

АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ВОПРОСЫ СОВРЕМЕННОГО ЛИТЕРАТУРОВЕДЕНИЯ

H. V. HRYTSENKO

Ukraine, Chernihiv, T.H. Shevchenko National University “Chernihiv
Colehium”

ON THEMATIC PARADIGM OF IRIS MURDOCH’S “SANDCASTLE”

Being one of the most versatile and productive novelists of the second half of the 20th century, Iris Murdoch has always attracted the attention of scholars and literary critics. Her fiction belongs to the classical heritage of the English and world literature. Her novels, being controversial themselves, caused the waves of critical reception of the same kind. The world-wide comprehension of her creative activity has touched upon the numerous aspects of her prose, from the manifestation of postmodernism to the variety of psychological and philosophical issues and characters. Although having been the subject of a lot of debate and the focus of numerous studies, the literary works of Iris Murdoch, which present the highest level of intertextuality and multilayerism, are still revealing more and more meanings depending on the changing contexts of contemporary reality.

The analysis of numerous critical sources exploring the thematic paradigm of I. Murdoch’s novels and the concept of multiple interpretation has inspired us to make some attempts to plunge deeper below the surface of her prose searching for implicit information.

The variety of themes and problems touched upon in Murdoch’s works is obviously wide, including religious and philosophical motifs, as well as moral sexual and psychological ones. Being a philosopher, I. Murdoch couldn’t keep from penetrating all her fiction with philosophical issues. Although she claimed to keep them separate from her novels. “I mention philosophy sometimes in the novels because I happen to know about it, just as another writer might talk about coal mining. I don’t want philosophy as such, to intrude into the novel world at all and I think it doesn’t” [1, p. 58]. However, it is evident that her literary universe reflects the complicated evolution of her philosophical ideas from existentialism to neoplatonism with its unity of beauty, truth and good.

The major Sartre’s concepts of “freedom”, “choice” and “love” occupy the key position in all Murdoch’s fiction. Existential problems of the absurdity of life and illusiveness of love are a constant motif running through all her works. In one of her early novels, “The Sandcastle”, the author keeps exploring the disharmonious consciousness of her contemporary, Bill Mor. Taken out of his comfortable, full of routine and everyday regulations life and put into a whirl of strong emotions and

events, which might lead to serious uncommon decisions, Mor is torn in two between his wife Nan and his beloved woman, young painter Rain Carter. We survive with him the most crucial moments of his life when he struggles in the attempt to make the most serious choice between passion and duty.

As a skillful psychologist and the expert in ethic matters, I. Murdoch evolves another typical of her fiction theme, the moral one, within the aesthetic frame of "The Sandcastle". She portrays the triangular relationships with the conflict "between two goods" [2, p. 213]. The ambiguity of Mor's situation, when a choice, whatever it is, will always be wrong, as it will cause unhappiness and regret, reveals a painful contradiction between the individual's desire for freedom (existential motif) and Kantian concept of moral duty. Both protagonists (Mor and Carter), facing the pressures of the hostile external reality and suffering from them, make their decisions not in the favour of love. Their freedom turns out to be just an illusion. Both central characters seem to be victims of the circumstances which impose the only possible choice. On the surface such ending may appear rather moral, as Mor's family becomes reunited and he manages to avoid divorce. Such a decision will satisfy his wife Nan and keep children from being abandoned by their father.

But the immorality may be seen in the predominance of false values, as Mor, being true to the society and family, loses his chance of happiness. Refusing the life according to true feelings, he is doomed to leading a hypocritical existence. The reader's hope for Mor's decision having positive influence on his children also turns out to be wrong, for their psychological wounds are unlikely to be healed. Besides, the way the protagonist treats his kids in the course of narration brings back the archetypical peculiarity of the author's style noted by Lisa M. Fiander. "Murdoch's witty, urbane civil servants are more concerned with questions of good and evil than they are with their own children; Murdoch never presents a convincing relationship between parent and child" [3, p. 8].

In contrast to Murdoch's later novels, where she prefers to hide her attitude to the characters and gives her audience the chance to assess, in her "Sandcastle" author's approval or disapproval can be easily felt by the readers. Narrator's moral sympathy is strongly perceived in her early novel, where, as strange as it may seem, a female writer shows her positive attitude to a male character who has committed adultery. She outlines Mor as open to others, sympathetic and receptive, vulnerable and apprehensive at times. However, in the final part of the book we can decode the author's regret or even criticism of the decision her protagonist has made. In general, male adultery appears to be one of the central themes of I. Murdoch's fiction. "The Sandcastle" served as a starting point where she proceeded to exploring adulterous relationships. Further, in "an Unofficial Rose", "The Sacred and Profane Love Machine", "The Message to the Planet" and some others she develops this motif, focuses on its various controversial dimensions, tries to highlight it from different, sometimes opposite angles.

It is not occasional that one of the central characters in this novel, Rain Carter, is an artist. The theme of art, in particular painting, belongs to the recurring topics in I. Murdoch's fiction. As the foundations of her creative method are deeply grounded in philosophic perception of the world, Kantian views on love, freedom and art are reconsidered in "The Sandcastle" and the predominance of moral duty in the artist's pursuit of creating true art has been vividly reflected in the novel. In the existential struggle between personal sinful desires and noble artistic aspirations Rain survives the most painful moments of her life. Trying to solve her inner conflict she sacrifices her love to make her art genuine.

In the way I. Murdoch depicts this character one can easily recognize such cornerstone of her style as recurring manner of following gothic aesthetic principles. According to traditions of gothic novels the narrator portrays the female protagonist as a romantic, virtuous, suffering lady, who turns out rewarded in the end. Rain's award is the portrait she has created, which might appear a future masterpiece.

Developing gothic trends, the author endues some characters of "The Sandcastle" with the negative features of "evil enchanter" (Mor's wife Nan, the teacher of painting Bledyard, and former headmaster Demoyte). Some other universal themes, incorporated from the myths, legends, fairy tales and biblical stories are interwoven with the plots in I. Murdoch's novels. This archetypical paradigm includes the themes of dangerous and unhappy romances, opposition between the individual and society, the good and the evil.

In conclusion, it should be stated that the thematic frame of "The Sandcastle" is rather eclectic. It reflects the universal experience of past generations which I. Murdoch has aesthetically transformed and embodied into the synthetic structure of her novel. The leading motifs in the microcosm she created are philosophical, moral and existential, that is quite natural as her creative manner has derived from the profound knowledge of philosophy, literature and culture.

Е. В. ГУЛЕВИЧ

Беларусь, Гродно, Гродненский государственный университет
имени Я. Купалы

ДОН КИХОТ В ВОСПРИЯТИИ В. НАБОКОВА: ОТРИЦАЯ ТРАДИЦИЮ

Интерес к роману Сервантеса «Дон Кихот» актуален и ныне. Известно, что по количеству переизданий «Дон Кихот» уверенно занимает второе место, уступая лишь Библии.

Рецепция образа Дон-Кихота менялась в разные эпохи. Однако, после знакового эссе И. С. Тургенева «Гамлет и Дон Кихот» (1860) для отече-