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**Textual analysis of “Coketown” taken from “Hard Times” by C. Dickens.**

The extract is taken from C. Dickens’ novel “Hard Times”, which is a narrative rendering of the philosophy of Utilitarianism according to the puritan culture of the Victorian Age.

Right from the title the reader expects to read a text about industrialisation. The name “Coketown”, indeed, is made up by the words “Coke” and “town” and remind to the material that made the Industrial Revolution possible: coke. As result the reader can imagine the extract is about a town which lifestyle is influenced and organised by industry.

The narrator is an omniscient third person narrator and starts to present the town with a comparison between it and Mrs Grandgrind (Mr Grandgrind’s wife, which is one of the two characters the narrator sees walking trough the town). The comparison make the reader understand that Coketown is not a fancy town but as the narrator says later it is a “triumph of fact”.

The narrator presents the town as “a town of red brick”, “a town of machinery and tall chimneys” and underlines its features with a simile: “like the painted face of a savage” and the juxtaposition of the animal word and the industrial world: “interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves”. In this sequence the narrator underlines the influence of industry in the organization and lifestyle of the town. In particular the effect of industrialization comes out in the following sentence where he describe its “black canal” and the “river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye”: nature is completely affected by smoke and buildings which destroy its balance the similes between the piston and the “head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness” convey what said so far and once again characterized the town with the work which sustains it. The repetition of sentences and adjectives as “like one another”, “fact,fact,fact”, “same” sound like refrains which give the rhythm to the narration (it sound like the machinery at work and reminds to the seriality of production) and at the same time allow the reader better understands how much important work was for society during to the Victorian Age: what mattered was the product. The jail could be the infirmary, all the public inscriptions were painted alike and the “fact” permeated every aspect of life (both material and immaterial). So industrialisation changed society, town organization and lifestyle: all is the same so everything could be at the same time also something else. This is the result of the serial production and the introduction of the production line.

The narrator ends the sequence with a religious formula: “world without end Amen”. The reader can understand that there was also a religious aspect of life. Indeed, during the Victorian Age, next to the utilitarian philosophy, Puritanism was the main culture: people salvation depended on their success during their life. Taking in consideration what was said so far the description of Coketown reflects both the utilitarians and puritans aspects of life during the Victorian Age.

Going on reading the extract the reader understand that the industrialised aspect of the town doesn’t imply that it is a rich and full of wealth town.

The narrator remind to the previous religious formula with a rhetorical question and the combination of the adjective “sacred” to the word “fact” sounds weird in reader’s mind who usually accost “sacred” to religion and so to something that is immaterial. This lexical choice remind, once again, to Puritanism and the relevance of work and success in life.

Most of the words used by the narrator to describe the town belong to the semantic areas of industry and work and as already said convey the Victorian culture characterised by industrialisation, Puritanism and Utilitarianism.

The use of the narrative technique of telling allows the reader to better build up images in his/her mind.

The reader is also involved in the reading process by the use of the language of sense impression: onomatopoeic words (“there was a retelling an the trammeling all day long" ) and references to senses ( the narrator makes the reader see, smell, heard ).