

## **Tereza Kiszová, *Music in Anthony Burgess' Fiction***

BA thesis

Supervisor's report

The first thing to appreciate about this thesis is Miss Kiszová's choice of topic: Anthony Burgess's work is not included in the BA curriculum and the question of music in literature is a complex one, necessitating deeper knowledge of musical forms as well as musical terminology. Miss Kiszová seems to be quite competent in this respect and her interpretations felicitously manage to avoid the snares of triviality.

As far as the theoretical concept of the relationship between the two forms of art goes, she borrows from two principal sources, Werner Wolf's and Paul Scher's studies, which enables her to distinguish two basic kinds of application of music in literature: thematic and structural. Reflecting on this, she concludes that both can be found in Burgess's fiction, either used separately or within one complex text. This assumption is then demonstrated on three works: the short story "1889 and the Devil's Mode" (1989) and two novels, *Napoleon Symphony* (1974) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1962). The short story, little known as it is, presents a fictitious situation which inspired Claude Debussy, during his visit of the World Exhibition and acquaintance with gamelan music, to revise the traditional Western conventions in music composition and use the banned "devil's mode" within a different, more neutral, semantic context. Miss Kiszová attempts to read this story, quite rightly, also as a reflection of the transforming tendencies in the fin-de-siecle culture, when Christianity was giving way to paganism; the question arises how much the story responds to analogical tendencies of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century – the year of publication, being a hundred years away from the year of the story, is a striking fact. Can this intention be detected?

The interpretation of the two novels is more detailed; in these chapters Miss Kiszová has fully utilized her knowledge of musical theory when she demonstrated how the two works reflect the principles of composition of the sonata form and by what means this analogy was achieved in a literary text. Her arguments sound convincing, being partly supported by Burgess's own comments and by other interpreters of Burgess's fiction. I find the passages focussed on the structural parallelisms between literary and musical works inspiring and generating further questions, such as the role of Nadsat as a specific "musical" element (is it

possible to see it as such?) or the relevance of the idea of ekphrasis for the study of the creative interaction between music and literature.

As is obvious from the above, my reservations do not go to the handling of the complex topic, which is, in my view, excellent at this stage, but rather to some formal negligence which mars the otherwise remarkable thesis. The most striking examples can be found on pp. 9-11, where the crossed-out parts of the text persist. This is absolutely unacceptable and I insist on withdrawing the standing version from SIS and replacing it with a corrected one. Chapter 2 should begin on a separate page. An awkward mistake, unfortunately, occurs in the English abstract with the first sentence saying “Literature has been considered an ideal model for literature”. There are also occasional language errors (wrong congruence, dropped words, awkward phrases such as “in such that process”) within the body of the text but their number is low and they do not disqualify the thesis.

In conclusion, I recommend the thesis for defence, provided that a correct version is supplied, and suggest a preliminary mark to be “excellent” (výborně).

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