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Mobbing in Oliver Twist

Alfonso de la Quintana*

Faculty of Journalism, University Rey Juan Carlos.28942.Madrid.España

Abstract

The appearance and study of child abuse is a phenomenon that may seem very current. As typical of the way of life and the development of the XX and XXI centuries. But it is not, they have always existed and to prove it, we just have to resort to literature, where it appears in all periods of history. From the bible or the Celestina, to the realism of Victor Hugo in Les Miserables. Of all the literary works, Oliver Twist is selected for being the best known and most accurate way of describing child abuse, and due to its proximity in time, as it takes place during the Industrial Revolution. The methodology has been based on analyzing the characters in the text and their circumstances. Being the result that child abuse from the past century isn't so distant to nowadays' one. Even if there is greater awareness among the public opinion and legal standards to combat it.

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1. Introduction

Allegations of ill treatment in the media may lead the public opinion to believe that it is a relatively new phenomenon for society. Unfortunately, it is not, this kind of cruelty has always existed, and to prove it we just need to resort to literature, where cases of abuse can be found, not only against children, but against adults too, as in the case of Cain and Abel, the Cid Campeador with his king, La Celestina, Victor Hugo's Les Miserables, or Don Quixote assaulting Sancho Panza. On the topic of child abuse, works like Lazarillo de Tormes or Rinconete y Cortadillo by Cervantes could be mentioned. Many are the literary texts that could come to mind with little effort.

* Corresponding author. E-mail address: alfonso.delaquintana@urjc.es

Examples of the type of ill treatment now known as 'mobbing' can be found in *La Celestina* (De Rojas, 1991,) the work by Fernando de Rojas, which describes the harassment of those workers who nowadays would be known as the domestic help. This is a form of workplace harassment based on psychological insults.

In French literature, "*Les Misérables*" by Victor Hugo could never be forgotten. Here, harassment in the work place in its cruelest way is portrayed in the figure of Fantine, a factory worker and single mother who, for moral reasons - being a single mother - is discredited and dismissed from the factory due to lies and false rumors - a very characteristic tactic of harassers - by her boss, who actually envies Fantine for her personality. A case of child labor is also portrayed in it harshest form, including workplace harassment, inflicted on her daughter Cosette, who works at the inn of Thénardier, who does not let her play with her dolls or even feed her to a minimum standard. Very different techniques are used to eliminate little Cosette's self-esteem, which are worthy of study. But, on the other hand, such dehumanization leads Jean Valjean, an ex-inmate, to attempt to achieve social justice, trying to apply the social justice that was so lacking to his workers.

But it is in English literature where the figure that best represents mobbing in the nineteenth century during the Industrial Revolution can be found, this being, in my opinion, "*Oliver Twist*" by Charles Dickens. In this work, we must not forget the third chapter, where the mobbing suffered by the still young Oliver while working in a funeral home, can be analyzed.

2. Objectives

To meet the objectives it was decided to analyze the texts of *Oliver Twist* that are related to child abuse, the texts in both English and in Spanish and bibliographic material that are closer to the journalistic model proposed by Dikj in his book "knowledge and news".

This way you can contextualize many of the expressions which are discussed. They have also seen four films, musicals and well-known animated cartoon versions. Differentiating between different versions as the treatment of the characters even in the version of Roman Polansky characters or family relationship with Mr. Brownlow are forgotten.

Therefore a large enough amount is to be used in other areas, that is not only universal classical literature mainstreaming. The method used is the analysis of discourse, which is meant to be a cross-discipline of human and social sciences that systematically studies written and spoken discourse as a form of language use, as made in communication and interaction in social, cognitive political, historical, and cultural contexts. (ACD)

Oliver Twist is a model for the prevention of child abuse and learning of reading values. Usually it is studied in literature but without taking into account the values involved.

The objective to be achieved is to analyze child abuse in this work with *Oliver Twists* as the archetype of the child victim. Dickens comes to accurately describe the somatic symptoms of abuse and even how reach *Oliver Twist* was hired by a funeral home as a crybaby. This provides educators with a tool that can foster in children the process of identification with the character of Dickens in a pedagogical way.

3. Methodology

Oliver Twist is being serialized in Magazine Bentley, as Miscellany. Therefore I apply the method disclosed by Van Dikj in "Knowledge and news" as appropriate to the texts in journalistic exposed methodology. To meet the objectives it has been decided to analyze the texts of *Oliver Twist* that are related to child abuse, the texts in both English and is Spanish and bibliographic material that are closer to the journalistic model proposed Dikj in his book knowledge and news.

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The method for qualitative analysis will be following what Van Dijk has taught us about how knowledge of specific events that is used to process discourse may be derived from, or implybgeneralizable knowledge in general. This theory gives us a strong theoretical link between knowledge and discourse and explores one aspect of the classic problem of "learning the text" (Johnson-Laird, 1983; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983; Van Oostendorp & Goldman, 1999)

This analysis requires a comprehensive and multidisciplinary theory and based on this, a theory of knowledge in the production and comprehension of discourse defining the conceptual scope of the notion of knowledge, and specifying their relationships with other socially accepted beliefs.

Discourse analysis is a cross-discipline of human and social sciences that systematically studies written and spoken discourse as a form of language use, made as communication and interaction in their cognitive, social, political, historical, and cultural contexts. (ACD)

Being a qualitative study using a working tool as Atlas. it has been necessary to resort to a computer program that allows an analysis of systematic discourse recording qualitative data analysis of the work under study

The method used has been the study of the literary work: *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, displaying a sampling of the most representative texts.

The reasons why this work has been chosen are:

- It is one of Charles Dickens' most widely read and represented novels.
- It is a work that greatly influences children. This is mainly due to the large number of cartoon series that have been made based on it.
- It is widely known in the world's public opinion, because the work is easy to obtain in its different written versions: editions for children, in English or other languages, as well as in its various film versions: by Frank Lloyd in 1922, David Lean in 1948, Roman Polansky in 2001, or Disney in 1998. Even the musical versions, such as Carol Reed's, have become widely known.
- Even though the plot takes place in the nineteenth century, it is a work whose contents are closely related to current issues.
- This analysis is made on the base document, which is the written work, in order to be as objective as possible. In fact, in most versions, alcohol does not appear as intensely as other types of complaints.

4. Analysis of child abuse in the passages of *Oliver Twist*

In *Oliver Twist*, the influence that the father used to have in the family during the industrial revolution is shown. Whenever a parental figure was lacking, the child's psychological development was usually diminished, because he did not have a mirror in which to see himself, losing his paternal reference point. Besides, the mother was, in most cases, simply a caretaker of the home. The father was attributed the principal task of educating the child, due to being the parent who ultimately brought money to the household, this being the principal value in a capitalist society. An analysis of the text is self-explanatory: "*Oliver was the victim of a systematic course treachery and deception. He was brought up by the hand*" (Dickens, 2000)

"But even if he has been wicked, pursued Rose, 'think how young he is; think that the may never have known a mother's love, or the comfort of a home, and that ill-usage and blows, or the want bread, may have driven him to herd with men who have forced him to guilt'". (Dickens, 2000) It's the way to get to learned helplessness (Selligman, 1975)

The great hunger that existed in orphanages is described in a paragraph that portrays the most memorable scene from *Oliver Twist*, when Oliver asks for more food and is severely punished and locked in a room for a week. "*Please, sir, one more, replied Oliver. I want some more. The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle*" (Dickens, 2000)

The problem of poor nutrition in British orphanages was so serious that there are studies published in 2008 by the doctors Smith and their team in the British Medical Journal, analyzing whether budgets were even met. (Smith, 2008). This type of abuse and corruption in the food budgets can be further analyzed, when Dickens denounces the philosophy of the old owner of the orphanages in the country, recounting cases of poor diet, cold or fortuitous accidents involving the children. "*The miserable little being was usually summoned into another world, and there gathered to the fathers which it had never known in this.*" (Dickens, 2000)

If they survived the high mortality, their work involved: "*That's acause they damped the straw afore they lit it in the chimbley to make 'em come down againt, said Gamflier; that's all smoke, and no blaze; vereas smoke aint't o' no use at all in making 'a boy come down, for it only sinds him to sleep, and that's wot he likes*" (Dickens, 2000)

Before the advent of modern heating systems, the chimney was the main tool for heating houses. The chimney sweeps were in charge of their maintenance and their cleaning but, unfortunately, it was necessary for them to be very thin in order to being able of climb up the chimneys, and people resorted to the orphanages, where the children had such a poor diet that they could fit perfectly into the narrowest chimneys. Unfortunately, they were often abused while working, as this paragraph shows, or worse, due to inhalation and contact with soot, boys developed testicular cancer, this being the first known example of work-related cancer. Interestingly, it was thought that this cancer was usually attributed to venereal diseases. The discoverer was Dr. Percivall Pott, who studied why chimney sweeps from other countries like Germany did not suffer from this ailment. The conclusion was that their personal protective equipment, consisting in a body suit that covered the entire body, protected them from the illness.

Luckily, before being an apprentice, the Law provided that a contract had to be signed in front of a judge. In the novel, the judge decided that Oliver ought not to work as a chimney sweep, luckily for him. He worked as a mourner at a funeral home and slept amongst the coffins." *A prentice, sir! said the child, trembling*" (Dickens, 2000)

Symptoms of abuse in Oliver Twist are: *"There's an expression of melancholy in his face, my dear, resumed Mr. Sowerberry, 'which is very interesting. He would make a delightful mute, my love'"* (Dickens, 2000)

"He only cried bitterly all day; and when the long dismal night came on, he spread his little hands before his eyes to shut out the darkness, and crouching in the corner, tried to sleep; ever and anon waking with a start and tremble, and drawing himself closer and closer to the wall, as if to feel even its cold hard surface were a protection in the gloom and loneliness which surrounded him". (Dickens, 2000).

5. Discussion and conclusion

So I return to my goals Oliver Twist represents a work that has to be studied to be brought into the classroom with the help of teachers, educators, teachers in general. The student must not only see a sad story of an orphan.

It involves a practice for the students to analyze the large number of values that brings the work and are yet to be discovered.

Be a good practice for students to analyze the large number of values that brings.

It is also a methodology to implement and make visible the importance of putting a brake on child abuse in schools.

As an audiovisual project and case study can move students to develop their critical ability to analyze the different situations found Oliver Twist and demand solutions.

The individual's training and education are critical to achieving a more just world. From childhood, people must be educated in the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, teaching children to be respectful of other people and their ideas, always showing empathy towards others and fleeing from ignorance, which it is the leading cause of injustice.

This is the commitment of the author, Dickens, when he denounces the reality of the world of Oliver Twist, which surrounded and affected him during his childhood. One must not forget that his father was put in jail as a defaulter and had to work in a polish factory as a young child. His literary work is thus a personal undertaking against the situations he went through. It gives us an opportunity to empathize with others. Oliver Twist suffers all definition of bullying (Leymann, 1996; Piñuel, 2002; Hirigoyen, 1999)

Unfortunately, many of the negative consequences of the Industrial Revolution are still present today, an example being child exploitation or human trafficking.

The concept of work ought to honor and dignify the person, unlike what used to happen in Spain during the Golden Age, when work was frowned upon, giving rise to the well-known Spanish picaresque style.

We must be aware of the importance of childhood in the development of the personality. Development cannot occur without a secure environment. Childhood is a very fragile stage in all respects and children are very impressionable. It is very easy to manipulate a child. In the era of Oliver Twist, as today, children raised in families with poorly differentiated members, poorly defined patterns and roles, contradictory rules of conduct or limits and without a secure environment, are more likely to have problems with their personal development. If the Rights of the Child were applied in our world, most of the problems listed in Oliver Twist would not exist.

Unfortunately, abuse, in general, is not new in our society. But it can now be fought better than at that time by acquiring what are now known as parenting skills, in order to protect, educate and take better care of our children (Byre, 2008)

There are phenomena such as underage drinking, which occur in our society and can help us reflect on alcohol consumption. Considering that, at the time of *Oliver Twist*, children drank pints of beer full of hot water with gin and even the medicines of children were made with alcohol may help students become aware of the gravity of alcoholism. One of the most frequent reasons that minors are led to alcohol consumption is to induce their submission. Another historical habit is attributing medicinal properties to alcohol.

It is necessary to provide companies with specific training regarding Work Related Stress, Mobbing and Burnout and tools of protection against such problems. The main reason why Oliver does not become prey to this process is that he is not criminalized, despite suffering the whole criminalization process to greater degree than most of his peers. It is also important that due to his initial formation, his common sense (the least common of all senses) was developed to a remarkable degree, because in his subconscious and genetic make-up, there was a good family atmosphere that would eventually come to the surface. The human values of *Oliver Twist* and the support of the Mr. Brownlow eventually save him from his dangerous situations, which went further than simple workplace harassment.

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