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ЛІНГВІСТИКА ТА ЛІТЕРАТУРОЗНАВСТВО**

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У збірнику вміщено наукові статті, присвячені актуальним проблемам мовознавчої та літературознавчої науки. Розглянуто сучасні питання мовознавства, зокрема лексики та фразеології, педагогічні технології навчання мов. Висвітлено сучасні досягнення з зарубіжної літератури та літературної компаративістики.

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КОМПАРАТИВІСТИКА ТА ЗАРУБІЖНА ЛІТЕРАТУРА

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"SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE" BY W. BLAKE. SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

The poetry as well as the whole art of William Blake is abundant with symbols and allegories that carry a strong charge - inspirational, charismatic and religious. It is the result of numerous factors including the peculiarity of Blake's epoch, the city he was born, raised and lived in, the traditions of his family, and, of course, his personal features that are imprinted on every line of his writings and every engraving or picture he created. Moreover, he was the first poet after Edmund Spenser who produced his own mythological reality [3,192], which proves the power of his imagination and creative potential. In his childhood and youth, William Blake was surrounded and impacted by objects, phenomena and people that were of pronounced symbolic character - his Dissenter origin, Bible study, visions and revelations that visited him throughout all his life, work in Westminster Abbey [3, 74] - and they could not but be incorporated in his masterpieces. If we add here interest in and adherence to Emmanuel Swedenborg's cosmology and Jacob Boehme's obscure mysticism [2, xxi], the background of his symbolism may become more or less clear. Literary sources and inspirations range from the Bible to Dante and the idea of joining two selections of "Songs" into a single unity might have been prompted, first by one of his favourites, another visionist, Milton who published his "Poems of John Milton, both English and Latin compos'd at Several Times", sharing the character and his inner world torn by representations of opposed, conflicting, even contradictory emotions and states, revealing two different stages of his spiritual maturing. Second, by Isaac Watts, the author of now-almost-forgotten moralizing poems "Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children" published in 1715.

The article deals with one of the most outstanding and acclaimed books written by William Blake - "Songs of Innocence and of Experience"<sup>1</sup> - and focuses on religious symbols that are so copious here and multidimensional in their connotations. The goal of the article is to single out most frequent and significant symbols and images, trace their history back to their origins and suggest some directions of their interpretation.

Among the works devoted to the study of Blake's symbolism we may mention those by Leopold Damrosch ("Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth"), David V. Erdman ("Blake: Prophet Against Empire, A Poet's Interpretation of the History of His Own Times"), Kathleen Raine ("Blake and Antiquity" and "Blake and the New Age"), Margaret

<sup>1</sup> This book may also have heading "Songs of Innocence and Experience" (omitting preposition *of*) in some editions.

Bottrall ("William Blake: Songs of innocence and Experience") and biographies that in no way should be overlooked - "The Life of William Blake" by Alexander Gilchrist and "Blake: A Biography" by Peter Ackroyd. The latter is particularly significant in that it contains overview of major works devoted to the poet and the diaries of contemporaries which have mentions somehow related to the nature of Blake; it is a successful synthesis of poet's biography, art history and the history of London.

There are also some sources that may be useful for a deeper approach and analysis of Blake's symbols and images. As he was influenced mainly by two traditions - Christian Dissenter one and European esotericism - Bible, "Selected Teachings of John Chrysostom" and Catechism will deal with the former and "Zohar" along with "The Kabbalah for Beginners" by Michael Laitman - with the latter.

It should be mentioned that the peculiarity of Blake's creativity is the organic unity of text and engravings. Virtually every poem is illustrated, and many of the characters have both verbal and graphical images. Poetry and visual images form a complete wholeness [3,199]. Blake claimed to have seen visions since early childhood and throughout his life, e.g., the prophet Ezekiel sitting under the tree, and he insisted that the God-granted images could be rendered through interfusion of picture and word. The text does not enlarge upon the picture, nor the picture stands for the text. The inseparable wholeness is created in different signs which prove to be cooperative and manifold. Illuminated copies are rarities kept in several American and British museums and libraries. It is, however, beyond the frames of the article to regard poems together with the illustrations, for most of the standard editions contain only the text.

It is also important to emphasize the uniqueness of each copy printed by Blake and his wife - there are no even two copies with the same order of poems [3,195]. So, dealing with the symbolism of this book special care should be taken in seeking special meaning or enigma in disposition and order of poems. William Blake avoided any shade of standardization and mechanical monotonousness in printing and publishing, most of his engravings and poems changed with every edition during all Blake's time.

Where may the author's attitude and approach to "Songs of Innocence and of Experience" be revealed without deepening into the complicated structure of symbolic images and their interrelation with each other and with the writer himself? It is in the inscription that follows the title and plays the role of a comment possessing considerable degree of significance and importance -- "Shewing<sup>2</sup> the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul" [1, 9]. So, the poems, first of all, intend to convey different states of human soul. The events described take place within the inner world of man; images, objects, dialogues are parts of himself. Here is evident the influence of Svedenborg [3,167] and Kabbalah [7,43].

The scene in "Introduction" is in certain closeness to those Biblical chapters that relate the moment of vocation of Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel and other prophets [4, 55-56,

<sup>2</sup> The quotations of the author are taken from the Everyman's Library edition which retains the original orthography of Blake's manuscripts and 19<sup>th</sup> century editions, so the spelling of some quoted words may not correspond to the modern standards, e.g.: 'tyger' for 'tiger', 'shew' for 'show' etc.

681, 795-796]. The prophecy is caused and initiated not by a human but from above - from a Supreme Being, in case of Bible it is God, in case of Blake it is "a child on a cloud". Another parallel we may see in mentioning "a Lamb" - "Pipe a song about a Lamb" - that is a very popular symbol in Bible referring mostly to Jesus Christ but also to any innocent (here is displayed connection with the title also) person. Further, however, the plot develops in a way different from the Bible. Piper never resists and always fulfills the "command" as for piping, singing, and writing. The child resembles a Muse rather than the God or Jesus Christ, he laughs and weeps like a real vivid kid without any hint on severity or urgency.

One of the images characteristic both to Christian religion and to Blake is the Sun that appears in "The Echoing Green". "The Sun does arise..." and then follows the picture of how life returns and revives. This symbol is so universal that it is interpreted by all the cultures and religions in virtually the same way: in the Ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, India, Persia, Aztec, Mayan and even modern European societies the Sun stands for life, light, warmth etc. It is the component without which our life and our world are impossible to exist. And practically in all pagan religions it is god/goddes, or one of his/her incarnations. The image of Sun is not alien to the Christianity too. It is first of all the symbol of Christ, who 'brought the light to the world'. The Sun, its light and warmth sometimes symbolize the hypostases of the Trinity in Christian theology, which is often mentioned in St. Augustine's writings, in the biography of St Cyril and Methodius and other outstanding Christian authors and Fathers of the Church. In Blake's own mythology Sun (or in earlier poems "Ios") - an anagram of Latin "sol" - is the symbol of "eternal prophet" personifying the Creative (Poetic) Genius.

This symbol is also a basic constituent of many mystic traditions. As for Europe, the most outstanding were the teachings about divine light of Protestant dissenter groups, of Kabbala, Svedenborg and Boehme, Orthodox Hesychasm, and "Spiritual Exercises" of Ignacius of Loyola. The closest ones to Blake are of course the Dissenter traditions and Emanuel Svedenborg. But we can hardly name them the sources, for Blake recognizes only one authority - Poetic Genius or Imagination [1, 7], which is the real source of all religions, arts and products of human creativity. In Blake's own mythology the role of the Sun does not much differ from that in other mystic and religious systems. The Sun rises - the life revives; then it descends - and there takes place the opposite process as it is vividly depicted in "The Echoing Green".

Later on we encounter this image in another poem - "The Lamb". The popular allusion is known since the time immemorial: "The next day John said Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John, 1,29) and the idea is very close to the poet as he put it in one of his articles - "Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as He is". Here the author speaks to a certain lamb that is probably grazing in the pasture, asks him philosophic or even religious questions about who gave it happiness and life and then himself answers those questions. It is more probable that he starts reflecting on the Creator after seeing a lamb

that caused associations with the one who is also called a Lamb and who is according to the Christian Trinitarian doctrine is identical with God - Jesus Christ [8, 24-26].

The symbol of blossom stands closely to the image of Sun, although they are separated by two songs. The similarity of these two images is revealed not by some logical chain or direct simile, but by their effect and impression they made on living creatures and, of course, on the reader. The blossom as well as the Sun is always followed by joy, vibrant life, rebirth and optimistic tone of the poet [1, 13].

The other two closely interrelated images are a cradle song and night. There may be found an opposition between the before mentioned Sun and blossom. But what can they convey besides the absence of light, energy and optimism? There may be given numerous suggestions - beginning with the darkness of incomprehension around the author and ending with the dark enigmas of our life. The most reasonable interpretation of those images may be suggested if Blake's visionary and mystic experiences are taken into account. It is widely known that all deeply devout adherents of most religions perceive our empirical world as a kind of dream or apparition that is not fully real. The true reality is beyond this world and our senses - that is the idea repeated by virtually all the mystics. William Blake's style of thinking, his life and his engravings are in a perfect accord with that thesis. His expression that "Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception: he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover" [1, 7] may explain a lot of vague passages of his writings and periods of his life that are problematic to explain. We may even say that the poet did not always use his five senses and common human reasoning. All of his works are complete and total revelation based on direct contact with the spiritual world. In this light, the cradle song and night are nothing else than our world, our earthly life.

Another significant symbol of divinity is "Mercy Pity Peace and Love" as it is indicated without commas, and regarded as one entity. This feature belongs not only to God but to human as well and is like a bridge that unites Divinity with Humanity - "For Mercy Pity Peace and Love / Is God our father dear, / And Mercy Pity Peace and Love / Is Man his child and care" - one more allusion to the second hypostasis of the Trinity that is both divine and human. Here we see the profound religiousness of William Blake that had been kindled by visions and apparitions he saw through all the stages of his life. The ideal bearer of mercy, love, pity and peace for the poet the same as for any devout Christian is, of course, Jesus Christ as he is depicted in Gospels, other books of New Testament and Christian tradition. Such complicated association of "Mercy Pity Peace and Love" with God, humans and Jesus Christ is characteristic of many of his symbols and mythological passages.

The image of lamb is not a symbol of Jesus Christ exclusively, in "The Shepherd" it signifies a human, and Christ bears another image - that of a shepherd. Definitely, among those lambs there is Blake himself who is constantly professing his innate belief in redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ, The shepherd is attributed traditional features of care and love common to the ideas of Christianity. The lambs are Christians for there are "the lamb's innocent call" and "the ewe's tender reply" - the features that

would hardly be ascribed by the author to those not belonging to Christianity. That could be proved by his address to the Jews and deists in his poem "Jerusalem", where he **cinpicts** them not in favourable light. Here can be traced much more associations, e.g. the sheep may be the circle of people who are favourable to him, they may be he and his wife, the symbol might also embrace all the suggested senses and interpretations. The fact that we can definitely state is that the images of shepherd and lamb are classical Christian symbols and allegories used in the parables of the Gospels.

Another very bright image we come across is in "The Chimney Sweeper". It is not found in religious scriptures or parables; its origin is in everyday reality of the 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> century London. The creativity of the poet manages to raise it to the religious level and make it as a symbol of his epoch and maybe the symbol of himself, a person working for the society too hard and too much and gaining neither respect nor gratitude. The figure of chimney sweeper penetrated even into the mystical writings of Swedenborg [3, 204], so it is natural for a person with such subtle religious feeling and intuition as Blake has to turn to that image too, the image of the children from the lowest layers of English society. In spite of the terrifying conditions of sweepers' life and occupation, the neglect of society and even the forthcoming death of "Dick, Joe, Ned & Jack" the poem is not pessimistic. The author sees (or gives) consolation to the poor boy and his fellow sweepers, their destiny appears to be not as gloomy as their everyday work - in future "He'd have God for his father & never want joy". That promise inspires boy and he continues his hard work ignoring all the inconveniences caused by the specificity of his work. That is a classical Christian millenaristic ambience characteristic of the first ages of Christian church [7, 9-10] and various protestant movements of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The connection with the author occurs by its own - all of his biographers point to the public neglect of William Blake during most of his lifetime. But it did not stop him from writing and engraving, finding new methods and technologies for his craft and printing. The visions constantly visiting him gave him creative enthusiasm and inspiration, and maybe due to them he was able to overcome public neglect. The 'sight' of Tom Dacre has a lot in common with the author's vision and spiritualistic experience. It would not be out of place to point out the symbol of lamb that appears in this poem again "curl'd like a lamb's back", it seems to be one of the basic and fundamental signs of Blake's poetry, art and mythology; although it does not seem very original in the context of Christian Dissenter tradition where it occupies virtually the same place.

The scene of "Holy Thursday" is like the previous one taken from London life of that epoch where "little boys & girls" from the orphanage visit a Mass. Again we have the iambs, again the angel - the symbols already familiar. Who those "children" and "grey headed beadles" are is not so obvious. Perhaps the centre of author's attention and intention is not some definite image but the whole solemn process, majestic action. Maybe, as it is stated below the title, it is pure reflection of author's soul's state, or just recent experience of watching a real scene when children are taken to the church. It is hardly true that all the verses were intentionally and consciously endowed with some symbolic meaning, that the poet was selecting images out of the ready stock or inventing

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them during the process of writing. It is more probable that Blake's symbolism is hidden in his subconscious and the signs that may be sometimes made out in his lines are the tips of icebergs.

Another interesting character is that of "Little Black Boy", that is according to Ackroyd devoted to the racial problem [3, 197]. It is actually a truthful suggestion, for during those times it was widely accepted to regard the black race as inferior people. It may be also the problem of slavery that ended in the British Empire only in 1834, it may also refer to Blake's own position as *rara avis* in the society of commerce and common sense. In Watt's collection the English boy expresses his gratitude to the God for being Christian born, Blake's poem states the equality of all in the world of Innocence: "For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear,/ The cloud will vanish; we shall hear His voice,/ Saying: "Come out from the grave, My love and care,/ And round My golden tent like lambs rejoice". But allowing for his strong and powerful imagination it would be fair to suggest that the image of the black boy may embrace all these interpretations.

All the poems titled as "Songs of Innocence" have prevalently optimistic spirit and display hope for the better future and positive attitude to life and reality. They are the words of a person only beginning his journey through life and having a lot of expectations, which agrees with the Blake's remark concerning the "Two Contrary states of the Human Soul". The images are usually of Biblical origin - Lamb, angels, Shepherd, "Mercy Pity Peace & Love" etc. - and bear positive emotional and psychological charge.

The second part of the book - "Songs of Experience" - is in full opposition to the first one: Biblical images are rare and the symbols are either of some 'heathen', pre-Christian origin or come from Blake's own mythology - Earth, Clod, Pebble, Tyger, Rose, Poison Tree etc. It was written four years later than "Songs of Innocence" several of the songs of which have their opposites in it - "Introduction", "The Chimney Sweeper", "Holy Thursday", "Little Girl Lost" etc, but there are also the poems that do not have correspondent ones in the first part.

In the "Introduction" prophet ("the Bard") is not asked to raise his voice by a celestial creature or God, he commences his solemn hymn by himself, he addresses to the "Earth" (unlike speaking to the creature from above in the "Songs of Innocence") and asks her to arise "from out the dewy grass." The next poem - "Earth's Answer" - is a response to the voice of Bard. These symbols are most probably of pre-Christian Celtic origin, that were so admired by Blake trying to revive Gothic and ancient British tradition [3, 78].

The poem representing an interesting dialogue between two opposite approaches and understandings of Love - "The Clod and the Pebble" - took place probably inside the soul of the author or is one of the numerous dialogues that Blake had with the apparitions during his visionary experience. The "Clod of Clay" is completely different from the Pebble in explaining the essence of love, this dichotomy takes place within the human society - indeed, there may only two types of understanding love be found - either seeking "not Itself to please" or "only Self to please", and there is no alternative.

The antipodes of the "Songs of Innocence" - "Holy Thursday", "The Chimney Sweeper", "Little Girl Lost" and "Little Girl Found" - convey more pessimistic and gloomy

atmosphere. In the first one, Blake makes an attempt to dispel the myth that Britain is a "rich and fruitful" country, for if it were so there would not be "Babes reduc'd to the misery". Moreover, it is impossible for sun to shine and rain to fall in such a place. For Blake, standing on Svedenborgian and Kabbalistic premise on human mind's primary position and importance with regard to the external world [6, 21], it is a human within whom all the events take place, so he rejects any possibility of welfare until there are no people in poverty and misery. In "The Chimney Sweeper" we no longer see any hint for improvement of the boy's situation, this boy says that his parents went "to praise God & his Priest & King,/who make up a heaven of our misery". The king is constructing heaven, a terrestrial one, at the expense of those paupers. In the poems about little girl, it is shown that she is saved not by a God or angel but by a lion and is given back to her parents. All the images here are earthly and perhaps of Blake's own mythological system.

There is another bright image in this book - that is of a tiger, most famous Blake's poem among his contemporaries and modern pupils in Britain. Tigers in that epoch were regarded as an embodiment of both grandeur and terror; these animals were often kept in numerous private zoos and in the Tower of London [3, 239]. They were often described in scientific publications and in the memoirs of travellers and explorers and represented in various paintings. Many things and phenomena might be denoted by that sign, and the most likely one is perhaps the general impression of the society and atmosphere around the poet living in the age of scientific discoveries and inventions, wars and social turmoil, commerce and entrepreneurship.

There is one outstanding Kabbalistic symbol that is employed to represent a human society - a rose [6, 210], and it is mentioned in the "Songs of Experience". Whatever or whoever William Blake might address saying "O rose, thou art sick", the society seems the most probable, especially concerning its treatment of the poet and the growth and domination of materialistic ideas. The 'invisible worm', symbolizing the world of Experience, destroys her life, and the author directly warns her about the danger. Mental, spiritual and intellectual distortion is implicit in the 'worm', destroying the beauty of the rose. Further on, we meet a 'pretty rose tree' that may be either the mentioned rose recovered or something else. Anyway, this 'incarnation' seems more attractive but finally it turns away from the lyrical hero. The optimistic hopes were not realized.

The image of London, the poet's birthplace, is somehow connected with that of the chimney sweeper and the latter is the necessary constituent of the former [1, 33] - dark, pessimistic, hopeless, doomed. Many critics mention the hard material conditions of paupers and other persons on the margin of society. But William Blake does not seem to be concerned with any material problem or issue, and that description refers rather to the spiritual conditions than material one. So, the capital of the most spacious and powerful empire bears the connotations of sorrow and despair in the context of Blake's symbols.

The little vagabond - Blake himself matches that image so perfectly - challenges even the institution that is in charge of the spiritual welfare of the society, i.e. the church. And it does not matter which church he means Anglican one or some Dissenter group, because the author himself was not affiliated to any religious community in his adulthood.

