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Sous la direction du :
Pr Elisabeth A. GNANSOUNOU FOURN



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LIGNE EDITORIALE ET DOMAINES DE RECHERCHE

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➤ La taille des articles

Volume : 18 à 20 pages ; interligne : 1,5 ; pas d'écriture : 12, Time New Roman.

➤ Ordre logique du texte

- Un TITRE en caractère d'imprimerie et en gras. Le titre ne doit pas être trop long ;
 - Un Résumé en français qui ne doit pas dépasser 6 lignes ;
- Les mots clés ;

Un résumé en anglais (Abstract) qui ne doit pas dépasser
6 Lignes ;

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Introduction ;

Développement ;

Les articulations du développement du texte
doivent être titrées et/ou sous titrées ainsi :

➤ Pour le **Titre** de la première section

1.1. Pour le Titre de la première sous-section

Pour le **Titre** de la deuxième section

1.2. Pour le Titre de la première sous-section de la
deuxième section etc.

➤ **Conclusion**

Elle doit être brève et insister sur l'originalité des
résultats de la Recherche.

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Les sources consultées et/ou citées doivent figurer
dans une rubrique, en fin de texte, intitulée :

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référence aux noms de famille des auteurs) et se présente
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Les rapports et des documents inédits mais d'intérêt scientifique peuvent être cités.

- **La présentation des notes**
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Tous les articles doivent être envoyés à l'adresse
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- Communication et Information,
- Education et Formation,
- Développement et Economie,
- Sciences Politiques et Relations Internationales,
- Sociologie et Psychologie,
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EDITORIAL

La Revue Internationale de Recherche en Communication, Education et Développement (RIRCED), publiée par l'Institut Universitaire Panafricain (IUP), est une revue ouverte aux Enseignants-Chercheurs et Chercheurs des universités, instituts, centres universitaires et grandes écoles.

L'objectif visé par la publication de cette revue dont nous sommes à la onzième publication est de permettre aux collègues Enseignants-Chercheurs et Chercheurs de disposer d'une tribune pour faire connaître leurs travaux de recherche. Cette édition a connu une modification en générale et en particulier au niveau du comité de rédaction où le Professeur Titulaire Elisabeth A. GNANSOUNOU épouse FOURN, devient le Directeur de Publication, le Dr (MC) Innocent C. DATONDJI reste le Rédacteur en Chef et le volume de la revue passe au numéro 2.

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Pr Elisabeth A. FOURN GNANSOUNOU

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THE PORTRAYAL OF CHILDREN IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE: A CASE STUDY OF CHARLES DICKEN'S *OLIVER TWIST*

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ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of children condition in the Victorian period. The choice of Charles Dicken's *Oliver Twist* gives an idea of how the writers of that period contribute to the reforms concerning children. This study helps to a good understanding of childhood and a better awareness of children situation in the society. The analyses reveal that childhood is neglected in the Victorian period. It attests that adulthood depends on childhood and not on being poor or rich as the Victorian English thought.

Key words: childhood, society, Victorian, Charles Dicken

RESUME

Cette étude est un examen de l'état des enfants à l'époque victorienne. Le choix d'*Oliver Twist* de Charles Dickens donne une idée de la manière dont les écrivains de cette période contribuent aux réformes concernant les enfants. Cette étude permet une bonne compréhension de l'enfance et une meilleure prise de conscience de la situation des enfants dans la société. L'analyse révèle que l'enfance est négligée à l'époque victorienne. Il atteste que l'âge adulte dépend de l'enfance et non d'être pauvre ou riche comme le pensait l'anglais victorien.

Mots-clés: Enfance, Société, Victorien, Charles Dickens.

INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution was a period between the 18th and 19th centuries that saw a rapid growth in many sectors including agriculture, mining, technology, etc. which started in the United Kingdom and then spread through to Europe and eventually found its way to all parts of the world. The Industrial Revolution is considered as a period that child labour was at very high level. Child

labour was heavily implemented in many factories during this period and they were forced to work in unfavorable conditions for a very low wage rate. These children were preferred by the employers as they could not oppose them even if they were harassed and ill-treated as they were so young. Heavy pollution and dim light in the factories complicated things for the children and they suffered from lung diseases. Due to lack of knowledge in handling heavy machineries, many children felt prey to the machines in either losing their limbs or sometimes even their life. Their little bodies were the only ones that could climb up chimneys and so they were used as chimney cleaners where they suffered many fire injuries and skin infections and were even subjected to suffocation and lung diseases due to the soot in the chimneys.

This study is an examination of Charles Dickens' representation of the underprivileged childhood in the Victorian society. The socially disadvantaged members that will be under discussion are the poor children, who are of major concern in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. It is evident that Dickens noted the impact of industrialization of the Victorian society as it created a massive urban

development, leading to higher class division. Initially, the English society consisted of the aristocracy, the landed gentry and the servants who belonged to the lower class. The influx of industrialization created a further division of these classes in which they emerged the capitalists or bourgeoisie, who were the industrialists and the working class, the industrial workers. *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), which represents a radical change in Dickens' themes, is his first novel to carry a social commentary similar to that contained in the subsequent condition of England novels.

1. THE PLIGHT OF CHILDREN IN *LIVER TWIST*

Oliver Twist is the story of a young orphan, Oliver, and his attempts to stay good in a society that refuses to help. Oliver is born in a workhouse, to a mother not known to anyone in the town. She dies right after giving birth to him, and he is sent to the parochial orphanage, where he and the other orphans are treated terribly and fed very little. When he turns nine, he is sent to the workhouse, where again he and the others are treated badly and practically starved. The other boys,

unable to stand their hunger any longer, decide to draw straws to choose who will have to go up and ask for more food. Oliver loses. On the appointed day, after finishing his first serving of gruel, he goes up and asks for more. Mr. Bumble, the beadle, and the board are outraged, and decide they must get rid of Oliver, apprenticing him to the parochial undertaker, Mr. Sowerberry. It is not great there either, and after an attack on his mother's memory, Oliver runs away.

Oliver walks towards London. When he is close he is so weak he can barely continue, and he meets another boy named Jack Dawkins, or the artful Dodger. The Dodger tells Oliver he can come with to a place where a gentleman will give him a place to sleep and food, for no rent. Oliver follows, and the Dodger takes him to an apartment in London where he meets Fagin, the aforementioned gentleman, and Oliver is offered a place to stay. Oliver eventually learns that Fagin's boys are all pickpockets and thieves, but not until he is wrongfully accused of their crime of stealing an old gentleman's handkerchief. He is arrested, but the bookseller comes just in time to the court and says that he saw that Oliver did

not do it. The gentleman whose handkerchief was taken, Mr. Brownlow, feels bad for Oliver, and takes him in.

Oliver is very happy with Mr. Brownlow, but Fagin and his co-conspirators are not happy to have lost Oliver, who may give away their hiding place. So one day, when Mr. Brownlow entrusts Oliver to return some books to the bookseller for him, Nancy spots Oliver, and kidnaps him, taking him back to Fagin.

Oliver is forced to go on a house-breaking excursion with the intimidating Bill Sikes. At gun point Oliver enters the house, with the pan to wake those within, but before he can, he is shot by one of the servants. Sikes and his partner escape, leaving Oliver in a ditch. The next morning Oliver makes it back to the house, where the kind owner, Mrs. Maylie, and her beautiful niece Rose Maylie, decide to protect him from the police and nurse him back to health.

Oliver slowly recovers and is extremely happy and grateful to be with such kind and generous people, who in turn are ecstatic to find that Oliver is such a good-natured boy. When he is well enough, they take him to see Mr. Brownlow, but they find his house empty. He has moved

to the West Indies. Meanwhile, Fagin and his mysterious partner Monks have not given up on finding Oliver, and one day Oliver awakens from a nightmare to find them staring at him through his window. He raises the alarm, but they escape.

Nancy overhearing Fagin and Monks decides that she must go to Rose Maylie to tell her what she knows. She does so, telling Rose that Monks is Oliver's half-brother, who has been trying to destroy Oliver so that he can keep his whole inheritance, but that she will not betray Fagin or Sikes. Rose tells Mr. Brownlow, who tells Oliver's other caretakers, and they decide that they must meet Nancy again to find out how to find Monks.

They meet her on London Bridge at a prearranged time, but Fagin has become suspicious, and has sent his new boy, Noah Claypole, to spy on Nancy. Nancy tells Rose and Mr. Brownlow how to find Monks, but still refuses to betray Fagin and Sikes, or to go with them. Noah reports everything to Fagin, who tells Sikes, knowing full well that Sikes will kill Nancy. He does. Mr. Brownlow has in the mean time found Monks; who finally

admits everything that he has done, and the true case of Oliver's birth.

Skies is on the run, but all of London is in an uproar, and he eventually hangs himself accidentally in falling off a roof, while trying to escape from the mob surrounding him. Fagin is arrested and tried, and, after a visit from Oliver, is executed. Oliver, Mr. Brownlow, and the Maylies end up living in peace and comfort in a small village in the English countryside.

Charles Dickens is a writer who is very sympathetic towards his child characters. He is personally aware of the exploitation to which the children are subjected because of his own history of workhouse incarceration, which parallels Oliver's workhouse experience. This explains the pathos in his novels, surrounding the uneducated and deprived orphans whose loss of childhood is echoed through their physical exploitation. Dickens 'novels ultimately petition society to protect these assailed juveniles. However, the Victorian society is paradoxical because it perceived childhood as essential, yet most of its juveniles are not given safely experience growth and transition into adulthood. Gorham

states: “...*childhood had great symbolic importance, but many Victorians suffered from an uncertainty about the nature of childhood and the proper relationship of children to the structure of the family and the wider society*”. In the late Victorian period, many people who were concerned about the welfare of children also found themselves uncertain about how the boundaries of childhood should be defined. Dickens’ characters are representations of the actual world as Rosenberg remarks: “...*the best Dickens’ characters are examples of verisimilitudinous representation*”. Dickens characters are not only representations of the world, but also reflections of existent beings ...and assumed, by virtually all readers, to be representations of people. Therefore, his child characters represent real children with actual experiences and backgrounds such as poverty, orphanage, neglect and deprivation of education. Firstly, Dickens’s child characters are usually orphaned or their parentage is unclear.

Orphans are usually vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation and neglect, which is the case of Oliver Twist. However, the lack of a proper family structures in

Dickens 'characters show the fragmentation of the nineteenth century society. Furthermore, Dickens' traumatic experiences are immensely echoed in Oliver who is stripped of his new clothes bought by Mr. Brownlow. "... *Oliver in Fagin's kitchen stripped of his "good" clothes, deprived of Brownlow's books, and laughed at the urchins...*" This incidents replicates Dickens' own experiences which imaginatively embodies the humiliation of the sensitive middle class Dickens amid the working – class fellow – employees, one of whom was indeed called Fagin. On other hand, fear of this environment was matched by his hatred of middle class parents, who had so promptly abandoned him into it.

Oliver Twist also mirrors Charles Dickens because they both belong to the middle class, but are abandoned into a workhouse. Although at this point the reader is not aware of Oliver's membership in the middle class, his innocence and failure to join a gang of criminals is synchronous to Dickens' exposure to the working class at the factory as a young boy of twelve. The vulnerability of children and their subjection to child labor is further reflected in *Oliver Twist* when the man in the white

waistcoat wastes to sell Oliver to Gamfield as a chimney sweeper. Instead, Oliver is later sold to Mr. Sowerberry the undertaker and assigned the role of a funeral mute.

The Industrial Revolution was a period in which many children were working at the workhouses due to poverty like the orphaned Oliver who was assigned to pick oakum at six every morning. Not only does Dickens portray young characters who are subjected to child labor, he also brings to the foreground that many children were deprived of education due to their social status. Oliver is an abandoned child who receives no education in his early stages of life. It is quite apparent from this turn of events that unlike the children from the poor families, those from the middle class are educated to become young gentlemen and ladies. Oliver is rescued by a middle class member and ultimately it is later revealed that Oliver's father was, in fact, a wealthy man. It is assumed that Oliver has finally received education after his adoption by Mr. Brownlow. Dickens 'seems to suggest that the only way that one can access education and escape poverty is through the generosity of middle class member to possess a munificent heart.

Dickens 'amazing art of character creation can only be explained through his desire to reform a society that subjugates the juveniles. Children are susceptible to exploitation as they are very defenseless beings and Dickens successfully portrays the abuse of children in nineteenth century Britain and evokes reader sympathy to their plight.

2. OLIVER TWIST: THE MAJOR CHARACTER ANALYSIS

In the tradition of Restoration Comedy and Henry Fielding, Dickens fits his characters with appropriate names. Oliver's status as a child protagonist is one element that bears more consideration. Oliver, being the main character of the novel was born in the workhouse of a parish under the witness of a surgeon and a drunken nurse, his mother died after giving birth to him; she only left a locket for the infant. Oliver's mother lost the moral right to her own last name (which was Fleming) when she left her father and shamed him into changing his name. And she never got to take Olive's father's last name

(Leeford), because he never actually married her. Oliver had nothing to prove his real identity. However, who is Oliver Twist?

As a poor orphan of the workhouse, without identity, Oliver was named by the bearded of the workhouse in alphabetical order. Bumble named him “Twist,” and then everyone who met him assumed that he was going to die by hanging. Everyone in this novel seems awfully interested in naming Oliver. Oliver’s name is an important marker of his identity too. Let’s look at another example of a scene in which Oliver’s name (and whole identity) is suppressed by the authorities. When Oliver is brought before Fang, the magistrate, on suspicion of being a pickpocket, he’s too sick to give his own name. The officer who brings him in does not even care to ask his name. He just calls Oliver “young gallows”. As it can be seen, “Twist” is more-or-less a synonym for hanging, anyway, so “young gallows” is not so different. Later, in the same scene, Mr. Fang asks Oliver what his name is. Oliver is about to faint, so another officer just makes up a name for him: “Tom White”. Why Tom White? A very popular play about criminals and the London underworld

during the period was called Tom and Jerry (no, it was not about a cartoon cat and mouse). So the name “Tom” could have criminal implications, even if the man did not mean for it. And the name “White”, is like the officer was making Oliver a white, blank slate. If Oliver’s a blank slate, he can be made into nothing, depending on who has access to him. For a novel that is all about innocence and corruption, light and dark, white and black, the name “White” is obviously not a random choice on Dickens’s part. He was also named “idle young ruffian”, “young devil”, “young wretch”, “little brute”...., such names opposite to his person.

Born in the workhouse as an illegitimate child, Oliver is placed on the fringe of society due to Christian values imposed by the leaders of the Church. In the workhouse, he is forced into labor as a youngster while the common uneducated notion is that Oliver and kids alike are a bunch of free loaders. He works picking oakum at the main workhouse. He wakes up early to work.

In *Oliver twist*, mannerism was greatly displayed in Oliver as a character. His mannerism best demonstrated how upper-class children were supposed to behave during

this era. They were to be ‘seen ‘and not ‘heard’. Oliver, when spoken to, was extremely polite and respectful (very odd for how, and where he was raised). When Oliver was taken to Mr. Sowerberry, ‘*he heard the news of his destination, in perfect silence*’.

Institutional abuse is the first scene where Oliver is introduced to. Orphaned almost from his first breath by his mother’s death in childbirth and his father’s unexplained absence, Oliver was meagerly provided for under the terms of the Poor Law, and spent the first nine years of his life at a baby farm in the ‘care’ of a woman named Mrs. Mann. Oliver was brought up with little food and few comforts. Mrs. Mann received an adequate sum for each child’s upkeep, but she kept most of the money and let the children go hungry, sometimes even letting die. Oliver Twist’s ninth birthday found him ‘*a pale thin child, somewhat diminutive in stature, and decidedly small in circumference*’.

Oliver is also emotionally abused, being deprived of all human adult love or affection and constantly criticized. Up to his ninth birthday, Oliver was said to have come ‘*from the wretched home where one kind*

word or look had never lighted the gloom of his infant year''. He is *''a naughty orphan which nobody can't love''* While locked in a small dark room *''after asking for more''* he could hear other boys being instructed to be *''guarded from the sins and vices of Oliver Twist who was led by wickedness of the Devil''*.

The novel is a sequel of child mistreatment. Oliver himself expresses very well when he says: *''everybody hates me''* Oliver spent most of his miserable childhood in workhouses which caused him suffer from hunger and mistreatment, therefore he made a decision of escaping. Oliver walked seventy miles to London. However, his mishap didn't end along with his leaving as he desires, but brought him to realize the cruelty of world. Oliver could not get away from his adversity but felt into a more dreadful trap ironically. He had no shelter, no relatives, but could only rely on himself. His friends, the gang of thieves, used him for Personal gain but treated him as their friend. He was exploited as much as he was in the workhouses. They taught him to steal which is illegal. Owing to the fact that Oliver was penniless and illiterate, he had no way to escape from Fagin and his gang but to

submit himself to them. However, in these circumstances would he allow to be corrupted?

“I wished to show, in little Oliver, the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last.” This statement by Charles Dickens provides us with some very necessary help in appreciating the nature of the hero and in trying to understand the meaning of the book. Oliver is not an individualized character. He is good, innocent, kindly capable of showing spirit, and endowed with a sturdy capacity for survival. He lacks, however, strongly individual characteristics, and many readers find him an unsatisfactory hero for this reason. They feel that he is rather a pasteboard figure, deficient in vitality and interest.

Dickens ‘intention is clear enough. Oliver was to have sufficient individuality to be credible as a human being, but his significance lay more in his embodiment of “the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance” than his own personality. He was to be a symbol of oppressed innocence. Dr Arnold Kettle brings out the effect of this when he says: ‘*in the famous scene*

when Oliver asks for more it is not the precise sense of Oliver's feelings and reactions that grips us ... We care, not because it is Oliver ... But every starved orphan in the word, and indeed everyone who is poor and oppressed and hungry is involved."

When Oliver is born, the narrator tells us that he could be anybody, *"the child of a nobleman or a beggar"*. Oliver was constantly surrounded by darkness and death, and his own innocence and commitment to life formed a stark contrast to his surroundings. He was so innocent that he didn't realize that Fagin was training the boys up to be pickpockets, until he actually saw them in action. Then would Oliver lose his innocence as he progressed?

From the beginning until the end, the novel is a sequence of cruelty that Oliver faced. Mr. Bumble and the other workhouse officials insisted on portraying Oliver as something he is not: an ungrateful, immoral pauper. At Sowerberry's, Noah made life impossible to Oliver. In London, Fagin and his criminal tried to corrupt him and Monks did his best to conceal Oliver's real identity so that Monks himself could claim Oliver's rightful inheritance.

As one can know, there are different ways to solve problems. Oliver tried to be patient in facing his conflicts and he struggled hard to be a good person because he had principle in life that the truth must be existed and our God would help us to show to every people that we were right. He helped himself when he fought with Noah. Besides, he wanted to show to Noah that he had bravery and he was not a coward child. Actually, Oliver Twist was a good child so when he had difficulties in helping himself, he always had ways to solve his problem and Oliver believed that God is always with good people.

Also, Oliver solved problems by looking for his family because if he knew and found his family, every people would not have low opinion about him. He thought that identity was one key to show to them that he was not a shabby child but he was same with other. On the other hand, the main character tried to show to all people that he was a good child.

Charles Dickens, through the novel demonstrated that the individual can indeed rise above his or her circumstances, and that an unfortunate birth did not have

to guarantee an unfortunate life and legacy. Not every poor ends poor and not every evil ends evil.

It is not note worthy, for how great a part of his recorded life, Oliver is a passive figure. At first, inevitably, for he is a mere infant, “a parish child... to be cuffed and buffeted through the world”, “the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception... brought up by hand”, advertised as being “to let”, “a dead-weight... a millstone round the parochial throat”. Even after he takes the one major decision of his life to run away from the Sowerberrys, he is the sport of Fortune, shuttled back and forth between the underworld and the light.

Oliver had an unhappy childhood. He moved on in misadventures. He could be corrupted. Oliver Twist, although he was raised in corrupt surroundings, his purity and virtue were absolute. Oliver ‘objective was “to be rich”’: *‘you mustn’t say you saw me, Dick,’ said Oliver. ‘I am running away. They beat and ill-use me, Dick; and I am going to seek my fortune, some long way off. I don’t know where.’* He motto theme was “sanctity”. Oliver was shocked and horrified when he saw the Artful Dodger

and Charley Bates picking a stranger's pocket. He also reacted with shock and horror at the idea of stealing when Sikes and Crackit forced him to participate in a burglary. It is unclear where he had acquired such moral fastidiousness. He could not have learned it amid the life or death struggles of the workhouse. That is why when he found an opportunity to run away from Fagin's gang, he did it.

... if he were in full possession
of all the best powers of his
slight and youthful frame,
whither could he fly ? He
pushed against the garden-
gate; it was unlocked, and
swung open on its hinges. He
tottered across the lawn.

Oliver's moral scruples about the sanctity of property seemed inborn in him, just as Dickens' opponents thought that corruption is inborn in poor people. Oliver's power to be incorruptible was in trust in God.

The final happy settlement of his fate, like his earlier vicissitudes, is imposed upon him. It happens to him because of what he is, not because of what he does. Oliver Twist had a dream ‘to be rich’ and a motto theme ‘sanctity’. Here was the real identity of the child when we consider Leeford’s condition for Oliver’s inheritance. Leeford stated in his will that, if his child were a son, he would inherit his estate, ‘*only on the stipulation that in his minority he should never have stained his name with any public act of dishonor, meanness, cowardice, or wrong*’ Oliver reached his destiny by ‘God bless’. He is to receive his place in the world not for what he does, but for what he does not do. It is quite plain that in giving his central figure this kind of nature and role Dickens wanted to stress the allegorical element in the novel. Though there is no lack of violent and melodramatic incidents in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens intended it to be primarily a novel of moral significance, rather than an eventful tale. Oliver the outcast is perpetually threatened by total absorption into a dark world of sin and fear. At Mrs. Mann’s he is imprisoned in a coal-caller ; at the workhouse, he remains a close

prisoner in a dark and solitary room ; he narrowly escapes apprenticeship as a chimney-sweep's climbing-boy ; he works for an undertaker and is pushed down a steep flight of stairs into a stone cell, damp and dark ; his bed is under the counter and he sleeps surrounded by coffins, he is led up dark and broken stairs to Fagin's den, the walls and ceiling of which were perfectly black with age and dirt. The attentive reader of the novel cannot fail to be impressed by this deliberate and constant symbolism, of which these are only a very few examples.

The forces of regeneration and healing are symbolized by the green hills and rich woods, the garden flowers, the rose and honeysuckle clinging to the walls of the cottage to which Oliver is taken by the Maylies and the eternal conflict between good and evil is most dramatically represented.

The little room, in which he was accustomed to sit, when busy at these books, was on the ground floor, at the back of the house. It was quite a cottage-room, with a lattice window: around which were clusters of

Jessamine and honeysuckle that crept over the casement and filled the garden, whence a wicket-gate opened into a small paddock; all beyond was fine meadow-land and wood. There was no other dwelling near, in that direction; and the prospect it commanded was very extensive...

Oliver knew, perfectly well, that he was in his own little room; that his books were lying on the table before him; and that the sweet air was stirring among the creeping plants outside. And yet he was asleep. Suddenly, the scene changed, the air became close and confined; and he thought, with a glow of terror, that he was in the Jew's house again. There sat the hideous old man in his accustomed corner, pointing at him, and whispering to another man, with

his face averted, who sat beside him...

There – there – at the window – close before him – so close, that he could have almost touched him before he started back ; with his eyes peering into the room, and meeting his : there stood the Jew ! And beside him, white with rage or fear, or both, were the scowling features of the very man who had accosted him in the inn-yard.

It was but an instant, a glance, a flash, before his eyes; and they were gone. But they had recognized him, and he them, and their look was as firmly impressed upon his memory, as if it had been deeply carved in stone, and set before him from his birth.

But the evil depicted in the book is to a large extent of man's own making. Fagin and Sikes are dangerous, not

only because of their wicked and violent actions, but because of their corrupting effect on others. Oliver escapes contamination because “the principle of Good” in him is unusually strong, like the “good sturdy spirit implanted by nature or inheritance” that enables him to endure the privations of his upbringing. The novel makes clear, however, that Oliver is exceptional in this respect, and that he is exceptionally fortunate in the happy ending that his story has. While the tyranny of Poor Law and workhouses, and evil squalor of the slums endure, Dickens maintains, Noah Claypoles, Artful Dodgers, Fagin’s and Dikeses will greatly outnumber Oliver Twists.

To some degree, this thesis explains Dickens’ reliance upon coincidence in his development of the plot. Mr. Brownlow refers to “a stronger hand than chance” that led Oliver to him, and the novelist’s point of view is made plain in those words. The rescue of Oliver “from a life of vice and infamy” is not likely to be repeated in the case of other “ragged, neglected” children living in “dirt and misery”. The society that allows these things to happen

must not expect Providence to save it from the inevitable consequences of its own heartless conduct.

3. CHARLES DICKENS' OLIVER TWIST: THE NOVEL THAT CHANGED THINGS

A full understanding of *Oliver Twist* presupposes some knowledge of the specific social evils which Dickens was concerned: the Poor Law, and the slums of London, with their degraded inhabitants. *Oliver Twist* opens with a bitter invective directed at the 19th century English Poor Laws. These laws were a distorted manifestation of the Victorian middle class's transformation from an agricultural, rural economy to an urban, industrial nation. The growing middle class had achieved an economic influence equal to, if not greater than, that of the British aristocracy.

In the 1830s, the middle class clamored for a share of political power with the landed gentry, bringing about a restructuring of the voting system. Parliament passed the Reform Act, which granted the right to vote to previously disenfranchised middle-class citizens. The idle class was eager to gain social legitimacy. This desire gave rise to the

Evangelical religious movement and inspired sweeping economic and political change.

In the extremely stratified English class structure, the highest social class belonged to the “gentleman,” an aristocrat who did not have to work for his living. The middle class was stigmatized for having to work, and so, to alleviate the stigma attached to middle-class wealth, the middle class promoted work as a moral virtue. But the resulting moral value attached to work, along with the middle class’s insecurity about its own social legitimacy, led English society to subject the poor to hatred and cruelty. Many members of the middle class were anxious to be differentiated from the lower classes, and one way to do so was to stigmatize the lower classes as lazy good-for-nothings. The middle class’s value system transformed earned wealth into a sign of moral virtue. Victorian society interpreted economic success as a sign that God favored the honest, moral virtue of the successful individual’s efforts, and, thus, interpreted the condition of poverty as a sign of the weakness of the poor individual.

The sentiment behind the Poor Law of 1834 reflected these beliefs. The law allowed the poor to

receive public assistance only if they lived and worked in established workhouses. Beggars risked imprisonment. Debtors were sent to prison, often with their entire families, which virtually ensured that they could not repay their debtors. Workhouses were deliberately made to be as miserable as possible in order to deter the poor from relying on public assistance. The philosophy was that the miserable conditions would prevent able-bodied paupers from being lazy and idle bums.

In the eyes of middle-class English society, those who could not support themselves were considered immoral and evil. Therefore, such individuals should enjoy no comforts or luxuries in their reliance on public assistance. In order to create the misery needed to deter immoral idleness, families were split apart upon entering the workhouse. Husbands were permitted no contact with their wives, lest they breed more paupers. Mothers were separated from children, lest they impart their immoral ways to their children. Brothers were separated from their sisters because the middle-class patrons of workhouses feared the lower class ‘natural’ inclination toward incest. In short, the state undertook to become the surrogate

parents of workhouse children, whether or not there were orphans. Meals served to workhouse residents were deliberately inadequate, so as to encourage the residents to find work and support themselves.

Because of the great stigma attached to workhouse relief, many poor people chose to die in the streets rather than seek public aid. The workhouse was supposed to demonstrate the virtue of gainful employment to the poor. In order to receive public assistance, they had to pay in suffering and misery. Victorian values stressed the moral virtue of suffering and privation, and the workhouse residents were made to experience these virtues many times over.

Three years before Dickens began to write *Oliver Twist*, the new Poor Law came into force. Planned to check the alarming growth in pauperism which, during the preceding forty years had become, as G. M. Trevelyan puts it, ‘the shameless rule, rather than the shameful exception’, it was a well-intentioned measure, designed to distinguish between the unfortunate and the shiftless members of society ; to succor the former and to force the latter to work. Under the old system, agricultural wages

had been fixed; no increase was permitted although prices were rising, and the laborer was not allowed to bargain for a higher wage. To meet the needs of the poor a dole was paid out of parish funds, according to the size of the family and the price of bread. Because of the wage-system, a great many laborers were condemned to pauperism. Because of the dole, a large family was an asset to the pauper, rather than handicap. The surplus rural population migrated to the towns, hoping for better things and finding only the slums and unemployment, or near-slavery on starvation-wages when they arrived.

Alarmed by the economic and moral waste of the old system, the sponsors of the new Poor Law hoped to kill pauperism. The dole to supplement low wages was abolished; the unemployed laborer was no longer allowed to exist with his family on an allowance from the parish, for he was forced into the workhouse and separated from his wife and children, who were sent to other wards of the same grim institution. What few possessions he had were sold to help to offset the cost of maintaining him and his family in the ‘‘ House’’. Life inside the workhouse, both in amenities and in diet was designedly at a lower level

than would have been reached on even the lowest wage obtainable by outside work. When Dickens describes the diet as consisting of “*there meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll on Sundays*”, he is exaggerating, but the diet approved by the Poor Law commissioners in 1836 was not a great deal better than this, providing as it did for one and a half prints of gruel everyday and meat only three times a week, five once at a time. Broth, potatoes, bread, cheese, and rice pudding also appeared on the ration list, but cheese, and rice pudding also appeared on the ration list, but it was a meager diet for a man. Women got slightly less, and children under nine were to be fed “at discretion”. Humphrey House, in whose book *The Dickens World* these details appear, comments, “it is fairly plain which way discretion would wear”.

Under the new Poor Law in fact, it was the children who fared worst. Miserably ill-fed, deprived of any chance they may have had of parental love and guidance, given little or no education, and apprenticed at the earliest possible age to get them off the rates, they were likely to turn out, out at best, sullen and ignorant ; at

worst, violent and depraved. It seemed to many besides Dickens that society, in allowing this state of affairs to continue, was making a rod for its own back.

Rather than improving what the middle class saw as the questionable morals of the able-bodied poor, the Poor Law punished the most defenseless and helpless members of the lower class. The old, the sick, and the very young suffered more than the able-bodied benefited from these laws. Dickens meant to demonstrate this incongruity through the figure of Oliver Twist, an orphan born and raised in a workhouse for the first ten years of his life. His story demonstrates the hypocrisy of the petty middle-class bureaucrats, who treat a small child cruelly while voicing their belief in the Christian virtue of giving charity to the less fortunate.

Dickens was a lifelong champion of the poor. He himself suffered the harsh abuse visited upon the poor by the English legal system. In England in the 1830s, the poor truly had no voice, politically or economic. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens presents the everyday existence of the lowest members of England society. Chares Dickens

realistically portrayed the horrible conditions of the 19th century workhouses in his novel.

From the chronology of the novel, it seems that Oliver was born in a workhouse run under the old Poor, and that when he is brought back from Mrs. Mann's the new system is in force. In which case it is perfectly clear that Dickens is quite unimpressed by any of the theoretical long-term advantages of the new system and equally unmoved by the arguments of those who advocated a return to the old. Inhumanity underlay laws, whatever arguments politicians and economists might propound.

Oliver Twist is Dickens's impassioned protest against systems that treated poverty as a crime and regarded the unfortunate with contempt and hostility. His remarks *Oliver Twist* about "the tender mercies of churchwardens and overseers", his satire on the Board of Guardians, all the members of which were "very sage, deep, philosophical men", arise out of his fury with those who put political or economic motives before humanity in their dealing with their fellow men. When, in chapter 4, he expresses the wish that he could see some "philosopher" (always his name for a political

economist) eating the scraps intended for the dog “the same relish” that Oliver had just displayed over the nauseous meal, we against which his generous heart revolted, nor have we heard the “philosophical” justification of such evils by which he was sickened.

Dickens exposed the injustices of the workhouse officials and their practices through grotesque realism. The description of the workhouse board members was a satire on their incompetent administration of the system. When Oliver went to the workhouse, he was introduced to “ten fat gentlemen” and one who was “particularly fat” with “a very round, red face”. The fat gentlemen were juxtaposed against the children at the poor house who were starved as evidenced by the scene in which the older children forced Oliver to ask for more food. In the novel, it is stated that the inmates were fed on small quantities of oatmeal, three meals of thin gruel a day and half a roll on Sundays. As a result, the pauper’s clothes “fluttered loosely on their wasted, shrunken forms, after a week or two’s gruel”. Dickens attempted to improve the workhouse conditions and as a result, his novel helped influence changes in the problem. Dickens’ novel shows

people how things really were in the workhouse during the 19th century.

A child of the parish had contrived to exist upon the smallest possible portion of the weakest possible food, it did perversely happen in eight and a half cases out of ten, either that it sickened from want and cold, or fell into the fire from neglect, or got half-smothered by accident; in any one of which cases, the miserable little being was usually summoned into another world.

Here Dickens shows how children were starved, neglected; inappropriately dressed, and mistreated. His statement also claims that many of the times, the children died in a result to the poor environment. The encyclopedia provides a more general explanation as it simply states that the “conditions in the workhouses were deliberately harsh and degrading”.

Another passage in the novel describes how one of the children of the parish was threaded when not to their liking. A boy named Oliver received ‘*a tap on the head [from the cane of the parish beadle] to wake him up : and another on the back to make him lively*’. The boy then received another tap in the back that terrified him more and brought him tears. Later in the novel, it is discovered that the same boy is sent into the cold weather to

perform his ablutions, every morning under the pump, in a stone yard, in the presence of Mr. Bumble [the parish beadle], who prevented his catching cold, and caused a tingling sensation to pervade his frame, by repeated applications of the cane

These cruel acts show no sympathy to the workhouse children. Franck Crompton, the author of the book *Workhouse Children*, writes ‘was monotonous and inmates, including children, were given menial and degrading tasks to perform, thus impressing on them their

lowly conditions''. The people in the workhouses had no choice. There was no welfare state, so those who were deprived of land and left unemployed found themselves forced to work in prison-like conditions in the workhouses. It is obvious that workhouses were an attempt to solve the poverty problem.

Charles Dickens also exposed child labor enforced on children at the workhouses. The red-faced gentleman informed Oliver that he was going to be trained in a new trade, which turned out to be picking oakum at six in the morning. He was later sold to Mr. Sowerberry the undertaker, where he took the role of being a mute during funeral processions. The reader empathizes with Oliver because at a tender age, he is already being exposed to death.

Dickens novel shows the social injustice of the 19th century. He is an author who wanted change in society, and helped influence the reformation. In an essay written by Gareth Jenkins on *Oliver Twist*, he writes that through the novel, 'there is hope that by exposing the horrors of the workhouse, on the brutality and deficiency

of education, that decent men and women will take steps to reform society''.

Many of Dickens's contemporaries were convinced by the Malthusian theories of population and the laissez-faire economic doctrines then in vogue that it was pointless, indeed dangerous, to treat paupers in any other way. It was the glorious achievement of Dickens to persuade many of his readers that another way must be tried; a way that recognized the human rights and dignity of the poor. In doing so, he may well have persuaded them to use their hearts rather than their heads, but he helped to create a public opinion in which humanity could play an equal part with politics and economics when reform was planned.

To the modern reader the connection between Dickens' exposure of the workhouse system and his description of London's slums and underworld may lack the inevitability that it had for the author and his Victorian public. We tend to think of the novel as containing two separate protests, and so miss something of the unity of impression that he was anxious to achieve and that his contemporaries appreciated. Yet we must be aware that he

intended to establish the closest possible links between them. Oliver, Noath Claypole Bumble and Monks are all involved in events, now in London, now in the town which was Oliver's birthplace; and the exposure of Monks and Oliver's restitution are symbolically set in the place where the pauper boy experienced the shame and misery that drove him to Saffron Hill and its horrors. Dickens' point was and his readers took it that children brought up as pauper children were so far from becoming good citizens, are very likely to become thieves and murderers, fit for nothing but the bestial life of the slums and the gallows. He "gentleman in the white waistcoat" who is so sure that Oliver will "come to be hung" is wrong, but everything in the novel shows that he had the laws of probability (and, Dickens would add, the laws of political science) on his side, and that it took a remarkable effort on the part of Providences to confound his prediction.

The same lack of common humanity that permitted the paupers to be treated as they were, allowed the slums to fester in the heart of London. Some people knew of these abuses, some did not; many did not want to know. Charles Dickens was determined that all his readers

should know of these evils and should agree with him that they were an intolerable blot on a civilization calling itself Christian. Others might take refuge behind the principles of so-called scientific modes of political and economic thinking to justify inaction/ Dickens knew that the heart, no less than the brain, has its reasons, and that what the heart of man condemns cannot be justified.

Dickens used his writings to tell about the bad conditions that the working classes and poor people had to live under. He hoped that by doing this that things would change for the better. There is no positive way to find out if Dickens was solely responsible for the dissolution of the workhouses. However, it is fair to say that helped influence the change in society s Dickens and other important people that thought like him gradually got conditions in the workhouses improved.

Through the novel *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens showed people the reality of the 19th century workhouses. Along with many firm believers, Dickens attacked on the unjust social system helped influence society, as conditions in the workhouses improved later in the 19th century, and social-welfare services and the social-

security system supplanted workhouses altogether in the first half of the 20th century.

CONCLUSION

Victorian children were in majority poor, and the belief of the time was that children were criminal at birth. The orthodoxy of that period was that children in general were immune from the passions and disorders. From the mid-century, this perception started to shift. During this period, there were organizations and people trying to change the image of society about children. The great Victorian novels of childhood and new ways of thinking about the child mind were being constructed in the novels of Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and others. Their novels opened up new ways of thinking about the child mind, and had an influence on the emerging sciences of child psychology and psychiatry. Their fiction helped to create a new sensitivity to the potential sufferings of childhood, and the life-long impact of these experiences they had.

The nineteenth century was the great age of the novel. This form of literacy art was bound to flourish since

there was an increase in literacy as the middle class rose in power and importance. As industrialization spread throughout Britain, it was common that the novel became a mean of portraying life and its social and moral values familiar to the readers. Thus, the Victorian novelists, Charles Dickens depicted the conflicts between one of the major Victorian novelists, Charles Dickens depicted the conflicts between individuals and society, and also criticized the nineteenth century social structure.

This study analyzes the suffering childhood of English Victorian children through the novel *Oliver Twist* written by Charles Dickens. The work analyzes the suffering childhood of English Victorian children through the novel *Oliver Twist* written by Charles Dickens. The classic story of *Oliver Twist* came the author's own childhood experience with poverty and factory work. The story revolves around young *Oliver Twist*, an orphan brought up at a 'charitable institution' where twenty or thirty other juveniles offenders against the poor-law rolled about on the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing'. After nine years, *Oliver* graduated to a workhouse for young orphans.

There, his starving fellow sufferers elected him to ask for more food in punishment for rich Oliver was sold to an undertaker. Eventually Oliver ran away, making his painful way to London. Penniless and hungry, Oliver was befriended by a young thief, the Artful Dodger, who introduced him to Fagin and his gang, the evil Bill Silkes, and Sikes's lover, Nancy. Steadfastly resisting the criminals' attempts to corrupt him, Oliver eventually escaped, discovered his true parentage, and received the respect he deserved.

Analyzing the protagonist character of the book has exposed the vulnerability of children. The book opens with the child born orphan. That was the case of many children in the Victorian era. There were many poor orphans in the streets. Many parents died poor (as Oliver's mother Agnès Fleming in the book). Children, whose parents were still living, were considered orphans for they barely spent time in family to enjoy lovely moment with parents, to get from their upbringing, to experiment joy and sadness peculiar to childhood... Instead of that, there were slave children working hard as adults and died at work. What future for a kind of child whose childhood

had been stolen? This appeared really dim. Considering that future gloomy, Charles Dickens made working Oliver in an undertaker's. Even, he slept between the coffins.

Showing that bad childhood is synonymous of bad adulthood, Oliver Twist went through adventures, a roaming life. He went through misadventures. After the undertaker's incident, he skimmed the prison. He was beaten up and accused unjustly to steal. Then, he got innocently and abusively into Fagin's gang where he had been many military asked to steal. Till there, Oliver thought he had found a welcome family where he was liked and understood for all were young people whom Fagin had salvaged from London streets. He thought he found people among whom he could play, where only one game was allowed to play, where he found the living joy, the end of all frustrations. As a naïve and innocent child, he couldn't know! Furthermore, being henceforth under the tutoring of Fagin, he had no choice in spite of his purity. Children always suffer the decisions and choices of their tutors or parents.

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