"I want my eyes…”: Blindness and Perception of the World in Polish Translations of Charles Dickens's The Cricket on the Hearth

Aleksandra Budrewicz

Resumo
The article discusses Polish translations of Charles Dickens’s The Cricket on the Hearth in terms of the vocabulary related to the blind girl Bertha, one of The Cricket's characters. The translations are compared and juxtaposed; the way their authors managed to talk about Bertha’s disability is presented within the context of both political correctness and the practices of the Polish publishing houses in the twentieth century.

She heard the Cricket-voice more plainly soon, and was conscious, through her blindness, of the Presence hovering about her father. ‘Mary,’ said the Blind Girl, ‘tell me what my home is. What it truly is.’ ‘It is a poor place, Bertha; very poor and bare indeed. The house will scarcely keep out wind and rain another winter. ‘I have been blind, and now my eyes are open. I never knew him! To think I might have died, and never truly seen the father who has been so loving to me!’ There were no words for Caleb’s emotion. ‘There is not a gallant figure on this earth,’ exclaimed the Blind Girl, holding him in her embrace, ‘that I would love so dearly, and would cherish so devotedly, as this! The greyer, and more worn, the dearer, father! Never let them say I am blind again.'

Charles Dickens, the review of George Orwell. First published: March 11, 1940 by/in Inside the Whale and Other Essays, GB, London. On the other hand, Nadezhda Krupskaya, in her little book on Lenin, relates that towards the end of his life Lenin went to see a dramatized version of The Cricket on the Hearth, and found Dickens’s ‘middle-class sentimentality’ so intolerable that he walked out in the middle of a scene. Taking ‘middle-class’ to mean what Krupskaya might be expected to mean by it, this was probably a truer judgement than those of Chesterton and Jackson. The Cricket on the Hearth: A Fairy Tale of Home is a novella by Charles Dickens, published by Bradbury and Evans, and released 20 December 1845 with illustrations by Daniel Maclise, John Leech, Richard Doyle, Clarkson Stanfield and Edwin Henry Landseer. Dickens began writing the book around 17 October 1845 and finished it by 1 December. Like all of Dickens's Christmas books, it was published in book form, not as a serial.