

# Oscar wilde the selfish giant

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BUSTER**

First of all, in order to either agree or disagree with the statement regarding Wilde's respect for children we must identify the author's tone in his narrative, "The Selfish Giant". Since it is through the complex process of speech that the author reveals his attitudes to what he is talking about, his relation to his auditor or receiver, and his assumptions about the social level, intelligence, experience, values, and sensitivity of that person. Considering this, Oscar Wilde clearly has a kind and respectful attitude towards his plot and towards the reader of The Selfish Giant.

His tone refers to childhood and the conflicts around it. It is perceptible due to the fact that we are conscious of a voice beyond the voices of the characters that speak in the tale. We recognize the fact that there is a voice behind all the dramatis personae, even behind the third-person narrator. This is the sense of a pervasive authorial presence that communicates through the characters a world view. Consider, for example, the tone of the following passages in Wilde's The Selfish Giant:

"My own garden is my own garden," said the Giant; "any one can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself."

"Only in the garden of the Selfish Giant it was still winter. The birds did not care to sing in it as there were no children, and the trees forgot to blossom. Once a beautiful flower put its head out from the grass, but when it saw the notice-board it was so sorry for the children that it slipped back into the ground again, and went off to sleep."

"And the Giant's heart melted as he looked out. "How selfish I have been!" he said; "now I know why the Spring would not come here. I will put that

poor little boy on the top of the tree, and then I will knock down the wall, and my garden shall be the children's playground for ever and ever." He was really very sorry for what he had done."

Second, the characterization of the protagonist is done by the narrator and also through the dialogues, which is undoubtedly the briefest and best form of character delineation since a long description of a character asks the reader to believe rather than deduct; and not all narrators are reliable either. By contrasting the children and the giant, the reader is lead to have a negative perception of the giant and sympathize with the children:

" After the seven years were over he had said all that he had to say, for his conversation was limited, and he determined to return to his own castle."

"What are you doing here?" he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away."

" He was a very selfish Giant."

Later on, when the giant and children start to share the same garden, and the same feelings, the giant is described with a different connotation:

" Years went over, and the Giant grew very old and feeble. He could not play about any more, so he sat in a huge armchair, and watched the children at their games, and admired his garden. " I have many beautiful flowers," he said; " but the children are the most beautiful flowers of all.""

The characterization of the protagonist follows a development through, which is directly associated with the atmosphere and the setting. The

changes that take place inside the giant's character and inside the garden are attached to each other.

In addition, the action of The Selfish Giant takes place almost entirely in the Giant's property, inside the house and in the Garden, whose changes are directly related to the plot. The setting plays an important role in the dramatic events. The Garden is essential because it creates a feeling of verisimilitude or realism, since a garden is a known setting for kids. Besides, it's not merely a place of action, it is an acting place. It is a thematic space in that it assumes a thematic function, the atmosphere. The actions are shaped and somewhat predetermined by the nature of the place or setting. The Garden act as a kind of characterization device - The giant character feelings step backwards and forge ahead as the garden does, and so it happens the other way around. The Giant comes from an insensitivite and self-isolated state to the discovery of the beauty itself and the beauty of childhood, and also to a self-discovery. Therefore, the garden also follows his changes.

" When they saw that the Giant was not wicked any longer, came running back, and with them came the Spring. " It is your garden now, little children," said the Giant, and he took a great axe and knocked down the wall. And when the people were going to market at twelve o'clock they found the Giant playing with the children in the most beautiful garden they had ever seen."

Thus, Wilde uses setting and space thematically and symbolically. Most of the events in Wilde's Selfish Giant take place inside the garden. Since one of the main themes of the novel is childhood, Wilde contrasts adults and children behavior towards nature and simple things of life by opposing two

settings when the manifest behaviors are in contrast: Inside the giant's house, where the nature becomes abnormal, and outside the garden, where nature takes its course without changes.

" The poor children had now nowhere to play. They tried to play on the road, but the road was very dusty and full of hard stones, and they did not like it. They used to wander round the high wall when their lessons were over, and talk about the beautiful garden inside. " How happy we were there," they said to each other."

Besides, there are plenty of symbology in the story, starting with the names of the characters. There are several fertile words in the story, the words that suggest the most to the reader. Wilde suggests all in a few lines resulting in a single concentrated impression, as a result of it the narrative moves swiftly. In the tale, the Spring is a humanized character, and so are the Winter, the North Wind, the Hail, the Frost, and the Snow. The phenomena of nature stand for complex ideas or emotions associated with it.

The Giant is a symbol too, he doesn't even have a first name, so that he represents a whole group of people sharing the same idea. In opposite to children's ideas, he could represent adults, in which connotation, denotation and symbolism combine to form a multiplicity of meanings. Also, by the naming the characters by the words of " giant", " The spring", " The Winter", and other characters which are not usual in the real world, the narrator intimates that the story is likely to have an atmosphere of a fairy tale (in this case, about the adult's world getting in contact with the children's world), as far as genre is concerned, or at least that the plot involves some magic or

unnatural events, more specifically the climate, which reflects the mood of the giant himself.