

# Images of Jewish Characters in the History of English Literature

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Odjel za anglistiku

Preddiplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti (dvostranični)

**Matej Čuže**

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## Images of Jewish Characters in the History of English Literature

Završni rad

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Zadar, 2017.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is not to theoretically explain the implications of the Western representational practises and specific discursive strategies that result in production of stereotypical images and prejudices on the concrete example of creating Jewish characters in literary fiction. My intention was to first find out the concrete examples from the history of English literature that can help me make an insight into what precedes the field of research. So that my writing focused on the history of English literature rather than any specific literary theory. Analysis of literary texts seemed more relevant for what I intended to write about at this stage of my study. As a result, I decided to deal with the literary texts without any specific theoretical “lenses” from the background of my reading, which, considering the specific topic, is theoretical perspective of representation and otherness. It is well known that Western European culture had created a stereotypical image of the Jew. This is what happens when we generalize individual traits of a person. The whole group starts to be perceived as disliked and unwelcome. And when it comes to the Jews everybody knows the unspeakable horror that had taken place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What about literary fiction? To find out answers to such a question I have decided to compare two literary texts, Chaucer’s *The Prioress’s Tale* and Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* to see if anything has change in the course of some five hundred years when speaking about literary imagination in the context of the ways in which literary fiction creates images of Jewish characters in the history of English literature. A comparative analysis of the two mentioned literary texts reveal that as a rule Jewish characters are represented as dehumanised social creatures whose individual, personal traits border on madness and monstrosity. In social terms, Jewish characters are represented as deviants who kill a Christian (child) which implies that they represent a social threat. On individual scale Jewish figure is usually represented as a psychopath which is manifested in their overstressed traits like avarice, slyness, greed and of course, hatred of Christians. Evidently what we deal here with is the way that the dominant, Western, Christian

social community perceives non-Christian Jews. In that way literary fiction, together with the society creates images of the Jews which reveal processes of othering within the representational system. To illustrate it, this paper focuses on the analysis of Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale* and Dickens's *Oliver Twist*.

## 2. JEWISH CHARACTERS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

The year 1066 marked the beginning of the Middle English period. According to the Skinner, that was also the year when the Jewish people started to inhabit Britain. They had the king's protection and in return their huge wealth had to be at king's disposal until the year 1189 when most of the Jewish people were killed and their homes were burnt down. The Christians often mistreated the remaining Jewish people. They were forbidden to store goods in churches like other people; they did not want to accept Jewish kids in their kindergartens. It was forbidden to build new synagogues. Sexual relationships between Christians and Jews were forbidden. In the year 1290 they were banished from Britain. (Skinner 3-56) According to Zago, their banishment was a consequence of crimes they had committed. The most repulsive crime was ritual child murdering. (Zago 36) Christians saw the Jews as their enemies and heretics after those events so it is not surprising that after the events in 1290 they were mainly fulfilling roles of villains in literature. The first author who introduced Jewish characters in his literary work was Geoffrey Chaucer in his collection of stories *The Canterbury Tales*, written in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. He mentioned the Jews in his short story *The Prioress's Tale*. The conflict between Christians and the Jews was described. The main theme of the story was the murder of an innocent young Christian boy, committed by the Jewish people. According to Zago, the idea for *The Prioress's Tale* came from the event that happened in Norwich in 1144 when the Jewish people lured the young Christian boy to one of their homes where he was crucified for being Christian. That happened on Easter. The body of the boy was found and buried in the cathedral where afterwards allegedly miracles happened. The other source that Chaucer used was the event that happened in 1255 in Lincoln. Similar scene happened, and the Jew named Copin confessed his crime. His murder of a Christian boy resulted in execution and massive arrests of Jewish community. (Zago, 36-8)



Chaucer's Jews were the inspiration for other writers in creation of their Jewish characters. Their murder of a Christian boy, comparison to the devil, evil character and death in the end are the key images of Jewish characters not only in *The Prioress's Tale* but in other works as well.

The image of Jewish characters did not change in the next big era in history-Renaissance, when Jewish people were present in Britain once again. Renaissance in Britain started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. According to Berek, at that time, Jewish people were connected with businesses labelled as controversial, such as foreign trade and money-lending. The first connection of usury and Jewish people appeared because of their jobs. In that period a term Jew was sometimes used to describe a person who is advancing in this world "by his own ingenuity and by the accumulation of wealth rather than any traditional principle of birth or inherited position." (Berek 128-35) That means that person was not necessarily Jewish, but was considered one because of his lifestyle and business he practised. Something similar can be seen in today's society and it is used in a derogatory way. Two writers whose Jewish characters made the biggest influence on society are Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare. Barabas was the main character in Marlowe's comedy *The Jew of Malta*. Marlowe chose the name Barabas on purpose because he wanted to make a connection with Barabas from *the Bible*, who was a prisoner and a murderer and was released from prison instead of Jesus Christ. It can be seen that Marlowe maintained the similar theme as Chaucer had and that is the conflict between Christians and the Jews, and the Jews were once again villains. Gross stated that Barabas being richer than Christians was also of great importance to him. (Gross 22) He also continued the tradition of Jewish stereotypes. Berek noticed that Barabas enjoyed his richness, not because of what he could buy, but because the simple feeling of being rich. (Berek 136-7) He adored his gold and money and its hoarding and usury became another Jewish stereotype which was kept in English literature and reached its peak with the character of Fagin in *Oliver Twist*.

Marlowe's comedy *The Jew of Malta* and his character Barabas clearly influenced William Shakespeare to write the play *The Merchant of Venice* because it was published after Marlowe's comedy and Shylock, the main character in *The Merchant of Venice*, has all stereotypical Jewish characteristics which Barabas had. Money hoarding, usury, avarice being a few of them. Shakespeare also included conflict with Christians like Marlowe and Chaucer. Shylock was a money-lender and his interests were so high that nobody could repay him and that is a good example of his avarice and usury. Gross mentioned the example of a young Christian who could not repay him and Shylock wanted his flesh in return. Also, he hated him purely for being Christian. (Gross 16-7) Again the Jewish character was described as ruthless and savage as they were in the Middle Ages. The most common comparison of Jewish characters was the one with the devil which was also the idea Chaucer used. It was either their physical characteristics, mental characteristics, the place they lived in, or their relations with other characters. According to Gross, Shylock's daughter compared their house with hell. (Gross 26) It is a clear metaphor of Shylock's character and his behaviour. The comparison of the Jewish people with the devil was the trend which was kept for centuries in English literature and it reached its peak with Fagin. However, the most famous representative of the Jewish people in English literature is Shylock. In terms of physical appearance, both Shylock and Barabas, are stereotypical Jewish people. It is often that Jews are described as big-nosed and often with some foreign accents. Berek stated that Barabas and Shylock were being usurers, greedy foreigners, had big noses, and strange, funny accents. (Berek 153) According to Cohen and Heller, Shylock's name was used in language as a term of abuse. (Cohen, Heller 25) Shylock's gruesome image was even used as a Nazi propaganda during the World War II. According to Gross, Hitler adored *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock was supposed to be hated. His Jewish "villainies" is traditional and stereotypical which was perfect for propaganda against Jewish people. (Gross 1993) In the 1940's Shylock's image became current and popular once again. The

image of a fictional character became a powerful tool of a brutal Nazi regime. Shylock possessed the worst characteristics that one human could possibly have and his description and actions were so evil that his image was used by Nazis and they have turned it into the symbol of the biggest tragedy that happened in human history. Then it is not surprising that Shylock is considered as the representative of Jewish characters in English literature and arguably the most villainous character in English history. It can be concluded that Shylock and Barabas are two prototypical Jewish characters because authors, who created Jewish characters after Marlowe and Shakespeare, used those two characters as a template for creation of their own protagonists. One of them, Fagin, was the closest to Shylock in terms of his characteristics and actions.

Stereotypes about Jewish people did not change in the Victorian era which began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Shylock's monstrosity lived through Dickens's character Fagin from his novel *Oliver Twist*. However, in Victorian era, for the first time a good Jewish character, full of virtues appeared and that is Riah. Riah was the character in the novel *Our Mutual Friend* and he is the complete opposite of Fagin. Firstly, Fagin was an old, villainous Jew who only looked after himself. No one else was important to him, he did not even care for his "friends". Avarice and greed were his main characteristics. He shared the same flaws as his "predecessors" Shylock, Barabas, and the Jews from *The Prioress's Tale*. He had no sympathy for anyone, he was hated by the society and in many occasions compared to a devil which is clearly the commonest comparison of Jewish characters. Fagin's contrast is Riah. According to Stone, Riah is the representative of Jewish virtues and he has the important role in his Jewish community which is in good relations with Christian community. His occupation was money-lender which can be connected with Shylock, but in this case this was not represented as a negative stereotype. (Stone 246) Dickens tried to show that money-lenders are not stereotypical evil Jews as they were shown before. Also, Dickens created the Jew who coexisted with the Christian community and in the past literary works, the stereotypical Jewish jobs and their exploitation of the Christians was

the main reason of conflict between them. It can be said that Dickens made a little revolution and slightly changed the image of Jewish character, or at least he tried. Riah was created as the reaction to Fagin. According to Cohen and Heller, Dickens wrote the novel *Our Mutual Friend* and created Riah just to “neutralize” the effect he created with Fagin. (Cohen, Heller 6) Fagin and Riah can be compared to the mirror image. While they are both old on the outside with stereotypical Jewish appearance and possessing a lot of money, they have different mentality. Riah was altruistic, honest, and simple man while Fagin was sly, avaricious, and intriguing.

Du Maurier's novel *Trilby* is a continuation of the same image the Jewish characters had. The most common one was, once again, comparison with the devil. According to Bienstock Anolick, the name of the Jewish character in the novel was Svengali. Svengali was a hypnotist who used Trilby, a tone-deaf lady, and transformed her into a singer, but only under his hypnosis. Svengali was a dark character who possessed supernatural powers. Furthermore, it is believed that his monstrosity in the novel comes from the fact that he was a Jew. He had stereotypical Jewish exterior and demonic control over Trilby. Even the concept of possessing other person (Svengali kind of possessed Trilby and sang through her) is similar to devil's possessing of a soul. The fact that Trilby was mentioned in a context of a musical instrument shows that Svengali is a person who dehumanised other person. Du Maurier could on purpose use singing as a method through which possession was present, because, in his time, it was believed that Jewish people were very talented in the field of music, which was also a stereotype in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Bienstock Anolick 163-76) It can be seen that Svengali had similar characteristics as the other Jewish characters, such as Fagin and Shylock. Not only he was compared with the devil because of his “demonic powers”, but he also used other people for his personal gain. The fact that the Jewish people were good in the musical field was a new stereotype that emerged, but this stereotype cannot be applied to other Jewish characters. Bienstock Anolick mentioned that Svengali was not an Englishman. (Bienstock Anolick 166)

That means that he was “the other”. This was also the case with the Jewish characters in *The Prioress’s Tale*.

### 3. TWO CASE STUDIES

#### 3.1. GEOFFREY CHAUCER: “*THE PRIORESS’S TALE*”

The theme of *The Prioress’s Tale* is the murder of a Christian boy committed by unknown Jewish people in their ghetto. This can be associated with *the Bible* and the murder and crucifixion of Jesus Christ committed by the Jewish people. A similar motive can be applied to Marlowe’s character Barabas. The fact that Jews were responsible for Christ’s crucifixion helped Chaucer in creating the villains he wanted. The crime in the story happened in the Jewish ghetto. Ghettos are parts of cities, usually dirty places full of crime where minorities live.

“There was in Asia, in a great city

Of Christian folks, a ghetto for Jewry...” (TCT 409)

It can be seen that the Jews were indeed the minority because the city was “Of Christian folks”. The conflict between the Christians and Jewish people was described and hatred for each other, which was also present in the Renaissance and Victorian periods.

“...Maintained by a lord of that country,

For shameful profit out of foul usury,

Hateful to Christ and all his company.” (TCT 409)

Besides the hatred towards the Christians, the term usury is mentioned. Usury is one of the most common stereotypes connected with the Jewish people, and characters such as Barabas, Shylock, and Fagin were usurers as well. The comparison of the Jewish people with the devil was extremely popular. Chaucer described them as devil’s servants because they had committed the crime of killing an innocent young Christian boy.

“Our first foe, Serpent Satan

Made in the Jew's heart his wasp's nest,

Swelled up and said, 'O Hebrew folk, alas!' (TCT 411)

Archer compared Judas to Satan, because, according to *the Bible*, Satan persuaded Judas to betray Jesus Christ. (Archer 50) Again *the Bible* was the main source of inspiration for creating the villainous Jews. In that way, the devil persuaded the Jews to kill the innocent Christian boy because he was singing a song in their ghetto.

“Is this a thing that seems to you full honest,

That such a boy shall walk by, as if blessed,

In spite of you, and sing out each sentence

That goes against the laws you reverence?” (TCT 411)

Conspiracies were a powerful tool for the Jews. For example, Fagin in *Oliver Twist* was in the middle of many conspiracies and he enjoyed it. Chaucer also mentioned how the Jews conspired to kill the boy.

“From thenceforth the Jews there conspired

The innocent from out this world to chase.

A murderer, to serve this end, they hired...” (TCT 411)

Even though it is not described in details how they conspired against him, the merely mention of that term is enough to make the connection to the other Jewish character's conspiracies in English history, with Fagin being its peak. The brutality of the Jews was described when the boy was murdered. They mercilessly cut his throat and threw him into the privy like he was not a

human being. That is why another comparison became popular. Not only they were compared to the devil, they were often compared to the monster or a wild animal.

“And as the child passed by at a pace,

This wretched Jew caught and held him fast,

And cut his throat, and in the pit him cast

Into a privy-drain him they threw,

Where the Jews purged their entrails.” (TCT 411-12)

The image of a little boy who is dead in a privy with entrails and other garbage the Jews threw in there picturesquely shows the monstrosity of the Jewish people. After the crime they had committed, the punishment was inevitable. The state of being cursed is the important motive in the story. The meaning of it was that there could not possibly be the happy ending for them. The only possible outcome was death.

“O cursed folk of Herod, born anew,

How shall your evil intent you avail?

Murder will out, for sure, and shall not fail

God’s honour, there, especially for to speed,

The blood cries out against your cursed deed.” (TCT 412)

In these verses can be seen the announcement of their deserved downfall. In the end, the guilty Jews were accused and hanged.

“Death for such wickedness he must observe.



Evil shall have what evil does deserve;

So with wild horses he did them draw,

And hung them then, according to the law.” (TCT 414)

The same destiny shared Dickens’s Fagin who was also convicted and executed for his crimes. The fact that they were first accused, convicted and then executed can also be seen from the perspective of how Christians considered themselves as better people. The Jews killed the boy and threw his body like he was not a human being, but Christians did not just kill the Jews who killed the boy. The process of executing them was according to the state law which again showed Christian civilization being more superior than the Jewish one. This is all proof of boosting Christianity through literature. The image of the Jewish people was under the influence of the fact that they were considered “the others”, meaning non-Christians in this concrete context. According to Bennett, Chaucer used the image of the Jews because it was safe at that time to use them. They were, as he stated “an absent presence”. They were not present in Britain when Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales*, but they were present as a concept of non-Christians. They were simply an object to make Christians look better. The Jews are represented as social deviants, who also represent a threat for Christians. (Bennett 1-4) Because of that the Jewish characters were created as villains. The motives were easy to find because of the popularity of *the Bible* and sins committed by the Jewish people, such as betrayal and murder. (Archer 48) With the combination of those sins, already highly spread stereotypes based on prejudices and exaggeration of some of their characteristics (mainly avarice and usury) Jews perfectly fit the needs of authors in the context of the history of English literature in their search for fictional characters representing “otherness” meaning “non-us” i.e. “non-Christians”.

### 3.2. CHARLES DICKENS: *OLIVER TWIST*

Dickens in his novel *Oliver Twist* created one of the most infamous villains in the history of English literature- Fagin. According to Cohen and Heller, Fagin is a direct descent from Shakespeare's Jewish villain Shylock and he can be compared with Chaucer's Jews from *The Prioress's Tale* because of his behaviour towards innocent children, one of them being the main character Oliver Twist. (Cohen, Heller 6) Shakespeare's Shylock is often compared to Fagin. Not only in terms of their characters and actions performed in the play and the novel, but in terms of influence they had on society, even language. Shylock's name appears in the context of abuse. According to Stone, the name Fagin has become a synonym for meanness and wickedness and because of that has become one of the best-known Jewish characters in English literature. He also compared Fagin with Chaucer's Jews in terms of his emotions and prejudices which were set by customs and tradition. (Stone 223-4) This means that Fagin was stereotypical Jew as well. His image was the same as the one of the Jews from previous eras in the history of English literature. In *Oliver Twist* people were also divided only into two religious groups, a Christian and a Jewish one. Fagin was not the only Jew in the novel. The other one was named Barney, who was a minor character. The conflict between Christians and the Jews is not the main theme of the novel and not an important one, because it is not emphasised in the novel. It is not as obvious one like in *The Prioress's Tale* or *The Merchant of Venice* but the fact that the character of Oliver Twist and other Fagin's "enemies" were Christians cannot be ignored. According to Stone, a Jew in the Victorian era was not allowed to open a shop or have a degree. The laws, newspapers, magazines, songs, plays, and novels were anti- Semitic. (Stone 225-6) It is not strange that the main business of the Jews was once again their stereotypical money- lending and dealing with clothes and jewellery. That was Fagin's business in the novel as well. Stereotypical Jewish business that Shakespeare's Shylock and Marlowe's Barabas also had.

“He [Fagin] sat down; and took from it a magnificent gold watch, sparkling with jewels... ..besides rings, brooches, bracelet, and other articles of jewellery, of such magnificent materials, and costly workmanship, that Oliver had no idea, even of their names.” (OT 54-5)

Those belongings described were not his. Fagin had young boys who were stealing for him all those valuable objects. He did not sell them to earn money and buy other expensive goods, he was just hoarding all those objects which is another connection to Shylock who was keeping all of his gold for himself. Fagin just wanted for his belongings to be safely hidden and he was the only one who was allowed to touch them and even look at them. This is a clear proof of his greed because he always wanted more and more valuable objects to be within the reach of his hand.

The image of the Jew was highly generalized: they were perceived as red-haired, repulsive and odious. So that, both, Fagin’s and Barney’s physical appearance fit that image. Fagin’s red hair and eyebrows were in the forefront. He was typical Jew and people could conclude it just by looking at him. Even though he was old, he had fair amount of red hair without any trace of grey to intensify his Jewish look. Dickens described Fagin as: “a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair.” (OT 52) Another Jewish character, Barney, was nearly the same in terms of physical appearance, but the only exception was that he was younger than Fagin. Barney was “nearly as vile and repulsive in appearance.” (OT 97) The only two Jewish characters were the same. They were friends and associates and it showed that even the younger Jewish people are as bad as the old ones. This shows the transfer of all bad stereotypical characteristics the Jews had from one generation to another. If the bigger picture is looked, that transfer from one generation to another happened in the history of English literature as well. Fagin was the template for Barney just like the Jews from *The Prioress’s Tale* were for all other stereotypical Jews in English literature.

The devil and the Jew became two synonymous terms in English literature. Gelber coined the term Jew-Devil. (Gelber 4) This was the continuation of the tradition of presenting the Jewish characters as the devils. In *The Prioress's Tale* they were Satan's servants and Shylock and Fagin were equalised with the devil itself. Fagin's first description in the novel already presented the resemblance of him and the devil. He was standing near the fireplace and had a "toasting fork in hand." (OT 52) The devil was often described with the fork in his hand and it is not accidental that Dickens used that motive in Fagin's first description. Furthermore, the fire symbolises ever burning fire in hell. Interestingly, Fagin was always near the fireplace when he was not outdoors. On one occasion, when he was not at his home near the fire, he was worried that it is not burning and could only think of how he should get home to light the fire. He "muttered something about having no fire." (OT 174) In almost every occasion, Fagin was sitting near the fireplace, even though it was not an important thing for the plot of the book and that proves that the only reason for this often mentioning of the fire is to present Fagin as the devil. "It is cold, Nancy dear,' said the Jew, as he warmed his skinny hands over the fire." (OT 125) In couple of occasions, other characters from the novel have called him the devil, even in front of him, but he did not consider that as an insult. One of Fagin's associates, Sikes, said to his dog: "Don't you know the devil when he's got a great-coat on?" (OT 124) Sikes also called Fagin the son of Satan.

"Reminds me of being nabbed by the devil", returned Sikes. "There never was another man with such a face as yours [Fagin's], unless it was your father, and I suppose he is singeing his grizzled red beard by this time..." (OT 306)

The most powerful picture of Fagin's evilness was Nancy's monologue about him. Nancy was one of the prostitutes who worked for Fagin and Sikes and she said: "Devil that he is, and worse than devil as he has been to me, I will never do that." (OT 318) This really puts the perspective

on how evil Fagin really was if the person who was close to him declared that he was more evil than the vilest thing ever imagined.

The Jews from *The Prioress's Tale* were conspiring to kill the young boy, which they eventually did. The key word for the comparison with Fagin is conspiracy. His double game got Nancy killed and as a consequence Sikes ended up dead as well. This proves that he had no loyalty and his associates were only standing in his way of making more wealth. He turned them against each other and those deaths could not be tracked back to him. His slyness was nearly flawless which is another label connected to the Jewish characters. Furthermore, he only used Nancy to get what he wanted, he never really cared about her and his opinion about women was low and he never showed any respect for them. At one point he said: "It's the worst of having to do with women." (OT 108) Fagin's avarice was as developed as Shylock's. He even confessed and accepted the fact that he was a miser man and saw no problem in it. "The folks call me a miser, my dear. Only a miser; that's all." (OT 56) Another proof of that is his exploitation of young boys who were stealing for him and all the loot belonged to him. This Fagin's monologue best describes how he embraced his avarice and greed: "Some conjurers say that number three is the magic number, and some say number seven. It's neither, my friend, neither. It's number one." (OT 296) Fagin did not really care for anyone but himself. That is why, in his opinion, his conscience was clear after the deaths of Nancy and Sikes. He never had any real friends and he never needed them. He was surrounded by people who he could use and benefit from them. His personal gain was his only goal in the life. When Oliver first met Fagin it seemed that Fagin could help him by "employing" him to steal for him and provide him with the safety of a home so that he would not sleep on the streets, but that was another of Fagin's plots which included Oliver's brother who paid Fagin in order to get Oliver to jail so he could get the inheritance. This also proves that Fagin loved himself and money more than anyone else, even if that was young and innocent boy and his theory that number one was the magic number suited him.

Ghetto was the place where the Jewish characters from *The Prioress's Tale* have lived in. Fagin's house was similarly dirty and neglected place. His neglect of the house can be also connected to the neglect he had for other people. He was only looking after himself that it was not important for him that he lived in a dirty old place, even though it was mentioned that he had a lot of money and other valuable possessions. "It was a very dirty place... Panelled walls were black with neglect and dust." (OT 118) His living area became a synonym for fear and danger. At one point, Oliver felt danger and discomfort and he felt like he was again in Fagin's house. It can be concluded that not only the Jewish character was evil and represented fear and terror, but also his residence was inducing negative feelings. "Suddenly, the scene changed; the air became close and confined; and he [Oliver] thought, with a glow of terror, that he was in the Jew's house again." (OT 231)

Fagin's fate was the same as the fate of the Jewish murderers in *The Prioress's Tale*. Fagin was arrested and sentenced to death. The verdict made everybody happy like they exterminated the only evil in the world. Fagin's descriptions were more dehumanising than before and he was compared to a wild animal. Dickens wrote that he had "countenance more like that of a snared beast than the face of a man." (OT 368) The day of execution was described as idyllic. The death of the Jew brought happiness in people's lives. As for people who were close to Fagin, they have all died. "As far from home, died the chief remaining members of his friend Fagin's gang." (OT 371) The motive that the Jews are cursed was present here because nobody who had any business connections with Fagin survived.

Another Jewish character, Barney, had a speech defect. He was rarely mentioned in the novel and, according to Gelber, Dickens deliberately produced the deformed English to intensify the reader's dislike of him. Barney was depicted as a Jew distinguishable by his "special" language. (Gelber 3) Barney mixed letters "m" and "b" as well as "d" and "n". Instead of saying "Nobody but Miss Nancy", he said "Dobody but Biss Dadsy." (OT 97) A minor character with

the speech defect was an interesting technique for Dickens to create another stereotypically bad or rather unsympathetic Jewish character.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Images of Jewish characters in the history of English literature spanning from the Middle Ages to Victorian era reveal that the image of the Jewish character was mainly based on prejudices which had become stereotypes. Those stereotypes were retained in English literature and the authors used them to create their Jewish characters. That was the reason why most of them were villainous characters who induced fear amongst other people. Their common characteristics were slyness, avarice, greed, tendency to conspire against other people, indifference toward other people and so on. The most important and most used term is the one coined by Gelber and that is Jew-Devil. The hideousness of their crimes was enough to compare them with the devil itself. Even their physical appearance was similar to the devil's in order to make a bigger impression on a reader. Bennett's definition of a Jew as "the other" was important because the Jewish characters were simply fulfilling a role of someone other than Christian. They served as a means of making Christians look better. A comparative reading of Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale* and Dickens's *Oliver Twist* leads to a conclusion that images of Jewish characters remained the same in the span of five hundred years. The same motives were used to describe Jewish characters. The same stereotypical jobs, behaviour and actions labelled Jewish characters in both, Middle Ages and Victorian era. Chaucer's Jewish characters were prototypes for other Jewish characters in English literature and Dickens's character Fagin is usually considered the most stereotypical Jewish character in English literature.



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## 6. IMAGES OF JEWISH CHARACTERS IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE:

### Summary and key words

From the Middle Ages to Victorian era, the image of Jewish characters in English literature was mainly based on social stereotypes. Jewish characters are represented as dehumanised social creatures whose individual, personal traits border on madness and monstrosity. In that way literary fiction, together with the society creates images of the Jews which reveal processes of othering. Chaucer was the first author who used social stereotypes in creation of the villainous Jewish characters in his short story *The Prioress's Tale* which was published in his collection *The Canterbury Tales*. The trend continued in Renaissance. Shakespeare's character Shylock was one of the most famous Jewish villains in the world of literature. His main characteristics were avarice, slyness, greed and hatred towards Christians. His character was even included in the Nazi propaganda against the Jewish people in World War II. Marlowe's character Barabas was the same as Shylock. Barabas's name is important because of the connection with *the Bible* and the famous Jewish murderer. Victorian era brought the first positive Jewish character, Riah. His characteristics separated him from the other Jewish characters, such as altruism, sincerity and honesty. Riah is the character in the novel *Our Mutual Friend*, written by Dickens. The same author wrote the novel *Oliver Twist*. One of the main characters in the novel was Fagin. Fagin was similar to Shakespeare's Shylock. His doings and relations with other people proved that Jewish stereotypes were actual in the Victorian era as well. A comparative reading of Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale* and Dickens's *Oliver Twist* proved that images of Jewish characters remained the same for five hundred years. The same jobs, actions and behaviour labelled Jewish characters from Middle Ages to Victorian era. Chaucer's Jewish characters were prototypes for other Jewish characters in English literature including Dickens's character Fagin, who is considered the most stereotypical Jewish character in the history of English literature.

Key words: *Jews, Jew-Devil, stereotypes, Fagin, Shylock, greed, avarice, dehumanisation, conspiracies, crime, death, otherness*

## 7. PRIKAZI ŽIDOVSKIH LIKOVA U POVIJESTI ENGLLESKE KNJIŽEVNOSTI: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Od srednjeg vijeka do Viktorijanskog doba, prikaz likova Židova u engleskoj književnosti bazirao se na stereotipima. Likovi Židova prikazani su kao dehumanizirana društvena bića čija individualna svojstva graniče s ludosti i monstroznosti. Na taj način književna fikcija zajedno s društvom stvaraju prikaz Židova koji otkriva procese drugotnosti. Chaucer je bio prvi autor koji je iskoristio društvene stereotipe u stvaranju zločinačkih židovskih likova u svojoj kratkoj priči *The Prioress's Tale* koja je objavljena u njegovoj kolekciji *The Canterbury Tales*. Trend se nastavio u Renesansi. Shakespeareov lik Shylock bio je jedan od najpoznatijih židovskih zlikovaca u književnom svijetu. Njegove glavne karakteristike bile su škrtost, prepredenost, pohlepa i mržnja upućena prema kršćanima. Njegov lik bio je čak dio nacističke propagande protiv Židova u Drugom svjetskom ratu. Baraba, lik kojeg je stvorio Marlowe, bio je poput Shylocka. Barabino ime je bitno zbog poveznice s *Biblijom* i poznatim židovskim ubojicom. U Viktorijanskom dobu pojavio se prvi pozitivan židovski lik, Riah. Njegove karakteristike bile su suprotne onima koji su imali ostali likovi Židova poput iskrenosti, altruizma i poštenja. Riah je lik iz romana *Our Mutual Friend* kojeg je napisao Dickens. Isti autor napisao je roman *Oliver Twist*. Jedan od glavnih likova u romanu bio je Fagin. Fagin je bio sličan Shakespeareovom Shylocku. Njegova djela i odnosi s drugim ljudima dokazala su da su stereotipi o Židovima bili aktualni i u Viktorijanskom dobu. Usporedno čitanje Chaucerove priče *The Prioress's Tale* i Dickensovog romana *Oliver Twist* dokazalo je da su prikazi likova Židova ostali isti kroz petsto godina. Isti poslovi, postupci i ponašanje etiketirali su likove Židova od Srednjeg vijeka do Viktorijanskog doba. Chaucerovi likovi Židova bili su prototipi za ostale likove Židova u engleskoj književnosti uključujući Dickensovog lika Fagina koji se smatra jednim od najstereotipnijih likova Židova u povijesti engleske književnosti.

Ključne riječi: *Židovi, Židov-vrag, stereotipi, Fagin, Shylock, pohlepa, škrtost, dehumanizacija, zavjere, zločin, smrt, drugotnost*