

# Homework for 13.02.2018

## Analysis of the text 'Oliver wants some more'

The text I am going to analyse is an extract taken from Charles Dickens's "Oliver Twist". The novel is about a poor orphan who lives in a workhouse with other boys. After some troubles, he got sold as an apprentice to an undertaker. He's very unfortunately and he feels not at home, so he escapes to London to become a pickpocket, but Mr. Brownlow saves and adopts him.

The extract is arranged into 4 paragraphs. The first, the second and the last one are mainly written in a narrative form, but third one is made up by a dialogue between Oliver and the employers of the workhouse.

The narrator is a third person one, who knows everything about the characters. He uses that omniscient feature to describe every single detail of the room and the opening situation in which is Oliver. He gives the reader the impression that the 'large stone hall' (line 1) in which Oliver and his canteen mates were eating is similar to a prison: he describes a very large room without any meaningful detail except of a place where it was a copper full of gruel. None in this room could ask for something of break the rules. Everyone must follow the rules. This idea is convey through expressions like 'each boy had one porringer, and no more' (lines 3-4).

Since line 5, the description of the boys in the room it is a mix of hyperbole and irony. 'The bowls never wanted washing' (lines 5-6), 'the boys polished them with their spoons till they shone again' (line 6), 'as if they could have devoured the very bricks of which it was composed' (line 9), 'the view of catching up any stray splashes of gruel that might have been cast thereon' (lines 10-11). Those are the sentences that make the reader smile for a few seconds, but then create a sense of displacement and a sense of pity towards the children. The repetition of sound 'sh' creates in the reader a sense of anger, indeed as we can see in the sentences Oliver and his canteen mates are described like animals, but they are not animals, they behave like that because they're treated like animals.

After the description of the setting and the situation, the narrator describes children's life in the workhouse. One again, the narrator refers to Oliver and his canteen mates as animals with words like 'wild' (line 13), 'voracious' (line 13), 'hinted darkly' (line 15). 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. Therefore, there's a contrast between those visions: on one side the children are animals, but on the other side they can regroup and decide democratically their spokesman. We can this, so, that the first vision is the one of any man that would watch only that scene, but the second one is the vision of the children of an intelligent reader, who knows the full story of them.

Passing to the second paragraph, there's a shift in time and we're thrown into the action. In this sequence, the description became gloom from ironic and hyperbolic. This is conveyed by expressions like 'the gruel disappeared' (lines 24-25), 'he was desperate with hunger' (lines 25-26), 'alarmed at his own temerity' (line 28). Oliver stood up and walked to the master. His figure is shown to be authoritative, powerful. Besides, the use of irony comes particularly to surface when the narrator says 'a long grace was said over the short commons' (line 24), as if children have to pray for little food and miserable conditions.

The third paragraph is mainly composed by dialogues. All what the reader receives is influenced by characters' words and he no longer see Oliver Twister's world through the third person narrator's eyes. Even the description we found in this sentence describes only the events and it doesn't give any detail that

only the narrator could know. After Oliver's request the master was paralyzed for a few seconds, as if that request would have been something unbelievable, unacceptable. The master answers with a 'What!' (line 33), told with a faint voice, as if he wanted to have heard something different. The master is a strong and important figure, therefore to demonstrate that to Oliver and to all the other guys in the room he uses the violence against Oliver ('the master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle' [line 35]), also to punish him for his thoughtless request. The master took the 'bad guy' to Mr. Limbkins, a 'gentleman in the high chair' (line 38), who first react as the master saying 'For more!' (line 41), but after he composes and tried to express a reasoning for Oliver's behavior. He did not found in his mind a reasonable explanation, so he said that the 'boy will be hung' (line 45). The intelligent reader understands that people in the Victorian Age don't search for answers to their questions, but they thought that every question they could express, they could answer with their knowledge and no more.

The last paragraph starts with a sentence: 'nobody controverted the prophetic gentleman's opinion'. The intelligent reader, once again, can immediately understand that in the Victorian Age, the social power is everything for everyone. None controverted the gentleman's opinion not because they all agree with that, but because they have fear to have troubles with him if they expressed their opinion.

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. The narrator ends the text saying that 'five pounds and Oliver were offered to any man or woman who wanted an apprentice to any trade, business, or calling' (lines 51-52). This confirms the previous affirmation: in the Victorian Age, there were no place for who not follows the rules and wanted to be free, everyone must follow the rules and the social hierarchy.