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The theme of the Big City and Child Hero in Selected Novels of Dickens and Dostoyevsky; *Oliver Twist*, and *Crime and Punishment*

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Téma velkoměsta a dětského hrdiny ve vybraných románech Dickense a Dostojevského; *Oliver Twist* a *Zločin a trest*

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Abstrakt

Práce se zaměřuje na porovnání ztvárnění velkoměsta a dětského hrdiny v románu *Oliver Twist* (1838) Charlese Dickense a v románu *Zločin a trest* (1866) F. M. Dostojevského v kontextu dobové sociální a společenské situace Anglie a Ruska. Přes řadu společných rysů v zobrazení chudoby hlavních dětských postav jsou závěry románů a potenciální budoucnost postav podstatně rozdílné jak to vyplývá z odlišných filosofí a morálních hodnot spisovatelů.

Klíčová slova: Londýn v době Dickense, Petrohrad za Dostojevského éry, dětský hrdina.

Abstract

This Bachelor thesis focuses on a comparison of the representation of the big city and the child hero in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) and F. M. Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) in the context of contemporaneous social situation in England and Russia respectively. In spite of a number of similarities in the depiction of the misery of unprivileged children, the endings of the novels and the potential futures of the characters substantially differ in accordance with the values and philosophy of the two writers.

Key words: London in Dickens's time, Petersburg in Dostoyevsky's era, the child hero.

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	6
2	THEORETICAL PART.....	7
2.1	LONDON IN DICKENS'S TIME.....	7
2.2	PETERSBURG IN DOSTOYEVSKY'S ERA.....	10
2.3	CHARLES DICKENS.....	12
2.4	FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY.....	14
3	PRACTICAL ANALYSIS.....	16
3.1	THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILD HEROES	17
3.2	THE LIFE STORIES OF OLIVER TWIST AND SONYA MARMELADOVA... ..	18
3.3	SOCIETY IN DICKENS'S AND DOSTOYEVSKY'S ERA.....	19
3.4	THE THEME OF THE BIG CITY IN DICKENS AND DOSTOYEVSKY.....	20
4	CONCLUSION.....	26
5	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	28

1 Introduction

The major aim of this thesis is to discuss the theme of the big city and the theme of the child hero as they are represented in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) and F.M. Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866).

The Theoretical Part characterizes London during the Victorian era and St. Petersburg during the life of Dostoyevsky. Subsequently, the biographies of the two writers including their major works are given in brief sketches.

The Practical Part presents the theme of the child hero: Oliver and Sonya, and also Nancy and Sonya are compared as the key child protagonists of the novels. The last part of this chapter covers the theme of the big city, especially the penetrating portrait of the lower depths of nineteenth century London and St. Petersburg. The London of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* gives us also the author's vision of the social background of the city. Child labor in Victorian England is also mentioned, since Dickens himself had an experience working in a blacking factory that influenced his literary career. This part also includes a brief plot re-telling and a characterization of the social situation in the nineteenth century in these two cities. The social stratification in the nineteenth century in England and Russia is mentioned as well. The Practical analysis dealing with the theme of the child hero is supported by extracts from the novels.

In the Conclusion I compare the similarities and differences of the treatment of the two themes in the respective novels.

2 Theoretical Part

2.1 London in Dickens's time

Charles Dickens concentrated his unique power of observation on the city in which he spent most of his life. He kept walking through the city streets, ten or twenty miles at a time: " And yet, if he was the chronicler of his age, he also stood apart from it; he was always in some sense the solitary observer, one who looked upon the customs of his time as an anthropologist might look upon the habits of a particularly savage tribe." (Ackroyd, Prologue 12) His descriptive literary illustrations of the nineteenth century London help readers to experience the sights, sounds and smells of the time-honoured city.

This tendency to draw the reader into time and place sets a perfect stage for Dickens to develop his fiction. Victorian London was the largest, and most spectacular city in the world. While Britain was experiencing the Industrial Revolution, its capital was both enjoying its benefits and suffering its negative consequences. The Victorian Age was characterized by a rapid change and developments in nearly every sphere – from advances in medical, scientific and technological knowledge to changes in population growth and location. Medicine changed significantly throughout the nineteenth century due to fast scientific progress. The number of hospital buildings and surgeries increased enormously, and so did their specialization. The growth of hospitals, specialized workhouses and asylums confirmed the public's faith in institutions. They were meant to help especially children and other vulnerable members of the society. Over time, this rapid transformation deeply affected the country's mood. The rein of Queen Victoria recorded enormous economic boom and prosperity in all spheres.

This era was associated with family values and religious observation. Families of the nineteenth century were patriarchal and they encouraged hard work, respectability and religious harmony.

Victorians were interested in politics and believed that their representative government was perfect. Political movements such as socialism, liberalism and feminism came into being in this age.

In 1800 the population of London was around a million inhabitants. While fashionable areas such as Regent and Oxford Streets were growing in the west, new docks supporting the city's place as the world's trade center were being built in the east. Perhaps the biggest impact on the growth of London had the railroad built in the 1830s which displaced thousands people from their

homes and accelerated the expansion of the city. The price for this explosive growth and domination of world trade was untold squalor and filth. As Ackroyd asserts in his book *Charles Dickens*: "If a late twentieth-century person were suddenly to find himself in a tavern or house of that period, he would be literally sick - sick with the smells, sick with the food, sick with the atmosphere around him." (Ackroyd, 65).

This era is also called the age of invention because of the development of telephone, gas lighting, steam power for trains and boats. Industry and agriculture underwent a great change. Employment for many changed, farm workers came to towns to work in factories or coal fields. New jobs appeared in heavy industry such as mining, shipbuilding, engineering, steel, iron manufacturing. Also women had new jobs as nurses in hospitals, teachers in schools or assistants in shops. Some women and children worked in the factories, in poor conditions and for very little pay. England gained a great wealth thanks to the industrial workers. They worked long hours in terrible conditions and lived in the filthy slums of London. Typhus, cholera and tuberculosis were widely spreading because of the poor living conditions.

There were also some improvements and arrangements in everyday life. Londoners paved the streets and laid the sewage and drainpipes. Public baths, wash houses, hospitals, gas lighting, libraries, museums and parks were created during the Victorian era. The homes of the upper and middle class in the London of the early nineteenth century were located in close proximity to areas of incredible poverty and filth. Rich and poor alike were thrown together in the crowded city streets. Street sweepers tried to keep the streets clean of the manure, dropped by the vehicles drawing horses. The city's thousands of chimneys were releasing coal smoke, resulting in the fall of soot which seemed to settle everywhere.

In many parts of the city raw sewage flew in gutters that emptied into the river Thames. Pick-pockets, prostitutes, beggars and drunks of every description underscored the colorful multitude.

The cleanliness was no better indoors. Personal hygiene was not a big priority, nor was clean laundry. In close, crowded rooms the smell of unwashed bodies was stifling. At night the major streets were lit with feeble gas lamps.

2.2 Petersburg in Dostoyevsky's era

As we know, Dostoyevsky always kept emphasizing Saint Petersburg's artificiality and called it 'the most deliberate city in the world'. "For Dostoyevsky Saint Petersburg was a symbol of modern disorder in Russia during the second half of the 19th century. Saint Petersburg has been considered by Russian writers as a menacing and inhuman mechanism." (Kagan, 165) From the high-class point of view Saint Petersburg was regarded a bureaucratic, ordered city with a traditional, regular street layout during the reign of Alexander I (1801-1825) . Saint Petersburg had to look very orderly in the Russian Imperial capital of that time.

When Alexander II (1855-1881) was crowned as the Russian Emperor, the country was striving to deal with the humiliating defeat in the Crimean War. This war was a conflict between the Russian Empire on the one hand and the alliance of the French, the British Empire, and the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Sardinia on the other hand, from October 1853 to February 1856. The conflict took place in the Crimean peninsula. Something had to be done to boost the national economy and ensure the political stability.

A series of reforms was undertaken under the supervision of Alexander II. Meanwhile, St. Petersburg was becoming a capitalist city, Russia was gradually moving down the road of technical progress. The first Russian railroad was opened in 1837. The first permanent bridge across the Neva River was built in 1850. As the new capital, St. Petersburg became a symbol of the reorganized Russia. Being situated in the estuary of the Neva River, St. Petersburg could establish tight connections with western European countries via the Baltic Sea. This circumstance made a deep impact on the course of reforms which established their goal to Europeanize the Russian society.

The expression 'Dostoyevsky's Petersburg' also signifies places where Dostoyevsky himself and the characters of his books lived. Dostoyevsky lived in Saint Petersburg since his high school studies and he took a lot of important themes from the big city for his fiction. The architectural form and cultural typology of the city of that time is pictured in his novels. As Kagan claims in his book: "There is an astounding vivid description of the real Petersburg in Dostoyevsky's *Crime*

and Punishment. (1866) In chronology Dostoyevsky's Petersburg belongs to the second half of the 19th century. The 1840s are considered to be the transition period in the history of the Russian culture, the period during which principles, ideas, main protagonists have changed. (Kagan, 167)

In the second half of the 19th century events such as the Crimean War and the Reforms in the 1860s had a huge impact on life in the Russian capital. Although Russia was becoming a capitalist country, it at the same time it remained a feudal state. In the clash of the two, the capitalist system began to form a new social consciousness. The city appearance had changed, the main architectural element became a multi-storey buildings not palaces anymore.

During Tsar Nicholas's reign (1825-1855) Petersburg already was a luxurious city in European-style. Nevsky Prospekt was a specimen of elegant boulevard where the whole city gathered during the day. After the Crimean War (1836-1856) the boulevard Nevsky Prospekt lost its festive character and became a common city street. Petersburg's peculiarity was that the city itself was considered the capital of Russia in spite of its eccentric geographical position. It was peculiar, but Russia recognized it as its capital. As Kagan asserts in his work: "Petersburg was a source of social ideas for the whole of Russia. Saint Petersburg seemed the only light point of Russia appropriate to live in." (Kagan, 170)

As the big city, Saint Petersburg represented a 'laboratory of ideas, center of the social life, of the movement and of the activity'. It was a place where people of higher-classes could benefit from the big city life. Apart from the rich class, there was a low class community living in indignity in the slums of the big city.

2.3 Charles Dickens

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in 1812 at Portsmouth. The family frequently changed the address, they settled in Chatham in 1817. As Ackroyd states in his book about Dickens : “ Certainly these were some of the happiest years of his childhood.” (Ackroyd, 16). The family returns to London in 1822. Dickens’s childhood experiences were similar to those depicted in *David Copperfield*. Dickens’s father, who was a government clerk, was imprisoned for debt and Dickens was briefly sent to work in a blacking warehouse at the age of twelve. Dickens received little formal education, but he taught himself shorthand and became a reporter of parliamentary debates for the *Morning Chronicle* in 1834.

He began to publish sketches in various periodicals, which were republished in one volume as *Sketches by Boz* in 1836. He married Catherine Hogarth the same year. Dickens’s characters became a publishing phenomenon after *The Pickwick Papers* was published in 1836-7. All Dickens’s novels were first published in serial forms. *Oliver Twist* was serialized monthly in *Bentley’s Miscellany* in 1837-9 and later was published in three volumes in 1838. *Nicholas Nickleby* was published in one volume in 1839, followed *The Old Curiosity Shop* in 1841.

Dickens left for America after finishing *Barnaby Rudge* in 1841. He returned disillusioned from there despite his previous enthusiasm. As Wilson affirms, “[b]oasting, quarreling, greediness, cruel mistreatment, snobbishness, insufficient hygiene, feigned cultural manners, violent threatening— all this can be seen in action in America” (Wilson, 143). He recorded his experiences in *American Notes* in 1842. His *Christmas Books* appeared in 1843 and *Martin Chuzzlewit* was published in 1844.

Dickens and his family set off for Italy, Switzerland and France where they stayed during 1844-6. Dickens began writing *Dombey and Son* while in Switzerland. *David Copperfield* (1850) was more serious in theme than his early novels. Dickens’s social criticism became more radical in *Bleak House* (1853) and *Little Dorrit* (1857). *Hard Times* (1854), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1860-1) were published in the weekly periodical *Household Words*. Most of Dickens’s novels are located in the city of London, he concentrates on the theme of the big city with passion of his own, “the city as the mystery”. (Ackroyd, 344). Ackroyd remarks in his work *Dickens:* “Practically all of

Dickens's novels are concerned with the life within families, after all, specifically in the degradation and unsatisfactoriness of familial relationships." (Ackroyd, 5).

Dickens decided to sell his London house and moved family to Gad's Hill in 1860. *Our Mutual Friend* was published in two volumes in 1865. His second American tour in 1866 and his series of readings hastened his decline in 1866. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, his last novel, was never completed and Dickens died on 9 June 1870, buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. As Ackroyd points out : " To all Victorians, then, the death of Dickens came as the evidence of a giant transition, they were registering in symbolic sense the end of an age of which he was the single most visible representative." (Ackroyd, Prologue 14).

2.4 Fyodor Michaylovich Dostoyevsky

“In order to write a novel, the author must first of all absorb one or several impressions he/she really experienced. This is the business of the writer. From this evolves the theme, the plan, and the harmonious whole.” (Kniazev, 55). This is how Kniazev characterized Dostoyevsky’s literary gift. Dostoyevsky was born in the family of a military doctor in Moscow in 1821. He studied the Main Engineering School in St. Petersburg. In 1844 he started his career as a novelist. Dostoyevsky was very receptive towards philosophical and cultural influences. Initially he was excited about Romanticism and translated Hugo’s novel *The God’s Mother Temple in Paris* (1831).

Later he was interested in Realism and he translated Balzac’s *Eugenia Grandet* (1833). Dostoyevsky stood up against Tsar Alexander II by reading a Belinsky’s letter for Gogol in public. The Tsar police arrested him and sentenced him to death penalty by shooting in the head. This sentence was cancelled literally a couple of seconds before the execution and changed into four years of forced labor and army service in the banishment in Siberia, Dostoyevsky spent altogether nine years in Siberia. These events shocked him and made him reappraise his present life and his philosophical views.

After his first publication *The Poor People* (1846), Dostoyevsky was considered a representative of the Russian naturalistic school. The basis of this school was a physiological sketch in which, according to the French writers such as Guy de Maupassant or Émile Zola, the society of that time has minutely described. He creates a portrait of a person in his/her setting and gives characterization of the reverse side of life of ‘the city scum’. He focuses on the social critique of the city. In his narrative *Double* (1846) and *White Nights* (1848), Dostoyevsky was focusing on the human and his/her psyche, and on the history of philosophy.

When he wrote the sentimental novel *The Humble and Insulted* (1861), “Dickens’ influence upon Dostoyevsky was obvious.” (Pospíšil, 163). Dostoyevsky borrowed flexibility and richness from Dickens’ narrative style, especially characterization and the themes in Dickens’ large novels *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65). In a close comparison of some texts,

especially *The Idiot*, *Our Mutual Friend* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*, have been revealed some parallels. As Gervais asserts in his work: “ Dostoyevsky’s response to Charles Dickens was broad, consciously or not, Dickens’ imaginative structures reflected through Dostoyevsky’s novels.” (Gervais, 50) Dostoyevsky’s imagery cannot be comprehended without appreciating Dickens’ role. In his *Diary of a Writer* (1873) Dostoyevsky expressed his appreciation of Dickens in this way: ” We understand Dickens in Russia, I am convinced, almost as well as the English, and maybe even all the subtleties; may be even we love him no less than his own countrymen; and yet how typical, distinctive, and national Dickens is.” (Dostoyevsky, 69).

His key novel is *Crime and Punishment* (1866) where the main protagonist, Rodion Raskolnikov, one of the Humble and Insulted, meditates about his life. He decides to murder an old usurer to prevent his sister from marrying for money. Another motive for Raskolnikov’s crime is his ‘Napoleon Theory’. He wants to test his theory that he has that capacity of ‘Napoleon’ who is capable of transgression in the name of higher ideas. However, he finds out later that he does not have that capacity.

Dostoyevsky is famous for his slenderness of psychological analysis among other writers. His works are characterized by a deep philosophical content. Psychologists value Dostoyevsky as a great psychologist. As Pospíšil points out in his *Panoráma*: “Dostoyevsky influenced world prose by foreshadowing the modernist stream of consciousness later represented by Henry James, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.” (Ivo Pospíšil, 164).

3 Practical Analysis

3.1 The Characteristics of the child heroes

The chief aim of this thesis is to compare Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Both novels prove that their novelists are rather diverse in their representation of the big city and the child hero. In Dickens the child hero is the main protagonist, while Dostoyevsky investigates and analyses adult characters and children only underscore the plot of the novel in episodic roles. Both writers had a great compassion with "The Humble and Insulted" of the world.

Like in his other novels, Dickens' social criticism is pronounced in *Oliver Twist*. Oliver Twist is a good-hearted ten-year old boy of a middle-class origin lost in the city of London. The fifteen-year old prostitute Nancy in this novel is one of the child characters put in contrast with Sonya Marmeladova in *Crime and Punishment*. Sonya being a deeply religious person gives a mental support to Raskolnikov after he kills the old usurer: "On his way to Sonya, he had felt she was his only hope and his only way out; he had thought he would be able to unload at least part of his torment." (Dostoyevsky, 422) Sonya Marmeladov's ambitions have always been also spiritual and so at the end of the novel she goes to Siberia to be of the moral and religious support of Raskolnikov, while Nancy in *Oliver Twist* is trapped by her relationship with the cruel pick-pocket Bill Sikes. Nancy is a child-like prostitute who turns from a mean person into a good one.

In *Oliver Twist*, Nancy meets Mr. Brownlow and Ms. Rose Maylie on the bridge across the Thames, that bridge represents a borderline between the wealthy and the poor London like the bridge across the river Neva in *Crime and Punishment*. In *Oliver Twist*, Nancy speaks with Mr. Brownlow and Lady Rose about her uneasy situation: "You can do nothing to help me. I am past all hope, indeed. I am chained to my old life. I loathe and I hate it now, but I cannot leave it. I must have gone too far to turn back, - and yet I don't know, for if you had spoken to me so, some time ago, I should have laughed it off. But this fear comes over me again. I must go home. To such a home as I have raised for myself with the work of my whole life." (Dickens, 388). In Dickens' world there is no way out for such characters as Nancy who has to end tragically.

In Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, the social theme is depicted alongside with philosophical and ethical ideas background. The chief child character, Sonya Marmeladova, is a friend of the main protagonist of the book, Rodion Raskolnikov and this is the way how she is mirrored by her father Marmeladov: "Sorrow, sorrow I sought at its bottom, sorrow and tears, and I tasted it and found it; and He will pity us who pitied everyone, and who understood all men and all women, He is the judge. On that day he will come and ask, 'Where is the daughter who gave herself for a wicked and consumptive stepmother, for a stranger's little children? Where is the daughter who pitied her earthly father, a foul drunkard, not shrinking from his beastliness?' And He will say, 'Come!' And He will forgive my Sonya, he will forgive her." (Dostoyevsky, 23) We can observe Sonya's difficult life in the Marmeladov family. Sonya is a victim of social struggles when she decides to save her siblings by becoming a street prostitute. Due to Sonya's strong emotional affection her mind develops ethical tendencies leading to a religious ideal.

Both Oliver and Sonya, her siblings, Lenchka, Kolya and Lenya, as well, are ill-treated in the street. They can be found in the lowest parts of the social scale in the big city society, as Dostoyevsky narrates in his novel, when Katerina Marmeladova drags all her children outside in the street and forces them to dance and sing: "The hoarse, strained voice of Katerina Ivanovna could already be heard from the bridge. Instead of banging on a frying pan, Katerina Ivanovna would begin clapping out the rhythm, with her dry palms, making Polechka sing and Lenya and Kolya dance, even beginning to sing along herself, but breaking off each time at the second note with a racking cough, at which she would again fall into despair, curse her cough, and even weep. Most of all it was the frightened tears of Kolya and Lenya that drove her to distraction. There had indeed been an attempt to dress the children up in street-singers' costumes. The boy was wearing a turban of some red and white material, to represent a Turk. No costume could be found for Lenya; Polechka was wearing her usual little dress. Timid and lost, she watched her mother. The street and the crowd frightened her terribly." (Dostoyevsky, 428.)

As Dickens characterizes his protagonists, there are some positive characters such as Oliver, Mr. Brownlow, Mrs. Bedwin, Mr. Grimwig, Mr. Losberne, Mrs. Maylie and the young lady Rose. The rest of the characters are negative, connected with the demonic Fagin, but also the workhouse staff and

Oliver's step brother, Monks. Nancy lives under Fagin's influence and she also takes part in Oliver's kidnapping. Nancy decides to help Oliver, but loses strength to rescue herself: "I don't know what it is, answered the girl; I only know that it is so, and not with me alone, but with hundreds of others as bad and wretched as myself. I must go back. Whether it is God's wrath for the wrong I have done, I do not know; but I am drawn back to him through every suffering and ill usage, and should be, I believe, if I knew that I was to die by his hand at last." (Dickens, 337)

3.2 The Life Stories of Oliver Twist and Sonya Marmeladova

In Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, readers follow the fate of Oliver from his birth in the workhouse under very dramatic circumstances. Oliver's mother was a young woman who passed away a couple of moments after giving birth to Oliver without revealing her real identity. Oliver's upcoming life in the workhouse develops in the same dramatic way. Oliver is an unwanted child at the mercy of the parish: " – a parish child – the orphan of a workhouse – the humble, half-starved drudge – to be cuffed and buffeted through the world, despised by all, and pitied by none." (Dickens, 5)

Consequently, Oliver's life is intertwined with dramatic and shocking reversals by which the readers are drawn into the plot with alarming detective suspense. Dickens begins Oliver's narrative from his age of nine where all the children were starving: "Boys have generally excellent appetites: Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months; at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing, hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel per diem, he was afraid he should some night eat the boy who slept next him, who happened to be a weakly youth of tender age. He had a wild hungry eye, and they implicitly believed him. A council was held; lots were cast who should walk up to the master that evening, and ask for more; and it fell to Oliver Twist." (Dickens, 14)

Oliver is dismissed from the workhouse and he is offered as an apprentice to anybody willing to pay five pounds. Oliver leaves the workhouse with tears in his eyes. He misses his friends, the only ones who he had in his life. When Oliver makes his first entry into the public life he works for the parochial undertaker Mr. Sowerberry. As Ackroyd asserts about Oliver's appearance: "It was that "long forgotten" look which Dickens describes again and again in his fiction. He sees it in *Oliver Twist*, in the dead face which returns to the long forgotten expression of sleeping infancy." (Ackroyd, Prologue 10).

The orphan's life does not get better because of physical abuse from his employer, bad nutrition, everyday encounter with dead bodies and sleeping in the workshop among the coffins. The head of the Sowerberry's family is Mrs. Sowerberry, aptly characterized by Dickens as a mean lady: "Mrs Sowerberry emerged from a little room behind the shop, and presented the form of a short, thin, squeezed up woman, with a vixenish countenance." (Dickens, 32). From the beginning, Mrs. Sowerberry is very harsh towards Oliver.

However Mr. Sowerberry finds in Oliver a great helper for developing his undertaking business. Oliver's childlike, innocent demeanour and his sorrowful expression are a great benefit for the coffin business. Every day Oliver walks with the streamer on his hat in front of the coffin and he moves all the mournful party by his appearance. Thanks to Oliver's help the coffin business increases. In spite of all these achievements Oliver does not become an undertaker. Noah, a charity-boy, assaults Oliver verbally and makes him come to the decision run away to London. Oliver is given for the first time in his life, a sincere blessing from his little orphan friend Dick. The first eight chapters of the novel focus on Oliver. There are also mentioned some other characters who underscore Oliver's difficult fate such as famine, "buffeting", being humble without a change for the better.

Oliver thinks naively that his life cannot go worse. On his way to London he realizes that he has no money, food, shelter and nobody in the big city is interested in his situation. That is why Oliver accepts with gratitude a new friendship of "The artful Dodger". As Jack Dawkins leads his sheep into the den, Oliver encounters for the first time the big city: "A dirtier or more wretched place

he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air is impregnated with filthy odours. There are a good many small shops; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who even, at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors, or screaming from the inside. Covered ways and yards, which here and there diverged from the main street, disclosed little knots of houses where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in the filth.” (Dickens, 63) Mr. Dawkins provides the exhausted and depressed Oliver with a shelter. The innocent boy is offered a pickpocket job in the house of a ‘good old man’ Fagin. Oliver has no idea who this old man really is. They take him into the den of the pickpocket gang: “The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black with age and dirt. In a frying-pan which was on the fire, and which was secured to the mantel-shelf by a string, some sausages were cooking; and standing over them, with a toasting fork in his hand, was a very old shriveled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. “(Dickens, 64)

Fagin is the name of a character abounding in wickedness, lie, servility, artfulness, and other negative qualities. “This old Hebrew” is the brain and the leader of the pick-pocket company. He is the one who teaches his boys how to become pick-pockets and the girls to become prostitutes. He tells his gang what and where to steal, the goods are then sold in the black market. Fagin provides Oliver with shelter not because of a human sympathy but because he is a calculating villain.

As mentioned above, it is a shock for Oliver to face the city of London for the first time: “As John Dawkins objected to their entering London before nightfall, it was nearly eleven o’clock when they reached the turnpike at Islington. They crossed from the Angel into St. John’s road, struck down the small street which terminates at Sadler’s Wells theatre, through Exmouth street and Coppice row, down the little court by the side of the workhouse, across the classic ground which once bore the name of Hockley-in-the-hole, thence into the Little Saffron-hill, and so into Saffron-hill the Great, along which, the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels. “(Dickens, 63) Dickens describes with preciseness the filthy London streets, drunkard hopelessness, emptiness, and

street maze. On the other hand, Dickens also describes quiet streets where decent inhabitants live.

The readers can see the contrast between the neat city of the wealthy people and the filthy city streets of low-class quarters. Dickens links the London night with Fagin's physical appearance: "The mud lay thick upon the stone, and a black mist hung over the streets; the rain fell sluggishly down, everything felt cold and clammy to the touch. It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved, crawling forth by night in search of some rich offal for a meal." (Dickens, 153) The big city in the novel is depicted in its vast variety and its contrasts. Oliver lives in the poorest parts of the city, but also he confronts the parts where the rich people live when he is accommodated in the Brownlows' house.

Fictional worlds of both writers are different, in Dickens, at the end of the novel *Oliver Twist*, Oliver comes into money and achieves a comfortable life. Dickens' values are therefore middle-class values (domesticity) and material values. In contrast to Dickens, Dostoyevsky values moral regeneration in the sense that poor people deserve a chance.

In *Crime and Punishment* we can see a former student Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov, who lives in a run-down apartment building in St. Petersburg. Raskolnikov is very intelligent, proud and handsome, but he is also sick, dressed in rags. He is short of money and keeps talking to himself. He goes to get money for a watch from Alyona Ivanovna, an old pawnbroker. On the way home he stops for a drink in a tavern. He meets Sonya's father Marmeladov who became a drunkard. Marmeladov quit his job and kept drinking for five days afraid to return home to his family. Marmeladov tells Raskolnikov about his three children and his ill wife Katerina Ivanovna. Marmeladov also mentions his daughter Sonya who has been forced into prostitution to support the family. Marmeladov gets drunk and run over by a horse carriage. Katerina's disease progresses. She makes her children dress in a funny way and makes them dance and sing with her in the street after a row with her landlady during the memorial dinner. She collapses on the pavement and dies at home.

Svidrigailov, former landlord of Dunya, pays for the three Marmeladov children to be placed in

the workhouse. Raskolnikov confesses his crime to the police officials and goes to Siberia. Sonya has moved to town outside the prison in Siberia and she visits him regularly.

3.3 Society in Dickens' and Dostoyevsky's era

The nineteenth century London society stratification had three layers. High class members were citizens in whose possession were mansions and who had servants. The middle classes were people with at least one servant. Families in the nineteenth century were much larger than today in spite of high infant mortality. In contrast, society in Russia was composed of the high class which was the court with the Tsar at the top. There was a small middle class and a huge layer of under-class people living in the slums of Saint Petersburg.

Victorian society profited from child labor: "Children were chained, belted, harnessed like dogs...black saturated with wet, and more than half-naked, crawling upon their hands and knees, and dragging their heavy loads behind them" (Yancey, 34). Child laborers played an important part in developing the country's economy. Children were the main sources of labor in Victorian England. They lacked adequate living and their working conditions were very bad.

As Yancey notes, employers saw many benefits in hiring children. They began working at the age of six or seven. Adolescents could be paid lower wages that is why they were a significant part of labor force. Their bodies were easily maneuverable and they had naturally small and nimble hands. Children were powerless and would not revolt, so employers most often hired children over adults. In the lives of children, education played a very small role. As Altick affirms, in the Victorian Era there was a refined belief that education was not needed. (Altick, 249). Dickens's childhood trauma was caused by his father's imprisonment for debt. His consignment to the blacking factory to help support his family had an overwhelming effect on Dickens's upcoming literary career. He repeatedly pointed out to the atrocities of the system throughout his novels.

3.4 The Theme of the Big City in Dickens and Dostoyevsky

Dickens gives another authentic picture of the city as it wakes up in the morning, there is

a thorough description of the streets, the market, animals, and people. Dickens' representation of the city testifies to his exuberant imagination: "There was a faint glimmering of the coming day in the sky, but it rather aggravated than relieved the gloom of the scene. The public-houses, with gas-lights burning inside, were already open. It was market-morning. Countrymen, butchers, drovers, hawkers, boys, thieves, idlers, and vagabonds of every low grade, were mingled together in a dense mass: the whistling of drovers, the barking of dogs, the bellowing and plunging of beasts, the bleating of sheep, and grunting and squeaking of pigs; the cries of hawkers, the shouts, oaths, and quarreling on all sides, the ringing of bells and roar of voices that issued from every public-house." (Dickens, 170, 171)

Dickens characterizes a similar situation in a black market with stolen goods from receivers and smugglers: "It is a commercial colony of itself, the emporium of petty larceny, visited at early morning and setting-in of dusk by silent merchants, who traffic in dark back-parlours, and go as strangely as they came. Here the clothesman, the shoe-vamper, and the rag merchant display their goods as sign-boards to the petty thief; and stores of old iron and bones, and heaps of mildew fragments of woolen-stuff and linen, rust and rot in the grimy cellars." (Dickens, 204, 205) He goes on with his narration after the black market description, Fagin enters a public-house called The Three Cripples and Dickens characterizes vividly the patrons' characters: "Cunning, ferocity, and drunkenness in all its stages where there in their strongest aspects; and women – some with the last lingering tinge of their early freshness almost fading as you looked, and others with every mark and stamp of their sex utterly beaten out, and presenting but one loathsome blank of profligacy and crime; some mere girls, others but young women, and none past the prime of life, - formed the darkest and saddest portion of this dreary picture." (Dickens, 207)

In Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* Saint Petersburg as a big city has an equally strong presence. Dostoyevsky was inspired by real and recognizable locations in the city when writing the novel. Setting of the novel is situated around the Haymarket and Catherine Griboedov Canal, which contained the worst slums in St. Petersburg. Raskolnikov keeps walking through the city streets in the

novel: “He wandered along the embankment of the Ekaterininsky Canal for half an hour, perhaps longer, and several times cast an eye at the landing steps as he passed by them. But he could not think of carrying out his intention: either rafts were standing there and washer-women were doing laundry on them. But he was not destined to get the Islands either; something else happened: coming out from the V----y Prospect to the square, he saw on his left the entrance to a courtyard, surrounded by a completely black walls.” (Dostoyevsky, 108)

The Haymarket and its surroundings was the poorest and most densely populated district of the city, with the highest mortality rate, and increasing crime, drunkenness and prostitution in the 1860s. As Raskolnikov wandered via the middle Petersburg streets, he ran into the Haymarket: “The proximity of the Haymarket, the abundance of certain establishments, a population predominantly of craftsmen and artisan, who clustered in these central Petersburg streets and lanes. It was terribly hot out, and moreover it was close, crowded; lime, scaffolding, bricks, dust everywhere, and that special summer stench known so well to very Petersburger who cannot afford to rent a summer house. The intolerable stench from the taverns, especially numerous in that part of the city, and the drunkards he kept running into though it was a weekday, completed the loathsome and melancholy coloring of the picture.” (Dostoyevsky, 4)

The Marmeladov family live around the Spasskaia district, one of the city slums, where drunks and prostitutes move in the streets. Similar to London, the big city in Dostoyevsky generates not only ideas, but also the filth, stench and penury that surrounds Raskolnikov and Sonya in the Haymarket: “It was about nine o’clock when he walked through the Haymarket. All the merchants with tables or trays, in shops big and small, were locking up their establishments, removing or packing away their wares, and going home, as were their customers. Numbers of various traffickers and ragpickers of all sorts were crowding around the ground floor cook-shops, in the dirty and stinking courtyards of the houses on the Haymarket, and more especially near the taverns. Raskolnikov liked these places most,

as well as all the neighboring side streets, in his aimless wanderings.” (Dostoyevsky, 60, 61)

All of that contributes to Raskolnikov’s sense of alienation and helplessness. The city’s presence in the novel is so overwhelming when Raskolnikov stands on Nikolaevsky Bridge and looks at the panorama. He senses the deaf and dumb spirit of the city when he sees the dome of the cathedral: “But Raskolnikov was already outside . On the Nikolaevsky Bridge he was once more brought fully back to his senses, owing to an incident that was unpleasant for him. He walked about ten steps, and turned his face to the Neva, in the direction of the palace. The dome of the cathedral, which is not outlined so well from any other spot as when looked at from here, on the bridge, about twenty paces from the chapel, was simply shining.” (Dostoyevsky, 113, 114)

Raskolnikov meets lots of drunks emerging from the stinking taverns around the Haymarket. Similarly to Oliver, Raskolnikov bumps into the drunkards on his wanderings throughout the city: “ Again it was unbearably hot out; not a drop of rain had fallen for all those days. Again dust, brick, lime; again the stench from the shops and taverns; again drunks all the time, Finnish peddlers, half-dilapidated cabbies.” (Dostoyevsky, 94)

Dostoyevsky emphasizes the impact of Petersburg on Raskolnikov’s consciousness as well. According to Dostoyevsky, the city is an ‘actor’ in the text rather than simply being a setting for the action. (Grossman, 15) In this sense, Petersburg’s dual role in the novel includes both an idea and a concrete social environment. As Leonid Grossman wrote: “ The squalid and repulsive pictures of Haymarket Square and Meshchanskies Streets are offset by the contrasting views of St. Isaac’s Cathedral and the embankments, of the palaces and boulevards.” (Grossman, 16) The squares, streets, the alleyways and canals not only serve as a backdrop to the action, but enter with their outlines into the thoughts and actions of the heroes. The city constantly dominates the people and hangs over their fates.

The internal drama in *Crime and Punishment* is in a peculiar manner carried out into the crowded streets and squares of Petersburg. The action is constantly transferred out of a narrow and low room

into the noise of the capital's streets. It is the street where Sonya sacrifices herself, Katerina Ivanovna bleeds to death on the pavement, it is there where Marmeladov falls dead run over the horse carriage, Svidrigailov shoots himself on the avenue before a watch tower. Raskolnikov attempts to confess publicly on Haymarket Square. The entire structure of the city, many narrow alleyways, storied houses, hump-back bridges and dusty squares, emerges as a heavy and merciless shipwreck. Petersburg is therefore inseparable from the personal drama of Raskolnikov.

4 Conclusion

There are both similarities and differences in the treatment of the theme of the big city and the theme of the child hero in *Oliver Twist* and in *Crime and Punishment*. In both novels the setting is mainly connected with the lives of the poor and the underprivileged. Although there is a great deal of filth, disease and drunkenness in the representation of London and St. Petersburg, as well as a general disharmony, both writers view the poor with great compassion.

Oliver Twist is set in an ambiance which evokes misery and horror in the first eleven chapters. Readers are drawn into a world of appalling ugliness and poverty. We may say it is a world of violence and brutality where death is welcome and suffering is present at all times. Oliver lives in a pickpocket den in a poor part of London.

On the other hand, in *Crime and Punishment*, Sonya Marmeladova and her siblings also live in the poorest city slum of St. Petersburg, where she has to sell her body in order to support her family. Her step-siblings are orphans with no future, their food is paid for in the workhouse, but there is nobody who could take a good care of them.

In *Oliver Twist*, we can see a critical comment on Victorian society, presented by the workhouse, the parochial child-institution, Mr. Sowerberry's shop, the funerals, the Artful Dodger and Fagin's lair. *Oliver Twist* is an evocation of the life of the poor after the Industrial Revolution. Dickens depicted a labyrinth of city streets, markets, alleys. In contrast to *Oliver Twist*, *Crime and Punishment* is not only written as a social critique, but also features philosophical and moral ideas. In comparison with *Oliver Twist*, the characters in *Crime and Punishment* (Raskolnikov and Sonya) are closely intertwined with the city itself. All the important action takes place in the streets, especially around the Haymarket, Spasskaia district and Nikolaevski Bridge. Yet, as shown above like Dickens's London, Dostoyevsky's Petersburg is a place of crimes, strange events, catastrophes and dramas. Dostoyevsky's heroes live desperate lives in city slums, poverty and hopelessness.

Although the city topography of the poorer parts of St. Petersburg is richer than in Dickens, the theme of the big city in Dickens is depicted also in contrasts. There can be seen rich quarters next to the poorest slums in London. The river Thames is a hypothetical borderline between the neat London of the rich and the filthy London of the poor. The city hangs over the fates of the people and all the essential actions take place in the streets of Saint Petersburg.

Even though there are many similarities between the misery of Oliver's, Nancy's and Sonya's lives, there are major differences in the endings of the novels and the potential future lives of the characters. In spite of his great compassion for the poor, Dickens does not see any way out for them. It is therefore revealed that Oliver is in fact a middle-class character who is eventually united with a previously unknown member of his family and is given the money he is entitled to. As Nancy has no such background she dies tragically. In accordance with Dostoyevsky's philosophical and religious views Sonya Marmeladova's religious enthusiasm and belief in moral regeneration makes her to be of a strong moral support to the convicted Raskolnikov in Siberia.

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