

NARRATIVE STRATEGIES IN CHARLES DICKENS'S *HARD TIMES* AND *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

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Abstract: This focuses on the narrative technique used by Charles Dickens in his work, specially the two novels titled *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*. Through a thorough analysis of characterization, the plots and the point of view techniques used in these two novels, it is revealed that they are critical aspects of the narrative process because they show the author's awareness of the issues concerning human condition and materialism of the society at that period. The author condemns materialism, class conflicts, injustices the society and rejection of morality through characterization or mimetic characters while proposing transformation of the characters mentioned above.

Dickens mainly uses the marriage plot and subplots which articulate the ideal marriage in the Victorian society but he manipulates the marriage plot to include deeper issues such as economy, gender issues and class conflicts. Alongside the marriage plot, Dickens also uses the objective narrator, the third-person omniscient narrator and the first person narrator to reveal the characters' motivations, feelings and thoughts.

This research study is based upon the principles of new historicism and psychology. New historicists do not analyse a text by only focussing on social, economic, cultural, historical and author's backgrounds but also on the form and the style of the text as advocated by new criticism. It is in relation to this view that this narrative strategies analysis is articulated. The Psychological perspective reveals Dickens's belief in the human perfectibility. The mimetic characters of *Hard Times* and *Great expectations* move psychologically evolves from self-alienation or moral regression towards self-actualization or moral progression.

Keywords: Dickens, narrative strategies, characterization, plot, point of view.

Résumé:

Cet article analyse l'utilisation des stratégies narratives par Charles Dickens dans *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*. L'étude de la caractérisation des personnages, de l'intrigue et des points de vue dans ces deux romans révèle leur rôle essentiel dans la narration, mettant en lumière la conscience de Dickens sur la nature humaine et le matérialisme dans la société victorienne. Il recourt aux personnages mimétiques, pour dénoncer le matérialisme, les conflits de classes, les injustices sociales et le rejet des valeurs spirituelles et morales. Il plaide également pour des réformes morales et politiques à travers la transformation psychologique de ces personnages mimétiques, qui évoluent de l'aliénation de soi ou de la régression morale vers l'épanouissement personnel ou la progression morale.

Dickens utilise principalement l'intrigue du mariage et les intrigues secondaires, qui articulent les valeurs culturelles liées au mariage idéal dans la société victorienne. Il manipule cependant l'intrigue du mariage pour aborder des problématiques plus profondes, telles que l'économie, les questions de genre et les conflits de classes. Parallèlement à l'intrigue du mariage, Dickens utilise également le narrateur objectif, le narrateur omniscient à la troisième personne et le narrateur à la première personne pour révéler les motivations, les sentiments et les pensées des personnages.

*Cette étude s'inscrit dans le cadre du nouvel historicisme et de la psychanalyse. Les tenants du nouvel historicisme n'analysent pas un texte uniquement en se concentrant sur son contexte social, économique, culturel, historique et celui de l'auteur, mais aussi sur sa forme et son style, comme le préconise la nouvelle critique. C'est dans cette perspective que s'articule cette analyse des stratégies narratives. L'approche psychanalytique révèle la croyance de Dickens en la perfection humaine. Les personnages mimétiques dans *Hard times* et *Great Expectations* évoluent psychologiquement de l'aliénation de soi ou de la régression morale à l'actualisation de soi ou à la progression morale, et de la conscience subjective à la conscience objective, qui se traduit par une prise de conscience de la supériorité des valeurs humaines sur les valeurs matérialistes.*

Mots-clés : *Dickens, stratégies narratives, caractérisation des personnages, intrigue, point de vue.*

Introduction

Narrative strategies can be defined as a various means employed by the writer in telling or making his story. The study of narrative strategies in a the text focusses on how a writer creates characters, organizes events, handles point of views and symbols to express his consciousness on his society. Simply put, narrative strategies are tools which allow the readers and the critics to be aware of the construction of the story and understand how meanings in the story are imparted. The reader's attitudes towards the text or his understanding and emotional responses to the text are influenced by the narrative strategies.

Writers employ mythic or mimetic characters or mythic characters in their narratives to develop the theme and conflicts within the stories. A While mythic character is a character that is not realistically depicted as he can do anything or extraordinary thing like Gulliver in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* but a mimetic character is the one which is realistically depicted like a real human being and can be analysed either from the perspective of Third Force Psychology or from the perspective of "the strategies of defense and the structure of the inner conflicts" which emphasize in terms of analysis motivations, behaviours and social interactions. Darcy in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is the illustration of a mimetic character.

In addition to characters, writers make use of plots and subplots in order to organize events in a story to arrange actions in a narrative. They relate separate actions or subplots to the narrative larger action called plot. It is worth specifying that Plot and characters are interrelated and cannot be separated from each other. writers use conflicts to move forward the plot in the narrative. Point of view, like conflict, is another technique of the plot and writers use point of view such as the third person narrator or the first person narrator to influence the way readers receive the text.

In *Hard Times* and *Great expectations* Dickens uses narrative strategies which include characterization, plot, and point of view to express his social consciousness. The aim of this study is to justify the claim that Dickens makes use of narrative techniques strategies in *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations* in order to condemn materialism and promote moral and political reforms in Victorian society.

Furthermore, this study is analyzed and assessed in the light of new historicism and psychoanalysis. New Historicists do not analyze a text by only focusing on social, economic, cultural, historical and author's backgrounds but also on the form and the style of the text like new criticism. Louis Montrose (1989) expounds this perspective by affirming that "New Historicism is a reciprocal concern with historicity of texts and textuality of history" (15-36). It is in relation to this view that this narrative strategies study in Dickens's *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations* is considered a textual analysis of Victorian society. The psychoanalytical perspective uses the Horneyan psychoanalytical theory which analyses characters with reference to psychological concepts which include Third Force Psychology, defense strategy and the structure of inner conflicts. Put it differently, The Horneyan psychoanalytical theory shows interest in the characters' nature, motivations, social interactions and conflicts in the narrative.

***Hard Times and Great Expectations* Characterization**

In *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations* Dickens expresses his understanding of humanity and society by creating mimetic characters, who go through psychological development that helps them realize themselves and perceive that humanistic values have prevailed over materialistic

values. This characterization study analyses characters in the light of their natures, motivations, social interactions and conflicts in the narrative of the two novels under study.

According to the the psychological evaluation in the novel *Hard Times*, the character is an arrogant-vindictive individual. It should be noted that Horney (1945), says that “the arrogant-vindictive person is motivated chiefly by a need for vindictive triumphs” (qtd in Paris: 1978: 49). Such a person is endowed with a competitive nature and has the propensity to display his superiority to people in his social interactions of which the purpose is to “exploit others, to outsmart them, to make them of use to himself” (Ibid). His life is devoid of emotional involvement and dependency. Friendships and marriage enable him to use the desirable qualities of others to strengthen his social position. In addition to these traits, the arrogant-vindictive person has an aggressive tendency which pushes him to seek safety through conquest or hostility. His goal in life is to “excel, to achieve success, prestige, or recognition” (ibid). He is not interested in love and he believes that helplessness and suffering are humiliating. As a result, he tries to develop in himself “the efficiency and resourcefulness” to address his anxiety. (Ibid).

The above-mentioned personality traits developed by Horney are actually valuable to analyze Gradgrind's inner structure. Gradgrind's philosophy of selfishness or utilitarianism has provided him with a sense of security and superiority over other people in Cocktown. In terms of a defense strategy, he developed hostility towards moral and spiritual values. He is proud of utilitarianism and imparted its values to his children authoritatively so that they could adhere to materialistic values and reject spiritual and moral values. He took advantage of his workers by giving them meagre salaries on the basis of utilitarianism. He expected to get some benefit from his friendship with Bounderby and the marriage of his daughter, Louisa, with Bounderby. He is also devoid of emotion as he showed no sorrow over the death of his wife. He suffered inner conflicts when he realized that his children, Tom and Louisa, became unhappy beings that failed to cope with life successfully as a result of their utilitarian education. The awareness of the drawbacks of his philosophy and its negative impacts on his children destroyed his pride and the sense of superiority he derived from his philosophy of utilitarianism. After feeling the pain caused by this self-discovery, he renewed his attitude to life and became a compliant person as he incorporated into his vision of life values such as sympathy and love.

Bounderby is also an arrogant-vindictive character but unlike Gradgrind, he does not undergo a psychological change. He developed an inferiority complex or low self-esteem in relation to his social background as he would often claim that he was from a humble family. To disguise his inferior feeling, he displays a domineering attitude in his social interactions. Like Gradgrind, Bounderby's system of values includes self-interest, arrogance and hypocrisy. His deficiency in love caused him to drive away his mother and exploit his workers without any scruple.

In *Great Expectations*, Pip's, Miss Havisham's and Estella's personalities can be analyzed from the view of Third Force Psychology. Third Force psychologists hold that healthy human development results from the process of self-actualization and unhealthy development results from the process of self-alienation. They argue that a man incarnates a third force, an "evolutionary constructive force", which makes him aware of his given potentialities. Human beings, according to the Third Force psychologists, have a "biologically inner nature" which is "good or neutral rather than bad". If this inner life "is permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful and happy" but if it is stifled we get sick. The inner life is fragile and easily supplanted by habit, cultural pressure and a wrong attitude to it (Paris 1978: 37).

Pip's encounter with Estella and Miss Havisham at Satis- House alienated him by making him dislike his poor social background. Talking about what an alienated person is, Fromm (1978) writes:

The alienated person [...] cannot be healthy. Since he experiences himself as a thing, an investment, to be manipulated [...], he is lacking in a sense of self. This lack of self creates deep anxiety. The anxiety engendered by confronting him with the abyss of nothingness is more terrifying than even the torture of hell (197).

Pip's contact with the values of the aristocracy, through Miss Havisham and Estella, developed in him a deep anxiety which destroyed his inner self. He became a neurotic, mentally sick person as he blamed himself all the time and was ashamed of being from the lower class. He felt uncomfortable in the company of Joe and Biddy, who had been kind to him in the past. He became pretentious as he no longer wanted to work with Joe in the forge for fear that Estella might see him in that dirty environment. He admitted to himself, "Now it was all coarse and common, and I would not have Miss Havisham and Estella see it in any account" (Dickens 1985: 134). He even repudiated Joe when he came to London to visit him out of love.

Magwitch's revelation of his identity to Pip as his benefactor brought about Pip's disillusionment. Magwitch told him that he was the source of his fortune. He was transported to Australia where he made a fortune in sheep-farming and he decided to make Pip acquire a gentleman's education (Dickens1985: 321). He told Pip that he was his second father and he was his son. He added that he had 'put away money, only for [Pip] to spend' (ibid). Pip thought that his wealth came from Miss Havisham who was from the upper class. When in possession of his wealth, he looked down upon the lower class people but the realization that his wealth emanated from a convict collapsed his dream of becoming a gentleman and marrying Estella, he felt ashamed for having deserted Joe and Biddy. As a result, he held a new objective perception of Magwitch as he says in the following passage:

My repugnance to him had all melted away, and in the hunted, wounded, shackled creature who held my hand in his, I only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor, and who had felt affectionately, gratefully, and generously, towards me with great constancy through a series of years. I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe (Dickens1988: 406).

The above-mentioned quotation illustrates Pip's psychological transformation from self-alienation or moral regression to self-actualization or moral progression as he does not see anything wrong by associating with a lower class man such as Magwitch. This shows that he has recovered his mental health, he is no longer alienated. Fromm (1991) defines the mentally healthy person in the following terms:

The mentally healthy person is the productive and unalienated person; The person who relates himself to the world lovingly, and who uses his reason to grasp reality objectively; who experiences himself as a unique individual entity, and at the same time feels one with his fellow man; [...] and accepts willingly the rational authority of conscience and reason; who is in the process of being born as long as he is alive, and considered the gift of life the most precious chance he has (268).

Magwitch's revelation of his identity to Pip led Pip to become objective in his assessment of reality as he understood that his true social position was even lower than that of a blacksmith as he had achieved the gentlemanly status from the money of a lower class criminal. He regretted that he had paid a high price to achieve nothing but the illusion of a gentlemanly status. He felt deeply sorry for mistreating Joe and Biddy who had loved him with sincerity. He

acquired the knowledge that money was not all that made a person a gentleman and money could not substitute for true friendship and love.

Like Pip, Miss Havisham and Estella changed psychologically from self-alienation to self-actualization. Miss Havisham was aggressive and her relationships with men was based on hostility but after a self-introspection she realized that her behaviour was unacceptable, which caused her to blame herself. This analysis reveals Dickens's belief in human perfectibility, a belief that humans always move toward self-actualization in spite of the cultural pressure.

From, the above study, which involves an analysis of character portrayal, the other area that requires discussion is the various plots in *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*.

Plot in *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*

In in *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*, Dickens relies heavily on the marriage plot to express the realities of the nineteenth century English society. He combines the marriage plot with other sub- plots to criticize issues such as gender roles, wealth and social class. In other words, he manipulates the romantic plot of love stories to claim social reforms. He patterned himself on the form of the previous romance novelists' marriage plots in which the heroine's main goal consists in finding an ideal husband and live happily ever after. The initial marriage plots also articulated the cultural values related to an ideal marriage in the Victorian society. Dickens not only deviates from the marriage plot expectations but he also turns upside down the expectation of the cultural values associated with marriage as he handles courtship to point out deeper issues which include economics, gender, and class issues.

In *Hard Times* Dickens uses marriage plots to claim social and cultural changes. The plots progress through contrast, parallel, causality and interdependence. The main plot turns around Mr Gradgrind whose marriage with Mrs Gradgrind deviates from the expectations of a romance fairy tale ending. His marriage results in unhappiness as the result of his adherence to the philosophy of utilitarianism. The subplot about Bounderby is also used by Dickens to show the collapse of the romance fairy tale as Louisa experienced unhappiness with Bounderby after their marriage, which resulted in a divorce. Dickens's intention in these marriage plots

articulates the idea that utilitarianism made Victorian society an insecure environment for children, women and workers.

The subplot about Bounderby is also used by Dickens to contrast the opulent lives of the upper class to the suffering of the lower class. This subplot around Bounderby and the workers is meant to criticize capitalism and industrialism as well as the middle and upper class inhuman attitude towards the poor. It shows that the industrial revolution had a harsh impact on English society particularly the working class. The plot which develops around Sissy Jupe, Rachel and the circus people show harmonious relationships or interdependence among lower class people, in contrast the plot which develops around Gradgrind and Bounderby articulates conflictual relationships. The plot contrast also enables Dickens to show the moral superiority of the lower class over the upper class.

In the closed plot structure, Dickens brings together the different plotlines to round off his narrative. He uses poetic justice to punish Bounderby and Gradgrind for their inhuman philosophy. Bounderby died and Gradgrind noticed the barrenness of his utilitarian education on his children. Tom became a thief and a criminal and Louisa failed to become a good wife. His best student, Bitzer, used a utilitarian argument against him in a critical moment when he needed his contribution. This punishment caused him to give up his factual approach to life. Louisa did not remarry any more but lived quietly, helping her fellow-men as the result of her reconversion to fancy. Rachel, on her part, kept on working and helped to support Stephen's wife. Tom Gradgrind became a reformed character and learned the value of humanity but he died of fever unfortunately. Sissy Jupe got married and gave birth to children with whom she lived happily. This closed plot structure reveals the meaning of Dickens's social consciousness which condemns the primacy of the materialistic culture over the humanistic one, which materialistic culture was destructive to Victorian society by generating a lack of sympathy, love and understanding among people. In other words, the closed plot articulates the meaning that there is another reality, fancy, which transcends facts consequently facts and fancy must go hand in hand so that the individual can lead a successful life.

In *Great Expectations* as in *Hard Times*, Dickens uses courtship and marriage plots to criticize Victorian society in order to bring about reforms. These plots are developed around the

marriage between Joe and Mrs Joe, the marriage between Pocket and Mrs Pocket, the marriage between Magwitch and Molly and the courtship between Miss Havisham and Compeyson. The marriage plot of Estella and Drummle deviates from the expectations of the traditional marriage plot, “they marry and live happily for ever,” as Drummle died and Estella remained a widow.

The plot which develops around Pip, Joe, Mrs. Joe and Biddy and Magwitch reveals Pip’s poor origin and social background. This plot shows the lower class people’s way of life which is regulated by spiritual and moral values, which moral values are articulated by Joe Gargery, a blacksmith and Biddy who influence Pip as mentors. This plot contrasts with the one which develops around Miss Havisham, Estella and Compeyson who are people from the middle and upper class, which people uphold wealth and class as the most important values. To create a conflict so that the plot can move, Dickens causes Pip to visit Satis House which is Miss Havisham’s estate. This interaction between Pip and Miss Havisham at Satis House led Pip to develop an inferiority complex, a feeling of disgust for his previous acquaintances and a desire to marry Estella.

The plotline about Pip’s journey in London is used by Dickens to contrast Pip’s dream of social ascension and reality. This plotline reveals Pip’s disillusionment and criticizes the middle and upper class way of life which is solely devoted to the quest of wealth and pleasure. This plotline also contrasts Pip’s life in the countryside and Pip’s life in London where he represses any idea of his poor origin into his subconscious mind. This repression is ephemeral as Joe came to visit him, which made him feel uncomfortable as Joe reminded him of his poor origin.

Dickens advances the above-mentioned plotline by contrasting true gentility with false gentility to reject the upper class definition of gentility and advocate the middle-class definition of gentility which was based on hard work and morality. Compeyson is contrasted with Magwitch, Estella with Biddy, Joe with Drummle, which illustrates that social advancement had nothing to do with work, morality and respectability in Victorian society. Drummle is respected as an upper class ruffian and Magwitch, who has a deep inner worth, is marginalized as a convict. Drummle’s life depends on inherited or unearned money while Joe works hard for little money. Drummle’s negative behaviour in the plot serves to allow Pip to notice the

inner worth of Joe and Magwitch, which finally induced him to throw away his dream about wealth and class for a new understanding that is humanistic and realistic.

The next plotline deals with the resolution or denouement of Pip's conflict with himself. It is based on the discovery of some truth, which discovery caused him to learn and grow. Talking about the plot of *Great Expectations*, Pickrel (1995) in his "Great Expectations" holds that "the plot is resolved through the discoveries of surprising relationships [...] the first of these is the discovery that Pip does not owe his great expectations to the fairy godmother, Miss Havisham but to the ogre Magwitch" (165).

Pip was proud to come into his inherited fortune which he believed was from his adoptive fairy godmother but was terrified when he discovered that his real benefactor was Magwitch who worked hard in an honest occupation to make money to establish him as a gentleman. This discovery made him understand that his dream of social ascension and gentility could not be translated into reality. His earlier shame of Magwitch turned into a tolerant and sympathetic attitude. He was free from snobbery and was regretful of his ungrateful attitude to Joe in London. In addition to Magwitch, Pip discovered that Estella was Magwitch's daughter, Mr Compeyson was Miss Havisham's fiancé and Molly was Estella's mother. Pip realised that he was also linked to all these people, which made him feel happy. This plotline reveals Dickens's belief in the interdependence of the different social classes or common humanity. Pip's renewed attitude caused him to go back to the countryside to meet Joe in the forge and reconcile with him and Biddy. This time he valued Joe at his true worth: God bless this gentle Christian man (463). Pickrel claims that "the healing touch at the end of the novel is not the reunion of Pip and Estella but Pip's return to the forge" (167).

The closed plot structure or closure shows Pip as a true gentleman who cares for other people; he is no longer selfish but selfless as he risked his life to save Miss Havisham who set fire to her dress. He reconciled with Joe, Biddy and Magwitch. He was no longer interested in outward manners. When Biddy encouraged him to marry Estella, he replied that his dream was over. Miss Havisham and Estella asked him for forgiveness and he gave it to them. This closure reveals the significance of Dickens's social consciousness which highlights the triumph of humanistic and socialist values over materialistic ones.

Point of View in *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*

In his narration, the author develops a narrator whose point of view is utilized in telling the story. The main points of view used by novelists include the third- person narrator and first-person narrator. The third-person narrator uses someone else to tell the story and does not participate in the action. The first-person narrator uses himself and is a major or minor participant in the action (Meyer 1993: 138).

In *Hard Times*, Dickens also uses the objective narrator and the third-person omniscient narrator to depict characters' motivations, feelings and thoughts. Through the objective narrator and the third-person narrators, he influences the readers' view of each character. The objective narrator reveals a negative view of the rising, greedy middle class through Bounderby who is depicted as being not only ugly but also the 'Bully of humility' which indicates arrogance that the narrator mocks strongly. The readers are expected to share the narrator's opinion and then condemn Bounderby. He is also described by the narrator as "a big, loud man" (Dickens 58), which indicates how wealthy and well-fed he is. In *Great Expectations*, the main point of view of the narration is the first-person narrator. The focalizer in the story is the young Pip who experiences the trouble and discoveries of childhood and the narrator guide the readers in the narrative and expect them to share Pip's disillusion and moral awareness.

Conclusion:

In all above aspect, this paper has confirmed the hypothesis that Dickens uses narrative strategies in *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations* to criticize materialism and advocate moral and political reforms in Victorian society. In this regard, it has been demonstrated how Dickens makes use of narrative technique to manifest his social awareness in *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*. Some of the narrative techniques used in this analysis include characterization, plot and point of view. Under characterization, it has been observed that *Gradgrind* in *Hard Times* is an arrogant and vindictive man with a tendency to agress. Realizing the failure of his materialistic philosophy, Granding changes his way of thinking to become a compliant individual. With regard to *Great Expectations*, Pip's character, it has been analyzed with respect to the Third Force Psychology. We showed how Pip's psychology evolves from self-alienation or moral regression towards self-actualization or moral progression. Pip's contact

with the values of the aristocracy develops in him a deep anxiety which destroys his previous identity and causes him to become a neurotic, mentally sick person. His contact with Magwitch and Joe Gargery bring about his moral progression and rejection of his previous subjective identity for a new objective identity.

From the Third Force psychology's view, we also showed that Miss Havisham and Estella are alienated characters who have achieved self-actualization or moral progression. We concluded that Dickens believed in human perfectibility, a belief that humans always move toward self-actualization in spite of the negative influence of society.

In discussing the plot issue in *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*, we pointed out that Dickens use the marriage plot and other subplots to express his awareness of the destructive effects of materialism, gender oppression and class conflicts in Victorian society. We also argued that the plot in the two above mentioned novels is based on the principle of causality and it evolves through the process of comparing and contrasting character's social conditions and decision making.

In *Hard Times* Dickens uses marriage plots to advocate social and cultural changes. The main plot turns around Gradgrind's marriage which results in unhappiness as the result of his adherence to the philosophy of utilitarianism. The subplot about Bounderby is also used by Dickens to show the collapse of the romance fairy tale as Louisa experienced unhappiness with Bounderby after their marriage, which resulted in a divorce. Dickens's intention in these marriage plots articulates the idea that utilitarianism made Victorian society an insecure environment for children, women and workers.

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class over the upper class. He strongly criticizes the middle and upper class but not the lower class because he trusts them.

The plotline about Pip's journey in London is used by Dickens to contrast Pip's dream of social ascension and reality. This plotline reveals Pip's disillusionment and criticizes the middle and upper class way of life which is solely devoted to the quest of wealth and pleasure. This plotline also contrasts Pip's life in the countryside and Pip's life in London where he represses any idea of his poor origin into his subconscious mind. This repression is ephemeral as Joe came to visit him, which made him feel uncomfortable as Joe reminded him of his poor origin.

In examining the perspectives employed, we note that Dickens employs the third-person omniscient narrator in order to express his consciousness about society. In *Hard Times*, he uses the objective narrator and the third-person omniscient narrator in expressing his disapproval of the growing, greedy middle class. But in *Great Expectations*, he changes the use of the third-person omniscient narrator to the first person narrator in order to express Pip's disillusionment and moral awareness.

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