



Analysing the Linguistic Aspects and the Image of the Hermitage in A. Burgess's Novels *Honey for the Bears* and *Any Old Iron*

Zulfiya Zinnatullina¹, Liliya Khabibullina², & Oleg Yurievich Polyakov³

¹Department of Literature, Kazan Federal University, Russian Federation; zin-zulya@mail.ru

²Department of Russian and Foreign Literature, Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, Kazan Federal University;
liliya.khabibullina@kpfu.ru

³Department of Russian and Foreign Literature and Teaching Methods, Vyatka State University; polyakoov@yandex.ru

Abstract

Exploring the Image of Russia represented in English Literature is a topical issue of Russian English Studies, which is a matter of research concerns of several scholars in this country. The paper is focused on the Image of the Hermitage in Anthony Burgess's novels and its linguistic features considered in the context of current scholastic approaches to the problem of reception and representation of the Image of Russia in English Literature and, generally, in West-European culture. The Image of St. Petersburg is a major component of the Image of Russia in English literature, while the Image of the Hermitage occupies a most significant position in the structure of the Image of St. Petersburg. Having analysed A. Burgess's *Honey for The Bears* and *Any Old Iron*, we conclude that the novels belong to the discourse of culture, a model of English literary representation of Russia, intended to evoke the reader's sympathy the country.

Keywords: English Literature; Image of the Hermitage; Burgess; *Honey for The Bears*; *Any Old Iron*.

1. Introduction

The Image of the Hermitage highlights the idea of the borrowed character of Russian culture and its secondary status concerning the West (Coker, 2020; Kozhukhar, 2019; Lépinay, 2019; L'vovna, Borisovna, & Jurevna, 2020). The Hermitage, represented in the novels, is only one of the components of the complicated system of images revealing A. Burgess's attitude towards the theme of Russia/Soviet Union touched upon in many of his works. However, it is exemplary of the specificity of his reception of Russia (A. Burgess, 1970; K. A. Burgess, 2002; Clarke, 2017; Lownie, 2015; Z. R. Zinnatullina & Khabibullina, 2015).

The semantics the Image of the Hermitage in English Literature is modified by the conceptions of Russia, existing in English cultural consciousness, in general, and of St. Petersburg, in particular. The scope of English writers' concern with portraying Russia is quite impressive, especially when compared with the scantiness of the "English text" of contemporary Russian Literature (Abazov & Guvajokov, 2017; Akgül et al., 2011; Čalić, Campbell, Dasiopoulou, & Kompatsiaris, 2005; Donina, 2018; Thompson & Reilly, 2017; Tuminskaya, 2020; Yanulevskaya et al., 2008).

1.1. Research Objective

In the novels of Anthony Burgess, the paper focuses on the image of the Hermitage and its linguistic features are taken into account in the sense of existing scholastic approaches to the issue of the reception and portrayal of the image of Russia in English literature and, in general, in Western European culture.

2. Methodology

Prof. A. Cross compiled an exhaustive bibliography of works about Russia published in England from the Eighteenth century to 1980 (Cross, 1985), which includes hundreds of literary pieces issued in the 20th century.



Nevertheless, in spite of a great number of English texts representing Russia, there exist many blank spaces in their imagological evaluation (McLean, 2011). Thomas MacLean mentions among the works concerned with the problem, alongside with those by A. Cross, Patrick Waddington's monograph *From The Russian Fugitive To The Ballad Of Bulgaria: Episodes In English Literary Attitudes To Russia From Wordsworth To Swinburne (Anglo-Russian Affinities)* (Waddington, 1994) and some others (Waddington, 1980). At present, numerous lacunae are filled in, in particular by Thomas MacLean's *The Other East and Nineteenth-Century British Literature: Imagining Poland and Russian Empire* (McLean, 2011) and by Olga Soboleva and Angus James Wrenn's *From Orientalism to Cultural Capital: The Myth of Russia in British Literature of the 1920s* (Soboleva & Wrenn, 2017).

In Russian literary studies, there is no lack of attention to the problem discussed, and a steadily growing number of imagological studies confirm the topicality of the issue (Drozdovskiy, 2017; Gurina, 2020; Images' linguistic & Linguoculture, 2018; Kozulin, Kurnykin, Malysheva, & Chernyshov, 2017; Krol, 2019; Panova & Mitchell, 2019; Zhindeeva, Karpushina, & Utkina, 2020). In particular, we note the works published in the late 1990s and in the first decades of the 21st century (Becker, 1991; Brewster, 2020; Groys, 1992; Major & Mitter, 2003; Pesonen, 1991).

Research into English-language critical works on Russian Soviet literature and the reception of Russian fiction in the 1980s-1990s English-language press reveals that there were two distinct hetero-images exchanged by scholars and critics alike of Russian Soviet literature. One of them (hetero-image 1) was based on a politicized stereotype according to which anti-Soviet and ethically and esthetically focused to the Western literary canon was inherently good Russian literature of the Soviet period. Indeed, Soviet culture and society were disrupting *Weltanschauung* and ideological positions at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, forcing artists to make a choice between returning to national roots or engaging with the early 20th-century modernist tradition, thereby attempting to enter contemporary Western literature (Hayward, 1964; Hoffmann, 1979; Marsh & Marsh, 2007; Mecacci, 1974; Oushakine, 2000; Safiullina, 2012; Safiullina & Platonov, 2012). Studying the hetero-image of Russia necessarily involves the contexts of its construction and modification, the changing attitudes of the West towards the Eastern Other (Levitsky, 1970; Paustovsky, 2003; Shapovalov, 2003). The ways of reception and representation of Russia in the West have been convincingly outlined in the work of the Norwegian political scientist Iver Neumann *Uses of the Other: The "East" in European Identity Formation* (Neumann, 1999).

I. Neumann states that since the beginning of 19 c. there was a "tendency to view Russia not only as a power grasping for hegemony but also as doing it as a barbarian at the gate" (Neumann, 1999). This Image was actualized in the period of the Cold War when Russia was seen as "an Asiatic/barbarian political power that had availed itself of the opportunity offered by the Second World War to intrude into Europe by military means" (Neumann, 1999).

In the period between the Socialist Revolution and the repressions of the 1930s (Khatipovna Kuzmina, Kamilovna Khadieva, Raisovna Galiullina, & Ramilevna Akhunchyanova, 2019; Rishatovna Gareyeva, Evgenyevich Martynov, & Aleksandrovna Martynova, 2019), a new model of representation of Russia emerged, inspired by the works of N. Berdyaev and connected with viewing the country as the "land of the future". Furthermore, finally, Russia came to be associated with "a learner of European economic and political practices", a lousy learner, indeed (Neumann, 1999).

Iver Neumann emphasizes the stability of perceiving Russia in the West from the point of view of its "anomalous character", but urges not to take it tragically (Forsberg, 2014; Hashamova, 2007; Malinova, 2014; Morozov, 2008; Römhild, n.d.; Snetkov, 2012; Tsygankov, 2003). We will see that the models of representation of Russia, outlined by I. Neumann, are reflected in the English novels considered below.

We reckon that Burgess's novels elaborate the Image of Russia within three discourses characteristic of representation of this country in English Literature in general (Bochkareva & Averkieva, 2014; Gainutdinova, 2018; Ekaterina V. Smyslova, 2018; Ekaterina Vladimirovna Smyslova & Khabibullina, 2016, 2019; Windle, 1995; Yüксеker, 2007).

First, "civilizational" discourse, in which Russia is viewed as an undeveloped, wild country that needs the ennobling influence of Europe.

Second, "political" discourse: connected with the Cold War situation, it represents Russia as a victim of the Communist regime (Conradi, 2017; English, 2000).

Finally, the discourse of "culture". It presupposes acknowledgment of Russia as a country with rich culture, especially Literature, which makes it to some degree akin to Europe. This discourse makes rapprochement of different worlds possible in some points.

The three discourses may interact in the process of imagological representation, which is convincingly described by Prof. V. Zemskov reflecting on the mechanisms of reception of the Image of Russia in the world: "<...> In this field the character of development, if one can speak about development here at all, is not evolutionary (although there are evolutionary moments in it), but it is a process of building-up, accumulation of varied features which form new layers without eliminating old ones. The latter do not disappear entirely and may be drawn from the depths of history in some circumstances which activate the recipient's memory about the Other, concerning both its "positive" and "negative" sides" (Zemskov, 2006). Actually, A. Burgess's novels confirm the justness of this model.

3. Results and Discussion

Antony Burgess transformed into the Image of the Hermitage for the first time in his novel *Honey for The Bears* (A. Burgess, 2013). The novel's epigraph, derived from Mandelstam's poem, forecasts its high cultural context, even though Burgess's work relies principally on adventure narration.

Initially, we should mention that the major component in the structure of the Image of the Hermitage is the dichotomy "the Winter Palace – the Hermitage", the semantic field of which is accomplished through the opposition "life-death" (Andreeva, 1999; Garmanov, n.d.; Haywood, 1979; Heres, 2006; McCaffray, 2018; Papaioannou, Papamarinopoulos, & Stefanopoulos, 1996; Vyskochkov & Shelaeva, 2018). At the very beginning of the novel, the protagonist talks with Dr Tiresias, a sexless "ancient creature", who says, "I knew St Petersburg when the Winter Palace was actually lived in" (A. Burgess, 2013). Then Alexey Prutkov, an illegal trader, comments on the Hermitage so: "What I want ... is to live. The Hermitage is dead" (A. Burgess, 2013). Therefore, a core opposition is proposed in the novel, "the Winter Palace – the Hermitage", in which the former component conducts the semantics of life, and the latter – of death.

Staying in the centre of the most "cultured" city of the Soviet Union, the protagonist of *Honey for The Bears* was persuaded not once by different people to visit the Hermitage. This visit actually took place, but by necessity, and the impressions were ambiguous. The author employs here a device common for portraying Russian realities in English Literature: the depicted seems to be neutral and even attractive, but the intensiveness of emotional or physical experience makes it sharply negative: "His feet and eyes ached, and his belly grumbled at the gilt and malachite and agate, the walls of silver velvet, the rosewood, ebony, palm and amaranth parquet, the frozen Arctic sea of marble veined and arteries like some living organism <...> Verst after verst after verst of Rembrandts, French Impressionists, Titians, a whole Prado of Spaniards – loot for the shabby dazed workers and their women <....> Paul's head and feet raged" (A. Burgess, 2013).

For English authors, the central exhibit of the Hermitage is the clock made by an English watchmaker, which was brought to Russia, not in working condition and restored by Ivan Kulibin. Burgess, mentioning it, indicates the distortion of facts in the reviews of Soviet guides whose words are rendered by one of the characters in a ridiculous way.

Elaborating the Image of the Hermitage as a symbol of culture in *Honey for The Bears*, Burgess highlights three essential ideas:

1. The Hermitage is the space of death, and it used to be the space of life when it was the Winter Palace.
2. The Hermitage is the main cultural symbol of the Soviet Union.
3. Cultural artifacts brought from the West are alien to Soviet people.

Any Old Iron, another novel by Burgess concerned with the representation of Russia, develops historic-political issues that are among the most stable themes of his oeuvre. The novel was published in 1987, which suggests that it was the author's response to the changed geopolitical realities (Z. Zinnatullina & Khabibullina, 2018). True, the plot almost allegorically reflects the situation in the world in the late 1980s. Two brothers, descendants of a Russian woman and a Welsh man, find in the Hermitage and then steal Excalibur, thus, obviously, preventing the Soviet Union from starting the Third World War. Then they destroy Excalibur, more often called Caledwich in the novel, or the sword of King Arthur, or the sword of Mars which belonged to Attila, then to Aetius, and later to the ruler of Britons Ambrose Aurelian.



Burgess also focuses on an important theme, connected with the new flashpoints of conflicts between Israel and Palestine. The emergence of this conflict zone is in some way connected in the novel with Russia: the author draws our attention to the fact that the first President of Israel, Chaim Weizmann (in the novel he is a mentor of the narrator's father), came from Grodno Province. The narrator, a Jew, provides an illusion of impartiality (in this point, his role is similar to that of Serenus Zeitblom of Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*), but, although his basic function is to sustain plot development, it is through this character that Burgess introduces the theme of terrorism.

The major mouthpiece of the novel's ideology is Reginald Jones, who is of Russian-Welsh origin. The central characters of the novel, representatives of the Jones family who are of mixed blood, are instead bearers of British national consciousness. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator notes: "We were, I suppose well-set-up young Englishmen of the period, though, neither of us English, whatever the term means, I think it ought to mean having English as a first language" (A. Burgess, 1989). The knowledge of other languages (Russian, Welsh) contributes to developing tolerance in the characters and shaping a broader approach to life.

Stereotypes of colonialist or civilization consciousness (representing Russia as a barbaric country) are manifested in *Any Old Iron* in general utterances concerning the Russian theme, and, although there are several narrators realizing imagological evaluation in the novel, it is clear that the author's point of view is expressed in their most axiomatic remarks about Russia seen by A. Burgess as conventional judgments.

Russia gets some kind of "justification" on the "cultural" level of the novel formed, particularly, by reminiscences from Russian Literature. Signs of culture in general, references to artifacts, authors of literary and musical pieces appear almost on every page of the novel, while the signs of Russian classical culture are extremely scarce, they represent a standard set known to a foreigner: "Your love for me was something in Pushkin or Lermontov. It was heroic" (A. Burgess, 1989), "Let us read Pushkin together, my dear. So Byronic, so civilized" (A. Burgess, 1989). The 20th-century Russian Literature is mentioned but once: there is a quotation in the text from A. Solzhenitsyn's poem "Prussian Nights" which is rendered by Europeans negatively and contributes to perceiving Russians as "barbaric people": "He says he's got about sixty men with dark skins and blown about by the wind and they're very cheerful but bad buggers really and they've got to get onto trucks and move into Europe and smash everything" (A. Burgess, 1989). The poem is quoted by a Russian soldier during World War II, which is an odd anachronism to which a Russian reader may be especially sensitive (Solzhenitsyn's poem was written in 1974). Many political ideas of the novel seem to be inspired by Solzhenitsyn's views; at least, Burgess's comments on the Soviet regime are in concord with those of Solzhenitsyn.

As we have already noted, the discourse of "culture" helps to valorize the Image of Russia partially. Curious enough, the author's positive attitude to Russian culture is displayed only on the example of the Hermitage, the most European of all Russian cities: "The Leningraders were atrociously dressed, but they seemed eager, harmless, even amiable" (A. Burgess, 1989). (here, the author depicts a concert premiere of an English orchestra in Leningrad).

The Image of the Hermitage in the novel, though rather laconic, is very significant. In that part of the novel *Any Old Iron* where the February Revolution of 1917 is described, the topography of Petersburg is presented widely: the author mentions the Fontanka river, Smolny Convent, Kazan Street, Nevsky Avenue, Anichkov Palace, and the Duma, but neither the Hermitage nor the Winter Palace is mentioned. In the "modern" part of the novel (the end of Stalin's epoch) the Image of the Hermitage is also outlined briefly. The narrator focuses on its impressive spatial characteristics again ("You have to tramp three or four versts to get the exhibition of war loot" (A. Burgess, 1989)); among the exhibits are mentioned, "the Faberge eggs and the Impressionists" и "war loot", which contains «a sword with A on it» (A. Burgess, 1989). Thus, we can conclude that, although the theft of the sword from the Hermitage is the central plot event, the Image of the museum is portrayed extremely laconically, and its semantics may be restored from the context by focusing, above all, on the meaning of the Image of the sword: "The Russians were thieves. They have got a lot of German booties, and they can call it legitimate reparations, but this is different. The Benedictines held it in trust for the British people, and then they forgot about it. Now I hold it in trust for the same people, conscious of what it is" (A. Burgess, 1989). Here, the semantics of the Hermitage as a depository of "borrowed" treasures are completed. The mission of the protagonist is to bring one of them to its native place, Wales, and so to end the Iron Age, the age of wars and revolutions, the depiction of which organizes the novel's plot. The participation of Russia and Germany in the tragic events of the 20 c. is motivated by the "travels" of Excalibur, so its removal from the Hermitage looks not like theft, but like a heroic deed aimed at saving the world (Bruce, 1998; Bryden, 2016; Clark, 2016; Saunders, 2009). The semantics of death is not developed here, but



the fact that keeping the sword in the Hermitage makes it impossible to finish the Iron Age presupposes its presence (Brosseder, 2015; Stacey, 2004; Summerer, 2008).

4. Conclusion

Overall, the study is dedicated to the Image of the Hermitage in Anthony Burgess's novels reflected in the context of contemporary educational approaches to the issue of reception and representation of the idea of Russia in English Literature and, on the whole, in West-European culture.

Both examined novels are dedicated to the Russian theme; both stress the importance of the Hermitage as Russia's "place of power", where the world conflicts are resolved and where treasures are held, which were brought from Europe and which must be restituted so as to stop global tensions. This idea is entirely elaborated in the novels' plot structures, narrative strategies, symbols, and imagological devices.

The Image of the Hermitage in A. Burgess's novels, as it was shown, is, on the one hand, integrated into the discourse of culture that is aimed to "justify" Russia to the Western reader and to evoke sympathy for the country. On the other hand, this central "cultural" Image demonstrates that culture is not organic to Russia, so it needs to be borrowed from the West. The opposition of pre-revolutionary Russia and the USSR reveals the author's sympathy for the Russian pre-Soviet past, which is contrasted to the semantics of death connected to a considerable extent with the Image of the Hermitage of the late 20th century.

4.1. Contribution

The authors conclude that the novels belong to the discourse of culture, a model of English literary representation of Russia, after examining Burgess's *Honey for The Bears* and *Any Old Iron*, intended to invoke the country's compassion for the reader.

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