

Educating Oliver: The Conflicting Ideas of Education in *Oliver Twist*

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I

In considering Dickens's ideas of education, what often puzzles critics is the disjunction between Dickens the novelist and Dickens the journalist and man of affairs. As Philip Collins points out, the novelist who passionately advocated fancy and imagination in the world of fiction held decidedly utilitarian views on the education of his sons and chose to give them practical education, which would directly help them to make a living in the world (Collins 26–52). Moreover, in his support of the Ragged Schools and the Home for the Homeless Women, what Dickens always had in mind was how education could make the pupils or the “fallen women” useful members of society.¹ There seems to be little room for fancy in the kind of education he advocated in the real world. Although critics have been aware of this disjunction, there have been few attempts to give some reasonable explanation to bridge it. This essay aims at filling the paucity of such criticism by tracing a certain element of utilitarian education in one of his early novels, *Oliver Twist*, which was serialized in *Bentley's Miscellany* from 1837 to 1839.

The early nineteenth-century was an important period in the development of popular education in England. Under the impact of the French Revolution in 1789 the conservative ruling classes had had a concern that literacy could become a dangerous tool for the masses, since it could enable them to gain access to “seditious” literature such as Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*. Educating the working classes was thought to undermine social stability, and the nascent attempts at popular education such as the Sunday School movement came to a halt (Altick 69–73). Such concern, however, was gradually superseded by urgent calls for education from middle-class reformers, who argued that ignorance, rather than literacy, among the poor could form the bedrock for

social unrest. In this climate various organizations for the promotion of popular education were established. Among them were Anglican's National Society for the Education of the Poor and the nonconformists' British and Foreign School Society, which were founded in 1811 and 1808 respectively.

Elizabeth Gargano argues that the proliferation of schools in the Victorian era made novelists suspicious about institutionalized education which adopted increasingly regimented and codified pedagogy. She further maintains that they sometimes criticized what they regarded as a soulless standardized pedagogy for working-class children, in part because they recognized such standardization would eventually pose a threat to middle-class children as well (4–5). Although it is an insightful observation, we should not overlook the fact that Dickens, for instance, supported a highly regimented pedagogy of the Ragged Schools and the schools for pauper children in his journalism. Gargano reads *Hard Times* as an overt attack on the government standardization of the school system (27), but while in the novel Dickens vociferously attacked Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, who promoted standardized national education by developing a teacher-training scheme, he at the same time supported Kay-Shuttleworth's educational reform in a couple of articles in *Household Words*.²

The Victorian discourse of education is often riven by a tension between the ideal of humanistic education aiming at nurturing children with love and sympathy and eventually inculcating those feelings in their mind and the utilitarian need to educate them in order to make them fit to survive in the world dominated by inexorable law of economy. Whereas the education for working-class children tends to be overtly utilitarian, the humanistic ideal is more apparent with regard to middle-class education—at least in theory, if not in practice. The conflicting ideas of education, however, almost unfailingly coexist within any texts on education of both classes. Whether it is about domestic education or school education, the writer is always concerned about how to keep a precarious balance between the need to nurture children with humane love and affection and the need to make them useful members of society with knowledge, skills as well as both mental and physical strength.

In the following discussion I will read *Oliver Twist* alongside contemporary writing about the education of the pauper children in order to examine the way in which conflicting ideas of education are reflected in the representation of teaching and learning. I choose *Oliver Twist* partly because it is the text written in the formative years of popular education in Britain, and partly because the protagonist, Oliver, dramatizes the problem of the education of children who belong to the lowest stratum of social

hierarchy. Since its publication *Oliver Twist* has been regarded as the novel which demonstrates an overwhelming influence of “nature” or “inheritance” upon the formation of character.³ Although it might be difficult to refute this argument, we should not underestimate the emphasis Dickens puts on the importance of education in depicting the formation of Oliver’s character. Born in a workhouse as a child of a young stray woman who died immediately after giving birth, Oliver is the center of the various attempts by adults to educate him according to their needs and desires. Even though those attempts fail to change his character in a decisive way, we need to examine the nature and the impact of them carefully in order to illuminate Dickens’s view on education in the early years of his career.

In *Oliver Twist* Dickens made a powerful criticism of the inhuman treatment of the pauper children in the workhouse under the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act (the “New Poor Law”). Almost contemporaneous with the novel, an important report on the education of the pauper children was written by an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner in Norfolk and Suffolk, who was eventually to become one of the most influential educational reformers in Victorian Britain. James Phillips Kay (later Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth) wrote *The Training of Pauper Children*, which was published as a part of the fourth annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1838 and in a book form in the next year. Although it is unlikely that Dickens’s novel and Kay’s report had a direct influence upon each other, it is still possible to detect a certain degree of resonance between these two texts written as a response to the same problem during the same period of time. In participating in the contemporary debate on the education of the pauper children, both texts illuminate a tension between humanistic and utilitarian ideas of education, as I will demonstrate in the following discussion.

II

Having received education as a medical student at Edinburgh University, James Phillips Kay started his career as a physician at dispensaries in Edinburgh and then in Manchester, where he had many experiences of witnessing the miserable condition of the life of the poor during the repeated outbreaks of fever. Those experiences made him aware that physical and social evils are inseparably intertwined with each other, and that social reform, as well as sanitary reform, was urgently needed in order to ameliorate the present condition. *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (1834) was the monumen-

tal pamphlet that marked his career as a social reformer. In the course of the pamphlet which discusses the problems that confront the working classes of Manchester in detail, popular education emerges as the cornerstone of social reform. What he particularly emphasizes is the education of the children, through which he believes the vicious circle of ignorance and poverty can be broken (Smith 1–34; Tholfsen 6–12).

Kay maintains that the problem of educating working-class children lies in the deprived environment and the lack of proper domestic instruction: “Before the age when, according to law, children can be admitted into the factories, they are permitted to run wild in the streets and courts of the town, their parents often being engaged in labour and unable to instruct them” (70). The children, therefore, need to be separated from the detrimental influences of the environment and sent to school at an early age in order to receive proper education which their homes fail to provide for them. For that purpose, Kay argues, the government should speedily grant funds “so that [the system of infant schools] may be extended, until all the children of the poor are rescued from ignorance, and from the effects of that bad example, to which they are now subjected in the crowded lanes of our cities” (71–72).

Being appointed as Assistant Poor Law Commissioner by Edwin Chadwick, Kay moved to London in 1835, and three years later he wrote *The Training of Pauper Children*, in which he discusses desirable education for the children of the workhouses. As the pauper children live in the workhouse, not in their own home, there is no possibility for them to receive proper domestic education. Kay maintains that it is the state’s responsibility to become “*in loco parentis* to the pauper children, who have no natural guardians” (5). Whereas the state is to act as a surrogate for their parents, the children have to cut off any ties with their parents, which are, in Kay’s opinion, nothing but detrimental for them: “it is the interest of society that the children should neither inherit the infamy, nor the vice, nor the misfortunes of their parents” (14). Although Kay uses the word “inherit,” qualities such as “the infamy,” “the vice,” or “the misfortunes,” are not exactly the qualities which are inherited through blood ties. In Kay’s logic, they are rather the qualities arising from the social environment. It is, therefore, crucially important to remove the children from the morally corrupting influences of their homes:

The moral atmosphere of the school playground should be so purified by the careful exclusion of all vicious influences, that in the moment of the most unrestrained mirth there should be an unseen, but effectual, screen from the contagion of bad example, and the errors which occur should be made the means of deterring the children from their repetition. (37)

The use of the medical terms of contagion reveals the depth of Kay's revulsion towards the depravity of the poor. School is the sanitized space, where the children, being protected from the contagion of moral degradation of their parents, can start a new life to become independent.

The primary purpose of the education of the pauper children is to make them a hardy and intelligent class of workingmen, who can be useful, not burdensome, to the state, and in this regard, Kay's view of education is overtly utilitarian: "[the child] must be trained in industry, in correct moral habits, and in religion; and must be fitted to discharge the duties of its station in life" (6). The choice of the word "train" instead of "teach" or "educate" exemplifies the utilitarian aspect of the education envisioned by Kay, in which the children has to learn more than the three R's and the Catechism. In the early nineteenth century the middle class was promoting practical education influenced by utilitarian thinkers such as James Mill and Jeremy Bentham. In Bentham's view, science and technology are an integral part of the content of education, and the vocational principle in education is advocated based on his belief that knowledge must serve a social function. Education, according to him, must prepare children to earn their future livelihood (Simon 80). Kay's educational reform can be regarded as a part of this movement advancing utilitarian practical education. Kay proposes "practical" or "industrial" training such as gardening, tailoring, shoe-making for the boys, nursing, knitting, sewing, as well as weeding and hoeing for the girls. These lessons are designed to give the children some general skills and knowledge which will be useful whatever job the children have in the future:

In mingling various kinds of industrial instruction with the plan of training pursued in the model school, it is not proposed to prepare the children for some particular trade or art, so as to supersede the necessity for further instruction; it is chiefly intended that the practical lesson, that they are destined to earn their livelihood by the sweat of their brow, shall be inculcated.
(17)

For Kay educational reform of the workhouse is first and foremost a matter of cost and benefit. The cost of education is far exceeded by the cost of maintaining dependent paupers: "The burthen of their dependence cannot cease, even temporarily, unless the children be reared in industry" (5). The state would have to pay even more if the children became criminals due to the lack of education: "Whether the state acknowledge its interests in the education of the masses or not, the consequences of a neglect of the

pauper class evidently are prolonged dependence and subsequent chargeability as criminals in the prisons and penal colonies” (5). Kay’s utilitarian cost-benefit analysis leads him to the conclusion that it is in the “interest” of the state to eradicate ignorance among the poor.

While the creation of a class of hardy workingmen is the primary objective of pauper education, Kay also puts emphasis upon the importance of the domestic comfort of the children’s future homes. Since all the problems of the pauper children such as ignorance, idleness, and viciousness stem from the lack of a proper home, the children themselves have to create their own homes when they grow up in order not to repeat the same failure of their parents. The children have to be taught gardening as it is “a most useful means of affording innocent recreation, and a productive source of comfort to the family of the working man” (22). The school, therefore, has a double function: to offer the children a systematic practical “training” to make them useful workers and to provide them with a simulacrum of domestic space which can become the model of their future homes. For the fulfillment of the second function a balanced combination of schoolmasters and school mistresses is crucial:

[T]here must be both a master and a mistress; for it will be readily granted that there are very few women who possess fine tact, varied information, delicate feeling, and a natural love of children, joined to great physical strength; all which are absolutely requisite for conducting an infant school. (25–26)

In the report on the systematic and schematized “training” there is not so much room for discussing the humanistic aspect of education, and this is one of the few passages in which Kay mentions “feminine” softening qualities such as “delicate feeling, and a natural love of children.” If the fundamental problem of the pauper children lies in the lack of a good home, the school should fill the role of a substitute home and discharge the nurturing function in place of their parents. Humanistic ideals are hard to dismiss even in the education of the children who belong to the lowest stratum of the social hierarchy. The repeated conflict between the utilitarian and humanistic ideas of education complicates the representation of teaching and learning in *Oliver Twist* as well.

III

Dickens’s vociferous attack against the inhuman treatment of the pauper children in the workhouse is one of the most memorable features of *Oliver Twist* for both contem-

poraneous and modern readers. Queen Victoria wrote in her diary on 1 January 1839, “Talked to [Lord Melbourne] on my getting on with *Oliver Twist* [. . .] of the accounts of starvation in the Workhouses and Schools, Mr. Dickens gives in his books. Lord M. says in many schools they give children the worst thing to eat, and bad beer, to save expense” (*Critical Heritage* 44). What is criticized in the first three chapters depicting the workhouse, however, is not only the lack of proper food but also the lack of any efforts to give proper education to the children of the workhouse. Although the gentleman of the board says to Oliver, “You have come here to be educated, and taught a useful trade” (25), Oliver has received virtually no education. All he is instructed to do is to pick oakum, and after making the audacious plea to the master to give him more food, he is conveniently offered as an apprentice with a small amount of premium to the prospective employer.⁴

In *Oliver Twist*, after criticizing the total lack of education in the workhouse, Dickens shifts the focus of the narrative to the various attempts of educating Oliver. The first “teacher” Oliver encounters in his life is Fagin, who gives him lessons of how to become a skillful pickpocket. His den is depicted as a kind of school, in which several “hopeful pupils of the merry old gentleman” (66) are learning. In void of any efforts of the government to teach the deprived children, Fagin poses the threat to social stability by offering the alternative subversive lessons to them. An article, “Moral Economy of Large Towns: Relief of the Poor”, which appeared in *Bentley’s Miscellany* in 1840, discusses the danger of the failure to provide proper education to the poor. The writer, W. C. Taylor, cites an example of Fagin to illustrate his argument.

The controversy is carried on as if the question were between education and no education. Was there ever such a thing as an uneducated human being, except, perhaps, Peter the wild boy? Archbishop Sharpe said many good things, but none the better than his reply to a lady, who said she would give no religious instruction to her children until they were of an age to seek it for themselves. “Madam,” replied the witty prelate, “if you do not teach them, the devil will.” His satanic majesty has indeed organized a very efficient system of national education. Fagin the Jew was one of his best schoolmasters, the Artful Dodger a first-form boy, and Oliver Twist an unruly pupil, who deserved chastisement for disobedience. (134)

Taylor reads the scene depicting Fagin’s education as a warning against the neglect of the duty to educate children.

Fagin’s subversive education forms a complete parallel with the utilitarian education of the pauper children envisioned by Kay. In order to make boys “good” thieves

and pickpockets, Fagin offers the boys practical and vocational training in which instruction and amusement are well combined. The art of picking pockets is taught in a make-believe game in which Fagin imitates the manner of an old gentleman walking along the streets. If Fagin is a skillful teacher, Oliver is a quick and keen learner, who is always responsive to both implicit and explicit demands of the adults around him. Without knowing what the game is designed for, he “followed [Fagin] quietly to the table; and was soon deeply involved in his new study” (71). In Fagin’s school, being dependent and a burden to others is condemned as the gravest evil not to be permitted to any member of the society for whatever reason. The boys thus reproach Oliver when he rejects to join their business: “Why, where’s your spirit? Don’t you take any pride out of yourself? Would you go and be dependent on your friends?” (128). The typical Victorian value of diligence and hard work is of the foremost importance which has to be imbued to the students, sometimes through corporal punishment: “Whenever the Dodger or Charley Bates came home at night, empty-handed, [Fagin] would expatiate with great vehemence on the misery of idle and lazy habits; and would enforce upon them the necessity of an active life, by sending them supperless to bed” (71).

Although sometimes harsh to his boys, Fagin at the same time knows the importance of creating a human relationship with them and provides them with a “home,” in which he assumes the role of a surrogate parent. When Oliver is introduced to Fagin for the first time, the latter is being engaged in a domestic activity of cooking: “In a frying-pan which was on the fire [. . .] some sausages were cooking; and standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew” (65). When Oliver falls asleep, being fed with a sufficient amount of food and drink, he is “gently lifted on to one of the sacks” (66). It is not clear who has “gently” lifted him, but this passage indicates that Fagin’s den is the place where the children are nurtured with care. It is just because Fagin can create a cozy atmosphere of domesticity that his education can exercise such a powerfully contaminating influence, before which even Oliver gives way at times.

Not only the physical needs of the children but also their emotional needs are well attended. What Oliver has been craving for is not food but love and sympathy after all: “Oliver, instead of possessing too little feeling, possessed rather too much” (39), which has to be reciprocated by others. Fagin and his boys are able to make Oliver feel a sense of comradeship. At least as long as he is one of them, Oliver does not have to feel “[s]o very lonely” (40) as he felt when he was with Bumble. Fagin knows well how to exploit the child’s yearning for love and sympathy and manipulates the child at will.

The most effective method he employs to refashion Oliver's character is solitary confinement, separating him from all communication with others:

In short, the wily old Jew had the boy in his toils; and, having prepared his mind, by solitude and gloom, to prefer any society to the companionship of his own sad thoughts in such a dreary place, was now slowly instilling into his soul the poison which he hoped would blacken it, and change its hue for ever. (131)

The above passage indicates that Fagin shares Kay's belief that a person's character is the product of the environment, and that it is possible to change it through education. For Kay, the final goal of education is to cut off the tie between the children and their parents in order to eradicate "hereditary pauperism" (6). In a similar way Fagin has to undermine "a good sturdy spirit in Oliver's breast" implanted by "nature or inheritance" (21) and thus obliterate any trace of Oliver's familial tie in order to disinherit the child.

If one only looks at the parallel between Fagin's and Kay's education, one might be tempted to interpret *Oliver Twist* as a powerful parody of the educational reform promoted by the Poor Law Commissioners. This interpretation, however, needs further examination.

IV

The education which Oliver receives at Brownlow's and the Maylies' houses is rendered as an antithesis to Fagin's education in many respects. Their houses are the purified space which affords protection against the corrupting influence of the criminal world of Fagin and Sikes. Being taken there in an enfeebled state, either because of illness or injury, Oliver is nursed by female characters such as Mrs. Bedwin, Rose, and Mrs. Maylie with "a kindness and solicitude that knew no bounds" (81). In the sickbed he re-experiences infancy, receiving motherly love and sympathy, which he has been craving for all the time but never received in the workhouse.

D. A. Miller describes Oliver's stay with the Maylies as a "domesticating pedagogy," in which the family, operating as a disciplinary institution, integrates the child into middle-class respectability (10). In the Maylie household, Oliver learns reading and writing, the first step towards integration, and then the Bible, an essential part of Christian education, under the guidance of a village clergyman. Although this "domesticating pedagogy" appears to have nothing in common with Fagin's education, these

two are similar in that both bear some utilitarian aspects. Reading, writing and the Bible are not all that Oliver has learned at the Maylies’:

There was fresh groundsel [. . .] for Miss Maylie’s birds, with which Oliver: who had been studying the subject under the able tuition of the village clerk: would decorate the cages, in the most approved taste. When the birds were made all spruce and smart for the day, there was usually some little commission of charity to execute in the village; or failing that, there was rare cricket-playing, sometimes, on the green; or failing that, there was always something to do in the garden, or about the plants, to which Oliver: who had studied this science also, under the same master, who was a gardener by trade: applied himself with hearty goodwill, until Miss Rose made her appearance. (216)

At this stage Oliver’s identity has not been revealed yet, and it is not very clear to what vocational end his education is directed. Whatever purpose it is, however, here Oliver is given some practical training to do various kinds of work including taking care of Rose’s birds, executing charity, and gardening, so that he might fit in whatever position in society in the future. The utilitarian education for some practical ends is considered to be necessary in the affluent middle-class world of the Maylies and Brownlow, just as it is in the impoverished world of the lower strata of the social hierarchy. Thus Rose says to Oliver before she offers him education, “[Y]ou shall have many opportunities of serving us, if you will. [. . .] [W]e will employ you, in a hundred ways, when you can bear the trouble” (210).

In the scene depicting Brownlow’s household the shift from humanistic to utilitarian education is represented as the shift from the female sphere of domestic nurturing to the male sphere of teaching. This shift is dramatized most effectively when Oliver, who has barely recovered from illness, is summoned to Brownlow’s study. In the nineteenth-century discourse of the private interior space, the study or the library is considered as the male domain, while the bedroom is under the feminine sphere of influence (Kinchin 12–13). Oliver, who is still in an enfeebled state of convalescence, puts on a clean collar and is taken to the library. Then “Oliver tapped at the study door. On Mr. Brownlow calling to him to come in, he found himself in a little back room, quite full of books: with a window, looking into some pleasant little gardens” (97). The movement of Oliver’s eyes from the interior of the room to the gardens implies his hidden desire to escape from the intimidating atmosphere of the study to the freedom of the outside world. Oliver is trapped in an oppressive space of coercive education, not being able to escape from it or go back to the peaceful female domestic sphere of nurturing.

Although Brownlow’s study is filled with books, Oliver is not allowed to indulge in

the pleasure of reading for its own sake. The habit of reading is encouraged only when it leads to a certain vocation to earn one's livelihood, as is indicated in the following conversation between Brownlow and Oliver:

“How should you like to grow up a clever man, and write books, eh?”

“I think I would rather read them, sir,” replied Oliver.

“What! wouldn't you like to be a book-writer?” said the old gentleman.

Oliver considered a little while; and at last said, he should think it would be a much better thing to be a bookseller; upon which the old gentleman laughed heartily, and declared he had said a very good thing. [. . .]

“Well, well,” said the old gentleman, composing his features. “Don't be afraid! We won't make an author of you, while there's an honest trade to be learnt, or brick-making to turn to.” (97)

It is not only the simple pleasure of reading which is denied to Oliver. He is also deprived of the freedom to decide his own future, because the power to choose it is in the hands of his guardian, not his own. It is Brownlow that decides whether he will “make an author” of the child or not. Oliver is a malleable child waiting to be fashioned or refashioned through education according to the design which his guardian has in his mind.

Although the conversation cited above indicates that Brownlow's education is considered to have the power to make Oliver whatever he likes, it is nevertheless built upon the assumption that a person's character has essentially been determined before education. In this respect it fundamentally differs from Fagin's corruptive education, which is based upon the belief that it is the environment, not bloodline or “nature,” that determines a person's character or abilities. Both Brownlow's and Rose's interest in Oliver is aroused because of his “delicate and handsome” (97) appearance, which they believe is the indication of his innate goodness. They do not have to change his fundamental character, because it does not need any reformation from the beginning. Kay has an ambivalent attitude towards the idea that a person is entirely the product of environment, because supposing that the environment is the only determinant, the social hierarchy which was still largely dependent upon “blood” might be challenged. Kay believes in the redeeming power of education which could transform the pauper children into diligent and capable workers by cutting them off from the detrimental influence of their indolent parents. He, however, at the same time believes in the rightfulness of the existing social order in which every person has to fulfill the duty of his/her predetermined social status. As cited before, the ultimate objective of education is to train a child “in industry, in correct moral habits, and in religion” as may “be fitted to

discharge the duties of its station in life” (6). He is conservative after all as his reform aims at maintaining, not transforming, the present social order.

Dickens’s ideas about social order are also marked with the same conservatism as Kay’s, as is clearly exemplified in a speech at the Mechanics’ Institute in Liverpool in February 1844. He said, “Difference of wealth, of rank, of intellect, we know there must be, and we respect them” (Fielding 56). In *Oliver Twist* the social order which is determined by “blood” even before the story starts is not challenged after all. Oliver regains his birthright and social status while Nancy cannot get out of the environment in which she was born in spite of Rose and Brownlow’s persuasion to flee and start afresh. If a person’s “nature” remains intact regardless of the environment, what function can education have? The description of Oliver’s education after being adopted by Brownlow gives us some clue to the answer.

How Mr. Brownlow went on, from day to day, filling the mind of his adopted child with stores of knowledge, and becoming attached to him, more and more, as his nature developed itself, and showed the thriving seeds of all he wished him to become—how he traced in him new traits of his early friend, that awakened in his own bosom old remembrances, melancholy, and yet sweet and soothing [. . .] these are all matters which need not to be told. (359–60)

While Oliver’s “nature develop[s] itself” and replicates the past as if it were a part of the cycle of nature which is beyond the control of human beings, Brownlow is “filling the mind of his adopted child with stores of knowledge.” The education described here prefigures Gradgrind-like education, in which a child’s mind is regarded as a simple container waiting to be filled with adult knowledge. Although what knowledge is delivered to Oliver is not clear, this passage indicates that some sort of coercive education of factual knowledge is deemed to be necessary in Brownlow’s educational scheme. Considering that Brownlow told Oliver before that “there’s an honest trade to be learnt” (97), this education can be practical education aiming at helping Oliver adopt a certain profession. The ideal education Dickens envisages in *Oliver Twist* is not very different from the education which Kay designed for the pauper children after all.

V

Heretofore I examined *Oliver Twist* along with Kay’s writing on the education of the pauper children and demonstrated that Dickens and Kay share a similar view on

education. While both recognize the necessity of humanistic education of nurturing children with love and sympathy, they at the same time hold that education should serve some utilitarian purposes.

In conclusion I will look at two articles on the education of pauper children which appeared in *Household Words* in 1850. The first one entitled “A Day in a Pauper Palace” depicts a pauper school in Swinton, which is located to the north-west Manchester, and the other one, “London Pauper Children,” depicts a school in Norwood to the south of London. In both articles the importance of making good, useful citizens out of the poorest population is repeatedly emphasized in a highly utilitarian tone. “[D]oes the State desire good citizens or bad?” the writer asks in the first article, “If good ones, let her manufacture them; and if she can do so by the agency of such establishments as that of Swinton, at not too great a cost, let us not be too critical as to her choice of the raw material” (361). The overtly materialistic use of words such as “manufacture” and “raw material” underlines the utilitarian attitudes of the writer. In the latter article, the writer becomes even more blatantly materialistic: “The place we speak of is the Pauper-School at Norwood, which may be called a factory for making harmless, if not useful subjects, of the very worst of human material” (549). In those “factories” for the production of good useful members of society the practical teaching, or what the writer refers to “the Industrial training,” such as tailoring, blacksmithing, and raising cattle is the essential part of education. Although the writer fleetingly mentions “the presence of much good, and of a fair amount of comfort and happiness” (“London Pauper Children” 549) of the school, the description of utilitarian education weighs far more than that of humanistic education.

According to Gargano institutionalized education is recognized as an implicit threat to middle-class children by Victorian novelists. Dickens, or at least *Household Words*, however, envisions the practical and comprehensive education experimented at the pauper schools as a possible model for educational reform for all classes. In “A Day in a Pauper Palace”, the writer concludes the article by saying: “The Swinton Institution is a practical illustration of what can be done with even the humblest section of the community. [. . .] Let us [. . .] hope that no effort will relax to bring out, in addition to Pauper Palaces, Educational Palaces for all classes and the denominations” (364). The magazine, in which the editor acclaimed an opposition to a “mere utilitarian spirit” (“A Preliminary Word,” 1) in the launching, is on the side of utilitarian reform after all.

Notes

- 1 There are numerous accounts concerning Dickens's involvement in these schemes in biographies and other criticisms. Just to list a few among them, see Philip Collins's classical study, *Dickens and Education*, pp. 87–92, and also "Dickens and the Ragged Schools." In *Household Words* there appeared several articles which introduced the practical vocational education of the Ragged Schools, including Alexander Mackay, "The Devil's Acre," W. H. Wills, "The Power of Small Beginnings," and W. H. Wills and Charles Dickens, "Small Beginnings." As for Dickens's involvement in the Home for Homeless Women, the most recent detailed description of the home is Jenny Hartley's *Charles Dickens and the House of Fallen Women*. See also Akiko Takei's "Dickens and Charity: An Evaluation of Uraina Cottage."
- 2 There are several articles which advocated Kay-Shuttleworth's reform for national education in *Household Worlds*, including W. H. Wills's favorable review of Kay's *The Social Condition and Education of the People in England and Europe* (1850), W. H. Wills, "The Schoolmaster at Home and Abroad" (1850) and Dickens and Henry Morley, "Mr. Bendigo Buster on Our National Defences against Education" (1850).
- 3 One critic of *Frazer's Magazine* says, "Every one [. . .] is struck with the intense folly of displaying *Oliver Twist* as a model of virtue, elegance and refinement, after an education under Mr. Bumble the beadle, Mr. Sowerberry the undertaker, and Mr. Fagin the fence" (Kaplan 414). More recently Cates Baldrige writes, " 'Nurture' cannot explain Oliver's character since he was nurtured in the workhouse; 'nature'—in the sense of a physical and moral inheritance—becomes the only explanation we can reasonably consider once we begin to discover the identities of the hero's parents" (186).
- 4 Kay criticized the system of the compulsory apprenticeship of the pauper children by maintaining that it tempted the wrong kind of employer and caused untold misery and suffering for the child (Smith 45). In *The Training of Pauper Children*, he also argued that "a large number of the children whose training had been neglected up to the period of their apprenticeship, would be found so ignorant, idle, and vicious, that the efforts of the best master would be vainly expected for their reformation" (11).

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