

DOCTORS' IMAGES IN RAY BRADBURY'S *CHRYSALIS*

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Representations of a literary image in the national literature directly reflect the society's ideas and attitudes toward their real-life prototypes at a certain period of time. The present paper focuses on the literary depiction of medical practitioners in Ray Bradbury's *Chrysalis* (1942, published 1946).

The representations of physicians in non-medical literature have already been within the focus of researchers' interest. The existing studies concentrate upon the physicians' literary figures in a cross-cultural aspect [5; 6; 7]; highlight a certain literary epoch [2]; or examine a particular piece of writing [3; 4]. The present research is the first scientific effort to analyze the features of doctors' literary representation by Ray Bradbury as exemplified by *Chrysalis*, which determines the novelty of the research.

A literary image is considered by researchers as "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" [8, p. 192]. Since each national literature is the mirror of its society, and it reflects the historical context, the spirit of the age and the nation's unique mindset, the study of the physician's literary image provides an insight into the public attitudes towards this profession in the US, which renders the research relevant.

Chrysalis features three images of physicians who face an unusual medical case and demonstrate different professional and moral features. A patient named Smith went into an inexplicable state of a lethargy, which promises to be a new stage of human development. One of the physicians (Dr. McGyer) is highly concerned that he will catch the mysterious disease. Another colleague (Dr. Hartley) tries to kill the patient to prevent the possible spread of an unknown virus. The third hero (Dr. Rockwell) is described as a skillful physician (“Rockwell’s crisp surgeon’s fingers darted rapidly” [1, p. 73] who is obsessed with a disease as a scientific phenomenon: “The impossibility of it overwhelmed Rockwell with an inexplicable excitement” [1, p. 75]; “Rockwell wanted to shout it to the world that he was sole possessor of the most incredible human in history” [1, p. 74].

The physician displays profound interest in the medical case along with total indifference to his patient: “Swearing at the top of his voice... After all this trouble, he cannot lose Smith. *No, not now*” [1, p. 79]. Rockwell observes the patient as an object of research: “Smith’s the most incredible medical phenomenon in history. *Bodies* just don’t act this way!” [1, p. 75]. As a matter of fact, when Smith suddenly recovers, Rockwell is disappointed that his unique case has “disappeared”. Bradbury humorously describes the physician’s reaction: “Dismay slammed Rockwell’s mind, hard ... Rockwell drew blood from Smith and slid it under a microscope. His shoulders sagged. It was normal blood ... Rockwell sighed miserably. Smith’s temperature was normal. So was his pulse” [1, p. 84].

Thus, the condensed inhuman models of the physicians in Ray Bradbury’s *Chrysalis* are used as allegorical representations: physicians are essentially the major vehicles of spiritual and intellectual values at all times, and descriptions of their degradation into callous and indifferent examiners is actually the author’s powerful tool for exposure and denouncement of the societal vices. By

using the dehumanized images of doctors who show little interest in their patient's problems and concerns, Ray Bradbury warns the reader about the danger of losing one's empathy and humanity in the world wars of the 20th century.

References:

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