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School education and professional educators as a problem in Charles Dickens

La educación escolar y los educadores profesionales como problema en Charles Dickens

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Abstract

This article studies the evolution of the Dickensian view of school education and teachers through the literary production of the famous English author. For this purpose, three basic elements are used: biographical school experiences; the schools and educators described in their fifteen great novels; references to the school world in letters, speeches and minor publications. The result of the study is that Dickens's initial confidence in the educational and reforming capacity of schools and professional teachers was declining over time until he arrived in his latest novels to turn the professional teacher into a villain.

Resumen

En este artículo se estudia la evolución de la concepción dickensiana de la educación escolar y del maestro a través de la producción literaria del afamado autor inglés. Para ello se recurre a la conexión de tres elementos básicos: las experiencias escolares biográficas; las escuelas y educadores descritos en sus quince grandes novelas y las referencias al mundo escolar en cartas, discursos y publicaciones menores. El resultado del estudio es que la confianza inicial de Dickens en la capacidad educativa y reformadora de las escuelas y los maestros profesionales fue decayendo a lo largo del tiempo hasta llegar en sus últimas novelas a convertir al maestro profesional en villano.

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Introduction

Charles Dickens' (1812–1870) relationship with education has been addressed on numerous occasions and from various angles. The most exhaustive monographic study is that of Philip Collins (1963) *Dickens and Education*, the first analysis that takes a fundamentally literary perspective. Previous analyses had taken a more pedagogical perspective, emphasising Dickens' supposed philosophical-educational foundations. As indicated by Collins (1963), the monograph by James L. Hughes (2001) *Dickens as an Educator*, appeared in 1900. Hughes (2001) argues Dickens subscribed to a Philosophy of Education, which was both profound and misunderstood in his time, as well as offering a conscientious reading of contemporary pedagogues. Later on, in 1959, John Manning (1959), another education specialist, published *Dickens on Education*. This study was marked by a tendency to downplay the relevance of famous satirical portraits of certain educational institutions, while continuing to connect the fiction and the rest of his writing with Dickens' own biographical school experience. With regard to this connection between the auto-biographical account of schooling and subsequent literary production, a subject analysed in this article, Collins cites a study, *Victorian Schoolteachers in Fiction* (Meers, 1953), which demonstrates the widespread dependence of Victorian school settings and characters on writers' respective childhoods. In the case of Dickens, all his biographers have highlighted numerous events that marked his childhood. Some, like Edgar Johnson (1977), go so far as to label the imagination of the brilliant writer as overwhelmed by memories of school life where classrooms were sinister dungeons and teachers were ogres that tortured children. Dickens' literary work has also often been considered a potential instrument of education for the way it cultivates imagination and sensitivity, not only in terms of aesthetics but also in morality¹.

This article aims firstly to offer a trajectory of the intermittent formal education received by Dickens. Secondly, it will present the fictional educators and schools that he created, along with the real people and institutions that inspired him. A diachronic analysis will allow conclusions to be reached about the problematic nature of formal education as perceived in his work.

An irregular, rambling education

Dickens' life was, above all, that of a very successful literary creator whose popularity was considerable and unending from the publication of the first chapters of his first novel, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (2003d). His audience ranged from Queen Victoria herself to the working classes. He was frequently invited to participate in charity events where he was the main speaker. He directed several popular periodicals covering a range of miscellaneous topics. For all these reasons, it is relatively easy to form an overall picture of his understanding of education and the role of educational institutions in society. At a time when the issue of education—and in particular the role of the state in education—had become a major focus of political controversy, it is reasonable that the public was aware of the famous writer's views on the subject. In 1851, there were more than 18,000 schools in Great Britain accessible to poor children as a part of two large networks. One, the British and Foreign School Society, founded in 1808, was non-denominational in character. The other was the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, founded in 1811 (Nagayach & Singh, 2017). In 1833, the British Parliament passed, for the first time and following many debates, an extraordinary expense (£20,000) to fund schools. Shortly afterwards, the first Education Committee (which would eventually become a Ministry), an education inspectorate, a Teacher Training College and a specific central-

ised body for the control of education in general, the Central Society for Education, were all created. Before Dickens, essayists and poets like Wordsworth (2008) had already drawn attention to the situation of education. But Dickens was the first major novelist to place children in need of education at the forefront of his works (Collins, 1963). His contribution to the educational debate, however, did not revolve around the role of the state: 'it was on the way in which the ethos of a school and the quality of teaching could make or mar a child. We are confronted with innumerable educational establishments, many of them ghastly, some of them good, that leave us in no doubt about the kinds of schooling he liked and disliked' (Cunningham, 2011, p.168).

Dickens was not a politician. In fact, politicians were often the subject of his satires. He knew them well from a young age, as one of his first jobs was to transcribe parliamentary speeches and write press reports about them. This does not mean that he underestimated the political dimension of human life, but rather that he looked at society in its real, concrete manifestations, at its individual personalities. He offered, above all, the viewpoint of the literary creator, not that of the politician or the reformer. Even his links to various charitable causes should be seen more as a favour to the people who ran the associations dedicated to them.

The mere announcement of his intervention at any public event drew crowds. But his one and only personal cause was literature, as he solemnly declared in Liverpool in 1869 in one of his last speeches: 'When I first took Literature as my profession (...) I calmly resolved within myself that whether I succeeded or whether I failed, Literature should be my sole profession' (Fielding, 1960: 389). This kind of dedication to the task of creating literature was not the result of what we would usually understand as a conventional education. It was a vocation for which young Dickens had to fight tenaciously.

In fact, the simplicity of his academic training is attested to in a letter addressed to the German publisher Johann Heinrich Kuenzel in 1838. Kuenzel, interested in promoting his first works in Germany, had asked him for his curriculum vitae. In his response, Dickens condensed the formal education received into just two lines: 'I had begun an irregular rambling education under a clergyman at Chatham, and I finished it at a good school in London – tolerably early, for my father was not a rich man, and I had to begin the world' (House & Storey, 1965, p.423).

In reality, young Dickens' institutional schooling had been even more tempestuous. Before attending the school of the Baptist Reverend William Giles, he had gone to a school of sorts, also in Chatham, run by an uneducated, untrained spinster. It was a common type of institution at the time, a *dame school* or, if it was a more refined type of institution, a *Preparatory Day-School* where the children attended for a few hours in the afternoon and where they hardly learned anything. Dickens parodies this type of institution in *Great Expectations* (2003b), where the protagonist Pip confesses he would have obtained no benefit whatsoever had it not been for the help of Bidley, an orphan like himself.

As for the Baptist school, he was only able to attend for a short time. However, this is perhaps the only clearly positive memory of the writer's time in a school. According to Collins (1963), it was Giles who coined the name 'The Inimitable' for Dickens². Dickens (2004)³ paid tribute to such a school through the optimistic description of Doctor Strong's school in *David Copperfield* and also in his characterisation of Canon Septimus Crisparkle, the kindly and courageous canon of Cloisterham in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Dickens, 1982). Both characters' nature and their exacting demands for strength in the act of educating, on the part of both the educator and the student, is combined with the capacity to stimulate an ordered form of creative freedom aimed at an objective good.

As for the aforementioned 'good school' in London in his letter (House & Storey, 1965), that was in reference to Wellington House Academy, described by Dickens: 'It was a School of some celebrity in its neighbourhood - nobody could have said why - (...) The master was supposed among us to know nothing, and one of the ushers was supposed to know everything. We are still inclined to think the first-named supposition perfectly correct (...) A profound respect for money pervaded Our School, which was, of course, derived from its Chief' (Dickens, 2006, p.23). In a speech given in 1857 at a charity dinner to cover the costs of schooling for adults, Dickens addressed the audience and offered a harsh take on that same school of his youth: 'I don't like the sort of school to which I once went myself, the respected proprietor of which was by far the most ignorant man I have ever had the pleasure to know [*laughter*], who was one of the worst-tempered men perhaps that ever lived, whose business it was to make as much out of us and to put as little into us as possible [*great laughter*]' (Fielding, 1960, p.240). The ignorant teacher and owner of the school was based on William Jones. In the same text, 'Our School', he wrote that 'The only branches of education with which he showed the least acquaintance were ruling and corporally punishing' (Dickens, 2006, p.23). His caricature in *David Copperfield* (Dickens, 2004) goes by the somewhat unpleasant-to-the-ear name of Mr Creakle, owner of Salem House Academy:

'School began in earnest next day. A profound impression was made upon me, I remember, by the roar of voices in the schoolroom suddenly becoming hushed as death when Mr Creakle entered after breakfast, and stood in the doorway looking round upon us like a giant in a story-book surveying his captives (...) 'Now, boys, this is a new half. Take care what you're about, in this new half. Come fresh up to the lessons, I advise you, for I come fresh up to the punishment. I won't flinch. It will be of no use your rubbing yourselves; you won't rub the marks out that I shall give you. Now get to the work, every boy!' (...) I should think there never can be a man who enjoyed

his profession more than Mr Creakle did. He had a delight in cutting at the boys, which was like the satisfaction of a craving appetite. I am confident that he couldn't resist a chubby boy, especially; that there was a fascination in such a subject, which made him restless in his mind, until he had scored and marked him for the day. I was chubby myself, and ought to know. I am sure when I think of the fellow now, my blood rises against him with the disinterested indignation I should feel if I could have known all about him without having ever been in his power; but it rises hotly, because I know him to have been an incapable brute, who had no more right to be possessed of the great trust he held, than to be Lord High Admiral, or Commander-in-chief: in either of which capacities, it is probable that he would have done infinitely less mischief' (Dickens, 2004, pp.99-100)

Despite his largely negative memories of those years at Wellington House Academy, young Charles was considered the best student in his class: 'we had the honour to attain and hold the eminent position of first boy' (Dickens, 2006, p.23).

He also won literary awards and wrote plays that were then performed by his classmates. As he says in his letter to Kuenzel, 'I won prizes at school, and great fame' (House & Storey, 1965, p.424). However, at the age of fifteen his family ran out of money to pay for his schooling and his studies were permanently suspended. This is what he refers to in his letter when he states 'I had to begin the world' (House & Storey, 1965, p.423). But that was not really the first time his studies had been interrupted. In the aforementioned letter, Dickens hides something that he himself will reveal only much later, once he has reached an immutable position among the stars of the literary firmament. This is the period when his father was in prison for failure to pay his debt. At the time, little Charles spent some time in the house of Mrs Roylance, who would later serve as the inspiration behind the character of Mrs Pipchin in *Dombey and Son* (Dickens, 2012). Also

in this period, his early knowledge of the world would include child labour in factories⁴.

In his confessions to Forster, Dickens seems to insinuate that his father did not make efforts to set aside a modest amount sufficient to continue his formal studies. He also mentions the fact that his elder sister, Fanny, continued to pay for his studies at the Royal Academy of Music, where he even received some awards. Charles, however, who had never had a particularly refined musical ear, felt that his literary talent was being wasted. His father's decision to stop spending money on Charles' education was probably consistent with the cultural environment of 1820 England. At the time, literature was not yet considered a worthy profession, except for those who entered it from a pre-existing position of high economic and social standing (Fielding, 1960). Some of Dickens' resentment of his elder sister can be seen in the different ways of understanding family decision making in terms of investment in education in *Our Mutual Friend* (1932). In this novel, protagonist Lizzie Hexam manages to provide her younger brother with a *ragged school*⁵ education despite belonging to the lowest social stratum. It should also be noted that Lizzie's little brother is named Charley.

With the possibility of a formal education closed off to him at age 15, Dickens became a self-taught man. He taught himself shorthand. He gradually managed to enter the world of journalism and would eventually go on to become one of the greatest writers of all time. Let us now examine how educational institutions and educators entered his works of fiction, often reflecting actual moments in the trajectory summarised here.

Teachers, good intentions and criminals

Adult Dickens resumed direct contact with educational institutions for two reasons. The main reason was as an observation exercise to gain ideas for his literary creations. The second,

which complemented the main reason, was as a participant committed to the establishment and development of charitable educational foundations. As such, Dickens often was, for example, a personal advisor to philanthropists such as Baroness Burdett-Coutts, helping to promote homes for former prostitutes. He also participated as a reader or special guest at numerous charity events to help schools for adults and orphans. He visited reformatories, nursing homes and schools in both Europe and the United States. In the periodicals he directed, more than 200 articles appeared on educational issues, though not always written by himself, but by close collaborators.

In this section, entitled 'Teachers, good intentions and criminals', we aim to show in three subsections the real-life teachers and educators that provided the inspiration for the corresponding fictional cohort in Dickens' work. We will also explore the gradual disenchantment of the writer with pedagogical theories that were as well intentioned as they were ineffective. Finally, we will observe the fictitious conversion of the teacher into a criminal, a symbol of Dickens' ultimate scepticism about formal education.

Yorkshire and Dotheboys Hall: from William Shaw to Wackford Squeers

One of his most productive visits, in literary terms, was the one he made to Yorkshire in 1838. Incognito, he collected personal impressions about the environment and the people linked to boarding schools in the area. Interest in this visit dates back to 1823. At the time, the London newspapers, which Dickens must have read when he was 11 years old, echoed the trial of William Shaw, owner and director of a school in the Yorkshire region. Shaw was accused of having let one of his boarders die from excessive cruelty and lack of care. Such boarding schools abounded in the region, to no small degree thanks to the many illegitimate children whose parents hoped to be rid of for a small

annual fee. During the visit, Dickens found that these boarding schools offered no holidays and enjoyed an aura of respectability inconsistent with the actual quality of their teaching. Shortly thereafter, *Nicholas Nickleby* (2003c), in which William Shaw is renamed Wackford Squeers, owner of the infamous Dotheboys Hall boarding school, was published. The inspiration of fiction in reality was so evident that some critics considered the cruelty and stupidity of Squeers (a name that seems to be a combination of squeeze and queer) to be an unacceptable hyperbole. For this reason, in the prologue to the first edition with the complete work, Dickens insisted that the descriptions of Squeers and Dotheboys Hall were not exaggerations but tenuous portraits of an even harsher reality⁶. The famous orphanages and poor houses described in *Oliver Twist* (2007) and the boarding schools in *Nicholas Nickleby* (2003c) meant Dickens was noticed by all those interested in education from a social reform point of view. The impact of these two novels on public opinion, which is difficult to measure, was unquestionable. But, in turn, every writer is a child of their time. Dickens himself lived in a time where educational problems were present in political debate, as we have explained in the first paragraph of this article.

The Battersea factory: from Kay-Shuttleworth to M'Choakumchild

In 1839, the year when Dickens insisted on the accuracy of his description of places like Dotheboys Hall, James Kay-Shuttleworth, one of the great reformers of British public education in the 19th century, rose to the highest position of government educational responsibility. In 1840, he opened the first Teacher Training College in Battersea. It was based on three pillars: a system of supervised placements, regular inspection of subsidised schools and systematic statistical reporting to assess educational outcomes for the poor. This was one of several measures to improve both the level of training teachers received and public education in general. Dickens

met Kay-Shuttleworth personally in 1846 and they immediately found they shared an interest in promoting the ragged schools, some of which Dickens himself had been visiting since 1843. Over the next two decades, however, disagreement over the concrete methods and content of school education became more pronounced. In 1853, after more than ten years of reform initiatives and statistics, Kay-Shuttleworth (1853) released his work *Public Education*. Dickens labelled his series of charts and statistics as 'supernatural dreariness' and later spoke of 'Kayshuttleworthian nonsense' (Litvack, 2012) to describe Battersea's serial teacher training. But where the disagreement between institutionalised pedagogical reformism and the Dickensian vision of education ultimately crystallises is with the publication of *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1995). Kay-Shuttleworth is portrayed as a secondary character but one who is essential in terms of the ideological aspects of the novel: the teacher comically named M'Choakumchild. His starring appearance is given in the second chapter of the novel, entitled *Murdering the Innocents*, wherein a class of his is described, supervised by an anonymous inspector. There, Dickens satirises the teacher, who has accumulated encyclopaedic knowledge but who is unable to teach anything in keeping with the nature of his students (Dickens, 1995). This same combination of excessive content and ineffective methodologies is parodied in Dr Blimber Academy of *Dombey and Son* (Dickens, 2012). They are well-meaning pedagogues lacking any effectiveness or talent for education. The lack of a realistic educational spirit cannot be compensated for by filling the students' head with endless lists of data memorised by rote. The case of the Blimber Academy is an example of the Dickensian contrast between nature and technique, where they have tried to develop educational technique without taking into account students' nature, with atrocious results. Moreover, the fact that the teacher, unlike Wackford Squeers, is kind and well-intentioned, makes the break in the natural educational order even more profound

and not just a passing caricature: 'Blumber is no less funny than Squeers and his regime no less harmful, although the man himself is kindly and well-meaning. But whereas Dotheboy's Hall is an episode from which Nicholas passes on, Blumber's Academy is integral to the novel's vision, providing a comic educational version of Dombeyism and its violation of "Nature"' (Gilmour, 1986, p.91). The lack of a sense of reality on the part of the heads of the educational institutions of the time meant excessive content was combined with a deliberate lack of food: 'Curiously the great paradox in the teaching of children in Britain at the time was that the more their brains were stuffed with information, the less food went into their stomachs. And this did not happen only in schools for destitute children (...) It also happened in the schools for the rich as well as in wealthy homes' (De Stasio, 2010, p.300).

In short, in Dickens' early novels, especially *Oliver Twist* (Dickens, 2007) and *Nicholas Nickleby* (Dickens, 2003c), the so-called teachers are simply bad people. But in the intermediate novels, such as *Dombey and Son* (Dickens, 2012) and *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1995), the teachers are good people, with good intentions, but with no real capacity for education.

From good intentions to the criminal

Dickens evolved from an initial shared enthusiasm for reform to a deep disenchantment in the lack of sensitivity and imagination shown in utilitarian schooling. Educational Benthamism had transformed children's imagination into a commercially useful design. Battersea's social engineering had degenerated into a type of industrial production process of egalitarian masters with no personality. Another product of such a factory is Bradley Headstone, a 'highly certificated stipendiary schoolmaster' (Dickens, 1932, p.187) and the head of a ragged school who plays an important role in *Our Mutual Friend* (Dickens, 1932)⁷. Lizzie Hexam, despite the

poverty her family faces and the opposition of her father, manages to get her brother Charley accepted into the school. The novel shows that this type of school offers the possibility of social advancement for a poor but intellectually bright, tenacious child⁸. Indeed, this is exactly what Charley Hexam is going to achieve. However, this function as a social elevator does not work as a result of the way schooling is established, but rather *in spite of* the way it is established. At the beginning of the first chapter of the second book, entitled 'Of an educational character' and dedicated, mainly, to introducing us to the sinister figure of Headstone, Dickens delights us with an amusing description of the school and its methods, which are as scientifically pedagogical as they are ineffective at educating pupils. In the two pages that are dedicated to providing a description, we find three references to the *good intentions* of the teachers. These good intentions contrast with the ineffectiveness of their methods and a lack of realism as to the students' starting point, in intellectual, moral and religious terms. The caricature of the 'child-choking' teacher we saw in Mr M'Choakumchild has evolved into Mr Headstone, which can be taken as a reference to the pedagogical rigidity of the man's methods, learned more as a way of achieving promotions than out of any love for education. In *Our Mutual Friend* (Dickens, 1932), however, the education system is not content with generating a figure of ridicule, but rather it now offers us a teacher that ends up being a criminal. Bradley Headstone becomes the main villain of *Our Mutual Friend* (Dickens, 1932), one capable of planning and executing murder in cold blood. Near the end, Rogue Riderhood, a secondary character and also a criminal, ends up appearing at the head of the classroom alongside Mr Headstone. Riderhood, who knows about Headstone's crime, wants to blackmail Headstone. He breaks into the classroom in the middle of a class. They have a conversation aloud in front of the students. Riderhood ironically asks Headstone: 'What place may this be?', to which Headstone replies 'This is a school (...) Yes, I am the master' (Dickens, 1932, p.679).

One killer introduces himself to the other as a teacher. Thus, we see a kind of fusion between criminal and teacher. Over the course of the novel, the figures of the teacher and the criminal have been confused. This confusion reaches its climax when Headstone, sometime later, tries to kill the blackmailer Riderhood. They both end up drowning in the same river where their crimes took place. After falling into the water as they fight, the two die by drowning, intertwined in a final, deadly embrace⁹.

Conclusions

The diachronic analysis of the schools and educators in Dickens' fiction, together with the erratic formal education received by the writer in his childhood, allows us to appreciate the evolution of his educational beliefs. In this article, we have noted a growing trend towards mistrust of formal education. In Charles Dickens' early novels, such as *Oliver Twist* (Dickens, 2007) and *Nicholas Nickleby* (Dickens, 2003c), the portrayal of schools and educators achieves the goal of denouncing situations that are as institutionalised as they are morally aberrant. The public authorities responsible for educating children and young people are presented as grotesque characters, that are, to a greater or lesser extent, depraved. Later on, in the novels where he had gained maturity as a writer, from *Dombey and Son* (Dickens, 2012) to *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1995), a period that also includes *David Copperfield* (Dickens, 2004), we find teachers who are usually well intentioned, although unwise in the concrete methods they use to teach. Finally, the figure of the teacher in his later novels, especially in *Our Mutual Friend* (Dickens, 1932), takes on more monstrous, criminal forms.

On the other hand, Dickens' frequent concern for those who are most in need of an education, in fiction, in his non-fiction writings and in real life, allows us to conclude the following: a mistrust of formal education does not mean that education is impossible, but that true education, for Dickens,

takes place outside of institutionalised channels. Here are just a few examples: Nickleby, with no previous pedagogical knowledge, improvises at Dotheboys Hall the only truly educational moments experienced by the pupils; Sissy Jupe's family circus, in *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1995), is characterised as a society whose members have achieved the skills so longed for by systematic education: teamwork, solidarity, effort, and perseverance; the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison seen in *Little Dorrit* (Dickens, 1953) is presented to us as a kind of inverted school where the real educator is Amy Dorrit and the 'pupil' who needs to be corrected is her father, he is the one who is 'punished' every day in the school/prison while it is Amy who comes and goes. In a boarding school, this would be the other way around. Something similar happens in *Barnaby Rudge* (Dickens, 2003a) with Newgate Prison. Upon being released after the destruction of the prison by the mobs, the prisoners are described by Dickens as nostalgic former students of the old school/prison where they would like to return, to the point that some of them return to sleep among its ruins. Even Fagin's lair contains a certain nobility that contrasts with the previous lodgings Oliver had known. In *Our Mutual Friend* (Dickens, 1932), almost 30 years after *Oliver Twist* (Dickens, 2007), the lair becomes the penthouse of the benevolent Riah, a 'good Jew' who, altruistically and almost clandestinely offers private lessons to Lizzie Hexam, as well as helping her escape from her stalker, the teacher Mr Bradley Headstone. This is, therefore, a conclusion that opens up future lines of analysis.

In short, the whole of Charles Dickens' work leads us to ask ourselves: why education? Why institutionalised, formal education? The answer is clear. Either we already possess those qualities which education is supposed to offer us, or we will never achieve them merely through schooling. Either we already have in us this *treasure*, which is not material but personal, spiritual and psychological, or we will never attain it, regardless of what we may inherit, or how many

teachers, schools and educational reforms we put in place.

We believe that Dickens' powerful imagination challenges all educators and educational institutions. It helps us to rethink the meaning of education and teaching. And it does so through stories that have a lot to offer to those of us who try to impart education, both formal and informal, in our day-to-day lives.

Notes

1. See, for example, Chesterton (2002). Other recent examples include Fazio (2015), Orsi Portalo (2012) and Belmonte (2012).

2. 'Dickens behaved kindly towards Giles in later years, visiting him, allowing his name to be used as a reference in the advertisements for his school, and acting as a President of the Testimonial Fund raised by his old pupils' (Collins, 1963, pp.10-11).

3. 'Doctor Strong's was an excellent school (...) It was very gravely and decorously ordered, and on a sound system; with an appeal, in everything, to the honour and good faith of the boys, and an avowed intention to rely on their possession of those qualities unless they proved themselves unworthy of it, which worked wonders. We all felt that we had a part in the management of the place, and in sustaining its character and dignity. Hence, we soon became warmly attached to it - I am sure I did for one, and I never knew, in all my time, of any other boy being otherwise - and learnt with a good will, desiring to do it credit. We had noble games out of hours, and plenty of liberty; but even then, as I remember, we were well spoken of in the town, and rarely did any disgrace, by our appearance or manner, to the reputation of Doctor Strong and Doctor Strong's boys' (Dickens, 2004, p.246).

4. 'On a Monday morning I went down to the blacking warehouse to begin my business life (...) No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship (...) I was handed over as a lodger to a reduced old lady, long known to our family (...) who took children in to board, and had once done so at Brighton; and who, with a few alterations and embellishments, unconsciously began to sit for Mrs. Pipchin in *Dombey* when she took in me" (Forster, 1980, pp.21-24). These words are part of the autobiographical musings that Dickens wrote for his

friend and biographer John Forster, in which he reveals his father's imprisonment and his time as a child labourer in a bitumen factory. Forster did not reveal the text until it was included in the biography he published shortly after Dickens' death.

5. 'Ragged schools, which took their name from the fact that they accepted the ill-kempt children of the 'perishing and dangerous classes,' charged little or nothing and taught in return an extremely limited curriculum' (Watt, 2012, p.1).

6. 'In depicting Dotheboys Hall, Dickens sought to expose the horrifying abuses actually found in a number of Yorkshire schools, many of which served as a dumping ground for unwanted children' (Friedman, 2011, p.319).

7. On the other hand, Watt (2012, p.1) believes there is an underlying criticism in *Our Mutual Friend* of the cuts introduced by the law known as the 'Revision Code' in the 1960s: 'Schoolmasters like Bradley Headstone were by no means well off financially, but their education and responsibility made them feel that they were in an honourable profession and that they deserved to be treated with respect by members of the middle class. (...) Dickens's fictional character, then, is mirroring the feelings of actual teachers at the time, who were asserting in the face of various attacks on their economic and social status...'

8. 'Bradley Headstone (...) is also a product of the training college system, and his conception follows the 1861 report of the Newcastle Commission, appointed to examine the possibility of extending sound elementary education to all classes. Its investigations revealed that the basics of education were being neglected, as Kay-Shuttleworth's colleges emphasised academic endeavour to the extent that graduates became out of touch with their pupils, and thus could not do their job properly. *Our Mutual Friend* considers the sociological development of the new generation of teachers: Headstone, and his pupil-teacher Charley Hexam, are products of the best education available to individuals from poor backgrounds, who are encouraged to rise above their social origins in their quest for respectability' (Litvack, 2012, p.1).

9. One final example of a teacher that seems respectable but who has a dark side can be found in the unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Dickens, 1982): Jasper is a magnificent musician, head of music at Cloisterham Cathedral, with an enviable education, and music teacher to the beautiful Rose. At the same time, however, he is a criminal, opium addict and a repugnant stalker.

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