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The filter of memory in David Copperfield: transpositions, distortions and recreations

Alison Remandet

► **To cite this version:**

Alison Remandet. The filter of memory in David Copperfield: transpositions, distortions and recreations. Education. 2022. dumas-03792580

HAL Id: dumas-03792580

<https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-03792580>

Submitted on 9 Nov 2022

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Mémoire

Présenté pour l'obtention du Grade de

MASTER

« Métiers de l'Enseignement, de l'Éducation et de la Formation »

Mention 2nd degré, Professeur des Lycées et Collèges,

The filter of memory in *David Copperfield*

Transpositions, distortions and recreations

Présenté par

REMANDET Alison

Sous la direction de :

GILLESPIE Margaret

Grade : MCF Littérature britannique, UFR Lettres ; INSPE de Franche-Comté

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I would like to thank Mrs GILLESPIE as a teacher and as my dissertation director for all the benevolence she has shown throughout the year.

I would also like to thank my colleagues from Voujeaucourt and Morteau who have been a source of endless support during these mentally exhausting years. It has been a pleasure to spend these two years among you.

I would also like to thank my classmates from the 2019-2021 Master MEEF promotion who have shown nothing but sincere compassion and mutual assistance during these two years of hardships, but also Constance, Alice, Pauline, Gillian and the rest of the 2021-2022 Master MEEF promotion. You have been a great source of support during my hardest times.

Finally, I address my respects to my partner Mickaël, my friends Alice, Fathima, Telma, Constance and my family who have managed to cope with my persistent-doubts. Their presence throughout my Master's degree has considerably helped me when stress took over and I felt like giving up.

Introduction

« Of all my books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is DAVID COPPERFIELD. » - Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, Charles Dickens edition, 1869.

The book under scrutiny in this dissertation is *The Personal History, Adventures, Experience and Observation of David Copperfield the Younger of Blunderstone Rookery, Which he Never Meant to Publish on Any Account*, better known as *David Copperfield*; it is Charles Dickens's eighth novel, first published as monthly instalments between 1849 and 1850, then as a book in 1850. Standing for Dickens's first work in a first-person narrative, it also represents his favourite writing, as Dickens himself wrote in the Charles Dickens edition preface, comparing his writings with children. This novel constitutes an interweaving of Dickens's imagination and a romanticized account of his own childhood. It falls within the scope of the Bildungsroman (from the German, « bildung » meaning « education ») or coming-of-age novel, a literary genre which covers the psychological and moral development of the protagonist from a weak and powerless child to a mature and secure adult. An older David Copperfield, the protagonist of the novel, narrates his tribulations and joys from his birth to his life as a successful writer in Victorian England. Born six months after the death of his father and under the grim predictions of a nurse foreshadowing an unlucky life for him, he is raised by his selfless mother Clara Copperfield and his nurse Clara Pegotty, living the happiest of childhoods. The arrival of Edward and Jane Murdstone, towards whom David and Pegotty feel a vehement loathing, disrupts their life and tranquillity, thereafter resulting in Clara's slow decay and death, Pegotty being dismissed and David's neglected childhood. First sent off to Salem House where he is violented by the headmaster of the boarding school Mr Creakle, David is withdrawn from school after his mother's death and put to work by his almighty step-father Mr Murdstone in a London wine-bottling factory at the age of 12, before escaping and going on an adventure fraught with pitfalls to find his aunt Betsey Trotwood, who abandoned him at birth, for she expected this child to be a girl.

The Victorian era, which lasted from 1837 to 1901, run by Queen Victorian with an iron hand symbolizes a period of territorial expansion and significant betterment of living conditions due to technological advances on account of Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, thus making this period a turning point in British history. Yet social issues and inequalities persisted within

the social system. A series of laws regarding education was passed, making school compulsory for children of all social classes until they were aged 10. But since school was declared free only in 1891, early Victorian working-class families could not guarantee their children education. Furthermore, for the upper class did not contribute to improving the working conditions of the lower classes, a rise of the demand regarding labour was observed and children were sent to work in order to favour the economy of the nation as a whole, but also to sustain their families' financial burden. Even though it did not start during Victorian era, child labour was prevalent and normalized during this period. Considered cheap labour and given their smaller size compared to adults, they were sent to work at a very young age in mines, factories, chimneys, thus exposing them to long working days, low wages as well as dreadful living conditions and sickness, often resulting in death.

Charles Dickens (born in 1812, died in 1870), considered the greatest writer of the Victorian period was one of these unfortunate children. His father, John Dickens who worked as a clerk in a payroll office of the navy in Portsmouth, Hampshire, was jailed in Marshalsea prison following his impossibility to pay his debt. Young Charles, only aged 12 was sent by his mother to Warren's Blacking Factory, a shoe polish factory in order to bring financial support to his family during his father's imprisonment. This rash and stark immersion into labour scarred the author, but also contributed to his writing, his life story and figments of his imagination merging in most of his novels.

My three high school years introduced me to the history of Great Britain, but my interest in the Victorian society grew through the study of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, portraying Queen Victoria through a fictional character and Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, denouncing the social and political conditions of Victorian England where women, children and people from the lowest social classes were treated cruelly. The study of Dickens's *Great Expectations* during my university years elicited in me a greater interest in the author's descriptive yet accusing writing style rendering the social reality of 1800s England.

For my research, I decided to focus on the life of working-class children during the Victorian times. Combining this aspect and my taste for Dickens's ironic and accusing writing style, since most Dickensian heroes are children witnessing the humiliations imposed by the newly industrialized England, I opted to tackle the fictionalization of the writer's life through

his own favourite work, *David Copperfield*. The concept of fictionalization pertains to the “action of writing about a real event or character, but adding imaginary details and changing some facts »¹. While Dickens resorted to that literary technique in his other written universes such as *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations*, it is undoubtedly *David Copperfield*’s character and his adventures that resemble the writer’s life the most, mirroring his experience as a working child in a factory or even his father’s plight through the character of Wilkins Micawber, and also his successful career as a writer. Consequently, his mingling of fiction and reality has given rise to the questioning of researchers and academics on whether this novel could be considered an autobiography or not. According to Philippe Lejeune, a French academic who has theorized autobiography in his *Pacte Autobiographique*, an autobiography consists in a real person giving an authentic account of their life in a retrospective point of view: « Récit rétrospectif en prose qu’une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu’elle met l’accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l’histoire de sa personnalité ». While Dickens indeed resorts to the first-person narrative and the protagonist recounts events of his earlier life, the writer’s and the protagonist’s identities differ in name even if scholars and researchers noticed that they shared the same initials yet they appear inverted, but also in the way the misfortunes Dickens and his fictional character share are rendered, therefore putting *David Copperfield* more under the scope of an autobiographical novel, a novel containing elements of the author’s life but rendered as a fictional account.

In this dissertation, I will mainly focus on the theme of the filter of memory. The word “memory” embraces two distinct concepts: it can refer to the ability of one’s mind to store and remember information, corresponding to the French word “mémoire”; it can also allude to the French word “souvenir”, consisting in remembering something from the past. The narrative technique of this novel is to go to and fro between the events as they took place when David was a child and the same events as they are commented by David as an adult, interweaving past and present tenses and creating a dual narrative. The theme of the filter of memory is at stake and salient, considering that this fictional autobiography stages a middle-aged novelist exhuming events that occurred years prior to the writing process. The events are consequently altered by the erosion of memory because of time, but also by David’s literary purposes.

¹ Definition taken from Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fictionalization>

Through this thesis, I will cover the multiple aspects of the filter of memory and analyse how Dickens uses these concepts in the novel. I will dedicate the first part of this thesis to the novel as the embodiment of Dickens's memories as a Victorian child himself by giving factual elements regarding the historical context, providing biographical elements concerning Dickens's early life and explaining to what extent this novel actually stands for a work of reference in terms of life in the Victorian society, giving visibility and paying tribute to the victims of Industrial England; then I will tackle the manipulation of events from the past, firstly by illustrating how David's childhood is idealized under the prism of nostalgia, secondly by presenting the filter of memory as a protective mechanism to repress painful episodes of David's past and thirdly by analysing the creative dimension brought by the selection, the suppression and the alteration of events which enable the distinctive separation of the narrating adult and the experiencing child; finally I will discuss the duality that implies the filtering of memory: on the one hand giving a different account of the past in order to exaggerate and darken the events; on the other hand altering reality to erase some undesirable parts in order to purify the past.

PART ONE: Memories of a Victorian childhood

A. The Victorian social context

While the Victorian Age is mainly known today as a period of significant technological and social progress thanks to the multiple breakthroughs that occurred during the Industrial Revolution, making the United Kingdom the most powerful nation of the world at the time, many tend to forget that such progress also implied several forms of cruelty and injustice, increasing the gap between social categories, worsening the living conditions of lower-class people and contributing to the enslavement of children. Society was divided into three distinct social groups: the Upper Class, which consisted in Nobles, Aristocrats and Dukes, being the wealthiest links of the social chain, the Middle Class who were granted better living conditions and work opportunities during the Industrial Revolution and lastly the Working Class, the lowest in the social scale that was exposed to extreme poverty, hazardous illnesses and death. While the higher classes detained power, lands and could fend for their families, the Working Class were stigmatized by the higher classes and therefore were intensely impoverished, preventing children from getting any education and thus sending them to work in order to make the ends meet. Yet, child labour existed before Industrial Revolution, but was not as prevalent. The transition from rurality to industrialised cities provoked the creation of multiple jobs that had to be filled with workers, hence the surge of child labour. In addition, even if a series of laws named the Factories Acts were passed in Britain as of 1819 ruled the employment of children under nine as illegal, some employers still resorted to children under that age to fill the jobs. In the article she wrote for the 66th volume of *The Economic History Review*, Jane Humphries states that the main reason families chose to resort to child labour was when they were “driven to do so by poverty”². The children were therefore taken out of school, since education was considered a luxury, and were sent to work at an early age, stripping them of the joys and innocence of childhood and confronting them harshly to the adult world. Humphries shapes her study of the Victorian social system in her article by collecting testimonies of former

² HUMPHRIES, Jane “Childhood and Child Labour in the British industrial revolution”, *The Economic History Review* Vol. 66, No. 2 (MAY 2013), p. 407.,
www.jstor.org/stable/42921562

child workers: “I begin with some voices from the past, the reminiscences of child labour by working men of the era”³

Her article begins with fragments of working men’s memories that she gathered, telling about the circumstances of their labour. These short paragraphs encapsulate the sordid and dreadful conditions they were confronted with, such as the age they were sent off to work, one of them having started to work at just six years old, but also their wages and the type of jobs they had to do. Most of the jobs consisted in working long hours each day and were considerably exhausting, if not endangering. Thomas Edward Jordan, an American researcher on Victorian England at the State University of New York presents in his work *Victorian Childhood: Themes and Variations* released in 1987 the case of Robert Blincoe, a man who worked in a cotton mill, whose memories of his past as a child worker could be seen by anyone, given his physical condition.

*“Blincoe’s condition was attributed to the life he led as a child worker in Lancashire cotton mills. There, he was over-worked, ill-fed, poorly housed, and subjected to punishment that can be accurately represented as torture. [...] Blincoe bore visible scars which were physical evidence of his ordeal.”*⁴

By insisting on Blincoe’s condition, the author emphasizes the fact that the reminiscences of the past are not solely psychological, but can also scar people on a physical basis, leading them to bear the stigmas of their exploitation for life if they survived. It also brings the evidence of children’s suffering and sheds light on the abuse they endured, placing Blincoe as a symbol of child labour.

Children were required for several types of jobs. As the children were definitely smaller in terms of size in comparison with adults but also cheaper than them, they were mostly required

³ HUMPHRIES, Jane “Childhood and Child Labour in the British industrial revolution”, *The Economic History Review* Vol. 66, No. 2 (MAY 2013), p. 396.,

www.jstor.org/stable/42921562

⁴ JORDAN, Thomas Edward. *Victorian Childhood: Themes and Variations*, State University of New York, 1987, p. 2.

<https://books.google.fr/books?id=xptgUkJxJQsC&lpg=PA1&ots=dIRGMdmEQS&lr&hl=fr&pg=PA2#v=onepage&q&f=false>

to work in coal mines, since the combustion of coal was the main source of energy at the time. They had to get into narrow spaces to extract coal, a task that could not be done by adults given their size. The consequences of such a task were that during their 12-hour working day, they could slip and fall and they were exposed to coal dust and soot, triggering lung and chest diseases, often resulting in death.

“In the case of chimney sweeps, the practice of using boys (and occasionally girls) small enough to climb chimneys was very old. It was intolerable because of the accumulated soot in the narrow flues and because places to put hand and foot were unknown to the tiny children forced to climb into dark and dangerous places. Children fell and were injured.”⁵

Another field that largely took advantage of young unskilled workers was textile factories. Children were also required to be small, thin and agile, as they had to crawl under the machines to clean the dust and remove the cotton wastes to prevent the machines from breaking down. One of the main dangers was that this task was accomplished while the machines were working, and those who were charged of cleaning underneath them were at risk of being severely injured, in addition to the long hours spent inhaling snippets of cotton floating in the air. All of these endangering circumstances took part in making child labour a crucial social question in Britain, contributing to the passing of other Factory Acts to regulate child labour in terms of age, working hours and types of jobs.

B. Young Charles

It is no secret to anyone that Charles Dickens himself has been a victim of Industrial Revolution. His friend, John Forster, assembled the fragments that Dickens gave him in order to write the author's biography entitled *The Life of Charles Dickens*, which was first published in 1872, two years after Dickens's death. The biographer recounts the events of Dickens's life by using fragments written by Dickens that were originally meant to appear in his autobiography, including the turning point that has shaped the author's social criticism and

⁵ JORDAN, Thomas Edward. *Victorian Childhood: Themes and Variations*, State University of New York, 1987, p. 36.
<https://books.google.fr/books?id=xptgUkJxJQsC&lpg=PA1&ots=dIRGMdmEQS&lr&hl=fr&pg=PA2#v=onepage&q&f=false>

vehemence towards Victoria's England. His father, John Dickens worked as a clerk in a payroll office of the navy in Portsmouth, Hampshire and was known to enjoy living above his means. When Dickens was only aged 12, his father John Dickens was imprisoned in the Marshalsea Debtor's Prison as he was in extreme financial debt. Consequently, Young Charles was suddenly drawn out of school and was sent off to work in Warren's shoe blacking factory in Hungerford Market London to pay off his father's debt and bring financial support to his family. He would paste labels on shoe-blackening pots for 12 hours each day, only to get the meagre salary of six shillings a week in return. This episode of his life was unknown to everyone except his wife Catherine Hogarth and Forster.

"The blacking-warehouse was the last house on the left-hand side of the way, at old Hungerford Stairs. It was a crazy, tumble-down old house, abutting of course on the river, and literally overrun with rats."⁶

This quotation, which is an anecdote regarding the blacking factory Dickens worked in at the tender age of 12 describes the most austere working conditions he was confronted with. The factory was dilapidated and unsanitary, crammed with rats, representing a considerable danger given the illnesses they could give. As he dwells on this peculiar episode of his life, he writes to Forster that "No words can express the secret agony of [his] soul as [he] sunk into this companionship; and felt [his] early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in [his] breast", associating this period to a death-like experience, since his dreams of becoming an educated and cultivated man were taken from him as soon as he was sent there. He also confessed that it was hard for him to understand, even as an adult, how his parents easily decided to interrupt his education and send him off to work and even harder to acknowledge that his own mother did not see any objection in letting him stay at Warren's, even if his father was against it and sent him back to school. This rash and stark immersion into labour scarred the author for life, but also contributed to his writing, his life story and figments of his imagination merging in most of his novels, especially in his eighth novel *David Copperfield*. The metaphor of the secret agony of his soul has then been used verbatim in the novel, when adult David writes the retrospective of his life at the Murdstone and Grimby wine

⁶ FORSTER, John. *The Life of Charles Dickens*, Amboco, 2016, p. 52.
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/25851/25851-h/25851-h.htm#Page_51

bottling factory when he was 10 years old, emphasizing the young and recently orphaned boy's sadness.

Yet, several writers such as Albert D. Hutter, who was an Associate Professor of English specialized in literary criticism of Victorian literature and in psychanalitics in Los Angeles questions the exactitude of Forster's account of Dickens's childhood trauma and points at the possibility that Dickens himself ignored the exact amount of time he spent at Warren's. He focuses on the episode during which Charles Dickens was sent to work in the blacking factory, where the young boy who then became one of Britain's most successful writer worked long hours pasting labels on pots of boot-blackening. The question he raises throughout this article is the different accounts of Dickens's childhood trauma in the biographies of the writer, including Forster's *The Life of Charles Dickens*. Hutter questions the exactitude of the information rendered by several biographers regarding how long Dickens worked at the blacking factory. William Robertson Nicoll, who wrote *Dickens's Own Story: Side-Lights on His Life and Personality* testifies that Dickens spent three years working there, whereas Forster claims that Dickens «could hardly have been more than twelve when he left». These numerous suppositions highlight the novelist's discretion concerning his time in the blacking factory, for it is said that only a few, including Forster knew about this incident. In addition, Forster's writing on Dickens's life suggests that Dickens himself could not remember how long it lasted, certainly because of the psychological damage: « I have no idea how long it lasted; whether for a year, or much more, or less. » Nevertheless, such a traumatising event has considerably shaped Dickens's writings and social criticism.

C. *David Copperfield*: a realistic criticism of Victorian society

“It had all been written, as fact, before he thought of any other use for it; and it was not until several months later, when the fancy of *David Copperfield*, itself suggested by what he had so written of his early troubles, began to take shape in his mind, that he abandoned his first intention of writing his own life.”⁷ John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*

Over the years, Dickens has become one of the most famous British writers along with the most involved critic of debtor's prisons, workhouses and children's enslavement which

⁷ FORSTER, John. *The Life of Charles Dickens*, Amboco, 2006.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/25851/25851-h/25851-h.htm>

symbolised Victorian ethics and values, as he has been a victim of the debilitating Victorian system himself. By staging fragments of his own life into his fictional worlds, he became an advocate of the destitute and the stigmatised and aimed at raising public awareness on the treatment of children in a period praised for its economic and technological growth. Most of his novels therefore stage destitute and orphaned children as their protagonist, such as *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*. His eighth novel, *David Copperfield*, based on a fragment of writing that Dickens initially intended to turn into his autobiography, incarnates Dickens's early life as a child who has suffered at the hands of the Victorian morals and values. It depicts the suffering of an orphan child in situations that are usually not destined to children. The memories of the writer merge with the fictional story of David, the protagonist and narrator of the book. Both David and Dickens were forced into labour when they were children. As I pointed it earlier, Dickens had to work in a shoe blacking factory in order to repay his father's debts, whereas David was sent off to his stepfather's wine bottling factory, as the Murdstones regarded him as a burden and wanted him gone after Clara Copperfield's death. The circumstances that led them both to child labour are different, but they do share the same feelings of abandonment and despair regarding the events, referring to the events as the agony of their souls.

If Dickens's and Copperfield's lives bear striking similarities, the novel is not only a transcription of Dickens's own uprooting experiences as a Victorian child and does not act as a sole autobiographical fiction, but it also constitutes a reference work in terms of Victorian life as a child. As seen in Humphries's and Jordan's works with the testimonies of former enslaved children, his personal story is not an isolated case, it reflects the lives of thousand children that were exploited and used as cheap labour at the time. *David Copperfield*, as much as Dickens's other literary works acts as a work of collective memory, giving a voice to those who were oppressed by society by describing years of suffering and normalised torture under the prism of fiction. It incarnates a form of tribute to the thousands of children that were poorly treated and easily exploited and acts as a work of collective memory. His success as a writer has contributed to give visibility to one of the most disastrous aspects of the Victorian Age.

PART 2: The manipulation of past events in *David Copperfield*

A. The nostalgic dimension of memory: idealizing childhood

The second part of this thesis tackles the nostalgic dimension of memory that pervades in the novel. Retracing the events at the beginning of the novel, we are told by an adult David, who became a successful novelist about his younger self who shared his life with his selfless and caring mother Clara and their nurse Pegotty in Blunderstone Rookery. As this novel adopts a retrospective narration, the writer David gets to go over the memories of his past life, remembering the peacefulness and the stability of life by his mother's side. His depiction of his earlier childhood days bears idyllic features, as if the Rookery were an earthly paradise, almost a Garden of Eden, as read in the following quotation, taken from the second chapter of the novel: « Now I am in the garden at the back [of the house], beyond the yard where the empty pigeon-house and dog-kennel are—a very preserve of butterflies, as I remember it, with a high fence, and a gate and padlock; where the fruit clusters on the trees, riper and richer than fruit has ever been since, in any other garden, and where my mother gathers some in a basket, while I stand by, bolting furtive gooseberries, and trying to look unmoved. » The resort to a comparison as he describes the fruit enhances the feeling of nostalgia, for his childhood was peaceful and pristine when it was only about him, his mother and Pegotty. By resorting to this comparison, the narrator's aim consists in showing that his life, symbolized by the fruit, has never been that perfect and luminous ever since the Murdstones entered his life, caused his mother's progressive decay and sent him away to fend for himself in a dreadful factory.

B. The filter of memory as protection: repressing painful memories

“I pass over all that happened at school, until the anniversary of my birthday came round in March. Except that Steerforth was more to be admired than ever, I remember nothing... The great remembrance by which that time is marked in my mind, seems to have swallowed up all lesser recollections, and to exist alone.”

Taken from the ninth chapter of the novel, this sentence tackles the recollection of the day David learnt about Clara Copperfield's death. The adult David here, who is the narrator, decides to make an ellipsis of some events of his younger life, pretending he does not remember anything much regarding this period. This idea pervades through the use of the verb "pass over", indicating that he might remember things taken from the period but he voluntarily avoids it. Considering that the event that follows this sentence is tragic and acts as a massive turning point in Young David's life, it is undoubtable that the narrating David uses pathos for the readers to share his pain and his grief.

While the writer chooses voluntarily to gloss over such things as his time at Salem House preceding his mother's passing, he also states that his memories are not as precise in time as he thought, for he mentions several times that his memory elided elements to precisely situate the events in terms of temporality, as he states in the following lines: "There was that jumble in my thoughts and recollections, that I had lost the clear arrangement of time and distance"

C. The creative dimension of memory: separating the adult narrator and the experiencing child

"For one thing, in novels employing this mode of narration there is a distinction to be made between the "I" as narrator and the "I" as character, between the narrating self and the experiencing self. And in first-person autobiographical narratives, there is the additional question of the stance that the narrator chooses to adopt in relation to his or her past life."

The novel David Copperfield consists in a story going back and forth between the events lived by David as a child and the same events through the perspective of the adult David who became a novelist, that is to say between the "I" of the character, embodied by the child and the "I" of the narrator, embodied by the novelist.

PART 3: The duality of filtering memory

A. The action on the past as a means to darken the events

B. Purifying the past

« Like Dickens himself, the young David is removed from school to labour in degrading conditions. »⁸

Deborah Wynne, Professor of Nineteenth Century Literature at the University of Chester writes about rags in Victorian society, first presented as the signature clothes the most modest classes wore, but also as the material granting white paper after recycling. In the third part of her article, Wynne tackles Dickens's narratives of ragged children, suggesting that in the same way as rags could be recycled into pure white paper, ragged children could be "recycled" into civilized adults. She uses the specific scene in *David Copperfield*, when the young boy escaped the wine-bottling factory and wandered hopelessly in the streets of London, selling most of his clothes for a few shillings in order to fight starvation on his way to his aunt's, resulting in him wearing rags during his entire journey. This scene is an allusion to Dickens's most traumatic memory of his childhood, consisting in him being compelled to quit school following his father's imprisonment for debt and having to work in a blacking factory when he was only 12. For Dickens, the "ragged child" aspect lies in the fact that his family's poverty has led him to go from a young boy who had an access to education to an impoverished child exploited in a factory with dreadful living conditions, only to earn a few shillings. Both Dickens's and David's recycling resorted in returning to school and becoming successful writers afterwards.

« But it is equally possible that Dickens recognized that his talents would be straitened by an autobiography. He chose fiction not to preserve his secrets but because it offered him a

• ⁸ WYNNE, Deborah. « Reading Victorian Rags: Recycling, Redemption, and Dickens's Ragged Children » *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 2015, Vol. 20, No. 1, 34–49, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2014.991747>

greater freedom to dramatize events, to make them stand out more boldly by freeing them from the tyranny of fact and chronology »⁹

Robert Tracy, a specialist in Dickens studies, tackles in his article “Stranger than Truth: Fictional Autobiography and Autobiographical Fiction” the nature and the techniques used in literary autobiography and the use of the author’s personal life fragments into it. He discusses the founding principles of autobiography consisting in an author rendering an authentic account of his life by defining the genre as « fictional in form and to some extent perhaps in content », given that the writer possesses the liberty to shape his own experiences as desired, presenting some events as they truly occurred and choosing to dismiss some others to achieve a sentiment of perfect life. Conversely, Tracy considers autobiographical fiction to be “partly based on fact”, narrating a story woven around parts of the novelist’s own past events. Tracy resorts to the use of *David Copperfield* as an example, along with Trollope’s *An Autobiography* to analyse the fine distinctions between literary autobiography and autobiographical fiction. Firstly, he sums up Dickens’s novel by writing that it consists in the autobiography of a character who becomes a novelist, written by a writer who injected pieces of his past self into his fictional character.

He then draws a parallel between the fictional writer’s childhood and Dickens’s episode in the blacking factory as portrayed by John Forster, the autobiographer who wrote *The Life of Charles Dickens*, the autobiography that Dickens gave up on writing. He states that since Dickens decided to make David an orphan child, since his father passed away six months prior to his birth, and Clara Copperfield died before Murdstone sent the poor boy off to Murdstone and Grinby’s warehouse in London, the writer opted to exonerate the parents’ responsibility in sending Young David to work. This creates an opposition to Dickens’s real life. Indeed, according to the letters and the fragment of autobiography Dickens gave to Forster, the writer seems to put the blame on his father’s incapacity to manage his finances, which resulted in Dickens’s sudden exploitation in the blacking factory.

Consequently, Tracy supposes that Dickens resorting to autobiographical fiction instead of writing an autobiography lies in the writing limits that autobiography imposes in terms of

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- ⁹ TRACY, Robert. “Stranger than Truth: Fictional Autobiography and Autobiographical Fiction” *Dickens Studies Annual*, vol. 15, 1986, pp. 275–289. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44371574.

chronology and accuracy of the events. Through the use of fiction, Dickens can forge links between his own boyhood memories and his fictive child to express his full writing potential, creating an innocent child whose peaceful existence rapidly turns into a nightmare at the arrival of a stranger to the family. Writing an autobiography would have restrained Dickens's writing, therefore the autobiographical fragment he had written before renouncing to write about his own life constituted the genesis of his favourite child *David Copperfield*.

III/ Scénario pédagogique

La deuxième partie de mon mémoire, cette fois-ci rédigée en français présentera la séquence didactique en lien avec mon sujet de recherche. Ayant eu trois classes d'élèves de Seconde en responsabilité cette année dans le cadre de mon stage au lycée Edgar Faure situé à Morteau, j'aurais aimé pouvoir jouer cette séquence en classe afin d'en établir par la suite un écrit réflexif visant à mettre en lumière les choses qui ont fonctionné ainsi que celles qu'il faudrait réagencer pour mes prochaines classes de ce niveau, mais l'organisation de cette année stressante ne m'a pas permis de la tester. Celle-ci est donc présentée dans ce mémoire dans une démarche purement théorique et présente l'exploitation du thème telle que je l'aurais conduite avec mes classes.

Ce scénario pédagogique s'axera sur la problématique du travail des enfants, tant en Grande Bretagne lors de la Révolution Industrielle au XIX^{ème} siècle sous le règne conduit d'une main de fer par la reine Victoria que dans le reste du monde au XXI^{ème} siècle par le biais de la fast fashion et des nouvelles technologies qui constituent à la fois un désastre écologique, mais qui aussi questionnent éthique et déontologie. Cette séquence pédagogique s'orientera dans un premier temps sur l'époque victorienne qui, par le biais de considérables progrès industriels a hissé le royaume britannique au sommet des puissances mondiales de 1837 à 1901, au détriment de la vie de milliers d'enfants que l'Etat a exploité dans les usines, dans les mines ,et dans les rues pour atteindre ce sommet. Parmi les supports utilisés figureront des extraits de romans de Charles Dickens, fervent dénonciateur des injustices de cette époque par le recours à la satire sociale. Cela permettra d'introduire les élèves à la Grande Bretagne du XIX^{ème} siècle à travers des œuvres littéraires caractéristiques de cette période, telles que *David Copperfield*, roman sur lequel j'ai travaillé pour la partie universitaire de ce mémoire, puis le roman *Oliver Twist* qui mettent tous les deux en scène maltraitances et exploitation d'enfants dans des conditions défiant toute morale.

On traitera également d'articles journalistiques abordant le travail des enfants dans le domaine de la mode et de l'électronique dans les pays du tiers monde, où de nombreuses multinationales parmi lesquelles Nike ont délocalisé la fabrication de leurs produits pour réduire leurs coûts de production, mais aussi pour l'extraction de cobalt pour la fabrication des batteries lithium-ion pour le géant de la téléphonie Apple et du concessionnaire automobile Tesla.

1) Place de la séquence dans les programmes officiels

Compte tenu du bagage culturel et civilisationnel conséquents de la séquence, celle-ci s'adressera à un public de Seconde Générale et Technologique et s'inscrira dans la thématique correspondante à ce niveau, à savoir L'art de vivre ensemble. L'axe retenu pour cette séquence est « Le passé dans le présent », puisqu'elle présentera la manière dont la société britannique exploitait les enfants sous le règne de Victoria en Grande Bretagne, puis visera à démontrer que ces pratiques, jugées impensables et archaïques sont pourtant encore bien ancrées dans la société actuelle. Selon le Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les Langues, souvent abrégé CECRL, le niveau de langue visé à l'issue de l'année de Seconde est le niveau seuil B1, dont je vais lister les descripteurs pour chaque activité langagière :

Cette séquence, compte tenu des thèmes socioculturels qu'elle aborde, s'inscrit dans plusieurs domaines du socle commun de connaissances, de compétences et de culture¹⁰ que chaque élève se doit de maîtriser à l'issue de chaque cycle. Il s'agira en premier temps du domaine 1 intitulé « Les langages pour penser et communiquer », puis du domaine suivant, touchant directement à l'apprentissage de la langue anglaise « Comprendre, s'exprimer en utilisant une langue étrangère » tout en passant par le domaine « Comprendre, s'exprimer en utilisant les langages des arts et du corps » qui sera mobilisé lors de la lecture et l'analyse d'extraits littéraires des romans dickensiens, ainsi que lors de l'étude de la bande annonce de l'adaptation filmique du roman du même nom *Oliver Twist*. La séquence mobilisera également les compétences visées par le domaine 2 du socle commun, intitulé « Les méthodes et outils pour apprendre » dans la mesure où les compétences méthodologiques qui y seront abordées, notamment en termes d'analyse, d'écoute, d'interprétation et de rédaction seront transférables à d'autres situations d'enseignement. Elle s'inscrit également dans le troisième domaine du socle commun intitulé « la formation de la personne et du citoyen », puisque le bagage de connaissances qui sera apporté au sein de la séquence guidera les élèves dans la conduite d'une réflexion sur le monde

¹⁰ "Socle commun de connaissances, de compétences et de culture", Bulletin officiel n°17 du 23 avril 2015.
www.education.gouv.fr

dans lequel ils vivent et sur les actions qu'ils pourront mener en tant que futurs citoyens afin de contribuer activement à l'amélioration de leurs conditions de vie.

2) Tâches visées et objectifs de la séquence

Dans cette partie, je vais annoncer les consignes relatives à la tâche finale et à la tâche intermédiaire de la séquence, puis finirai par dresser la liste des objectifs visés.

La **tâche finale** de ce projet pédagogique consiste en la conception d'un poster dénonçant le travail des enfants dans le monde à l'occasion du World Day Against Child Labour se tenant chaque année le 12 juin.

Consigne: "You are a UNICEF representant and you are taking part in a conference in a school on the occasion of World Day Against Child Labour. Create your own World Day Against Child Labour poster and give a speech aiming at denouncing the dreadful consequences of child labour in the world."

Cette tâche vise dans un premier temps à mettre en œuvre les compétences d'expression écrite que les élèves ont développé en cours d'année et ont su approfondir tout au long de la séquence, puis de mettre à profit les compétences d'expression orale en continu afin de mettre en voix leur discours de la manière la plus éloquente et convaincante que possible. Ils seront amenés à mobiliser autant que possible les données historiques et le structure grammaticales et lexicales abordées tout au long de la séquence afin de mener à bien cette tâche. Le poster sera effectué à l'issue d'une séance visant à analyser et déterminer toutes les composantes d'une campagne de sensibilisation, à savoir un slogan, une illustration poignante et des données statistiques.

La **tâche intermédiaire**, quant à elle, consistera en une adaptation moderne de l'extrait du chapitre 12 du roman *David Copperfield* de Charles Dickens, passage qui relate la désillusion du jeune David alors qu'il a été envoyé travailler dans une usine d'embouteillage de vin par son beau-père Mr Murdstone, devant sa mère impuissante. Cette tâche, reposant entièrement sur de l'expression écrite permettra aux élèves de travailler sur leurs techniques de rédaction en mobilisant les figures de style et les entrainera à la rédaction du discours attendu en tâche finale.

Consigne: Write a modern version of the extract from *David Copperfield*'s 12th chapter we studied in class. Replace the wine-bottling factory with a modern job given to children. Describe your protagonist's feelings and impressions regarding the way they are treated.

A présent, je vais dresser la liste des différents objectifs visés qui permettront de mener à bien la tâche finale.

Les objectifs culturels de la séquence s'axent principalement sur la période de la Révolution Industrielle lors de l'époque victorienne en Grande Bretagne. Ce thème sera abordé par le biais de l'auteur britannique Charles Dickens, dont les expériences personnelles et les 2 œuvres étudiées dans la séquence font partie intégrante de la thématique de l'exploitation des enfants.

Il s'agira également de présenter la Journée internationale de lutte contre le travail des enfants, se tenant chaque année le 12 juin.

Les objectifs citoyens soulevés par la séquence reposeront sur la sensibilisation au travail des enfants, mais aussi sur la notion d'éducation obligatoire.

En ce qui concernent les **objectifs lexicaux**, divers champs lexicaux seront couverts tout au long de la séquence. On retrouvera dans un premier temps le lexique relatif à la négligence et à la maltraitance des enfants par le biais d'expressions comme *to be deprived of food, to be caned, to be denied the access to education* ; le lexique de la pauvreté, des conditions de vie difficiles avec *to be poor/penniless, to be paid low wages, the plight, to live in dreadful conditions* ; le lexique du travail forcé, de l'obligation et de l'interdiction : *to be exploited, to be obliged to, to be forced to + verbe ; to be compelled to + verbe, to be forbidden/prohibited, to not be allowed to* ; le lexique du travail : *a chimney sweeper, a street merchant, a workhouse/a warehouse, cobalt mines*.

En termes d'**objectifs grammaticaux**, le nombre de structures visées est dense, mais l'ensemble constitue un rebrassage de notions qui ont été abordées lors du cycle 4 (de la 5^{ème} à la 3^{ème}). Nous retrouverons dans un premier temps le prétérit simple pour raconter des faits passés, datés et terminés ; l'expression du conseil au conditionnel avec les auxiliaires modaux SHOULD et SHOULDN'T, l'obligation et l'interdiction avec les auxiliaires modaux MUST et MUSTN'T ainsi que le semi modal HAVE TO ; la voix passive afin de parler de ce que les enfants ont subi ou subissent. Il s'agit du point de grammaire saillant pour cette séquence, puisqu'il est question de mettre en lumière le traitement et les conditions de vie désastreuses d'êtres humains que l'on prive d'éducation pour contribuer à l'enrichissement d'une nation ou

d'entreprises. Nous finirons par revoir l'impératif, notamment pour la conception du slogan du poster pour la première partie de la tâche finale de la séquence.

Les **objectifs pragmatiques** reposeront quant à eux sur la structuration du discours exigé en tâche finale, à savoir les figures de rhétorique qui viendront donner davantage de relief et de vivacité aux idées véhiculées. Cela visera également à la structuration des arguments classés par idées et reliés par des connecteurs logiques.

3) Etapes de la séquence pédagogique

Cette dernière partie présente l'organisation générale de la séquence en présentant les étapes principales.

Séance 1 : La première séance du projet pédagogique vise à poser le thème de la séquence. Cette séance d'anticipation se fera par le biais d'un cartoon créé par le caricaturiste marocain Sanouni Imad (voir Annexe 1). Ce cartoon représente un enfant, tiré par le col par un homme en bleu de travail dont la tête a été remplacé par une clé à molette. L'homme en bleu tire le garçon dans la direction opposée au panneau « school » que l'on peut voir dans le coin supérieur droit de l'illustration. L'illustration ne sera pas projetée telle quelle, je retirerai le mot « school » dans le panneau et j'effacerai également la clé à molette, le but étant que les élèves imaginent ce dont il est question sur cette illustration en formulant des hypothèses. Avant de passer aux hypothèses, les élèves devront tout d'abord déterminer les choses suivantes : « What type of document is it ? », « Who is the author ? ». Ils devront ensuite décrire ce qu'ils voient, et notamment parler de l'expression faciale du jeune homme. Cela permettra de mettre en application la méthodologie de description d'image vue antérieurement dans l'année et d'amorcer également le travail d'hypothèses sur l'image.

Ensuite, pour l'émission d'hypothèses concernant le panneau et la tête du personnage de gauche, je leur donnerai la consigne suivante : « Imagine what is going on between the two characters ». Cette étape se fera en Expression Orale en Interaction avec leur voisin de table. Ils disposeront de deux minutes d'interaction pour imaginer la situation et le rapport entre les deux personnages. A l'issue de ce temps de concertation entre eux, une mise en commun collective sera faite au tableau. Je reporte l'ensemble de leurs idées au tableau. Avant la révélation de l'image originale, je leur demande de choisir quelle idée parmi celles inscrites au tableau leur semble la plus crédible.

L'image révélée intégralement, les élèves procéderont à la description de celle-ci. L'objectif consistera à comprendre que la clé à molette est une allégorie du monde du travail, que celle-ci prive l'enfant d'éducation en le forçant à aller travailler. Cette illustration pose les jalons de la séquence pédagogique.

Séance 2 :

Cette étape aura pour but de plonger directement au sein de la problématique du travail des enfants lors de l'époque victorienne, une période saillante dans l'histoire de la Grande Bretagne de par son essor économique et sa domination sur le plan mondial. La séance se ferait intégralement en salle multimédia, sur les ordinateurs ou bien sur les tablettes mises à disposition. Dans un premier temps, il s'agira de voir si les élèves possèdent d'ores et déjà des connaissances sur cette période de l'histoire britannique, certain.es ayant peut-être déjà abordé ce thème au collège. Ainsi, afin de contourner l'enseignement frontal, cette étape anticipatoire se ferait par le biais du site Wooclap qui permet entre autres de créer des quizzes de connaissances, mais aussi des questions à réponses libres, comme ce sera le cas ici. Je leur poserai la question « What do you know about Victorian age ? » via le site Wooclap. Ils répondront anonymement à la question via leur tablette et pourront donner autant de réponses qu'ils le souhaitent. Leurs réponses s'afficheront au tableau, elles serviront à nouveau à la fin de la séance.

La suite de la séance se fera sous forme de webquest à l'aide de la partie « Working Children » du site Primary Homework Help¹¹. En binômes sur un ordinateur ou une tablette, les élèves devront compléter une fiche de questions à l'aide des informations glanées sur le site afin de se familiariser avec les notions relatives au travail des enfants au cours du XIXème siècle. Ils gagneront en connaissances sur le type de travail donnés aux enfants, sur leurs conditions de vie, sur les raisons pour lesquelles le pays a eu recours au travail des enfants et sur des textes de loi qui ont été passés pour réguler ces pratiques telles que la Factory Act, passée en 1883. Enfin, les élèves devront comparer leurs réponses émises au début de la séance avec celles qu'ils ont trouvées lors de la webquest.

A l'issue de cette séance, chaque binôme devra choisir un travail pour lequel les enfants étaient réquisitionnés à l'époque afin de le présenter à l'oral devant la classe.

Séance 3 :

¹¹ <http://www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/victorians/children/working.htm>

Cette séance se consacrera à l'étude de la bande annonce de l'adaptation filmique réalisée par Roman Polanski du roman *Oliver Twist* écrit par Charles Dickens.

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