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# POETIC TEXTURE OF "GREAT EXPECTATIONS" BY CHARLES DICKENS

The paper aims at presenting a precise analysis of "all the local, heterogeneous detail which differentiates the poem from a prose statement" [1], special stress being put on its plurisignation [2] and its relevance to the meaning of the novel.

*Great Expectations* was intended as, and largely is [3], a story of gradual disillusionment and disappointment in a poor boy's pursuit of money, the social rank of a gentleman, and love—based on false expectations.

Taking into consideration its meaning and way of presentation Pip's experience can be divided into four parts—four different "worlds" met by Pip: the life in Joe's forge and the village, the world of convicts and crime, the unreal reality of Miss Havisham's strange mansion, and the life of a gentleman in London. From the point of view of presentation each of these "worlds" consists of small elements representing often multiple meanings. Through their component meanings these elements on the one hand characterize and individualize each of these "worlds", on the other hand they introduce features which make a direct contribution to the theme of the novel. Apart from these elements the novel is organized on a subtle metaphor which joins all the other components into a whole compact from the point of view of meaning and structure.

The main elements of the presentation of the "convict world" are place and characteristic objects connected with it. Places most frequent-

[1] Al. Preminger, ed., *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Princeton 1965, p. 853.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

[3] Dickens changed the conclusion of the book into a partly "happy end" under the pressure of the publisher.

ly connected with the "convict world" are: marshes, the river, and a neighbouring churchyard. Characteristic objects accentuated in the descriptions are: dykes, mounds, tombstones, flints, nettles, briars, stones, graves, a church, and a gibbet expressively dominating all these. This setting provides the background for all the most important and most dramatic scenes of the "convict world": the first two meetings with Magwitch; the hunt after the convicts; the scene when Orlick, who actually joins the "world" of crime, tries to murder Pip; the escape with Magwitch; even the accidental scene with the two convicts in a coach, which begins in London, finally, as the tension of their talk increases, also brings the flavour of the marshes: "although I could recognize nothing in the darkness of the fitful lights and shadows of our lamps, I traced marsh country in the cold damp wind that blew at us"[4].

The above mentioned places and objects imply the features of some mystery, quagmire (marshes), suffering (stones, nettles, briars), crime (a gibbet) thus corresponding directly to the essential features of this "world". On the other hand emotions evoked by them in Pip—fear, awe, abhorrence—correspond to Pip's emotions and reactions towards the whole "convict world".

Taking into consideration the frequency of the appearance of these elements, their inseparable connection with the "world" and their role in its characterization, we can treat them as a symbolic representation of the "convict world" and of Pip's attitude towards it.

A very interesting element of the presentation of the "convict world" is light and darkness. The action of the "convict world" never takes place in full daylight. In no other place in the novel is Dickens so careful to mention and justify the time as when the "convict" action develops. The time of the day introduced here is either before sunrise or after sunset: "a raw afternoon towards evening"; "about dusk"; "two or three hours after dark"; "a dark night". Darkness implies here mystery and secret, masked existence of this "world". Being an inseparable attribute of the "convict world" darkness attains symbolic significance. For example, during the hunt after the convicts in chap. V the contrast between the darkness on the marshes and the light in the houses becomes a symbolic contrast between the "world" of crime and the quiet village life: "...darkness coming on, and the people had good fires indoors and were keeping the day".

More or less thick darkness being the background, Dickens introduces into some of these scenes the light of a candle or fire, which produces very interesting technical effects. For example, in chap. XXXIX the

[4] Ch. Dickens, *Great Expectations*, London 1962.

interplay of darkness and light provides a very skilfully handled description of Magwitch; in chap. LIII the flaring match and then a lighted candle revealing first a bent figure, then blue lips, and finally Orlick, are probably one of the most perfect examples of tension attained by a textural element.

When compared with painting Dickens's novels remind us of black and white sketches. Whenever developed, the backgrounds of the "convict world" scenes in *Great Expectations* are very dark oil paintings with the prevailing shades of black, grey and leaden. The characteristic of all these colours is that they describe only the natural background—marshes, river, sky—and they never concern any particulars of the objects in a room or a man's dress which are just dark, colourless lines and spots against the background. This harmonious tonation of colour on the one hand increases the atmosphere of dread and mystery, on the other hand it gives a very strong poetic effect, especially expressive when, in the most dramatic scenes, the harmony is broken by a sudden sharp accent of bloody red from the setting sun or moon: "The marshes were just a long horizontal line, not nearly so broad nor yet so black; and the sky was just a row of long angry red lines and dense black lines intermixed". Taking into consideration the strong dramatic tension of the scene, the red from the sun may be interpreted as symbolically corresponding to the red of blood.

The element of weather is the most important and essential of all the components of the presentation of the "convict world". First of all, by always introducing the idea of wetness, damp, and cold, covered in a veil of mist, the weather contributes to the effects produced by the elements of place, light, and colour: "It was wretched weather; stormy and wet, stormy and wet; mud, mud, mud, deep in all the streets. Day after day, a vast heavy veil had been driving over London from the East, and it drove still, as if in the East there were an eternity of cloud and wind".

Creating the atmosphere, the weather naturally corresponds to the moods and reactions of the people. This pathetic fallacy usually affects Pip either by evoking special mood in him (see the quotation above) —the inward unrest and nervous expectation produced by the weather prepares Pip for the great psychological crisis he is soon to face), or by appealing to his sensitiveness and imagination and thus making him realize Nature's sympathy for the convicts: "...the pale afternoon outside almost seemed in my pitying young fancy to have turned pale on their account, poor wretches".

Apart from creating the atmosphere the significance of the weather element consists in its frequency of appearance. Besides the long, most typical scenes in chap. I, III, V, XXXIX, LIII, the "convict world" appears constantly throughout the novel either in the form of short scenes or just slight mentions and references where the background is only hinted at. In such cases, while the other elements are often missing, it is the weather that never fails to appear, though sometimes reduced to a laconic remark. "The weather was miserably raw".

This inseparable connection between the special kind of weather and the "convict world" makes the weather element a constantly recurring motif which, always introducing the idea of some warning and producing the mood of tense expectation, becomes a symbol of the convict reality. The most evident example of the symbolic function of the weather appears in Dickens's treatment of the marshes—the only difference between the marshes used as a setting for the "convict world" action and that of the "village world" is the change of the weather, the former being stormy and wet, the latter—sunny and peaceful.

Presentation of the "convict world" forms a separate and interesting whole also from the point of view of the language. The richness of effect described above is attained by very simple lexical means. The basic words of these descriptions are simple, every-day speech words, mostly of Anglo-Saxon stock, covering a very small range of vocabulary. The words repeated most frequently are: wet, cold, mud, wind, rain.

This limitation of vocabulary plus the directness and clarity of denotation and connotation of the most typical words provides very definite, sharp images which become highly expressive in the context of the often symbolic meaning of the descriptions, thus strengthening the poetic impact of the presentation.

Another important aspect of the language is its rhythm. The "convict world" is often presented in a kind of language characterized by clear, regular rhythm. A typical example may be the description of the weather in chap. XXXIX: "It was wretched weather; stormy and wet, stormy and wet; mud, mud, mud, deep in all the streets. Day after day, a vast heavy veil..." The structure, the meaning, even the punctuation divide the passage into seven units which at the same time correspond to the regular number of stresses (2, 2, 2, 3, 3, 2, 3 respectively). Writing this passage in the form of lines with a caesura in the middle we receive meaningful units in each line and equal number of stresses on each side of the caesuras:

"It was wretched weather;
stormy and wet, stormy and wet;
mud, mud, mud, deep in all the streets.
Day after day, a vast heavy veil..."

The regularity of stress, the natural caesura, and metaphorical presentation of an image (mist as a veil) give the passage a poetic quality; at the same time some variation in the number of stresses and the kind of feet avoids a monotony which might be dangerous when we take into consideration iambs and trochees as dominating feet, and repetitions, especially that of the whole phrase in the second line. Besides, the structure of the first part of the third line produces another interesting effect—the regularity of the previous lines makes the reader follow their rhythm and interpret this line as one consisting of three feet with their theses missing, but marked when read aloud by a natural pause, which creates the illusion of this part of the line being slower, and accentuates the idea of mud (stressed also by the repetition of the word).

Here this aspect of language is interesting not only from the point of view of its decorative function, but first of all because of its connection with the meaning. As shown above, particular elements of the presentation of the "convict world" become symbols of particular features of the "world", they constantly appear throughout the novel, and the fact that they often take the form of regular metrical poetry accentuates them, makes them more eminent, more striking when read aloud [5], so that they become a prominent, constantly recurring refrain. This refrain, finally, can be interpreted as a symbol of the constant connection between Pip's life and the "convict world". For Pip the scene of the convict's capture by the soldiers in chap. V is a final and complete breaking of any links with the criminal "world". He climbs up the social ladder, reaching its highest rungs, while Magwitch is at its very bottom. Neither Pip nor the reader realizes how strong are the connections between these two social positions. And it is this constantly recurring refrain that becomes the symbol and the only implication of this connection.

This double-layer symbolism—particular elements symbolize partic-

[5] It seems quite possible that the special sound effects of Dickens's novels may be ascribed not only to his instinctive creative powers, but also to the influence of the Victorian reading public, whose typical manner of receiving literature was reading aloud in a family circle. Cf. R. K. Webb, *The Victorian Reading Public*, [in:] *From Dickens to Hardy*, The Pelican Guide to English Literature, Harmondsworth 1963, p. 207.

ular features of the "world", the pattern of appearance of these elements symbolizes the relations between this and the other "worlds"—is one of the greatest poetic achievements of the novel.

The next reality Pip meets—"Miss Havisham's world"—is, unlike the "convict world", limited to one place only—Miss Havisham's old mansion. In the descriptions of the mansion Dickens's love of detail is combined with a disciplined choice—every element introduced has at least one meaning.

Details of the external features of the mansion symbolize its complete isolation from all other reality: walled up windows, walled up yard, barred windows: "we came to Miss Havisham's house, which... had a great many iron bars to it. Some of the windows had been walled up, of those that remained, all the lower were rustily barred. There was a courtyard in front, and that was barred".

Details of the interior correspond to other characteristics of "Miss Havisham's world". Its decay is symbolized by the famous image of the bridal cake with spiders, mice and blackbeetles, as well as by the numerous descriptions of "every discernable thing... covered with dust and mould, and dropping to pieces". The complete uselessness of this "world" finds expression in the descriptions of: an "empty and disused" brewery, an "idle" place, a shoe that "had never been worn", a "neglected garden", etc. The deadness and stagnation of "Miss Havisham's world" finds a correspondence in some details of small actions performed by Miss Havisham: "I noticed that Miss Havisham put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up", and even in the way of behaving and speaking: "I found Miss Havisham just as I had left her, and she spoke to Estella in the very same way, if not in the very same words" The most typical symbol of stagnation is the stopped clocks and watches impressing even little Pip with their symbolic meaning: "I felt as if the stopping of the clocks had stopped Time in that mysterious place, and... it stood still".

The range of colour in "Miss Havisham's world" is, typically of Dickens, very limited. In fact the whole "world" exists in only one colour—white—which after closer examination appears to be "faded and yellow". No other variation of colour is introduced, on the contrary, the same colour, even similar expressions describing it, are repeated: ...the shoe upon it, once white, now yellow... the silk stocking on it, once white, now yellow"; "she in her once white dress, all yellow and withered; the once white cloth all yellow and withered". This yellow and withered white can be interpreted as a symbol of the gradual decay and dying of "Miss Havisham's world".

A very interesting thing occurs when Pip, stimulated by Mrs. Joe's curiosity, describes Miss Havisham's house. However strange and incomprehensible, the new experience exerts a great charm and holds a spell over the boy and makes him keep its secret to himself, and at the same time it spurs his imagination to invent scenes rich in fabulous colour: a black velvet coach, a gold plate, a silver basket, a blue flag, a red flag, a flag sprinkled all over with gold stars. The colourless reality has been changed in the young boy's perception into a colourful fantasy—a key motif of the novel.

The most interesting and the richest in meaning is the element of light and darkness. "Miss Havisham's world" exists in darkness ("no glimpse of daylight was to be seen in it") dispersed with candle light ("well lighted with wax candles"). The effect of this artificial lighting is so strong that, entering the house, Pip loses all sense of real time, and the moment of meeting natural light is a shock for him—coming from another reality where even time flows differently: "Until she opened the side entrance, I had fancied, ...that it must necessarily be night-time. The rush of the daylight quite confounded me, and made me feel as if I had been in the candlelight of the strange room many hours. "This example also accentuates the isolation and otherness of "Miss Havisham's world".

Another feature of this "world" conveyed by the treatment of the element of light is its artificiality and unnaturalness suggested by the unnaturalness of artificial darkness and artificial light. Dickens is constantly stressing this feature, often using the very words "artificial" and "unnatural" ("the steady dullness of artificial light"; "I came out into the natural light"), and he even makes Pip strongly aware of this situation and its effect on Miss Havisham: "...as if the admission of the natural light would have struck her to dust".

This function of the elements of darkness and light becomes especially expressive and meaningful when contrasted with the darkness and light of the "convict world"—the former being artificial and faint (walled up windows and candles), the latter—natural and powerful (night and moon or setting sun)—a subtle symbolic contrast between the essential meanings of these two realities: a decorated and artificially stimulated suffering on the one hand, and a real, great human tragedy on the other.

The unchangeable lighting also contributes to the general effect of stagnation and stopping of time achieved by the descriptions of the objects discussed above.

As in the "convict world", the handling of light and darkness provides very interesting artistic effects. Although the elements of form

and colour exist as components of the background, yet it is the constant, mysterious interplay of dusty darkness, trembling misty light, and intermingling shadows and half-shadows that create the most typical image of "Miss Havisham's world". The figure of Miss Havisham thrown against this shadowy background gives the whole "world" a kind of ghostly quality of the kingdom of witches: "...her awful figure with its ghostly reflection thrown large by the fire upon the ceiling and the wall". Being an inseparable element of Estella's appearance in front of Pip, the light of a candle becomes effective in many ways: it gives a very memorable picture—a small light against the utter darkness of the stairs and corridors—the only point visible for Pip ("I followed the candle down, as I had followed the candle up"); it increases the atmosphere of strangeness and mystery; confronted with Estella's beauty and with the fact that she was still Pip's only guide in the terrifying mansion, it gives her a kind of fairy quality which corresponds to the general atmosphere of the house ("her light came along the dark passage like a star").

Such images form in fact great metaphors—an old woman's house is presented by means of images of a fairy kingdom. These metaphors provide the key to the understanding of Pip's emotions and reactions (his enchantment with "Miss Havisham's world", his desire to reach its level) and at the same time they allude to the theme of the novel—a bitter misinterpretation of reality.

As far as language is concerned it is worth-while to notice a great number of similes and metaphors which give the same effects as the other elements discussed above, and which are often striking in the freshness of their poetic perception combined skilfully with the relevance to the atmosphere, as for example when Miss Havisham is compared to "bodies burnt in ancient times, which fall to powder", or to "waxwork and skeleton" which "seemed to have dark eyes that looked at me", or when the candles are said to have "faintly troubled" the darkness.

The rhythm of the language is also an important element in the presentation of "Miss Havisham's world". Especially in the speech of Miss Havisham a regular, monotonous rhythm can be noticed. It is achieved either by means of repetition (a word, a phrase, or a sentence is repeated):

> "But to be proud and hard to me!
> Estella, Estella, Estella,
> to be proud and hard to me!";

or by means of "parallel construction"—not the words themselves but the syntactic relations between them are repeated:

> "So new to him, so old to me;
> so strange to him, so familiar to me;
> so melancholy to both of us".

This kind of language, mainly typical of Miss Havisham, is also used by Estella in very emotional states:

> "Take all the praise,
> take all the blame,
> take all the success,
> take all the failure";

and even by Pip in his reflections on the strange "world":

> "But her hands were Estella's hands,
> and her eyes were Estella's eyes".

The artificiality of the language sounding so unlike every-day cadences of speech, its monotonous sing-song quality produce the effect of some mysterious incantations or spells of a witch—contributing thus to the unreal and fairy quality of this "world".

The next phase of Pip's experience—the "gentleman world"—is less uniform from the point of view of its presentation, it is more complex and differentiated than the two previous "worlds". Many elements, however, can be interpreted as symbols though the poetic perception they represent is less interesting. Analogies are more obvious, less detached from the subject.

Thus the element of dirt and ugliness which prevails in the descriptions of external objects correspond directly to the inner dirt and ugliness of this "world": "dust and grit that lay thick on everything"; "gravy on the table cloth"; "dirty windows"; "greasy great-coat"; "dirty shawl" etc. Being Pip's very first impression of London this element of dirt and ugliness is also the first symbol of his great expectations changed into great disappointment: "So imperfect was this realization of the first of my great expectations..."

Another characteristic of life in London which finds correspondence in the presentation of objects is the strict border and contrast between private and official life—the former being symbolized by the equipment of Wemmick's "Castle"—highly individual, allowing all kind of fancies, and at the same time warm and domestic ("The queerest gothic

windows"; a flagstaff, a draw-bridge. The Stinger, a fountain, pigs, fowls, rabbits, growing cucumbers, salad, etc.), the latter—by the official and severe character of objects in Jaggers's room ("books... about evidence, criminal law, criminal biography, trials, acts of Parliament, ...there was nothing merely ornamental to be seen").

Another interesting aspect of the treatment of objects is illustrated by the descriptions of Wemmick's collection of curiosities, a clerk's clothes "which had evidently not belonged to him originally", and an inn-boy's "bloated pair of shoes". Though different at first, in the context of the whole novel all these objects appear to have one feature in common—all of them are acquired because of somebody's death: Wemmick got the rings from his clients sentenced to death, the clerk bought the clothes "cheap from the executioner", the inn-boy took the shoes "from the feet of a drowned seaman washed ashore". And it is this common feature that makes them a symbol of one of the basic mechanisms of the "gentleman world"—some people may gain because others lose.

The greatest degree of plurisignation is achieved by the presentation of the two casts in Jaggers's office. By being effective in various ways they become the most characteristic symbol of their "world". First of all they create the atmosphere of dirt and ugliness discussed above: "two dreadful casts..., of faces peculiarly swollen, and twitchy about the nose" standing "on a dusty perch for the blacks and flies to settle on". Being portraits of "famous clients... that got us a world of credit", and who provided Wemmick with some of his curiosities, the casts contribute to the theme of making profit from other people. As the most prominent objects in Jaggers's office, always striking Pip on entering it, they become a symbol of the office and the dirty work going on in it: "the two brutal casts, always inseparable in my mind from the official proceedings". Finally, by becoming animated and active they may strengthen the dramatic tension of a scene. For example, during Pip's talk with Jaggers about the boy's benefactor, at the very climax of the talk "the two horrible casts of the twitched faces looked..., as if they had come to the crisis in their suspended attention, and were going to sneeze"—as if mocking and stressing the irony of the whole scene.

The element of colour as a component of the presentation of the "gentleman world" almost does not exist except for a few remarks alluding to dark, black, or brown, without suggesting any relevance to the meaning. The only case when colour contributes to the characterization of this "world" is the description of Avenger's clothes: "a blue coat, canary waistcoat, white cravat, creamy breeches". As in "Miss

Havisham's world", the bright colours (a very rare thing in Dickens's descriptions) correspond to bright and unrealistic ideas—Pip's conception of the life of a gentleman, which, like the servant, finally appeared to have no real value under a colourful surface.

Behaviour, small actions, movements can also have more than one meaning. Thus the constant washing of hands after the return from a police court or the office not only characterizes Jaggers as a pedant, but also symbolizes the morally dirty character of his work, corresponding at the same time to the outward dirt discussed above. Similarly, Wemmick's peculiar way of smiling consisting in the change of the intensity of automatism according to whether he was nearer his office or home, apart from characterizing Wemmick, also suggests a strict border between private and official life, the latter being also represented by Jaggers's "throwing his fingers at his clients". Many similar examples could be quoted here.

The correspondence between language and meaning in the "gentleman world" is slightly different from that in the previous ones. The typical vocabulary is wider in range and Dickens more often introduces different words of similar connotation instead of repeating the same words. Besides, while in the two previous "worlds" the most typical words are mostly concrete and with a symbolic meaning (wind, marshes, light, dark, etc.), in the "gentleman world" the key words are often abstract in meaning (disappointment, depressed, desperate, etc.).

The frequency of appearance of the most typical words changes according to the character of Pip's experience in this "world". Generally speaking, the presentation of the "gentlemen world" can be divided into two parts—that before the coming of Magwitch, and that after his coming. In the first part, which presents Pip's disappointment with the surface of his expectations, the most typical and frequent words are: ugly, dirty, greasy, dismal, dreadful, dusty, disgust. In the second part, which disillusions him as to the very nature of his expectations, the key words are: miserable, depressed, desperate, wretched, disappointment, destroyed, dread, weary.

Apart from all these examples of the very close correspondence between texture and meaning the "gentleman world" also contains scenes and incidents where this correspondence is very slight. The introduction of the Pockets' story with the long scenes of their family life, the descriptions of Mrs. Coiler, like the characterization of Billy Barley, Miss Skiffins, or the landlady of the house in which Estella stayed in London—though very good as descriptions in themselves, seem to be an outcome of Dickens's love for drawing characters and

presenting very picturesque and memorable scenes rather than elements necessary to convey the full meaning of this part of the novel.

The life in the village, which in fact centred in Joe's house and forge, was the first great experience Pip had and the last one he was able to understand properly. The "village world" appears in three phases corresponding to Pip's attitude and appreciation of it.

The first phase covers the period of Pip's early childhood till his first visit to Miss Havisham. However unjust and even cruel the "bringing up by hand" was, still the life in the village covered for Pip the whole of reality, and having no idea of the existence of other "worlds" and no opportunity of comparison Pip believed it to represent at least a very high level of elegance and culture. This attitude is conveyed by the presentation of objects—components of the descriptions of the house. Thus "clean white curtains" or "four little white crockery poodles on the mantelshelf each with a black nose and a basket of flowers in his mouth, and each the counterpart of the other" represent for Pip refined taste, and make the room "a most elegant saloon". Similarly pictures presenting Joe at work accentuate his masculine strength which had such a strong appeal to the boy: "I believed in the forge as the glowing road to manhood and independence".

The most characteristic element of the "village world" is fire. It is worth noticing that in all the scenes taking place in the kitchen the fire is mentioned, usually serving either as a place near which Joe was sitting, or a point which somebody was looking at or moving towards. Great burning fire against the blackness of night is also the most beautiful and frequent picture of Joe's forge: "... a black night sky, and Joe's furnace was flinging a path of fire across the road". The constant presence of fire as a component of the background confronted with the word's connotation of warmth makes it a symbol of Pip's childhood in Joe's house; a symbol which becomes most effective when in London the fire in Barnard's Inn makes him think about the fire in the old kitchen: "Many a time of an evening when I sat alone looking at the fire, I thought, after all, there was no fire like the forge fire and the kitchen fire at home".

The second phase of Pip's perception of the "vilage world", which begins with his first visit to Miss Havisham, can be summed up in two words—"coarse and common". Consequently all the elements analyzed above are now presented as ugly, ridiculous low, and above all "coarse and common". Thus in the scene of Joe talking to Miss Havisham, Mr. Wopsle playing *Hamlet*, Joe in London, the only feature present all the time and constantly accentuated through the presentation of some particulars of dress, movement, talk, etc., is ridiculousness: "I could

hardly have imagined dear old Joe looking so unlike himself or so like some extraordinary bird; standing as he did, speechless, with his tuft of feathers ruffled, and his mouth open as if he wanted a worm". Even the stars above the kitchen are "but poor and humble stars".

Gradually, the stronger his disappointment with the "gentleman world" the weaker grows the feeling of being ashamed of home. The last phase of Pip's appreciation of it is that of full understanding of its real value. This part of the novel, however, is the weakest from the point of view of its poetic value. Pip's attitude towards the "village world" is very often shown not through images of multiple meaning, but rather by means of direct comments and explanations often made in the tone of sentimentalism. The key words of Pip's last talk with Joe and Biddy clearly connote the atmosphere of a sermon: "...church ... charity... love... mankind... humble thanks... repay... hope... love.., thankless... ungenerous... unjust... honour... good... true.. better man... kind hearts... forgive... forgive... amen... God..."

Apart from all the changes in presentation corresponding to the changes of Pip's attitude there is one element of the "village world" the presentation of which is unchangeable— the marshes. As a background of the "village world" action the picture of the marshes is always the same, always in summer, during beautiful, peaceful summer weather ("the summer afternoon toned down into the summer evening, and it was very beautiful"). Other characteristic details are: birds singing ("the larks sang"; "the voices of birds"; "the larks were soaring"), scents of flowers ("sweet summer scents"), summer plants ("wild flowers"; "green corn"), blue sky, etc. Contrasted with all the changes in the presentation of all other elements this unchangeable presentation of the marshes becomes a symbol of the unchangeable, constant value of the "village world", suggesting at the same time, through the connotations of the key words of these descriptions, the idea of something simple, quiet, natural, and really beautiful—the most important features of this "world".

Another meaning of the picture of the marshes appears in the scene when, before leaving for London, Pip says farewell to the marshes during a wet, stormy weather identifying them not only with the terror of the first meeting with the "convict world" but also with his childhood spent in the "village world": "No more wet grounds, no more dykes and sluices, no more of these grazing cattle...—farewell, monotonous acquaintances of my childhood..." In the context of the novel the irony of this wrongly interpreted symbol becomes an allusion to the irony of misinterpretation of values.

Apart from all the symbols and metaphors discussed in the analysis of the four "worlds" the whole novel is organized on a very subtle metaphor represented by an image of mist. The heavy veil of mist dispersing or gathering appears at all the turning moments of Pip's life. The meaning of this image is double—for Pip the gathering mists symbolize poor, monotonous life (the "village world") and the dispersing mists—a bright future spread before him (the "gentleman world"). For the reader the mist is a symbol of Pip's blindness and inability to see clearly.

This metaphor sets a framework within which there are numerous small metaphors, symbols, motifs—all acting on various levels—producing atmosphere, increasing tension, conveying some meaning, and above all bearing relevance to the main theme of the novel. These imaginative effects attained by means of highly suggestive and often symbolic language are responsible for the evident poetic value of the work [6].

Besides some slight weaknesses, the imaginative force of the unity of vision is so strong and overwhelming that the total effect produced is that of great poetry [7]. *Great Expectations* can be regarded not only as a crowning achievement of Dickens the novelist, but also of Dickens the poet [8].

## TKANKA POETYCKA „WIELKICH NADZIEI" KAROLA DICKENSA

## STRESZCZENIE

Zamierzonym i w dużej mierze zrealizowanym tematem *Wielkich nadziei* jest stopniowo nawarstwiające się rozczarowanie życiowe młodego chłopca — Pipa. W czasie urzeczywistniania się wielkich marzeń Pipa — zdobycia pieniędzy, społecznej pozycji gentlemana oraz miłości pięknej Estelli — stopniowo okazuje się, że wszystkie one są oparte na fałszywej ocenie rzeczywistości.

Biorąc pod uwagę treść oraz sposób przedstawienia, przeżycia Pipa można podzielić na 4 różne „światy", z którymi się zetknął: tajemniczy, zamaskowany „świat" zbiegłych galerników i przestępców; nierealny i udziwniony „świat" zdziwaczałej starej panny Havisham; szczyt marzeń Pipa — „świat" gentlemana i Londyn, oraz „świat wsi" obejmujący przeżycia Pipa w rodzinnej wiosce i w domu Joe'go. Pod względem przedstawienia każdy z tych „światów" zbudowany

[6] Cf. W. Allen, *The English Novel*, Harmondsworth 1960, p. 171.

[7] Cf. *ibidem*.

[8] Cf. F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, Harmondsworth 1962, p. 258, where, presenting the analysis of *Hard Times*, Mr. Leavis concludes: Dickens "writes with a poetic force of evocation, registering with the responsiveness of a genius of verbal expression what he so sharply sees and feels. In fact, by texture, imaginative mode, symbolic method, and the resulting concentration, *Hard Times* affects us as belonging with formally poetic works".

jest z drobnych elementów, o często wielowarstwowym znaczeniu. Poprzez znaczenia składowe elementy te z jednej strony charakteryzują i indywidualizują każdy ze „światów", z drugiej strony wprowadzają cechy będące bezpośrednim przyczynkiem do wyrażenia głównej idei utworu. Poza tym powieść jest zbudowana na subtelnej metaforze łączącej wszystkie elementy składowe w zwartą znaczeniowo i strukturalnie całość.

Jednym z głównych elementów przedstawienia „świata galerniczego" jest miejsce oraz związane z nim charakterystyczne przedmioty. Biorąc pod uwagę częstotliwość ich występowania oraz nierozerwalny związek ze „światem galerniczym" mogą być one interpretowane jako symbole istotnych cech tego „świata": grząskości (bagniska), cierpienia (ciernie, kamienie), zbrodni (szubienica), oraz przeżyć Pipa z nim związanych: przerażenia, grozy, wstrętu.

Starannie i konsekwentnie wprowadzony element światła i ciemności (akcja „świata galerniczego" nigdy nie ma miejsca w pełnym świetle dziennym) nie tylko implikuje cechę tajemniczości i zamaskowanego istnienia tego „świata", lecz także staje się jego symbolem, wyraźnie kontrastującym z innym oświetleniem pozostałych „światów". Gra ciemności i światła dostarcza także ciekawych efektów artystycznych, np.: wprowadzenie zapalonej zapałki, stopniowo ukazującej pochyloną postać i sine, nabrzmiałe usta, a następnie światła świecy pozwalającego rozpoznać Orlicka — stanowi przykład niezwykle precyzyjnie wzmocnionego napięcia sceny.

Element koloru w „świecie galerniczym" występuje rzadko i jest ograniczony do odcieni: czarnego, szarego i ołowianego. Ta tonacja wzmacnia atmosferę tajemniczości oraz dostarcza silnych efektów poetyckich w kontraście z krwawą czerwienią zachodu w dramatycznych scenach.

Podstawowym elementem przedstawienia „świata galerniczego" jest element pogody. Wprowadzając nieustannie cechy wilgoci, zimna i mgły, pogoda charakteryzuje „świat galerniczy". Wytwarzając atmosferę, pogoda w naturalny sposób odpowiada nastrojom, uczuciom i reakcjom postaci. Główne znaczenie elementu pogody polega na częstotliwości jego występowania.

Najciekawszym aspektem języka przedstawienia „świata galerniczego" jest jego rytm, który przez swą regularność często nadaje fragmentom powieści charakter mowy wiązanej. Ten fakt uwydatnia cechy elementów „świata galerniczego", akcentuje je, nadając im w ten sposób charakter uporczywie powracającego refrenu. Ten zaś refren staje się symbolem nieustannego związku między życiem Pipa i „światem galerniczym". Ta dwuwarstwowość symbolu jest jednym ze szczytowych osiągnięć poetyckich *Wielkich nadziei*.

W przedstawieniu „świata panny Havisham" Dickens łączy umiłowanie szczegółu z bardzo rygorystyczną selekcją — każdy wprowadzony element ma przynajmniej jedno znaczenie. Zamurowane podwórze i okna symbolizują izolację tego „świata". Zniszczony przez karaluchy i pająki tort i rozpad innych przedmiotów ma charakter symboliczny. Martwota i stagnacja znajduje wyraz w szczegółach drobnych czynności wykonywanych w rytualnie niezmienny sposób przez pannę Havisham. Przykładem stagnacji są również zatrzymane zegary.

Podobny efekt pisarz osiąga przez ograniczenie kolorów do wyblakłej i zżółkłej bieli, natarczywie występującej w prawie każdym opisie i symbolizującej rozpad i przeżywanie się tego „świata". Jedyny wypadek wprowadzenia innych barw — fantastyczny opis domu panny Havisham dokonany przez Pipa — poprzez zastąpienie bezbarwnej rzeczywistości kolorową fantazją jest wyraźną aluzją do głównej idei utworu — fałszywej interpretacji rzeczywistości.

„Świat panny Havisham" występuje stale w ciemności rozproszonej światłem świecy. W kontekście powieści oświetlenie to można interpretować jako: 1. symbol izolacji i „inności" tego „świata"; 2. symbol jego sztuczności, sprzecznej z naturalnymi prawami, a jednocześnie 3. jako wymowny kontrast w zestawieniu z krańcowo przeciwnymi wartościami „świata galerniczego", oraz 4. jako symbol stagnacji i zatrzymania czasu; 5. element wzmacniający atmosferę udziwnienia i tajemniczości; 6. metaforyczne przedstawienie domu zdziwaczałej starej panny jako nierealnego królestwa wróżek i czarownic, które z kolei 7. dostarcza klucza do zrozumienia przeżyć i reakcji Pipa, oraz 8. stanowi aluzję do głównego motywu powieści.

Obok wielkiej liczby interesujących porównań i metafor najciekawszym aspektem języka jest jego rytm, którego uderzająca monotonia opiera się na dokładnym powtórzeniu wyrazu, frazy lub zdania albo na powtórzeniu syntaktycznych stosunków między wyrazami. Osiągnięty w ten sposób inkantacyjny rytm wypowiedzi panny Havisham odpowiada nienaturalności tego „świata" oraz jego baśniowemu charakterowi.

Przedstawienie „świata gentlemana" wydaje się mniej ciekawe pod względem poetyckiej percepcji. Symbole są tu na ogół bardziej oczywiste, mało odległe od przedmiotu, który symbolizują. Tak więc brzydota i brud opisywanych przedmiotów jest symbolem wewnętrznej brzydoty i brudu tego „świata". Podobnie opis licznych przedmiotów zdobytych dzięki czyjejś śmierci jest symbolem głównego mechanizmu „świata gentlemana" — bogacenia się na krzywdzie innych. Przesadnie dokładne mycie rąk po wyjściu z biura nie tylko charakteryzuje adwokata jako pedanta, lecz także sugeruje moralnie brudny charakter jego pracy.

Ogólny charakter języka przedstawienia „świata gentlemana" jest nieco inny niż w poprzednich „światach". Z punktu widzenia częstotliwości najbardziej typowych wyrazów daje się tu przeprowadzić zdecydowaną linię podziału — do dramatycznej wizyty Magwitcha i po przyjściu Magwitcha. W pierwszej części, ukazującej rozczarowanie Pipa zewnętrznym wyglądem „świata gentlemana", najczęstszymi wyrazami są synonimy brzydoty; w drugiej części, w której Pip rozczarowuje się do wewnętrznej struktury tego „świata", występują synonimy depresji.

„Świat wsi" przedstawiony jest w trzech fazach, odpowiadających trzem różnym postawom Pipa wobec niego.

Pierwsza obejmuje okres dzieciństwa Pipa do momentu poznania panny Havisham. Wszystkie elementy przedstawienia „świata wsi" w tej fazie — opisy przedmiotów, czynności, domu, kuźni — akcentują cechy piękna, siły, elegancji. Najbardziej charakterystycznym elementem jest ogień jako źródło ciepła.

Druga faza przedstawienia „świata wsi" odpowiada opinii Estelli o Pipie, który był dla niej „prostacki i pospolity".

Ostatnia faza przedstawienia owego „świata" to pełne docenienie jego wartości. Ta część powieści jest najsłabsza pod względem budowy poetyckiej. Dickens najczęściej ukazuje stosunek Pipa do „świata wsi" nie poprzez obrazy poetyckie o wielowarstwowym znaczeniu, lecz przez bezpośrednie skomentowanie sytuacji w tonie sentymentalnym.

Cały utwór zorganizowany jest na metaforze reprezentowanej przez obraz mgły, który w kontekście powieści przybiera podwójne znaczenie symboliczne. Dla Pipa koncentrująca się mgła symbolizuje „świat wsi", rozpraszająca się mgła — „świat gentlemana". Dla czytelnika mgła jest symbolem zasłony na oczach Pipa, nie pozwalającej na właściwą ocenę rzeczywistości.

Ta metafora tworzy ramy, wewnątrz których znajdują się wszystkie omówione powyżej elementy. Ich wyraźna funkcja znaczeniowa i wieloznaczeniowa, przejawiająca się w formie symbolu czy metafory, zestawiona z niezwykle sugestywnym językiem decyduje, że efekt końcowy utworu jest efektem wielkiej poezji. *Wielkie nadzieje* mogą być uważane nie tylko za szczytowe osiągnięcie Dickensa powieściopisarza, lecz także Dickensa poety.

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