages only support this claim, as the historical research is followed, but the author does not name any specific buildings engulfed by the Fire. As she avoids stating concrete names, it is easier not to deviate.

The eastern wind, whose impact was pointed out several times, is mentioned as well as pulling down houses, orders for the Lord Mayor, panic in the streets or the huge firebreak which was made as the flames approached Cheapside (see p. 12). Merivel also with his companions Francis and Finn escape to the fields outside the city wall and then he continues to the money-lender´s house where he hopes to find his daughter.

Merivel´s account of the events of the Fire is very dynamic because he witnesses the king´s and political decisions, and also the suffering of ordinary people. He even loses his own property when his house in Cheapside is burnt down. Additionally, he keeps moving and so it is not description from one place or from one perspective, but we are offered various views of different social classes.

If the previous prosaic texts could be used as a tool how to learn something about the Great Fire of London, this book could not. The reader only gets to know that there was a Fire in London, which had really destructive effect on population and urban area (the fatefulness is not as strong as in the other novels and poems), but the author does not mention many facts.

On the other hand, in the part dealing with the Fire the text is lightweight and it is not a reflection of a cataclysmic event as we experienced with other works and there is even space for jokes and common distraction. For example when the painter Finn offers making of portraits of the people in Lincoln Inn´s fields not realizing they have no "*wall on which to hang them*" (Tremain, 1989, p. 351).

3.4. Novels – the Comparison

All the novels processed the subject matter of the Great Fire on several chapters only, but although it is a partial topic in each book, it works as a turning point in the story. The Fire helps to escalate the action, makes it faster and its part is one of the most significant. Each author appears to choose, or select the Fire to support a radical change in his or her novel and after that, the story was prepared to be drawing to an end.

In the selected books, there is no distorted information regarding the conflagration except for Ainsworth´s origins of the Fire, which was started by religious zealots in his *Old St. Paul´s*. On the contrary, the authors use the theme of burning London as the background for their stories and enrich them by their own fictional characters, which are moving in the center of metropolis ablaze.

The hypothesis was that the prosaic works would be more dynamic which was confirmed in two books – *Old St. Paul´s* and *Restoration*. The remaining novel by Winsor concentrated only on one place in the part about the Fire and the context was described by the author itself when she was explaining to the reader issues of the event. Despite her comprehensive overview and naming most of the engulfed buildings, it became more static than the other works.

While the first novels could be used for pedagogical purposes as some tools for acquaintance and getting to know the events of the Fire, the last one is unusable in this way. Ainsworth´s and Winsor´s novels could make the topic of the Great Fire more popular, which they have already succeeded in. These two books could be supplementary literature for people interested in history, of the Great Fire especially.

Restoration by Tremain is a dynamic novel, focusing on the main character during the Fire but omits the overall context and only Cheapside and fields are on the front burner. Tremain, for example, does not mention destroyed buildings, even the most prominent such as St. Paul´s cathedral or the Royal Exchange and that´s why the reader needs to know the context to imagine the event as it really happened.

4. The Reflection of the Fire in other Forms of Art

Films

The proofs that the topic of the Great Fire has not disappeared even from more modern artistic forms are, among other things, film adaptations of all analyzed novels. *Old St. Paul´s* was made into a silent movie in 1914. The British production processed the theme under the lead of director Wilfred Noy (Old St. Paul's: (1914), [online]).

Another novel, this time, by Kathleen Winsor became the bestseller and therefore, an idea of a film adaptation of *Forever Amber* occurred. Its scenario with the same title as the novel had, differed from the plot of the original book, but the movie was as successful as Winsor´s debut. *Forever Amber* from 1947 was colorized and it earned almost 15 million dollars, while the expenses were around 6 million dollars. It benefited from the enormous popularity of the novel and the ban in several American states did not prevent spreading either of the film or the book (Forever Amber: (1947), [online]).

Six years later after the publishing of Tremain´s *Restoration*, a film adaptation was released in 1995. Its significance and success can be illustrated on the fact, that it won two Academy Awards. Again, the plot was slightly changed for the purposes of the film and the part about the Fire was affected by these changes quite a lot. Merivel, instead of heading towards the Tower after hearing about the blaze, hurries to Cheapside to save his daughter who is there. Illogically, he uses a lighter to get there from Whitehall and he does not rescue anybody. The king´s favor is regained thanks to his previous curing of Charles´ mistress, when Merivel, unselfishly, did not reveal his face and did not demand anything for his service.

Fine Art

The flames of burning London in 1666 mirrored also in fine arts and several anonyms or well-known authors depicted the cataclysm. The most significant paintings will be introduced and commented.

The first selected picture is painted by an unknown author from **Anglo-Dutch school** and it is a reflection of burning London in the night and we can see the phenomenon of saving people´s belongings and goods on the river Thames.

Picture 5

Another author from Dutch school – **Jan Griffier** (1652–1718) portrayed both ways how Londoners escaped from the engulfed area (boats on Thames and crowds fleeing the city) and captured Tower fortress and London Bridge, which was defended from the flames.

Picture 6

Jan Griffier the older is also the author of the painting *The Great Fire*, which is showing Newgate and St. Paul´s cathedral in the background (Stephen Porter, 1996, p. 51).

Picture 7

Waggoner, in his night depiction of burning London, captured the riverside and people on the boats with their belongings.

Picture 8

Lieve Verschuier´s painting was already mentioned in view of the fact that it is another work reflecting London in flames in the night. In addition to that, it illustrates the river Thames overflowed with the people on their lighters desperately trying to save their lives and belongings.

Picture 9

Highgate Fields during the Great Fire of London from 1666 by **Edward Matthew Ward** (1816–1879) does not focus on the Fire itself but the people who managed to escape into the fields, while the conflagration is in the background.

Picture 10

Conclusion

It was shown that the topic of the Great Fire of London was attractive for contemporaries who often witnessed the event and had tendencies to react on the catastrophe. It also resonated within the artists circles in the 18th when a reference to the Great Fire of London appeared for example in *Gulliver's Travels*. In Swift´s satire the protagonists helps to douse a fire of imperial palace in Lilliput and he halts the flames by urinating over the palace (Swift, 1800, p. 98). It is an apparent allusion to Thomas Bloodworth who said the well-known sentence: "*a woman might piss it out*" (Hanson, 2001, p. 49). Then, in the 19th, 20th century and before the new millennium were still published novels about Restoration era, which included passages about the Fire, which could not be omitted for it was such an important event in the first decade of the Restoration. The selected novels utilized the blaze to speed their action up and close the story.

The poems were unexpectedly very objective with anticipated desperate feelings because of the desolation the Fire caused. However, in those days after the conflagration the poets were able to see benefits of the blaze, for example the rebuilding of the capital or the purification of the city and they did not only lament on the Fire.

In prose, only Ainsworth deals with the issue of the rebuilding when it is mentioned in the end. The rest of the authors do not pay attention to this and they merely use the event as the background for their stories and after the Fire ends, they keep focusing on the main characters.

In this thesis, it was suggested that both selected poems and novels could be a valuable source of information about the cataclysm, even though it is not the only theme in the books or poems. All these works can attract an ordinary reader and introduce him this historical topic or they can be a supplementary source to the books written by historians. Though, it is important to draw the line between fictional literature and historians´ research using our critical thinking.

Regarding the facts mentioned in the individual works, several themes and buildings are repeated but not all of them are covered in every single work and the themes penetrate the texts of the poems and novel. For example, the destruction of St. Paul´s cathedral, the Royal Exchange, city gates or London Bridge can be mentioned but it only illustrates how the artistic works correspond with the reality and how there is no tendency to change it dramatically.

There are also some differences between the works form distinct periods as the poems were usually a certain reaction on the unexpected disaster written almost immediately after the Fire or in several years. While the novels were published throughout the following centuries and there is a noticeable distance which was projected into the emotional level. The authors of the novels also rely on historical research and eye-witness accounts, which allowed them to be historically precise. Writers´ examination of diaries of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn became evident when the latter mentioned appeared in some novels as a real historical figure (in *Forever Amber*, *Restoration*).

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Picture 1:

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Picture 2:

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Picture 3:

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Picture 4:

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Picture 7:

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Picture 8:

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Picture 9:

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Picture 10:

Highgate Fields during the Great Fire of London, 1666 Edward Matthew Ward (1816–1879): Parliamentary Art Collection. In: *Art UK* [online]. London [cit. 2017-12-02]. Dostupné z: https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/highgate-fields-during-the-great-fire-of-london-1666-214288/view_as/grid/search/keyword:great-fire-the-great-fire-of-london/page/3