

THE ENDERBY NOVELS BY ANTHONY BURGESS: THE ARTIST'S CONCEPT

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: Anthony Burgess (1917 – 1993) is an English writer, author of the intellectual novels and serious musical works. Being a talented and inventive person, he was very interested in art and its creative processes. Anthony Burgess's artistic creativity concept can be traced in many of his works about fictional and non-fictional writers

Methodology: The article uses the analysis of the fictional world created in the novels as a means of its consideration. The image of the artist is considered from the perspective of the writer's worldview reflected in the composition and the message of his works.

Results: The conducted analysis shows that in Anthony Burgess's opinion the artist is a craftsman whose artistic activity is closely connected with his sexual attraction. In addition, the writer is characterized by isolation as the main condition of the creative process and the total devotion to Art.

Applications of this study: This research can be used for the universities, teachers, and students.

Novelty/Originality of this study: Thus, the novelty of the paper consists in its first trial to present the artist's image thoroughly studied in the mentioned above novels. It is worthwhile mentioning that the research is conducted according to Anthony Burgess's creative concept.

Keywords: *English literature research, culture, Anthony Burgess, Enderby, analysis of artistic creativity concept, the image of an artist.*

INTRODUCTION

English literature has always been studied in Russia. There are some researchers at Kazan State University who have dedicated their scientific carrier to it and the oeuvre of Anthony Burgess in particular (Burgess, 2012). Thus, the Enderby novels have already been under consideration of Russian scientists and of foreign ones as well. However, the mentioned tetralogy has been analyzed either in the context of Burgess's creativity (the monographs by S. Coale, A. A. De Vitis, J. Stinson) (Cullinan, 2008; De Vitis, 1972) or due to the specific aspects of the main themes of these works. Thus, the novelty of the paper consists in its first trial to present the artist's image thoroughly studied in the mentioned above novels. It is worthwhile mentioning that the research is conducted according to Anthony Burgess's creative concept.

METHODS

The article uses the analysis of the fictional world created in the novels as a means of its consideration. The image of the artist is considered from the perspective of the writer's worldview reflected in the composition and the message of his works.

RESULTS

The tetralogy includes the following four books written at different times: *Inside Mr. Enderby*, (1964), *Enderby Outside*, (1968), *The Clockwork Testament or: Enderby's End*, (1974), *Enderby's Dark Lady or: No End to Enderby*, (1984). The protagonist of the novels is F. X. Enderby, a forty-year-old modern English poet, frightened by the outside world who leads a hermit's way of life. He spends most of his time in the bathroom, forced to use it for its intended purpose because of the dyspepsia caused by fatty food he cooks and eats regularly. As J. Stinson, a well-known researcher of Burgess' works, states in his monograph the name of Enderby sounds in English as "end" and "be" which fully corresponds to natural needs of every single man usually conducted in the bathroom (for Enderby it is defecation as a consequence of the digestion problems he suffers from and masturbation as a result of absence of an active and fulfilling sex life) (Gainutdinova Alsu, Khabibullina Liliya, Naumova Olga, 2018). Moreover, the restroom is the usual place of Enderby's work as a poet, the place where art is created and where the creative process is easily intertwined with physiological one.

It is obvious that Anthony Burgess contrasts Enderby's naturalistic image with the romantic one of the artists. To our mind, it can be explained by two basic reasons. Firstly, the early works by Burgess are characterized by the binary world view, shaped by his Catholic upbringing and fascination with the ideas of Manichaeism, based on the world understanding as a constant struggle of opposites (light/darkness, life/death, soul/flesh) (this concept is reflected even in the structure of the tetralogy as the first 2 novels about Enderby have the opposing titles: *Inside* and *Outside*). Secondly, according to the author's concept of creativity, the artist is not a romanticized hero, but a simple person. In addition, a writer is a good craftsman, a professional who earns his/her living by writing.

In the book *“Writers Revealed: Eight Contemporary Writers Talk about Faith, Religion and God”* Rosemary Hartill gives the following quotation by Anthony Burgess: “In those days it was a great pleasure to see that writing was just a job like any other – that, like the carpenter or like the shoe-maker, you had your own breakfast and got down to work. And I worked every day, as I still do, writing a thousand words before breakfast” (Hartill, 2008). Burgess represents William Shakespeare exactly the same craftsman in *Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare’s Love Life*.

Like the modern poet Enderby, the Elizabethan playwright is completely devoid of a romantic halo: the only goal which Shakespeare has is to become famous, create wealth and gain a coat of arms for his family. The difference between the two creators lies in the fact that Enderby is not characterized by such ambition, which is directly related to his creative infertility caused by his sexual weakness. According to Burgess, art is a sublimated libido. In an interview with J. Cullinan, the writer says: “I mean, you can’t be a genius and sexually impotent”, that is Anthony Burgess sees a certain similarity between the creative impulse and the sexual attraction since both of them are creative. For this reason, Shakespeare is depicted as a voluptuary whose heterosexual and homosexual relation along with his venereal disease (Shakespeare is infected with syphilis in *Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare’s Love Life*), are a sign of his hypersexuality, and therefore a fruitful creative process. In the biographical novel *Shakespeare (1970)* Anthony Burgess speaks on this subject, saying that “even the surname (*of the playwright*) just appeared suitable for this: it means aggression, vital force...”¹, while the name *Will* has an additional shade of meaning of desire”.

On the contrary, Enderby’s impotence can be explained by Anthony Burgess’s most negative attitude towards contemporary reality. From Burgess’s point of view the twentieth century is an age of permissiveness, relaxation, characterized by a passion for consumption, not creation. In connection with this perception of the surrounding reality, the external world in Burgess’s novels is portrayed absurd and ridiculous and the main themes and in the works about artists are plagiarism and travesty.

In the tetralogy Enderby’s image is opposed to the minor characters who are meant to be the antagonist of his: a poet Rawcliffe, known for one work in all anthologies; a pop singer and the idol of the young Yod Crewsy, performing songs with the lyrics from the stolen from Enderby poems; a publisher Sir George Goodby, who dreamed of the glory of the poet and forces one of his subordinate firms to publish his poems. These characters become characteristics of the modern era, developing in the novel the theme of transformation. Rawcliffe distorts the poem by Enderby “The Pet Beast”, naively told by him at their last meeting, and appropriates its authorship. While the protagonist of the novel has to wear a mask for the survival in the outside world: not having his own best suit, necessary for the solemn presentation of a literary award from the aforementioned publisher, borrows an outfit from his friend-cook, after which the poet is attributed to the friend’s love adventures. In the second novel, Enderby is forced to live in Tangier because of his escape from his native country due to ridiculous complicity in the “murder” of Yod Crewsy, where the poet continues to run Rawcliffe’s bar after his death and wears a robe of his former rival.

DISCUSSION

Along with it the Enderby novels mark another feature of the artist that is isolation. In addition to problems with digestion, Enderby has difficulty in communicating with the outside world: he interacts neither with women nor with his neighbors as he leaves his shelter only for essential domestic needs. Every try of his to escape from his shell ends up being an absurd comic situation (the scene where the innocuous poet calms down his enemy, the neighbor Jack, by putting on him the polished seat of his toilet) which later may be followed by major consequence such as Enderby’s marriage.

Despite the impotence of the main character in the Enderby novels, a female image appears. It is Vesta Bainbridge whom Enderby mistakes for his Muse, but who in fact becomes the embodiment of the evils of the modern society as she marries Enderby in the hope of the former glory, left her after the death of her first husband, a famous motorcycle racer. In addition, she is obsessed with turning the eccentric poet into the average citizen. At Vesta’s firm request Enderby now follows a diet, wears fancy costumes, contact lenses meeting all standards of the modern time and society, but losing himself: the poetic inspiration leaves Enderby and he stops writing.

Enderby comes up with the idea of the artist’s detachment from the outside world as an essential condition of the creator’s work during another dispute with his wife, after whom he concludes that the artist had better live alone: “There’s no obligation to accept society or women or religion or anything else, not for anyone there isn’t. And as for poetry, that’s a job for anarchists. Poetry’s made by rebels and exiles and outsiders, it’s made by people on their own, not by sheep baaing bravo to the Pope. Poets don’t need religion and they don’t need bloody little cocktail-party gossip either; it’s they who make language and make myths. Poets don’t need anybody expects themselves” (Khabibullina, 2004).

Indeed, Enderby openly denies any form of organized and structured communities, whether they are literary cocktail parties (the hero eventually refuses Sir George Goodby’s literary award), religious ceremonies (Enderby is a renegade Catholic) or government institutions (see the above citation about poets being anarchists). He strongly disagrees with Vesta’s words that the artist needs a place in the world and that his work should come into contact with the passage of life.

¹The author here refers to the consonance of the surname of the Elizabethan poet with the words 'shake' and 'spear'.

From Enderby's point of view, the poet and his/her works exist outside of time and space, because the poet serves Art, and therefore Eternal Beauty.

Being the closest to Beauty by definition, the artist has a special place in Anthony Burgess's creative concept. The writer believes that a clear division into opposites may be healed with the help of the ritual. In the monograph on Burgess's literary works Samuel Coale focuses on the writer's childhood love for Catholic rites, mass and explains it by his inner craving for the structure and form (Zinnatullina Zulfiya, Khabibullina Liliya, Popp Ivan, 2017). Burgess considers the language (a system of signs presentation) to be a tradition and a ritual as well that is why it is able to resolve the contradictions: "You can make rituals out of language. And it is in the rituals that opposites are reconciled, of course". Thus, the writer, whose work is directly related to the language, is endowed, according to Anthony Burgess, a special gift of reconciling the contradictions embodied in the artist's creation of the whole (unified) work of art². This talent enables the creator to reveal the meaning of life to the man through his initiation to the eternity. As it is seen from the Enderby novels, this skill distinguishes a creative person from the crowd, often turning him into a social outcast and kind of a monk-hermit: in the first novel of the tetralogy after a suicide attempt Enderby undergoes rehabilitation with Dr Wapenshaw's program of personal reorientation in which the poet turns into a bartender named Piggy Hogg, then in the second novel Hoggerby in despair roams the world in search of himself and his lyrical gift and in the end Enderby becomes a poet again.

CONCLUSIONS

The general sense of alienation, as well as the artist's dedication to Art, explains Enderby's strangeness and his inconsistency with the generally accepted norms. To a certain degree the closed space of the bathroom where Enderby works is a little place reserved to the creator in the society. Denying man-made forms of religion, expressed, for example, in the worship of the cult of the Pope (the scene of Enderby and Vesta Bainbridge's Roman journey), the poet worships his own God of Art. So, we can come to the conclusion that from Anthony Burgess's point of view the artist is both an artisan who skillfully performs his/her work and an Art servant filled with self – oblivion. However, in both cases the creator should be inspired by love for a human being or/and the creative process itself.

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²This theme is studied more thoroughly in the article "Aesthetics as an Aspect of Good in Enderby Novels by Anthony Burgess" (18).



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