

## THE IMAGE OF THE ARTIST IN THE NOVEL «THE BLACK PRINCE»

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*The article dwells on the image of the artist in the novel «The Black Prince» (1973) written by Iris Murdoch. The author of the article pays special attention to comparison of the two artist types in the novel represented by Bradley Pearson and Arnold Baffin.*

Iris Murdoch (1919–1999) is the author of 26 novels, several plays, poems, philosophical works. She is one of the most famous writers of XX century. Murdoch was six times in the Booker's list, but she won the prize only once for the novel «The Sea, the Sea» (1978). *The Times* ranked Murdoch twelfth on the list «The 50 greatest British writers since 1945».

The novel «The Black Prince» is one of the most prominent works by I. Murdoch. Many researchers of the writer «without realizing it, follow in the footsteps of the characters of «The Black Prince», those who anyway interpret the main character's life» [1, p. 9]. Thus, the book «100 Writers of Great Britain» mentions that «the main task of the novelist writer is in the creation of active characters. All her characters are complex, psychologically convincing, but they, as a rule, work within a strictly specified plot scheme, which is predetermined by the author's philosophical views. This transforms them from social and psychological types into philosophical. In the interpretation of reality, human beings, and relationships between people, the writer proceeds mainly from two philosophical systems – existentialism and neoplatonism, and the main themes of her works are freedom, responsibility, and love. Her novels are marked by subtle observation and stylistic shine» [2, p. 116–117].

The image of the artist and art plays a huge role in I. Murdoch's novel «The Black Prince». It should be mentioned that the artist is «a creative person, who has a talent and the ability to create piece of art. One of the most important instrument of the writer is spirit» [3, p. 258]. The artist usually exists both in the spiritual world and in the social world simultaneously, and «spirituality of the person doesn't want to adapt to non-legal and social requirements» [3, p. 258].

The main character of the novel «The Black Prince» is Bradley Pearson. He is a writer, who published only three books. His image is compared with the image of his friend, Arnold Baffin, who is more prolific in writing. The main character is called «an artist», but his friend is called «a writer»: «I don't think of myself as a writer, not like that. I know you do. You're all «writer». I don't see myself in that way. I think of myself as an artist, that is as a dedicated person. And of course it's a life drama» [4, p. 32]. But Bradley thinks that Arnold «really just a talented journalist» [4, p. 32]. For him, as for an artist, «life was simply one big gorgeous metaphor» [4, p. 102]. Arnold calls himself «a second-rate» writer [4, p. 92]. He expresses the opinion that a true artist is supposed to know all his weaknesses, but never show them in public: «In fact most artists understand their own weaknesses far better than the critics do. Only naturally there is no place for the public parade of this knowledge» [4, p. 94]. Arnold believes, that a writer should keep working hard on his works. If it is more, the result will be better: «If one has a thing at all one must do it and keep on and on and on trying to do it better. <...>. I do not believe that I would improve if I wrote less. The only result of that would be that there would be less of whatever there is» [4, p. 94]. Thus, for Arnold the art is more about the material than about the truth and goodness.

Bradley Pearson is one of those who can be called «the minor poets of their little world, who have only one voice and can sing only one song» [4, p. 197]. But at the same time he is «an artist and because, before our very eyes, he is ingeniously (and often disingenuously) reflecting about his art» [4, p. 205]. In comparison with Arnold Bradley works towards the truth and the goodness: «all art is the struggle to be, in a particular sort of way, virtuous» [4, p. 103]. Bradley supposes that a true artist should have an ability to destroy and wait easily. Arnold Baffin is a writer with a vivid imagination, but the main character can be considered to be prolific.

Another important theme of the novel «The Black Prince» is the theme of love. A. Saruhanyan thinks that love and art are equal in I. Murdoch's novel: «Art and love get equal primarily because they are equally creating their objects, and if they are true, they let them live their own lives. This aesthetic principle, always important for Murdoch, in the «Black Prince» is done more consistently and completely than before» [5, p. 312]. What really could help Bradley to write a new book and become a real artist was his love for Julian. The contradiction can be found in the main character. On the one hand, Bradley believes that neither life nor art should cross, but on the

other hand, he admits the idea that both love and art can be considered to be as a whole: «Love can soon dim the dream of art and make it seem secondary <...>» [4, p. 112]; «The deep causes of the universe, the stars, the distant galaxies, the ultimate particles of matter, had fashioned these two things, my love and my art, as aspects of what was ultimately one and the same. They were, I knew, from the same source. It was under the same orders and recognizing the same authority that I now stood, a man renewed» [4, p. 112]. The Bradley's sweetheart, Julian, expresses the opinion that true art should be cold and never distracted. The main character can be called a true artist, because he tries to contravene generally accepted norms in love and also in art (unlike Arnold Baffin, who wants to please his readers).

We can connect Bradley Pearson with the black Eros. According to ancient Greek mythology, Eros is the God of love, Aphrodite's companion. His image is usually identified with something eternal as a certain world power, or also with strong love feelings [6]. But Julian Baffin believes that Eros isn't a clue to art, it is «the deep springs of human love are not the springs of art» [4, p. 210]. The black Eros is sufferings, which are Bradley's fears and love at the same time. But only before the death Bradley realized that it's just a shadow of «a greater and more terrible godhead» [4, p. 202]. What is more, the image of Bradley Pearson is connected with the theme of Hamlet, which «symbolizes the unity of love and art, passion and tragedy» [7, p. 444]. N. Karaev guesses that the title of the novel «The Black Prince» cannot be related with Hamlet, in spite of the fact that I. Murdoch pushes the readers to draw direct parallels with this play by Shakespeare [1, p. 24].

We can say that two types of artists are compared in «The Black Prince» by I. Murdoch. Arnold Baffin is the expression of the material beginning of the art and an opportunity to get money for his work. He puts imagination in the first place. In contrast to him, Bradley Pearson seeks the virtue and the truth in the art. A person who can wait for a better moment to write a work is a productive artist for Bradley. In the main character we may find contradictions. On the one hand, Bradley believes that neither life nor art should cross, but on the other hand, he admits the idea that both love and art can be considered as a whole. Also Bradley Pearson is connected not only with the theme of Hamlet (as the unity of love and art), but also with the black Eros, which is the symbol of crazy and noble love.

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