

Homework for 21.02.2018

Analysis of the text 'Coketown'

The text I am going to analyse is an extract from Chapter 5 Charles Dickens' novel 'Hard Times'. It is divided into 6 paragraphs. The narrator is a third person omniscient one and he uses the technique of telling to convey town's characterisation. The narrator often gives the reader personal judgments on the life in the town.

The first paragraph has an introductory function. The narrator doesn't say anything on the town, but makes a comparison between the boring life of Mrs. Gradgrind and the one in Coketown. The narrator chooses to use an introduction typically referred to tales or operas: 'let us strike the key-note, Coketown, before pursuing our tune' (lines 2-3) to give the reader the idea of a theatrical description more than an impartial one.

The second paragraph is a description of Coketown. In the very beginning, it is described like 'a town of red brick' (line 4) and this can create in the reader the expectation of a fantastic, coloured town. Those expectations are not satisfied since in the follow line, the narrator says that this red is covered by the grey of smoke and ashes that are produced in the town. Coketown's description turns into a description of an industrial town, polluted by the smoke and the factory's wastes. This idea is conveyed by expressions like 'interminable serpents of smoke' (line 7), 'black canal' (line 8), 'a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye' (lines 8-9). In the same paragraph, the city is described like a monotonous and ghost town. The technique the narrator uses to convey this idea is the repetition of the adjective 'same'.

The third paragraph is about the relationship between the town and the concept of work. Its main function is to make a connection between the second and the fourth paragraphs. It concludes Coketown's description and introduces the reader to the concept of work related to the town.

The fourth paragraph reveals the real nature of Coketown's citizen. They live their life without free time; they don't want to have fun. In Coketown, there's nothing, except what was 'severely workful' (line 25). Even the only one exception, the New Church, was painted 'alike, in severe characters of black and white' (lines 30-31). To reinforce this idea of a monotonous and ghost town, the narrator uses the technique of the repetition of some words to create a sense of a daily routine.

The fifth paragraph is really short and it's composed by a single sentence, which is a rhetorical question that the narrator immediately answers to. He asks if the city, so devoted to work got on well. He answers 'not quite well' (line 41) and immediately after he says 'Dear me!' (line 41), as if the question involved him in a personal way.

The last paragraph is somehow a longer answer to the question made in the previous paragraph. The narrator gives an ironical answer: 'Coketown did not come out of its own furnaces, in all respects like gold that has stood the fire' (lines 42-43) and immediately after he asks another very interesting question: 'who belonged to the eighteen denominations?' (lines 43-44). Since the very beginning of the text, the narrator insists on the concept of the monotonous and ghost town, none has free time to have fun or doing recreational activities, so who are those guys who belong to the eighteen denominations?

There are a few of residents that go to the Church every Sunday morning with their "barbarous jangling" gazing at all the church and the chapel. This recalls the idea of strange religious sects with unusual behaviour. Those men did nothing wrong in public, but some societies comes with some tabular statements

to demonstrate that in order people get drunk, do drugs and make some low singing and low dancing. A guy got arrested because of his thoughts. The people of the town make some strange reunion where they try to create methods to make people 'by main force' to be religious. The intelligent reader, who can read between the lines, immediately understand the reference to the Victorian society. In some way or another, the society described in Coketown reminds more totalitarian regime than a society of the late nineteen century.