

## **Relationships in 19<sup>th</sup> century's society**

The main features I would like to point out in my essay would be the people's relationships mentioned in two different extracts of books. I have chosen Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and *London Labour and the London* written by Henry Mayhew. I will describe especially the story of *Two Orphan Flower Girls*. Both these books were written in 19<sup>th</sup> century and in both of them we can see relationships of people. In some aspects they are similar in other they are different. I would like to write about the people who try somehow to help these poor people, because there were just few of them in the text. And I think it is really important to help someone who needs it.

In both mentioned books the authors are focusing on poor people and their lives. Mayhew is describing two poor girls and there is a dialog between them and the author. Quincey's writing is, as the name of the book tells us, talk of the main character an user of opium. And we can see first difference. In Mayhew's book the poor children are the main characters of the story, the narrator is talking to them and we get to know something about their hard life. However in the second text the young man is described. These facts point out that there would be different relationships in both texts as children usually act in different way than the adults.

In *London Labour and London* we can watch the live story of two sisters. So there is a close relationship between them. They are family and it is usually expected that the members of the family would stay together and help each other. They live together with their brother. Their mother died few years ago and they remained alone. They like each other even if they are half-siblings, as the older girl has mentioned, she could not imagine emigrating without her brother and sister. Also another people, who buy bunches of flowers from them, behave quite well to these girls. In the text the older girl mentions that no gentleman was ever rude to her. Although they are very poor, they do not have problems with other people.

Opium-Eater is not alone as well, but it is hard to call it a “relationship”. He meets one young girl, she is a prostitute Ann. They spend time together, usually nights, but they do not love each other. They stay together because they have nearly the same fate. They both do not have “home” and family. But we cannot see and love affair. Even though Opium-Eater is afraid of her when she passes out one night and there is nobody to help her. Nobody in the night street take care about one girl from the street. But I cannot be so strict by saying that nobody cares about his fate. There is a man called by the narrator as Lord D---- and he tries to help him.

There are also another people in the main characters surroundings. I mean people who provide them some kind of living. These landlords are in my opinion quite different. But both of them try more or less to help them. The two sisters with their brother are staying with their landlady and her husband in one room, which is not spacious enough for all these people. They have one bed for all of them, so the living conditions were not great. The children have to pay rent for their living. On the other hand the lady helps them in the way possible for her. She washes and repairs them their clothes. She even lends them money if they do not earn enough.

Also Opium-Eater has possibility to live in a house. But the conditions were slightly different. He is offered to stay in an unoccupied house. This house belongs to a man who gives Opium-Eater bread so that he does not starve. So this character has larger space to live in than the girls. On the other hand the living conditions are worse than in the small but relatively clean room where the girl stay. This house is empty, cold and with huge number of rats. The house equipment consists of almost nothing in the house except few chairs, old table and there is one small inmate already. The poor child is staying there and the presence of our “hero” makes her happy. Their relationship is based on mutual help. The man promises to protect the child of the ghosts she is afraid of and she helps him to orient in the house. They

usually sleep together and developed their sleeping place. I think this is quite different relationship than that with young girl. The small child sees the guardian in Opium-Eater. Maybe she was not so lucky to meet so many kind adult people as the flowers' girls do.

In my opinion the lives of poor people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had to be really hard, especially concerning small children. For them the relationships are maybe more important than for the adult suffering man. They need to feel sureness and safety. And that is another different between these two types of characters. The Opium-Eater does not want to get too close to someone. Maybe he does not want to hurt someone or he was afraid of his death because of his bad health. The children make relationships quite easier they do not want to be alone because of their fears and vulnerability.