

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2020.24.4.5>**ЖАНРОВОЕ ОФОРМЛЕНИЕ ПОЭТИЧЕСКОГО ПАЛИМПСЕСТА С. Т. КОЛЬРИДЖА «СКАЗАНИЕ О СТАРОМ МОРЯКЕ» В ЭПОПЕЕ У. ГОЛДИНГА «НА КРАЙ СВЕТА. МОРСКАЯ ТРИЛОГИЯ»**

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Предметом изучения в статье является историко-литературный палимпсест, или образцовый художественный текст, принадлежащий к наследию прошлого и присутствующий в дискретной форме в составе жанровой архитектуры рассматриваемой эпопеи. Цель исследования заключается в том, чтобы установить зависимость авторской герменевтики классического образца от современных приоритетов и актуальных проблем писательского творчества. Системный подход к исполнению заданной установки позволяет воссоздать целостную полимодель трех романов и выделить в их жанровой организации формульную матрицу морского травелога, обеспечивающую множественные коннотации эпической трилогии У. Голдинга с идентичным палимпсестом – «Сказанием о старом моряке» С. Т. Кольриджа. Дискурсивная аналитика обнаружившихся связей выводит линию изысканий к точке пересечения классических традиций и обновленческих тенденций в британской литературе после модернизма. Прояснение ретроспективного плана морской эпопеи У. Голдинга в контексте постмодернистской ситуации влечет за собой заключение о том, что стратегия автора по отношению к палимпсесту была направлена на утверждение принципа исторической преемственности как необходимого условия нового развития.

Ключевые слова: палимпсест, интертекстуальный дискурс, архитектура жанра, постмодернистская ситуация, английский философский роман, У. Голдинг.

THE PATTERN OF THE POETIC PALIMPSEST “THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER” BY S. T. COLERIDGE IN WILLIAM GOLDING’S EPIC “TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH. A SEA TRILOGY”

Research article

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Abstract

The subject matter of the article is a historical palimpsest, or the exemplary literary text, borrowed from the past inheritance and discreetly introduced into the genre architectonics of the epic trilogy under study. The research aims to define the dependence of the author’s hermeneutics of the classical specimen on the contemporary priorities and essential problems of creative writing. A systemic approach to the prospective purpose enables to reconstruct a consolidated model of the three novels and to identify their general pattern with the traditional formulaic matrix of the sea travelogue. Further insights into the structural organisation of the trilogy sustain, that the identified matrix provides multiple connotations of the epic narration by W. Golding with the corresponding palimpsest – namely, with “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by S. T. Coleridge. The discursive analytics of revealed connections brings the guideline of research to the intersection point of classical traditions and innovative trends in the British literature after modernism. Highlighting the retrospective plan of W. Golding’s sea epic in the context of postmodern situation entails the conclusion that the author’s strategy in relation to the palimpsest purported to assert the principle of historic continuity as a necessary condition for new developments.

Keywords: palimpsest, intertextual discourse, genre pattern, postmodern condition, the English philosophical novel, W. Golding.

Introduction

William Golding is one of the most noticeable representatives of philosophical prose who influenced the mainstream of literary thought in Great Britain in its postmodern period. He started his literary writing in the genre of the novel and became a recognized master of this form after publishing his opening book “Lord of the Flies” (1953). Since then the writer has issued a number of other novels reflecting his current experience in the art of fiction as well as thoughtful consideration of essential problems of the human condition. The epic “To the Ends of the Earth. A Sea Trilogy” relates to the later period of W. Golding’s literary biography and is, in fact, a follow-up work, where the author resumed and finalized many of his aesthetic and philosophical ideas.

The name “To the Ends of the Earth. A Sea Trilogy” represents the sequence by William Golding’s novels as a holistic narrative about a long and troubled voyage of British migrants to Australia in the early 19-th century. The series comprises three successive parts entitled “Rites of Passage” (1980), “Close Quarters” (1987) and “Fire Down Below” (1989). Set out in the frameworks of conventional sea travelogues, these nautical, relational novels account for a historical epic due to the wide scope of their factual content and its meaningful interpretation. S. Connor, a well-known postmodern critic, specifies that historicized fiction by W. Golding bounds up with “a kind of transmission or passage of meaning” which leads “not to Truth, but to the historical process of grasping at it” [10, P. 150,154].

Building a retrospective of the past from the position of modernity presumes deep insights of the writer into the life reality and the cultural mentality of the people who belong to previous generations. If a new work of literature about old times concerns the mental archeology of knowledge, then the author's restoration project needs a sound foundation to back up the order of epistemological discourse in the structure of eventful narration. W. Golding meets this requirement by establishing the storyline of his epic trilogy on the ground of palimpsest which lengthens the memory and extends the forethought of ideas in their historic movement from past to present.

The word "palimpsest" derives from the Ancient Greek *παλίμψηστος* ("again scraped") and refers to a manuscript underlying the lines and symbols of a newly written text [2, P. 714]. Until recently, palimpsests had remained subjects for linguistic and paleontographic explorations into ancient artifacts [4]. Nowadays, the hermeneutics of the term has extended, owing to the practices of modern and postmodern literature where the juxtaposition of diverse texts entails the emergence of a wide network of semantic connotations. Thus, a contemporary definition of palimpsest states that this phenomenon is especially characteristic of "postmodernism and POST-culture on the whole", as far as it enables to create "the systems of aesthetic oppositions" and "non-aesthetic contrasts" correlating with "various types of associative and intellectual perception" [3, P. 333]. G. Genette, a distinguished French specialist in narratology, was the first to introduce the renewed interpretation of palimpsest into literary theory under the definition of a layered structure with a remarkable faculty "to provide the substantial depth of the text for conceiving the deep substance of things" [11, P. 1]. Classifying various modifications of the structure "in the order of increasing abstraction", the French theorist upgrades the status of palimpsest in narration to the level of the "architext" that "sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" [12, P. 52].

N. Piege-Gro, another French researcher, approximated G. Genette's theory to writing practice by developing a conceptual scheme of intertextual and semiotic links between the palimpsest and the narrative text within a literary work [6]. The Ukrainian art expert and literary critic Yu. A. Pomogaibo facilitated further conceptual and practical advances in aesthetic interpretation of palimpsest when displaying the results of his interdisciplinary research, devoted to the palimpsest-related works of the Austrian writer Chr. Ransmayr and the German painter A. Kiefer [5]. Nevertheless, in the area of modern and postmodern literary studies, there are still unclaimed fields for special explorations into the subject. This article represents an experience of such a kind, aimed at identifying the concealed pattern of the poetic palimpsest "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" by S. T. Coleridge in the epic narration of W. Golding's "To the Ends of the Earth. A Sea Trilogy". The prospective purpose of the actual case study is to reproduce the aesthetic system of their intertextual connections with regard to the current classical traditions and innovative trends in the British literature after modernism.

Methods

The general principle adopted for achievement of the aim stated is the system approach to the issues of study. This way conduces to a comprehensive vision of the whole in part through the recreation of a virtual model of the object under research. Systemic modeling involves a number of auxiliary methods, which enable to align the copy with the original and to highlight the immanent properties of the latter. The set of the operational instruments includes heuristic of the relevant elements and their structural organization along with discursive analytics and final conceptualisation of cause-and-effect relationship at different levels of the resultant system.

Discussion

In the epic "To the Ends of the World", W. Golding incorporated the basic components of the palimpsest into the architectonic foundation of the three novels by unfolding the narration within the homogeneous framework of a traditional travelogue. Turning back to the past, the author took into account the formula literature of the time and the vintage forms of the genre, created by D. Defoe (Robinson Crusoe, 1719) and J. Swift (Gulliver's Travels, 1726) in the early view of Enlightenment. Some later marks of that epoch on W. Golding's pattern of palimpsest pertain to L. Sterne, who attained the scope of personal vision to "A sentimental Journey Through France and Italy" (1795). In W. Golding's travel books, further introspections into individual perception of reality cast the reverse projections of the archived text onto the strong egocentric bias of modernistic novels and the criticism of this radical shift in postmodern literature. The starting point of these allusive connections is the position of the narrator as an autonomous subject of all artistic notional representations.

Considering the first book of the trilogy, "Rites of Passage", an English researcher, Ph. Redpath remarked, that "the historical mode of the novel and its historical subject matter complement each other" [16, P. 75]. This sentence is quite justified by the fact that the writer delegates his author's rights to the hero-narrator who is supposed to witness the forthcoming events and, hence, to make the story true. Since the authorized protagonist began the story in the form of personal travel notes, the ultimate task was complicated with the limited capacity of the genre, allowing more options for subjective self-expression than for epic objectivity. Therefore, the real writer conditions the feasibility of his project on the subsequent pages of the palimpsest where truth complies not only with the notional preconception of mind but also with the outcome of life experience. These pages are devoted to the poem by T. S. Coleridge "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner in seven parts" (1798), conveying the mainstream concepts of authentic knowledge in the English literature of Romanticism. W. Golding relies on this poem as on a relevant sample of literary writing and retains it for the benefit of the hero after the first attempts at travel reports and before entrusting him the genre of the novel: "Edmund, I adjure you! Be a writer" [13, P. 5]. Given the placement of the classical model, the tale of the old mariner overtakes the functions of the centralized metanarrative and sets guidelines for ordering the discourse of the narrative text. However, the initial guidelines of the poetic palimpsest do not cover the total genre pattern of the novel. In W. Golding's epic world, they undergo changes and lean towards alternative turns to thread paths to unknown sides of reality.

The intertextual correlations of W. Golding's trilogy with S. T. Coleridge's poem start up with distinctive signposts, pointing out to coincident routs at the very beginning of the two stories about sea voyages. The preceding "Argument" to the ancient mariner's rime outlines the plan of narration in the following words:

“How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the Cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean, and of the strange things that befell” [9, P. 242].

Primarily, W. Golding adopts a similar itinerary with the view to implement a parallel storyline and to query into its possible branching within the spatial and temporal boundaries of epic narration. Eventually, this single line with subsequent ramifications facilitates new developments of aesthetic and philosophical ideas at various levels of the consolidated architectonics of the three travel books.

The crosscutting theme of the journey “to the ends of the Earth” passes through the first book along with persistent questioning about human condition under the circumstances of critical situations at sea and aboard the ship. Following the preassigned pattern of the palimpsest, the hero-narrator Edmund Talbot and one of his travel companions, the parson Robert Colley, arrange these versatile questions in depth of their own insights and mindsets. To match the subject matter, both characters choose the forms of personal travel notes, but digress from the original stencil when translating the everlasting literary issue of human destiny into individual acts of self-determination on the ways of being in the world. The story of the old mariner discerns the crucial stage of such a way with reference to the passage of the ship over the equator, and to its dramatic encounter with great nature’s disturbance:

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o’ertaking wings,
And chased us south along [9, P. 245].

In “Rites of Passage”, both storytellers witness, that the most powerful “storm-blast” came not from without, but from the inner disturbance of human nature, when its secret vices and worst inclinations got out of reasonable control and manifested themselves in the savage rituals of crossing the equator. At the time of sensible recognition, the parson suffered his painful death, tormented with shame and plunged in the darkness of “the lowest hell of self-degradation” [15, P. 278]. Talbot left the dark fields of discovery with a burden of guilt and insistent feeling that there would be no way to redemption without awareness of his own identity and sharing knowledge of the outer world. Although “the chain” between the two goals “would seem too thin, the links too weak”, Talbot believed, that their disconnection might incur a moral fall of a man and unbearable tortures from belated remorse: “In not too ample volume of man’s knowledge of Man, let this sentence be inserted. Men can die of shame” [15, P. 278].

The turning point passed, the epic storytelling reverts to the palimpsest storyline and continues the predestined itinerary in the novel “Close Quarters”, the second book of the trilogy. In S. T. Coleridge’s poem, the sailboat, damaged in the storm, had to go southward at the will of an outer power:

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
Who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled [9, P.247].

In W. Golding’s novel, the same evil rock drives the ship in a disastrous state and blows it towards the South Pole. However, the fatal power turns against the voyages only after the impious rites of passage and the miserable death of the parson, the tragic victim. This sequence of events relates the logic sense of the narration to the narrator’s inquiry into consistent “links” of course and effect in human destiny in the world. Highlighting the cognitive aspects of the hero’s activities, the author engages him in the essential problems of modern and postmodern literature as far as they concern the plausibility of figurative and conceptual representations, contingent on the knowledge and experience of the narrative subject.

The cross-temporal involvement of the hero exemplifies the theory of transcendent intertextual functions of palimpsest, proposed by the French analyst N. Piege-Gro: “So, the palimpsest implies such a mode of intertextuality, whereby the priority is given to continuity and connectivity: deriving by-gone texts from nihilism and oblivion, writing weaves the thread of incessant tradition” [6, P. 170]. W. Golding summons his hero-writer to derive the beginning of cohesive “thread” of historic continuity commensurate with romantic traditions and modern trends in hermeneutics of human values. The English critic J. Carey writes that this assignment is complicated with high social standing of the protagonist because it “shows us how much progress he still has to make in transforming himself from an Augustinian gentleman into a human being” [8, p. 455]. Nevertheless, Edmund Talbot steps up to the challenge and moves ahead to awareness of other reality beyond his own self. From this point of view, the title of the novel “Close Quarters” signifies the convergence of individual positions and dissimilar lifelines on the common way, which necessitates Talbot, as well as other travelers, to bridge divides of social differences, of spiritual self-isolation, or existential alienation from the real world.

In the romantic palimpsest of S. T. Coleridge, the hero’s sense of abandonment in the boundless ocean equals the ulterior intuition of rejection, inflicted by Almighty on the lost soul:

Alone, alone, all, all alone
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And Christ would take no pity on
My soul in agony [9, P. 256].

In the novel of W. Golding, the same feelings of blame and desolation overwhelm the hero-narrator whenever he recalls his failure to save the ill-fated Colly, – now dead and alone, “as Mr Coleridge says, all, all alone” [15, P. 264]. To escape the horror of non-being in the abyss of solipsism, Talbot, like the ancient mariner, seeks for reconciliation in communication with other people. Unlike the old sailor, the young voyager regains complicity in common life not through intimate confessions to strangers, but doing his best for passengers, who suffer no less from personal afflictions, or for sailors, who need help to keep

afloat the half-destroyed vessel. The redemptive actions of good will make up the sequential stages of the hero's progress from the negative experience of solitary existence to emotional sensations of moral suspense, and then to comprehensive knowledge of moral laws of human coexistence. A later revelation of goodness as the imperative of his own life comes to Talbot together with the inner voice of guilt and sorrow for the suicidal deaths of Colley, and then Wheeler, another unhappy shipmate: "You could have saved us" [14, P. 63].

The hero's exit from the vicious circle of egocentric world outlook induced a key prerequisite for the utter fulfillment of the author's project allowing for a continuous extension of the epic perspective in conformity with the enlarging horizons of the narrator's vision. Explaining the reasons for the increase of the epic space to global proportions, W. Golding specified the cognitive objective of the process: "In all my works I have suggested a shape in the universe that may, as it were, account for things" [17, P. 12]. In the novel "Fire Down Below", the third book of the sea trilogy, the writer's globalization strategy is aimed at shaping the total picture of the world with the view to a particular area of human reality and the outer environment around it. In this composite perspective, the main concern of the protagonist was to clarify whether the ethical measure of unity of human coexistence, derived from his life lessons, might account for the world order in general, and thence for the universal law of total being.

The romantic palimpsest of S. T. Coleridge affirms the idea of moral universe on grounds of metaphysical preconceptions and a supposed testimony obtained by the eyewitness at the extreme ends of human habitat and the realm of earthly nature. The first view of the icy deserts did not bring the people any hope for survival:

And thro' the drifts of snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen;
Ne shapes of men ne beasts we ken –
The Ice was all between [9, P. 246].

Further insights into severe surrounding revealed the inspiring sign of omnipresent Good in the image of albatross, which led and followed the ship on the way from the lifeless domain of eternal winter:

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the Fog it came;
And an it were a Christian soul,
We hail'd it in God's name [9, P. 246].

The travel pictures in the novel "Fire Down Below" are reminiscent of the seascapes in the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" if compared by modes of their symbolic stylization. When describing a storm in the vicinity of the Antarctic region, Talbot writes: "A place for no man: for sea gods perhaps; for that great and ultimate power which surely must support the visible universe and before which men can do no more than mouth life-defining and controlling words of experience of living" [14, P. 135]. However, notwithstanding apparent similarities, the two pictures have the backgrounds from different epochs of cultural history. While the primary pattern of S. T. Coleridge's marina pertains to the paradigm of Romanticism, the semiotic code of the secondary pattern in W. Golding's novel falls under the definition of recovered palimpsests as "retained traces of tradition" in postmodern culture. The Russian art critic S. I. Kuskov suggested this definition with the explanatory comment that "palimpsest biased rewriting of the Total Archive" aims at "obtaining something, which belongs to the past and without which the present artistic experience is unthinkable" [1]. Indeed, the romanticized picture of the "ends of the world" in W. Golding's epic brings out the missing arguments for enlarging the temporal and spatial dimensions of contemporary art of literature with a view towards the enhancement of its cognitive and didactic faculties. Thus, the further interpretation of the picturesque imagery in terms of philosophical connotations discloses the ontological decent of romantic metaphysics from Plato's dual model of moral universe. The author introduces this concept in the epic discourse under the mediation of the narrator, who refers to the reasoning of a travel companion about absolute Good in its divine and earthly hypostases: "Imagine our caravan, we, a fire down below here – sparks of the Absolute – matching the fire up there – out there!" [14, P. 219] Although the passionate faith of the speaker in ideal "fire up there" does not meet any objective correlates, the hero-narrator finds and presents the evidence of real "fire down below", telling the story of salvation from the heavy ice of the Antarctic owing to indicative signs and lenient messages of merciful nature.

The attitudinal bias in cognitive identification of objective reality is another juxtaposition where the novel text declines from the original palimpsest. The poem of S. T. Coleridge vindicates the real existence of supreme justice by proof from the contrary. The mariner, who killed the prophetic albatross out of self-interest, and the other sailors, who gave up the moral truth for the same reason, were doomed to retribution for trespassing the law of higher order:

One after one, by the horned Moon,
(Listen, O Stranger! to me)
Each turn'd his face with a ghastly pang,
And curs'd me with his ee.
Four times fifty living men
With never a sigh or groan,
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They drop'd down one by one [9, P.256].

Drawn on a negative experience in the poem by S. T. Coleridge, the ethical concept of the world unity is conjured as a subject to positive verification in the novel by W. Golding. It remains a thought-to-be-truth for the hero-narrator but becomes the truth beyond reasonable doubt for his shipmates, when the salvatory messages of nature about favourable winds and currents helped them rescue the vessel from the ice captivity in the Antarctic and plot a secure course for Australia. Nevertheless, the storyteller acceded to the common opinion as soon as he appreciated the real-life rewards for the successful trial by his personal gratification at the respectable social position, distinguished administrative career and happy marriage, all achieved at the end of the voyage. Embarrassed as he were for the authors "who feel that despite all the evidence from the

daily life around them, a story to be veridical should have a happy ending”, the hero-narrator was apt to share these feelings from the moment when his own life “took a turn into regions of phantasy, or ‘faerie’, of ridiculous happiness!” [14, P. 277]

Overall, the aesthetic plan of W. Golding’s epic is consistent with the pattern of S. T. Coleridge poem to the extent that both projects stipulate appropriate frameworks for depiction the destiny of man in the global perspective of outlook and being in the world. Within the open perspectives of both literary works, the scattered phenomena of human and natural reality take shape of a single entity under the legitimacy of cause and effect, action and reaction, and other compensatory implications comparable to the ethical principle of punished vice or virtue rewarded. As a result, the moral resolution of poetic justice, which T. S. Coleridge advanced by means of didactic suggestion, got confirmation on the solid basis of empirical objectivism in the epic novels by W. Golding. Acknowledging the viability of romantic moral ideas, W. Golding specified their contiguity with the principle of evolutionary process in real life and its representation in the art of literature: “The only kind of real progress is the progress of the individual towards some kind of – I would describe it as ethical integration” [7, P. 41].

The transversal research into W. Golding’s narration and T. S. Coleridge’s palimpsest leads to the conclusion about a systemic organization of their intertextual links in the novels of “A Sea Trilogy”.

Conclusion

The conducted case study leads to the conclusion, that its factual results correspond with the initial aim to clarify the attitude of palimpsest related epic by W. Golding to the contemporary state of the art in the British literature of the postmodern period.

The historic palimpsest “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by S. T. Coleridge and the historicized travel story “To the Ends of the Earth” by W. Golding form a holistic aesthetic system, conditioned on their unitary genre modelling within the pattern of the epic. The main factor of the system’s cohesiveness is the continuous network of constructive and semantic linkage between the lyrical palimpsest and the epic narration achieved by the author at all levels of his tripartite architectonics. Apart from the common formative methods, the writer implements the principle of homogeneous ontological framework for the unified genre organisation of the palimpsest and narrative contents. Assuming the ethical concept of the world order as the common fundamental element of the three novels, W. Golding, along with T. S. Coleridge, asserts its ontological status on the factual experience of human life, and then evens out the epistemological parameters of the whole system with the British empirical-and-sensualistic tradition in the philosophical theory of knowledge. Furthermore, since the way of knowledge and experience gives rise to various storylines in the architectonics of the two consolidated travelogues, this eventful and circumstantial diversification provides supplementary arguments in support of the concept assumed. Lastly, the phenomenal images of subjective perception, whereby the world represents itself on the roads of life, draw up coherent pictures of real objects in the frameworks of the lyric poetry by S. T. Coleridge and the epic prose by W. Golding, correspondingly.

Along with the intrinsic linkages with historic palimpsest, the aesthetic system of W. Golding’s sea trilogy has a network of external correlations with the contemporary paradigms, which emerged on the crossways of classical traditions and innovative tendencies in the art of fine letters after several decades of modernist experiments. At the time of uncertainty, when the controversial trends in literary thought overshadowed its future prospects, the palimpsest related novels got into an intermediate placement, designating a turning point for new developments as opposed to the mutual negation of ultra-modernism and conservative traditionalism. The mainstay for the strategic position of “golden mean” between the extremes was the informed author’s response to the postmodern questioning about the validity of truth claims asserted by the writers of previous epochs. W. Golding completes his retrospective study of the problem to the effect, that its positive resolution induces motivations for progressive changes to the present state of art with respect to the principle of historic continuity of long-standing and recent experience.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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