

The text I'm going to analyze is an extract from the fourth chapter of "Hard Times"

Starting the analyzes from the title the reader could understand that the text tells about a man (Mr.) Bounderby. If the reader breaks down the name he could see that he probably has the capacity to be a parasite of poor people who worked for him (*bounder + by*). The word Mr. induces the reader to think that the protagonist of the extract is an adult and cultured man.

In the first paragraph the novelist made a social description of Mr. Bounderby. He seems to represent the typical values of the Victorian Middle Class ("devoid of sentiment"), where poors were always in danger to become even poorer, and rich people were always looking for salvation and to avoid poverty, and thus damnation.

His description is made by the third omniscient narrator who lead the reader, leaving him with no liberty of suggestion. Mr. Bounderby is a successful capitalist who made himself through hard work as "*banker; merchant, manufacturer, and what not*".

The second paragraph gives to the reader a physical and psychological characterisation. He made a comparison between Mr. Bounderby and Mr. Gradgrind, both of them as men "perfectly devoid of sentiment": the analogy between these two characters seems to make closer their relationship, but to tell the thruth they are totally different, with sarcasm.

Here the narrative voice uses the grotesque. It is visible in the juxtaposition of the word "coarse", which refer to an abstract concept, with the word "stretched", which refer to a matter of fact reality. Mr. Boundberby is described as an extremely priggish person, who was the "bully of Humility" and "could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man". This suggests the middle class role during the Victorian age: it was considered the "backbone" of the country. Mr. Bounderby is described as a man who looked old and with no hair. However, he cares about his "pervading appearance": clothes were considered important because they showed the class belonging. Mr Boundberby's will to subdue Mrs Gradgrind recalls women's role in the Victorian society, indeed they had a subjective and a submissive role.

In the dialogue Mr. Bounderby informs the audience about the difficult living conditions of his childhood. The extract has a strong narrative cohesion, indeed Mr. Bounderby's narration of his childhood is anticipated by the sentence "a man who was always proclaiming his old ignorance and his old poverty". The Puritan's ideology is clearly visible in Mr. Bounderby's words: he glorifies values such as determination and stubbornness, which lead him to a social and economical improvement, which was the focal point of the Puritan vision of the world, those who were unable to exploit their own talents were considered doomed to failure. In addition, another character catches the reader attention: Mrs. Gradgrind. In her psychological characterisation Dickens is able to convey the sense of pathos, which played a central role in the Victorian novel: the readers used to feel guilty because of the bad living conditions of the pathetic subject. On the contrary, Mr. Bounderby symbolises the grotesque, he is characterised by caricatures of evil and represents the main contradictions of the Victorian society.