

## **Summary in English**

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the history of female offenders, especially in the history of infanticide. This crime has a long history as the practice of killing unwanted children of various ages by both men and women. Historians suggest that it was a familiar part of pre-modern and early-modern social life. Even though infanticide was condemned by Christianity almost from its origins, it seems to be a part of the history of most Christian nations. Infanticide has always been an emotive, debated and controversial practice, and has remained so to this day. The dissertation focuses on the problem of infanticide (killing children under 12 months old) in Victorian London between 1834 and 1901. The Victorian epoch was the period of industrial growth and significant changes within the society. At the end of the eighteenth century, the idea of Malthusianism was presented by the English Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus, who believed that the population growth should be limited mostly. Another significant process of this time was the Industrial Revolution which had changed the world completely. The birth of capitalism which was connected with the revolution led to the emergence of a new social class – the working class. Moreover, during the Victorian era, women's rights were extremely limited. Women were seen as those who belonged to the 'domestic sphere', and their main duty was to keep the house clean, put food on the table and raise children. It needs to be highlighted that the women from the upper or middle class had domestic servants who helped them with all their duties. However, women from the working class could not afford such a luxury. Usually, they had to work, raise children and do all household chores. All these factors led people, mostly women, to commit the crime of infanticide. In a world where too many children were seen as a burden and unmarried pregnant women had to face social exclusion, the act of murdering a new-born child was seen as the chance for a less problematic future.

The dissertation analyses the issue of infanticide based on the Old Bailey's Proceedings and the press. The main purpose of this research is to examine this phenomenon and its types. Another purpose is to establish the profile of the perpetrator. Contrary to the previous research on this topic, this one concentrates not only on single women who committed this crime but also on married women and male perpetrators. Furthermore, the dissertation also analyses the verdicts and sentences which were announced at Old Bailey and determines whether the courts were lenient and what was the reason behind this. The research also includes the examination of medical professionals and their testimonies during the trial. It also attempts to explain the

role of puerperal insanity in infanticide trials. Last but not least, the dissertation also addresses the social issues of the Victorian period which contributed to committing this crime.

The research approaches the problem of infanticide from the perspective of social history and draws on sources generated by the criminal justice system such as the records of Old Bailey, indictments and depositions. By using historical methods such as source criticism, the research analyses the court record and press articles and considers the validity of information contained therein. Furthermore, qualitative and quantitative methods were also used to analyse the primary sources. Another method which was used while examining the phenomenon of infanticide was a case study, which helped to illustrate various aspects of this crime.

The analysis of the gathered data shows that single women were not the only ones tried for infanticide. The analysis of the proceedings shows that the defendants can be categorised into four groups: single women, widows, married women and men. Married women and men constituted a minority of the accused, however, their motives, methods of killing or mental state differed from single mothers. The examination of the frequency and severity of sentences which were announced at the Old Bailey shows that the majority of defendants were found not guilty or were sentenced to lenient punishments. There were many reasons for that, such as deficiencies in forensic medicine at the time or the fact that infanticide was punishable by death, which was considered to be too severe. Moreover, the analysis of the data shows that the majority of people who committed this crime were lonely and did not have the support of their families or friends, because they left their homes to find a job in London, but that was not always the case. There were also exceptions where mothers, fathers or husbands of the defendants participated in the crime itself or the disposal of the infants' bodies.

It should be also noted that the research focused not only on maternal or paternal infanticide but also on baby farming. The analysis of this phenomenon shows that the well-being of infants and single mothers was a serious social issue, which was usually ignored by both the state and London authorities. The research also demonstrates the press was not only interested in infanticide as the social issue but also in reporting about the trials which took place at the Old Bailey. It is not possible to fully determine why some defendants gathered more attention than others. However, the press articles contained the details that were deliberately omitted by the proceedings. The press depicted the behaviour of the accused or their appearance, and towards the end of the century, the sketches of the most scandalous infanticide offenders were more often included. It should be noted that the way the defendants were

depicted by the press influenced the public opinion, who felt pity or strong dislike towards them.

The dissertation examined the complex phenomenon of infanticide in Victorian London. The research was based on a vast number of primary sources and showed that the offenders were not a homogenous group and that the types of this crime, methods and even verdicts and sentences varied and depended on many factors described in the dissertation.