

ang070

Assignment "Analysing Fiction"

Analyse the following passage from: H.G. Wells. *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. 1896. Ed. Mason Harris. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2009. 145.

Had Moreau had any intelligible object, I could have sympathised at least a little with him. I am not so squeamish about pain as that. I could have forgiven him a little even, had his motive been only hate. But he was so irresponsible, so utterly careless! His curiosity, his mad, aimless investigations, drove him on; and the Things were thrown out to live a year or so, to struggle and blunder and suffer, and at last to die painfully. They were wretched in themselves; the old animal hate moved them to trouble one another; the Law held them back from a brief hot struggle and a decisive end to their natural animosities.

In those days my fear of the Beast People went the way of my personal fear for Moreau. I fell indeed into a morbid state, deep and enduring, and alien to fear, which has left permanent scars upon my mind. I must confess that I lost faith in the sanity of the world when I saw it suffering the painful disorder of this island.

Please analyse this text, addressing the following tasks and questions. Refer to the categories presented on the narratology handout. You may write up to three pages of text, according to the formatting specifications of our style sheet.

1. Narration and Focalisation (30p)

Comment on narration and focalisation in the given passage and support your findings with textual proof.

Narration (18p)

- Temporal relation: ulterior narration (3p)
- Level (3p) and Participation (3p): "I" (Edward Prendick) – either extradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator (if only this passage considered), or intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator (if entire novel considered, incl. Charles Edward Prendick as extra-homodiegetic narrator in "Introduction")
- Perceptibility (6p)
 - description of setting ("the painful disorder of this island");
 - temporal summary ("in those days"),
 - identification (Moreau, the Things, Beast People) and
 - definition of characters (e.g. "he was so irresponsible"; "They were wretched in themselves");
 - reports of what characters did not think or say ("Had Moreau had any intelligible object": he did not specify a clear goal; his motive was NOT hate; "I could have sympathized" but Prendick did not; "the Law held them back");
 - commentary (comments upon his own state: loss of fear, instead state of depression; comments on island and its state in comparison to the entire world)
- Reliability (3p): no obvious sign of unreliability in this particular passage:

- narrator has greater knowledge than experiencing Prendick; earlier on: limited knowledge, after Moreau's explanation Prendick knows what's going on → no longer limited knowledge
- the value-scheme is one which is closer to the reader than at other times; it is Moreau who has the problematic value scheme;
- BUT: personal involvement and lack of distance, traumatising influence ("has left permanent scars upon my mind"); taking the frame into consideration: reliability of entire narrative questioned (cf. Introduction; question of 'memory')

Focalisation (12p)

- Shifts ... (6p)
 - from internal focalisation (experiencing Prendick) in the first paragraph [possible exception, external foc.: "I am not so squeamish about pain as that."]
 - to external focalisation (narrating Prendick) in the second paragraph, here: present tense and clear distance between narrating and experiencing self ("In those days, ..."; "I must confess...")
- (2p) as internal focaliser focalises Moreau from within (e.g. "His curiosity, his mad, aimless investigations, drove him on"),
- (2p) as internal focaliser focalises Beast Folk both from outside ("thrown out to live a year or so") and from within ("to struggle and blunder and suffer")
- (2p) as external focaliser focalises his younger self from within (development of his fear into morbid state, loss of faith) BUT extends to his current state ("permanent scars")

2. Characterisation (30p)

How are Dr. Moreau and Edward Prendick characterised in this passage? What modes of characterisation are employed in the given passage? Support your statements with textual proof.

- Dr Moreau (12p)
 - Direct definition: characterised by narrator/internal focalization [after the hunt for the Leopard-man and Moreau's plan to punish through torture in the House of Pain],
 - lacking in recognizable aim: no "intelligible object" "aimless investigations"
 - motive not hate
 - irresponsible
 - lacking in compassion, "so utterly careless!"
 - curious: "His curiosity"
 - driven (=not rational): "his mad, aimless investigations"
 - indirect presentation through reported committed action, Moreau is heartless and discharges the animals when he does not need them any more: "and the Things were thrown out to live a year or so"
- Edward Prendick (12p)
 - Direct definition of Prendick the character:
 - strong ("I am not so squeamish about pain as that") [by Prendick the narrator]

- cannot understand Moreau, cannot sympathize, cannot forgive him
 - no longer fears Beast People, no longer fears Moreau; instead: “morbid state”, no more “faith in the sanity of the world”
 - Direct definition of Prendick the character, still true for Prendick the narrator
 - Morally changed, traumatized (“permanent scars”)
 - Indirect presentation
 - Feels with the Beast Folk, acknowledges their suffering
- Correspondence and Contrast (6p)
 - Contrast Prendick vs. Moreau: morality, sympathy, understanding
 - [Correspondence: Prendick the character and Prendick the narrator]

3. Wider Context (30p)

a) Name one other passage in the novel which corresponds or contrasts with this passage in one particular aspect. (10p)

- Correspondence and contrast: e.g. description of Moreau and the relationship between science/ethics in Chapter 14: Doctor Moreau Explains: Moreau’s story regarded as “simple and convincing” (123) and the effect this has on Prendick: “I looked at him, and saw but a white-faced, white-haired man, with calm eyes. Save for his serenity, the touch almost of beauty that resulted from his set tranquillity and his magnificent build, [...]”; Prendick no longer feels fear but he is less sympathetic with Moreau in the passage at hand; his feelings concerning the Beast People change as well from fear to sympathy (in contrast to lack of sympathy for Moreau)
- Correspondence: e.g. Prendick back in London (173) and the description of the “permanent scars” which he mentions in the passage at hand
- ...

b) Describe the nature and significance of the correspondence or contrast. (10p)

c) Relate both passages to one of the central themes of the novel. (10p)

- Science and ethics;
- Science and religion;
- island vs. London / world;
- human/animal relations
- ...

4. Tutorials (10p)