CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY

HOMEWORKS

DIKENS AND VERGA, THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

The present extract is taken from Rosso Malpelo, a short novel by Giovanni Verga published in his collection Vita dei Campi. The story is about a young boy who works in a cave as a miner and it is useful for reflecting on the theme of children exploitation comparing the text with the previous extract from Oliver Twist.

The extract focus on the protagonist’s death. The narrator is omniscient so the reader can “read” the character’s thoughts. His death is connoted in a material way with the word “ossa”, underlining Malpelo’s physical appearance but also referring to death as death of the body rather than of the mind.

Malpelo’s death is close to his father’s because they both die in the cave. Their closeness is underlined by the narrator’s inferences and by the fact that Malpelo takes his father’s tools with himself. The difference is that Malpelo’s body was never found. His death is characterized by a disappearance, as if Malpelo dematerialized himself. It marks Malpelo’s exclusion and solitude.

comparing the two extract we can understand that the two protagonists are both young, poor and, in a way or another, orphan. Despite the reader does not know yet Oliver’s job, the children share their condition of juvenile exploitation and hard-working in precarious conditions.One can’t forget England had just experienced social consequences of the Industrial Revolution, while southern Italy suffered its backwardness in respect to the north and paid the costs of a still feudal agriculture and the mistreatment of mineral resources; so the two backgrounds fostered the actualizing and the development of the exploitation of children.

Verga’s story is close to Dickens’ novel as for the interest and attention towards the living condition of children in their own countries. And both novelists chose to support poetry of Realism (Verism in Italy with Verga), without hiding the awareness of a disarming misery the social contexts were invaded by.