

Literary Analysis of Main Heroes in the Novels “the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” and “Oliver Twist”

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ANNOTATION

Oliver Twist and Huckleberry Finn are the main heroes of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. Both of the heroes are depicted in the novels as child. Their childhood was described differently. Being children they experienced various adventures. Oliver Twist lived in very harsh conditions. Being orphan he met lots of people both cruel and kind. However, Huckleberry Finn was naughty and he had loving relatives. Authors wrote realistic live in a critical way. This work opens the ways of childhood depiction in novels.

KEYWORDS: childhood, realism, Oliver Twist, Huckleberry Finn, British literature, American literature, critical realism, childhood problems.

To clarify the realistic elements in English and American literature , two novels : “Oliver Twist ” and “ Huckleberry Finn ” are chosen as one of the best realistic novels written by Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. As their writing style differs from each other , their main heroes also distinguishes from each other. These distinguishing features are due to different social environment and economic situation.

As Belinsky wrote “ ‘Oliver Twist ’ is one of the best works of Dickens. The merit of the novel is in its truth to reality, sometimes arousing indignation; always full of energy and humour , its fault is in the ending which is in the manner of the sentimental novels of the past century... All the characters of ‘Oliver Twist’ ,of the good cranks and villains in particular, are delineated sharply and originally.”

It tells the story of an orphan boy of unknown parentage. Born in a workhouse, brought up under cruel conditions, the hero runs away from the workhouse to London, where he falls into the hands of a gang of thieves. He is rescued from them by the benevolent rich Mr. Brownlow, but the thieves make him join them once again and partake in their foul dealings. The novel ends with Oliver being adopted by Mr. Brownlow. The adventures of boy-hero were used by Dickens to describe the lower depth of London. He makes his readers aware of the inhumanity of city life under conditions of the capitalism. Dickens describes the awful conditions under which the children of the poor were brought up, and exposes the cruelty of the bourgeois philanthropists.¹

As for the second novel, children read Huckleberry Finn for the descriptions of the hero’s adventures. But for the adult reader the novel is valuable as realistic pictures of American life in the past century. Huck Finn runs away from The Widow Douglas, who wanted to “civilize” him, meets a runaway Negro slave Jim, and together they travel down the

¹ (Alexandr, An Antology of English Literature XIX, 1949)

Mississippi River. Describing their various adventures, Mark Twain unfolds a wide panorama of American provincial life. Absence of culture, wild brutality, deadening dullness, money – hunting – such are some of the features of the life presented by the writer.

As our main task is to analyze the protagonists, it is quite clear that Oliver and Huck have many similarities and differences.

First of all, both authors chose children as their main heroes.

Both *Oliver Twist* and *Huckleberry Finn* were children about 12 and 13 years old. Both of them were pure and innocent. Oliver was orphaned from the time of his birth in the work house. He did not know anything about his parents. And he was brought up in the work house up to he ran away to London. When it comes to Huck, differing from Oliver, he had father, Dad but his mother also died. Although he had a drunken father, his father never tried to educate his child, instead of that he forced Huck to drop out the school, saying to beat him.

Oliver was never taught about anything, neither reading books nor religious education. He never wore new clothes until Mr. Brownlow and Mrs. Maylie took care of him. However, the Widow Douglas got legal custody of Huck and began to civilize him. Huck wore smart clothes and he was educated as his Dad said. But Huck himself did not want to go school because he wanted adventures.

Despite the fact that Huck was an adventurous boy, he was kind and honest. Huck did not want the two frauds to take the money which was left to the girls. "So I wrote: "I put it in the coffin. It was in there when you was crying there, away in the night. I was behind the door, and I was mighty sorry for you, Miss Mary Jane." It made my eyes water a little to remember her crying there all by herself in the night, and them devils laying there right under her own roof, shaming her and robbing her; and when I folded it up and give it to her I see the water come into her eyes, too;"²

And the same occurs in "*Oliver Twist*". When Mr. Brownlow gave Oliver money to deliver the book to the shopper and on the way taken by Nancy and Sikes they took the money and the books from him he begged to them: "They belong to the old gentleman," said Oliver, wringing his hands; "to the good, kind, old gentleman who took me into his house, and had me nursed, when I was near dying of the fever. Oh, pray send them back; send him back the books and money. Keep me here all my life long; but pray, pray send them back. He'll think I stole them; the old lady: all of them who were so kind to me: will think I stole them. Oh, do have mercy upon me, and send them back!"³

Oliver was so innocent and naive that until he first time was led to theft under the joint guardianship of Charley Bates and his friend the Dodger, he did not know that Jew Fagin was a gang's leader and all the children under his hands were taught to steal other people. At that moment, "What was Oliver's horror and alarm as he stood a few paces off, looking on with his eyelids as wide open as they

Would possibly go, to see the Dodger plunge his hand into the old gentleman's pocket, and draw from thence a handkerchief! To see him hand the same to Charley Bates; and finally to behold them, both running away round the corner

² (Twain)

³ (Dickens, Free eBooks at Planet eBook.com)

At full speed! In an instant the whole mystery of the handkerchiefs, and the watches, and the jewels, and the Jew, rushed upon the boy's mind.

He stood, for a moment, with the blood so tingling through all his veins from terror, that he felt as if he were in a burning fire; then, confused and frightened, he took to his heels; and, not knowing what he did, made off as fast as he could lay his feet to the ground."⁴ Nevertheless, Huck was not so naïve because when he met two men who introduced themselves as Duke and King he said that he already knew that they were real frauds.

Talking about Oliver, he never lied to people around him, he was always ready to help them. Mrs. Maylie and Rose began to take care of him, as an answer to this kindness he tried to do his best for them. When Rose was ill, every morning Oliver brought various flowers to make her happy.

As a comparison Huck was a liar. He deceived many people during his adventure. For example, he lied to Pap when he asked him about the money. He told a lie when he and Jim were running away without the two frauds. He lied a woman when he posed as a girl. But he was also very kind. When Jim was sold, Huck did almost everything to release him from being slave once more. Even he pretended to be Aunt Sally's nephew Tom Sawyer, he was ready to dig the ground in order to help escape. However, Oliver never deceived anyone. He was described as an innocent child.

Oliver was somehow weak and went the way life led him. He never rebelled against the unfair treatment people did him. Instead, other nice and generous people acted for his fortune. In contrast, Huckleberry Finn changed everything for himself. He ran away from his drunk father because of Pap's brutal treatment. He developed during the novel. His opinion about people, especially, about slaves and their race changed. At first he looked Jim as a slave, but nothing more. Even he did not want to apologize from him. But after being together, he altered his opinion about Jim and understood that all people despite of their skin color were the same human being.

To conclude, Oliver inherited his good manners from his parents and he even spoke in plain English although people who surrounded him spoke in a dialect, while Huckleberry Finn learned good behaviors like caring, sympathy from his friend Jim and he spoke in a dialect like other people in the novel.

References

1. Alexandr Pope, *An Anthology of English Literature XIX*, 1949
2. Dickens Charles, *The Adventures of Oliver Twist* Free eBooks at Planet eBook.com
3. Twain Mark, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

⁴ (Dickens, Free eBooks at Planet eBook.com)