

# ILLUSORY WORLDS IN ANTHONY BURGESS' NOVELS

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## Abstract

As a means to interpret the illusory worlds in Anthony Burgess' novels *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Wanting Seed* and *1985* the Fictional semantics is chosen as one of the contemporary approaches to literature. In the following part the three of Burgess' novels are analyzed from the perspective of fictional semantics. Burgess has been misunderstood as being adoring violence, but actually he just hold a mirror up to society. In his novels *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Wanting Seed* and *1985*, Burgess uses the narrative and its fictional world as a deliberate construct in order to picture what postmodern society, according to him, actually is about. His main worries are concerned about the condition of individuality and the individual within society

## Keywords

postmodern society, illusory worlds, Augustinian phases

This is a practical analysis of a literary text based on a conception of possible worlds applied to fiction, so-called illusory worlds or fictional worlds, described in *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible worlds* by literary theorist Lubomír Doležel and *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* by Ruth Ronen. According to the authors, unlike mimetic doctrine of classic narratology, the concept of fictional worlds is supposed to sufficiently implicate and interpret postmodern literature. In Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* the protagonist and the narrator, young delinquent Alex, is often misunderstood as Burgess' voice adoring violence. The objects of this intensional structure analysis are similarities and analogies of the texture of the novels *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Wanting Seed* and *1985*. Consequently to describe the illusory world of the novelist self and then separately the thought content, themes and motifs.

## Characters

All of the three Burgess' novels contain illusory worlds with more than one person; therefore the plots are based on the interaction of characters functioning as individualities or a group. The main source of the story is an interaction of the characters performing as individuals or groups. Moreover, these characters must function as agents; they must be actively involved and take part in the interaction to make an action and plot. Illusory characters could be divided into protagonists and secondary characters. Considering protagonists of *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Wanting Seed* and *1985*, they seem to be a good example and a clear result of Burgess' literary intentions. Secondary characters both Alex from *A Clockwork Orange* and Bev Jones from

1985 are strong individualities. The protagonists may have a group of peers as in *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex's so-called "droogs", who they later turn traitors. In 1985 Bev's wife dies at the very beginning and daughter is mentally retarded. Therefore, the protagonist becomes solitary. While in *The Wanting Seed*, which has an explanatory function as an outline of the cyclic theory of Pelagian and Augustinian phases, there are two protagonists, a couple, on which Burgess could demonstrate relationship and family consequences of a particular cyclic phase.

Secondary characters are those, with whom protagonists interact and communicate in order to invoke action and evolve the plot. *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Wanting Seed* have the framing symmetric pattern, because the protagonists and secondary characters begin and end the narrative in the same structural set. 1985 is not framed by a character compositional pattern but by a death. The difference of 1985's character compositional pattern might indicate an alteration in Burgess conception of the cyclic development and allow a spiral as another possible shape of progression, which he admits as early as in *The Wanting Seed*. What connects *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Wanting Seed* is an epiphanic character of a religious man, whose function is to present the real status quo and to explicitly explain the affirmation of individuality to a reader. In all of the three Burgess books there is also a set of police officers, officers and public figures that are always described with a strong and clear antipathy, which also leads to Burgess' romantic defence of individuality and opposition to majority, masses and government.

What is typical for all Burgess characters is a certain level of psychological flatness, which could be seen as an author's failure or, by contrast, an intention to direct attention from character inner life to the explanation of outer matters, such as the state of current society. What is the main interaction of Burgess novels is a conflict of a protagonist/protagonists and a strict social organization as well as political system. There is always a strong contrast between an individual and anonymous social group. In his novels, Burgess designs illusory worlds with powerful institutions, with which the individual needs to struggle in order to fulfill their purpose.

The social basis for Burgess novels is always south-east of England in 1970s and 1980s. *The Wanting Seed* and 1985 are set in London, in *A Clockwork Orange* the placement is not explicitly mentioned but it could be London too. Social constructs of the novels *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Wanting Seed* and 1985 seem to be an essential part of comprehending Burgess' illusory worlds, because the society provides the necessary environment for a protagonist's journey through the novel. The main aim of the constructs of society in the novels is to picture the particular phases of the cyclic theory, their features and their sources in the society as well as the impact upon it.

*A Clockwork Orange* represents a society at the beginning of the Augustinian phase. The country is paralysed by the aggressiveness of the youth as well as a high number of brutal attacks upon its citizens. Besides the struggle of the individual, the novel portrays the never ending generation conflict between the youth and the old. The young generation is aimless, aggressive and takes drugs; still it wins a reader's favour,

because the old, despite their maturity, do not seem to be fully taking advantage of their being. In *The Wanting Seed* Burgess describes a Western society in its exaggerated form. At the beginning there is a liberal, multinational society governed by Pelagians that faces over-population with officially pronounced homosexuality and a birth ration. By contrast, the final part shows society in the third phase of strict and pessimistic Augustinians maintaining population stability by reinforcing fertility on one side and a pseudo-war on the other. While in *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Wanting Seed* the division of the cyclic phases is quite clear, in 1985 identification seems to be complicated, because the 1985's illusory society carries features of both stadia at the same time.

In all of the three novels roles within the society are strongly determined. There is an individual within the anonymous crowd, against which they have to struggle, but there is also an authoritative group of either political party or unions that holds power in firm hands. The social system is strongly hierarchical and determined. Finally, as we can see, societies of *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Wanting Seed* and 1985 are based on the same system of ideology, (non)religion and hierarchy; they are interconnected with the socio-theological concept of the cyclic development and altogether seem to complement different variables, phases and periods of the same illusory world.

A plot is one of the elements of a narrative structure. Despite this obviousness, its position within the hierarchy of a narrative organization is highly unclear. The importance of a plot within the narrative varies according to different perspectives of narratology. To a certain extent, the narrative semantics of illusory worlds relate to the latter concept, because it disclaims the plot as a separable unit and rather approves of it as a global organizing element, which is, moreover, highly connected with the psychology of its agents.

What is typical for *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Wanting Seed* and 1985 is the fact that intentionality and deliberateness of characters is strongly limited by a strict social and political organization interfering in its citizens' private lives. In the first part of *A Clockwork Orange*, the protagonist Alex is the agent of action, deliberately disparaging every notion of order and authority. In Burgess novels the power of governing system seems to have increasing tendency. While in *A Clockwork Orange* the intentionality and power are taken from the protagonist in the middle of the narrative and only because of his violent behaviour, hence partially reasonably, in *The Wanting Seed* and 1985 intentionality and independency are taken from the protagonists at the very beginning of the narrative. Therefore, protagonists are predominantly in the position of patients struggling against the government or powerful unions. The introductory accident is followed by a number of accidents that, in a classic Aristotelian manner, leads to a happy-ending in *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Wanting Seed*. *A Clockwork Orange*, in which Alex finally matures and the political system continues unchanged but the love of protagonists still have an ability to help them to overwhelm its destructiveness, and to catastrophe in 1985, a cacotopia, in which an individualist do not have any chance to survive. The narratives are based on conflicts, which represent the destroying powerfulness of the governing system that oppress an individual. Characters, their inner life, interaction, society, institutions, social system etc. are the

fundamentals for constituting illusory worlds. The illusory worlds of *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Wanting Seed* and *1985* are in accordance with physical and logical patterns of the actual world. Characters are possible counterparts of actual people and their abilities are illusory projections of actual people's abilities. The illusory world of Burgess' novels is set as a narrative of the "fall," which is based on the protagonist's violation of norms followed by a punishment. Burgess' protagonists disclaim official values of the society and government and create their own subjective axiology. One of the main themes of these three novels is a fundamental question dealing with the inequality of the individual's and majority's axiology. Which one is more important or should they be at least equal? The characters, environment, society, institutions etc. as they have just been described are so-called illusory extensional entities; they form illusory worlds that are not related to the text of the narrative itself. However, the author encodes and the reader decodes the narrative through the original texture.

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