



ISSN: 2230-9926

Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

# IJDR

*International Journal of Development Research*

Vol. 13, Issue, 03, pp. 62061-62067, March, 2023

<https://doi.org/10.37118/ijdr.26466.03.2023>



REVIEW ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

## THE FORSAKEN CHILDHOOD PORTRAYED IN JORGE AMADO'S CAPTAINS OF THE SANDS AND CHARLES DICKENS' OLIVER TWIST

<sup>1</sup>Jaciara Tereza Miranda Pereira and <sup>2</sup>Dra. Diana Barreto Costa

<sup>1</sup>Major in Languages, Licensed in Portuguese, English and Literature at the Universidade Estadual da Região Tocantina do Maranhão (UEMASUL); <sup>2</sup>General coordinator of the Teacher Training program Caminhos do Sertão and Professor at the Undergraduate Programs of Languages (Teaching Licensing) in Portuguese, English, and Literature, and Languages (Teacher Licensing) in English and Literature. Adjunct Professor level IV, linked to the Center of Human and Social Sciences and Languages (CCHSL), Member of the Group of Studies and Research in Applied Linguistics and English Literature (GEPLALA) and of the Group of Studies in Educational Practices and Teacher Training (GEPEP), at the Universidade Estadual da Região Tocantina do Maranhão (UEMASUL), Campus Imperatriz, Maranhão, Brazil

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2023

Received in revised form

07<sup>th</sup> February, 2023

Accepted 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2023

Published online 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

#### KeyWords:

Poverty. Violence. Abandon. Childhood.

Public institutions.

#### \*Corresponding author:

Juliano Massini Medici da Costa

### ABSTRACT

Our study discusses the portrayal of poor childhood in England and Brazil, displayed in the works "Oliver Twist", by Charles Dickens, and "Captains of the Sand", by Jorge Amado, respectively, in the 19th and 20th centuries. We aimed to identify social and institutional criticisms presented in both works, understanding the existing singularities and adjacencies between them, and to report on the social abandonment experienced by those kids and teenagers. To that effect, we used bibliographical research and returned to historical and conceptual topics that are relevant, such as poor childhood, public power and violence. We also used elements from comparative literature and indispensable concepts to literature analysis. In a later moment, we sought historical elements to contextualize and enrich the knowledge of the reality under study. The studies by Nascimento (2013), Segalin (2007), Soares (2004) and Torezan (2005) served as a theoretical reference, which helped to understand the theme. Carvalhal (2006), Gancho (2006) and Gomes (1998) were indispensable for the analysis of literary elements. As a result, the present study shows that aspects related to family and school are vital for personal and social development.

Copyright©2023, Jaciara Tereza Miranda Pereira and Dra. Diana Barreto Costa. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Jaciara Tereza Miranda Pereira and Dra. Diana Barreto Costa, 2023. "The forsaken childhood portrayed in Jorge Amado's Captains of the Sands and Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist". *International Journal of Development Research*, 13, (03), 62061-62067.

## INTRODUCTION

Childhood spent a long period hidden from world history. Elder people sometimes treated children and adolescents as miniature adults, sometimes as helpless beings, with no right to speak or act. Given these characteristics, it was up to the adult world the decision of what was permitted or forbidden to childhood. Thus, the world's child protection legislation took a qualitative leap in the 20th century. International norms have driven countries to consolidate specific laws for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents. In Brazil, for example, it gave rise to the Federal Constitution of 1988 and Law No. 8069, of August 13th, 1990, better known as the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA<sup>1</sup>) – which regulate the rights and duties of children and adolescents. In England, there were laws that protected

children from unhealthy work, which was constant in the Industrial Revolution. In the 19th century, there was no legislation for crimes committed by children and adolescents, and criminal punishment depended on subjective issues such as awareness of the crime that had been committed, regardless of the age of the accused. The first law came in 1930 and regulated the penal age to 10 years. In Brazil, the Code of Minors, as it was called, emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, focused on surveillance and direct intervention on abandoned and delinquent minors, prioritizing hospitalization in public institutions. Given the above, our work proposes to reflect on poor childhood and its treatment by the public power. To that effect, it was essential to study contextual and literary elements, and topics such as: poor childhood, public power and violence.

**Policies of accommodation to poor childhood in Brazil and in London during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries:** The literary works *Oliver Twist* and *Captains of the Sand* were published in 1837 and 1937, respectively. Despite the geographical and temporal differences

<sup>1</sup>From the Portuguese "Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente".

between them, as those stories took place in Salvador and London, both productions presented several similarities, as they portrayed poor childhood and society abandonment by government institutions. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, England was going through its Industrial Revolution, marked by an acceleration of the industry modernization process and an escalation of child labor, as well as an increase in the population, unemployment and poverty. With regard to childhood in the Victorian Era, or more precisely in the Industrial Revolution, Elono (2018, p.3) explains that:

the Industrial Revolution despite having an evolutionary character, that is, replacing manual work with machine work; caused many children to carry out the manual work that was previously done by adults. Several citizens took advantage of the misery of others. Chimney sweepers employed children in unhealthy and dangerous work, where children did the dirty work, and died trapped in the chimneys or with lung cancer.

The work of Charles Dickens portrays the way in which the poor population, especially children, were treated by the State and its institutions. The author clearly depicts the institutionalization of its main character – *Oliver Twist* – at shelters and, later, in the labor market, as an apprentice in the profession of funeral worker, as presented by Dickens (2019 p.15): “Well! You have come here to be educated, and taught a useful trade [...] So you'll begin to pick oakum tomorrow morning at six o'clock”. It is noted, in this quote, the beginning of Oliver's work in the factories, at the age of 9, “a pale thin child, somewhat diminutive in stature, and decidedly small in circumference” (DICKENS, 2019, p.10). Despite the fragility of childhood, the character is inserted in factories from an early age, something that was allowed by the laws enforced at the time.

Thus, Bresciani (1992, p. 99-100) affirms that:

the New Poor Law of 1834 maintains the principle of assistance to those without work, but drastically changes the conditions and what is offered. All applicants for public aid should enter the Workhouses, whose system of organization is also modified. The local Workhouses are suppressed, and localities (parishes) grouped in associations (unions) now had a single and large Workhouse supervised by a council of commissioners, elected by the taxpayers of the region covered by the Poor Law Unions [...] the New Poor Law considered financial aid to the poor just as pernicious as unions and factory regulations.

Labor legislation in England considered the work of children over 9 years old to be legal, as long as attention was paid to education, hygiene and working hours, which could not exceed 12 hours a day and could not be performed on the night shift. Peel's Acts – Health and Morals of Apprentices Act – was pioneer in expressing concern with the working lives of apprentices. The Brazilian reality was no different; the children and adolescents presented in Jorge Amado's work suffered from the neglect and abandonment of the institutions that were supposed to protect them. The Brazilian legislation on child support uses as reference, during this period, the First Code of Minors, enforced at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which inaugurated “[...] a model of public assistance with functions related to surveillance, regulation and direct intervention on abandoned minors, delinquents, focusing on their institutionalization” (RIZZINI, 2005 apud SEGALIN; TRZCINSKI, 2006, p.02). The separation between the terms children/adolescents and minors was so clear in Brazilian society that “[...] conflicts related to the so-called 'normal' childhood were resolved in the Childhood Court, however, the problems of poor childhood were resolved in the Juvenile Court, making them different from normal childhood” (SOARES, 2004, p.19). According to the mentality of that time, the family was responsible for the child's need. This would be the result of their abandonment and neglect, which made parents unable to take care of their children. In a clear attempt by the State to criminalize poor childhood, “[...] the minor was born with a 'fate', would be deprived of basic subsistence conditions, would go to life on the streets and consequently to delinquency” (TOREZAN, 2005, p.13). The role of the State would be to care for,

to protect and to sponsor poor children in a coercive manner, through isolation in institutions, boarding schools and agricultural colonies. In several passages of the book, it is clear that the relocation of children and adolescents in educational institutions was not aimed at re-education, reintegration or protection, but represented a social cleansing, to avoid disturbances to the current order. Thus, despite the temporal distance between the works, there is a similarity in the treatment of poor childhood in both countries. The institutions and people who were supposed to care for and to welcome them acted, however, as repressive and punitive.

### **What is it like to be a child and adolescent in a scenario of violence and social exclusion?**

To Nascimento et al. (2008, p. 02), “the first studies on childhood were conducted by Ariés (1960) on the Social History of Childhood and the Family”. Thus, Ariés (1960, apud NASCIMENTO et al, 2008, p.02) exemplifies that, in the Middle Ages, childhood was considered as:

a period characterized by inexperience, dependence and inability to respond to more complex social demands. The child was seen as a miniature adult and, therefore, wore the same clothes and were treated in the same way as an adult person would.

The concept of adolescence emerged at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in 1904, by the American psychologist Stanley Hall, the first author to address this topic as a unique phase in human development. Before that period, society was unaware of such a phase, the individual passed directly from childhood to adulthood. As Rizzinni (2004, apud CABRAL; SOUSA, 2004, p.73) points out, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

the expression childhood was used to designate the years of development of the individual until their coming of age. Thus, in some historical periods, there are no specific references to adolescents, which seems to be an indication that this phase was not known in the way it is known today.

Continuing her explanation, Rizzinni (2004) defines adolescence as a socioeconomic construction, a period created by society for young people to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for their participation in adult life, also configuring itself as a period in which the State and society ask from the family to have greater control over these young people, aiming to form an adult who is identified and committed to the social, political and economic values prevailing in each era. In this sense, child and adolescent formation runs through the family, society, school and the State, that is: all these actors play an important role in the construction of these subjects. Thus, the family and the school play are essential in this period of development, but these institutions are not present in the analyzed works, as orphanhood is a common characteristic of all subjects who do not have family members responsible for them. Society also plays an essential role in this period. However, the discriminatory and repressive character of the population is noted when meeting street children and adolescents. As for the State, as already mentioned, it neglected the character of welcoming, re-educating and reintegrating by emphasizing policies of institutionalization and punishment.

**Focus and Narrative Space:** Storytelling is present in many situations of our daily lives. Since our childhoods we hear stories from our parents, grandparents, uncles and professors, for instance. With the passing of the years, we become the storytellers, be those lived by us, heard or read somewhere. Two indispensable elements for the construction of narratives will be listed below.

**The omniscient and omnipresent narrator in the works:** One of the essential elements in the work concerns the narrator. Their role is to tell the story involving the characters in a given time and space. Gancho (2006, p.30) explains that:

there is no narrative without a narrator, as they are the structuring element of the story. The narrator variants can be countless, since each author creates a different narrator for each work [...] it is good to clarify that the narrator is not the author, but a fictional entity, that is, a linguistic creation of the author, and therefore only exists in the text.

Thus, it is immature to conceive as true the premise that the analyzed works portray the life stories of Charles Dickens and Jorge Amado, as, if seen as true, they would lead to futuristic narrative stories – the author would have to have lived a fictional life. Verisimilitude – the logical organization that gives coherence and credibility to the text – present in the novels<sup>2</sup> under study makes us think that those fictional facts narrated happened on a certain date and place, so true they seem. Thus, the construction of narratives depends on the author's creativity, imagination and artistic power. To complement this observation, Leite (2012, p. 07) affirms that “the one who narrates, narrates what they have lived, but also what they have imagined, what they dreamed, what they desired”. Therefore, narration and fiction are practically born together. Thus, to write a work, the author needs someone who has free access to all characters and all environments. This someone is the narrator. Both novels analyzed in this study present the narrator sometimes as an observer, sometimes as an intruder in the story. As to the observer narrator, Gancho (2006) presents a few characteristics that help us to understand their role, such as: “omniscience: the narrator knows all about the story; and omnipresence: the narrator is present at all places in the story” (GANCHO, 2006, p. 31).

The author adds that the observer narrator can be intrusive, one who judges the behavior of the character, or a partial narrator, who identifies with a certain character and ends up amplifying their importance to the story. Still concerning the narrative focus, it is worth mentioning that these works are written in third person, as the narrator is an outsider to the facts. However, at times there is the occurrence of judgments, approvals and reprovals of actions conducted by the characters, as seen in the quotes below:

dressed in rags, dirty, half-starving, aggressive, swearing and smoking cigarette butts, they were, in fact, the owners of the city, those who totally knew it, those who totally loved it, its poets. (AMADO, 2008, p. 29)

a parish child, the orphan of a workhouse, the humble, half-starved drudge, to be cuffed and buffeted through the world, despised by all, and pitied by none. Oliver cried lustily. If he could have known that he was an orphan, left to the tender mercies of churchwardens and overseers, perhaps he would have cried the louder. (DICKENS, 2019, p. 09).

At several instances of the novel, we are led to imagine in detail the situations experienced by the protagonists, due to the rich accounting and the verisimilitude present in the works. The reported passages demonstrate the impartiality of the narrators, at the same time that they promote empathy and a reflection from the reader on the situation of abandonment of orphaned children and adolescents. These passages in the works reinforce the presence of the omniscient narrator. Aguiar and Silva (1974, apud Gomes, 1996, p.71-72), when analyzing the omniscient narrator, report that:

the narrator is configured as an authentic demiurge who knows all the events in their deep plot and intimate details, who knows the entire life story of the characters, who penetrates the core of consciences as well as all the intricacies and secrets of social organization. The focus of this omniscient creator is panoramic and total.

Another element deserving of attention concerns the identification of the narrator with the characters of the story. In *Captains of the Sand*,

for example, the narrator mentions at various moments, value judgments that place the residents of the pier as heroes, going against the moral values of society. This fact is also present in the work of Charles Dickens, since, despite all situations experienced by Oliver, he retains his moral values and does not commit crimes, reinforcing his heroic and valiant characteristics. Finally, Diniz (2012, p.103) analyzes that the works make use of free indirect discourse, that is, “the main narrator allows the manifestation of secondary narrators through characters”. This can be observed in the use of verbal expressions, such as: “Cat said that the spinster was loaded with money” (AMADO, 2008, p.156) or in the passage “‘He is tall,’ said the girl, ‘and a strongly made man, but not stout; he has a lurking walk’” (DICKENS, 2019, p.217). The presence of secondary narrators streamlines the work and attributes value to secondary characters, as they have a direct voice in the stories, since they speak their impressions about certain facts of the story.

**Between heat and coldness:** getting to know the narrative spaces depicted in the works.

As previously mentioned, these novels have their narrative spaces set in England and in Brazil. The opulence in the description of physical spaces in those romances has made necessary the study of narrative spaces. Diniz (apud Gancho, 2003, p. 23) affirms that:

the main functions of the space are to situate the actions of the characters and establish an interaction with them, whether influencing their attitudes, thoughts or emotions, or suffering any transformations caused by the characters. As with the characters, the space can be characterized in more detail in descriptive passages, or the spatial references can be diluted in the narration.

Thus, we use the same definition as the authors to aid in the understanding of the works under analysis. The novel *Captains of the Sand* begins in the abandoned pier. In the narrator's description, despite the state of abandonment and the fact that it already possessed previous tenants – rats –, the abandoned pier will serve as a shelter for the *Captains of the Sand*, a place for protection from bad weather, for planning the group's actions, for welcoming new members, as a hiding place for the band and, as such, it must be protected, watched over and respected. Another relevant aspect is the vestment of the abandoned boys. They are portrayed in the work as living under extreme material poverty, and Amado reports that:

under the Moon in an Old Abandoned Pier the children sleep [...] Dressed in rags, dirty, half-starving, aggressive, swearing and smoking cigarette butts, they were, in fact, the owners of the city, those who totally knew it, those who totally loved it, its poets.

In another passage, the narrator reveals the holes in the ceiling of the abandoned pier that hindered sleep during rainy nights, and it even emphasizes the predominance of children in the middle of the group, who are scared of the lightning bolts and believe in imaginary monsters.

they went down to the pier. Rain dripped through the holes in the ceiling [...] During these rainy nights, they could not sleep. Once in a while the light from a bolt illuminated the pier and made visible the thin and dirty faces of the *Captains of the Sand*. Many were so young that they still feared dragons and legendary monsters. (AMADO, 2008, p. 98)

Thus, the contradiction between childhood *versus* abandonment is confirmed in their dirty and torn garments. The abandoned boys are poorly dressed and hungry, but at the same time they are masters of the city, as they know all the hiding places and secrets of the great Bahia. In the work by Charles Dickens, on the other hand, young Oliver Twist also goes through similar situations to the pier inhabitants. Since his birth, he experiences moments of trials, privations and challenges. An example is in the first chapter, which describes the newborn's difficulty in breathing and the lack of essential care, as mentioned in the excerpt below:

<sup>2</sup> According to the definition by Gomes (2006, p.9) “A novel is a long narrative, which usually involves a considerable number of characters, a greater number of conflicts, more dilated time and space”.

Among other public buildings in a certain town, which for many reasons it will be prudent to refrain from mentioning, and to which I will assign no fictitious name, there is one anciently common to most towns, great or small: to wit, a workhouse; and in this workhouse was born [...] For a long time after it was ushered into this world of sorrow and trouble, by the parish surgeon, it remained a matter of considerable doubt whether the child would survive to bear any name at all [...] The result was, that, after a few struggles, Oliver breathed, sneezed, and proceeded to advertise to the inmates of the workhouse the fact of a new burden having been imposed upon the parish [...] a parish child, the orphan of a workhouse, the humble, half-starved drudge, to be cuffed and buffeted through the world, despised by all, and pitied by none. (DICKENS, 2019, p. 07-08)

The mere act of breathing when being born is what defines whether a baby was born alive or dead and, above all, if this newborn will be in need of special care and affection, something that was not granted to Oliver, as his mother died in childbirth and his dad is only known by the end of the book. His orphanhood and reception at the Workhouse, at around 8 to 10 months of age, happened without maternal affection and based on oatmeal porridge. There, accommodation, food and work were offered to the poor and orphaned children. Poverty, lack of infrastructure and basic sanitation, exploitation of workers, be them children or adults, are features present in English history. Before reaching his first year of age, Oliver is transferred to another Workhouse. His new home was intended to children and adolescents who broke the poor-laws. Assistance was sponsored by the poor-laws, which provided a monthly payment to the children caretaker and was supervised by a State supervisor. Oliver's new home is described as: a place "where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female" (DICKENS, 2019, p. 09). It is worth mentioning that the lack of food and care is commonplace in the life of the protagonist.

At another instance, the narrator describes in rich detail Oliver's new house in the city of London. In this description, it is possible to imagine the environment where several passages of this story will take place. The abundance of details allows the construction of the narrative space, since in addition to the physical aspects, there are psychological and moral elements.

Oliver, groping his way with one hand, and having the other firmly grasped by his companion, ascended with much difficulty the dark and broken stairs: which his conductor mounted with an ease and expedition that showed he was well acquainted with them. He threw open the door of a back-room, and drew Oliver in after him. The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black with age and dirt. There was a deal table before the fire: upon which were a candle, stuck in a ginger-beer bottle, two or three pewter pots, a loaf and butter, and a plate. In a frying-pan, which was on the fire, and which was secured to the mantelshelf by a string, some sausages were cooking; and standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old, shriveled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare; and seemed to be dividing his attention between the frying-pan and the clotheshorse, over which a great number of silk handkerchiefs were hanging. Several rough beds made of old sacks, were huddled side by side on the floor. (DICKENS, 2019, p. 79-80)

The quote above presents important elements for us to understand Oliver's new family, such as: the lack of adequate lighting, the precariousness of the stairs, the dirt in the rooms, the improvised chandelier, the clothing, the improvised beds and the food that was being prepared. However, amidst so much poverty, a large number of silk handkerchiefs can be seen drying on a clothesline. All of them reinforce the material poverty condition of the subjects, the lack of basic sanitation in the city, the lack of adequate food, the

precariousness of housing and, finally, psychological and moral aspects of the subjects. Finally, there is the presentation of a new space in the work, when Oliver is welcomed by a family and starts to receive care and education.

Spring flew swiftly by, and summer came. If the village had been beautiful at first it was now in the full glow and luxuriance of its richness. The great trees, which had looked shrunken and bare in the earlier months, had now burst into strong life and health; and stretching forth their green arms over the thirsty ground [...] Oliver had long since grown stout and healthy [...] He was still the same gentle, attached, affectionate creature that he had been when pain and suffering had wasted his strength [...] One beautiful night, when they had taken a longer walk than was customary with them: for the day had been unusually warm, and there was a brilliant moon, and a light wind had sprung up, which was unusually refreshing. Rose had been in high spirits, too, and they had walked on, in merry conversation [...]. (DICKENS, 2019, p. 205)

Thus, Oliver's story moves from the dirtiness of the London streets to the beauty and coziness of the countryside towns, reinforcing the protagonist's change of life and environment.

Oliver, whose days had been spent among squalid crowds, and in the midst of noise and brawling, seemed to enter on a new existence there. The rose and honeysuckle clung to the cottage walls; the ivy crept round the trunks of the trees; and the garden-flowers perfumed the air with delicious odours. (DICKENS, 2019, p. 203)

Therefore, one observes the precariousness of housing, streets, clothing and food for abandoned children. This reality is experienced in both novels, despite the fact that they address different countries that had different laws and protection systems, with regard to care for children, adolescents and the poor. Duly presented is the methodological route used for the study of the works. This aspect is discussed below, highlighting some scholars who were the basis of this analysis.

### Methodological Route

To conduct this research, a bibliographical survey was carried out, reviewing the literature related to the subject under study, aiming at a greater knowledge on the subject. Notes on Comparative Literature were also used, in order to understand central elements in the works, among them the approximation and the distancing, especially in the portrait of orphaned children in London and Salvador and in the happy ending of the characters, after their encounter with a maternal figure.

As highlighted by Carvalhal (2006), Comparative Literature cannot be understood solely as a comparison. The author points out that:

[...] in comparative literature, comparisons of a special nature and with a positive purpose are carried out. With the purpose, extremely fruitful for the history of the spirit, of verifying the affiliation of a work or an author to foreign works and authors, or a literary moment or the internal literature of a country to literary moments or literatures of other countries. (CARVALHAL, 2006, p.15-16)

The author adds that comparative literature is a critical activity, presenting historical, literary and extraliterary elements. This analysis echoes back to Bakhtin's precepts, since the researcher states that in the construction of a statement, elements of other statements are present, with which the subject can agree or disagree. Thus, a text is always constructed upon another text.

Complementing this analysis, Fiorin (2020, p. 59), when studying the concept of subjectivity according to Bakhtin, shows that:

since reality is heterogeneous, the subject does not absorb just one social voice, but several, which are in different relationships with each other. Therefore, the subject is constitutively dialogic. Their inner world is made up of different voices in relationships of agreement or disagreement. Furthermore, as it is always in relationship with the other, the inner world is never finished, closed, but constantly coming to be, as the discursive content of consciousness changes.

Thus, when studying these works, we can gather that the voices of the narrators display a social critique in regard to the poor and abandoned children, showing that there is an alternative to this. Moreover, for the understanding of the theme, the dialectic is brought in the theoretical framework, as it is understood that the works hold a social critique, making the reader think about the grasp of the State and society in the care of orphaned children. In this sense, one should not overlook what is beyond the chapters, that is, the analysis of the social context and the class struggle in the lives of the protagonist children. It is interesting to point out the lack of scientific material on the similarities and differences between these works, which makes the analysis more innovative, challenging and complex. Duly presented the methodological route, we will showcase the portrayal of the abandoned childhood of the novels, highlighting moments of fragility and courage experienced by children and adolescents.

**Portrayal of poor childhood from Jorge Amado and Charles Dickens:** moments of fragility and bravery. Children and adolescents portrayed in the works experience different situations that require courage, attitude and cleverness. These decisions range from aspects related to survival, individual protection, protection of the 'family', to the commitment of infractions. The works also present different situations of fragility and vulnerability in the daily life of the main and secondary characters. In *Captains of the Sand*, for example, at times they take risks and plan a deed at the police station to rescue a holy figure of the Afro religion which has been apprehended, and at other times they play like children on an old merry-go-round. Likewise, *Oliver Twist*, who at one moment cries and asks a benefactor for protection, at another fills up with courage and runs away from an robbery plan and ends up being shot. Law n° 8.069/90, better known as the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA), considers the unlawful act committed by the child or adolescent as an infraction, and not a criminal offense, as it is for those over 18 who violate the current regulations. It is worth noting that *Oliver Twist* does not commit infractions; he is depicted as "an innocent and unoffending child [...] the offspring of a guilty and most miserable love" (DICKENS, 2019, p. 321), who due to vengeance and ambition of his one-sided brother is not given rights to a home and is raised by bandits and profiteers. On the other hand, the captains of the sands are described as "abandoned children who made their lives out of theft" (AMADO, 2008, p. 28), and who, by orphanhood and inefficacy of their guardian institutions, are inhabitants to an abandoned pier.

The absence of a paternal or maternal figure in the lives of the protagonist children is perceived in moments of fragility and in their memories. The children reveal the desire and need for a family, shelter and a welcoming lap, for example, in the chapter entitled "Dora, Mother". In another chapter, the narrator displays a show of smartness versus the frailty of boys, when, for example, Legless is adopted by a family from the upper city, with the pretext of acquainting himself with the residence for its further robbery by the other members of the group. Despite all his feelings of revenge and hatred, resulting from the aggression imposed by the police, Legless is involved with maternal affection, and such a feeling becomes an obstacle to carrying out the planned action, but loyalty to the group is essential for the continuity of the plan.

was reminded of the other times, of when he ran out of a house for it to be robbed, of the great joy that filled him. This time, however, there was no joy. His hatred against them all did not disappear, it is true. But it made an exception for the people of that home, because Dona Ester called him son and kissed him on

the face. Legless fought against himself. He would like to proceed with that life. But what good would it bring to the Captains of the Sand? And he was one of them, would never cease to be one of them, because soldiers once arrested him and beat him while a man in a vest laughed brutally. Thus, Legless made up his mind. He stared fondly, however, at the windows in Dona Ester's room and she, who spied him, noticed that he cried:

- Are you crying, my son? – and disappeared from the window to come closer to him [...]
- Do not cry for your mother. Now you have another mamma who cherishes you and will do everything to replace the one you lost... [...] Dona Ester kissed him on the face where tears now streamed down:
- Do not cry, or you will make mamma sad. Then, Legless' lips parted and he sobbed, wept a lot against his mother's chest. And as he held her and let himself be kissed, he sobbed because he was going to leave her, and, more than that, he was going to rob her. And she might never know that Legless felt that he was going to rob himself as well. As well as she did not know that his crying, his sobs, were a request for forgiveness. (AMADO, 2008, p. 131)

Thus, the concept of family goes beyond issues of descent, kinship and blood. Family in this work is presented as affinity and protection. Children bond with other children and adults for the affection and care they receive. In *Oliver Twist* it is no different, one can see his affection for friends in the Workhouse, and even to those who mistreat him:

[...] And yet he burst into an agony of childish grief, as the cottage-gate closed after him. Wretched as were the little companions in misery he was leaving behind, they were the only friends he had ever known; and a sense of his loneliness in the great wide world, sank into the child's heart for the first time.

[...]

- 'No, no, sir,' sobbed Oliver, clinging to the hand which held the well-known cane; 'no, no, sir; I will be good indeed; indeed, indeed I will, sir! I am a very little boy, sir; and it is so... so...'
- 'So what?' inquired Mr. Bumble in amazement.
- 'So lonely, sir! So very lonely!' cried the child. 'Everybody hates me. Oh! sir, don't, don't pray be cross to me!' The child beat his hand upon his heart; and looked in his companion's face, with tears of real agony. (DICKENS, 2019, p. 14, 28)

The longing for his friends and the apology to the supervisor of the Workhouse – Mr. Bumble – reinforces Oliver's lack of affection, fear of abandonment and fragility, which requires protection even of those who treat him badly. Oliver's emotional dependence and innocence are characteristics that differentiate him from the children in Jorge Amado's work. Right at the beginning of the novel, the narrator shows the courage, or maybe despair of the child when asking for more food, due to the precarious feeding habits made available to the children at the oakum factory. Oliver's disrespectful action will culminate with his imprisonment in a dark and lonely room and, later, the offer of his labor as an apprentice chimney sweep.

- 'Please, sir, I want some more.'

[...]

- 'What!' said the master at length, in a faint voice.

- 'Please, sir,' replied Oliver, 'I want some more.'

[...]

- 'That boy will be hung,' said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. 'I know that boy will be hung.'

[...]

For a week after the commission of the impious and profane offence of asking for more, Oliver remained a close prisoner in the dark and solitary room to which he had been consigned by the wisdom and mercy of the board. (DICKENS, 2019, p. 17-18)

The richness of details enables the mental construction of the narrative space and develops feelings of compassion, affinity and anger in the reader at some moments of the narrative. The work shows that Oliver's bravery and principles were to blame for the injury resulting from the botched robbery. But, at the same time, the turning point of the story stems from this robbery. Still in relation to Oliver's vulnerability, in another circumstance one can identify his attachment and need to show gratitude to those who welcome him, above all, as a demonstration of affection and recognition of the care he received from his new family. This passage concerns the illness provoked by the botched robbery that caused the fracture of a limb and feverish crises. Thus, Oliver, between cries, tears and pain, awaits anxiously to reward the affection and care he received.

Oliver's ailments were neither slight nor few. In addition to the pain and delay attendant on a broken limb, his exposure to the wet and cold had brought on fever and ague: which hung about him for many weeks, and reduced him sadly. But, at length, he began, by slow degrees, to get better, and to be able to say sometimes, in a few tearful words, how deeply he felt the goodness of the two sweet ladies, and how ardently he hoped that when he grew strong and well again, he could do something to show his gratitude; only something, which would let them see the love and duty with which his breast was full; something, however slight, which would prove to them that their gentle kindness had not been cast away; but that the poor boy whom their charity had rescued from misery, or death, was eager to serve them with his whole heart and soul.

Finally, there two moments of courage in the Brazilian novel; one of them refers to the tortures faced by Bullet in the reform school. Despite all the suffering and deprivation, he does not reveal the group's hiding place.

now they beat him from all sides. Whipping, punching and kicking. The director of the reformatory got up, gave him a kick, Bullet fled across the room. He didn't even get up. The soldiers vibrated their whips [...] Everyone depended on him. Everyone's safety depended on his courage. He was the boss, he couldn't snitch. (AMADO, 2008, p. 201)

Displays of bravery, of care for others and loyalty to their group's rules and values are presented in several instances of the story, and both moments reinforce this analysis. The captains of the sand make up a family and, as such, protect and take care of each other. Above all personal matters, there is the appreciation of the collective welfare. Concluding, this analysis portrays the social and institutional criticism present in the works, highlighting the ineffectiveness of public institutions and the vexatious situations depicted in the novels.

**From abandonment to violence against childhood depicted in the works:** social and institutional critique in the novels. Childhood during a long period of world history had its representativeness restricted to the family environment. Children and adolescents were the property of their parents, without the right to speak or to act. Family decided on the education, profession, marriage and future of its members. In this context, violence against children was considered normal, since they were the property of their parents. However, with the advent of child protection laws, reality has changed: children and adolescents now have rights and duties, they have become subjects of social protection, especially because they are undergoing physical and psychological development, with the right to education, health and, mainly, family protection - but in its absence, state protection. In the analyzed works, the failure of the State and of the institutions that shelter orphan children was presented. In London, for example, where the adventures and misfortunes of *Oliver Twist* take place, the reception takes place in Workhouses, in oakum factories and in family homes – as apprentices of some profession. In all these environments, children are malnourished, without access to health and education, as can be seen in the chapter entitled “The growth, education and custody of *Oliver Twist*”. In it, the protagonist, still a baby, is transferred from a shelter specific for children:

The hungry and destitute situation of the infant orphan was duly reported by the workhouse authorities to the parish authorities.

[...]

he should be dispatched to a branch-workhouse some three miles off, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing [...]

Sevenpence-halfpenny's worth per week is a good round diet for a child; a great deal may be got for sevenpence-halfpenny, quite enough to overload its stomach, and make it uncomfortable. The elderly female was a woman of wisdom and experience; she knew what was good for children [...] So, she appropriated the greater part of the weekly stipend to her own use, and consigned the rising parochial generation to even a shorter allowance than was originally provided for them. [...] It cannot be expected that this system of farming would produce any very extraordinary or luxuriant crop. (DICKENS, 2019, p. 09-10)

Ironically, the narrator describes Mrs. Mann's wisdom in diverting the money destined to provide food, clothing and healthcare for the children to her own benefit, abandoning them to their fate and punishing those who complained that they were hungry. This could be the education given to Oliver, as we cannot see any reference to formal or informal education in this chapter, despite the mention in the title. The Councilors' attitude shows that the treatment given to children was authorized by the Poor Law, since that norm determined that shelters would be involved in productive activities and, subsequently, teach a profession, without proper supervision. But the narrator shows again, with irony, the lack of education given to the children, the demand for attitudes/actions that were not taught and the need for gratitude for their care. It should also be noted the excess of physical punishment suffered by the protagonist in all host institutions. Still in regard to school, it is emphasized that this institution has not always had the same role and social importance that it currently has. For a long time, education took place in the domestic environment, carried out by tutors. In the Victorian Age, for example, only wealthy families attended the few schools that existed, or were homeschooled by parents or a professional in the field. Poor children, on the other hand, were taught some function or activity that earned them a useful job in society, as expressed in the quote “Well! You have come here to be educated, and taught a useful trade” (DICKENS, 2019, p.15).

Another institution deserving of attention is the family, as Oliver's abandonment to his fate is due to the moral values imposed on family members, causing the protagonist's helplessness and suffering. In addition to moral values, there is the ambition of Oliver's one-sided brother, who, out of greed or revenge, allowed his upbringing in workhouses and, later, in a group of lawbreakers. Once Oliver's life changes from the moment he finds a new family, they start to treat him like a child who needs care, food, education and healthcare. The author's analysis is fundamental for recognizing that shelter institutions are the main spaces of physical, psychological and moral violence. The narratives show that disobeying the rules deserves penalties such as: food restriction, physical punishment and isolation in small rooms. The effect of punishment is the reverse of that intended. Disobedience and escapes are reported as the only possible option to end punishment and run from torture. At another instance, the narrator refers the reader to the social problems that plagued the residents of the lower city, reinforcing the difference in health care for residents of the lower city *versus* residents of the upper city, who had access to the vaccine; the former, however, had access to the “pesthouse”. The smallpox crisis reinforces that the social gap caused the suffering of only a portion of the population that did not have access to primary care.

Omolument the black pox into the city. But the rich people up above there got vaccinated and Omolu was a god from the jungles of Africa, he didn't know about things like vaccines. And the smallpox descended to the poor people's city and made people sick, laid black people full of sores onto their beds. Then, the men

from public health came, put the sick people into bags, carried them off to the distant pesthouses [...] (AMADO, 2008, p. 145)

Smallpox brought Dora and her brother to the group, but took one their members. The arrival of Dora to the group can be considered the milestone of the beginning of the change in the fate of the members of the group, as her death leads the captains of the sand to change their lives, to a future beyond the sands of the pier. Other important elements present in the book for the reader to recognize are the reformatories, institutions designed to correct the behavior of children and adolescents who are offenders. Thus, the reformatory appears in the novel since its first pages, in which there is the presentation of the letters sent to the editorial office of a newspaper, and later it is reported as the place where Bullet was sent after the invasion of a residence – reformatory – or the prison where Legless was beaten by guards. Besides the reformatory, another place mentioned is the orphanage where Dora was taken after Bullet's actions, which are institutions regulated by the government that punish offenders in different ways: physical aggression, food restriction and sexual abuse. The description of these institutions – orphanage, reformatory, workhouses – does not mention educational, leisure, culture or healthcare attendance to children and adolescents. Much to the contrary, in those places are described situations of abandonment, forced labor, lack of hygiene and food. In this sense, it is worth highlighting that the works under analysis narrate in their conclusion the importance of formal, professional or union education to improve the lives of subjects, reinforcing that there is an alternative for change and that it involves education. Finally, there is the importance of the family's role in the process of building the subject's character and personal transformation.

### Final Thoughts

Poor and forsaken childhood, especially of those who disobey the rules in force, is a recurring theme, but there is always something new to be thought and discussed, as in this study. Throughout world history, the interest in maintaining social order has always been present. Poor children and adolescents who have committed infractions, sheltered in public institutions, should be educated and cared for, but unfortunately this has not been happening. The novel *Captains of the Sand* shows that reality is different. Institutions punish, enforce penalties and do not offer basic living conditions to their interns. Consequently, fight for food and escapes are constant. Such sheltering in those institutions does not aim to diminish the suffering of abandoned children and adolescents, or offer them conditions for a better life, but imprison them, that is, instead of proposing policies that treat the problem at its root, they would rather punish minors for some action that does not conform to societal norms. In this sense, the central issue should be to ensure dignified living conditions and not being placed in punitive institutions, as occurs in the works. Another aspect deserving of notice is education. It is presented by the narrators as an instrument of personal transformation, as occurred with the Professor in *Captains of the Sand*, and when young Oliver is presented to it in the books. In both moments, it is noted that the fate of children will be profoundly transformed by the education and acceptance of someone who showed affection and interest in the potential they had. Something that should be present in the workhouses, orphanages and boarding schools, but it is not what happens in the novels. Both works also reflect on family abandonment and the building of a new family from bonds of affinity, protection and adventures. The family, in this context, plays the role of protecting and welcoming its members, freeing them from dangerous situations, hunger and abuse, and is, above all, transformative to the destinies of children and adolescents. Children and teens from those works, especially the captains of the sand, are marked by exclusion. They have been excluded from their basic rights and see in their criminal acts the possibility of access to goods and services that were once denied to them by society.

The inhabitants of the pier undergo situations of prejudice and discrimination during many passages of the novel. Similarly, young Oliver also suffers from exclusion, not being entitled to basic services, in addition to being punished when he asks for more food. But he does not commit an infraction; despite every trial, he remains a child within the law. Even so, he is punished by society. Despite all their suffering, exclusion and misfortunes, children and adolescents are portrayed as courageous by the narrators, at various times they show themselves to be strong and fearless in protecting their family, their home and their convictions, such as when Oliver disrupts the robbery or when Bullet suffers further punishment for not reporting where the captains of the sand's hideout is. In order to transform such a complex reality, it is necessary to ensure that children and adolescents in a state of poverty and family abandonment have an authentic experience of rebuilding their life project. For this, it is necessary to develop effective public policies that prioritize the comprehensive care of these individuals, recognizing them as subjects of rights and in full physical, mental and personal development. Thus, poor childhood ceases to be considered a problem to be understood as a social priority worldwide.

## REFERENCES

- AMADO, Jorge. *Capitães da Areia*. 3. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008.
- BRASIL. Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente, Lei N.º 8.069, de 13 de julho de 1990. Disponível em: <http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil/LEIS/L8069.htm>. Acesso em: 12 jul. 2021.
- BRESCIANI, Maria Stella Martins. *Londres e Paris no Século XIX*. 7.ed. São Paulo: editora brasiliense, 1992.
- CARVALHAL, Tânia Franco. *Literatura comparada*. 4. ed. rev. e ampliada. São Paulo: Ática, 2006. Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Tradução de José Sette Camara. São Paulo: Ciranda Cultural, 2019.
- DINIZ, Luis de Melo. *Representações da infância ultrajada e da criança-herói: uma leitura de Charles Dickens e Jorge Amado*. João Pessoa, 2012.
- ELONO, Edith E. B. Owono; SANTOS, Sarah Da Cunha. O Protagonista Órfão: A Representação da Infância em *Oliver Twist*, de Charles Dickens. Disponível em: [http://www.editorarealize.com.br/revistas/enlije/trabalhos/Modalidade\\_13\\_1dataora\\_09\\_06\\_2014\\_13\\_17\\_56\\_idinscrito\\_1151\\_b9c51ff2f4d3ead5dc083af3cb1\\_69827/](http://www.editorarealize.com.br/revistas/enlije/trabalhos/Modalidade_13_1dataora_09_06_2014_13_17_56_idinscrito_1151_b9c51ff2f4d3ead5dc083af3cb1_69827/) / 2018. Acesso em: 09 set. 2021.
- GANCHÓ, Cândida Vilares. *Como analisar narrativas*. São Paulo: Ática, 2006.
- GOMES, Álvaro Cardoso. *Literatura comentada: Jorge Amado*. 2. ed. São Paulo: Nova Cultural, 1988.
- LEITE, Ligia Chiappini Moraes. *O foco narrativo*. São Paulo: ática, 2006. Série Princípios.
- NASCIMENTO, M. L. B. P. (coord) *et al.* *Infância e Sociologia da Infância: entre a invisibilidade e a voz: Relatório Científico*. São Paulo: FEUSP, 2013.
- SEGALIN, Andréia; TRZCINSKI, Clarete. Ato infracional na adolescência: problematização do acesso ao sistema de justiça. Disponível em: <http://revistaseletronicas.pucrs.br/ojs/index.php/fass/article/view/1038/817>. Acesso em: 13 jul. 2021.
- SOARES, Mirian. *Discutindo a liberdade: analisando a questão do adolescente em conflito com a lei na historicidade*. 2004, 102f. Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (Graduação em Serviço Social) – Universidade Federal do Maranhão, São Luis, 2004.
- TOREZAN, Sonia Aparecida Bortolotto. *Ser jovem em meio à violência: Identidade X singularidades no contexto com a lei*. 2005, 151f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação) – Universidade Estadual de Campinas, São Paulo, 2005.