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**Literary Images of the Great Exhibition of 1851**

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## **ANOTATION**

The bachelor thesis introduces and analyses the images of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in two literary sources; Mrs. Napier's poem *The Lay of The Palace* and Henry Mayhew's novel *1851: or, The Adventures of Mr. And Msr. Cursty Sandboys*. To understand both the nuances and the parallels between the event's impressions depicted in these literary sources, the theoretical part provides historical, social and cultural background of the Victorian era in Great Britain. Additionally, the Exhibition is introduced simultaneously with the contexts mirroring the historical setting in order to illustrate the event's complexity.

## **KEYWORDS**

Great Exhibition, Great Britain, Victorian era, Crystal Palace, nineteenth century

## **NÁZEV**

Literární obrazy Světové výstavy 1851

## **ANOTACE**

Bakalářská práce představuje a analyzuje vyobrazení Světové výstavy ve dvou literárních dílech; báseň paní Napierové *The Lay of The Palace* a román Henryho Mayhewa *1851: or, The Adventures of Mr. And Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*. Pro porozumění jak nuancí, tak i paralel mezi těmito literárními obrazy Světové výstavy teoretická část práce poskytuje historický, sociální a kulturní vhled do Viktoriánského období ve Velké Británii. Výstava je představena i s kontexty odrážející dobové dění pro ilustraci komplexity události.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Světová výstava, Velká Británie, Viktoriánské období, Křišťálový palác, devatenácté století

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## Introduction

One of the most revolutionary epochs in the British history is the Victorian era. The British and their nineteenth century advances in machinery, production, manufacturing, engineering and trade were built on the backs of the Industrial Revolution and its omnipresent effects, which manifested themselves during the Victorian days. Great Britain became the centre of industrial production, and in addition to that, its expansive tendencies resulted in British colonies strewn all around the globe. This combination led to an ongoing trade cycle, Great Britain thus gained more wealth, and consequently confidence. Thompson characterizes Great Britain during the Victorian period as: “the workshop of the world, and it was in important respects indeed more of a workshop than a factory.”<sup>1</sup> This workshop excelled in steel- and ironmaking, shipbuilding, production of locomotives, electrical apparatuses or textile machinery; and although this is a modest selection of British production triumphs, they changed everyday life basis of British citizens immensely by shifting from small manufactures to great mechanization of manufacturing, and subsequent production boom. Nineteenth century unquestionably carried a spirit of success in Great Britain regarding industry and trade. On the other hand, some spheres of the era, despite the pervasive progress, were influenced in a negative way; the concentration in cities caused great shortage of housings, or easier spread of diseases. Slums, typical for the London city, were the cheapest shelter for lower-class workers, whose working conditions were rather poor, hence the widening differences (and issues) between social classes, leading to raising of the social alienation and confrontations. The Victorian period, though being very progressive in some ways, was far too complex to be summed up as merely innovative and glorious; there definitely were shortcomings and flaws connected to the novelty. Aspects of the Victorian era are introduced in the first chapter of this thesis as the happenings and circumstances play a big role in the depictions of the Great Exhibition, which is the concern of the rest of this paper.

It is possible to state that the Great Exhibition was a milestone of the century. Nations from all over the world, whether or not being a part of the British Empire, came to

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<sup>1</sup> F. M. L. Thompson, “Economy and Society,” in *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (Cambridge & Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 39.

London to share their strongpoints; the exhibits were mostly of industrial nature suited to the age. It was a massive international event, first one of its kind. The Exhibition reflects the era quite accurately as the event mirrors the historical contexts; people rushing to cities using the novelty of railway transportation while leaving their village houses behind, shifting attention to mechanical production, or fusing of the nations leading to first hints of globalization. It was a celebratory gathering, namely for the British. The goals of the event were, mainly claimed by Prince Albert, to boost the companionship between nations, share ideas and innovations, and according to Mitchell to demonstrate the closeness of art and manufacture,<sup>2</sup> all of which carry a sense of good intentions, being exactly the reputation which the British aimed to set for themselves. On the other hand, the event turned out to showcase some of the less pleasant aspects of the imperialistic and nationalistic base of Great Britain. The aim of this thesis is to support a claim that both the Victorian era and, most importantly, the Great Exhibition, which is a perfect representative of the historical setting, were not purely positive, but rather multi-layered, and in some ways even controversial. Also, it is necessary to prove that the era is reflected in the Exhibition in terms of the British nineteenth century propaganda based on its achievements. Two literary sources are used for analysis of the depictions of the Great Exhibition; Mrs. Napier's poem *The Lay of The Palace* and Henry Mayhew's novel *1851: or, The Adventures of Mr. And Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, both written shortly after the event took place, hence providing a valuable historical insight.

This thesis is divided into two major sections. In the theoretical part, the contexts of the era are introduced, as they formed the British approach to the Great Exhibition. In the second chapter, the Exhibition is introduced from the outside perspective and in the third, the display of the nations is depicted and justified to introduce the theme of self-promotion and self-boast in context with the selected exhibiting nations. The practical part then analyses, contrasts and finds parallels between the literary images of the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the related contexts connected to the event.

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<sup>2</sup> Dennis J. Mitchell, *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Sally Mitchell (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1988), 517.

## 1. Victorian era in Great Britain

In order to be able to see the Great Exhibition from a broader perspective, its historical background shall firstly be acknowledged, which was in that time currently experiencing the Victorian era. The aim of this chapter of the thesis is to indicate several happenings and contexts, serving as connecting dots, which led to, and supported, one of the greatest and most influential occurrences of the nineteenth century Britain: Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations itself. Queen Victoria is the symbol of this era, hence the terms Victorian and Victorianism, which has had several interpretations over time. Victorian can be understood as originating from the of Victoria`s reign, or bearing the effects of it, reflecting the ideas and beliefs such as strict moral and religious rules. Victorianism was then understood as a set of arts, typical values, attitudes and patterns of that time, but its originally positive meaning shifted slowly more towards stifling convention, humourlessness and hypocrisy. This shift might be perceived as a fitting parallel from the excitement of the omnipresent newness of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and all of its inventions transforming into the urban dullness of manufactories, unsettling wealth aspirations within the society and loss of individual skill sets for the sameness of one`s job content. Briggs, for contrast, suggest four elements typical for Victorianism: the gospel of work, seriousness of character, respectability and self-help.<sup>3</sup> His point of view provides a picture of rather hard-working and conscious Victorians, putting emphasis on the self-help, which might come off as almost Puritan-leaning. Various interpretations considered, Victorianism could not really be characterised in terms of its typical features, as there are so many, and they are almost abstract, and they vary for different historians. It cannot even be specified in terms of its duration, as the effects of the period manifested themselves even years after queen Victoria`s death, which is often mistakenly perceived as the end of Victorian Britain. It is therefore rather unsensible to frame it rigorously by the year 1837 to 1901.

There are, however, two terms which characterize the period perfectly: progress and change. Both these processes took place in Great Britain nineteenth century`s religious

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<sup>3</sup> Asa Briggs, "Victorianism," in *The Age of Improvement, 1783-1867* (New York: Longman, 1993), 450.

situation shift, political scene, economy state, population numbers, working ethics, transportation and much more. As a contrast to the seemingly booming and turbulent era, Toms describes the period as a time of complexity, but also as one not of chaos or incoherence.<sup>4</sup> It is true that some of the Victorian elements seem ever-lasting, be it the British city structures, roads, viaducts, telegraph wires, but also the matters like class distinction or education standards, which both shaped during the Victorian Era to the form we know now in the modern history. To introduce the time period deeply, Victoria's rule over the most influential empire of the world shall be discussed.

The time period preceding Victoria's reign was quite unfathomable. Browne in the biography *Queen Victoria* recalls that the accession to the throne of hers was rather a coincidence; in 1830 George IV, her uncle, died and it was William IV who got to reign due to the order of succession.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, when William died in 1837, it was time for the only legitimate child to sit on the throne – Eduard's daughter Victoria. The eighteen-year-old queen chose Buckingham Palace, which was just freshly completed at that time, as her place of residency, formerly known, and in the biography frequently referred to, as the Queen's House.<sup>6</sup> She ascended to the throne on 20 June, 1837 and became the Queen of United Kingdom and Ireland. The timing of her starting her reign was not too merciful or restful, as she was the first monarch to rule after Whigs' reform act of 1832. Taylor states that this act made her crown prerogative quite imitated by the powers of Parliament.<sup>7</sup> Not only she had to accustom to the new political traditions, but she was expected to be good at it too. Political arena was at that time opened to new groups, as the confessional state – the one having state church, being Anglican and aristocratic – was demolished. This process is understood as the start of the liberal state. Although the state was now liberally oriented, Marrying Prince Albert in 1840 did not do her any justice, since he was a German coming to nationalistically blooming Britain.

As the previous paragraph touched upon the theme of the British religious situation, it is important to acknowledge that during the nineteenth century the focus of the British,

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Toms, "Victorian England," in *The English & Their History* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 456.

<sup>5</sup> E. Gordon Browne, *Queen Victoria* (London: Duke Classics, 1915), 22.

<sup>6</sup> Browne, *Queen Victoria*, 26.

<sup>7</sup> Miles Taylor, "Crown and Company," in *Empress: Queen Victoria and India* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 87.

or at least some of them, shifted from faith to God more towards faith to humankind due to all the achievements in industrious spheres, and raising interest in science. Clergymen criticized scientist, and people concerned with the novelties rather than the Biblical past, for being arrogant, and vice versa. According to Turner, the era was typical for scientific and religious conflict regarding the methods of perceiving the world and its mechanisms.<sup>8</sup> Generally there was a confusion in society whom to praise for the great British success; the church praised God, however many humanistic-leaning individuals focused on human skills, thus the power of the church faded throughout the nineteenth century, perhaps even because of the power of big cities like London or Manchester, where religion became smaller part of the daily life of British citizens. Young claims that knowledge and science were the main reasons for the church not to maintain its rigid power.<sup>9</sup> The change in viewing the reality changed with the age of mechanization and industrialization, as people focused on wonders of the human power more. In addition to all these shifts, the British nation was going through a massive urbanization.

England was urbanised by the first half of the nineteen century, and so was Scotland and Wales, unlike Ireland. However, according to Steinbach, England was the most urban of all four nations, and only from 1851.<sup>10</sup> In the previous century, there was a huge population growth during which England and Wales doubled number of its citizens. Steinbach claims that a big part of the population became concentrated in the cities; for instance, in 1821 London has reached 1.5 million, and smaller cities grew as well. By 1851, 54% of the population was living in cities creating a new urban society.<sup>11</sup> Naturally, the cities varied – industrial towns of the North and the Midlands differed from older regional centres in its structure, occupation, focus and social class distinction. What was consistent though was the popular, and often quite romanticized, idea of a city – the impressive urban centres, slums, growing suburbs and public streets. The cities offered sources of enjoyment such as cafés, pubs, pleasure gardens, shopping streets, museums, galleries and music halls. The reality of cities though, warns Steinbach, was often different from the idea of it; there were outbreaks of

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<sup>8</sup> Frank M. Turner, “The Victorian Conflict between Science and Religion: A Professional Dimension,” in *Isis* 69, no. 3 (1978): 357.

<sup>9</sup> G. M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age* (London: Oxford University Press 1937), 72.

<sup>10</sup> Susie L. Steinbach, “A ‘Green and Pleasant Land’ of Cities and Slums” in *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in the 19th Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2017), 32.

<sup>11</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 13.



diseases such as cholera. Furthermore, drunkenness on the streets was common, similarly to violence, harassment or even property theft.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the tension in the residential parts of the cities – the slums, and the commercial part was rising. The space that was considered as safe was occupied by the respectable upper-middle class, whereas the slums were occupied by the working class. Seemingly, these parts were geographically distinct, but in fact they were sometimes just a few steps from each other. This caused great clashes between different social classes, eventually resulting in social alienation due to the widening gap of the poor and the wealthy.

Continuing with the theme of social structures, there was a massive change in the structure of the society during the era; going from the essentially hierarchical based society towards a class-based society. Hewitt states that this resulted in social revolution of the class distinction.<sup>13</sup> To begin with, the middle class was not homogenous. In the commercial parts of the cities consisting of boulevards and enjoyment and workspace centres, three sub-categories might be distinguished; upper-middle class people, who were often self-employed men and businessmen. Middle-middle class, who were workers and manufacturers. Trainor claims that these two classes were furthermore comfortably off than the lower middle class, which was almost blending with the working class living in slums.<sup>14</sup> The tendency to view lower-middle class population as an urban middle-class member was rather effective; the workers had a chance of having a well-paid job. The workers stood behind their prosperous leaders, these typical Victorian self-employed businessmen, which was helping the Great Britain's economic growth. Stated in the biography *Queen Victoria*, Browne claims that as the working-classes were able to achieve higher education, the workers began to aim at reforms through their Trade Unions,<sup>15</sup> creating even more clashes and tension within the society.

In contrast with the previous paragraph, there were rural areas on the other half of the scale of wealthiness; about 46% of the rural working population living in the villages who were farmers or millers, living in cottages made from clay, thatch and stone.

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<sup>12</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Hewitt, "Why the Notion of Victorian Britain Does Make Sense," *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 397.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Trainor, "Urban Elites in Victorian Britain," in *Urban History Yearbook* 12 (1985): 4.

<sup>15</sup> Browne, *Queen Victoria*, 67.

Steinbach states that after the abolition of a tax on bricks of 1850, people were able to use bricks, but still many were left with a cottage made from mud and some bricks in the villages, creating the contrast between the wealthy and the poor, the urban and the rural.<sup>16</sup> Such contrast was noticed even by Tombs, who refers to Victorian England as composing of two nations; the wealthy and the poor.<sup>17</sup> The society clearly lacked unity. It is noticeable that there were contrasts in terms of extremely wealthy upper class located in city centres, working class men living in slums, together creating the urban society and the rural, which was not by any chance progressing as fast. Even though this description of the British rural land does not appeal too well, it still had a silver lining; the combination of the technical, scientific and agricultural betterments and huge fields in the rural locations enabled the mid-nineteen century years in Britain to become, how Briggs calls it, “the golden age of high farming.”<sup>18</sup> This was only possible because of the results of the Industrial Revolution, which is the omnipresent foundation allowing the huge progress in various spheres of industrial production, and consequently trading.

Carrying on with the theme of the revolution and the progress that came along, the machinery was one of the greatest contrivances of the Industrial Revolution, which manifested itself in several fields. In 1850, claims Briggs, the coal industry managed to output over two million tons, which was half of the total world’s output.<sup>19</sup> Cotton factories were thriving as well, as there were 1 800 of them, similarly to ship-building factories, iron industries and railway companies. The railway business even got so extensive that people were buying railway shares at London Stock Exchange. It might be the railway that characterizes the period nicely; goods, ideas, individuals and inventions started to be transported in higher speed and frequency than they ever did. The sad part of the factory production was that small British farms were left with no work to do, which was according to Browne the downfall of the new industrial production system<sup>20</sup>, since the British wages fell rapidly. Yet again, this fact points at the two-faced nature of the era. Continuing with the dark side of this cycle, the people from the colonies were traded as well as goods were and later used for cheap work

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<sup>16</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 24.

<sup>17</sup> Tombs, *The English & Their History*, 457.

<sup>18</sup> Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, 394.

<sup>19</sup> Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, 395.

<sup>20</sup> Browne, *Queen Victoria*, 74.

labour. Slavery and oppression were not the only downfalls of the period, as the industrialization and manufacturing made it hard for the working people; men, women and even children, to stay in good health, keep traditions and unique skill sets, or have access to food of good quality. The British Isles were filled with a sense of freedom, Thombs even states that the English “saw themselves above all as traditionally free.”<sup>21</sup> Ironically enough, their sense of freedom flourished at the expense of the colonized ones. Nonetheless, the British confidence sky-rocketed during the mid-nineteen century, and it would not be too risky to state that the isles were nationalistic-leaning at the time.

Examining the nationalistic feeling of the Victorian Britain further, it was surely partly caused by the wealth that nation was obtaining. There were, according to Steinbach’s timeline, several factors preceding the Great Exhibition that made Britain the richest nation on earth by 1851. Few of them might be the railways becoming pervasive by the 1850, 23% of cotton exported to India, or the overseas investments that were £225 per year.<sup>22</sup> It is, therefore, no wonder why Britain and the British were living with a spirit of national enthusiasm, having colonies in Canada, New Zealand, India, Australia and South Africa. With these areas, Britain traded goods and, more importantly, secured raw material. As a result, there was a constant trade circulation, as Britain gave back railways, medicine, and education to the colonies. With the theme of wealth, a link to Queen Victoria introduced in the beginning of this chapter emerges again. She was indeed a monarch who empowered the nationalistic feeling. During 1850s, she visited the British provinces, and its huge success was visible even in newspaper reports, claims Briggs, perhaps because Victoria’s spirit matched the society’s one.<sup>23</sup> She celebrated progress and supported the society she was close with while also being the ruler of the biggest empire of the world by the mid-nineteen century.

To conclude, Victorian era was revolutionary in many ways. With all the technical, scientific, agricultural and social progress, it seems to be shaping the modern ways of living. British Empire, also fittingly called the empire on which the sun never sets,

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<sup>21</sup> Tombs, *The English & Their History*, 469.

<sup>22</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 4–5.

<sup>23</sup> Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, 459.

reached its full imperialistic potential by the mid-nineteen century with Queen Victoria being the symbol of its success from the very beginning of her rule to the end. As discussed above, the beauty of progress came with its costs; the urban became dangerous for one's health and safety, national wealth left farmers from rural areas with no work, trade cycle went hand in hand with slavery or women and children working in the factories before the mechanization. The beginning of this chapter stated two terms, progress and change, which suit the time period perfectly. While that is still definitely true, it is only reasonable to add one more expression; contrast. This term concerns the line between the urban/the rural, the upper/lower class distinction, and the wealth/the colonized areas. Taking all the factors discussed in this chapter into consideration, Victorian Great Britain was definitely an entity of complexity and number of layers, impossible to sum up by one or just few terms.

## 2. The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations

Being the first one of its kind, the Great Exhibition was opened on May 1, 1851 by Queen Victoria accompanied by Prince Albert and their two oldest children. The timing of the exhibition was not accidental, considering that Great Britain was at that time the richest nation of all. This chapter will introduce the contexts connected with the Exhibition; its aims, symbolisms, impulses, organization, financing, and perceptions. At the beginning, no one knew what to expect of such a big event as it never has been done before, and to many it was a surprise that it turned out to be such a great success. One aspect that made it so unique, claims Luckhurst, was the fact that it was the first exhibition which shifted from national to international,<sup>24</sup> moving from the small local exhibition concept to an event with great power and influence. According to Halada and Hlavačka, it was Prince Albert who acknowledged that the expectations were quite high,<sup>25</sup> as the British aimed at showing themselves in the best possible light. The era of inventions, newness, national pride and flow of ideas called for a gathering of a high standard. A contemporary, captured in Briggs' *The Age of Improvement*, wrote:

The triumphant facts of industrial progress were proclaimed for all the world to see in the Palace of Industry of 1851, The Great Exhibition, which set out to present a true test and a living picture of the point of development at which the whole of mankind has arrived [...] and a new starting point, from which all nations will be able to direct their further exertions.<sup>26</sup>

The initial aim of the Exhibition, as indicated in the excerpt above, was to boost the brotherhood between nations, and navigate them towards industrial betterments. This uniting quality of the Exhibition was also noticed by E. Yates, captured in Auerbach's article, who stated that the event binds together the races of the involved nations, creating common brotherhood, hence bringing peace.<sup>27</sup> To continue with the theme of brotherhood, Briggs highlights that a gigantic olive tree was built in the middle of the Crystal Palace,<sup>28</sup> which was meant to symbolize the international concord, and also

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<sup>24</sup> K. W. Luckhurst, "The Great Exhibition of 1851," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 99, no. 4845 (April 1951): 421.

<sup>25</sup> Jaroslav Halada, Milan Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy: Od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000* (Praha: Libri, 2000), 16.

<sup>26</sup> Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, 398.

<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey Auerbach, "The Great Exhibition and Historical Memory," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 6, no. 1 (2001): 92.

<sup>28</sup> Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, 376.

the way how Great Britain openly welcomed other nations. Additionally, the Exhibition was portrayed as a celebration of each country's industrial art and the vision of better, modernized future. Industry was the main element of the Exhibition; the fine arts were not a subject of this event, as it would almost be unsuitable in a time of national industrial prosperity and free trade. Another reason for the event to take place was to eliminate the drudgery of individuals working in the factories with mechanization, and present new ways of cheaply and conveniently making clothing or foods. The idea was that sharing ways of producing the goods at a reduced price would ideally remove the poverty of the lower class. There was a general belief that industry, trade, and financial prosperity are the three elements making it possible for the London city to control world's economy, and it eventually did. According to Halada and Hlavačka, 2/3 of the world's capital was managed by the British by the time the Exhibition was opened.<sup>29</sup> With the spirit of grandiose national pride and power, London was to host the Exhibition, but before exploring the event itself, the matter of who and what were the initial impulses for the event shall be developed.

The first of the three gentlemen who took part in planning and organizing the Exhibition was Henry Cole, who has already arranged several successful art-oriented exhibitions by the time he was asked to organise the Exhibition, but with this particular one it was different. French, or more specifically Parisian reflections were intertwined with many aspects of the Victorian Britain, and even the Exhibition showed some of its influences; Cole was truly inspired, claims Halada and Hlavačka, by his visit organized by the Society of Arts at the Exhibition of Products of French Industry in Paris in 1849.<sup>30</sup> This exhibition is said to be a precursor to the one in 1851, therefore its impacts are undeniable. Cole, the initiator and future commissioner, introduced his vision of the Exhibition to Prince Albert, who was at that time a chairman of the Royal Commission, where he firstly had to get a consent for the event, which finally happened in 1849. Both of these men believed, claims Briggs, that a combination of design and functionality is crucial in addition to technical progress of the machinery and "high arts" – the ones that refine the society's taste.<sup>31</sup> The nature of the Exhibition was, therefore, industrial is the first place, but the design of the goods that is pleasing

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<sup>29</sup> Halada & Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy*, 20.

<sup>30</sup> Halada & Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy*, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Asa Briggs, "Products," in *Iron Bridge to Crystal Palace: Impact and Images of the Industrial Revolution* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), 166.

to an eye was an indispensable benefit. Prince Albert became the face of the event eventually, and being organised and opened by a royal member, a prince, helped the Exhibition to gain much higher prestige. Basic matters were discussed during the first few meetings in the Buckingham palace – for instance the financing, which was provided in a form of subscription from private sources of about 5,000 parties; the Queen and Prince Albert, labourers or, for instance, Samuel M. Peto – a railway contractor, who, according to Halada and Hlavačka, gave away the biggest amount of money to support the exhibition – £50,000.<sup>32</sup> It would therefore not be wrong to state that the event was funded from private finance sources. Another hot topic of the meetings was the place and the building where the occasion should be located, and that was the moment when Joseph Paxton, who Auerbach claimed to be the Victorian archetypal self-made man<sup>33</sup>, came into play. He was called by H. Cole to create a draft of the central exhibition building, which happened to be a pleasure for him, as he already done such proposals before.

To introduce the building mentioned in the previous paragraph closer, its location should be demonstrated. After considering the suggestions of locating the Exhibition in Regent's Park or Primrose Hill, H. Cole came up with the assertion that Hyde Park would be ideal for its accessibility, allowing all social classes to come and see. J. Paxton then made up a plan of a breath-taking iron and glass construction which, after being finished was, as reported by Auerbach, "like a fairy vision."<sup>34</sup> This description is illustrative for several reasons; the transparent gleaming glass construction, the reflection of huge trees which were intentionally reserved for the essence of nature, or its size – or rather greatness. In all its glory, the Crystal Palace became a symbol on its own. The construction was built extraordinarily quickly with the help of railway transport and innovative machinery, reflecting the era's strongpoints. Ironically enough, the draft of the building was being ridiculed; Halada and Hlavačka point out the *Punch* magazine, which likened the building to a greenhouse<sup>35</sup> – and perhaps this was a double entendre, as J. Paxton was famous for his drafts of greenhouses. For that reason, the magazine sarcastically called Paxton's proposal "Crystal Palace"; little did the authors know that this name would, fittingly enough, stick with the building for

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<sup>32</sup> Halada & Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy*, 19.

<sup>33</sup> Auerbach, "The Great Exhibition and Historical Memory," 97.

<sup>34</sup> Auerbach, "The Great Exhibition and Historical Memory," 91.

<sup>35</sup> Halada & Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy*, 21.

ever. The Palace was preciously detailed and thought-through, adds Halada and Hlavačka, as the length of the actual building is 564 metres, which is exactly 1851 feet long<sup>36</sup> – the length mirrors the year of the Exhibition. Crystal Palace was not only stunning, but also practical, which draws a connection to the earlier mentioned ideal of Cole and Prince Albert that design shall be combined with practicality; for instance, the supporting columns of the building were hollow, allowing the rain to flow down effectively. These columns, as well as all the railings in the building, were painted with blue, red and yellow, aiming to mimic the scheme of which all nature's elements are made of, yet again connecting the progress with nature; the base for everything human-made. This connection to nature was also linked to the lightning of the space; only natural, no artificial lights were used. Although the Palace was later dismantled from the Hyde Park, J. Paxton was given the status of an aristocrat for his great, and by some considered controversial back then, work of art.

Carrying on with the theme of light controversy surrounding the Exhibition, there was an issue connected to a religious interpretation of it. Besides the historical picture, agreed on by most of historians, that the Great Exhibition was a celebration of technicality, progress and internationality, there was another point of view; God is the origin of all progress, and many people chose to highlight this perspective. Geoffrey Cantor comments that this approach is presented even in the fact that Prince Albert promoted the motto of the Exhibition using the first verse of Psalm 24: “The earth is the Lord's and all that therein is; the compass of the world and they that dwell therein.”<sup>37</sup> On a similar note, the official opening ceremony had a religiously enlightening character; Halada and Hlavačka indicate that John Bird Sumner's, the Archbishop of Canterbury, prayer during the opening of the Exhibition set the religious tone right away.<sup>38</sup> The archbishop prayed for the Exhibition's success and expressed gratitude towards human work and sensibleness. This clearly shows the religious undertone of Prince Albert's attitude, and many Protestant commentators shared his religious outlooks. Some of these commentators, claims Cantor, perceived the Exhibition as a “harbinger of Apocalypse”,<sup>39</sup> which is quite an emotive simile. This

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<sup>36</sup> Halada & Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy*, 22.

<sup>37</sup> Geoffrey Cantor, “Science, Providence, and Progress at the Great Exhibition,” *Isis* 103, no. 3 (2012): 455.

<sup>38</sup> Halada & Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy*, 25.

<sup>39</sup> Cantor, “Science, Providence, and Progress at the Great Exhibition,” 441.



approach can, however, be found in many points of history; all in all, the humankind tends to be afraid of the new; religion in general, and in this case too, tends to refer to the Biblical past, but this event celebrated the future and all its possible new versions. This is nicely presented by Auerbach, a historian who perceived the event as a rather secular one, who adds that 1851 Britain's possibilities, both at home and abroad, seemed limitless,<sup>40</sup> suggesting a celebration of the unexplored newness, rather than a Biblical interpretation of Britain's state. Evangelicals on the other hand, criticised the Exhibition for its temporariness and transience, and Cantor stresses that they put emphasis on the comparison with the eternal varieties of Christianity, which according to them should have been the centre of a man's attention and focus.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, they warned that materialism is on the rise. It was during this event when the clergymen, and their followers, criticised the progressive nature of the era extensively, as people were showing more admiration to a temporal honouring of progress and science rather than to church and all its traditions and referring rather to the past than to the future. There was, as evident from the different interpretations of the event, a two-faced nature to the Exhibition; according to the (un)secular interpretations some groups celebrated, some groups lamented, and the clashes between the sources of science and industry and the sources of church authority arose, one opposing the other. It is necessary to accept the religious undertone of the event and era of progress overall. The general public, perhaps because of Prince Albert's dedication too, perceived the Exhibition as a God's will and it is the God to whom the gratefulness for the event was being expressed. The religious interpretation was not the only controversial side, as some racial-related questions came to light too.

As the era was fortunate for travels and sharing, there were situations that challenged the British, or rather the European in general. For the first time the British could meet an Indian, Chinese, American, or a Turk with a turban on, which inevitably brought a sense of the unknown, and therefore easily judgeable from the European point of view. Auerbach points at the fact that the presence of foreigners revealed a nationalistic side of the British that was leaning rather racist.<sup>42</sup> It is quite natural that the period of free trade and traveling opportunities brought cultural shocks for the British. It highlights

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<sup>40</sup> Auerbach, "The Great Exhibition and Historical Memory," 96.

<sup>41</sup> Cantor, "Science, Providence, and Progress at the Great Exhibition," 443.

<sup>42</sup> Auerbach, "The Great Exhibition and Historical Memory," 104.

the national progression and its occasional excessiveness, and most of historians agree that the Exhibition challenged the racial question of the British, and the event came across a little haughtily from the British side. On the other hand, the cultural encounters were enjoyable in other ways; for instance, the refreshment section of the Exhibition offered exotic foods and beverages, mainly from the Middle East, which was itself a cultural experience for the British general public, and which also evoked a spirit of interest in the exotic cultures. The possibility of taking interest in exploring other nations, which was the Exhibition's content, started the age of commercial enjoyment. Overall, there were situations during the Exhibition which exposed the British to other cultural and racial influences, and some of them were perceived better than others.

The press, as already mentioned earlier with the case of the *Punch* magazine, was interested in the Exhibition and wrote about it frequently. There were both negative and positive echoes. Journalists could enter the Exhibition for free, which is itself a significant hint of the organizers' tendency to make the event commercial and magnify its publicity. Even huge medias expressed their interest; a very conservative press sharing the attitude with the English clergymen, *The Times* was, according to Auerbach, very critical towards the class fusion<sup>43</sup>; the Exhibition was stated to be too socially opened, suggesting that sharper class distinctions were expected. In reverse, *The Illustrated London News*, a rather liberal press observed the Exhibition's evolution closely too, in a spirit of support and honouring. Similarly, captured in Auerbach's *The Great Exhibition and Historical Memory*, the *Guardian* magazine wrote: "The Exhibition demonstrated the resolution, ingenuity, and skill which made us one of the world's great empires",<sup>44</sup> suggesting that there were various interpretations of the Exhibition in the press, and points of view varied based on whether the press leaned liberal or conservative. No matter whether positive or negative, the publicity attracted people to London city to come see the novelty, and it worked wonders; according to Tombs, an average of 43,000 people visited daily.<sup>45</sup> This was the largest crowd ever gathered indoors, which was impressive, and so was the total number of visitors – according to Halada and Hlavačka, it was 6,039,196.<sup>46</sup> All these people came to see

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<sup>43</sup> Auerbach, "The Great Exhibition and Historical Memory," 104.

<sup>44</sup> Auerbach, "The Great Exhibition and Historical Memory," 96.

<sup>45</sup> Tombs, *The English & Their History*, 467.

<sup>46</sup> Halada & Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy*, 19.

what the nations had to show and share. They could do so until October 11<sup>th</sup>, meaning that the Exhibition was opened for 140 days. All the publicity and fuss around the Exhibition brought it to the limelight, and even its gains were promising; the profit was double the input amount, however after the Crystal Palace was sold and moved, the profit was even bigger – £200,000. Great Britain hence gained a massive financial base, nevertheless the utilization of the finances was quite a thorny subject; Prince Albert opted for constructing an educational and academical institution, which happened to be known as “Albertopolis”, Shears comments that by buying 35 hectares of land in Kensington and building several museums, halls, colleges and libraries, Prince Albert secured a physical monument, however, it was saving the rest of the profit that was truly far-sighted of him.<sup>47</sup> The Royal Exhibition commission still takes care of the annual interest of the unexpected 1851 Exhibition earnings. According to Halada and Hlavačka, £900,000 was the sum of the profit by the twentieth century;<sup>48</sup> its interest these days covers British scholarships, art supports or scientific research funding. All in all, it might be justified to claim that the event was, in the end, commercial. Three mementos are still to be found in London; Victoria and Albert Museum, Science Museum, and Natural History Museum all funded by the Great Exhibition’s profit as a part of the former Albertopolis construction.

This chapter presented some of the features and outlooks connected to the Great Exhibition, starting with the primal goal of the event; to unify, celebrate, and boost peace. With these aims, the Exhibition was, and still is, perceived as one of the most symbolic happenings of the nineteenth century, representing the Victorian attitude of self-designing the nation and its progression. The event truly was monumental and fascinating; the ambience of the Crystal Palace, its connections with the nature, but also with faith in God simultaneous with faith in progress. It was a view that can never be experienced again, as Hobhouse noted, captured in Shears’ *The Great Exhibition, 1851*: “The nostalgia and amazement surrounding the Exhibition was due to the fact that nothing physical remains.”<sup>49</sup> It is true that certain romance is present in each depiction of the Exhibition. Conversely, there were some aspects to the event that were

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<sup>47</sup> Jonathon Shears, “Afterlives,” in *The Great Exhibition, 1851: A Sourcebook* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 219.

<sup>48</sup> Halada & Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy*, 29.

<sup>49</sup> Shears, *The Great Exhibition, 1851: A Sourcebook*, 196.

disputable; the undertones of racism, overcrowding of the London city with visitors, the prince's decision about the spending of the profit, or perhaps the unrest of the ecclesiastical power caused by the temporal nature of the event. There were many meanings to the Exhibition. Different people saw and experienced the Exhibition differently, they saw and experienced what they themselves had projected onto it. That is why, perhaps, there are more ways to interpret the event. On the whole, the Great Exhibition was a huge celebratory success of the British nation, a symbol of its own, and a never-done-before milestone.

### 3. The display

This chapter, unlike the previous one, focuses on the inside of the Exhibition and serves as a display guide. The following text acts like an insight, or a wander through the Exhibition with added elucidations of the arrangement, representation of nations, their exhibited items and connects them with the contexts of the industrial era introduced earlier. The exhibits were provided by, states Halada and Hlavačka, 23 nations, and exactly 17,062 exhibitors participated.<sup>50</sup> It is reasonable to notify that almost half of the exhibitors were British, or coming from British colonies in India, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and parts of Southern Africa and America. The national pride was unmissable, manifesting itself even in the partition of the exhibiting hall, claims Luckhurst, who comments that the western part of the building was devoted only to the British and colonial exhibitors.<sup>51</sup> There was a lot of goods to set up, or perhaps show off, and for that reason the distribution and classification of the exhibits was one of the primary issues and it was Prince Albert, states Hermione Hobhouse, who suggested the following division into 4 classes: Raw Materials, Machinery, Manufactures and Sculpture.<sup>52</sup> This categorization was nicely logical, and somehow symbolic of the event, as it is mirroring the process of real-life process of manufacturing; a natural element is being processed by human-made industrial machinery for the sake of gaining a product, and then art, as cherry on top, provides the manufactures with a touch of beauty. Although the visitors did not particularly have to see the exhibits in such order, the division represented a celebration of the process of industrial production. Furthermore, the classification draws a certain link to nature again, as it is portraying natural materials as a primary base for every product a man can ever make. The primary distinction of the four fundamental classes was not enough though due to the number of the goods.

As there were so many elements to display, additional 30 manageable subclasses like glass, tapestry, clothing materials, or minerals were distinguished. Most of these subclasses were devoted to machines, which came as no surprise because of the

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<sup>50</sup> Halada & Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Luckhurst, "The Great Exhibition of 1851," 440.

<sup>52</sup> Hermione Hobhouse, *The Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition: Art, Science and Productive Industry: A History of the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851* (London & New York: Athlone Press, 2002), 40.

nineteenth century machinery upswing. On the other hand, only one subclass represented fine art; sculptures, plastic art, and mosaics. The show was purposely industrial and presented technical art; the few displayed examples of high art were said to be exhibited for the nature of the paint, not the actual painting nor its message, which expresses the character of the Exhibition; unpretentious, factual, and industrial. Despite the practical spirit of the event, the display managed to be presented in a very classy way. Johansen comments on the display:

[...] displayed objects were ordered, set on pedestals, and illuminated, raw materials, machines and manufactured objects were constructed into new reality. [...] They became objects of wonder, object that required a second look, object that demanded respect.<sup>53</sup>

The presence of exotic and unknown countries' elements caused the visitors to examine the exhibits closely, and with a sense of amazement, as illustrated in the excerpt above. This effect was further supported, claims Hoffenberg, by the music that was playing and paintings decorating the blank spaces.<sup>54</sup> The Exhibition therefore presented its visitors with stimuli for all their senses, contributing to the overall impression and introduction of the nation's culture.

Although there were over 100,000 exhibits, they were well-managed; each nation was asked, claims Luckhurst, to appoint a commission responsible for arranging and selecting its exhibits for its allocated area.<sup>55</sup> The committees were the best medium to select what to exhibit and, as a result, the display was orderly and consisting of the given nation's greatest triumphs. In addition to plans of the inside area available for the visitors, the arrangement of the display was supported by standard sight boards, organizing the whole building into areas, making it easier for one to orientate. On top of that, it was advised, captured in the *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition*, to walk through the Palace from West to East because of the the sunlight working best when following this path,<sup>56</sup> drawing yet another connection to nature and to the respect

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<sup>53</sup> Sylvi Johansen, "The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Precipice in Time?," *Victorian Review* 22, no. 1 (Summer, 1996): 63.

<sup>54</sup> Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English Indian and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2001), 6.

<sup>55</sup> Luckhurst, "The Great Exhibition of 1851," 440.

<sup>56</sup> G. W. Yapp, Robert Ellis, *The Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851* (London: Spicer Brothers, 1851), 2.

to it. Due to the limited acres all the elements which could possibly be presented vertically were hung up – namely the carpets and rugs. This was, criticizes Luckhurst, the only image that created a “bazaar-like effect”,<sup>57</sup> which did debase the presentation slightly. To sum up the Exhibition’s partition, each class allocated space was subdivided geographically, and each nation’s committees had to reserve their space in the given class area in an earlier notice as every acre of the floor space was delimited. Additionally, the interior itself was so stimulating thanks to its ability to entertain all senses and, therefore, the Exhibition was a place to educate oneself, as well as entertain. Next paragraph shifts from the overall impression of the inside of the Palace to the individual components and their justification.

Proceeding to the actual displayed bits, the United Kingdom’s area is the first to be discussed. Even though the nation covered all subclasses, considering both quantity and quality of the items in the given section it was obvious what was British strongpoint – the machinery. According to *The Official Catalogue* of the Exhibition, the range of this class was huge; starting with marine mechanisms and railway locomotives,<sup>58</sup> which both drew a link to the phenomenon of travelling discussed in the first chapter. Marine machines then presented ways in which Britain obtained many goods from the colonies; and therefore, is linked to the earlier mentioned imperialistic nature of the British Isles, which was an omnipresent undertone of the event generally. Popularity of railways was also connected to the ongoing theme of urbanization typical for the nineteenth century, as it had never been easier for the British to get to cities. In addition, with the growing urban society, there was a constant need for additional housing space, thus the machinery section filled with, pointing out examples from the *Official Catalogue*, machines for civil engineering; drilling machines, fire-extinguishers, or block for buildings to ensure equal pressure.<sup>59</sup> The biggest engine used for building was a majestic hydraulic press. The section with manufacturing machines was equally symbolic because of the expansion of factories. In this section, recalling from the *Official Catalogue*, there were machines for cotton or wool production, printing presses, weighing-engines, cigarette-making machines, or all kinds of cutting engines<sup>60</sup> – all the machinery needed for mass production that took

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<sup>57</sup> Luckhurst, “The Great Exhibition of 1851,” 448.

<sup>58</sup> Yapp & Ellis, *The Official Catalogue*, 40.

<sup>59</sup> Yapp & Ellis, *The Official Catalogue*, 28.

<sup>60</sup> Yapp & Ellis, *The Official Catalogue*, 43–44.

place during the Victorian period. Halada and Hlavačka even comment that the British machinery section introduced 3 items that were a total exhibition novelty: gas cooker, electric clock, and telegraph.<sup>61</sup> The machinery and manufacturing majority of the British exhibition in fact acted as a great reflection of the British context of the era; mirroring the inclinations to travel, colonize, build and produce more than ever. In spite of that, the British and their representation were so elevated even because of the colonial section, which, though not necessarily directly, belonged to the British show.

In the section of colonial exhibits, the focus was no longer on machinery, but on the section with raw materials. Colonial exhibitors displayed their natural wealth, because that is what created the bond between these nations and the British, leading to the ongoing cycle of trading. Exhibited natural products, citing from the *Official Catalogue*, consisted of spices, precious woods, furs, shark fins, herbal aromas, tobacco, dried fruits, flax, hemp or gemstones like rubies and emeralds.<sup>62</sup> There was one precious stone that stand out the most, and to some point became an icon connected with the Great Exhibition– the Koh-I-Noor diamond, originating in India, however falling under the British possession due to the status and function of a colony. The diamond is established to be the rarest stone with incalculable value. According to Kinsey, queen Victoria allowed to exhibit the diamond, but was not satisfied with its representation, therefore the diamond underwent cutting for better clarity and shaping.<sup>63</sup> Its elaborated glass replica was then done and exhibited as many people came to experience the sight at the rarest stone on earth, which started a general fascination with the glass culture. According to Hoffenberg, Queen Victoria used the Exhibition to show off the wealth her family possessed,<sup>64</sup> which is reflecting the British attitude towards the colonies and, therefore, even the event itself; the wealth originating in the colonies was theirs to flaunt. It also suggests the British tendency to express power through material belongings manifesting itself throughout the nineteenth century. Johansen comments on the character of the Exhibition that such attitude was only natural, stating that the accounts of the Great Exhibition went hand in hand with the character of the period as such.<sup>65</sup> The diamond, therefore, to some

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<sup>61</sup> Halada & Hlavačka, *Světové Výstavy*, 19.

<sup>62</sup> Yapp & Ellis, *The Official Catalogue*, 157–158.

<sup>63</sup> Danielle C. Kinsey, “Koh-i-Noor: Empire, Diamonds, and the Performance of British Material Culture,” *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (April 2009): 413.

<sup>64</sup> Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 258.

<sup>65</sup> Johansen, “The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Precipice in Time?,” 60.



extent served as an emblem of British imperialism not only because of the East India Company which played a huge role in the British and Indian relations. Even though the colonial section of the event undoubtedly displayed many intriguing items like art capturing exotic places, stuffed animals, lace manufactures or folk costumes, it was the class of raw materials that stole the show. With the oriental smells, sights, gleams and materials, the colonies exhibited exactly what the British, and therefore all the other nations as the trade was hugely dependent on Great Britain, wanted and expected to see in order to build and keep overseas ongoing commerce.

Proceeding to the eastern part of the Palace, where nations not falling under the British reign exhibited their elements. Many of these nations used the event as a way of introducing and expressing its identity; Russia being a great representative. Auerbach and Hoffenberg comment that wanted to “influence public opinion in Great Britain, and Europe in general, as well as to promote the economic interests of Russian agriculturists and manufacturers.”<sup>66</sup> Because of the economic interest in trading with Britain, Russia exhibited all sorts of raw materials. Many other nations chose the same strategy, as they knew that industrial and manufacturing powerhouses like France, Belgium and, of course, Great Britain, would simply outperform them in the sphere of production. Greece was another example of nation expressing its identity through the exhibits, however, they chose to do so by exhibiting parts of its history with examples of Greek sculpture. Generally, it is safe to state that these nations aimed to express the natural wealth they possessed, establish their identity through the exhibits, and attract potential market prospects.

Each nation put different items on their display. The British, in the lead with eager Queen Victoria, used the opportunity to shine; their exhibits mostly consisted of machinery and manufactured goods. What is more, the British wealth was unmissable not only concerning the display, but the whole event; the Palace, the royalty, and the ambiance. British colonies mostly exhibited the raw commodities representing their natural wealth, and together with the rest of the world’s nations, they delivered a sense of national identity. This way, the British were faced with the foreign newness, and the foreigners with the British splendour. The display therefore allowed the

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<sup>66</sup> Jeffrey A. Auerbach, Peter H. Hoffenberg, *Britain, The Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Hampshire & Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 125.

participants to experience other cultures, and thus one of the greatest missions of the Exhibition – to boost the brotherhood and closeness among nations by diminishing the prejudice of other cultures and nations based on not understanding them– was accomplished.

#### 4. Mrs. Napier's *The Lay of the Palace*

But see ! a Palace open to the world !  
Behold the many nations' flags unfurled !  
Pledges of peace to candidates for fame,  
In every art and product we can name;<sup>67</sup>

A celebration of the whole the Great Exhibition: its goals, success, international outreach and connections, newness, but most prominently; its overall lasting impression. These terms can be extracted as the essence of the poem *The Lay of the Palace* by Mrs. Napier, which is the centre point of this chapter. The Exhibition seems to be, though sometimes overlooked, a great image of the British manifestation of their nineteenth century achievement. The success of the event cannot be denied, it is therefore no wonder that the Exhibition was captured in numerous literary works. This particular source, *The Lay of the Palace*, is able to provide a great insight into the Exhibition, as the event was recorded by a contemporary poet, and the experience of the event is described directly in the British intoxicating celebratory national mood typical for nineteenth century. It is, notwithstanding, necessary to address that the poem and its demonstrations of the Exhibition are rather eloquent; the ways of presenting the event are hyperbolic and the language employed is quite high-sounding, characterizing the Exhibition as a very pompous event. This work of art therefore provides the readers with a mood depicting the national prideful climate, which is inseparable from the poem's content. The poem captured the event as the triumph of the era, the symbol of the nineteenth century, the centrepiece of industrial progression. By breaking parts of the poem down, this chapter aims at exploring the attitudes of a contemporary and analysing to what extent the portraiture of the event is relevant based on the contexts discussed earlier. First and foremost, as the name of the poem suggests, the text is largely devoted to the Crystal Palace.

A Palace ! Let us think upon that name !  
What does that chosen epithet proclaim ?  
So often given to a princely dwelling,  
Above all habitations far excelling.<sup>68</sup>

This extract is so illustrative for several reasons. Firstly, the Palace is highlighted as a royal-like place. This of course draws a link to the fact that the Exhibition was

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<sup>67</sup> Mrs. Napier, *The Lay of the Palace* (London: John Ollivier, 1852), 7–8.

<sup>68</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 4.

organised by the members of the royal family; the excerpt can suggest that the royalty and the event were intertwined. The theme of the Palace is celebrated, but also contrasted with other “habitations” mentioned in the fourth line, which can indicate that the Palace is exceeding every other building. Contrasting the Palace and other “habitations” can be interpreted as a juxtaposition of the urban and the rural. Due to the circumstances of the era many people in the rural areas were left unemployed and their housings were reflecting the omnipresent rural poverty. In the cities though, the diversity of housings was bigger; the upper and upper-middle classes could afford houses, any often even servants, however, the lower-middle classes were living in slums offering terrible living conditions. Coming back to the theme of Palace contrasting with other housings, the author might suggest that the Palace is the highlight, and the ordinary housings are nothing as fancy, as the Palace exceeds them.

The fragment with the mentioning of the Palace in contrast with other housings, though, provides yet another interpretation; the nationalistic sensation. The Palace, in a figurative language, can serve as a code name for Victorian Great Britain and their success in terms of industry, economy, trade and power. Therefore, the verse can refer to Britain far excelling above all other nations of the world, or perhaps above all the nations participating in exhibiting during the 1851. Such interpretation then leads to a suggestion of a strong British propaganda of its imperialistic and national excitement. To some extent, this excerpt and its mentioning of the Palace which was far excelling can be interpreted as parallel for the British haughtiness, and consequently British propaganda, of the nineteenth century. The British almost looking down upon other nations is a typical representation. Aside from the boastful tone, the Palace is celebrated solely for its beauty, majesty and genuine initial goal in other parts of the poem.

But to my theme, the Palace! ever grand.  
The Palace of all ages ! every land.  
This Crystal Palace boasts not rule nor power,  
nor bids a stranger to its grandeur cower.<sup>69</sup>

Quite literally, the Palace became an attraction and symbol on its own; it is portrayed as a welcoming sanctuary for every nation aiming to progress. The Palace is being

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<sup>69</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 16.

described as grand, reflecting its majesty. The verse stating that the Palace does not boast rule or power, however, contradicts the idea developed above, that the Palace is somewhat superior to any other construction, and thus a paradoxical national feeling is described; the Palace, and thus the Exhibition in general, is more impressive than any other attempt of similar character, but simultaneously the British are claimed not to boast rule or power. The British perhaps quite naturally felt a great national pride, but it was the Victorian idealised character that evoked the guilt in feeling prideful, drawing a link back to the Victorian values connected to seriousness of character, and therefore not wanting to admit the level-headed national attitude. This battle of themes of pride and guilt perhaps resulted in the perplexity in representations of power. Altogether, the references about the British power and majesty are recurring throughout the poem.

Say wealthy Babylon! Say power of Rome!  
To what has your most wondrous glory come?  
Let us not doubt impiety and crime  
Called down their doom in every age and clime.<sup>70</sup>

It is suggested that the power the British held during the nineteenth century was, according to the author of the poem, comparable to powerhouses like Babylon or Rome, both being a massive empire influencing the whole world. This simile suggests that the nineteenth century British Empire is comparable to these giants, again pointing out British importance and power, leaning towards British propaganda. The Victorian approach suggested in the excerpt above is, however, simply foreshadowing of what was yet to come, originating in historical experience of empires, their centres, majesty, and their destinies:

Erected in the pride of wealth and glory.  
How vain their boast! How sad their moral story!<sup>71</sup>

The topic of powerhouses' glory turning into tragedy and decline, which is further supported by the Victorian preferences in being morally fair and praising progress to God; and lamenting if these predilections are not followed the society is bound to degenerate, foreshadows the British and their twentieth century downfall. The author suggests that the glory resulting in the Exhibition, and the British feeling too self-

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<sup>70</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 6.

<sup>71</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 4.

assured and boastful about their nation, might lead to unexpected decline where their history would no longer be celebrated, but perceived as rather underwhelming. Although there is a strong motif of the British affluence and its possible future scenarios throughout the poem, the Exhibition itself is definitely being honoured for its interconnecting aspect in terms of the international relations.

In the poem, it is clear that the other nations were welcomed to participate by the British in general. During the event, the foreign, and thus until that time unknown element, met the British element. This can be considered as taking one step closer towards globalization, which was at that time only suiting; free trade and great economic state of the British were the reasons why they might have welcomed the international influx. This supports one of the biggest goals that were set for the Exhibition – to empower the togetherness among nations:

Here comes a brother from a distant land,  
To clasp in amity the skilful hand  
Of brother artist in his work or trade,  
Or curious invention, –every grade—<sup>72</sup>

This excerpt from the poem depicts the foreigners as brothers coming from other lands in a friendly and peaceful way, not suggesting competition at the slightest, again creating a picture of the Exhibition being a safe sanctuary. A certain openness of the British is being developed, supporting the image of the welcoming and accepting British nation, not concerning about the inevitable differences among the nations in terms of wealth, race, or culture: “Called are the distant ! welcomed are the poor.”<sup>73</sup> The British tried to create a sense of brotherhood and unity through presenting the event as a safe place to share parts of each nation and its culture. This depiction however can be interpreted as Great Britain being the huge protective empire welcoming all tiny, help-seeking nations; which is very nationalistic undertone, revealing British propaganda.

Proceeding to the inside of the Palace and how its depictions; the exhibits are being described, but rather in terms of the impressions they gave to the visitors. The descriptions of the sights seem to be impacting all the senses, creating an image that

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<sup>72</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 8.

<sup>73</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 10.

the experience of visiting the Exhibition was, though in a good way, overpoweringly stimulant. There was simply so much to look at, wrap one's mind around, explore, and marvel. Additional stories then get associated with the exhibits; the author provides a stream of thoughts that go through one's head when looking at the exhibits, which is, as it seems, an inevitable process. Various connotations connected to the display take place in the poem, therefore the event appears to be a great visual experience leading to individually connotated stories in the minds of the visitors.

Here jewels glitter for a still brighter eyes ;  
Reflecting sunny beams and starry skies.  
The careful master of the precious art  
Displays his skill to charm the female heart.<sup>74</sup>

Another huge theme present in the poem is the question to whom to be grateful for the event and its success. Victorian era and the time of the Industrial Revolution was typical for the clash between believing in power of the humankind and believing that God is the originator of everything. Therefore, the question of who to give the credit for the greatness of the Exhibition is to be discussed, as the poem offers several interpretations, reflecting the Victorian slight hesitation to whom to thank for (not only) the success of the Exhibition. One of the possible interpretations the poem offers are the members of the royal family; Prince Albert and Queen Victoria:

Was it a fairy queen inspired out prince  
In this Transparent Palace to evince  
Talent original, and vast and true?<sup>75</sup>

The royalty is, as discussed earlier, an inseparable part of the event. The circumstances of the time period enabled the great show, but it was the organization and conception of the event done mainly by Prince Albert that gave the event such a royal sense which is portrayed frequently throughout the poem. Prince Albert is admired in the poem not only for the event itself, but also for the British wealth that was obtained during the mid-nineteenth century.

God Kindly grant to Albert health and peace,  
Whilst public and domestic good increase.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 8.

<sup>75</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 8.

<sup>76</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 19.

Here, the author suggests that the era was, namely thanks to prince Albert, purely positive in terms of both public and personal life. As discussed earlier with the contexts of the Victorian era, the circumstances both the public and the domestic life were not as pleasant as portrayed in the second line of the excerpt, which depicts only the “good” of the era. Many people obtained opportunities for a job in the cities; however, this was hugely dependent on their social class dictating their social status. Lower classes and their slum housings, though, are not fitting such description; this reflects the overly celebratory nature of the poem, which refuses to depict the possible reality of poverty, disease and rural unemployment. The first line of the excerpt mentioning praising God leads to the second possible interpretation of whom the people gave their thanks to; God. Several references appear throughout the poem, and they are filled with faith and gratitude to God for human glory.

God works the greatest purpose and design  
By human means ; even evil deeds combine  
To ends unsought, surprising, only known  
To beings seated near th’ Almighty throne.<sup>77</sup>

This fragment of the poem clearly suggest that God is the creator and reason for human purpose and each achievement. References to God reflect the nineteenth century, as some people still perceived clergy highest authority and faith as the holiest principle of life. The importance of the church, however, was slowly fading by the mid-nineteenth century, and yet again, a possible perplexity arises. In the last line of the excerpt above, the mentioning of “Almighty throne” might appear as a fusion of the Godly essence and the royalty element because of the reference to a throne, associating the setting of the royal family. It is possible to state that this fusion reflects the mid-nineteenth century disillusionment connected to praising God, and therefore the church too, or praising people; in this case Albert and Victoria for the British abundance. Additionally, the mentioning of throne with connecting of the throne, as the royal element, and the Almighty God, reveals the idea that the empire made by God, thus came out of God’s will. There definitely is a parallel between the Godly and Victoria and Albert, the leaders of the eminent empire. This portrays Great Britain in a very

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<sup>77</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 14.



elevated light, as if it is not only nation and imperium anymore, but rather God's chosen land to govern and guide the rest of the nations.

Covering the gratefulness expressed to the royal couple and to God, it is necessary to address that a great part of admiration was focused on the humankind. During the Victorian era, the abilities people mastered were appreciated more than ever, namely the ingenuity and skilfulness. It was only because of the great human minds enabling that the Industrial Revolution took place. Similarly, it was only because of the Industrial Revolution and the great inventions it created that the Great Exhibition was later filled with machines for industrial use. The third entity to whom the poem expresses gratefulness and praise is, therefore, the humankind.

Here India's dark-eyed sons with wonder view  
The precious work, the splendid webs they drew,  
With skilful eye and never-wearied hands,  
[...]  
Of steam and wheel, flying from day to day.<sup>78</sup>

Human talent is a very important theme in the poem. It mirrors that the people of the era were able to appreciate the work of a man, while also prising the opportunity to do so to God, and finally, to be able to gather these manifestations of talent, the thanks go to the royals too.

To sum up the impression of the event portrayed in *The lay of the Palace* by Mrs. Napier, it is necessary to remember the hyperbolic tone of the poem, creating a cliché British nineteenth century impression. The text serves as a celebratory insight, which focuses hugely on the Crystal Palace and its majesty which was never seen before. A certain British arrogance is present with presenting the Palace as one of its kind, and almost never possible to surpass, however this tone goes hand in hand with the spirit of being the world's number one in almost every sphere. The Palace was not only the building made to host the event, it was, according to the interpretations offered in the poem, rather an exquisite glass component of the Exhibition, an actual part of the display worth gazing at. What happened inside of the Palace is depicted as equally pleasant; the nations coming from all over the world were warmly welcomed by the British nation. In addition to that, the event is portrayed as a safe space to express each

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<sup>78</sup> Napier, *The Lay of the Palace*, 10.

nations' specifics through the exhibits. As a result, the unity of the participating nations would raise and strengthen; such depiction is, yet again, rather idealistic and not really reflecting the reality of the century, its happenings and contexts. The British were not as respectful as the poem suggest, and there were the two main silent clashes among people present at the Exhibition; the British racist bias combined with the struggle between different social classes. Both issues were discussed earlier in connection with the context surrounding the Great Exhibition, as they an important role for introducing the era from various points of view. It is possible to conclude that the author of the poem depicts the event in an overly idealised way, resulting in a slight cliché impression. Last theme represented in the poem is the unclear expression of gratefulness for the event's success. First interpretation is based in the references to Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, who are directly connected to the Exhibition. Secondly, references to God throughout the poem mirror the indecision between the religious approach and the rather humanistic approach; to some extent, the Victorians claimed the progress and achievement to God. Such belief was, however, challenged more than ever in the nineteenth century, as many people focused on the ability of the man more than on the church, power of which was slowly declining. Besides the British pride surrounding the Exhibition, the festive and almost jubilant tone of the poem might be influenced by the desire to preserve the event in such light that the British felt about it, and wanted to present it. The author of *The Lay of the Palace* aspired to create a joyous image in the imagination of the readers. However, in this chapter, the ubiquitous cheerfulness surrounding the event was questioned and challenged, as the contexts of Victorian Britain explored in the theoretical part refute some of the purely cheerful descriptions.

**5. Henry Mayhew's *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys and Family, Who Came Up to London to Enjoy Themselves, and to See the Great Exhibition***

The second literary image to be discussed is based on the impressions of the Exhibition in *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys* by Henry Mayhew. This literary source differs from the poem discussed in the previous chapter for two main reasons. Firstly, this chapter analyses a novel, therefore the impressions are far less abstract and open to interpretation in comparison with the poem and its use of figurative language. Secondly, the tone of the novel is very different from the celebratory and hyperbolic one discussed with *The Lay of The Palace*; the novel is light-hearted and humorous while portraying the event in a complex way; some descriptions are almost caricatured, some, especially the ones connected with the Exhibition, are more serious. Henry Mayhew was a co-founder of the *Punch* magazine, an editor and a journalist, which is why the novel contains both comical and serious approaches. The centre point of the story is the Sandboys family consisting of the married couple and their two children all living in Buttermere village, Cumberland. Before the actual happening of the Exhibition is introduced, the text concerns few key background aspects reflecting the contexts of the era, its ideals, issues, and novelties.

Firstly, the preparations for the event are illustrated as definitely not underestimated; in fact, people in Great Britain are portrayed as taking it quite seriously. Such claim applies to both sides taking part in the event; the people in charge of the organization, and the visitors who are nervously waiting and preparing to see the great show, which suggests that the expectations were set quite high.

[...] all the old dames were busy ironing their deep-frilled caps [...]; all the young lasses were sticking all their dresses, while some of the more nervous villagers, who had never yet trusted themselves to a railway, were secretly making their wills—preparatory to their grand starting for the metropolis.<sup>79</sup>

A general nervousness connected to the Exhibition is a huge theme in the story; people wanting to wear their best clothes for their visit of the 1851 London, being referred to

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<sup>79</sup> Henry Mayhew, *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys and Family, Who Come Up to London to Enjoy Themselves, and to See the Great Exhibition* (London: David Hogue, 1851), 17.

as “metropolis”. The uneasiness of the British also can be interpreted as an attempt to look like their best selves for the foreigners, because, in reality, they did not live up to their own (moral) standards, leading to an image of a certain British hypocrisy. The nervousness suggests the importance of the event build up within the society, as well as certain interest of the British to be representative of their seemingly perfect nation, covering for its shortcomings. The nervousness is connected to other areas of living, too; the people coming from villages, the Sandboys family included, are depicted as quite sceptical towards the new ways of travelling, namely the railway, comically mentioning their wills as they might be expecting the worst scenarios while travelling to London. Besides being sceptical towards the newness of the railway transportation, the villagers are prejudiced against London in general. Specifically Mr. Sandboys perceives it as dirty, busy, and somehow wicked: “[...] neither him, nor anyone that belonged to him, should ever be exposed to the moral pollution of the metropolis.”<sup>80</sup> The villagers thought of London as full of traps testing their moral side, which was a very sensitive topic for the Victorians, as they claimed themselves to possess a strong moral foundation and to constantly aim at self-improvement, avoiding self-deterioration at all costs; London is portrayed as a threat for a good Victorian. Furthermore, the urbanization causing London to reach its size, influence and affluence is another theme in the novel. The Sandboys family is somehow forced to pay a visit to the city of London, as the village they live in is left with no workers, goods or services; it seems that everybody moved, or at least travelled to the city, the Exhibition being one of the strongest motivators for the rush, as shown in Appendix 1.<sup>81</sup> This depiction of the rural parts of Britain becoming uninhabited as a result of people’s desire to concentrate in the cities mirrors the era and the new ideal of the urban life and its opportunities. The family, however, struggles because of the emptiness of the village immensely; severe shortage of common necessities takes place. As a result, the thought of visiting the, according to both Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys, filthy London becomes pressing.

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<sup>80</sup> Mayhew, 1851: *or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 17.

<sup>81</sup> Mayhew, 1851: *or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 59.

His wife, overpowered by this addition of the loss of dinner to the loss of tea, did not hesitate to suggest him, that perhaps it might be as well, if they consented to do like the rest of the world, and betake themselves for a few days to London. For her own part, she was ready to make any sacrifice, even to face the London dirt.<sup>82</sup>

It was the lack of tea, food, and eventually even clothes and cleaning products that the “anti-metropolitan”<sup>83</sup> Mr. Sandboys, who would rather pursue his interest in pig-riding, finally listens to the pleas of his wife and, despite his preferences of the countryside and the moral cleanliness that came with it, agreed to pay a visit to London. This creates a stark contrast between the urban and the rural; the villagers despising the urban society and vice versa. The happening of the Exhibition, however, appears to be just a pleasant benefit of the timing; the initial goal seems to be simply to end the shortage, namely of the cleaning products as Mrs. Sandboys preached cleanliness over any other virtue, reflecting the Victorian mindset of improving oneself and the surroundings too. Additionally, such depiction mirrors the simplicity of the mind of some of the villagers: “She did not care about any of his Great Exhibitions, only all she knew was, that she would rather go through any wickedness than live in the dirt that she could see he was forcing her into.”<sup>84</sup> Mrs. Sandboys shows no interest in visiting the Great Exhibition, and hence no interest in broadening her horizons, mirroring her simple desires, which are, however, pure and caring; again creating a picture of a good Victorian.

When the family manages to endure the railway journey to London, which was “by no means of an agreeable character”<sup>85</sup>, they are faced with many struggles that humorously point out the confusion that the urban surroundings bring to an unexperienced villager. First problem they come across is the crowdedness of the city; the text suggests that almost all of the British people, and a huge part of the world too, gathered here to see the show, and the family is quite overwhelmed by the masses of people in London. (see Appendix 2)<sup>86</sup>. Such illustration is quite sensible, as the Exhibition was the first place to ever gather masses of people inside, and discussed in the historical background earlier, it is true that London became overpopulated and

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<sup>82</sup> Mayhew, *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 25.

<sup>83</sup> Mayhew, *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 28.

<sup>84</sup> Mayhew, *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 31.

<sup>85</sup> Mayhew, *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 39.

<sup>86</sup> Mayhew, *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 59.

packed, which is reflected in the story: “Every one had gone to the Great Exhibition! and certainly the multitudes assembled in the Park were proof demonstrative of the fact.”<sup>87</sup> Another aspect showing the crowdedness of London is the fact that the family cannot find a place to stay, and therefore have to urgently search through the city for a shelter. This might be reflecting to the nineteenth century deficiency of habitats in London, and subsequent increase of slum housings.

Proceeding to the image of the actual event, the impression of the Crystal Palace is the first to be discussed. The text suggests that, although worth gazing upon, the sight of the building was disappointing. Referring back to the controversy surrounding the Palace and its greenhouse resemblance, some visitors seem to be unimpressed with the view.

To say the truth, the engravings and the imagination had failed to convey any adequate notion of the structure. The very name of the Crystal Palace had led people to conjure up in their minds a phantasm that could not be realised—a transparent edifice, pellucid as if built of block of ice instead of stone—a prismatic kind of fairy mansion [...].<sup>88</sup>

The theme of high expectations emerges. The visitors, having high expectations, created an image in their minds of a fairy-tale transparent gleaming Palace, however the reality of the Palace, and the impression of the Exhibition in general, does not bring them satisfaction, as their the idea described in the fragment above was followed with strong dislike: “But how different the scene on the earliest dawn of the morrow!”<sup>89</sup> A general discontentment in connection with the Crystal Palace is reflecting the opinions about Paxon’s style, which was panned by some. Contrastingly, the British, no matter the criticism, appear to still be proud at the building, reflecting the omnipresent British national pride: “And well may the nation be proud of its Crystal Palace. No other people in the world could have raised such a building.”<sup>90</sup> The remark of no other nation being able to erect such a building almost lean towards looking down on other nations, questioning their abilities and, yet again, suggesting that Great Britain is the world’s

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<sup>87</sup> Mayhew, 1851: *or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 145.

<sup>88</sup> Mayhew, 1851: *or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 134.

<sup>89</sup> Mayhew, 1851: *or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 134.

<sup>90</sup> Mayhew, 1851: *or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 137.

champion. Even though the novel carries a humorous approach, the British nineteenth century pridefulness is an inseparable theme considering (not only) the Crystal Palace.

As the family approaches the Exhibition dealing with “the squeezing of the masses of people”,<sup>91</sup> the description shifts from the outside to the inside. Even though Mr. Sandboys never manages to get inside due to his bad luck present throughout the whole trip, he is very clear about what section of the display he is the most interested in; the machinery. This interest is mirroring that the British machinery part was the place most people headed, as it, as discussed earlier, was the British highlight of the show.

More than all, he was anxious to see the machinery-room, which everybody spoke of with such enthusiasm. There was the monster pump, with its two mouths, pouring out its river of water, – he wanted to see the stream printing-press, and the carding and spinning-machines, and the power-looms, of which he had heard such marvels.<sup>92</sup>

This excerpt is such a nice illustration of the British strongpoint of the display. The mentioning of everybody talking about it with enthusiasm only reflects the prestige connected with the British machinery exhibits, which indeed was one of the most desired spots to see. The descriptions of the display in fact mirror the event’s true colour well, as they suggest what was each nation’s triumph. “Young girls were waiting to see the hemispherical lamp-shades, [...] noisy flax-crushing machine, or the splashing centrifugal pump [...] clustered, endeavouring to solve the mystery of its complex operations.”<sup>93</sup> The visitors are portrayed as enthralled by the mechanical marvels, trying to figure out how they function. Using the term “mystery”, however, it seems that a typical visitor could not possibly comprehend the operations, implying that the machinery was a system too complicated, complex and difficult for one to take in. Additionally, the glorified machinery section was introduced in connection with God, creating a clash between applauding success through faith in God or the human abilities:

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<sup>91</sup> Mayhew, *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 143.

<sup>92</sup> Mayhew, *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 149.

<sup>93</sup> Mayhew, *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 161.

The machine-room alone, with its thousand iron monsters snorting and clattering, was a sight to overwhelm the mind with a positive sense of awe; stories were current of many of the strongest minds having been affected to tears at the spectacle; what with the noise and the motion, there was a sense of reverent humility forced upon the mind, together with a feeling of gratitude to the Almighty, who had vouchsafed to conder upon us so much of his own power, that filled with the bosom with the very pathos of admiration.<sup>94</sup>

Gratitude to the “Almighty” seems to be recognised, but so does the strength of the human, as the text mentions “strongest minds”, and thus recognizes that a man can accomplish great things thanks to human reason. These two elements coexisting is typical for the time period, as the juxtaposition of religion and human reason was undoubtedly one of the hotly debated topics in the nineteenth century. The greatness of the display was surely a sight inducing “admiration” and “positive sense of awe” rightfully, however the undertone depicted in the image of visitors being in tears is rather overly emotional, dramatic and hyperbolic.

Generally it is safe to state that the tone of the novel changes when describing the Exhibition; it gets slightly more serious, as if the event was not to be joked about: “Now, the Great Exhibition, looked at in its true light, is we say once more, a huge academy for teaching the laws of the material universe, by demonstrating the various triumphs of the useful arts over external nature.”<sup>95</sup> This picture of the event, which is claimed to be shown “in its true light”, implies that the Exhibition carried great academic opportunities, and that it functioned as an educative medium. A certain British exaggeration is present again considering the claim that the event is teaching how the “material universe” functions, which is itself a strong premise. Back in the days, the British did not certainly know every law of the material functioning of the world, or even the material universe as the author claims, therefore such description is rather exaggerated. It is true that the Exhibition was an event where ideas and knowledge emerged more than ever, however, the British over-praising of their knowledge and hence power, stretching as far as the universe goes as implied in the text, is simply excessive.

Referring back to the British haughtiness present in depictions of only the British being able to build a construction like the Crystal Palace, the references to other nations carry

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<sup>94</sup> Mayhew, 1851: *or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 137.

<sup>95</sup> Mayhew, 1851: *or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 158.



the same spirit. British people seem very proud, arrogant and impudent, suggesting that the foreigners are of lower status. Especially in connection with the machinery, the British are captured as excelling while other nations could only admire and envy their achievement.

The foreigners appeared to be in no way prepared for so overpowering an example of England's immeasurable pre-eminence [...] and it was curious to see the Frenchmen and Germans grouped round the several machines in operation, with their noses almost touching the wheels, as they vainly endeavoured to make themselves acquainted with their bewildering details.<sup>96</sup>

The theme of competitiveness is present. The reference to Frenchmen and Germans "with their noses almost touching the wheels" creates an image that France and Germany desired to obtain such a technical advance while envying Great Britain, which holds, according to the fragment, the "immeasurable pre-eminence." Again, such depictions suggests the status of Great Britain being the most advanced nation.

All in all, the novel provides a humorous approach with the contrasts between the rural and the urban, and by drawing a picture of a good Victorian family to which London brings many tests and shortcomings, it actually displays complex historical issues; over-population of cities, shortage of goods and services in the rural areas, sceptical attitudes towards novelties, and moral decline connected to the urban life. The Great Exhibition though brings a sense of seriousness to the text. The author portrays it in a complex way; for instance, it is being acknowledged that the Crystal Palace is a touchy subject bringing disappointment. On the other hand, the British portion of the display is hyperbolically praised while gratitude goes to the Almighty, but to humankind, too. The event is nonetheless depicted as magnificent and lively: "All was bustle, life, confusion, and amazement."<sup>97</sup> What is inevitably projected into the novel is the repetitive theme of British pride. The foreigners in the story are depicted as inquisitive, as if they wanted to reach what the British already have in terms of (not only) industrial progress, while the British looked down upon them, not considering them to be a threat or competition at the slightest; the British are portrayed as if they already won the competition with their progress being the most loud and prominent. British prideful

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<sup>96</sup> Mayhew, 1851: *or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 137.

<sup>97</sup> Mayhew, 1851: *or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*, 133.

nineteenth century spirit seems to be inseparable from the depictions of the Exhibition, as it was provided a setting for the British to boast.

## Conclusion

Based upon academic research, this thesis aimed to inspect the depictions of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Theoretical background introducing the historical, social and cultural background of the Victorian era implies that the contexts of the era inevitably influenced the event; the era mirrored itself in the contexts of the actual event, and vice versa. Despite its complexity, the Victorian period can be regarded as a time of progress, growth, change, and novelty, as well as British pride, hypocrisy, and disparity. Great Britain changed perhaps in all the possible spheres of life; most notably in British industrial production, and thus the trade, and working-class structures. The society, due to the nature of the period, started to turn into an urban one, as the cities were the location with employment opportunities, but also entertainment and flow of ideas. Mechanization caused small manufactures, and the labourers in it, to be replaced by huge industrial production factories. Great Britain became a massive empire, having colonies all around the world, accumulating riches, leading to a continual trade cycle enabling to improve the structure of cities, or fund activities of educative or entertaining nature. The Great Exhibition was one of the outcomes of Great Britain's wealth; it eventually turned out to be a commercial event.

Contrastingly, the period was unfair in other ways; the industrial production caused confusion, and even alienation among social classes and people in general because of religious diversity, varying housing conditions, or widening gaps between the wealthy and the poor; the Victorian era did not erase poverty, it was rather hidden in slums and villages, which did not manage to obtain much of a progress. The Victorian era, though often romanticized, was contrastive, and it is impossible to claim it either rather positive or rather negative. One aspect of the timeframe this thesis highlights is the British haughtiness of the nineteenth century. The practical part of this thesis analysing the depictions of the Great Exhibition In the practical part of this thesis, the depictions of the British and their presence at the Great Exhibition is portrayed as though they looked down upon other nations, suggesting the nations should look up to Great Britain creating a sense of British propaganda.

The first one of the two literary sources providing the image of the Exhibition was Mrs. Napier's poem *The Lay of the Palace*. Due to the analysis done in the practical

section, the overall tone of the poem can be summed up as celebratory and hyperbolic. Great Exhibition is depicted as an event which should be able to make every British citizen proud for being British, being a part of the empire. The poem is heavily concerned with the Crystal Palace, which is an inseparable element of the Exhibition; the Palace is characterised as a triumphant construction, which no other country could ever imitate, suggesting the attitude of the British towards other nations after the national prideful climate which took place after the Exhibition. In contrast, the poem describes the British as not boastful at the time, which is causing paradoxical imagery in the power debate. On one hand, the British should feel prideful for being British, which itself implies huge nationalistic sentiment, but on the other hand, they are depicted as humble and not boastful. The interpretation can be based on the Victorian hypocrisy; they felt proud for the success of the Exhibition, Crystal Palace and the nineteenth century Britain's prosperity, but it did not comply with the Victorian ideals; hence the, somehow forced, depictions of British humility. Another theme in the poem was the thankfulness, or rather the receiver of it. Three main entities are discussed as the idol to whom people were grateful for the success of the Exhibition; a God, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and a man. Poem's celebratory tone implies gratefulness to all of these entities, which is reflective of the era's confusion whether to focus on faith in God, or whether the human power, skill and will is more worthy. The thankfulness shown to the royal couple then reflects the faith in the British imperium, but also the close connection between Victoria and Albert and the Exhibition, the organizers. Overall, the poem provided a sense of the celebratory, joyous and hyperbolic nineteenth century spirit, which depicted the Exhibition in quite a clichéd light, omitting every controversy connected to it and instead portraying the event, and the Great Britain in general, as an entity offering a helping hand to the other, seemingly lagging behind, nations. All these themes resulted in a portrayal of the Exhibition and the British as being way too ahead of other countries; thus it is possible to state that, using modern optics to analyse the event, the theme most prominent in the poem is the British haughtiness, but also the nineteenth century British propaganda.

Secondly, Henry Mayhew's novel *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys* was analysed in the practical part in order to examine the image of the Great Exhibition, and compare it with the previous one. This novel focuses on the Sandboys

family coming from Buttermere to London, not necessarily in order to visit the Exhibition, but rather to end the shortage of goods in the village, and see where all the workers went. Huge emphasis is put on the idea that everybody seemed to travel to London to see the Exhibition, hence the deserted, decaying rural areas. Travelling to London brings yet another huge theme present in the novel; the railway transportations, and the scepticism around it. The arrival to London brings a slew of shortcomings to the family, and it seems like the bad luck is linked to the urban element; reflecting the Victorian, almost Puritan-leaning, belief that cities are harmful for one's morality. London is characterized as crowded, alive and energetic, but somehow overwhelming for the simple-minded family coming from the mountains of Cumberland, drawing a contrastive picture of the urban and the rural. The townsmen confuse the villagers, and vice versa. Continuing with the depiction of Victorian values, the theme of cleanliness, skewed city view, preference of the purity of the village, or mental simplicity are all major aspects peaking throughout the novel. It is important to acknowledge that the novel carries a light-hearted and humorous approach, it is, however, possible to sense what topics were concerning to people. One of these humorously portrayed themes is the Crystal Palace, which is depicted as a disappointment to people, who had a greater image in their mind judging by the name of it; instead, they were left with a greenhouse-like construction and dissatisfaction, pointing out the theme of high expectations for the Exhibition. However, when the focus shifts on the Great Exhibition itself, the tone changes; it is depicted as an event worth appreciation, namely the machinery part. The fascination with the machinery room is connected with the British primacy in machinery production typical for the nineteenth century, and suggests that the machinery was the focal point of the British display. Other nations are depicted as envious of the machinery, or attempting to comprehend it, while only the British are capable of doing so; again, the theme of British haughtiness.

The most prominent parallel this thesis highlights is the theme of the British propaganda as well as the British haughtiness, which is based on the nationalistic tendencies present in both analysed literary sources. This theme is partly hidden because of the Victorian ideals, hence the tones of modesty peaking throughout the depictions of the event. Another issue which is similarly characterized in both analysed texts is the confusion of gratefulness; the thanks are given both to God and to

humankind. Similarly, the message that the British should be proud of the Great Exhibition, as well as proud for being British, is present in both of the analysed literary sources, pointing out the nationalistic climate. On the other hand, the theme that is depicted differently though is the Crystal Palace; the poem is solely hyperbolic and festive; however, the novel depicts the visitors as disappointed. The claim that the time of the event taking place was not affable is supported by the novel's depictions of struggling villagers, or crowded London city. It is thus possible to state that the novel *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys* provides a complex, critical and more accurate image of the event. The poem *The Lay of the Palace* however, with its solely celebratory descriptions, rather reveals the nationalistic climate of the British nineteenth century.

## RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce si klade za cíl analyzovat literární vyobrazení Světové výstavy pořádané roku 1851. Teoretická část představuje podklad přibližující historický, sociální a kulturní vzhled do Viktoriánského období, jehož kontexty nevyhnutelně ovlivnily samotnou výstavu. Kontexty události totiž odrážely Viktoriánskou dobu, a naopak. Viktoriánské období ve Velké Británii lze považovat za dobu pokroku, růstu, a novoty na jedné straně, ale též britské hrdosti, pokrytectví a obecné nesourodosti ve Velké Británii na druhé. Změny, které s sebou doba přinesla byly promítnuty snad do všech možných sférách žití, z nichž nejvýraznější byl rozmach britské průmyslové výroby a na něj navazující růst obchodování a změn v rozdělení dělnických tříd. Kvůli okolnostem tohoto období se společnost začala měnit v městskou, s největší koncentrací v Londýně, neboť města nabízela nejvíce pracovních příležitostí, ale i zábavu a výměnu idejí. V návaznosti na Průmyslovou revoluci a výraznou urbanizaci devatenáctého století se ve Velké Británii rozmohla mechanizace, která nahradila malé manufaktury a dělníky v nich a dala vzniku velkým průmyslovým výrobním továrnám. Velká Británie se tak stala obrovskou říší, mající kolonie po celém světě, zatímco akumulovala velké bohatství vedoucí k neustálému obchodnímu cyklu. Toto bohatství poté umožnilo financovat mimo jiné i aktivity vzdělávacího a zábavního charakteru. Světová výstava byla jedním z výsledků bohatství Velké Británie, sama se totiž v závěru ukázala být komerční akcí.

Viktoriánské období bylo v jistých ohledech žití, navzdory progresu v ohledech jiných, nespravedlivé. Rozmach průmyslové výroby způsobil zmatení, ale též odcizení mezi sociálními vrstvami, či lidmi obecně. Důvodem pro tento jev byla otázka náboženství typická pro devatenácté století, kdy se společnost stále více otevřeně odkláněla od církve k víře v lidský rozum, schopnost a vůli. Dalším důvodem byly rozdílné podmínky bydlení v závislosti na rozdělení do sociálních tříd, které se extrémně lišily; vyšší třídy bohatly a nižší stále chudly, což vedlo k rozšiřování sociální mezery mezi těmito vrstvami, a upadal tak ve společnosti pocit sounáležitosti. Viktoriánské období chudobu nedokázalo vymazat, ta se totiž skryla do slumů a vesnic, které velký progres a zlepšení neznamenaly, naopak trpěly nedostatkem pracovních možností. Viktoriánské období bylo časem kontrastu a nelze ho nazvat spíše pozitivním či spíše negativním. Mimo kontrastní podmínky žití je britská

povýšenost devatenáctého století dalším z těch nejvýraznějších aspektů doby. Praktická část práce se dále zabývá literárními obrazy Světové výstavy v dílech zachycující Brity jako shlížející svrchu na ostatní národy přítomné na výstavě.

Prvním literárním zdrojem poskytující obraz výstavy je báseň paní Napier *The Lay of the Palace*. Analýza v praktické části zdůrazňuje, že vyznění básně je velmi oslavné, až hyperbolické. Světová výstava je líčena jako událost, která by měla každého Brita udělat pyšným; nejen na událost, ale i na to, že je Britem. Křišťálový palác, místo konání výstavy, je v básni velkým tématem, byl totiž nedílnou součástí celkového dojmu z události. Palác je charakterizován jako triumfální stavba, kterou žádná jiná země není schopna imitovat, což vede k interpretaci povýšenosti Britů nad ostatními národy, a prozrazuje britskou propagandu. Na druhou stranu ale báseň popisuje Brity jako nevychloubačné, což vede k paradoxnímu vyobrazení britské (ne)povýšenosti; na jednu stranu by Britové měli být hrdí na to, že jsou Brity, což samo o sobě implikuje silnou nacionalistickou tendenci, na druhou stranu jsou ale vyobrazení jako pokorní a nevychloubační. Interpretace tohoto paradoxu může být založena na pochopení Viktoriánského pokrytectví. Britové byli hrdí na úspěch nejen výstavy, ale Británie celkově, ale tento postoj neodpovídal Viktoriánským ideálům. Odtud poté pramení poněkud vynucené zobrazení britské pokory. Dalším z témat básně je vděčnost, která je rozprostřena mezi tři hlavní entity; Bůh, královna Viktorie a princ Albert, a člověk a jeho schopnosti. Oslavné díky vyjadřovány všem těmto entitám naznačují dobové zmatení v tom, zda zaměřit víru v Boha, či zda je hodnější lidská dovednost a vůle. Vděčnost projevená královskému páru pak odráží víru a obdiv Britské říši, ale také úzké spojení mezi Viktorií a Albertem a výstavou samotnou, neboť byli jejími organizátory a tvářemi. Báseň se nese v oslavném, radostném a hyperbolickém znění typickém pro devatenácté století, které vykresluje výstavu v klišé pojetí, a zcela vynechává veškeré kontroverze s výstavou spojené. Velká Británie, a tedy i Světová výstava 1851 je též vykreslena jako podávající pomocnou ruku ostatním, poněkud zaostávajícím národům. Uvedená témata básně vedou k dojmu, že Britové drželi světové prvenství a je tedy možné konstatovat, ač s moderní optikou, že nejvýraznějším tématem básně je britská povýšenost devatenáctého století.

Druhým literárním textem k analýze a komparaci vyobrazení Světové výstavy je román Henryho Mayhewa *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys*.



Rodina Sandboys v tomto románu přijíždí z vesnice Buttermere do Londýna, ne nutně proto, aby navštívili výstavu, ale spíše kvůli nedostatku zboží a pracovníků ve vesnici, na což je v příběhu kladen velký důraz; zdá se, že každý cestuje do Londýna kvůli výstavě a vesnice chátraly prázdnotou, což odráží dobovou koncentraci lidí ve městech. Cestování do Londýna přináší další velké téma železniční dopravy a skepse s ní spojené, která se, kvůli novotě této transportace, rozmohla společností. Příjezd do Londýna přináší rodině spoustu problémů a zdá se, že jejich smůla je způsobena městem. To odráží Viktoriánské, téměř až Puritánsky orientované, přesvědčení, že města jsou škodlivá pro morálku člověka, která by se měla neustále ochraňovat a zlepšovat. Londýn je vyobrazený jako přeplněný lidmi, živý a energický, ale jaksi ohromující pro jednoduše smýšlející rodinu přicházející z hor oblasti Cumberlandu. Další vyobrazení Viktoriánských hodnot otevírají témata čistoty, zkrslené a předpojaté vnímání města, preference vesnice a s ní spojené čistoty, či mentální jednoduchost, které jsou v románu přítomné. Ten se většinou nese v odlehčeném a humorném pojetí, i přesto lze ale cítit, jaká témata Viktoriánská společnost řešila. Jedním z takto humorně ztvárněných témat je Křišťálový palác, který je podaný jako zklamání pro návštěvníky, kteří si pod honosným jménem této budovy představovali lepší obraz; místo toho se jim dostalo stavby připomínající skleník a nespokojenosti, což poukazuje na téma velkých očekávání spojených se Světovou výstavou, a též na kontroverzi spojenou s Paxtonovou skleněnou konstrukcí. Když se však text soustředí na výstavu samotnou, tón se mění; výstava je vyobrazena jako událost hodna ocenění, a to hlavně její část s mašinérií. Fascinace sekcí s nejrůznějšími stroji souvisí s britským prvenstvím ve strojírenské výrobě typické pro devatenácté století, a též naznačuje, že právě tato část byla ústředním bodem britské expozice. Ostatní národy jsou přitom líčeny jako závistivé, či snažící se pochopit onu mašinérii, zatímco jediní Britové jsou toho schopni; tudíž se opět vyskytuje téma britské povýšenosti.

Lze konstatovat, že nejvýraznější paralelou, kterou tato práce v analyzovaných textech nachází je tematika britské propagandistické tendence a nacionalistické povýšenosti spojená s děním devatenáctého století, která se někdy ve snaze odpovídat Viktoriánským ideálům schovává za poněkud hranou skromnost. Další téma, která je podobně vykreslená v obou literárních zdrojích je otázka vděčnosti, protože ta je v obou dílech za úspěch výstavy projevena jak Bohu, tak i člověku za jeho schopnosti. Posledním velkým společným tématem obou děl je poselství, že by Britové měli být

hrdí na jejich Světovou výstavu, ale též na to, že jsou Brity, prozrazující silnou nacionalistickou tendenci. Rozdílného literárního vyobrazení se však dočkal Křišťálový palác, který je v básni paní Napier vykreslen jako chlouba a manifestace úspěchu Velké Británie, ale v románu Henryho Mayhewa je tento obraz vyvrácen; naopak poukazuje na zklamání, které pohled na palác mnohým přineslo. Fakt, že doba konání Světové výstavy nebyla nepřívětivější potvrzuje i vyobrazení nedostatku spotřebního zboží ve Viktoriánských vesnicích, či velké přelidnění Londýna. Je tak možné tvrdit, že román *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Cursty Sandboys* podává komplexnější, realističtější a kritičtější vyobrazení výstavy. Báseň *The Lay of the Palace* představuje zdroj, který spíše prozrazuje britské nacionalistické klima devatenáctého století s čistě oslavnými náhledy na Světovou výstavu.

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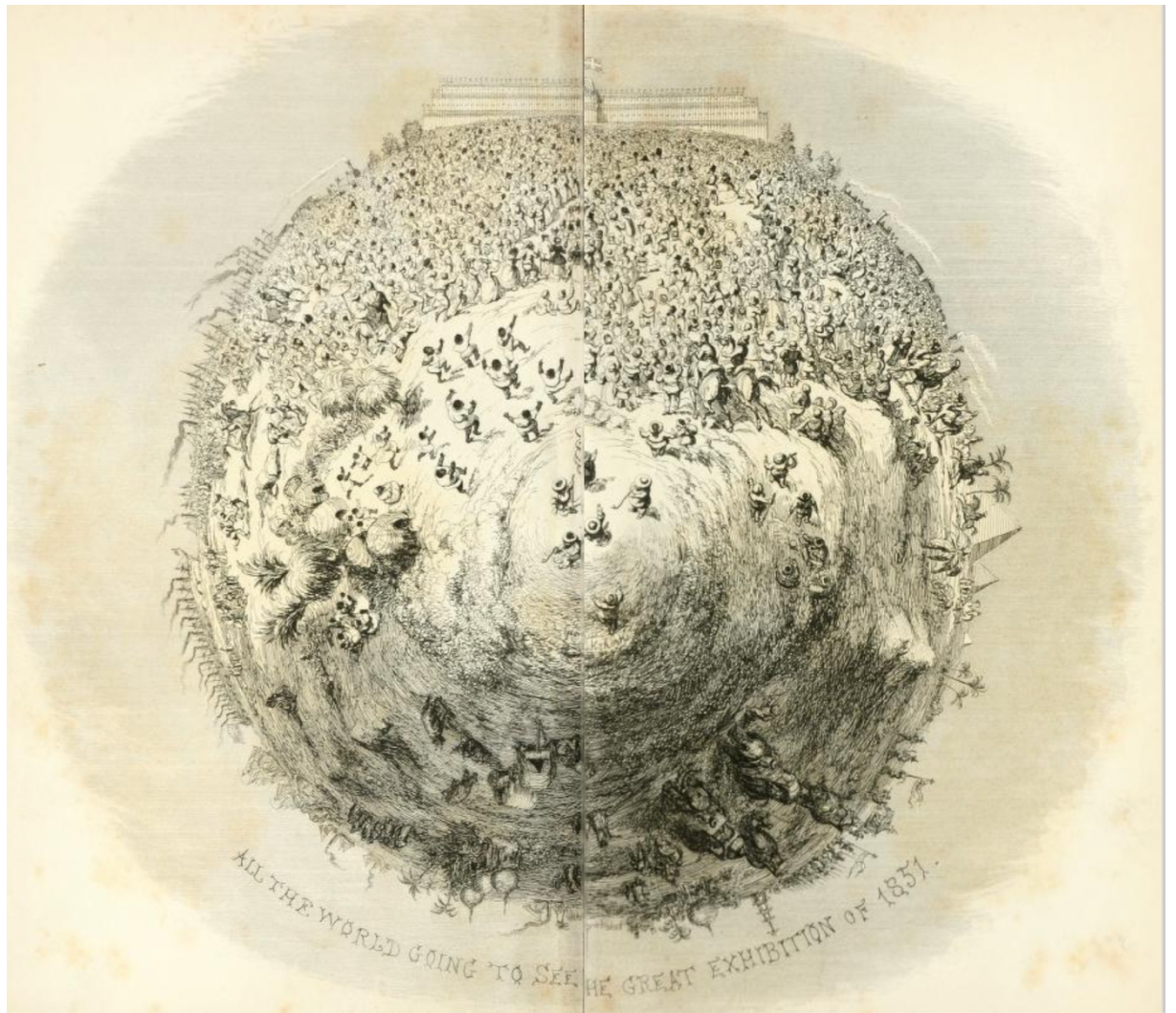
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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

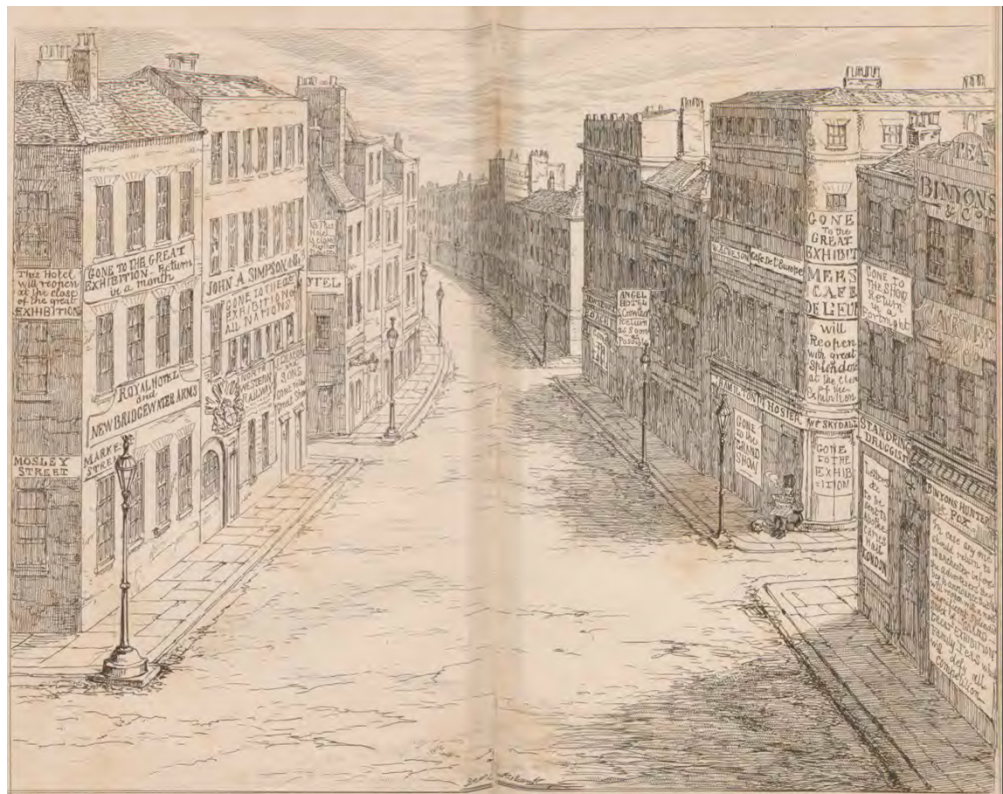
All the world going to the Great Exhibition by George Cruikshank





APPENDIX 2

London crammed and Manchester deserted by George Cruikshank



MANCHESTER, in 1851.  
LONDON, in 1851.

