**OLIVER WANTS SOME MORE - ANALYSIS**

“Oliver wants some more” is ‘the invented title’ of an extract taken from Chapter 2 from Charles Dickens’s novel Oliver Twist. Dickens’s work tells about the story a poor boy of unknown parents who is compelled to live in a warehouse with other boys. In the extract, the narrator sets up the atmosphere at mealtime: children are supposed to have a bowl of soup but they feel really hungry and therefore, like a sort of challenge, Oliver has been sorted to ask for some more food.

The extract is arranged into 4 sequences, three of them are narrative ones, in which the narrative technique of telling prevail. The third sequence is characterized by dialogues, thus the use of showing.

The narrator is a third person omniscient narrator, who therefore knows everything about the characters, and at the beginning he starts to tell about the setting where the plot is expected to develop itself. He focuses the attention of a ‘large stone hall’ which reminds the idea of something cold, like a prison where children are compelled to stay. The use of the passive form is significant to underline children’s inactive role complete submission to a character he is going to be analysed in the following sentences. That is the master, whose characterization is made up thanks to his way of dressing “dressed in an apron for the purpose”. This underlines two aspects: the first is that the master has a strong authority in the economy of the warehouse and that the narrator uses irony and synecdoche to make a simple ordinary situation seem like a ceremony, thus denouncing the master’s behaviour and attitude in front of the children. In the beginning, hyperbole and irony may make the reader laugh but then he will soon feel a sense of pity for what the children are compelled to live. Indeed they are allowed to have only a very limited amount of food, thus producing a sense of uncontrollable starvation. ‘ The bowls never wanted washing’ is once again ironical, since children devoured all the food in every bowl and this operation was so quick that the reader can imagine the really small amount of nourishment they could have. The repetition of sound ‘sh’ creates in the reader a sense of anger, since children in the following lines are characterized like animals: they would suck their fingers and catch up any stray splashes of gruel they could eat.

After the description of the setting and the situation, the narrator passes from the passive form to the active by considering and referring to Oliver and his companions ‘attitude: they have excellent appetites and have been suffering starvation for three months. Once again, the narrator semantic choice recalls of the semantic field of animals: ‘wild’, ‘voracious’ and when he tells about a boy’s eating: that is a typical attitude of animals. Besides, it has been told that the children have held a council where a decision has been taken: someone would have asked for some more soup after the dinner and Oliver has been sorted.

Passing to the second sequence, there is a shift in time since the decisive evening has come and Oliver has to make the difficult request. Once again, the figure of master is shown to be authoritative, powerful and last but not least, his force is determined by women and children’s total submission to him. That will be an important aspect and way of living in the Victorian age: “his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him”. Besides, the use of irony comes particularly to surface when the narrator says “a large grace over the short commons”, as if children have to pray for little food and miserable conditions. The limited amount of food is underlined by the expression “the gruel disappeared”, thus making the children restless, desperate and asking for Oliver to go and ask it. The choice of the expression ‘he rose from the table’ is once again hyperbolic: it seems to be a rite: Oliver with fear and alarmity stands up and goes to the master.

The third sequence begins with the dialogues, so there is a shift from the narrative technique of telling to that one of showing. All what the reader receives is influenced by characters’ words. On the other hand, the master is a fat, healthy man (children are skinny and unhealthy) and therefore he is characterized by the category of physical aspect. Going on with his characterization, his feeling and reaction come to surface in the following lines “he gazed in stupefied astonishment”. The assistants were paralyzed so once again the narrator uses irony, establishing a strong difference between what happens and what would in reality happen. Moreover, the master is expected to be strong and authoritative but when it is said that he pronounces ‘what’ in a febrile voice, the idea the reader makes of him seems to vanish. The scene described is one of silence and terror in the room: nothing seems to happen before the master’s answer.

The reaction of the master is not only verbal, indeed he acts violently, by aiming a blow with the ladle and immobilizing him. After that, the text refers once again to a sort of council (thus making the ordinary situation as something important) ‘ in solemn conclave’, from where another character will come into scene. The master is speaking to Mr. Limbinks, who is characterized to be a ‘gentlemen in the high chair’, underlining one more time the higher position of men in Victorian society. The master is referring to Mr. Limbinks, highlighting Oliver’s request “I beg your pardon, sir. Oliver Twist has asked for more!”. In the beginning, it seems that the master feels a sort of compassion for the child, but the reader will soon understand that it is ironic: the master with the answer, shows all his cruelty and wants to make Oliver believe that he will soon receive some additional food, but his expectations will not be satisfied.

Mr. Limbinks’ reaction is very cold, since he does not seem to agree to children’s request, even if they feel extremely hungry. This is particularly underlined by the use of imperative forms “compose yourself”, ”answer me”,… thus creating a sort of hierarchy in the warehouse. He is in addition straight-forward, he says that Oliver will be hung and so it was. In conclusion, Oliver was ordered into instant confinement and anyone who wanted to take Oliver off the parish and to use him for trade, business, or calling would have received a reward of five pounds. The narrator can imagine how, for such small request, the poor child would have seen such a reaction.

So in conclusion the extract belongs to a typical Victorian age novel since it wants to denounce all the contradictions and negative aspects that characterized that period. For example, the idea of male adults who submitted women and children, who were considered like slaves, and the difficult situation many children were compelled to live, due to poverty, disease, lack of parents or any relatives.

Ultimately, Oliver Twist may be considered a sort of lens through which the reader can see England social conditions of that time.