

**Dickens, Education, and Social Enrichment**

by

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### **Author's Declaration**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines Charles Dickens's criticism of Victorian education systems. This thesis considers three of Dickens's novels: *Hard Times*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Great Expectations*. By demonstrating the failure of Victorian school systems to encourage these environments, Dickens's novels highlight the need to teach children how to critically analyze their surroundings and question the information that they are provided. Although regulation and control are necessary dimensions of schools, they should not restrict children's individuality, creativity, or imagination. Schools should aim to develop morally sound children who participate socially, economically, and culturally as a part of larger communities of human beings. This thesis considers how Dickens emphasizes childhood as an integral part of human development, and how establishing strong education systems is integral to future social improvement. Education systems must be open to scrutiny and must be willing to change. Children should always be a priority for society, and schools are an integral part of this development.

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## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in citations:

Culture and Anarchy: *CA*

Great Expectations: *GE*

Hard Times: *HT*

Nicholas Nickleby: *NN*

## Introduction: Dickens on Pedagogy

“‘You are to be in all things regulated and governed,’ said the gentleman, ‘by fact. We hope to have, before long, a board of fact, composed of commissioners of fact, who will force the people to be people of fact, and of nothing but fact’” (Dickens, *HT* 6). Regulation and governance are central to Mr. Gradgrind’s pedagogy. They are also a focal point for Charles Dickens’s criticism about Victorian education, which is central to many of his novels including *Hard Times*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Great Expectations*. Dickens’s scrutiny is not limited to these three novels, but these texts provoke further exploration of the students’ position in mid-Victorian education systems.

Restrictive education systems are central to Dickens’s novels, particularly because a strict pedagogical approach undermines his valuation of childhood and his consideration of children as key components of social enrichment. The three novels in question emphasize the importance of providing children with a quality education, particularly children from the lower classes who have little opportunity to advance intellectually or socially without support. Each of these novels contains disenfranchised children who struggle when adapting to the world because their education inadequately prepares them to participate in society beyond the school system.

Dickens’s novels criticize inefficient school systems, such as Mr. Gradgrind’s school, Dotheboys Hall, and Mr. Wopsle’s Great Aunt’s School. Through this criticism, Dickens advocates that children receive a strong educational foundation. By demonstrating restrictive pedagogical systems, Dickens promotes liberal and flexible school systems that consider student needs and ideas. His novels demonstrate how important it is that students are provided with an environment in which they may grow and develop without teachers and adults imposing ideals upon youth.

As David Paroissien explains, establishing a consensus about what children should learn is important, but the process requires flexibility and must accommodate children's unique perspectives and learning styles. Paroissien claims that the Victorians desired a school system that is "designed to ameliorate the lot of the industrial poor" and provide the next generation with "the skills needed to raise themselves out of poverty" (267). This idea is particularly evident in *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations* where working-class children like Sissy and Pip are exposed to different ways of thinking and living at Mr. Gradgrind's school and Miss Havisham's, respectively. Although *Nicholas Nickleby* does not portray this type of poor education, the fact that Squeers' school does not provide its abandoned children with the resources and skills to make their way in the world is a central aspect of Dickens's criticism.

Paroissien explains that crucial goals of Victorian education were that educated pupils would "bear usefully on the industrial pursuits of the middle and lower classes and simultaneously help promote unity between the classes" to improve overall social morality based on interpersonal respect (275). Education is multidimensional, but in the Victorian period its goals were centred on developing people to contribute to and survive in a rapidly changing industrial society. One level of this education is to ensure economic growth by teaching children about the ways that they may contribute to society economically, such as working in a bank like young Tom Gradgrind does.

However, education's goals extend beyond developing children's intellects for economic purposes. Morality and community are equally important consequences that educational systems can implement. Dickens focuses on these two dimensions in particular. He criticizes those who are immoral, such as young Tom Gadgrind who steals from his employment, or those whose selfish pursuits prevent their participation in wider communities, such as Pip who rejects the

labouring class from which he comes. For Dickens, education should instill a sense of morality and community that reinforces the common humanity that people share. Moreover, a strong education system is concerned with educating people from lower classes to mitigate their suffering and provide them with the ability to advance beyond predetermined social confines. Through enhancing social morality, improving people's intellects, and forming strong communities, education aims to improve society for both current and future generations.

Dickens's novels offer important criticism regarding mid-Victorian education because they highlight the lower and middle-class plea for an improved education system. Even though most of his writing occurs before the 1860 shift in pedagogical approaches that focused more on the middle classes rather than considering education as an upper-class privilege (Manning 59; Simon 7), Dickens's novels encourage educational change. To accentuate the need for improved education systems, *Hard Times*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Great Expectations* demonstrate Victorian education's failure to equip students with the ability to contribute socially, to participate in larger communities, and to act compassionately and morally in society. These novels approach educational issues differently, but find common ground in the need to develop children and value them as crucial members of society.

Being an advocate for children and the impoverished, Dickens wrote novels that highlight the need to consider the pupils' best interests when establishing teaching philosophies. By using this approach, Dickens considers his society with the future in mind. His criticism articulates the potential for change, as well as the need to continuously review education systems. This idea is accentuated through *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Louisa Gradgrind* who both challenge schoolmasters and counteract the restrictions imposed upon students. Dickens presents hope for the future, but

he also tempers this hope considering the restrictive pedagogy that he considered commonplace in his society, which will be explored later in this chapter.

*Hard Times* condemns a public education system that focuses on strict pedagogy that inhibits unique perspectives from students and demanding that they conform to Mr. Gradgrind's "Facts." The novel demonstrates that flexibility is necessary for effective pedagogy, and that children grow the most when their perspectives are valued and when they are encouraged to scrutinize their society. Although an education that reflect current social conditions, such as Gradgrind's industrial school, is important because it prepares students to function in the world beyond the school, Gradgrind's 'Fact'-based ideology is too rigid and stifles the children's growth. For example, Sissy Jupe becomes increasingly fragmented and unsure of herself the longer that she is exposed to Gradgrind's ideology of 'Fact'. Because she does not conform to the rigid perspectives promoted by the school, Sissy's development is hindered and she is unable to participate in Coketown's industrial community, be it socially or economically. Eventually, she is left aside and her perspectives are no longer considered.

Similarly, young Tom Gradgrind is evidence that Gradgrind's pedagogy is ineffective. It prepares Tom to work at Mr. Bounderby's Bank, but education does not equip Tom with the moral principles and sense of community necessary to function and contribute to Coketown society. As an adult, Tom accumulates gambling debts and steals from the bank to pay those debts. Instead of contributing socially and participating in Coketown's wider community, Tom detracts from society, alienates himself from his family, and, although he is not incarcerated for his crime, society is not hindered (perhaps it is better off) by his absence when he goes abroad.

Conversely, Louisa Gradgrind is a voice through which change is encouraged. She challenges her father's pedagogical philosophy and, despite her restrictive upbringing, she comes

to understand the common humanity that she shares with the labouring class. As such, she becomes a key advocate for both pedagogical and social change when she undermines her father's perspectives and provokes a positive shift in his educational philosophy. She counteracts her father's rigid ideals, and her perspectives provoke change within the novel. Louisa is the antithesis to Tom and Sissy who are fragmented to the point that they serve little social purpose. She presents hope for the future, and her counterintuitive perspectives are both welcome and necessary to improve Coketown's community and future prosperity.

*Hard Times* is one of Dickens's later novels, but it correlates education and wider society through parallel plotlines. It establishes many patterns that *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Great Expectations* present, particularly the way that young people struggle to interact with wider society. As such, *Hard Times* facilitates the latter novels' discussions, which is why it is considered first. Whereas *Hard Times* is a later Dickensian novel, *Nicholas Nickleby* derives from the beginning of Dickens's career. The temporal distance between the novels (twenty-five years) highlights how slow change is, and it accentuates the need for continuous questioning.

Dickens's earlier criticism is more direct and hyperbolized particularly when Wackford Squeers' child abuse is demonstrated when he beats Smike (*NN* 156). Thomas Gradgrind's principles are equally unnecessary, but Dickens's writing at this latter stage of his career is less episodic, and *Hard Times*' subject is more concentrated on education and industrial culture rather than the adventures that Nicholas has. *Nicholas Nickleby* is equally critical to Dickens's critique on education, but it is more episodic like Dickens's earlier sketches and as a result the pedagogical criticism is not maintained throughout. Philip Collins points out that, while the Squeers episode is an important part of the novel and it reflects Dickens's primary purpose for writing a novel against Yorkshire schools, it is only an episode because Nicholas "is in Yorkshire

for less than one-sixth of the narrative” (110). Even when the school system is portrayed, there is little teaching that occurs. Herein lies the novel’s pedagogical critique: Squeers focuses on regulation and authority to the point where the children are uneducated and cannot function beyond Dotheboys Hall. The children are not provided with the freedom to grow and provoke social change, and their development is stunted. Whereas Gradgrindian pedagogy is restrictive and limiting because of its rigidity, Squeers’ pedagogy—or lack thereof—is limiting because of his abuse. Children are not taught or nurtured, and the school leaves them unable to participate in society beyond the school.

Smike is a première example of the damage that Yorkshire schools instill through abuse and regulation. Smike is beaten and treated as Squeers’ slave, and he is broken by the system. He becomes dependent on Nicholas’ support beyond the school and, despite Smike’s desire to escape Dotheboys, he lacks the skills to contribute socially. He survives for a time through Nicholas’ support, but his death demonstrates that a young man as fragmented as Smike serves little purpose to society because he does not have any translatable work skills, he is emotionally broken because he cannot express his love for Kate Nickleby, and he cannot form communities beyond the school.

Conversely, Nicholas’ character functions similar to Louisa Gradgrind’s insofar as he advocates change. He condemns the immorality of Squeers’ methods, and he develops his own values of right and wrong while observing Squeers. Although Nicholas is an instructor at Dotheboys, his growth is most prevalent in the novel. He transitions from being haughty and easily dismissed, to being someone who challenges oppression and who refuses to work in an environment that contributes little to the world. He does not dwell on his lack of wealth, but instead focuses on improving himself, standing up for what is right, and developing a supportive

community for the Dotheboys children. By challenging Squeers' abuse, Nicholas provides an important perspective that calls for the eradication of Yorkshire schools specifically, and more broadly encourages a reconsideration of established school systems.

The last part of this thesis considers a more abstract, yet equally important novel regarding Dickens's pedagogical criticism. *Great Expectations* offers more abstract criticism of Victorian education that emphasizes Pip's struggles to function socially because his education does not adequately prepare him for life beyond the forge. This novel demonstrates and criticizes how insufficient education renders it difficult for a child to contribute as he or she matures, and Pip's struggles center on the idea of literacy. Literacy is a prevalent topic that permeates the novel, and it is often discussed in Pip's younger life at the forge. Pip tries to write a letter according to sound, and Joe tries to decipher the letters even though he is even more illiterate than Pip. Pip begins to learn how to read and write with Bidley's help at Mr. Wopsle's Great Aunt's School, but Pip's overall education for life beyond the forge is inadequate. As Pip begins to reconcile his debts and re-establish his bond with Joe near the end of the novel, both characters' literacy is portrayed and this capability facilitates their communication and, by extension, reinforces a bond that helps Pip to heal and gain control of his life.

Through Pip, Max Byrd associates literacy with a child's ability to function in society. He explains how Pip's illiteracy at the beginning of the novel leads him to create fictions: "At the beginning of his story, Pip cannot read, but his efforts to improve lead him to create fictions, largely out of his own forlorn identity, which he foolishly believes" (259). Pip's desire to improve amplifies as he grows. It begins in Mr. Wopsle's Great Aunt's school, his tutelage under Miss Havisham increases his desire for a different life, and then his experience in London leads him to believe that his life will improve once he comes into his fortune and he marries Estella.

Pip comes to believe that this scenario will unfold, and he is devastated when it does not. Byrd explains that this illiteracy amplifies Pip's struggles in London because "he believes the fiction to be truth, indeed, the whole truth" (261). Pip's ignorance and reliance on fiction to interpret the world breeds his sense of superiority because he does not consider perspectives beyond his own. He considers his ways and perceptions as the absolute truth, which is demonstrated when he is embarrassed by Joe upon his visit to London because he is of an inferior social class. Because Pip is a gentleman, he does not believe Joe is worthy of his company. Pip distances himself from his past, and he tries to ignore the former labouring community in which he once participated and was being trained to contribute economically. By ignoring his past and alienating his friends, however, Pip rejects his support network in favour of an upper-class lifestyle that he deems more desirable.

However, Pip is unable to adapt to the life of a gentleman without overindulging. Pip's ignorance is alienating because he cannot form any sense of community in London, and he struggles to survive in his new surroundings. With Herbert, he racks up debts and places himself at risk of imprisonment. He continues living in his fictional fantasy in which he and Estella are destined to be together, while ignoring the fact that Miss Havisham has trained them to suit opposing functions: he is meant to desire Estella, and she is conditioned to reject him. Instead of contributing economically and socially, Pip becomes dependent on his inheritance and on the fruition of an unlikely circumstance. His illiteracy translates into an inability to critically analyze the world, and produces a form of "social illiteracy" in which Pip is unable to understand his surroundings and adapt to his new community. As a result of insufficient education and guidance, Pip remains underdeveloped for most of the novel and he ends up living on credit, alienated by his delusions and unable to participate in his new community.

Since Pip lacks an adequate intellectual or moral foundation, he does not have the necessary skills to acquire employment or participate in the London upper-class. Pip desires more than being a blacksmith, and he does not want to participate in industrial culture. He is often contrasted to Magwitch, who, like Pip, does not have a strong educational basis. Like Pip, Magwitch is displaced, but the difference is that Magwitch is not meant to conform to unfamiliar social customs. He finds labour in New South Wales (Australia), and he uses his hands to make a fortune. However Pip, being thrust into an unfamiliar social milieu as a London gentleman without being exposed to larger social circles or trained in social customs, is damaged and corrupted because he is trying to be something that he is not. Because he is inadequately prepared intellectually, morally, and socially, he is easily influenced and he ends up detracting from society rather than improving it.

Dickens presents examples of inadequate school systems throughout his oeuvre by demonstrating the failure of Victorian education to nurture children with these qualities. These three novels focus on how educational systems err, whether it is by being too absolute and restrictive like a Gradgrindian school, being abusive and overregulating its students to the point where children learn little like the children at Dotheboys, or whether it is the failure to train students like Pip how to critically analyze and “read” his surroundings. By identifying erroneous practices, these texts highlight key constituents of positive and supportive school systems that nurture children and encourage their various perspectives. However, this critical approach is not limited to the texts in question, but rather it is apparent throughout Dickens’s oeuvre, particularly in *Our Mutual Friend*, *Oliver Twist*, *Dombey and Son*, and *David Copperfield*. Dickens’s pedagogical criticism is wide-ranging, and it functions as a key part of his social criticism. Because education is related to overall social enrichment, Dickens’s pedagogical critiques reflect

wider social movements for improved lifestyles that were prominent in Victorian society. Education is central to this improvement.

Raising awareness about inadequate school systems was important to Dickens, who touches upon the matter in a public speech to the Board of the schools for Warehousemen and Clerks in November of 1857. In this speech, he expresses his disagreement with schools that revere teachers at the students' expense: "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...[and because] I don't see what business the master had to be at the top of it instead of at the bottom" (*Speeches* 240). Dickens condemns the lack of humility that pedagogues had when considering themselves superior because of their position. He reinforces the importance of teachers when creating a nurturing environment, while also highlighting the blame that they share when such an environment is not provided. He expresses concern about seeing "a great many such [schools] in these latter times—where the bright childish imagination is utterly discouraged, and where those bright childish faces...are gloomily and grimly scared out of countenance" (241). He discourages pedagogical methods designed to instill conformity and that restrict the children's imaginations. Dickens correlates the loss of the imagination with the failure of an education system to properly nurture a child's interests. The imagination is central to the child's growth and creativity, and any imposition on this creativity inhibits that child's development.

Dickens reveres 'bright childish faces,' which indicates that he recognizes children as distinct from adults. He considers their brightness encouraging and full of potential. In a September 1843 letter addressed to John Forster, Dickens discusses a letter that he sent to Angela

Burdett-Coutts, a Ragged School proprietress.<sup>1</sup> In the letter, Dickens discusses the encouragement that he receives from people from the lower classes who, despite their wretchedness and hunger, are eager to learn and absorb the instruction that they receive: “The contrast of this labour in the men, with the less blunted quickness of boys; and the universal eagerness to learn; impress me” (*Selected Letters* 189). However, in the same discussion, Dickens struggles with the idea that children cannot learn from books because they cannot read, they have few resources available to them, and the chances that they will receive sustained education are slim. His letter claims that:

They could not be trusted with books; they could only be instructed orally; they were difficult of reduction to anything like attention, obedience, or decent behaviour; their benighted ignorance in reference to the Deity, or to any social duty... was terrible to see. Yet, even here, and among these, something had been done already. The Ragged School... had inculcated some association with the name of the Almighty... (190).

Dickens recognizes the potential that these people have, and he emphasizes how this eagerness is a gift to be nurtured, not restricted. Limitations, be they a lack of resources, attention deficiencies, illiteracy, or restrictive pedagogy, all inhibit children’s potential. He emphasizes their lack of unity and focus, their moral ignorance, and their ignorance regarding social duty. These are key features that he believes are missing from these schools, and he considers improvement in these areas of instruction as crucial to improving these human beings. He takes hope in their eagerness to learn and the exposure that the schools are already receiving, but he believes that teachers can adapt their teaching to improve the school system to help alleviate these people’s ignorance.

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<sup>1</sup> Angela Burdett-Coutts would later consult Dickens on the establishment of Urania Cottage, which sought the redemption of prostitutes.

Dickens emphasizes the role of teachers as integral to nurturing children. John Manning asserts that Dickens's novels express that "method, equipment, system, and curriculum count for little unless all are reinforced by the sympathy and the personality of adequate teachers" (102). Although Manning's insights are somewhat misguided because 'curriculum' and 'system' were still being established when Dickens wrote and were not central to his criticism, his emphasis on teachers is undeniable. Mr. Gradgrind, Mr. M'Choakumchild, and Mr. Squeers are unsympathetic teachers, and they are focal points for Dickens's pedagogical criticism. They are inflexible pedagogues, and their students, such as Sissy Jupe and Smike, suffer because of this rigidity. However, sympathy does not ensure that children receive a strong education. Mr. Wopsle's Great Aunt is well-intentioned because she tries to educate lower-class children, but she ultimately lacks the intellectual know-how and self-discipline to provide Pip with a sufficient intellectual education. Pip remains ignorant and presumptuous about the people in his life, and proves that intention and sympathy are insufficient pedagogical tools if they are not combined with adequate intellectual ability from the instructor.

Manning concludes that Dickens was not an educational pioneer: "Dickens...was neither a pioneer nor a revolutionary in this movement [to improve schools]; but he certainly gave it additional momentum" (200). Although he toured many schools, workhouses, and was acquainted with prisons from his father's imprisonment for debt, Dickens's contributions to Victorian education and children's learning were tangential to the main thrust of his novels. Manning also asserts that Dickens's contributions were emotional rather than intellectual because "there was little analytical sagacity about much of his discussion. Dotheboys Halls should be abolished. But what should be put in their place?" (204). Dickens criticizes and raises awareness about restrictive pedagogy, such as Gradgrind's fact-based school, and about abusive

or inadequate institutions, such as Dotheboys or Mr. Wopsle's Great Aunt's school, but he does not directly suggest alternatives. Manning claims that Dickens:

gave no concrete method other than benevolent charity. True, he thought the state should care for the neglected and the delinquent...[but provides] no comprehensive plan for any large state scheme of social betterment or comprehensive educational system (204).

Perhaps Dickens does not suggest a concrete method of improving the injustices that he criticises. It is certain that he focuses on criticism and undercutting current educational systems rather than explaining what his ideal school would be. However, criticism is key because it highlights the issues. Without highlighting the abuses that occurred in Yorkshire schools, they would not have been eradicated as quickly as they were. Gradgrind's school is hyperbolized and so is Mr. Wopsle's Great Aunt's Ragged School, but they highlight contemporary education's insufficiency. These are all important portraits to understanding the state of education in Victorian England and the role that teachers play in developing students.

Manning admits that Dickens gave the movement to improve schools momentum, but the critical voice that Dickens provides as a leading Victorian novelist provided more than just criticism, and it inspired a community of people who sought his opinion, like Burdett-Coutts. Although Dickens's direct impact is questionable, his letter to Burdett-Coutts suggests that Dickens invested more in education than just criticism through fiction. In a letter to John Forster, Dickens discusses the changes that he proposed to Burdett-Coutts if he donates the financial resources. Among his contentions are that the children need a space to wash and develop good hygiene: "it was of immense importance they should be washed" (*Selected Letters* 186). Aside from practical life skills, Dickens also proposes certain curriculum changes that he desires Burdett-Coutts to consider. In his September 1843 letter to Samuel R. Starey, a treasurer of the

Field Lane Ragged School, Dickens writes: “it seems to me of vital importance that no persons, however well-intentioned, should perplex the minds of these unfortunate creatures with religious mysteries that young people, with the best advantages, can but imperfectly understand” (187). Indeed Dickens centres the teacher as an important resource through which education is made accessible to children. He suggests that it is not up to the children to adapt to the instructor’s dogma, but rather that the instructor must make the information clear and easy to understand. Intentions are important, but they must be combined with the children in mind. If the pupils do not understand what is being taught, then they will not absorb or learn from their education. In turn, they will not develop skills and perspectives that enable their development and enrich their lives.

The question of accessibility helps to explain why Dickens seemingly opposes Burdett-Coutts’ religious instruction. Dickens condemns her teaching the children ‘religious mysteries’ and criticises “injudicious catechising” (*Selected Letters* 189), but he does not mean that this instruction is not beneficial. Rather, the school should provide the children with a strong moral foundation, which can only be established if the children understand what is being taught. If the instructor is ‘injudicious’ when teaching the students, then these pupils will struggle to grasp the meaning of what is being taught. Because they do not understand, their instruction will not provide them with the resources necessary to practice these principles in everyday life. While there are other avenues to acquire this foundation, such as through the Church, providing an education centered on rigid dogma that students do not understand is a waste of time and resources, and it ultimately undermines the aim of such an education.

Dickens’s letter also incorporates class divisions. He mentions how Burdett-Coutts’ instruction would be ‘imperfectly’ understood even by youth with ‘the best advantages’ (*Selected*

*Letters* 189). He indicates that the children that Burdett-Coutts teaches are disadvantaged and, while he appreciates how teachers are willing to teach poor children, “show them some sympathy, and stretch a hand out” (188), the instructors must understand that these children do not have the resources necessary to learn like more advantaged children. However, they should be provided with an equally-adequate education. Teaching them things that even advantaged (literate) children would have difficulty understanding is counterintuitive. If the school aims to teach and enrich children, then education must be accessible regardless of class. For example, Mr. Wopsle’s Great Aunt provides a similar type of education that Burdett-Coutts provides. However, the pupils learn little. Pip remembers a nonsensical poem that repeats the words “Too Rul,” but he does not understand its meaning. Indeed, the poem’s meaning would even be lost upon somebody who is more literate and more advantaged, because the poem is unintelligible and provides pupils with little instruction.

Even though sympathy and good intentions cannot stand alone in education, they are important constituents of pedagogy. Dickens uses sympathy to present issues in Victorian education and to give a voice to disenfranchised children, such as Smike. Dickens provides a sentimental response to the inadequacy of Victorian education. His work contains a simple, yet powerful message regarding the value of childhood and the importance of children for the nation’s future, and that they should be nurtured rather than subordinated. James Hughes explains that, for Dickens, “subordination always dwarfs the human soul, but when the child is forced to a position of abject subordination to a coarse tyrant, the degradation is more complete and more humiliating” (45). The way that Hughes measures subordination is reductive, and it is unclear how one instance of subordination can be measured as ‘more complete’ than another. For example, it is difficult to identify Pip subordinating Joe in London because of their class divide

as more or less complete and humiliating than Sissy being redefined by Mr. Gradgrind. Any subordination is abusive and can be considered tyrannical, but Pip, albeit misguided and selfish, is not a tyrant. The subordination of others, be it Sissy the child or an adult like Joe, is condemnable because it demeans and devalues other people.

However, Hughes provides important insights into Dickens's valuation of the human soul. Central to any education system is child development, but what exactly is being 'developed?' To pinpoint what, exactly, developing the soul consists of is even more difficult because education's effects are multifaceted and have a wide-ranging influence. Considering, as Hughes does, how subordination hinders soul development helps to understand how pedagogues must balance ideology and sympathy. Inflexible educational systems, like Mr. Gradgrind's school and Dotheboys Hall, produce intellectually, morally, and socially flawed human beings.

In most of his novels that consider schools and children's development, Dickens focuses on the negative aspects of his contemporary education systems. He criticizes restrictive pedagogical philosophies, he scrutinizes pedagogical practices, he condemns subordination, he denounces inhibiting original thought and imagination, and he laments child abuse. In contrast, he promotes individuality, accessible education, developing morality, building community, and developing the intellect through sympathetic teachers who have proper teaching resources to deal with the challenges of illiterate, unclean, and impoverished youth. However, his novels never identify (specifically) what Dickens would consider a model school or school system.

In November 1857, Dickens delivered a speech in which he outlines his ideal school system to the board of the schools for Warehousemen and Clerks. After denouncing restrictive practices and the dissemination of inflexible pedagogy, Dickens emphasizes the importance of a nurturing system. A crucial part of developing a soul is nurturing and providing a safe

environment for a child to explore and develop interests. According to Dickens, an ideal school would be “a children’s school, which is at the same time no less a children’s home, a home not to be confided to the care of old or ignorant strangers” but rather it should be a refuge (*Speeches* 242). Dickens always emphasizes the children. The teachers must provide this environment, but the children are the focal point. When he claims that the schools should be ‘no less a children’s home,’ Dickens suggests that it should be a warm and nurturing environment. It should tolerate mistakes and consider them opportunities for children to grow and learn. The environment should not be run by people like Mr. Gradgrind, Mr. Squeers, or Miss Havisham who only consider personal interests. Rather, the instructor must be a part of the community and act as a parental figure for the children. This idea is emphasized when Sissy Jupe moves into Mr. Gradgrind’s house and she is forced to “begin [her] history” (*HT* 44) anew. From this point, Sissy lacks a home because neither her school life nor her home life provides a nurturing environment. Instead of instituting this system, Dickens’s vision of an ideal school fosters a sense of domestic and public love. It establishes a community of people who respect and support each other, and it is a space where children can grow without fear of abuse or subordination.

In a May 1864 address to a group of actors trying to establish an acting school, Dickens praises public schools for the values that they implement, and the consideration that they give to the child. He believes that public schools are a crucial role in providing a basis for forming liberal education and developing pupils. Dickens tells his audience that they “may differ about the curriculum and other matters, but the frank, free, manly, independent spirit preserved in our public schools” is unquestionable (*Speeches* 336). Complementing the idea that a school should be a home, Dickens outlines certain values that all schools should instill despite pedagogical differences. He values the child’s independence and freedom, as well as an opportunity to be

open about perspectives, feelings, and attitudes. The curriculum should be flexible to suit the context, but these core principles should always remain intact. Teachers are important because they uphold these values and they provide the supportive environment. However, everything centers on the children, and any changes implemented should consider their development and enrichment.

Dickens's plea for pedagogical reassessment aims to mitigate the greed and self-interestedness of authority figures like Squeers. Dickens's novels encourage individual discovery and innovation, but more importantly they condemn any practice that restricts student growth, be it intellectual or spiritual. Considering these values, the concepts and criticisms outlined in this thesis are applicable across a variety of geographical locations, educational disciplines, and political systems. Just as the need to re-examine pedagogy should not be restricted to the dimensions in question, so the principles and conclusions drawn from these case studies—*Hard Times*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Great Expectations*—should be models for widespread pedagogical reconsideration that focuses equally on social and individual needs, and that understands that stifling individuality hinders both personal and social growth.

However, these concepts are not necessarily practiced, and systems are imperfect. Presenting hypothetical scenarios and practicing these principles are separate matters. Victorian fiction, particularly by Dickens, presents similar criticisms and places them into equally hypothetical scenarios. Fiction presents a space through which society may be modelled and criticized, while also captivating audiences and entertaining. Whereas philosophy presents strong logic, fiction relies on illogical and hyperbolized scenarios. It relies on metaphor, and uses transferences of meaning to inspire critical thought. The philosophical perspectives considered

are a platform upon which analysis may be provoked, and the fictional ideas regarding education can be analyzed through Dickens's fiction.

*Hard Times*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Great Expectations* offer examples of Dickens's social critique as it pertains to education. While these selected novels are only a sample of Dickens's writing on education, they offer a detailed exploration concerning individuals who are suppressed not only by their education systems, but by the social conditions that influenced mid-Victorian education. They promote the role of the individual and the importance of the child for future social improvement. These novels condemn mistreating individuals—be they children or adults—and highlight the need to cultivate young minds so that they can reach their full potential. Even the most uncultivated minds, such as those of Sissy Jupe or Magwitch, can hope for an improved life if they are included socially and given a strong foundation. In turn, these individuals can translate their skills into social scrutiny with the goal of improving the current social conditions so that erroneous and restrictive practices may be mitigated or, more importantly, corrected.

### Stunted Development: *Hard Times*

*Hard Times* is divided into two distinct, yet interwoven plotlines that criticize Thomas Gradgrind's philosophy of education as it relates to Coketown's industrial culture. The novel scrutinizes the reverence for preconceived "realities" (Dickens, *HT 2*) in their most simplified and restrictive form, as well as education in an industrial community. The novel begins with Sissy Jupe's struggles in Gradgrind's school, where she is redefined according to her number rather than her name. Sissy's journey progresses as she struggles to adapt to her new life with the Gradgrind family, in which she experiences a growing sense of inadequacy and inferiority before becoming irrelevant as the novel shifts towards everyday life in Coketown. Leaving Sissy aside, the novel focuses on young Tom and Louisa Gradgrind, who struggle to contribute and participate in Coketown's community after being raised according to their father's restrictive philosophy. In this sense, the novel correlates the restrictive pedagogy that children like Sissy, Tom and Louisa endure with the negative impacts it has in their adult lives.

The novel condemns Mr. Gradgrind's pedagogy and reverence of "Fact" because it is inflexible. Though this criticism, the novel demonstrates that school systems must be flexible and encourage students' unique perspectives. Rather than imposing rigid rules and ideas, such as Bitzer's description of a horse, critical analysis and scrutiny should be encouraged. Instilling conformity throughout the classroom should not be a pedagogue like Gradgrind's goal, but rather providing a space through which children can grow and scrutinize their society.

The school's influence persists through the adulthood of Sissy Jupe, Louisa, and young Tom Gradgrind. Education is a platform for promoting social progress through morality, community, and intellect, and an effective school functions through a nurturing system that balances both a child's individuality and social contributions. A system constructed according to this model has

greater potential than an education that is restrictive, like Mr. Gradgrind's school. On one hand, children like Louisa Gradgrind have the potential to provoke change and improve the future. On the other hand, children like Sissy Jupe and Tom Gradgrind (junior) cannot overcome their intellectual deficiencies, which ultimately inhibit their social contributions. This contrast suggests two things: the first is that change is possible, but it is slow; the second is that change is slow because contemporary education systems establish a way of thinking that persists generations after change is instituted.

In order to understand the role of Gradgrind's school in Coketown society and its damaging impact on the pupils that attend the school, three dimensions must be examined. The first considers Sissy Jupe as a product of the "warehouse...for the hard facts" (*HT* 1) education that Gradgrind's system provides. Through nomenclature, Gradgrind redefines not only how Sissy interacts with the world, but also how she identifies herself. The second dimension is the relationship between education and identity exemplified through young Tom's and Louisa's development, and through the opposing ways that they come to consider their social status. The third and final considerations are the restrictions that schools impose on students as part of a system that subordinates individual interests to ensure social conformity.

David Paroissien discusses how Mr. Gradgrind's philosophy reflects "ideas introduced in the 1840s and indicate Dickens's distaste for a system he found increasingly troublesome" (260). The ideas of which Paroissien speaks concentrate on the growing desire for criteria that determines which branches of knowledge were necessary for lower and middle-class children to grow into socially responsible adults who contribute to Victorian industry. It was a movement that desired building schools "designed to operate with the efficiency of factories and supply teachers trained to impart branches of useful knowledge as the route to a new and hopeful future"

(267). However well-intentioned these ideas were, they risked being too rigid and restricted students to prescribed information. If children are bound to an immovable 'Fact'-based system, then they are not afforded the freedom to discover and grow as members of a wider community. Systems like Mr. Gradgrind's, while hyperbolized, demonstrate the lack of development that children experience if they are restricted to considering objective principles that do not engage their emotions, subjective interpretations, and critical thought.

As Philip Collins explains, Dickens saw the merits in public education and its potential to mitigate the abuses and lack of learning that occurred in public schools like Dotheboys Hall, but he was worried that the new systems, encapsulated in Mr. Gradgrind's school, were too rigid. Dickens's writing supports a State system, but it does not demand that the State should have complete control. According to Collins, Dickens believed that "the State should ensure that all children received some minimum of schooling, should be prepared to help pay for it, and should supervise the standard of teaching" (71). The State has a duty to supply its citizens with education and the opportunity to better themselves. In turn, those citizens are expected to contribute socially. In this sense, having an education system that prepares people for industrial culture was important to Victorian growth. However, balance is necessary. Students should be supported in their own endeavours, and people should be able to express their perspectives.

Gradgrind's system reflects Victorian concerns and values regarding industry. It operates the machine-like culture upon which Coketown, and by extension Victorian England, prides itself. Matthew Arnold discusses this machine-like social approach in *Culture and Anarchy*, condemning those who consider the machine an integral social tool. He mocks those who regard machines as "precious ends in themselves" (CA 64) as if the machinery has "value in and of itself" (63). Underlying these perceptions is that the machine supersedes human life not only in a

literal sense, but also figuratively through the attitudes that people foster. Implicitly, Arnold questions how humanity can thrive or improve by upholding rigid class structures and devaluing human beings because they are of a lower class. How can industry, represented through the machine, precipitate prosperity and, tangentially, happiness? It cannot, and this conclusion provokes Arnold's assertion that "machinery is...our besetting danger" (63) because it leads to what he considers a "disproportioned" end: servitude. Servitude implies extreme compliance to social standards, and it insinuates that individual character is being stifled. The result is a disproportioned society that concentrates its skilled labour in a limited market. Societies that revere industry, like Coketown, do not capitalize on their citizens' individual talents. They do not expand socially because they are concerned with sustenance. Maintaining the status quo does not alleviate the human suffering or the social divides that the novel portrays. People do not grow in these systems because they learn to serve the machine as if it supersedes their future.

The machine metaphor is crucial to Dickens's social critique, and it is consistent with Thomas Carlyle's own condemnation of the Victorians' machine-obsessed culture. William Oddie discusses this culture, stating that Carlyle and Dickens were fascinated with machine symbolism because of its ambivalence. They consider how "the machine was the agent of progress; at the same time, it was...indifferent to human needs, and could even be destructive to human life and happiness" (117). This catch-22 is evident in *Hard Times*, where machinery is essential to prosperity and forms Coketown's economic foundation, but the people's dependence and fixation on these elements enforce strict divides between labourers and masters. However, there is a risk that the machine becomes figurative insofar as it establishes a cultural ethos that people follow; they become devoted to industrial attitudes and opinions, which are established in Gradgrind's school. As a result of this social mentality, Coketown's education system is extreme

because it favours social needs over people's needs, and it fails to achieve a balance between the two. The system reinforces empirical values while subordinating individuals, which is where Dickens focuses his critique. When executed to these extremes, the machine—in this case education—becomes destructive by stifling growth and restricting Coketown's quality of life and ultimately people's happiness.

Restricting happiness is a risk, but considering happiness as a way to measure a social system's success contradicts how Dickens values human happiness as a by-product of freedom, but not happiness as a goal. Increased happiness is Louisa's motivation for challenging her father, despite admitting that she is unhappy (*HT* 205). Instead, she desires to satisfy her "hunger and thirst" (206) for a life "where rules, and figures, and definitions were not quite absolute" (206), which is consistent with the idea that pedagogy must be flexible to produce the freedom necessary for children to learn. People need the freedom to expand their souls and develop emotionally. Being precise like Bitzer is when discussing financial details, "'a hundred and fifty-four, seven, one'" (173), serves very little purpose beyond contributing economically, and this exactness exhibits little personal development because he thinks only in absolutes. Louisa rejects this lifestyle, and she condemns developing children according to her father's model because it fails to provide the nurturing necessary to enable the development of the soul.

The absence of happiness is a by-product of stunted individuality. When Louisa confronts her father, she explains that her soul is undeveloped, and that she does not have any "sentiments of [her] heart" (*HT* 205). She is wretched because both her intellect and her emotions are underdeveloped, and she cannot interact with the world emotionally or derive sympathy for those less fortunate than her. Her lack of development inhibits her full participation in Coketown's community, especially her association with members of the working class. Similarly, Tom's theft

and immorality, which derives from a similar undeveloped soul, produce his wretchedness. When he lies to Louisa about her finances helping Stephen Blackpool's crime, he reacts by "tearing his hair, morosely crying, grudgingly loving her, hatefully but impenitently spurning himself" (183). Tom lacks the morality to repent for his crimes, and his wretchedness compounds as he tried to conceal it. He stoops to lying to the one person who cares for him because he is driven by his need for money to pay off his debts.

Sissy Jupe is a primary figure of stunted development because Mr. Gradgrind's school reforms her according to industrial customs. While Louisa and young Tom Gradgrind are important figures because they are nurtured according to their father's principles, Sissy is crucial to the novel's criticism because she demonstrates how imposing cultural ideals can hinder an individual's development. Sissy's struggles when adapting to Gradgrind's system highlight a culture's destructiveness when it is used to mould the individual according prescribed social ideals. Gradgrind's school overturns how Sissy considers herself in larger society as opposed to her home life. In public spaces like at the school, she must call herself Cecilia, but at home she is affectionately called Sissy. Because the school alters her outlook and how she composes herself, Sissy must reconfigure her identity to suit Gradgrind's formality. In this sense, the potential for change that a cultivated individual harbours is negated by Coketown's rigidity. Sissy comes to believe that there is an appropriate way to think, and that the authorities' insights are superior to her own. This shift in mindset diminishes Sissy's spirit and redefines her to the extreme where she is silenced.

In Gradgrind's school, Sissy is redefined as "girl number twenty" (Dickens, *HT 2*) to reflect the system's factory-like nature, which categorizes people according to their gender and a number, and it stifles individuality and subjective thought. Compartmentalization makes it easy

to identify members of Coketown's industrial machine. When Gradgrind asserts that he does not know "that girl" (2), he is not just insinuating that he does not recognize Sissy, but rather he is unable to identify "that girl" as a part of the system because she does not uphold Coketown's ideals. Because she is an outlier who is separate from other students, she is a danger to Gradgrind's philosophy and, by extension, industrial culture. Her reasserting her nickname, 'Sissy,' instead of her given name, Cecilia, indicates that she has the potential to challenge social norms, but her education must stifle this potential and eradicate these her non-conformist perspectives in order to maintain these customs. Whereas her father's profession is tending to sick horses, Sissy can be considered a social illness that must be "cured" in order to re-establish social order.

The fact that Sissy's father is a horsebreaker is ironic because Sissy too must be broken by Gradgrind's system. The term 'horsebreaker' is apt because Sissy must be broken to conform to her master's demands and customs; she must be trained to conform to the social expectations outlined by Gradgrind's school. This imposed conformity is counterintuitive because it forces Sissy to participate in a community to which she is not accustomed. Trying to 'break' Sissy of the horsebreaker culture suggests that their ways are unsuitable to participate in Mr. Gradgrind's social circles. It devalues the horsebreaker community, and discounts people of lower-classes. Even though lower-class speech is coarse, as Mr. Sleary's lisp demonstrates, people like the circus peoples are compassionate and sympathetic, and they maintain a sense of community regardless of class. For example, Mr. Sleary helps young Tom to get away from persecution even though Mr. Gradgrind is condescending towards people of inferior class, like Sissy, for most of the novel. Unlike Bitzer who in his own self-interest wants to persecute Tom to ensure that he never steals again (*HT* 273), Sleary does not even consider his own well-being. A person needs

help, so Sleary provides help. Even though he is uneducated, he has the moral foundation that public schools, which were established in the nineteenth-century, should instill in their students.

Instead of accepting money for his efforts, Sleary wishes his compensation go to a fellow horse-rider, ““Childerth [who] ith a family man”” (275), who needs the financial help to survive and raise his children. Again, Dickens uses a character’s morality to emphasize the importance of childhood as the foundation for a nation’s prosperity. Sleary selflessly sacrifices money to help those in need, and to acquire a collar for his dog and a bell for his horse. He thinks of children and creatures ahead of himself, whose only desire is to receive a free drink of Brandy (275) with Gradgrind. In this sense, Sleary levels the class boundaries by asking for a drink with his social superior. By thinking of everyone before himself, he demonstrates the common humanity that people share, which Gradgrind struggles to understand for most of the novel. Sleary serves as a model for developing sympathetic and community-oriented human beings who selflessly help other people regardless of class differences.

The novel’s pedagogical critique is established through the juxtaposition between Sissy and Bitzer, who is a paradigm for Gradgrind’s system and for Coketown’s ‘machine’-like attitudes and culture. Sissy standing in the sunlight renders her more “lustrous” (*HT* 3), and highlights her individuality. Conversely, Bitzer is paler and his eyes are less defined (3). The sunlight is allegorical insofar as it represents the characters’ individuality and how the characters’ potential to transform society fades with the sunlight. Sissy’s light represents hope because she is rife with potential. Conversely, Bitzer is at the end of the light where his potential wanes and the possibility that he changes is fading. He is a product of the system and represents conformity. Although Bitzer is an exaggerated character, he forecasts what Sissy will become at Gradgrind’s school because the longer that Sissy is influenced by Gradgrind’s principles, the further that she

will move away from this light. Her “lustrous” (3) nature will fade and she will become just another part of the social machine. The sunlight metaphor exceeds the school when Coketown people are marred by a “sun eternally in eclipse” (157) because of industrial smoke. This metaphor demonstrates that Sissy and Bitzer are microcosms of working class Victorians, and that they are a part of a larger industrial milieu to which they are supposed to assimilate. It also foreshadows the disintegration of boundaries between education and larger society, where education’s restrictions are reflected in industrial society’s shortcomings. Just as the children will stop growing, Coketown will not improve.

Bitzer’s definition of a horse demonstrates his insufficient education: “Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth” (*HT* 4). The horse is reduced to a rigid series of signifiers that do not interrelate, as the excessive punctuation insinuates. Even variations, such as horses who shed their hoofs in “marshy countries” as opposed to those in other regions, can easily be broken down geographically to establish a standard definition. Considering the association between Sissy and an unbroken horse, then Bitzer’s rigid definition points to the school’s goal in redefining Sissy so that she can be easily identified by a rigid set of signifiers, such as being Cecilia: “girl number twenty” (2).

The horse is a microcosm of the school’s failure because it teaches students to identify things objectively, but it does not ask students to make connections between the features. Subjective perspectives are forbidden because they are not constant; they do not conform to prescribed knowledge. This inconsistency demonstrates that unconventional thought is not encouraged and it is not valued in this society, and that this system is designed to maintain social customs, but it

does not provoke change. It trains people to function in Coketown's factories—even this assertion must be taken loosely— and contribute to the machine, but Gradgrind's school does not educate students to engage in a larger community.

Further insight into the role of education and industrial power is provided when Sissy moves into Mr. Gradgrind's house following her father's death that makes her an orphan, which is considered abandonment. Mr. Gradgrind asserts that Sissy must "begin [her] history" (*HT* 44) by being "strictly educated... [in order to] be reclaimed and formed" (44). Education is a means through which Mr. Gradgrind reasserts his authority because he now controls her educational and domestic development. Not only does Sissy now have to contend with conforming while in school, she loses the love and nurturing that her father provides. Home is no longer a refuge in which she may be herself, and she must change her entire perspective on life by eradicating her past.

Sissy's education depends as much on forgetting her past as it does her learning the ways of her new society. Her reformation requires erasing her past and reforming her current identity. Reshaping an identity by forgetting the past is impractical, but this impracticality is crucial the novel's criticism. Gradgrind's methods are hyperbolized, and this hyperbole highlights education's destructive social interests. Sympathy for Sissy's loss is replaced by imposing social values and reforming her. She cannot grieve for her father or cope with her emotions because she is thrust into a world that reveres logic and objectivity. The system imposes conformity and hinders her emotional development in the process. She loses an important component of her development because she cannot work through her problems and gain perspective from her hardship. This imposition renders Sissy unstable, and it hinders how she interacts with and functions in larger society.

Sissy's instability coupled with sustained pressure to conform when living with Mr. Gradgrind accelerates her degeneration. Her interaction with Louisa regarding the school highlights how quickly imposing ideals can impact children. Within a short period at the school and coping with the school's principles in her new domestic life, Sissy views herself differently from when she asserts that she is Sissy (*HT* 3). Whereas she never used to question her identity, now she believes that her insights are false because the instructors are always correct. Now, she perceives herself negatively, and she is preoccupied with her faults.

When she claims that she is a "stupid girl...[who] all through school hours [she] makes mistakes" (53), she articulates Gradgrind's philosophical inadequacy, not her own. Rather than encouraging mistakes so that people may learn and grow from these errors, Gradgrind's school system is so rigid that it considers mistakes harmful to learning. Sissy's mistakes are socially condemned, and she internalizes this inadequacy, which limits her development. Sissy infers her stunted growth, claiming that she cannot help making mistakes (53), which suggests that her perceived insufficiency compounds her mistakes: as her belief that her insights are incorrect increases, so too does the number of errors that she makes. She is trapped in her belief that answers are absolute, and that one direct answer is discernable so long as she follows the instructors' rules and opinions.

The school's influence on Sissy is amplified by how she perceives what information is correct and incorrect. As Sissy asserts, she contrasts herself to Mr. and Mrs. M'Choakumchild, whose surname expresses their stifling pedagogical approaches, because they ostensibly "know everything" (*HT* 53). Sissy's dialogue with Louisa highlights how Sissy tries to conform because her mistakes make her feel "almost ashamed" (53). It is important that this conversation occurs outside of the schoolroom because it demonstrates the extent to which

Sissy's education influences her composure in larger social settings. The skills and attitudes that she experiences in the schoolroom negatively impact her interactions with other people and, as her desire to avoid shame suggests, Sissy believes that appealing to the dominant culture will enable her success. Her education has forced her to reconsider her beliefs and it has made her uneasy and scared to make mistakes, which is ineffective pedagogy that hinders Sissy's and her peers' development.

As Sissy conforms, her agency diminishes. As her answer to the schoolroom being a prosperous nation insinuates, Sissy has the propensity for critical analysis and the potential to evoke change because she produces alternative perspectives. Her counterintuitive mind is outlined in her discussion of how she cannot know whether the schoolroom is "a prosperous nation or not, and whether [she] was in a thriving state or not, unless [she] knew who had got the money" (*HT* 53). Sissy's discussion demonstrates her capacity for abstract and complex thought in a variety of areas, such as state politics, economics, and communications. She understands social relations in terms of class divides, and she believes that a prosperous nation should comprise an equal distribution of goods, be they money, work, or material, among people regardless of class. Her answer demonstrates her sympathetic and selfless nature, and it accentuates how she ponders the gray areas in discussions by asking questions, such as probing who has money and how much money indicates national prosperity. By dismissing her answer as erroneous, the school discourages critical analysis and, because of her unstable self-esteem and her desire to conform, denouncing her scrutiny inhibits her contributions.

The extent of Sissy's conformity is not explicit, but the novel does account for her intellectual destitution. Beyond Mr. Gradgrind's exasperation at never hearing the "'last of'" (*HT* 59) Sissy's inquiries regarding her letters in chapter nine, the novel's emphasis on Sissy

diminishes until Mr. Sleary discusses her father's death in volume three, chapter seven (269-271). The primary reason for this reduced emphasis on Sissy Jupe is the narrative's shift from the schoolroom to the industrial plotline, which focuses more closely on Louisa and Tom Gradgrind. As the novel moves towards greater social interactions, it reveals that Sissy has not been "properly trained [to function in Coketown] from an early age" (58). Therefore, her education is unsuccessful because she becomes a liminal character who cannot contribute to industrial advancement. Despite the perception that conformity will render her capable of participating in a larger community, the system does not work.

However, the reduced emphasis on Sissy does not mean that she is no longer an effective agent for Dickens's criticism. On the contrary, Sissy's diminished role accentuates Dickens's criticism by highlighting the damage of constricting education systems. The fact that Sissy cannot translate her education and her perspectives into contributions to larger society is sufficient criticism: because Sissy is not enriched by her education, society is not enriched by Sissy's intellect. However small Sissy's part is in the latter part of the novel, she plays an important part in Louisa's moral reflection and her desire to change. Sissy makes a brief appearance when Mrs. Gradgrind compares the sisters in volume two, chapter nine. Despite Mrs. Gradgrind's assertions that they look alike, Louisa surmises that "her sister's was a better and brighter face than [Louisa's] had ever been" and that Sissy is superior because she possesses a "sweet face with the trusting eyes, made paler than watching and sympathy made it, by the rich dark hair" (*HT* 190). Facial features are important indicators of personality and morality, as an examination of Nicholas Nickleby's, Ralph Nickleby's, and Wackford Squeers' faces in the next chapter of this thesis will demonstrate. Sissy face is brighter more sympathetic than Louisa's. However, this brightness does not derive from Gradgrind's school. Rather, it is a part of Sissy's

nature that the school has not changed. Louisa reveres Sissy's trust and innocence, and as a result Louisa believes that her sister is a superior human being. This observation of Sissy's blessedness and sympathy are catalysts for Louisa's change in perspectives, which culminate in her challenging her father's philosophy. In this instance, Dickens uses Sissy to highlight characteristics that society and, by extension, schools should value such as sympathy, morality, and innocence.

Diverting from Sissy's perspective allows the novel to consider the second dimension of the school's limitations, illustrated through young Tom and Louisa as they pursue opportunities beyond the school. Tom is a première example of how Gradgrind's system hinders the industrial culture that it promotes. Tom's upbringing leaves him unable to contribute to Coketown's economy and, worse than that, he becomes a thief. In this sense, he is an allegory for the legacy of Gradgrind's school. His nickname, "whelp," articulates Tom's stunted development and represents the school's failure to develop men who can contribute to society: "at first the whelp would not draw any nearer...the father buried his face in his hands, and the son in his disgraceful grotesqueness, biting straw: his hands...looking like the hands of a monkey" (*HT* 269). Tom's hesitation when approaching his father indicates a weariness of returning to the man whose philosophy destroyed his child's life, and it also insinuates that his interpersonal skills are inept because his emotions are undeveloped.

"Whelp" not only debases Tom by insinuating that he has animal-like qualities, but it also highlights his immaturity. Tom's grotesqueness is a synecdoche for the Coketown's grotesqueness. The town is hindered by "whelps" who, as a result of passing through Gradgrind's system, are inadequately prepared to improve Coketown's industry—at best they maintain the status quo; at worst, they become a burden. "Whelp" suggests a depreciated human

spirit that characterizes industrial England. It highlights what happens when children do not receive proper nurturing. Their deficiencies do not only hinder them, but they hinder the communities to which they belong. Each individual is a fraction of the nation, but too many fragmented individuals produce a fragmented society.

Tom's attitudes are formed by his education and his upbringing, which are dictated by his father's misguided devotion to "Fact." Tom represents the blurred boundaries between education and personal development insofar as his education is not limited to the school. He lives according to his father's pedagogy. As James Hughes asserts, "any education system that addresses hundreds of boys exactly in the same manner must destroy their individuality... [which means that Tom Gradgrind's] selfhood never had a chance to develop and every power that he had naturally to make him strong, true, and independent had helped to work his ruin" (131). Tom is a stock figure who symbolizes industry's ills, ills which transcend the factory to include all dimensions of Victorian society including family life, personal desires, and interpersonal relationships. Like Bitzer, Tom is capable of contributing economically as his employment at the bank suggests, but he lacks the social skills and individuality necessary to be a part of the community. He has few interpersonal relations, and his apprehensions about his father and his lies to his sister suggest that he has alienated himself from his family.

Even Tom's economic contributions must be considered with caution because he is not defined by his work at Bounderby's bank, but as someone who steals from his employment. Tom is defined by money and he is willing to take from his family, like Louisa, to resolve his debts. He is preoccupied with how a "fellow [is] to do for money, and where [is he] supposed to look for it, if not to [his] sister" (*HT* 168). Tom is devoted to wealth in a town that is concerned with increasing capital via industry. Considering Tom as a microcosm for Victorian society

demonstrates how industry thrives by exploiting working class people. By privileging industry and permitting the exploitation of the poor, England creates a greater and more damaging debt that implicates its citizens and that damages long-term national prosperity. Exploiting people prevents communities from forming, and it inhibits advancement through collaboration. If the majority of the nation thinks individualistically like Tom, then it will not grow or improve through its citizens.

Tom has the potential to contribute to society, but he ultimately ends up hindering it. Because of the mentality that has been fostered by his upbringing, Tom works in an industry that regulates and controls the nation's capital, but that is not innovative or enriching. When he steals from the bank, he detracts from society. Tom is a legacy of his father's pedagogy, and the robbery is a metaphor for the long-term effects of this education system. Gradgrind's school does not encourage improvement and, long-term, it does not benefit society. In fact, such a system takes more from society than it provides.

Tom's education and social limitations provoke him to take from society. His declaration that his sister ought to get the money that he needs because she should get what he "wants, out of [Bounderby], for [Tom's] sake" (*HT* 168) demonstrates that Tom believes that it is normal to take from other people. When Mr. Harthouse discusses how "every man is selfish in everything that he does" (169), he indicates that Tom's actions not only reflect his own character, but also the contemporary social condition. By pursuing money, industrial culture precipitates social regression. Since education is a platform that propagates this system, it is central to this conundrum. Gradgrind's school produces pupils who can contribute to the town's industry, but who risk doing more harm than good.

Louisa's conversion from upholding to criticizing her father's school contrasts with Tom's pursuit of money. While her critical assessment provokes her father's ideological crisis, her change in perspective contributes to a larger social criticism. Coketown's working class community is central to Louisa's enlightenment. Only when class distinctions disappear does Louisa experience "individuality in connexion with them" instead of only knowing "of their existence by hundreds and by thousands" (*HT* 150). By changing how she regards the working class, Louisa experiences her own individuality for the first time because she escapes the prejudices instilled by her upbringing. She recognizes the common humanity that she shares with the masses and is enriched as a result. Louisa no longer considers them as people who "worked so much and paid so much" (150), but rather as people distinct from their economic value to society.

Typically, labourers are associated with work and money (industry), but Louisa sees beyond these restrictions. This idea is accentuated when Stephen accepts Louisa's bank note with thanks that had "more grace in it that Lord Chesterfield could not have taught his son in a century" (153). Louisa experiences a genuine bond between them that exceeds class or education. What is important is their individuality, not the conformity that her father's school promotes. Education should center on teaching this common bond between people that does not consider money as the end to which people strive. The system should focus on individuality and should encourage authenticity rather than conformity. Through this approach, society will adopt enriching values, such as thankfulness and a genuine desire to treat people with respect.

Society's ability to change is articulated through Louisa at the end of the novel. However, the challenges that this change will encounter are outlined through Tom's and Sissy's perspectives, which are used to counteract the hope that Louisa provides. The way that these contrasting

ideologies complicate society's ability to change is demonstrated by the rhetorical questions such as "did Louisa see these things? Such things were to be" and "did Louisa see these things of herself? These things were to be" (*HT* 282). By eliminating the boundaries between the reader and the narrator, Dickens integrates his own philosophy. These questions evoke pathos for not only Louisa, but for Coketown's future because progress is uncertain. The questions ask whether Coketown will ever realize this vision of an enriched society while, at the same time, these express hope that these things will come "to be" (282). This goal can be achieved if children are provided with a "childhood of the mind no less than a childhood of the body" (283). The children represent hope for the future, and they symbolize how present changes affect future generations. Children are not only an essential focus of the present society, but they also represent England's future prosperity. If children grow both physically and intellectually with the freedom to develop their interests, they will maximize their growth and, in turn, enhance their ability to contribute to England's future.

This section of the novel highlights Dickens's positivity, but it also articulates the fine line between maintaining the current prejudices and eradicating them. While the Sissy's children represent Dickens's hope for a better future, they must overcome the legacy that years of industrial culture have produced and that industrial education, like Gradgrind's school, have propagated. The potential for improvement is counteracted by a warning that people like Tom Gradgrind still exist and, despite their best efforts to give up "all the treasures of the world" (*HT* 282), they cannot change. Moreover, there are well intentioned workers like Sissy Jupe who, despite her best efforts, is stunted. Will her children merely uphold the industrial status quo that work is "a duty to be done" (283) for the nation? Or will they uphold the values that are necessary for change, such as brotherhood, sisterhood, a bond, or a covenant between people

(283). Sissy's children can grow by participating in and encouraging community. However, the machine still looms in the background as Sissy's children, like Sissy are: "trying hard to know her humbler fellow-creatures, and to beautify their lives of machinery and reality with those imaginative graces and delights, without which the heart of infancy will wither up" (283). Sissy's children must combat this machinery and machine-like attitudes by maintaining a sense of wonderment and imagination. In order for Coketown to improve, its youth must learn to recognize industry as a means to an end, but not as the only means necessary. Children must learn to balance work with community, imagination, innovation, and sympathy for their 'humbler fellow-creatures.'

Dickens presents hope, but he tempers this optimism with reality. Coketown, a microcosm for larger England, can improve so long as it invests in its children. Educating children in a liberal and accommodating system is key to larger social enrichment. As children are enriched, so too is the nation. However, maintaining current perspectives and not encouraging critical thought can cause long-term social problems that affect several generations. Making the same mistakes is futile, but stunting children's development for social interests, as Gradgrind's school does, highlights how education systems must be open to scrutiny and be willing to change. Education can harm children, but it can also help them and nurture them so long as the government integrates supportive and nurturing systems that consider students as individuals, not as masses who will contribute to the social machine.

### Emerging Individuality: *Nicholas Nickleby*

Advocacy for re-assessing pedagogy and fostering more individually-oriented school systems is not unique to *Hard Times*. It is an extension of Dickens's wider criticism regarding Victorian education practices that is outlined, in part, through *Nicholas Nickleby*'s scrutiny of Victorian public schools. Brian Simon outlines that Victorian public schools had "a clearly defined ethos, serving a particular social class, and claiming both independence from and the highest services to society" (1). These principles were criticized in the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century when Victorians became increasingly aware that schools did not reflect wider social concerns (6). Instead of condoning education as an upper-class privilege, people were interested in better schooling for the working class, implementing schools that promoted strong values and catered to social needs, and ensuring that children were granted nurturing and liberal childhoods.

*Nicholas Nickleby* is central to Dickens's criticism of educational practices, particularly concerning the Yorkshire schools, as well as his advocacy for individually-oriented pedagogy. The novel's educational critique centers on how Wackford Squeers' abuse of the children hinders their future engagement with the world beyond the school. The children at Dotheboys Hall are regulated and broken to the point where their imaginations are restricted. The school lacks a nurturing atmosphere and, although the children are permanent residents, the school lacks the "home-like" characteristics that Dickens deems necessary to children's development. Dotheboys is not what Dickens recommends in his speech to the board of the Warehousemen and Clerks' schools in November 1857 that an effective school is "a children's school, which is at the same time no less a children's home" that is not "confided to the care of old or ignorant strangers" (*Speeches* 242). The children do not have freedom at the school and, like the children

educated according to Gradgrindian principles, they are expected to conform. They become dependent on the system, and they are broken by this abuse.

Smike is Dickens's central figure for critiquing Yorkshire schools. Smike is abused to the point where he resents the system and longs to leave, but he does not possess the skills to function beyond the school. He depends on Nicholas' support, but he cannot interact with others or express his emotions. Smike is a paradigm for a child who has been robbed of his childhood and who, as an adult, suffers the consequences of not being raised in a nurturing or loving environment. Smike's past before Dotheboys is erased, just as Sissy is told she must forget hers at Gradgrind's house. He cannot remember his mother or love, and instead remembers only the abuse that he has suffered. He becomes defined by this abuse and lives in fear of Squeers' oppression to the point where he cannot really participate in the world beyond Dotheboys.

The second critical figure is Nicholas himself who resists Squeers' oppression and becomes the children's defenders. Although Nicholas is an instructor, he himself grows by observing the immorality of Squeers' abuse. Nicholas learns to control his emotions and to defend what is morally just by promoting a nurturing environment for the children. He resists Squeers to ensure that the children are granted their childhoods and that they do not live in fear of abuse or regulation. Nicholas grows as an individual and becomes a champion for other children to have the opportunity to grow and learn at school without fear of reprimand. Nicholas himself comes to refuse working in a system, such as the MP Mr. Gregsbury's, that does not contribute socially or help his own personal development. Nicholas demonstrates that personal development is an ongoing process, but that upholding a nurturing childhood is an important component of education. He demonstrates how one individual can effect change in a school

system by defending the oppressed and refusing to uphold systems designed to regulate and restrict other human beings rather than nurturing them to facilitate their development.

*Nicholas Nickleby* was a central influence for the eradication of Yorkshire schools, as Dickens highlights in his 1848 preface to the novel.<sup>2</sup> In this preface, he condemns the “monstrous neglect of education in England, and the disregard of it by the state as a means of forming good or bad citizens, and miserable or happy men” (NN 5). Dickens’s preface articulates his sympathy for education as means of improving society, and it also reinforces education’s role in state formation. His insights suggest the state’s obligation to supply education to cultivate its citizens’ interests. In both the 1839 and 1848 Prefaces to *Nicholas Nickleby*, Dickens articulates that Dotheboy’s Hall’s proprietor, Wackford Squeers, is a product of his class rather than an individual: “Mr. Squeers is the representative of a class, and not of an individual...[so that] all his fellows will recognize something belonging to themselves, and that each will have a misgiving that the portrait is his own” (NN 3). These words suggest a challenge to Yorkshire proprietors or, more generally, teachers. It calls for them to change their ways and reconsider how they teach and how they govern their schools. Dotheboys is a microcosm for the insufficient education that Dickens believed plagued Victorian society. Dickens condemned an education system like the Yorkshire schools, which undermined children in favour of regulation and control. Dickens believes that education is a key part of forming ‘good or bad citizens’ who not only contribute economically, but who also become responsible citizens who seek improvement.

Nicholas is a solitary individual who translates his critical evaluation of society into action as he challenges Squeers’ authority, defends the school’s children, and protects his family from Ralph. Nicholas’ emerging individuality, independence, and his increasing self-control

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<sup>2</sup> When *Nicholas Nickleby* was written, Dickens claims, “there were, then, a good many cheap Yorkshire schools in existence. There are very few now [in 1848]” (NN 5).

provokes change both at and beyond the school. At the novel's beginning, he demonstrates an intolerable haughtiness that hinders his credibility. As Nicholas matures, he exhibits increased self-control and demonstrates more critical thought. He examines his own flaws, such as his temper and his impulsiveness, and he mitigates these issues to benefit both himself and the relationships that he forms.

Emphasizing the role of teachers in creating a positive or restrictive school, Dickens condemns Squeers' and Ralph Nickleby's avarice and disregard for the growth of less fortunate people. The association is implicit through Squeers' and Ralph Nickleby's countenances, which are criticized in the characters' respective introductions. Ralph's face is "stern, hard-featured, and forbidding" and an "eye [that was] keen with the twinklings of avarice" (37), while Squeers has "but one eye" and a "wrinkled and puckered up" face that makes "his expression [border] closely on the villainous" (44). Squeers' later conversation about pounds and guineas (47) as the primary adjudicatory method used to grant admittance to his school demonstrates that he prioritizes money, not intelligence. Therefore, Squeers is associated with the same avarice that Ralph reveres. These men represent a self-serving class that favours accumulating personal wealth instead of educating people who are less fortunate. As men who occupy positions of power, Squeers and Ralph provide little support for the people around them. Despite running a school, Squeers is never portrayed as a pedagogue. He beats his students, and they are barely fed. Similarly, Ralph separates the Nicklebys by sending Nicholas away to Dotheboys where Ralph will not have to deal with the boy's haughtiness.

The novel condemns Victorian public schools that promote hierarchical systems at the expense of less fortunate people. This idea is presented early on, when Nicholas is introduced. Now fatherless, Nicholas is expected to contribute to society, which his Uncle insinuates when

he asks Nicholas whether he has ever done anything (*NN* 39) and if he is willing to work (40). Nicholas lacks experience, and although he is willing to work, his education is also limited and gives him many options. He is educated, although his mother admits that this education is “such...as his father could give him” (39). Even becoming an assistant at Dotheboys Hall requires a Master of Arts (40) despite the lack of teaching that occurs at Squeers’ school. Nicholas is in a difficult position because he does not have proven work experience considering that his father always looked toward the future in which he would make “something of [Nicholas] one day” (39). However, this future does not materialize, and Nicholas is left without a support network or any options to employ his education to a vocation with which he may support himself and, if possible, his sister and his mother as well.

Nicholas struggles to control his temper and to change the injustices that he observes, particularly at Dotheboys Hall under Squeers’ tutelage. Although Nicholas is an instructor at Dotheboys, he himself develops through his experiences, and Nicholas learns to be patient and controlled to provoke the change that he desires. Nicholas struggles to assert his individuality and to uphold his values when being pressured by authorities like Wackford Squeers and his Uncle Ralph Nickleby, but Nicholas nevertheless plays a key role as a teacher who challenges and eventually subverts Yorkshire’s oppressive education system.

Dickens’s valuation of children is encapsulated in Nicholas who defends the Dotheboys children from Squeers’ abuse. The way that Nicholas values children contradicts Dotheboys Hall’s perception of pupils as clients who all require the same pedagogical approach. Nicholas is closely associated with Smike, whom Collins considers “a symbolic figure, representing the perils of a wrong system of education” (142). Nicholas’ defence of Smike throughout the novel, but at Dotheboys in particular, represents the power of individuals to change a system. Although

Nicholas is only one person who defends a helpless pupil, he provides the children at Dotheboys with hope and he teaches them that resistance is possible. On a macro level, the relationship between Nicholas and Smike evokes the power of questioning and challenging oppression, and demonstrates how persistence can create change.

Nicholas represents values that the education system and society should model insofar as he is driven by helping other people and sharing his intelligence. Nicholas' negative attributes are not represented physically in the way that his uncle's and Squeers' hardness is inscribed on their faces. Instead, Nicholas's physical features represent more positive qualities like being "bright with the light of intelligence and spirit" and having "an emanation from the warm young heart in his look" (*NN* 37). Nicholas is more complex because his traits are more implicit and abstract than the antagonists' attributes. He demonstrates qualities, such as having a warm heart and demonstrating his spirit, that are integral to forming relationships and provoking change in the world. Nicholas, while upholding stock characteristics like having a "keenness or acuteness of perfection" (37), is more dynamic than his Uncle and Squeers and must control his eagerness in order to translate his intelligence into helping less-fortunate people such as Smike.

Understanding the abuses of Yorkshire schools requires an examination of why and how Nicholas resists Squeers. Squeers explains that the school is preoccupied with finances, which he promotes through his mantra to "never postpone business [which] is the very first lesson [the proprietors] instil into [their] commercial pupils" (*NN* 51). This principle insinuates that the school's goal is for the students to adopt Squeers' pursuit of money instead of establishing their own interests. He treats the school as a business, and the students are his clients. While finances are always a factor in education, they should not be the primary motivation for establishing an education program. Although machinery does not factor into this novel the same way that it does

in *Hard Times*, Squeers' school fosters similar attitudes in that economics are the primary focus and that students are instructed to pursue this wealth. While one consequence of education should be that students benefit and contribute economically after their schooling, pursuing money should not be the sole motivation. A strong moral education, which Squeers does not provide, instils children with a sense of humanity and sympathy that is an integral part of being a responsible citizen.

Although the children are apparently trained in commerce, they are still subordinates with a limited chance of advancing. While their lessons ostensibly promote their ability to accumulate wealth and progress socially via this accumulation, they will likely never achieve Squeers' level of prosperity or power. This idea is accentuated when Squeers equates his role in hiring a teacher to a "slave driver in the West Indies [who] is allowed a man under him, to see that his blacks don't run away" (108). Squeers' reasoning suggests that he likens his role to that of a plantation owner who is concerned with production and upholding authority; the workers do not matter. This notion reinforces the idea that Squeers represents a class of people insofar as he is a slaver driver to works within a greater social system. This reasoning both governs and gives credence to his actions, such as hiring another person (Nicholas) to maintain order. However, this logic supposes that the laborers or, in this case, rejected children are inherently inferior and are obliged to serve the upper-classes.

While it is easy to assume that the children are slaves, this metaphor is hyperbolized to articulate the education system's abuses and the need to eradicate the detrimental culture instilled by Yorkshire schoolmasters. The novel insinuates that subordinating rejected children can harm society and restrict the common sense of humanity that people share. Instead of promoting community, this system harbours a sense of privilege that has potentially destructive

consequences if people are restricted socially and are not afforded the opportunities to improve both themselves and the world.

Nicholas' ability to recognize both his own limitations and the school's inhibitions allows him to establish values to contradict the schoolmaster. By examining the school's shortcomings, Nicholas cultivates his individuality and mitigates his limitations. One instance in which Nicholas recognizes the school's lack of care for the individual is when he realizes that "it needed a quick eye to detect from among the huddled mass of sleepers, the form of any given individual" (NN 149). The homogeneous mass of sleeping bodies symbolizes the conformity that the school instills, and it criticizes the restrictions that suppress the children. The 'mass' does not distinguish between individuals, people with skills that can combine to transform communities, although the potential for such an event is presented when Dotheboys is purged at the novel's conclusion. However, when Nicholas looks upon the sleeping boys, the group conveys how individuals can be fused into generic groups such as being the "youngest of children" (150). The fact that this scene is juxtaposed with Nicholas' commitment to helping Smike if they leave the institution together, despite the "fresh sorrow" (149) that Nicholas' teaching produces at Dotheboys, marks his transformation from contributing to Dotheboys' abuses to helping people escape.

Nicholas' advocacy for helping the less fortunate through education is essential to understanding his actions and the reasons that he resists Squeers. Nicholas' motivations are created by a desire to recover the childhood that Dotheboys Hall restricts. By restoring this fundamental element to the children's lives, Nicholas promotes re-evaluating the child's social role. The narrator's interjection condemns how the school inhibits dreams and imagination, asserting that "dreams are the bright creatures of poem and legend, who sport on earth in the

night season, and melt away in the first beam of the sun, which lights grim care and stern reality on their daily pilgrimage through the world” (NN 150). Dotheboys restricts the children’s freedom and their ability to develop personal interests. They can only be themselves when they are unconscious and disengaged from the world; sleep is their only opportunity to imagine. The metaphor expands to suggest that the children’s true selves are marred by darkness. They cannot provoke social change because they have a fragile and uncertain sense of self that is hindered by the abuse that they endure. These are the conditions that Nicholas must combat: he must defend imagination and he must recover the children’s freedom.

In extreme cases, children like Smike are redefined by Dotheboys and their dreams provide no solace until death. Recovering Smike’s childhood is impossible because he is too damaged to rekindle his imagination. Smike’s fragmentation is evident through his lack of memory beyond Dotheboys, where he can ““never remember”” (NN 267) anything except the ““large lonesome room at the top of the house”” (268) that he recollects in nightmares. Dotheboys erases Smike’s history and leaves him with negative memories of solitude and alienation. Because of this abuse, Smike cannot remember a ““kind gentle woman... [who] called [him] her child”” (268). Even though Nicholas supports Smike, love and kindness are inaccessible to him for the most part. He cannot remember his mother, and more importantly he cannot remember a home in which he had access to love and nurturing. After Nicholas and Smike escape Dotheboys, he acts as a lingering reminder of how Yorkshire schools damaged not only individuals, but also their ability to function in society.

While death should not be considered a relief, Smike’s death liberates him from an abusive upbringing that leaves him so fragmented and dependent on the charity of others, such as Nicholas, beyond Dotheboys. Death is the only way that Smike can recover his dreams and find

comfort: “He fell into a slight slumber, and waking, smiled as before; then spoke of beautiful gardens, which he said stretched out before him, and were filled with figures of men, women, and many children, all with light upon their faces; then whispered that it was Eden—and so died” (717). Smike not only recovers his dreams near his death, but he gains the confidence to confide his feelings to others, like when he admits his love for Kate Nickleby. Whereas he is generally unable to express himself, Smike is free to express the beauty of his paradise with Nicholas when death is imminent because Smike’s fears are alleviated. Smike’s revelation is a final lesson that reminds Nicholas of his purpose and reinforces his conviction to fight for the children’s dreams and inspirations on Earth. Nicholas must ensure that as many children as possible experience love and gain the freedom that Smike is only granted in death.

By establishing a stable sense of self and understanding the abuses that occur at Dotheboys, Nicholas is able to subvert Squeers’ methods. The fact that Nicholas takes his seat at Smike’s beating “without opening his lips in reply” (*NN* 155) does not insinuate that Nicholas condones Squeers’ despotism. Instead, Nicholas’ silence outlines the self-control that he now has to not rush into situations before they develop. Recognizing that angering the inebriated Squeers would make the situation worse, Nicholas deems it better to bite his lip and “knit his hands involuntarily” (154) than to provoke more severe punishment upon Smike. Nicholas only gains an advantage when he realizes that his diplomatic entreaties have been ignored because Squeers has brought these repercussions (Nicholas’ resistance) on himself: ““You have disregarded all my quiet interference in the miserable lad’s behalf,” said Nicholas; ‘returned no answer to the letter in which I begged forgiveness for him...don’t blame me for this public interference. You have brought it upon yourself; not I.” (158). Nicholas has tried a plethora of possibilities before resorting to his passionate interference. He defends Smike quietly and asks for forgiveness. Since

Squeers has no sympathy or propensity to forgive, Nicholas is deemed morally superior to Squeers. His ability to successfully challenge the schoolmaster depends less on his physical strength (although this element cannot be ignored), but more on the fact that Nicholas' actions are justified. He has used logic and reason to combat Squeers' irrationality. Just as Nicholas is pushed aside by his Uncle Ralph earlier in the novel because of haughtiness, Nicholas now has the discipline and logic required to resist the schoolmaster. Squeers' "looks that were positively frightful" (158) are provoked more by the fact that his authority is being challenged than the idea that he is losing the fight physically. The prospect of being challenged is shocking and paralyzing because it is rare. Nicholas demonstrates unprecedented resolve and determination to denounce the system, and he succeeds as a result.

Nicholas' efforts and rebellion shows that the remaining children at Dotheboys Hall, as a group, have the potential to escape, a prospect that materializes at the end of the novel. This rebellion marks the ultimate subversion of the existing regime and the prevalence of Nicholas' values over Squeers' and Ralph's. By breaking up Dotheboys Hall, the children demonstrate a sense of community that challenges oppressive power structures. However, the breakup also articulates the danger that the boys may, as John Browdie says, "'sike revolution and rebel'" (NN 770), which the novel does not condone. Browdie's interference suggests that rebellion may also have destructive consequences and precipitate further oppression. In this sense, the novel condemns revolution because it has alienating consequences. Many of the schoolboys cannot adapt to the outside world, and are found "frightened at the solitude" (774). The consequences of the children's revolution is two-fold. The children are ill equipped to function beyond the school, which is why many of them are found in close proximity to Dotheboys Hall. Squeers has failed to provide them with the skills necessary to function beyond the institution.

Despite the abuse, the children are dependent on this system because they know nothing else. The uncertainty associated with leaving is frightening and disconcerting. They are alone in the world, and they have few options. They are orphans, and they are alienated by society not only because of their remote location, but also because they lack social skills. Herein lies the second consequence of their revolution. However satisfying this rebellion is because it subverts the system, it is uncontrolled and their community is only sustained briefly. They lack the skills necessary to sustain a productive community long-term. This idea accentuates the importance of Nicholas choosing his spot in his previous revolution against Squeers. Whereas the children are out of control, Nicholas had the discipline and conviction necessary to cope with the alienation of leaving Dotheboys with Smike.

Although the Squeers' episode is brief, the novel does consider restrictive or limiting systems beyond the school, such as Mr. Gregsby's office. The extent of Nicholas's cultivation through his experience at Dotheboys is highlighted by his refusal to work for the MP Mr. Gregsby. Nicholas rejects the position not because of the low salary (fifteen shillings per week), but because he refuses to cram and conform to Gregsby's desired methods. Nicholas' rejection reflects Dickens's own opposition to the practice. "Cramming," which is typically a pedagogical method that emphasizes memorizing facts, is condemned in *Hard Times* through Gradgrind's devotion to "Fact." "Cramming" is implicit in *Nicholas Nickleby*, where Mr. Gregsby employs this method to remain au courant with contemporary affairs. Cramming's limitations, however, are demonstrated through Nicholas' rejection in that the "responsibilities make the recompense small" (NN 198). On one level, Nicholas' assessment suggests that his primary concern is compensation. However, it also proposes that cramming information offers little reward and that the participant benefits little for the effort that is required. Just as Nicholas

does not advocate Mr. Squeers' self-interested pedagogical approach, he cannot participate in an unfulfilling endeavour.

Nicholas refuses the job because the position offers little in terms of personal growth and Mr. Gregsbury's office does not help people. Nicholas cannot participate in a business that will not develop his soul. The position requires Nicholas "to be crammed" by becoming "acquainted from day to day with newspaper paragraphs on passing events" (NN 196), but it does not encourage immersion in the practice. Mr. Gregsbury's description implies that the job deals with superficial and incomplete assessments concerning daily events, without a concern for the future. There is no suggestion that the information is integral to promoting social justice, but it is instead implied that this "cramming" fulfils Mr. Gregsbury's self-serving political motivations. He is more concerned with remembering as much of the answer as possible (197) than understanding the events and engaging with their inherent issues. In this sense, the job does not present Nicholas with the prospect of growth. It requires conformity to Mr. Gregsbury's expectations and to maintain someone else's political image while not learning anything of substance. In short, this position requires Nicholas to stanch his own ambitions and principles in favour of another person who does not consider society's best interests.

A central reason that cramming does not allow personal growth is that it is not concerned with the future. The need to become acquainted with "passing events" (NN 196) suggests that the work that Nicholas does is preoccupied with events that have already occurred. Mr. Gregsbury's primary concern is ensuring that "inferior people [do not become] as well off as ourselves" (197). Although he hints at not being opposed to the "diffusion of literature among the people... [because] the creations of the brain... belong to the people at large" (197), Mr. Gregsbury's subsequent discussion reveals his self-serving motives that such a stance, where he is not

affected, ““comes out very well at election time”” (197). In this instance where education and the Victorian populace intersect, Mr. Gregsbury demonstrates the ideal principle upon which knowledge is disseminated throughout society. However, he does not translate this principle into practice and, as a result, his character outlines how politicians consider education an integral element for their political careers, but do not focus on improvement.

While individual motives factor into Nicholas’ decision, such as being paid according to the amount of work that he does, his values are more important. This idea is articulated in his subsequent discussion with Newman Noggs when he is upset that he cannot find ““any honest means by which [he] could even defray the weekly hire of this poor room, and see if [he] shrink[s] from resorting to them”” in what he calls ““this wide waste of London”” (*NV* 199). Nicholas prioritizes his principles and integrity over luxury and employment. He considers both Mr. Gregsbury’s corrupt politics and systemic corruption that spreads into institutions such as schools, and that affects social progress in various ways, not the least of which includes the upper class’ self-interestedness.

Nicholas’ values are crucial to his ability to provide counterintuitive perspectives. Nicholas’ association with Smike outside of Dotheboys Hall is a testament to his commitment to ensuring that people are granted a fulfilling future beyond their learning and upbringing. He approaches this endeavour without compromise and he refuses to abandon people in need, such as Smike. Nicholas’ inability to leave Smike despite poverty identifies his self-confidence and devotion to his principles. What is peculiar about these motives, however, is Nicholas’ assertion that Smike lightens his poverty:

““The thought of you has upheld me through all I have endured today, and shall, through fifty times more trouble. Give me your hand. My heart is linked to yours. We will

journey from this place together, before the week is out. What if I am steeped in poverty?

You lighten it, and we will be poor together.'” (NN 251)

This statement is problematic because Nicholas’ reasoning is ambiguous and unconventional. Nicholas never indicates what it is about Smike that provides strength. Nicholas never discusses what must be upheld. He does not assert how Smike lightens Nicholas’ poverty. His speech is ambiguous, but it demonstrates that Smike is Nicholas’ foundation. He does not find comfort in who Smike is, but more with what Smike represents: Dotheboys Hall. Smike is a constant reminder of the abuse and neglect that Dotheboys represents for Nicholas. Smike upholds Nicholas’ conviction that the education system must be changed so that more boys like Smike cannot be held back and ruined. Smike gives Nicholas a reason to not despair about his poverty because he knows that he is doing the correct thing by counteracting this oppressive system.

Nicholas’ individuality emerges as the novel progresses. He has an inherent desire to challenge the oppressive systems that surround him, such as Dotheboys Hall and Mr. Gregsbury’s office, but evoking change is difficult because change is slow. With the breaking of Dotheboys, the novel depicts revolution as a means to provoke immediate change. However, the novel demonstrates reservations against revolutionary ideology, favouring maturity as a process that schools allow. Learning how to scrutinize and how to assess when action is needed cannot be an impulsive decision. The school should provide an outlet through which children may mature and gain this ability to critically analyze the world. An ideal school should allow children’s imaginations and ideas to prosper without fear of abuse or neglect. In short, Dickens’ ideal school would be a home. It should account for the students’ natural progression and ensure their development, and it should be a safe zone in which they cannot be abused and in which they may feel comfortable. When schools configure each child’s individuality, they allow

children to create and innovate. Education's success should not be measured according to whether children comply with the instructor's ideologies or opinions, but rather these schools should be measured according to the number of unique perspectives that they produce.

### Intellectual and Social Illiteracy: *Great Expectations*

Pip's practical education as a child occurs in the forge. He is apprenticed to Joe as a blacksmith, which prepares him to contribute to industrial life. Concurrently, he receives an education at Mr. Wopsle's Great Aunt's school. This education, however, is farcical insofar as the instructor passes out and Biddy is left to educate the pupils. Little instruction occurs, and the students resort to examining "who could tread the hardest on whose toes" (*GE* 74) with their boots. They are given "three defaced Bibles" that are "more illegibly printed at the best than any curiosities of literature" (74) that Pip ever encounters. When the children read from the Bible with Biddy in a "frightful chorus," they do not have "the least notion of, or reverence for, what [they are] reading about" (74). Through this practice, the boys learn little because they do not understand. They do not show any unity, and they do not learn to analyze what they read. In part, they can read selections of the Bible, but their learning is disjointed. They do not grow intellectually, and their moral education suffers because they don't understand the Bible's principles. Although education is only one avenue through which they may acquire these skills and moral principles, the insufficiency of Pip's education to develop his literacy skills hinders his future life in London and his ability to critically analyze his surroundings.

Pip's deficiency in critical analysis is a key part of his social struggles because it inhibits his ability to understand his surroundings, and this lack of community renders him unable to change his ways. His education in literacy begins at home when he teaches himself how to write a letter by combining his alphabet with phonetics. He then attends Mr. Wopsle's Great Aunt's school, where he recites strange poems and develops a hunger for knowledge. At the same time as he attends this "school," Pip begins his tutelage at Miss Havisham's with Estella where they play and Pip learns how to develop feelings for women like Estella, and she learns how to disengage her

emotions. Both children carry these qualities into their social interactions, and are equally damaged by their extreme thinking in adulthood. Subsequently, Pip's education becomes more informal as he and Herbert Pocket learn through trial-and-error in London. In this new social milieu, Pip struggles to become accustomed with upper-class ways and he struggles to become a part of his new community. Despite his hardship, Pip does not grow until he is completely destitute because he stubbornly maintains the same delusions throughout most of the novel.

Pip spends most of the novel stubbornly believing the "fictions" that he creates (Byrd 259). Pip's inflexibility about the "truths" that he comes to believe prevents his growth and, according to Max Byrd, Pip's dependence on illusions harbours a sense of superiority (261).<sup>3</sup> Harboring this self-assurance and selfishness that he carries into his London life, Pip becomes ashamed of his origins, and he develops "a strong conviction...that [he] should never like Joe's trade" and although he "had liked it once, once was not now" (*GE* 103). Pip considers only his present emotions, and he tries to dismiss his past for most of the novel. He comes to believe that he is destined for Estella and that gentlemen do not associate with lower-class people like Joe, but he never changes these fictions. He does not consider that Estella does not have an interest in him, nor does he examine the unlikelihood that Miss Havisham is his benefactress because she has already funded his apprenticeship as a blacksmith. Furthermore, he is unable to recognize that the only difference that exists between he and Joe is class-based, and that it is only through Pip's own beliefs that he becomes alienated from Joe and Biddy.

As Byrd suggests, Pip's single-minded beliefs cause him to misinterpret "all the texts around him" (261). Pip's illiteracy is closely linked to his fictions, and these 'texts' to which Byrd alludes are figurative in that Pip is unable to read the signs that surround him. Pip does not

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<sup>3</sup> "His tyrannical fictions, like his illiteracy, yield to time, although for many years his illusion of alienation and separateness will be replaced by an illusion of superiority" (Byrd 261).

possess the skills in critical analysis or the ability to recognize patterns that reading provide. As such, he is unable to analyze and interpret his surroundings adequately, and suffers as a result of not having these skills.

Pip, as an uneducated gentleman, is expected to adapt to his new London life with minimal guidance. Pip is never taught to analyze his surroundings objectively to make the best possible decision. As a result, most of Pip's presumptions are erroneous and, while mistakes are crucial to personal growth, Pip always seems to be behind because other people exploit his academic deficiencies. For example, he spends most of the novel believing that Miss Havisham is his benefactress and that she intends his marriage to Estella. Pip's fixation on this scenario makes him vulnerable to Miss Havisham's manipulation, and although it is unlikely that he would discover that Magwitch is the benefactor, Pip's inability to understand or accept that Estella does not love him sets him up for disappointment and heartbreak. Even though Herbert Pocket points out that Pip's marriage is never insinuated by his guardian (*GE* 233) and that Estella is not a condition of his expectations,<sup>4</sup> Pip's assertion that he "can't help it" (233) outlines his failure to accept that the ideal future that he has envisioned is unlikely to materialize. He wants to be with Estella, and he will entertain his fantasy until it comes true or he learns the truth. He becomes dependent on a future that will never come, and he remains trapped in the same delusions for most of the novel.

Pip's social illiteracy in London is also represented metaphorically. Pip is socially illiterate insofar as he cannot communicate in his new social sphere, and his assumptions of politeness are insufficient; he is illiterate regarding social customs. In this sense, literacy undertakes two forms: Pip's struggles to understand what he reads and writes as a child, and the metaphoric translation

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<sup>4</sup> Following a dinner, Pip and Herbert discuss Estella and the details of Pip's expectations. During their conversation, Herbert tells Pip, "I have been thinking since we have been talking with our feet on this fender, that Estella surely cannot be a condition of your inheritance, if she was never referred to by your guardian" (230).

of this inability when he is in London. In different social circles, be they in London or at Satis House, Pip struggles to read the cultural or social signs associated with these locations. He cannot analyze his surroundings because he does not understand them, despite his attempts to cultivate himself. For example, when Estella coldly dismisses Pip from Satis House upon their first encounter, he feels “so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry...that tears started to [his] eyes” (*GE* 64). Yet, in the same instance, he surmises that “she gave me a contemptuous toss—but with a sense, I thought, of having made too sure that I was so wounded” (64). Pip recognizes that this humiliation is calculated and something is off. Although he does not understand the deception that he is implicated in, he knows that Estella’s rejections are deliberately designed to hurt him. However, even as an adult, Pip never questions why Estella makes sure that he ‘was so wounded’. He continues to believe his fantasy that he and Estella are destined to be together. So although he is aware of his surroundings in the moment, he cannot critically assess or probe the situation to develop a better understanding.

Another example of these fictions occurs when Pip first arrives in London and meets Herbert Pocket. Herbert divulges his knowledge of Miss Havisham and Estella so that Pip can understand their coldness and a part of Miss Havisham’s history. Herbert claims that Estella “has been brought up by Miss Havisham to wreak revenge on all the male sex” (*GE* 167). Once again, Pip is provided with information regarding Miss Havisham’s motives; however, he does not contemplate the scenario and the potential harm that is involved in associating with the Satis House residents who desire revenge. Instead, he concludes that Herbert “perfectly understood Miss Havisham to be [Pip’s] benefactress, as [Pip] understood the fact [himself]” (173). At no point in their conversation does Herbert express sentiments that Miss Havisham is Pip’s benefactress, nor does Herbert surmise that Estella is meant to be betrothed to Pip. Pip draws

these conclusions because that is what he wants to believe. He interprets Herbert's words to suit his own desires, but never analyzes the tale to understand its meaning.

Pip is presumptuous, but he is hardly condemnable because he has never been taught how to interpret social situations beyond the forge. Other people, such as Miss Havisham, Pip's sister, Mr. Pumblechook, and Magwitch try to mould Pip into their own vision of what a "gentleman" or what a man should be. In the process, Pip learns little regarding the world besides ways to compose himself to suit a particular model, such as being "brought up by hand" (*GE* 16), which is a concept that is repeated as justification for Mrs. Joe's abuse. Similarly, Magwitch tries to transform Pip into a gentleman, but the young man never receives any "enlightenment" (232) by receiving his fortune and being left to his own devices in London. Because Pip is not eligible to receive further information regarding his expectations until his twenty-first birthday when Jaggers tells him he is to receive five hundred pounds per year, he maintains his delusions until he meets his benefactor (which is, indeed, after his twenty-first birthday). This means that Pip receives little guidance through his formative adolescent years, and nobody teaches him how to act or survive in his new environment.

Magwitch is well-intentioned as Pip's benefactor, but his plan's execution is flawed because Pip is never able to "detach [himself] from Estella" (233) and he constantly presumes that Miss Havisham is providing his fortune. While Magwitch and the Miss Havisham/Estella plotlines are distinct and Magwitch revealing himself to Pip will not alleviate his feelings for Estella, the ideas presented are complementary insofar as they highlight Pip's ignorance. In both instances, Pip's ignorance is his downfall. He is manipulated by Miss Havisham, and he benefits financially through Magwitch but does not understand how to act responsibly and manage finances. Either

way, Pip is never told the truth until he has accumulated debt and after he has alienated himself from those who love him, such as Joe and Biddy.

Pip's inability to critically analyse his surroundings is fostered from an early age, particularly through Miss Havisham. She exploits Pip and Estella's youth, manipulating their emotions and dictating their relationship to suit her own malicious intentions. Miss Havisham asserts her power over the children and, because Pip and Estella are both ignorant regarding social affairs, Miss Havisham succeeds in creating a fantasy that recreates her past with reversed circumstances. In this new scenario, Pip is the ignorant person whose emotions are manipulated and whose life is altered by false expectations, such as anticipating his union with Estella, a theme that permeates the text. The plotline between Pip and Estella is tragic primarily because it constitutes older people fulfilling personal agendas by exploiting youth. Miss Havisham is no better than Mr. Gradgrind or Wackford Squeers because she uses pedagogy to mould Pip and Estella for her own revenge. The two male pedagogues are abusive, but Miss Havisham "educates" her pupils according to selfish motives, just like the men from the other novels do. She hinders both of their futures, and she inhibits their love and happiness. With Estella, Miss Havisham destroys any chance that the girl may have at a prosperous future with Pip.

Miss Havisham is an integral figure who accentuates Dickens's pedagogical criticism because she balances pedagogical gender roles. She represents women as educators and configures women as equally important dimensions to childhood development. Her "school" balances the perspectives regarding Victorian public schools represented through Gradgrind's school and Dotheboys Hall because Satis House configures private/domestic education. Dickens does not assert that one method of pedagogy is better than another, but rather promotes how integral each dimension is when developing cultivated people: domestic and public education are

equally integral in childhood development. Gradgrind, Squeers, and Miss Havisham are equally condemnable for over-regulating their schools to serve personal motives because they share the same role in developing people.

In “Of Queens’ Gardens,” John Ruskin discusses men and women’s characters. He claims that the sexes cannot be distinguished as one being superior to the other because each sex “completes the other, and is completed by the other” (67). Each sex possesses different characteristics, but they are equally important to developing a stable household. Ruskin describes men’s power as: “active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender” (68). According to Ruskin, the woman is “for rule, not for battle,—and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision” (68). Despite their distinguishing characteristics, men and women combine to create an important dimension to any child’s life: a home. For Ruskin, the combination of these characteristics make the home a “place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division” (68). In this sense, Ruskin asserts, it is foolish to consider “the idea that woman is only the shadow and attendant image of her lord, owing him a thoughtless and servile obedience, and supported altogether in her weakness by the preeminence of his fortitude” (54). Women play a vital function in society and in raising children. Women are not dependent on men, and the environment that they provide and maintain for children is equally important to the environment defended and created by men. In this sense, Satis house and its proprietress, Miss Havisham, can impact children as much as the schools run by Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Squeers.

Miss Havisham can impact and mould the children in the same way that public schools do. Positive results derive from a nourishing education that focuses on individual desires and favouring the children’s interests instead of the instructors’. Conversely, the instructor’s bias can

hinder the pupils' growth. Drawing on key literary figures like William Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, Aeschylus, and Dante Alighieri, who consider women integral to a healthy society, Ruskin considers women as key regulators of men's faults and follies (57).<sup>5</sup> This perspective is restrictive because it risks compartmentalizing men's and women's social roles, but nevertheless considers balance necessary for social growth and regulation. Without the symmetry between men and women, between the domestic and public spheres, between the child's education in society as well as in the home, both individuals and society remain incomplete. Regardless of who or what gender occupies these positions, balance and equilibrium are necessary.

Miss Havisham relies on a common Victorian pedagogical method to manipulate Pip and Estella: games. Miss Havisham controls the children through playing and establishing Pip's desire as he plays with Estella; she creates distance between them with her insults, and he desires her even more because she is inaccessible. Miss Havisham's imperative phrase, "Play" (*GE* 61), establishes a power dynamic in which the adult orders the children to do something, and they comply. While Pip and Estella play cards, Pip begins to notice how "everything in the room had stopped" (*GE* 62), citing the watch and the clock. He also mentions that Miss Havisham "put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up" (62). These observations suggest that this is the moment in which Pip stops developing. Although he ages, matures, and eventually learns from his mistakes, this room at Satis House acts as a perverted schoolroom that stunts his development. In this room, Pip develops his affinity for Estella, and for material wealth represented through the jewel. In this space, Pip receives his model of upper-class composition, which he translates into his London life. In this location, Pip vainly tries to understand Miss Havisham's motivations and judges them incorrectly because he believes that she intends him to

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<sup>5</sup> "So that in all cases, with Scott as with Shakespeare, it is the woman who watches over, teaches, and guides the youth; it is never, by any chance, the youth who watches over or educates his mistress" (Ruskin 59).

be Estella's husband, while Miss Havisham considers Pip as a means to get revenge on her former fiancé.

Pip's inadequacy is articulated during his first interaction with Estella: "I misdealt, as was only natural, when I knew she was lying in wait for me to do wrong" (63). Pip's consciousness regarding his errors parallel Sissy Jupe's cycle of errors, where her perceived insufficiency precipitates further mistakes. Resenting his errors, Pip comes to consider Estella and Miss Havisham's methods superior to his own. He begins questioning things that he never considered inadequate before, such as his hands being an "indifferent pair" (63). Implicitly, this unstable sense of self provokes the upper-class emulation that plagues his adult life. He does not understand how or why they act in that way, but he understands that these methods must be correct and superior to his own. The notion is incorrect and contributes to his future superficiality, but, as Pip asserts, Estella's "contempt was so strong, that it became infectious" (63). Pip's identity becomes unstable as he internalizes these notions. The more that Pip internalizes this inadequacy, the more presumptuous he becomes. He ceases to analyze or observe his surroundings, and he accepts his inferiority. He begins to assume that natural class divides exist, and that there is an acceptable way of looking or acting.

Harry Stone identifies this interaction at Satis House and, more specifically, in this room as central culprits in Pip's fragmentation. Stone says that Pip and Estella stop growing because of Miss Havisham's influence (115). Satis House is the place where the children foster their conceit and selfishness. Pip and Estella embark on separate paths in which they meet, but their interests never intersect—Pip desires Estella, but Estella is conditioned to entrap men. Satis House changes Pip's perspectives because it exposes Pip to a life beyond the forge. From this time, Pip's desire to be a blacksmith wanes, and he begins to resent his future vocation. Claiming that

“it is a most miserable thing to feel ashamed of home” (*GE* 104), Pip demonstrates his uncertainty about settling for a certain life. He also highlights the entrapment associated with being unable to express these issues. He cannot express his desires to Miss Havisham or Estella because they make him feel inadequate.

Moreover, Pip and Joe’s relationship prevents the child from confiding in his friend for fear of hurting him. There is also the possibility that young Pip cannot express his desire because he does not wholly comprehend his feelings. He understands the emotions associated with his desires, such as his home’s inferiority according to class divides, but he never identifies the source of his malaise. He does not know how much of his “ungracious condition” (104)<sup>6</sup> is created by his sister, Miss Havisham, Estella, or himself, but Pip does understand that he longs to escape and cannot articulate his sentiments. The hunger for more exists, but the education does not. Miss Havisham supports Pip’s apprenticeship financially and Magwitch provides the finances necessary for Pip to move to London, but his desire for more never subsides.

In a later meeting, Pip claims that Estella still manipulates him: “She treated me as a boy still, but she lured me on” (220). As adults, Estella even warns Pip that loving her will only “deceive and entrap [him]” (289). Pip does not learn or grow from his time with Estella. Despite heartbreak and hardship, he does not understand how to avoid being deceived or used. In short, he is still trapped in the same fiction in which he and Estella are destined to marry. That she still treats him as a boy suggests that Pip never grows any wiser; he is still a malleable child who vies for her affections. He still believes that there is a scenario in which he and Estella may unite and be happy, and can neither escape this delusion nor cross their social divide.

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<sup>6</sup> “How much of my ungracious condition of mind may have been my own fault, how much Miss Havisham’s, how much my sisters, is now of no moment to me or to anyone.”

Similarly, Estella never grows beyond being cold and manipulative. She cannot build or maintain positive relationships, and she maintains that deception and manipulation are her central motivations: “‘Do you want me then,’ said Estella, turning suddenly with a fixed and serious, if not angry, look, ‘to deceive and entrap you?’” (289). Although Estella does not implicate Pip in her deception in this instance, it is clear that they cannot be together. Absolving Pip from her entrapment shows that Estella cares enough not to hurt him any more than she already has, but it does not change who she is. Typically, her intentions when interacting with men are malicious because her teacher Miss Havisham’s intentions are malicious. Estella’s upbringing inhibits her social contributions because she cannot interact with the world beyond Satis House. When she does, she is aware that she cannot form positive and truthful relationships. She cannot participate in a wider community, and she has few individual talents that she can contribute to society. Estella is not socially illiterate in the same sense as Pip is, and her actual literacy is unknown. However, she represents the product of restrictive education systems and, like Pip, she is not granted the healthy and nurturing childhood that Dickens promotes. She is produced through a regulated system that dictates her future and that she resents once she develops the ability to critically analyze her social position.

Estella parallels Louisa Gradgrind insofar as Estella rebels against the system in which she is produced.<sup>7</sup> When she receives Miss Havisham with the same coldness that she has been taught to use on other people, Estella responds that she is “‘what you have made me” (*GE* 281). She highlights the formative and manipulative nature of Miss Havisham’s pedagogy, and Estella condemns the approach. She challenges the philosophical perspectives that create her, questioning the motives behind education. In this sense, Miss Havisham’s domestic and

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<sup>7</sup> I say “produced” because she is Miss Havisham’s product, just as Louisa is her father’s product. They are both used to contribute to the larger “machine” that Dickens criticizes.

emotional education fails just as much as Mr. Gradgrind's restrictive devotion to Fact because they are both stifling systems derived from malicious intentions. Subsequently, Estella outlines the responsibility associated with education when she claims that Miss Havisham must "take all the praise, take all the blame; take all the success, take all the failure; in short, take me" (281). Educators must bear the consequences of their pedagogy. There is little choice because children translate these teachings into the larger communities to which the pedagogues belong. By ignoring the wider social consequences associated with education, educators risk hindering both the child and society. Even though children like Estella and Pip cannot translate positive skills to society, they contribute what they know nevertheless. If all they know is to take or to manipulate, then that is what they will do. And educators must take responsibility for the consequences; their failure is society's failure to advance or surpass their limits and expectations.

While the term "expectation" refers to the prospect of Pip's inheritance from his benefactor, it is intriguing that a novel entitled "Great Expectations" does not articulate the other expectations that its title character must fulfill. This omission is telling because, although many possibilities exist, the nature of these expectations is open to interpretation. The novel never provides the reader with a blueprint upon which these expectations must be executed, unless moving and living in London fulfills the requirements. As Pip demonstrates, simply existing in a locale does not make one apt to contribute and survive in that milieu. In this sense, Pip's illiteracy is our own illiteracy as readers. The novel represents social illiteracy on a figurative level through Pip, but it engages it literally by questioning the readers' literacy. This metanarrative exists insofar as Pip tries to figuratively "read" his surroundings while the reader is trying to identify the correct direction that Pip must take, if such a path exists, by reading the

novel. The reader is no more equipped to function in Dickens's fictional London society than Pip is because there is no definite route to fulfill these expectations.

In fact, these "expectations" simultaneously exist and are nonexistent. Linguistically, they exist because they have been presented as central to the novel: Pip is expected to develop as a human and fulfill these expectations. Pip knows that they exist and they drive his path in London, but he does not understand them: "Then, my dear Herbert, I cannot tell you how dependent and uncertain I feel, and how exposed to hundreds of chances...I may still say that on the constancy of one person (naming no person) all my expectations depend'" (*GE* 232). Pip insinuates that his expectations exist, but his words suggest that they are his own expectations. Underlying Pip's speech is his expectation to finally know who is giving him money, his expectation that he will receive his inheritance, and his expectation that his benefactor is Miss Havisham who intends his union with Estella. Regarding what is expected of him, little is known. The great expectations that Pip must fulfill remain unexpressed and ambiguous. All that Pip has is uncertainty regarding his life and what he is supposed to do. Just as his benefactor is unnamed, so are Pip's expectations. As he admits to Herbert, there could be 'hundreds' of possibilities, but all that Pip's presumptions produce is further uncertainty. He wants to advance, but he does not know how.

Pip claims that his tutelage under Biddy fuels a desire to make himself uncommon and leaves him "wishing to get on in life" (*GE* 74). Pip believes that if Biddy were to "impart all her learning to [him]" (74), he would achieve his goal of being different and advancing his life. This belief is ironic because his apprenticeship as a blacksmith is imminent, and by gathering Biddy's knowledge, he would not be uncommon. Rather, he would be like Biddy. Even from an early age, Pip lacks logic. Like Joe, Pip is conditioned to work in the forge, but he is ill-equipped to

function in the upper-class. Pip and Joe are both ill-equipped to interact with wealthy people because they are trained as blacksmiths, and they are not among the middle or upper classes. Regardless of their class differences, Joe and Pip are cultivated for the same milieu, and money cannot alleviate their nurturing. Arthur Adrian outlines that as lower class people, such as Pip and Joe, who are “born into a world of dirt, vermin, hunger, disease, and crime, they could only pass on their heritage” (5). Although this perspective is overarching and does not account for all lower-class people, it outlines the cycle through which lower class people like Joe and Pip struggle to advance because of their environment. Although Pip inherits a fortune, he cannot escape his origins. Both Joe and Pip derive from abusive parental figures—Joe’s alcoholic father and Pip’s sister, respectively—and, despite the love that they receive from their other parent—Joe’s mother and Joe’s affinity for Pip—the abuse inhibits their education. Joe admits to his father’s addiction was, tangentially, a “draw-back on [his] learning” (*GE* 50), which parallels how Pip is brought up by hand by his sister. Being brought up “by hand” is merely the rhetoric that his sister uses to justify her abuse.

Pip’s illiteracy is represented at the beginning of the novel. Pip’s letter to Joe is difficult to read because it is written in broken English: “I ope I shal son b habell 4 2 teedge u Jo” (*GE* 48), but it does not matter because it is sufficient for their own communication. Literacy is a luxury rather than essential to their relationship, as Joe expresses when he asserts “I’m oncommon fond of reading, too” (49). Pip writing the letter highlights his enthusiasm for learning, but the only communication that he can make is through names. The only intelligible aspect of his letter is Joe’s name: “‘why here’s a J,’ said Joe, ‘and a O equal to anythink! Here’s a J and a O, Pip, and a J-O, Joe’” (48). Moreover, Pip writes and Joe reads the letter according to sound, which renders it confusing and nearly incomprehensible. They do not account for the difference

between how things should be and how they are. This level of literacy is sufficient for the forge, and it is acceptable for Pip when is a child. However, once he must communicate in larger social spheres, this illiteracy is a disadvantage and hinders his overall development.

Pip's education is sufficient for the forge, but it does not allow him to progress after he leaves home. When Pip writes the letter to Joe as a child, Joe believes Pip is astonishing, claiming "you ARE a scholar" (*GE* 49). Joe's praise is affectionate and rewards Pip's efforts. He cannot tell the difference, but it is irrelevant because Pip's training is already above Joe's. This remark is later reiterated when Orlick scoffs at Pip's assumed superiority, suggesting that Pip must be a scholar because he can point out the obvious (218). Orlick's remarks accentuate how he resents Pip's undeserved financial success. They also demonstrate how little of a "scholar" Pip actually is.

Orlick deconstructs class divisions and demonstrates that they both began in the forge. While fortune has allowed Pip's advancement, Orlick represents an uneducated working class boy who ends up without wealth. Orlick is relegated to being Miss Havisham's gatekeeper who is not allowed into the house. He guards the upper-class estate, but he is denied access to what occurs and he remains ignorant regarding the affairs. Pip argues that Orlick is not the "right sort of man" (*GE* 228) to guard Miss Havisham's estate. What qualities the "right" man would possess is never specified, but the reference suggests that Orlick is socially and intellectually inadequate to fulfill his post. Jaggers' response that a person in a position of trust is never the right sort of man highlights that ignorance is key to Orlick fulfilling his position. His job is not to maintain upper-class appearances; it is to guard Satis House and ensure that only those invited should be permitted access. He is also a "safe" choice because he, from what the reader knows, is illiterate. Not only does he not comprehend Miss Havisham's affairs, but even if he did he could not write

a letter to betray his trust. His class also inhibits his credibility if he accuses Miss Havisham of anything illegal.

However, Pip is disconcerted because he and Orlick cannot communicate. They occupy different social circles, and their perceived social roles hinder their conversation. Pip's observation that Orlick left the forge sometime after Pip left is obvious, but does not provide any added insight to their conversation. Pip cannot maintain communication with Orlick because he wants to evade his past, including Orlick. Pip's objections to Orlick's new position also derive from jealousy. Pip is jealous that Orlick has access to Satis House and that he is acceptable in this social circle. Although Orlick does not advance socially, he exists in close proximity to upper-class people like Miss Havisham. That Orlick should be so close to Pip's perceived benefactor is unacceptable when Pip rarely has access to Miss Havisham or Estella. Orlick and Pip cannot sustain a relationship because they cannot and do not desire interaction. They occupy separate social positions, and they cannot move beyond these differences. Just as Orlick does not know anything beyond ringing the bell (*GE* 219), Pip knows little beyond spending the money that he receives.

The insufficiency of his linguistic education with Bidly and Mr. Wopsle's great aunt is central to Pip's social issues. A central example of this limited education occurs in chapter fifteen when Pip discusses the poem that Bidly teaches him which has only one coherent part, but that he memorizes "in [his] desire to be wiser" without questioning the meaning or merit of what he learns (*GE* 106). His education is ineffective because it does not provoke reflection and renders the wisdom that he acquires impractical. Furthermore, the poem is a metaphor that associates Pip's failure with his unstable intellectual foundation. "Too Rul" (*GE* 106) is nonsensical, and Pip's learning has little value that he can translate into his future relationships.

‘Too Rul’ foreshadows his future social problems. It is a metaphor for his inability to rule himself, despite his desire to rule as a gentleman. Pip does not know how to rule, because he is “too” liberal with his money and he is too quick to discount his relationship with Joe. Just ‘rul’ is incomplete, so Pip’s ability to rule or obey the rules is incomplete because of his ignorance. The repetition of ‘rul’ throughout the poem insinuates Pip’s repetitious errors. He maintains the same lifestyle by “leaving a margin” (257) when paying off his debts despite the ineffectiveness of this method.

Linguistics factor into the first interaction between Joe and Pip after his move to London because of their speech differences. Pip treats Joe according to class rather than as a fellow human being because of Joe’s perceived lack of education. These inconsistencies are introduced through their parallel speech patterns when Pip greets Joe with “‘Joe, how are you, Joe?’” while Joe greets Pip with “‘Pip, how AIR you, Pip?’” (*GE* 205). The difference between the formal “how are you” and the uncultivated “how air you” demonstrates a shift in how they perform their social roles. Joe’s use of the same sentence structure that Pip uses is his attempt to speak like a gentleman, and it is also evidence that he cannot perform that role. The difference in Joe’s speech reminds Pip of his origins and the sudden distance between them that makes Pip resent Joe.

Ironically, their linguistic differences describe Pip better than Joe. Joe’s inability to be a gentleman mirrors Pip’s own struggles in London. Joe’s discomfort reflects Pip’s financial discomfort. Although Pip has mastered London’s dialect, he still does not understand what it means to be a gentleman because he cannot relate to people. The informal and affectionate “old chap” (*GE* 19) that Joe used to call Pip has been replaced by the formal and uncomfortable “sir” (209). The problem with their conversation is not Joe’s inadequacy but rather Pip’s obstinacy in

maintaining appearances. He upholds the belief that if Joe was “less ignorant and common...he might be worthier of Pip’s society” (106). For Pip, literacy and education are synonymous with status and respect. While these two factors are crucial to human development, Pip is wrong to assume that Joe must be worthy of Pip’s attention. In fact, Pip would be a gentleman if he supported Joe. Because Pip is unwilling to do this, it is only when Joe admits that he does not belong that the barrier between them dissolves and the “‘sir’ melted out of his manly heart as [Joe] gave [Pip] his hand” (210) and calls him “old chap” again. Joe demonstrates that he is the better man because he accepts who he is and he loves Pip unconditionally. The dialect switches to the working class, but it reminds Pip of what he should be: Joe’s friend.

Pip’s attempts to extend his learning beyond his means do not allow him to succeed. Biddy highlights this distinction when she calls him ‘Mr. Pip,’ even though he finds it in “bad taste” (*GE* 264). Biddy’s use of the title ‘Mr. Pip,’ similar to Joe’s ‘sir,’ highlights Pip’s ignorance rather than her own. Biddy’s echoes to Pip’s “what you mean by this” (264) reflect the parallel sentence structures that Joe uses with Pip to try to model a gentleman’s speech. However, Biddy does not try to mirror Pip’s speech. Her echoes accentuate Pip’s inability to communicate his thoughts, and his own uncultured soul. Biddy is the unchanging, stable force in Pip’s life, so any change that is insinuated by Pip’s “‘you used not to echo, Biddy’” (264) reflects Pip’s inadequacy, not her own. He can speak like a gentleman, but he does not understand what a gentleman is, and he cannot adapt his communication style to suit whom he is associating with. He cannot adapt it because he has never been exposed to intersecting cultures. Pip is either from the working class, or he must be a gentleman—he does not consider their intersection. He is educated by the working class, but spends most of his adult life among London’s wealthy people. Because of this distinction, Pip relies on others to adapt to his expectations and to compensate

for his own insecurities, which not even Joe or Biddy are prepared to do. Pip's self-assessment is incongruous with other people. Like Joe, Biddy reminds Pip of who he is and demonstrates that she still considers him in relation to the forge. Pip tries to manipulate his speech such that he erases his past, but discovers that it is impossible.

The interactions with Joe, Biddy, and Orlick after Pip leaves the forge highlight how little he values human beings. Because he is uncultured, he judges people according to how they benefit him. For example, Pip claims that Magwitch is “not likely to ever enrich [Pip] in reputation, station, fortune, anything” (*GE* 331). This ironic statement demonstrates that Pip does not properly value enrichment because he associates his progress with status and money. His comments reflect John Ruskin's criticism of parents who want their children educated to “befit such and such a station in life” (“Of Kings' Treasuries” 253) with the goal of advancing beyond their current station. Pip reflects the revering of personal wealth, and not cultural and intellectual enrichment. Ironically, the advancement that wealth provides does not enrich Pip's soul, but instead corrupts him. He devalues his interpersonal relationships and considers materialistic wealth as the means to happiness.

The result of Pip's ignorance is that many of his possible expectations remain unfulfilled. He does not contribute to society because he does not seek employment until the very end of the novel. He accumulates debt and contributes to Herbert's financial demise. He does not help others, and he rejects his best friend, Joe. Magwitch's goal to “[make] a gentleman” (*GE* 297) is ironic because Pip never fulfils a “gentleman” status. Instead of a gentleman, Magwitch creates a shallow and superficial human being who is dependent on money, who becomes a burden on society, and ones whose survival depends on an inheritance. Pip's assumption that Magwitch will not advance him (331) therefore holds true because Pip remains undeveloped.

Magwitch's failure in transforming Pip into a gentleman is due to the criminal's own ignorance. Magwitch does not understand what being a gentleman means, and he associates this status with the superficial and materialistic qualities. Magwitch marvels at Pip's watch and rings, he reveres the diamonds that Pip wears, and he calls Pip's linen "fine and beautiful" (GE 297). At each item, Magwitch claims "*that's a gentleman's*" (297). Magwitch can observe a member of the upper-class, but he does not understand what is required to become and act like a gentleman. As such, Pip's "expectations" are merely to look like the upper-class and revel in the riches. Magwitch's ignorance produces Pip's own ignorance insofar as Pip knows just as little regarding social customs as the criminal does.

The only difference is that Magwitch works for his money and selflessly relinquishes wealth to encourage Pip's advancement, and Pip merely takes from Magwitch and, if Pip cannot afford what he desires, he takes it from society through loans. This idea of ignorance breeding ignorance reflects Adrian's claims regarding the cyclical nature of intellectual deficiencies. People "pass on their heritage" (5) and that children produced in degenerate conditions, regardless of legitimacy, "were abandoned by their mothers in workhouses" (5). While Pip is never left to a workhouse, he is equally abandoned. He experiences maternal abandonment twice, once when his mother dies, and then when his sister dies. Joe remains a father figure, but his illiteracy cannot eradicate Pip's intellectual deficiencies. Once Pip rejects Joe in favour of his mysterious benefactor, he becomes dependent on Magwitch.

Magwitch does not mean to abandon Pip, but exile prevents their interaction. However, by not providing the necessary means through which Pip may grow and mature to responsibly manage his finances, Magwitch fails to alleviate Pip's crippling social illiteracy. Pip insinuates this cycle of ignorance through a flashback to the criminal (Magwitch) that Pip met in the

graveyard. He remembers Magwitch “fighting like a wild beast” (*GE* 300), and Pip associates the criminal with the lack of cultivation that Pip fears. Just as two ignorant people, young Pip and Magwitch the criminal, interact in the churchyard, they must interact now even though Pip considers Magwitch insufficient to maintain a relationship with. Pip becomes unconscious at the end of chapter twenty in volume two, and awakes to see the rain “intensified the thick black darkness” (300). The darkness represents the darkness associated with Pip sleeping, but the metaphor extends to consider his conscious “darkness.” The pathetic fallacy highlights Pip’s ignorance and his soul’s darkness. His spirit is uncultivated, and he is inconsiderate. His waking metaphorically represents him beginning to understand that he cannot merely act like a gentleman, he must become a gentleman in part through helping those who require his protection, like Magwitch. For the first time, his expectations do not require merely receiving his benefactor’s kindness. The relationship must be reciprocal and Pip must fulfill his responsibility to others. Pip’s superficial appearance is no longer acceptable, and he must develop the grace and humility required to contribute to a larger community.

Underlying Pip’s shallowness is Dickens’s criticism of upper-class superficiality. The novel criticises people who deem themselves superior because they possess more expensive material objects than others. *Great Expectations* encourages truthfulness and that people remain faithful to themselves regardless of social class or wealth. The novel deconstructs and destabilizes class boundaries, claiming that being a gentleman does not require status. Understanding the wealth of life, making the most of what one has, and letting go of people who are loved so that they may advance, are desirable qualities that gentlemen should possess. In this sense, Joe is a consummate gentleman. Joe is content with his place in the forge, and he never wavers despite Mrs. Joe’s abuses or her illness. He lets Pip go to pursue his fortune, despite Joe losing a

labourer and, more importantly, his only friend in the world. Joe's selflessness presents a model that Pip should imitate, despite Joe's illiteracy. More important than being intellectually cultivated is that a person must be able to "read" society. Joe understands that "Divisions among [different classes of people] must come, and must be met as they come" (*GE* 210). He understands that he must let Pip go, and that he is not designed for London society. Whereas Pip is unaware of his place because he does not understand his place in society, Joe possesses superior social literacy because he knows where he belongs and how to interact in his social circles. He is even willing to help Pip through his apprenticeship, and help him to grow and learn in a supportive social space. However, Pip occupies an uncertain social space, not being adept in the London upper-class, but not content with being a blacksmith. Conversely, Joe understands how society is structured according to those who have wealth as opposed to those who do not. Regardless of how correct this structure is, it creates divisions with which people must cope.

Regardless of education or wealth, Joe is content and adept in the forge. Joe claims that he "want[s] to be right" (210). He does not insinuate intellectual correctness, but rather he desires staying true to himself. He is not adept in Pip's upper-class London society, and he knows that he must leave. He is stretched thin in this milieu, and he tries to speak beyond his means. When he uses words like "architectooralooral" (207), he demonstrates his illiteracy, which alienates him from society, and it marks the distance between him and Pip. Regardless of Pip's insecurities, Joe's friendship is unwavering. He understands class, but he sees beyond these limitations—which is something that Pip never does in London. Joe never disinherits Pip, claiming that he will not "find half so much fault in [Joe] if, supposing as [Pip] ever wish[es] to see [Joe]" he sticks his head in the forge to see Joe working as he always has (210). Pip alienates Joe from the London upper-class, but Joe never rejects Pip from visiting or returning to

the forge. Therein marks the differences between a gentleman and an uncultivated young man who cannot find his way. Pip continues his attempts to become affluent in his new society, but he still has a refuge to which he may escape if he ever needs it.

By releasing his inhibitions and returning to his origins, Pip recovers from his illness and becomes a true gentleman who works honestly and contributes to society. Pip redeems himself by mending his relationship with Joe. Arthur Adrian describes this regeneration by asserting that “Joe Gargery, merely by being himself, a true gentleman, brings about the regeneration of Pip and sends him forth into a life of genuine meaning” (94). As Joe and Pip discuss Miss Havisham, the harmony between them is evident, particularly through how they finish each other’s sentences: “‘that’s a deal to say; but she ain’t—’ ‘Living, Joe?’ ‘That’s nigher where it is,’ said Joe; ‘she ain’t living’” (*GE* 427). Their words, ‘she ain’t living’ parallel each other and their speech differences are no longer an impediment. Their conversation is comfortable and their dialects are complementary because Pip considers Joe an equal. Pip’s is supportive and he accepts Joe’s deficiencies. Instead of shunning those who are less fortunate and intelligent, Pip is now willing to help them succeed.

One of the main reasons for this shift in perspective is Pip’s lack of judgment concerning Joe’s literacy. Joe’s education gives both himself and Pip “pride” and contentment, regardless of its ability to advance either of their fortunes. Joe’s letter parallels the letter that Pip writes as a child, where Joe’s struggles are not an impediment but rather encouraged. Their education is advancement in itself because they are both literate. They can both read and write, and Pip finally accepts Joe’s friendship. Therefore, the communication gap that existed between them is amended both by Pip accepting his origins, but also by Joe’s literacy that they may both enjoy.

Pip's intellectual growth is also an important dimension of the novel, even though it is only implied. His references to Shakespeare to contextualize situations are one example of how Pip's maturity is evident through his narration. Pip references Shakespeare when he describes the fourth year of his apprenticeship, during which a murder occurs. In his assessment of Mr. Wopsle reading the newspaper, he determines that "the coroner, in Mr. Wopsle's hands, became Timon of Athens; the beadle, Coriolanus" (*GE* 128). These references are unlikely young Pip's assessments because even if his literacy is improved, he is unlikely to have read Shakespeare because such a text would be inaccessible (especially considering the children do not have access to a coherent Bible). Instead, they are his retrospective evaluation of his life. This development demonstrates that Pip is capable of self-reflection and that he has developed a critical eye of the world through London experiences. He contextualizes these experiences with cultural references, and demonstrates that he has learned to evaluate the world according to his cultural exposure—he can now critically analyze his surroundings and explain them. The references suggest how he has learned from his errors and has precipitated the growth of his soul. He has accepted who he was and he improves through these errors.

A second example that accentuates Pip's literacy is the reference to him reading a book before Magwitch returns to his life. Pip reading with his watch on the table coincides with the footsteps on the stairs to his apartment (*GE* 291). This occurrence is peculiar because there is little reference to Pip being taught how to read. The narrator even admits that his own lessons do him little good, and that "the little [he] knew was extremely dear at the price" (121). His upper-class lifestyle has afforded him the luxury of developing his literacy and gives him the opportunity to share his gift with people like Joe, with whom Pip exchanges letters and therefore they can sustain direct communication despite being apart.

One redeeming quality is that Pip's financial freedom gives him the resources to improve his literacy, which is a quality that he may share with the world, particularly Magwitch. Magwitch envisions Pip reading to him, claiming that Pip "shall read 'em to me, dear boy! And if they're in foreign languages wot don't understand, I shall be just as proud as if I did" (297). Magwitch reveres literacy, and associates it with being a gentleman. He values what Pip has that he cannot: the ability to read, and to share that skill with the world. This moment accentuates Magwitch's intentions for Pip. The criminal does not understand how to be a gentleman, and he can only identify gentlemen through physical appearance. Magwitch also cannot interact or communicate as fluently as a gentlemen, as his speech particles "wot" and "'em" insinuate.

However, Magwitch does envision what gentlemen do with their intellect. He believes that gentlemen share this knowledge with the least fortunate. Magwitch desires exposure to the world through literature, despite his own illiteracy. He wants culture, and he considers Pip an outlet to alleviate this ignorance. Magwitch forgoes his own prosperity so that Pip can advance, and his benefactor only asks to share this literacy in return. Literacy is considered advancement even though those who are literate, like Pip, often take it for granted. For those who do not have this privilege, having a chance at literacy is a desire for all. For Magwitch, exposure to other cultures through words is crucial to human development. Pip's failures highlight that without understanding the cultures and being able to read cultural "signs," exposure is futile. Magwitch may not understand the extent of what true literacy is—neither does Pip, really—but he understands that it is an integral dimension to social progress. While the novel cannot be oversimplified to consider that Magwitch's sole motivation for repaying Pip is literacy, literacy is a valued element in Pip's cultivation. Being literate not only provides Pip with the opportunity to communicate and interact with different people or societies (even if he does not know their

customs), but it gives him the opportunity to share his talents with the world. Although Pip and Magwitch do not have an opportunity to fulfill this vision, the reverence of literacy is undeniable and it is a skill that Pip will never lose.

Communication and literacy are essential aspects of Pip's inability to function in London, to the subsequent breakdown of his former relationships with Joe and Biddy, and to his regeneration at the end of the novel. The development of Joe and Pip's literacy highlights the correlation between literacy and cultivation. Culturally aware people are equipped with the tools to provoke change and help others, while also achieving a high degree of personal contentment. Again, happiness is not a means of judging pedagogical success, but rather it is a by-product of developing fulfilling relationships.

These relationships suggest participation in a larger community, which Pip is incapable of doing. He never achieves the sense of belonging because he is never fluent with the cultural customs. He feigns fluency in his new middle-upper class milieu, but he never understands his responsibility to help other people, to maintain his relationships, or to contribute socially. He learns through experience more than formal education and, while experiencing his surroundings is an education, he does not advance socially. He remains socially illiterate, unable to properly "read"/interpret his new surroundings through critical analysis.

Although Pip's tutelage under Joe is adequate for a life in the forge, Pip is unable to adapt to the upper-class lifestyle that he leads in London. The majority of Pip's struggles derive from his selfishness and his propensity to create fictions to accommodate his desires. Pip believes that he is superior to Joe and Biddy because of his social status, and alienates them as a result. Pip convinces himself that he is destined to be engaged to Estella and that Miss Havisham is his

benefactress. These beliefs lead Pip to alienate people in his life, and he develops a sense of entitlement. He is vulnerable to Miss Havisham's manipulation and desire for revenge.

The novel ends with hope that interrelates Pip's and Joe's formal literacy with their renewed relationship. This literacy is also juxtaposed with Pip's physical rejuvenation. He finally understands that forming relationships and participating in a larger community is integral to his growth. He begins working with Herbert, and Pip realizes his safety net at Joe's. He pays off his debts and is no longer a social burden. He relinquishes pursuing Estella, and subsequently understands that they will only ever be "friends apart" (*GE* 445). The novel affords multiple outlets through which Pip's cultivation may occur and through which the novel may present this hope for the future. However, literacy is central to everything. It facilitates communication, it strengthens relationships, and it builds strong and sustainable communities.

## Conclusion: Education and Enrichment

Repeatedly, Charles Dickens demonstrates how much he values childhood as he writes about nurturing children. His emphasis regarding the importance of nurturing and enhancing childhood development is not limited to *Hard Times*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Great Expectations*, but this idea is central to these three novels. The way that they treat childhood is complementary because they all correlate education and wider social contributions, moral righteousness, and the ability to form strong social communities. They all consider education as a means to enrich society, and they scrutinize the potential damage that a school system may inflict if it does not uphold the best interests of all its students.

Dickens criticizes the insufficiency of contemporary Victorian education systems. He scoffs at their restrictiveness, and he laments the authority that teachers have. He writes against child abuse, and he worries that children's futures are compromised by inefficient schools. Through this criticism, Dickens highlights the need to establish liberal and unrestricted school systems that consider students' needs and interests. He advocates for establishing an educational environment that allows students the freedom to scrutinize their society and to pursue their interests without fear of alienation or abuse. He understands children as integral to the future, and his works demonstrate how present limitations can hinder that future if children do not receive the appropriate nurturing.

In these texts, Sissy Jupe, Smike, and Pip exemplify the need to provide a nurturing education for children. Sissy, who comes from the horserider community, is disoriented by the absolute nature of Mr. Gradgrind's system. In turn, she develops a sense of inadequacy and assumes her perspectives are incorrect. Instead of growing up in a nurturing community that will teach her how to contribute to Coketown's industrial community, Sissy's development is stunted

because of uncertainty and Gradgrind's restrictive ideology. Similarly, the abuse that Smike endures at Dotheboys renders him unable to function beyond the school. Just as he depends on the school structures, he depends on Nicholas' support as they travel across the English countryside in search of employment and sustenance. Thirdly, Pip leaves his life at the forge with little instruction on how to engage with society beyond the forge. He is easily influenced, and he is manipulated by Miss Havisham to the point of heartbreak and financial destitution.

These novels complement the middle-class Victorian desire for re-evaluating and improving school practices. Just as Mr. Gradgrind is a stock character for industrial education and Dotheboys Hall is the paradigm for Yorkshire Schools, characters like Sissy Jupe and Pip represent the struggle against aristocratic ideals that lower classes combatted. The characters' struggles to contribute and work humanizes the people implicated in larger social systems, as Dickens demonstrates by drawing a select few children from the masses to serve as paradigms for both individual and class-based oppression. The hardships of one student represent class hardships and the individuals' struggles within those classes, simultaneously accounting for the micro and macro power dimensions that governed Victorian society.

Dickens's novels promote reconsidering and challenging the ideals that govern society, such as viewing working-class people as a part of a larger political, social, and economic machine. The novels advocate every individual's inherent value, and in doing so they destabilize the association between humans and economics. They unhinge the popular notion that working class people are lesser human beings because they do not possess money. The onus is placed on the upper-class and middle-upper class people to change their economic outlooks and begin considering people as individuals, not as property.

In order to enrich society through improved education systems, pedagogical approaches must be reassessed to account for individuals rather than large student bodies. Dickens's novels focalize the individual, picking individual children from the masses. These children, such as Sissy Jupe and Smike, are exaggerated stock characters who stand in for the other children in the masses. While these characters are topical, Dickens gives them depth by showing the potential that exists if they receive proper nurturing. After Louisa, Sissy is the most proficient critical thinker that *Hard Times* presents. Even though Smike is nervous and pitiful for most of *Nicholas Nickleby*, his love for Kate demonstrates that he is capable of complex emotions and that his spirit remains despite the Squeers' abuse. Both Smike and Sissy leave the reader wondering what could have been if they had been given proper childhoods and if they were not silenced. The tragedy that Dickens presents is that disenfranchised children do not have a future, and they are not valued. They have all of the necessary skills and ambitions to contribute, but these attributes are never cultivated. For Dickens, this commonplace nineteenth-century condition is intolerable.

There is an implicit notion that permeates Dickens's novels that human lives are not disposable and people should not be forced into conforming with social norms, such as revering money, devotion to 'Fact,' or considering disadvantaged people inferior because of their poverty. Counterintuitive perspectives should be valued and promoted because they are a means through which society may improve. Maintaining contemporary prejudices hinders social progress because the issues that plague the current environment are never alleviated. In this regard, Dickens's works are empirical because they relate not only to Victorian England, but they also evoke a philosophy that is translatable across a number of cultures and societies, regardless of historical period.

It is easy to assume that children should be self-regulating, but these assumptions are erroneous. Children must be given an opportunity to make mistakes, and they should not be punished because they think differently, as the children in Gradgrind's school and Dotheboys are. Mistakes are essential to personal development, and they are crucial to social progress. Contemporary errors have the potential to produce an improved future that draws on an extensive body of knowledge to create and govern social systems. If schools condemn mistakes in order to impose conformity, they hinder future generations.

Regardless of circumstances, most of the children in question cannot communicate or function in larger society. They are socially "illiterate" because they cannot interpret the cultural or social "texts" that surround them. They lack the critical analysis skills required to accurately perceive their social positions and evoke positive social change. Many of these characters occupy a liminal ideological space, yet this position is simultaneously an advantage and a burden. They are outcasts who are capable of evoking social change, yet their social interaction is hindered as a result. Their education hinders their ability to critically analyze, or to communicate the issues that they perceive. Communication is key to provoking social change, and yet many of the central characters discussed including Sissy, Louisa, and Nicholas risk silence and obscurity.

Hope is important to Dickens's criticism because it establishes a vision for the future. It can be hindered, however, through silencing these important subjects and maintaining social norms. Each of these three novels configures this optimism and consider hypothetical improved futures, but they also represent the risks and challenges associated with upholding the status quo. Having a vision that things can improve blunts the novels' critical perspectives, but these criticisms cannot be discounted because they reflect the current social condition. Criticism is simple, yet it can be restrictive if it is too condemnatory. Dickens tries to establish a balance

between criticism and perspective through hope. The ideas are complementary because criticism provokes reconsidering preconceived norms. It can also provoke action, such as how *Nicholas Nickleby* contributes to eradicating Yorkshire schools. However, hope for the future makes it believable that change can occur and provides incentive for pursuing social improvement.

Coinciding with this notion of social scrutiny, *Hard Times*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Great Expectations* all consider personal reflection and understanding how a person impacts society as equally-crucial dimensions of personal development. This idea is particularly present in Nicholas Nickleby's and Louisa Gradgrind's growth. The former learns to control his emotions to rationally challenge Dotheboys' oppressive system. Conversely, Louisa learns to speak out against oppression, breaking her conformity to Gradgrind's system and precipitating change. Nicholas' story enhances awareness regarding Yorkshire schools that contributes to their mid-Victorian eradication. *Hard Times* does not have the same social impact as *Nicholas Nickleby*, but it does present a similar philosophical challenge. Louisa and Nicholas present counterintuitive philosophical perspectives that figuratively and literally overturn pre-established ideologies. They defend the weakest people, particularly working class or orphaned people, and they grow in the process. The present hope for the future, and they are the catalysts for change. They represent Dickens's belief that change is possible, regardless of the challenges or how deeply engrained social perspectives are.

Pip lacks the philosophical depth that Nicholas and Louisa possess, particularly because Pip does not share a space with the upper-middle class; he is not accepted among their ranks and he does not work among these people. Each of the children discussed in this thesis are malleable and will be cultivated according to the examples that they are given. These figures are the most important people in society because they can either be encouraged to change the world, or they

can be taught to conform to a certain social standing. Ostracizing these children and failing to provide them with proper direction through education can have potentially damaging social effects. Without knowing how to function in wider social circles, children like Pip can become social burdens who detract from society rather than contribute. This idea can be extended to include Tom Gradgrind, Smike, and Sissy Jupe, who also struggle with conformity and translating their education into larger social settings. Overall, these children demonstrate the importance of implementing proper school systems that do not aim to implement complete conformity.

These characters highlight the need to focus on individuals and promote literate and inclusive communities. In order to improve pedagogy, governments must begin asking more critical questions regarding their approaches and student involvement. Every society should seek improvement, in part, through better education across a number of dimensions including economic concerns, moral education, and cultural preservation. Compartmentalizing pedagogical improvement to one area is a good way to improve that one region, but this improvement should also extend to benefit other communities and individuals.

It is easy to suggest how education should be changed. It is also easy to criticise pedagogical practices and promote improvement, as Dickens does. However, implementing this change and increasing scrutiny are not instantaneous. Improvement takes time and understanding that the task will never achieve perfection. Other than eradicating Yorkshire school systems, much of Dickens's pedagogical criticism did not come to fruition until the 1860s, near the end of his career. And even these changes were imperfect, and they are still progressing today.

It is reasonable to expect change, but it must also be considered a process. Scrutiny and criticism are key, and taking initiatives to invoke change is the beginning. Scrutinizing the

effects of these initiatives is the next step. It is a process that is forever incomplete. Change takes time. It requires collaboration. Above all, it requires patience. Rather than condemning a social system entirely, specifically education, everything should be examined in context. Having a vision for the future is important, as Dickens does when he promotes a world in which childhood is valued. Focusing on individual growth is one of the strongest ways that change may be evoked, and it is a principle that Dickens upheld that we still contemplate today. Perfection may never be achieved, but we should always try to improve education so that children develop into considerate, intelligent, and socially aware members of society.

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