BLEAK HOUSE ANALYSIS – C. DICKENS

This text is taken from Bleak House by Charles Dickens, Chapter I. Just reading the title “Chancery” the intelligent reader can undestand the connection with a judicial system, Chancery Court: indeed C. Dickens through this work wants to elaborate a satirical view about the inefficient english judicial system. In addiction the reader notes that the centre of the novel is an house. It is defined as “bleak” and so this belongs to something desolate, stark and empty.

Before starting talking about the content, from this brief part is possible to understand the type of narrator: it is a 3rd person omniscient narrator but also after an overall reading of the 1st chapter is possible to understand that C. Dickens uses also a 1st person narrator, Esther Summerson.

Analyzing the structure, it is organized in five paragraphs taht are connected with the first word used by Charles Dickens: London. All the five paragraphs represents different part of a day in London.

The first introductory sequence is set during a typical day in November. The narrator focuses the reader attention on the weather, on the smoke and on the people and the animals (dogs and horses) across the streets. He defines the weather like the typical British one: cold, wet and foggy. The atmosphere generated by this accurate description is quite melancholic.

The second sequence is totally focused on the fog. This may be understood thanks to the exaggerated use of language and the use of the anaphora since the word “fog” is repeated at the beginning of every sentence for twelve times. Indeed, this term underline a depressive situation where people are lost. A clear example of that is provided by two characters described in the first chapter: the"little mad old woman" and the Shropshire man. Dickens, with them, wants to highlight the central theme of the novel: the High Court of Chancery is an institutionalized abuse of the law.

The last sequences are characterized by key words like gas, fog and mud, giving an overall idea of something gloomy and undefined. All these aspects are totally in contrast to what the reader aspectetion are. The law is something rational and clear, but in this extract the narrator describes it foggy and confusional. Last but not least there is the figure of the main protagonist that recalls the first line of the extract where Dickens presents the Lord Chancellor, high judge of the four of Chancery. Therefore the meaning structure is circular.