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Bakalářská práce

The portrayal of class  
in Charles Dickens' works

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I confirm that this thesis is my own work written using solely the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited.

České Budějovice, 7.7. 2023

Eliška Raisová

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## Abstract

Wealth and social status in Victorian England had a great influence on perceiving a person in nearly all directions. Charles Dickens grew up in this time period as a member of the lower class of people on which this perception of society had a huge impact. Thanks to his father's debts, he lived, together with his family, for quite a long time in a debtor's prison, and he lacked a sufficient amount of education because of his mother. In essence, he was never able to forgive them, which got portrayed, as well as many other factors, in his later works. The aim of my bachelor's degree thesis is a study of the depiction of social classes in Dickens' writings in the context of his life and period, whose opinions influenced his literary stories. With the help of the characters from his books, who represent each social class, I will try to picture Charles' conception and inclusion of the topics of social inequality in his work.

Keywords: Charles Dickens, Victorian England, social class, wealth, poverty

## Anotace

Bohatství a společenské postavení mělo ve viktoriánské Anglii velký vliv na vnímání a sudbu člověka takřka ve všech směrech. Charles Dickens v tomto období vyrůstal jako člen právě té nižší sorty lidí, na kterou toto pojetí společnosti mělo ten největší dopad. Kvůli dluhům svého otce žil dlouhou dobu spolu s rodinou ve vězení pro dlužníky, a kvůli matce se mu nedostávalo důkladného vzdělání. Ve své podstatě jim křivdu nikdy nedokázal odpustit, a to, spolu s dalšími faktory, se také odráží v jeho pozdější tvorbě. Cílem mé bakalářské práce je studium zobrazování tříd v Dickensových dílech v kontextu s jeho životem a dobou, jejíž názory tak ovlivnily jeho literární příběhy. Za pomocí postav z jeho knih, které zastupují jednotlivé sociální skupiny, se pokusím vykreslit Charlesovo vnímání, pojetí a následné zakomponování témat společenské nerovnosti do jeho tvorby.

Klíčová slova: Charles Dickens, Viktoriánská Anglie, společenská třída, bohatství, chudoba

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## Introduction

Charles Dickens is one of the greatest authors of the 19th century. His novels belong to the ones which still keep fascinating readers and remain relevant even today. The bildungsromans, often capturing the lives of disadvantaged people, mainly children, and members of the lower class society, are an unforgettable part of literary history. That is achieved by the vivid depiction of the characters and the atmosphere of Victorian England, in addition to the author's own experience of a similar lifestyle shared with the heroes of his stories. The goal of my bachelor's thesis will be to examine the way Dickens portrayed the social classes in contrast to his life. Certain characters and their surroundings from chosen novels are going to be analyzed, and their example will be shown as the author's perception and characterization of the mentioned divisions.

The first part will cover the important details of the author's life, as well as the introductory information about the time period he lived in. The author's literary significance among the other authors of the period will be included as well. These factors are necessary to mention for a better and deeper understanding of the second part of my thesis.

The second part will contain a closer analysis of the description, appearance, and behavior of the characters I previously hinted. Each character picked will be a representative of a certain social class in the given story. These representatives are going to be compared with ones of the same class but from the other narration.

This bachelor's degree thesis will be completed with a conclusion that will include a summary of the results emerging from the previous parts, concerning the possible archetypical description of social classes, appearing in Dickens' works, and the attitude he held towards them.

## 1. Victorian England

Hearing the title "Victorian" often evokes an idea of something obsolete, austere, or even puritanical. An image of a strict system and firmly observed order appears in the mind. One which has the purpose of suppressing any human whims and profligacies. As there is always at least a grain of truth in every statement, these thoughts might be rightfully caused by the picture of the "Victorian lady," an ideal woman, innumerable times portrayed as chastity and excellence itself, who has to follow particular rules to not be diminished by society. The depiction of the opposite sex as the "Victorian gentleman" is no exception. Men of high standards, formally dressed, leading conversations on revolutionary topics with other men of the same virtues. It was, of course, possible to actually see individuals alike in the mentioned time period. However, it certainly does not capture the whole essence of the era and stays only one of many inevitable elements, together composing one of the most prominent periods of British history. (Steinbach)

Queen Victoria, who also lent her name to the times, was a proud ruler of the land, which during her reign highly flourished in numerous areas. of life, and thus refutes the above-stated opinion. She was one of the most important monarchs who laid the cornerstone of an emancipated future. Even the length of her administration of the kingdom is an aspect worthy of recognition. It lasted nearly a whole century, with Victoria ascending the throne in 1837, and ruling the kingdom until her death in 1901, making her the second longest-governing in the history of Great Britain. She was only recently surpassed by the, unfortunately, now deceased Queen Elizabeth the Second. (*List of British monarchs*)

### 1.1 Industrial Revolution

A great number of important movements began or reached their peak during Victoria's care for the throne. The satisfactory state of contemporary politics, and stable financial system, supported by the opportunity of global trade, allowed the industry to



prosper. This phenomenon carries the title “The Industrial Revolution. “ It is characteristic of the transition from manual work to mass production, which was enabled by the innovation of the old methods or an introduction of completely new machinery. (Landow)

The population was rising, and so was the demand. The inquiry grew to such an extent it became hardly possible to answer with an offer of products created by hand. Considering the required quantity and the speed with which the goods were supposed to be manufactured, some sort of change was inevitable. The first to start off the expansion was the industry of textiles. (Williams) As production increased, the supply of materials also needed to be accelerated. This was one of the main reasons leading to the evolution of the world of transportation. The development involved the introduction of railways, coupled with the invention of the steam engine, and followed by the construction of the first-ever locomotives, which permitted both people and commodities to travel across the state as well as to be imported and exported abroad. (Hobsbawm) After the gathering speed of the physical possibility of conveyance, the pace of carrying information between people as such too exceeded. The third wave of the revolution brought the discovery of electricity, the foundation of modern success. The invention of the telegraph meant a huge shift in the field of communication, giving the empowerment to send messages over a long distance in a matter of just a few moments. This made it the distant predecessor of any contemporary networking technology. (Allingham)

All the improvements stated above, and far more, go hand in hand with the overall economic expansion and social transformation of the United Kingdom. That is, at least, the traditional view of this evolution. Surveys concerning British import, export, and production examined their contribution to the economy of the nineteenth century, coming up with a slightly contradictory conclusion. Although the overall capital of the country increased, the variability

of providers has declined, making the growth inefficient and stagnant in the other sectors.

(Temin)

## 1.2 Charles Darwin

Viewing the Industrial Revolution from one point or the other, it is always apparent it intervened not only in materiality but also pushed the intellect of the population. It sprung up the desire for further development of mind and knowledge. One of the most prominent representatives of such a notion is the biologist Charles Darwin. His theory of the evolution of species changed the perception of the world as it has been known to date. His discoveries helped to get the nineteenth century written in history as the Age of Science. After finishing his studies at Cambridge University, he undertook an expedition all around the world, where he collected all kinds of important data concerning animate and inanimate nature and their environment. This voyage piqued his interest in the exploration of life and its aspects on such a scale it resulted in his need to write a book that would bring light to the supportive arguments of his theories. (Darwin and Barlow, 71-82)

The theories proclaimed are ones of the origin and extinction of species throughout the history of the Earth. "Natural Selection of the Species" is the summarizing title of the thesis, describing the superiority of the stronger individuals. Those with sufficient ability to reproduce and thus slowly evolve into better versions of themselves are chosen to survive. Following up with the argument of the possibility of living creatures emerging from one common ancestor, one prototype of existence. (Darwin 459-490) His work began to spread uncertainty among the people, causing them to question their existing beliefs. They started to view the surrounding nature around them from a different perspective and started to notice the similarities we share with other living species, giving rise to a certain reevaluation of the cornerstone of their religions, making their period into the presently called "Age of Doubt." (Diniejko)

### 1.3 Marx's Theory of Classes

As the religion moderately proceeded to repatriation, it provided space for curiosity in other aspects of life. People started to focus on themselves in a more detailed way, from various points of view. Karl Marx, the renowned philosopher and theorist, was, among other, concerned with researching the citizens in terms of their social status. He constructed a theory that kept developing throughout his whole life as he aged, gaining needed knowledge and experience. He aimed to change the running of society and perhaps the whole world instead of only plainly describing an idea. (Andrew, 455) As already mentioned, the theory concerns the social division of the population. However, it does not observe individuals and their characteristics but rather examines separate groups and the foundations of their mutual relations. He divided them into two main categories. Understanding these is one of the keys to comprehension of Capitalism. The first of the couple is "The Bourgeoisie" or the "Upper Class." The second one is "The Proletariat," also called the "Working Class." To explain their essence in simple words, the members of the higher status are the employers, whereas the lower sort are the employees. (Gingrich)

Other minor subdivisions included are, for example, "The Landlords," who own a number of certain areas without any further importance attached to them. "The Petty Bourgeoisie" or "The Middle class," the possessors of property or merchants lacking funds to hire others to perform the work for them; therefore, they have to physically participate in the running of the firm. "The Lumpenproletariat," in other words, "the ruined bourgeoisie," burnt-out soldiers or discharged jailers, frequently turned into beggars. Last to mention is "The Peasantry and Farmers." (Gingrich)

From Marx's theory emerges the idea that individuals should not be judged by what they are not able to change about themselves or their lives. This thought also guides his work, which does not include a division based on biological properties, such as the sex or race of an

individual. Avoided are also the attributes inherited and given by birth, such as nationality, religion, or belonging to a certain cultural group. He tried to defuse the rising misleading conceptions by his thesis because, quoting Andrew, “Classes are historical; they can become what they are not,” thereby preventing the probable arising miseries. The amount of wage or a consumption is not able to sufficiently define the source of difference, as it provides inaccurate and overly extensive results; therefore, they are excluded as well. (Andrew, 456)

Knowing this, the concept of classes is not easy to summarize in just a couple of words. A possible definition emerging from the divisions and descriptions above, however, might sound like this; Classes are “groups of men and women, socially divided by connection to common means of production“ or “economic relationships with ideological and political dimensions.“ (Andrew, 461) Such belonging determines the direction of a whole life. It does not necessarily need to be permanent; it is not a static condition. It can move due to an evolution in the variability of fields, forcing the classes which do not fit the stage of development, to change. Such transformation caused by force leaves inevitable footprints that deepen the “class consciousness,“ and therefore, just adds an emphasis to the margining of the divisions. According to Andrew, “Classes exist only when the belief in the equality of humankind is fairly widely diffused...” (Andrew, 462) In other words, they do not exist until their members start realising they do, when they begin to focus on the conflicting interests they possess. These differences were most prominent between the complete opposites, the higher and the working class, later reflected in many events and the mode of the whole society. (Andrew, 465)

#### 1.4 Working class movement

A sudden awareness of the incompatibility of interests makes an impression of inequality and stirs up the desire for change. Since there was no variety of political representation, the state policy was highly accustomed to the bourgeoisie. There were not many ways how to

state an opinion, and thus the people started to express it publically, in the streets, or their workplaces. A series of protests, manifesting themselves on the example of the workers breaking the new machinery, and strikes laid the foundations of the incoming chain of political acts and laws.

Initially, the government tried to suppress them with The Combination Act, which forbade any kind of meetings for the purpose of complaining or its planning. (Davis, 34) This act did not bring any succession or advancement; thus, the approach had to turn the other way. The First "Reform Act" has been put to work. However, this essentially changed an insignificant minimum. The country continued to be ruled by the bourgeoisie, as the House of Commons was still mainly filled with the aristocracy. (Davis, 20) "The Factory Act" was supposed to at least relieve an amount of work of the seemingly weaker. It was supposed to shorten the working hours of the children and women laborers. This measure, however, was hardly ever monitored due to an insufficient number of inspectors in relation to the number of places to be checked. Maternity leave was not an option either, causing the mothers to often even give the actual birth to their children on the grounds of the factories themselves. (Davis, 54-55) The following "Poor Law Amendment Act" was intended to lower the cases of the destitute by giving out housing, food, and education for the youngest, discussed in greater detail further. The question remaining was the standard of these offers. These conditions were arranged as practically and cheaply as possible, which many times led to starvation, forced labor, diseases, and premature death. (Davis, 57)

The demonstrations kept going and gave rise to Chartism, a powerful working-class movement guided by various theoreticians, who incorporated new weapons in the form of more organised meetings, written petitions, and word-spreading pamphlets in fighting the injustice. The result of their actions, along with others, was the General Strike of 1842. Millions of workers in all variations of fields of trades stopped their activity and demanded

better conditions for its renewal. Due to the imperfect directory, a violent dispersal by the military took place, and many arrests were made. (Davis, 58-62) Nearly twenty years later, took place the new, and a bit more impactful Reform Act, which also helped shape the future of the Labour Political party and further involvement of the working class in politics. It gave voting rights to all adult men, owning property, and paying a certain amount of money for rent. (Davis, 83)

#### 1.4.1 Women's suffrage movement

Despite the Reform Act of 1867, enabling a considerable part of male population to vote, the female segment kept being neglected. No law enabled the women to express their thoughts. The married, which was an immense percentage of the sum, were considered as one with their husbands. Their existence, and thus their opinion was almost non-existent to the legislation, or represented by the man. Divorce was not forbidden, yet immensely difficult and not at all common. If there was to be a separation, both parties had to agree, and there had to be a valid reason stated. When the marriage was, after all, annulled, it was the father who got to keep the children. During female trials, double standards were often applied in the severity of the punishment, compared to the judging of the opposite sex. All these disadvantages and inequalities often resulted in a woman only being a mere property of the man. A possession that belongs to the house, taking care of the proper running of the household. (Turner, 590-591)

With the expansion of the industry, a greater amount of a work-force was demanded, therefore the fairer of the sexes had to be called into the service of the state as well, alongside with the husbands. As women started to gather in mutual places, they started to share knowledge and thoughts and began to realise their unfavourable treatment. Together with their slowly growing financial independence, caused by the wages, they came forth to call for a higher form of representation in the parliament. The satisfactory result however, was to be

seen nearly two decades after the end of their era, when an enactment of suffrage was granted to the females as well. The protests became an inevitable part of the evolution in the perception of women, and an immense part of the feminist movement, advocating for their further rights. (Aranha, 143)

## 1.5 Education

“From the moment you entrust the masses with power, their education becomes an absolute necessity, and our system of education...must give way to a national system... You must take education up as the very first question, and you must press it on without delay for the peace of the country.” (Heffer, 412-413)

The Industrial Revolution offered new job opportunities and thus ensured the financial independence and empowerment of many people. The current opinion that the poor should only be asserted in the well-being of their situation instead of proper education was replaced by the opposite thought. Thanks to the rising self-confidence and self-respect of the nation, intellectual development became a necessity. The education system was far from what we know it to be today. Every stratum of the population possessed a different structure, conditions, and approach toward schooling. The poor were taught in private schools and the homes of ordinary workers. The content of the lessons often concerned only good behavior, cleanliness, and religious stories. (Hadingham, 49-52)

The Factory Act of 1833 and The Poorlaw of 1834 were supposed to spread education further by lowering the working hours and age at which children were allowed to start working in factories. It was also, additionally providing young workers with tuition from their employers. These conditions were, however, nearly impossible to control regularly, resulting in frequent violations. Education thus still remained voluntary, which further supported its neglect in the families of the lower social stance. The children often interrupted

their school attendance too early, insufficiently learning the basics. In some cases, they did not start visiting the school in the first place. The parents often did not support or even forbid the studies, as every diminishing working power meant a serious impact on the family budget and thus usually, for many, a question of life and death. The money, being the main stagnating point in the question of the intellectual expansion of the population, gave rise to the Education Department, slowly turning schooling from the submerged of the Church of England to a political matter. The 1870 Education Act enabled children to visit schools even against their parents' will. They were still taught more of the instructions than aspirations, meaning they were just being transformed into the more suitable for work. A decade later, foundations for a universal education system were built by introducing a law of compulsory schooling of the kids until the age of 10. (Hadingham, 53-64)

#### 1.6 Authors of the era

Due to the literacy expansion of the citizens, striving for internal self-development and the desire for varieties of entertainment rapidly grew. People became more and more interested in hobbies or additional activities, enriching themselves with excessive information from fields other than religion. With the industrial and global expansion of the kingdom, the sources of amusement spread, as each form also became much cheaper. The Victorians turned into great readers, increasing the demand for reading materials and thus creating many new working opportunities for aspiring authors. Celebrity culture was on the rise. The source were pamphlets, newspapers, or books, all of which had the ability to broaden the reader's horizons. Of course, there kept peeking such an opinion of excessive liberty expressed by some authors. Thomas Hardy or George Gissing was of the opinion the receivers perhaps should not expand their minds in such a measure and were scared of where this development could further lead. (Flint)



### 1.6.1 George Eliot

The period and its other authors also brought completely opposing ideas to the ones of Gissing or Hardy. In favour of the new expansion of mind was the novelist of the 19th century, George Eliot. She professed, in one of her essays, “*The Natural History of German Life*,” that it is actually “the purpose of literature, to expand readers’ moral sympathies and imaginations.” (Flint) In other words, one of the tasks of literature is to develop the minds of individuals and their creativity by imagining the life stories present in the books. It helps develop sympathies towards the characters and thus towards other people present in their lives, gaining the ability of empathy. In the wake of this, she also developed the “psychological analysis characteristic of modern fiction.” (Haight) A brisk example of this kind of narrative is applied in her most famous fiction, *Middlemarch*. *Middlemarch*, following many distinct life stories of people, talking about topics such as idealism, the social standing of women, and education, also ranks among the feminist literature via its witty remarks. For example, “And, of course, men know best about everything, except what women know better.” (Eliot), degrading the overgraduating self-confidence of men by irony. Eliot shows the possible emancipation of women, thus sparking the beginning of the feminist movement as such, despite writing under a pseudonym of the opposite gender.

### 1.6.2 Elizabeth Gaskell

The exploration of feminism and emancipation was on the rise, mostly by female writers. Considering the instability and distrust towards their time period, they preferred not to connect their own name to the topic they so enjoyed investigating. Elizabeth Gaskell initially also published her works anonymously. The novel “*North and South*” is no exception. It discovers the possible relations between sex, intellect, and class. The heroine of the story contemplates and acts contrary to contemporary customs but does not ridicule her stance of a “proper wife.” (Mann, 24) According to Mann, she portrayed the Victorian era in

her works as the period of changes, the transition between the old and new world. (34) The book got serialised in the magazine *Household Words* of one of the most acclaimed and highly prominent authors of Gaskell's active years, who, together with his works, will be discussed in greater depth in the rest of my bachelor's degree thesis. (*North and South*)

## 2. Charles Dickens

As already mentioned, the topic of female emancipation was more the domain of female authors. This is not to suggest that Dickens' works are completely free of them. His stories were rather influenced by the aspects of his private life, on the background of the century he grew up in. With the help of such a depiction of his personal experiences, he adjusts an imaginary mirror in front of society, giving it a hopeful opportunity to realize its own mistakes and seek redress.

### 2.1 Childhood

His first experiences depicted in his works relate to a relatively early period of his life. Even such a memory as the one of his first toys is hidden in the subtext of his literary works. To be precise, the decorations Dickens' family displayed at their home on the Christmas holiday made such an impact on little Charles that he later used them as the model for some of his characters. The mood they radiated was later reflected in the characteristics of the heroes of some of his works. Namely, the torpidity of the mask above the Christmas tree or the numbness of the pulling dummy hanging on the wall inspired the nature of some of them. (Wilson, 9-12) Supporting evidence to this claim is the description of his childhood toys, written in his late 30s, where he shows the potential reader his excellent memory, wit, and the ability to transfer his imagination and various feelings of either happiness or fear onto a paper. The excerpt includes sentences such as "When did that dreadful mask look at me?" And "Nor was it any satisfaction to be shown the Mask, and see that it was made of paper, and to have it locked up and assured that no one wore it." (Wilson, 9-10) His fearful inner

child but disappointed outer man is heard in these sentences, intertwining with his nature of an actor. (Wilson, 15) To illustrate better, as Tomalin proposed: “He saw the world more vividly than other people, and reacted to what he saw with laughter, horror, indignation, and sometimes sobs.” (Tomalin *Prologue: The inimitable*, 46)

Fairytales were yet another element of his childhood to get stuck in his head. The story of Robin Hood impressed him with the thought of the main hero as the defender of the weak. He empathised and unintentionally embodied himself in it, which is reflected in the attitude he takes as the author and narrator of his books. This approach instills in the reader the sympathy for the characters, disadvantaged in any way, in the comparison to others. Little Red Riding Hood was, as he self-proclaimed, his first love. The Arabian Nights Entertainments, however, influenced his mind the most. He often quoted the book in his works as well. The character of Shahrazad was the model for David Copperfield, to be precise, the same way David is telling his stories in the common bedroom due to the fear of otherwise losing his defender Steerforth, Shahrazad keeps the sultan, as the listener of her stories in uncertainty, only to delay her death sentence. (Wilson, 24)

His enthusiasm for literature carried over into his later years. Dickens was a great reader of the picaresque novels. The characters he met there, such as Tom Jones from the novel of Henry Fielding or Roderick Random written by Tobias Smollet, highly influenced the heroes Nicholas Nickleby or Martin Chuzzlewit, the rejected travelers with their hearts on their sleeve. (Wilson, 34) Don Quixote and his friend Sancho also made their mark on many of his characters' souls, as they created a pattern for humorous yet loveable personas, like Sam Weller of *The Pickwick Papers*. (Wilson, 35)

## 2.2 Family

### 2.2.1 Ancestry

Fiction was introduced to Dickens by his closest surroundings, which was one of the essential pieces of the puzzle of factors influencing his stories, as well. The family history of Charles is quite colorful but rather of colors occurring on the darker side of the spectrum. His grandfather, from the mother's side of the family, was a payroll office chief treasurer, who, as it later turned out, falsified his accounting for many years and gained his fortune by nothing but a swindle. Grandmother from his father's side was a fairly affluent woman due to her savings from her previous occupation. She was, however, systematically robbed of them by her son, Charles' dad. (Wilson, 18) Initially, he perceived genteel origins as ones of great importance. He created many characters of such birth who received high sympathy from the audience. For instance, the independent gentleman Mr. Pickwick or the Nickleby siblings, the newly impoverished. (Wilson, 17) It was, however, the unfortunate family private affairs that influenced his later works even further. Either a grim secret of Copperfield's aunt or the curious tension of the house of Clennams in Little Dorrit are its bright instances. (Wilson, 35)

### 2.2.2 Nurse

The servants and their importance and loyalty to their employing family were also an indispensable fraction of his stories. The motherliness and selflessness of Clara Peggotty, David Copperfield's caretaker, was perhaps modeled by his own nanny, Mary Weller. (Wilson, 28) Her influence, however, was not only in a positive manner, as she was a highly religious person, forcing young Charles to visit the church, which gave rise to the unsympathetic characters related to it. Reverend Stiggins, an evangelist living off of Tony Weller's money, the clergyman Howler, and the greedy minister Chadband appearing in *The Bleak House* are a few of many instances of the unpleasant concept of dignitaries. He perceived them as the ones concerned mainly with gaining wealth, only counting their

money, portrayed in many of his works as well. (Wilson, 32-33) Since Dickens was still a child at those times, he was also opposed to any activity foregoing the actual visit of the church. Dressing up in formal clothes or taking a thorough bath was a nightmare for him, just like for little Tom Sawyer in his adventures. Nothing would compare to, in my view, as a person of the modern-day era, the far more scary experience of being taken into the front rows of people's deaths. This changed his perception and the kind and frequency of portrayal of it in his stories, especially of such a sensitive topic as the passing away of the young. (Wilson, 30)

### 2.2.3 Parents

The possibility of having a nanny, who influenced Charles in many ways with her attitudes and upbringing, was mediated by the financial security of Dickens' family, which they were proud of, at least at the beginning of his childhood and early youth. It was when they were still living in Chatham, and John Dickens, Charles' father, was taking his little boy on frequent strolls through the city and its surroundings. That is also what appears to be a model for the countryside setting in his later works, for instance, the birthplace of Philip Pirrip, the protagonist of *Great Expectations*. Thanks to these mutual activities, Charles grew very close with his dad, who entertained him with his witty remarks and voluminous speech, completed by a great amount of energetic behavior. Perhaps he inherited his aptitude and enthusiasm for performance from him. The theatre he so admired, both from the view of the spectator and the participant, was also very much reflected in his writings. His characters often visit plays or perform in them as well. At those times, his relationship with his mother flourished as well. She was the major source of the beginning of his growing penchant for learning. She was the first to teach him the basics of the English and Latin language, the cornerstones of his writing career. It was precisely her, as he says, who awoke his passion for education. (Wilson, 43)

The fondness and strength of their relationship did not last long, slowly turning into bitterness, later passing on to disdain. After they moved to London due to severe financial difficulties caused by the debt, his father held towards his creditors, which also kept increasing due to the mother's reckless spending habits and wish to do business. She tried to fulfill her dream of impeccable living, which they were not able to afford, resulting in the forced discontinuation of Charles' beloved studies, so he could put his hand to work. During his free time, he wandered through the streets of London, and thus his characters gained a new typology. As he roamed, he encountered many "*secondary representatives of liberal professions*" who were accurately assimilated as either "*ants*" or "*cicadas*" due to their innumerable numbers, also causing immense noise around. These people, with their environment, became the background for his main protagonists. Only minor character detailing, as the prisoners pictured in *Little Dorrit* or *The Pickwick Papers*. (Wilson, 47-48)

The walking stayed with him all the way until his adulthood. Then he started noticing the architectural structure of the place. Saint Paul's cathedral became a dominant setting in some of the scenes of his books. As well as the concept of walking itself, as the characters tend to walk miles just by foot. (Wilson, 84)

## 2.3 Work

### 2.3.1 Forced labor

Due to the still increasing debt, and his mother's help consisting mostly of reliance on the help of their familiars and acquaintances, the family soon got relocated into the debtors' prison. Dickens was forced to work in the blacking factory. That place and its conditions unlocked the feelings of loneliness and disappointment in his heart, both towards the system and his parents. (Wilson 51) They were directed more to his mother than to his father, as she saw him rather as a tool to success than a talented person who is trying to help with exertion. One of the undying proofs of this mindset was that she pushed for his reinstatement after he

was fired from his job, just so they could maintain good relations and not lose her much-vaunted acquaintance among labor and management. (Wilson, 58) This kind of behavior of hers is well shadowed in the character of the mother of Nicholas Nickleby. (Wilson, 51) Her loyalty to her husband, which earned her a sliver of admiration from her son and shaped his future perception of women, was portrayed, on the other hand, in the character making an appearance in the novel David Copperfield, Mrs. Micawber. (Wilson, 61)

Despite the aversion he possessed towards the prison and his parents, he missed his family during their stay there as well. The sense of being alone and lost did not disappear. Quite the opposite when accommodated in Mrs. Roylance's house for the time being. The feelings of high sympathy towards his father were never really gone, and he even blindly pitied the situation he was currently in. The reflection of these feelings is apparent in Little Dorrit and her character, who also feels sadness about her father's miserable situation. (Wilson, 53-54)

### 2.3.2 Wellington Academy

John Dickens completely regained his son's love by having him enrolled in the Wellington House Academy. The level of education provided was not the exact one he dreamed of, which later proved to be the case in his depiction of Mr. Creakles' institute, figuring in the novel David Copperfield. Despite the insufficiency of the school, considering his innate abilities, he was more than happy to study there. He enjoyed the possibility of having fun with friends and finally being able to use his talented brain and mind once again, even when just in a small amount. In his opinion, education was one of the keys to fulfillment and successful life. The opportunity to study again also opened new doors in the field of the future occupation. (Wilson, 61-63)

### 2.3.3 Employment

After finishing his studies, his work at Ellis and Blackmore's law office, though menial for him as he performed only unimportant functions there, paved the way for his further employment. It also provided the reader of his books with the characters representing Dickens himself if he stayed in one place, in the position of the office lawyer scribe, just as Dick Swiveller did in the novel *Old Curiosity Shop*. (Wilson, 66)

The position in the law office Doctors' Commons, by ironic coincidence provided by his mother's acquaintance, taught him much closer knowledge of the law, which also conveyed to him the contemptuous view he held of it. The portrayal of the British judiciary offers his story of the Bleak House, and the knowledge of the law helped to depict the period. For example, the mention of the poor law in the life story of *Oliver Twist*. In this job, wills also entered his subconscious and thus became a ridiculous yet critical subject of the development of his stories. (Wilson, 64-66)

The last stop on his way to the career of a writer, getting him much closer than his previous experiences, was journalism. As a journalist of the parliament, he participated in its affairs, learning the cycles and the principles of elections, and gained his future dismissive pose towards it. Together with its members, it got portrayed in *The Pickwick's Papers* or *Nicholas Nickleby*.

In the *Morning Chronicle* newspaper agency, he gained one of the most impactful experiences, influencing not only his writing but also his future life decisions. What also followed was the creation of his first ever book he wrote after led his colleagues into a strike, "Sketches by Boz," Boz being Dickens' contemporary pseudonym. (Wilson, 67-78)



## 2.4 Adult life

Between the years of his youth and young adult life period, he started gaining influence by his further surroundings and the society he lived in, in much greater measure than he did until now. He started noticing people and environments not that particularly close to himself or not directly connected to his interests. Thus his works once again earned a new type of character, the prominent middle class of citizens, who are greedy for earnings and a better living, willing to do anything to achieve their goals, not always justly or in a fair way. (Wilson, 79) In the already mentioned publication of his “Sketches by Boz,“ a highly critical and perhaps, brutally honest view of, possibly to say, snobbish manners of that nature portrayed by Dickens. However, as he later in his life admits, in retrospect, he felt ashamed of it, as, in the opinion of his older self, it might appear too honest and even arrogant, blaming his low age and the lack of knowledge in the world of humbleness. (Wilson, 80) His youthful extravagance was also evident in his own handling of money, which he tended to spend quite senselessly. Capriciousness like this trained young Charles on his own mistakes and influenced his character’s approach toward wealth. The instability of his relatives' financial situation, as well as of the class he started to feel like belonging to, led him to an immense fascination with crime. For example, the main protagonist of Great Expectations, Philip Pirrip, after suddenly acquiring a larger amount of money, starts recklessly spending. Later he is, however, humbled by the threat of punishment for his debt. (Wilson, 93)

### 2.4.1 Women

As already mentioned in the sections above, he was much influenced by the theatre when he was little. That remained the same his whole life, except with age, he improved his skills in performing. This refinement went hand in hand with bettering his heart’s intentions. He took up charity work, being able to see the practically standing development of unfavorable conditions the theatre offered to the actors participating in its running. He

decided to help the people himself and tried to support the failed actresses or orphaned children who lost their parents to acting. (Wilson, 94) He even engaged later on, together with his family and friends, in volunteer performances. The money they raised went to the support of the poor and the establishment of the colony for literary artists such as himself, who retired from their careers. (Wilson, 246)

With advancing age, Dickens also started to express further interest in the opposite gender. At first, he only showed his compassion towards the socially weaker members of the tender sex, the prostitutes. He portrayed them as agreeable, yet not innocent, more desperate martyrs rather than mean in nature. An example of such perception would be Martha from David Copperfield's story. (Wilson, 94)

His first love interest was Maria Beadnell, whose nature got intertwined with Flora Finching's in Little Dorrit. She influenced him severely, not as much as her friend, Marianne Leigho, who perplexed his views on women as the ones biased against men. She made fun of his admiration for Maria, making it impossible for them to actually become a happy couple. (Wilson, 100-104)

A similar fate befell his marriage with his first wife, Catherine Hogarth. Their union was rather unfortunate and thoroughly, once again, influenced his view on other women. The immense difference in each's nature, and the contrasting ideas of pleasures and fulfillment, led to their separation later in life. The first deeper intimate connection was achieved with Cathrine's younger sister Mary. They had very similar interests and thoughts, and he highly admired her for her mind. It did not take long; they became very close friends, and poor Charles fell in love. She, unfortunately, however, died very soon, and love was replaced by feelings of great sorrow. The melancholy which fell upon him immensely influenced the novel he was currently working on. (Wilson, 104-114)

## 2.5 Oliver Twist

It was precisely the times of his grief, caused by the loss of such an impactful woman, when he was in the process of writing one of his earliest and most prominent books, *Oliver Twist*. The sudden sickness of the character Rose Maylie is the major representation of his contemporary feelings. He had the impression of a certain injustice, as he saw the diseases of the loved one as devastating and completely meaningless. In the secret of a soul, he hoped it would not end the way it was destined to. Similarly, the surrounding of Rose, except the fiction, contrary to the reality, fulfilled both the imaginary family's and Dickens' wishful thinking.

Perhaps the re-acquired feelings of loneliness and vulnerability took him a few years backward to the times when as an inexperienced young man employed in the workhouse, he struggled with such notions of sadness, in the same matter as the character of Oliver did. One of the triggering mechanisms of the discomfort was the conditions of the place, which the reader can clearly imagine due to the vivid description of the treatment the workers were accustomed to, only to raise the income and lower the cost. The senseless indifference the supervisors held toward all of them, no matter their age or gender. "What a noble illustration of the tender laws of England." – an ironic remark full of disdain towards the system, uttered by the author, reacting to the character of a nine-year-old Oliver crying himself to sleep at night on the hard bed on the factory site. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 13)

How he hated the system and the fact nobody cared enough to intervene with a piece of compassion, especially in the places where people were dying every day because of the never-ending cycle of poverty. Such despair is portrayed in the third chapter of the book, which follows the situation of the father of a family who has been forced to beg on the streets as the mother fell ill due to the shortage of financials for food. He got imprisoned, and after being set free, he found his wife deceased. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 44-46)

The omnipresent filth and dirt in the streets of the poorer parts of London, in combination with bad weather, results in often fatal diseases such as measles, which are mentioned in the sixth chapter. The author of the novel walked such paths on a daily basis, meeting various kinds of citizens and closely experiencing the conditions as well. He chose to use it as an inspiration for his characters as well. Together with the architectural structure and the layout of the city, he depicted it on various occasions in the book. For instance, when the prostitute Nancy drags poor Oliver through the roads of the town across the Smithfield district. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 136)

His books are oversaturated with lots of processed, detailed characters that will inadvertently imprint themselves on the reader's memory. How did he actually picture them, and what does it say about the opinion he held toward them? That is the topic my bachelor's degree thesis aims to explore. I decided to examine the characters representing the two furthest points on the spectrum of classes, complimenting the main focus of the Marxist theory of classes explained formerly in my thesis.

### 2.5.1 The storyline

The first book, as apparent from the paragraph above, subjected to my analysis, is *Oliver Twist*. It follows an orphaned boy's journey for luck. The title of the novel, which is also the name of the protagonist, is more than apt. Both the story, as well as the author's current life contained many unexpected "twists" and turns, as denoted by Meckier in his article. An example of such a surprising event is the identity of Mr. Brownlow, who is first introduced as the victim of the robbery committed by the group of thieves, which Oliver unknowingly joins at the beginning of his search for a better living. He, however, is later revealed to be his deceased father's closest friend. (Meckier, 118) This, among many other incidents, helped form the destiny and character of the main character and gave him the premise to be the first examined as the prime example of the working class.

## 2.5.2 The representatives of the lower class

### Oliver Twist

To understand Oliver's character properly, we have to start from scratch, precisely at the moment of his birth. The place, where he was born, is the essential proving indicator of his social-class. As written right in the beginning, in chapter number one, on the very first page of the book, he was born in completely unsanitary conditions of a workhouse, in the presence of an old, drunk nurse and one parish doctor. The result of this unthinkable environment for such an act of vulnerability is the almost inevitable death of the mother, and the survival of the child, coming as a surprise. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 1-3) It certainly would not be the first occurrence of such a premature death in the Victorian era, due to the expansion, and the consequential conditions. Perhaps it gave Oliver the first much-needed stroke of strength he keeps slowly acquiring throughout the whole book. A great sign of the evolution of his character is shown in the transition between the second and third chapter. The second one shows the reader his employment in a workhouse, only at the age of nine. It also depicts the scene of Oliver quietly crying himself to sleep at night, after being assigned a job for the following days, denoting his fragility. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 13)

This kind of sensitivity is never completely erased from his character but rather moved to the background by the early expression of defiance. Despite the warnings of his supervisor, mister Bumble, not to speak up, he pleads with the magistrate to dismiss his apprenticeship by the rather uncanny figure of a chimney sweeper. Saying he would rather be beaten, starved, or even murdered than leave with that man convinces the officials to oblige his request. The prospect of a following punishment by the beadle mister Bumble is just a small price for getting rid of an experience that could have as well cost him his life, to all the known aspects. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 23-27)

Instead of a chimney sweeper assistant, he is apprenticed as a helper of the undertaker, where he is forced to sleep in the shop, very close to the coffins, and gets fed with the residual bones. Despite his pessimistic thoughts concerning his wish to rather lay inside one of his caskets than live a life like this, he shows his gratitude and eats every bit of food he is given. His gratitude goes hand in hand with politeness and perhaps a slight naivety occurring due to the unfamiliarity with other apprentices working in the same place he does. One morning he hears someone kicking the door of the store, he opens, and despite seeing a peer, later known as Noah Claypole, not older than himself, he asks him if he wants to buy anything, without any sign of judgment or moodiness in his approach. It is probable that this first impression enabled the boy to choose the young Oliver as a target of ridicule, giving him the opportunity to show off his growing confidence and bravery when he defends his deceased mother against Noah's senseless commentary. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 36-54)

He proves his confidence by standing up to the beadle, as he is immediately alarmed by the fight that took place between the two. Collecting all of his courage, he finally escapes the imprisonment of his current job and decides to take a journey to London. Before he leaves the town for good, he makes one stop to say goodbye to one of his oldest friends from the baby farm he was kept at before the workhouse. Showing his friendly nature and loyalty, risking the possibility of being caught. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 54-62)

On his way to a better life, his already mentioned naivety comes into the picture and is additionally joined by the gullibility of his nature. As he, after an initial contemplation, follows the lead of a stranger, Jack Dawkins, who provides him with shelter from his master, Fagin, whose character is discussed in a bigger detail further. After being fed, Oliver is set up to play a supposed game of taking a handkerchief out of Fagin's pocket without being noticed. He does not get the gist of the activity until later when it turns into reality, and he becomes part of a criminal act of robbery. He is, however, so taken aback by the whole event

and starts running when it is already too late, leading to him eventually being caught by the officer, and brought up to the court. Due to the intensity of the sprint, in connection with low immunity and underdevelopment, he falls very sick, not being able to move or speak. He would be condemned to hard labor as a punishment if it was not for a witness proving his innocence. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 62-94) This scene quite accurately summarizes the state of the judiciary of the period this work was written in. The trials ran like a treadmill; dozens of criminal cases were often solved in just a day, with a lack of evidence, and on numerous occasions, the result was highly dependent on the appearance of the convict. Therefore, many unjust convictions were made on a daily basis. (Hay, 52-53)

Thankfully, it worked out well for Oliver in the very end. He was even lucky enough to soften the heart of the robbed man, who then took him into his home to care for him. The strength of inner self and determination to live resurfaces again when he defeats the otherwise frequently fatal fever. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 94-99) Not only the strength of will but also the power of the mind becomes apparent. After raising remarks about the picture hanging on the, firstly subjected to his child-like curiosity, then to the following description: “The eyes look so sorrowful; and where I sit, they seem fixed upon me. It makes my heart beat, as if it was alive, and wanted to speak to me, but couldn’t.” (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 99-100) At first glance innocent; however, for a child his age, still rather smart, commentary has a hidden depth. Mainly when considering the fact that shadowed later in the story, the painting is supposed to be a portrait of Oliver’s deceased mother.

He shows his gratitude towards his rescuers, Mr. Brownlow and his housekeeper Mrs. Bedwin, by his wilful character and happily obliging any request for help he gets. That, unfortunately, leads him to the trouble of being kidnapped by his previous companions, the thieves. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 132-135) By the time he becomes a part of the vicious group once again, he very much misses his saviours, worrying only about them, thinking he

betrayed them. After he finds out he is going to be part of another crime, he becomes so frightened to the extent of being described as “pale with sadness and anxiety, almost as death.” (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 178) Showing just how sensitive he is and how the child-like spirit and naivety are still in him through constant praying and enjoyment of little details, such as the variability of a market they pass while preparing for the criminal act, despite the situation. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 178-194)

When his prayers remain unanswered, he has to act upon his inner bravery. At first, taking up the courage to stand up to the thieves, pleading with them to let him go, that he would rather die than steal, showing his golden heart and manners. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 199-200) When the robbery goes wrong, and Oliver gets hurt, he decides to try and crawl back to the house initially subjected to the crime. Accepting his faith and the possibility of death, presents his mature mind to the readers. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 253-254)

His strength of will and determination gets him to the door of the house. Inside gets him once again; his charm and enchanting appearance, which he seems to enthrall people with. Just as in the seventeenth chapter, Mrs. Bedwin believes in his innocence, of him not running away from them; here, in the thirtieth, the ladies of the house, Miss Rose and her aunt, both believe he was not a voluntary companion of the robbers. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 265) Earning the trust of all the members of the household, becoming a helpful, gentle, affectionate boy by picking the flowers for the table and trying to reassure Rose’s aunt of surely soon healing of Rose’s sudden illness, despite being afraid himself. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 294-304)

With the help of this family, he finds his way back to his previous saviour, emotionally moving the reader by how cheerful he is when he does. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 377-389) Mr. Brownlow adopts him as his own and gives him the happy ending he deserves.



(Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 506-511) Oliver finds so much strength inside of himself to even forgive Mr. Fagin, wanting to pray for him on his knees in his prison cell, showing the size of his heart once again. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 505-506)

Mr. Fagin

Mr. Fagin, or the Jew, is initially introduced to the main protagonist Oliver, examined above, as a “respectable old gentleman“ in chapter 8 of the novel. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 68) However, the readers quickly learn the contradictory meaning hidden behind this utterance. When he actually appears on the scene for the first time, he is shown in a rather deceitful place, a dubious house situated near Field Lane Alley. The essence of this dwelling is apparent from the contemplation of the hero of the story if it would not be better just to run away. As he decides not to and sets foot inside, his premonition is fulfilled as he is welcomed with darkness, filth, and dirt. Wretched interior, without a bed to sleep on, only filled sacks to lay a head on, after a tough day. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 70-72) Since he clearly does not live in the arms of any affluence, or at least is not presented as such, I think my decision to sort him as representative of the lower class is justified.

While the storyline unfolds, more of his persona is revealed. Except for his real name, he is also called by his religious affiliation, already aforementioned earlier. Why did Dickens decide to make him Jewish still remains a topic for discussion. As Meyer in her essay suggests, there is a very thin line between the perception of the author’s views as antisemitic or just too honest in his overall perspective of religions as such. (Meyer, 239-243) It remains for the reader to judge this aspect, especially since one of the first actions Mr. Fagin is described doing is a thorough rummaging through various jewels, watches, and trinkets of an unknown origin. From this can be retrieved his admiration for possession and property. After being caught by Oliver during the mentioned activity, his reaction is rather fierce as he springs up with sharp questions on his tongue, asking if the boy actually saw something he

apparently should not. Moments later, however, he calms down, showing his volatility.

Perhaps he did it from the smart judgment of not scaring his new possible source of income right at the beginning.

The belonging of the gems mentioned a couple of lines ago is not such a mystery, at least not entirely. Their sources are pockets of often wealthy gentlemen and ladies occupying the streets of London. They did not find themselves in Fagin's hands by accident but with the help of a group of little homeless children, into which Oliver is to be incorporated. Hiding behind intermediaries like this makes him seem like a lazy coward, but one who is also smart and cunning enough to escape possible charges and punishment while making a living without lifting a finger. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 72-80)

Once the new member is brought to the reality of his new mission, the whole network begins to fall like a house of cards as he is caught. Fagin could burst out of rage when his little helpers came back without his earliest trustee. He, however, never raises a hand on either of them. He also speaks in a fairly nice, unexpected manner to the female company of his, addressing them "my dear," showing he is no thug, despite his volatile behavior. Although they say the kind of people you surround yourself with are the representation of who you are yourself, that is not entirely true after all since the same can not be said of the other participant in this story, his boorish companion, Sikes. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 105-115)

Perhaps his sweet tongue and its ability of persuasiveness is the cause of Oliver's rapid change of behavior, adapting to the circumstances and enjoying the company to a certain extent. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 160)

Disregarding the pleasure his words might cause to their receiver, his appearance is rather the opposite, considering the way he is described by the author. As he was "creeping" through the alleys one night, almost resembling "a loathsome reptile engendered in the slime and

darkness through which he moved, “ simply can not evoke a pleasant image in one’s head.  
(Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 168)

He is, unlike some of the reptilian species, well aware of the importance of the bonds and loyalty between the members of one group to make it work in a sufficient manner. He emphasises it to the newest possible member Noah Claypole. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 401-402) Retrospectively proving his thoughts when persistently searching for Oliver and Sikes after an unsuccessful act of robbery contained in chapter 26. He recalls this idea even at the very end of his life, when, with the help of poor Oliver, he tries by his cunning to get out of his prison cell the day before his execution. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 505-506)

### 2.5.3 The representatives of the upper class

According to Marx and his theory, the classes are also defined, inter alia, by the relationship they carry out with one another. Thus the aim of my thesis would not be sufficiently accomplished without including the representatives from the opposite polarity of the spectrum of the social division.

#### Mr. Bumble

The first upper-class member I decided to examine is the character of Mr. Bumble. Unlike the protagonists analysed earlier, his social status is not primarily outlined by the place where he lives but by his occupation as part of the parish. His entrance to the storyline is introduced by the direct description of his behavioral type of “a choleric. “ He also “had a great idea of his oratorical power and his importance.“ (Dickens *Oliver Twist*, 7-8) These former mentions of aspects considering his nature alone do not show the character in the best light right from the beginning. They show signs of his conceit and unpleasantness. As he was the one to choose the name of little Oliver, he decided to give him one according to the alphabetical order he used when choosing names for other orphans with unknown ancestry. The approach alike denotes a sort of indifference and sense of superiority above the weaker,

seeing each just as the next number in the line and not as living and breathing human beings. This is also proven by his lack of compassion towards the conditions Oliver is growing up in and the treatment that he himself secures by transferring him from the poor-conditioned baby farm to the environment of a workhouse just at the age of nine. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 9-16)

His complete indifference and perhaps laziness is expressed by his means of threatening the poor child instead of setting things right. He issues the little boy to not speak a word of a complaint in front of the magistrate, instead of ensuring acceptable conditions to primarily give no room for disagreement. As the orphan eventually decides to speak up, and the magistrate thankfully complies with his requests, his mood drops below zero, initiating the following hate speech about the jury. It is possible to use the colloquial phrase “my way, or a highway“ to explain his selfish behavior adequately. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 23-27)

However, he does, at least partially, get it his way after Oliver's employment by the undertaker. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 31-36)

After a certain amount of time has passed, while the beadle has not engaged with Oliver for long, he still has to intervene and change the further unfolding of the boy's destiny. After the series of events that led the boy to finally reach the so-deserved treatment of love, which he unfortunately promptly lost for some time anyway, he is assigned as a missing person in the newspaper. The mention of the financial reward for any sort of information regarding the boy is the thing to appeal to greedy Mr. Bumble to such an extent he went and tells the kind people searching for him an exaggerated story of how bad of a child Oliver actually is, and how he definitely just ran off with his fellow thieves. Showing him as the envious and mean person he is. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 153-157)

His arrogance towards the others is even more emphasised by the following occurring events. In chapter 27, he professes the sentence “no beadle can do no wrong,“ commented upon by the author of the book by a description of his utterance as “boasted himself

magnificently.“ (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 240) The dialogue taking place between him and his newly acquired wife; “The prerogative of a man is to command.“ And to a question by Mrs. Bumble, “And what’s the prerogative of a woman in the name of goodness?“ he angrily answers, “To obey ma’am.“ (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 331), denoting his discrimination is based even on the gender of the targeted. Lastly, after the sudden discovery of his share of the guilt of his wife’s act of robbing, the only thing he cares about is if he, as the current head of the workhouse, will have to face the consequences in the terms of his post as well. This concern for himself and his well-being finally caught up with him, and he ended up working in the factory where he had once reigned so powerfully. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 509)

Mr. Brownlow

The first appearance of the second representative of the higher class takes place in chapter number 10, coincidentally, as the victim of the robbery by the Fagin’s gang, including the young Oliver as well. He is initially not introduced by a name but by a direct description of “an old gentleman,“ together with his further evolution, making him an obvious choice for the examination. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 82)

After he very shortly realises he has become a victim of a crime, he starts looking around for the culprit. When he lays his eyes on the first fleeing figure, he calls out for help from a police officer, regretting the action, however, as soon as he sees Oliver’s lifeless body lying on the courthouse floor. At that moment, his heart is softened, and he takes the poor boy home, showing not only the size of compassion he possesses but also the heart that beats in his chest and is the major order-giver, at least in this situation. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 85-95)

Thanks to these circumstances, Oliver finally receives the fortune he so richly deserves, as the stagecoach which drives them from the court stops at the house in the street near Pentonville, the district of London’s more affluent residents. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 95) Even the style of speech Mr. Brownlow uses is clearly giving away his intellect and manners

of a genteel man. He talks about Oliver as a trustworthy individual whose honesty beams out of his eyes, speaking to him according to these matters, unbiasedly treating him as an equal. Describes his own future intentions with Oliver with the apt metaphor, “I have not made a coffin of my heart and sealed it up forever...” (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 119) As not only does he decide to provide his rescue with new clothes, but he also shares the roof above his head with immense selflessness and compassion. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 116-119)

After Oliver goes missing, he puts into print an article in the newspaper reporting his loss and issuing a reward for any provided information related. He cares but also keeps his eyes open to any other possibility of explaining the disappearance of the boy. He gets influenced by the information given by the most unwanted person, Mr. Bumble, who overwhelms him with lies and exaggerations, how the boy certainly only must have run off with his comrades, the thieves. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 154-157) He, however, never loses hope for his innocence, and when they meet again, he is happy and immediately accepts him again. He also promises to help find the ancestors of the little orphan. Accomplishing his aimed target, after a long journey of investigation, he is able to reveal details of the boy’s origin, showing his persistence and undying loyalty to a friend. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 383, 425-437, 456-467)

In spite of the newly occurring circumstances, Mr. Browlow earns a deserved ending of shared living with Oliver in the countryside, where the gentleman becomes a valued part of the village community. (Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 507-508)

## 2.6 Dickens' travels

After publishing the novel examined above, his own desires influencing his works, as much as any other factor mentioned before, took the lead. It is possible to say he portrayed his inner soul in his books, his unquieting need to keep bettering himself if it was for studies or later the desire to get to know the whole world. This was one of the immense differences between him and his wife, which in the end, led to their mutual separation. First, however, he managed to convince her to step out of her comfort zone and take part in his first voyage abroad.

### 2.6.1 USA

The first greater journey they took together was to the United States of America. The idea of the USA overwhelmed him so much that he even portrayed it in *The Pickwick Papers*, where Tony Weller developed a plan to save Mr. Pickwick from prison, of which the main peak consists of taking him to the USA. The story of the Bleakhouse is even partially set there. This travel experience and destination, however, also took off his initially rose-colored glasses. Like many others, he discovered the unfriendly feeling of disillusion as he came into contact with the reality of the non-existence of the American dream. He felt drained, and major relief came over both of the married couple after they returned to their homeland. This travel also gave birth to one of his travelogues, "American Notes for General Circulation," where he described his experiences. (Wilson, 153-170)

The positive prospect, which was brought into his life by this expedition, was in the form of yet another inclusive woman, Georgina Hogarth. His wife's older sister was the one taking care of their children when they were abroad. She also continued helping with the household even after their arrival. For Dickens, she represented the ideal woman in terms of caring for and improving the home. He often compared her to his Catherine, who fairly lagged in these duties. Georgina gave him the archetype of the characters of sufficient

housekeepers in his books; for instance, Agnes from David Copperfield earns her worth as a man's wife due to the sufficiency of her house-works. (Wilson, 174)

### 2.6.2 Italy

After his eye-opening experience of visiting the States, simultaneously being disgusted by the social situation in his own country, he decided to move with his whole family to Italy. (Wilson, 184) This decision, however, meant a major setback in his writing as the result of the cultural shock and a series of unfortunate events and accidents. Since he was unable to focus on what he did best, he decided to take a short foray back to England, where he occupied his mind with paying attention to the printing of his new book and meetings with his old friends. The distraction did not last long, and his mind began to wander to the thoughts which tore apart his mind. It was the dissatisfaction of his marriage, yet longing for the warmth of home, and his children, which convinced him to return to Italy. His ability to write again, unfortunately, did not get better by any means. (Wilson, 185-186) His wife was so jealous of their new female friend, the wife of Doctor De La Rue, Madame De La Rue, who became a great interest of Charles, and they decided to move back to England when the happy times full of relaxation and writing began. Despite his setback, which also sprung up due to he grew fond of the country and the Italian nature, which later got portrayed in Little Dorrit's Italian worker Cavaletta, and Plornisch translated his utterances from the worker's birth language to English. (Wilson, 191) He also wrote another travelogue of his experiences in a foreign country, "Pictures from Italy."

After his stay in Italy, he made other travels abroad. For example, he went with his family to Switzerland, which enchanted him with its nature. A trip to the Great Saint Bernard Pass then became, along with Venice in Italy, the ideal of Mr. Dorrit in the story of Little Dorrit. Here he also met his friends, the Watsons, whose estate in Northamptonshire became the model for the setting of the Bleak House. (Wilson, 200) The country that bewitched him



the most was France. He completely fell in love with their culture, their theatres, and their nightlife, which helped him with the sadness he experienced while writing *Dombey and Son* on his previous vacation in Switzerland. He often used the country as a benchmark, comparing it to his native England. He also learned to speak French fluently, and the French returned his love to the full. He became popular there both as a person and as an author. (Wilson, 202-206)

## 2.7 Home

Having sufficiently satisfied his desire to explore other cultures and an overall expansion of knowledge and his inner self, he returned back to the United Kingdom and settled. Due to the expansion of his mind and knowledge, having a comparison to other cultures, he started acknowledging the problems which the people of the lower social stance struggled with the most. One of them was the excessive consumption of alcohol. He realised it was one of the biggest obstacles to the growth of the workers. He even experienced it himself, not personally but with one of his servants who was forced to steal in the office due to his alcoholic wife. He sympathised with the people like this. He wanted them to enjoy life in a different manner other than unhealthy encouragers such as cheap liquor. He advocated the establishment of social equality reform and education in various fields. (Wilson, 225)

## 2.8 Final phase of life

After the inevitable divorce from his wife, due to different views on life mentioned earlier, he decided to move from London to the countryside. Living in the house he bought, his health went downhill. He stopped doing charity performances and work but stayed in the area of the theatre he loved so dearly. He started doing public readings, in this case, however, for the purpose of his own earning livelihood. Everything changed concerning the contact with his closest. The thing which stayed the same was the fond relationship with his readers and fans. He published his works in journals piecewise, maintaining the bond by regular

communication. If we were to assimilate his work to the modern-day person, we could compare it to the way of weekly distribution of tv series to the contemporary audience of people. (Wilson, 257-261)

## 2.9 Great Expectations

“He left a trail like a meteor and everyone finds their own version of Charles Dickens.”  
(Tomalin, 416)

This phase of his life has also borne fruit in the form of many unforgivable literary works. For example, *The Tale of the Two Cities* or *Our Mutual Friend* captures the impact of his deteriorating state of health, including the rapidly growing pessimism. He, however, never stopped valuing his public life and tried to enjoy it until the very end of his own life. His next piece of work, written in this period, was the novel *Great Expectations*, in which he returns to his feelings of loneliness and contempt, projecting them into the perception of the main character Pip. It is, however, not a replica of his life. The most prominent aspect symbolizing Dickens' actual life would be the relationship between the character of Estella and Pip, as the constant dismissal of affection and love. A similar situation occurred in the life of the author himself, in the instance of his fondness towards Ellen Ternan. Reciprocated with coldness and indifference, making her the last woman of his life who influenced him to such an extent. (Wilson, 290-297)

### 2.9.1 The storyline

As the book *Great Expectations* is considered to be the peak of his writing, I decided to use it as the second submission to my analysis. It narrates a story of a little orphaned boy named Philip Pirrip, further referred to just as “Pip,” fulfilling a dream of becoming a gentleman. Already the title of the novel belongs to one of the best, in comparison to the other, since it calls out all those parallels of roles and lusts that the reader is introduced to in

the course of the plot. (Wilson, 268-272) These parallels give the momentum of the story and shape the destiny of the main character, who was chosen as the representative of the lower class of people. As we later discover, his social stance would be an interesting topic for a deeper discussion due to the nature of the novel, being a prominent bildungsroman, thus following the maturing of the main character.

## 2.9.2 The representatives of the lower class

### Philip Pirrip

Philip Pirrip, or also “Pip,“ whose name got shortened due to his inability to pronounce it when he was little, stayed with him until adulthood. The reader is introduced to the story at a moment of grief when the boy is crying above the grave of his parents and siblings. Since the graveyard, as well as his house is situated near the muds and sludges, his place of living also does not necessarily reflect affluence. His poverty is apparent even at the moment of surprise when he becomes a victim of an attempted robbery by an escaped convict. It was, however, not successful because the pockets, which the thief tried to empty, had nothing in them already. Thus at least, Pip obeys, under threat, to bring food, beverage, and a file from his home. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 11-15)

As he returns home, two new characters are introduced; Joe and his wife, Pip’s sister, Mrs. Gargery. The relationship he holds with the two is already apparent from the way they are both addressed. Taking that into consideration, concluding he is not in much of a favorable relationship with his sister. This statement is confirmed by the initial description of her appearance uttered by the boy. According to him, the most prominent features are her red face, height, and the rough apron she often wears. He also adds a little side note of the inability to understand how she actually persuaded Joe to marry her. This remark hints at his impudent character. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 16) Since they were living on the line of poverty, he did not get a sufficient amount of education; thus, when he hears the adults speak

the words “the convict“ or “the hulks, “ he is fairly puzzled about their meaning. However, he immediately shows his childlike curiosity by asking an innumerable amount of questions considering the topic. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 21)

Little Pip keeps his word, and the next early morning, he fulfills the convict's requests; instead of informing the adults or contacting the authorities. He brings him the food and the file, taken at Joe’s forge. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 24-28) After getting back home safely, another prospect of an unpleasant event is proposed by the organized festive dinner with other citizens of the village. In their presence, he feels rather uncomfortable, showing his shyness when they constantly tease him about his ingratitude. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 33-39) He almost feels inferior among them, as denoted by his expression of thoughts, “They seemed to think the opportunity lost, if they failed to point the conversation at me, every now and then, and stick the point into me. I might have been an unfortunate little bull in a Spanish arena, I got so smartingly touched up by these moral goads.“ (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 32)

During the feast, soldiers burst into the house. Pip gets quickly overwhelmed by the fear of him being the target due to the help provided to the convict. It turns out that is not the case, but such fast thought processes show him as a little bundle of nerves full of worry. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 37-38) The feelings of guilt lead him to speculate about telling Joe what he did. He finally decides not to since he would not be able to bear the possible loss of their friendship, which he values too much. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 47-48) He further expresses his affection towards Joe by writing him a letter with an extra endeavor, despite sitting right next to him. Since the note possesses a rather unacceptable linguistic structure, it is another example of the level of schooling of the poorer in Victorian England, which is discussed in the former part of my thesis. On the other hand, it also shows the great effort Pip puts into bettering himself, despite the given circumstance. That is supported by the

enthusiasm contained in the message, which talks about the hope of gaining the ability to teach Joe to write as well since he lacks literacy. Pip later assimilates it to the contemporary state of evolution of the steam industry – “in its infancy.” (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 51)

In chapter eight, Pip is ordered to play at an old lady’s, Miss Havisham’s, house. The experience is rather shocking, and Pip provides it to the readers with great precision with the help of a colorful depiction, enabled by his great observative skills. It is also the place where he meets another representative of the opposite social class, only this time it happens to be a lady, presumably his age. Right at the moment he sees her, he immediately falls in love, despite the rude behavior she performs on his account. She calls him “a common laboring boy,” pointing out his dirty clothes and rough hands, basically everything that makes them different from one another. This way, she also performs a prime example of the statement claiming the division of classes is based on the mutual relationship, previously mentioned in my thesis. He slowly starts realising how much he hates his current stance, showing his rather easily influenced nature. At the time of his departure, he starts shedding tears as the result of her insults getting stronger, presenting the sensitive side of his inner self. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 58-68) His now different perspective is apparent even in the aspect of education, as he, thanks to the encounter with the girl, whose name is Estella, and who enchanted him so much he discovered his new passion for change. He wants to become more desirable to her by becoming a gentleman of proper manners. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 73)

On the next visit of Miss Havisham, he is welcomed by a company of other ladies and gentlemen of a higher status. Their presence makes him feel rather uncomfortable, viewing them only as sycophantic snobs rich only in terms of material possessions, otherwise empty and featureless as a sheet of paper. It is rather a paradox; he disdains what is a high probability of what he could become if his wish was fulfilled. That moment is one of the first

signs of the undying duel between his two personalities, one wanting all the material and abstract riches of the world, the other the comfort of the old home in the smithery with Joe. It is not the only fight to begin that day, as he unexpectedly meets another boy of his age in the garden of the house, and they agree to combat. Pip, despite his previously emphasised physical size, wins and shows strength, slumbering in his body. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 82-94)

Despite being so fearful and even paranoid to a certain extent, while contemplating his possible punishments after the fight previously mentioned, he surely is growing self-confidence as well. During the meeting of Joe and Miss Havisham, before Pip definitively changes her place for the smithery, he is so ashamed of Joe's behavior, it leads to utter frustration on his part, completely overlooking his effort when he is trying to communicate with the lady of the house. It even makes one disdain him when considering the fact Joe perceives Pip as his best friend and admires him dearly. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 95-96, 101-104) He is also far from being happy with having to leave his old temporary work to join the forge, showing a slow loss of gratitude to the only person who honestly loved him for who he was. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 108-109)

An unexpected series of events take place, completely changing the future and Pip's destiny. Mrs. Gargery gets attacked, nearly killed, and loses almost all of her senses. Thus Pip has to help around much more, especially in reading. He also blames himself, as he thinks it has to do something with the convict from the past. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 119-122)

As some time passes by and Pip grows, he starts to notice Biddy much more. She is an older friend of his, a girl who taught him to write and read. She is kind-hearted, smart, and sophisticated. She would even perhaps be interested in him, only if she was good enough to be viewed as a possible subject of Pip's romantic desires. The boy is in love, which is, unfortunately, making him ignorant, and conjures the shallow in him. He even starts to

examine Bidley's rough, working hands during their interactions. In the same manner as Estella did to him. As soon as he finds out that Orlick, an uncanny apprentice of Joe, might be interested in her, however, his newly discovered confidence and seemingly lost selflessness come in handy as he aspires to step in. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 125-132)

After an unknown benefactor offers him through an intermediary an opportunity to become the gentleman he so desperately wanted to be, his old self calls, and he starts doubting himself and his dreams. It does not take long and he discovers the power of money. Once again, he is back at exclaiming the thoughts of arrogance, asking Bidley to make Joe a better person by teaching him the basics, to turn him into a "more suitable" for Pip's future self. Despite him meaning it, perhaps at least partially in good faith, it certainly makes the reader sigh, watching his confidence ruin his good intentions. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 133-157)

His inner goodness is not gone once and for all, even though it appears to be so, especially after the change in Pip's nickname suffers. It still manifests itself in Pip's innocence upon his actions following his arrival to London. For example, he does not understand the concept of giving a tip to a coachman after a ride or the surprise coming from the reaction he receives after offering a handshake as a form of introduction. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 159, 168) He is, however, fully prepared to take a critique for it, to be able to reach his goal much sooner, not afraid of being judged. (Dickens *Great Expectations*, 174) The acquisition of a new friend made it look as if Pip had quite forgotten the original one and whose arrival in London was announced to him by an incoming letter. This report has brought him a sudden fear more than joy. He became scared of the possible embarrassment Joe's presence might cause among his companions. The poor man, however, only came to say hello to an old friend, bring a theatre ticket for a performance, where one of their old familiars plays a part,

and break the news that Miss Havisham wants to see him. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 211-217)

In great anticipation, he jumps on the soonest coach to the countryside to see her, and presumably Estella as well. As soon as he arrives at the place, he is brought out of his naive idea of Miss Havisham being his anonymous benefactor and the girl, his new wife, designed just for him. (Dickens *Great Expectations*, 218-223) However, even after the disappointing destruction of the dream, by a harsh reality, his love for Estelle does not diminish, and he continues to love her. The next time they meet, he shows his obedience and takes her for a cup of tea at the inn, as she orders him to do. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 255-261)

After these events, certain regrets and homesickness come over Pip. While living through such a crisis, two hunting experiences hit him straight in the heart. One being debt and the other death of his sister, Mrs. Gargery. He returns to the countryside once again for the funeral, hunted by the thought of his deceased sister. Perhaps all of these events had the exact timing to humble his ignorance and to prepare him for the shock of the incoming surprise. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 262-274) Indeed, he soon got into a situation in which it was more than necessary to keep calm. He learns the unpleasant truth about the convict he helped in the beginning, being his unknown donor and thus the source of his genteelness. Initial confusion, anger, and frustration soon replace willingness to help and unbiased approach, wanting to learn more about his benefactor's past. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 301-323, 330-336) It is possible to say he even started returning to his old kind-hearted self. It is quite evident in the complete change of attitude towards the inmate, refusing to leave him when their attempt to transfer him abroad to safety goes wrong. It is also Pip who holds the convict's hand until his last breath in the prison cell. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 423, 435)



In the end, coming back to the countryside to settle down with Biddy, he finds out she is actually marrying his beloved brother-in-law, whom he decided not to tell the whole truth hiding behind his benefactor. He rather only wishes him all the best in his new path of life. This fragment of an approach makes him a real, thoughtful gentleman. (Dickens *Great Expectations*, 451-452), The maturity of his encounter with Estella after years of separation, the ending gives the reader a sense of satisfaction about the character Philip Pirrip alias Pip. (Dickens *Great Expectations*, 456-457)

### Joe Gargery

The second person whom I chose to submit to my analysis as the representative of the lower class characters is the brother-in-law of the main character examined above. Joe Gargery is right at the beginning introduced as a blacksmith and the husband of Pip's older sister, with whom he lives in a mutual household. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 11) His past, presuming his current life, is enlightened to the reader after Pip asks him why he actually did not go to school when he was little. He answers with a heartbreaking story of him and his mother being victims of domestic violence. He, however, does not blame or shame anybody for it, as he lives in the positive mindset that everything happens for a reason and that he would perhaps not have become such a skillful blacksmith if all of this did not occur. His early life inconvenience also helped him to learn how hard women's life can be and thus learned the ability of tolerance and appreciation. Later on, it was he who, after taking Pip's sister into his forge, convinced her to take the poor little boy as well, closing the full circle of his destiny, proving Joe's kind heart. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 52-54)

“Good-natured,” “sweet-tempered,” “easy-going,” and “foolish, dear fellow” are the adjectives capturing the way Joe was initially perceived by the main protagonist. He definitely proves himself to be by taking the little boy as an equal, playing games with him,

protecting him from the danger called Mrs. Gargery, and talking to him as a best friend.

(Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 16-23)

One afternoon, when soldiers burst into the door of their house, asking him, as the blacksmith, to repair their shackles, he complies without hesitation, showing his helpfulness. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 37-40) His polite willingness to not embarrass Pip in front of Miss Havisham by wearing Sunday clothes and talking as formally as he is able to. It is also apparent from the overall behavior he presents himself with on the visit to her house, where he is taken by Pip on her order. As he speaks to the lady in the form of answering as if he was talking to his young trustee, his good intentions are thus unfortunately shadowed by his newly emphasized shyness, perhaps stemming from lower self-esteem. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 101-104)

One day, his best friend, as well as an apprentice, is offered to go to school in London. He does not object by any means, not even wanting financial compensation for him, showing the modesty and wishfulness of his character. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 136-144) The same amount of modesty and wishfulness he projects when Pip arrives after a long time. He asks for no money, does not blame him for following his dreams, and only appreciates the boy for his presence, as the right friend should. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 268-274) As he selflessly, without any question, arrives to help Pip while he is sick, he truly deserved spending the rest of his life with a woman of great values who enriched him not only in the academic field but also in the aspect of love and care. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 438-439, 447-454)

### 2.9.3 The representatives of the upper class

#### Estella Havisham

The character of Estella Havisham seems to be a rather peculiar one immediately from the moment she makes the first appearance in the story. She is initially introduced as the second resident of the Satis House, living in the great mansion of Miss Havisham. The mysteriousness of the place is quite matched by the peculiarity of her behavior towards the main protagonist. Pip describes her as “very pretty“ but also “very proud, “not even slightly capturing the essence of her behavior. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 60) Her remarks, full of irony, emphasising the word “boy“at the end of every utterance directed to Pip, make it sound like he is nothing more but a mere child to her. It is worth mentioning they were approximately the same age. Showing immense signs of arrogance and feelings of superiority over the ones she decides to be weaker, giving out nicknames like "common laboring boy “ and assigning them characteristics like “stupid“ or “clumsy,“ revealing her bias against the working class. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 63)

Regardless of Estella’s negative attitude, Pip becomes fairly obsessed with her, admiring her dearly until the very end of the book. However, it is only one-sided, unrequited love caused by constant manipulation, supported by false hopes. First, she treats him as a burden and, moments later, lets him kiss her on the cheek after him winning a boy’s duel. Keeping the boy uncertain, influencing him to such an extent, he decides to change his whole nature and thus his final destiny. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 94) She keeps influencing his resolutions, even when not being physically present. For example, it leads Pip to break the heart of his friend Biddy by telling her he is not able to love her, despite the fact he would really like to, justifying it with being in love with someone else. This whole unpleasant situation results in him doubting his own worth, showing just how manipulative Estella can actually be. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 125-130)

One day, an unexpected twist occurs, and Pip and the reader get enlightened about the story behind Estella's approach. Miss Havisham's vindictive nature comes to the surface as the cause of the girl's character. She lived through a great disappointment in love; thus, she decided to slowly turn Estella into a weapon of revenge against all men. This fact shows the other side of Estella, as he is the victim of constant, what would be possible to call abuse. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 171-177) As some time passes, Estella tells the story to Pip herself, showing her vulnerability and self-awareness, explaining the absence of a heart, besides the physical box which beats and bleeds when stabbed, but not one to feel affection. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 228-230)

It would perhaps even make a person pity her, involuntarily causing sorrow to others. Since she shows no signs of remorse, however, it is a fairly difficult task. The ongoing desire for manipulation, yet child-like mockery, when the manipulated actually gets caught in the net of lies; similar to the continuous need to show her imaginary superiority and wealth by wearing a furr dress or issuing for Pip to pay for her, but from her own purse, is what the human side of a person just can not forgive (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 256, 291) This behaviour of hers is placed in a great paradox after her true ancestors come to light; her mother, a servant, accused of murder and an escaped convict. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 389-395/403) After Miss Havisham's death, she inherited a major part of her fortune and, in the end, was finally able to lead a mature, friendly dialogue with her forever admirer, Pip. (Dickens *Great Expectations*, 440, 456)

Mr. Pumblechook

The reason why I chose Mr. Pumblechook as the last representative of the higher class people is explained by the mere introduction of his character. The first words describing him being "a well-to-do corn-chandler" and "drove his own chaise-cart," are sufficient proof. "Large and slow, middle-aged man, hardly-breathing, with a mouth like fish and dull eyes" is

the following description of his outer properties. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 31) Perhaps the size of his bank account gives him the impression of the enormity of his inner properties as well. He treats Pip as the naughtiest boy alive, despite the truth being the opposite. He keeps instructing him about gratitude towards the elders, which signals his desire to exalt oneself above others; especially when the others can not sufficiently defend themselves. This type of behavior shows his weak and narcissistic nature. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 32)

He likes to give out, but only if the source of the given is someone else's. For example, the way he feverishly pours the wine to the soldier on the festive dinner by the Gargery's, not caring it is not his. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 39) Similarly, he also likes to take credit for other people's successes. After Joe Gargery brings 25 guineas from Miss Havisham as a reward for Pip's services, he laughs and talks as if it was only his doing which brought them such immense fortune. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 105-106) As well as he boasts lies about himself, being Pip's benefactor but Pip being an ungrateful brat who ditched him. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 399-400)

While he cares so much for money and possessions, his immense greed allows his brain to be interested only in Pip's fortune and how to gain his liking, even on such an event as the funeral of Mrs. Gargery, Pip's sister. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 270-271) Fate, however, will at least partially repay him, and his shop gets robbed in the end. (Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 440-441)

## 2.10 Comparison

Despite my description and analysis of the individual protagonists in the works provided above, the question remains; how did Charles Dickens portray class in his books? What characteristics did he assign to each representative, and did he use any patterns? Alternatively, what attitude did he have towards them? The following summary and comparison of the facts gathered so far will provide an answer to these uncertainties.

### 2.10.1 The comparison of low-class representatives

As the first representative, I decided to use Oliver Twist. He is the hero character; thus, it is possible to say he also serves as the main picture of the author's views and feelings. As the storyline unfolds, the reader learns about his character and its development. In terms of appearance, Oliver is depicted as skinny and short in height, presumably also with a lack of physical strength. His tiny size, however, does not mean any larger obstacle for him, as he makes up for it with a great dimension of will and determination. The initial sign of such mental power emerged at the moment of his birth, surviving the awful conditions. The once fragile boy slowly starts to turn into a courageous individual. He learns how to stand up to others and defend his own interests. The effort put into such change is immense as well, as his strong character fairly clashes with the tender, gentle boy, living inside. Being still just a child after all, Oliver often admires with child-like enthusiasm details invisible to adults. He never wants to hurt anyone to some greater extent, physically and morally. Such polite nature sometimes turns into slight naivety, which might be considered dangerous in some cases, especially when supported by the gullibility he also possesses which also leads him to a couple of life-threatening situations. On the contrary, it also makes him a great friend, as being very willing to help. Those whom he decides to deserve it, he approaches with great loyalty, expressing it both to the person in question, as well as to the law since he also is very well mannered, among everything else.

In many of these aspects, he is very similar to the character of Joe Gargery from *Great Expectations*. He is also very selfless when dealing with someone close to him; with the undying loyalty of a friend, he never judges and only supports the well-being of the other. He is always prepared to help anyone but never asks for assistance, even if he is in desperate need of it, showing his willful character as well as modesty. His appreciation, as well as tolerating many details, together with the other properties mentioned, make him a very kind-hearted individual with an immensely positive mindset. It is only a shame he has such low self-esteem, which awakes shyness, making him very vulnerable, and thus often a target of mockery.

He and Pip are not so much alike, despite them both being a part of one story from an identical book, especially compared to the similarities Joe shares with Oliver. Perhaps, at the beginning of the narration, where Pip is still a sensitive little boy, asking questions with enthusiastic curiosity and child-like impudence, all three characters might be considered comparable. That is when he still shows his kind and caring side, which is very willing and effortful. However, Pip is also very easily manipulated, which results in the contradictory personality he accepts later in the story. When he meets a girl, who bewitches his senses to such an extent, he rapidly changes his nature and needs. He begins to show signs of immense ingratitude, as well as arrogance and ignorance. The newly acquired confidence turns him into a rather superficial person, rejecting and hurting his surroundings. Unfortunately, or perhaps, thankfully, there is still the tiny, highly self-critical junior hidden inside of him, whose innocence and naivety soon get humbled by the harsh reality. All the events he lived through, and every surprise he encountered, finally turned the boy into an appreciative, selfless man.

The last of the lower social class submitted to my analysis is the figure of Mr. Fagin. If I was to compare him with the previously chosen characters and find a similarity, it would

be a fairly difficult task. Perhaps only the loyalty, but in his case, it serves merely as an instrument of his own selfish welfare rather than of any virtue or goodness of heart. Mr. Fagin is a thief, or rather, he commands a band of little pick-pockets who steal for him and earn his living in exchange for food and a roof over their heads. Not only does his support of crime make him insincere, but his commanding it from afar also shows the shrewdness of his character. He is also a volatile person. The only violence he ever uses is the power of words, making him a rather persuasive and cunning individual. The strength of speech, however, is often more dangerous than muscles; thus, he is one to be very careful around.

#### 2.10.2 The comparison of the upper-class representatives

Mr. Pumblechook, from the book *Great Expectations*, is the first chosen for the analysis of the upper-class members. Despite being a relative of the kind-hearted Joe examined above, his character is rather different. His affluence made him into a greedy and narcissistic being who, via arrogant tone of voice and thoughts, lectures everyone around him, never, however, proving his own abilities. The only thing he is able to do, and actually performs, is take credit for other people's success; just as the dishonest liar he is, he values only himself and his wealth. He can also be very sycophantic when it comes to money, especially when it comes to acquiring it. He does not like to give away his own, preferring to give other people's possessions, and mainly to make him look better in the eyes of others. He is both greedy and miserly, pretending to be virtuous himself.

Mr. Bumble's character is not a lot different. He lacks compassion and is very indifferent to others. He is likely to sacrifice someone else's well-being for his own comfort. This factor many times leads to unjust resolutions of various situations and problems. As easily derivable from these factors, he is selfish as well. In the same manner he despises the poor; he also discriminates against the other gender, which is proven by his biased view of what a proper woman should and should not do. His choleric nature, as worded in the



introduction of his character, only emphasises and enlarges his unpleasant persona of a greedy beadle.

The character of Estella Havisham possesses rather similar properties as the gentlemen above. She shares her arrogance with Mr. Pumblechook and her balance against the lower class with Mr. Bumble. As much of a manipulator, as she is able to be, she can get easily influenced as well. That also is the factor of change in the perception of her character. It is found out she is a victim of mental abuse and violent change of opinions, deriving her cold, indifferent nature is not entirely her fault. When talking about the reasoning behind her behavior, she shows signs of self-awareness and vulnerability; however, she does not put any effort into changing anything and continues to boast about her affluence. There has also been risen the idea of never really being able to judge her true nature entirely, as she is described only from the perspective of one other character, Pip. (Gates, 390) To be able to do that, the narrator of the story would have to shift from a first-person point of view to a third or create an entirely new sequel of the book. At the same time, for the same reason, all characters would have to be re-evaluated.

If I would like to find a hint of resemblance in the nature of the last examined characters and the last to be analysed, I could never succeed. Mr. Brownlow is a selfless gentleman who saves a little orphan from the awful conditions of the streets. He shows just how compassionate he is when taking good care of Oliver Twist and the decrease of happiness when the boy gets lost. He, however, is also an intelligent man, who tries to give a chance to every possibility, and thus when a message of the possible escape of Oliver arises, he decides to partially believe it. However, when it is proven not to be true, he shows his loyalty and kind heart, accepting him back and even adopting him as his own. He even puts all his effort into searching for the boy's ancestry and eventually succeeds, proving his inner gentleness to an even much greater extent.

## Conclusion

How did Charles Dickens, one of the most prominent authors of the Victorian era, portray the social class in his works? An answer to that question was a major aim of my work, and with the help of his novels, as well as the secondary literature, I managed to derive the following results.

At the beginning of my thesis, I studied the topic of the period Dickens wrote his works. I initially tried to explore the development present and the aspects influencing one another, including the revolution of industry, science, and education. Since the big shift accelerated production, it was necessary to increase the number of employees. This, of course, also resulted in the deepening of social classes, and citizens began to take notice. They realised the inequalities and started to riot and hold demonstrations. Those started a series of changes, albeit slow, in various sectors. The records of the progress of these conversions are a testament to the terrible conditions that preceded them. On the other hand, they also show just how many things a person is able to do when given the right to choose.

These movements were not only noticed by working people or dignitaries but also by artists and philosophers. Authors of fiction recorded their hopes or experiences associated with the period. Charles Dickens was inspired by aspects of his own life, from early childhood, through early youth and into adulthood. He depicted his feelings and how different stimuli, including things, people, and events, affected him. Sense of loneliness, sadness, and hatred caused by the disappointment he experienced, were commonly reflected in the characters featured in the works. The system of the times in which he lived, the inequality, and the unwillingness to do something about it also greatly influenced his thinking and ideas. He was well aware of his surroundings, both near and far, and presented it in a certain way to his readers, with whom he was frankly very popular. He depicted the period

without exaggeration but in the presentation of a fictional story. In this way, he held up an imaginary mirror to society without having to tell the often painful truth directly.

The most prominent aspect of his works was precisely the unequal division of citizens. The individual characters represented the different classes and often pointed to Dickens' attitude towards them. Although he went through both financial stability and poverty, he never quite belonged to an either extreme state of life. However, it could be said that he always sympathized more with the lower class and despised the upper.

Representatives of the working class are often characterized in his works by positive qualities or characteristics, which, together with the incidents that happen to them, make the reader sympathize. Members of the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, were often portrayed as pretentious, indifferent snobs who cared about nothing but money. Evidence of this would be the character of Oliver Twist, as a lovable poor orphan with a good heart, or the rich, cold, and manipulative Estella Havisham. Through my analysis, however, there was also proof of the opposite of this statement, in the form of the characters of the rich, good, and educated Mr. Brownlow or the thief living on the fringes of society, Mr. Fagin. Perhaps, the author shows by this the unbiasedness which he wished to be true of the general public. He also portrayed the truth of the colorful diversity of persons and their characters and the idea that all is not as it seems at first sight, and therefore one must not judge too quickly. Also, any change or variation, though seemingly unattainable, is never completely impossible, such as with the character of Philip Pirrip in *Great Expectations*.

It is, therefore, safe to say that Dickens portrayed class in a variety of ways in his works, and although he had certain preferences, he certainly never judged or condemned any one option or variant.

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