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Satirical allegory in the English literature of Enlightenment and Romanticism: Swift, Sterne and Blake

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Abstract

The article is devoted to questions of continuity in the English satirical literature: the authors trace the development of Swift and Sternian traditions in William Blake's satire "The Island on the Moon". Blake's satire is connected with the novels by Swift and Sterne by multiple threads of motivational and thematic correspondences. The place in Blake's work, the Island on the Moon, is a sign of an allegorical reality for the English literary tradition. The prototype of the satirical and allegorical Island are the islands of travel novels, extraordinary habits and the appearance of mythical inhabitants which Swift parodied. The type of narration in Blake's work is close to Sterne's one. Textual correspondences are interesting: Swift's Gulliver with a deliberately serious tone tells about the scientist, who evaporated human excrement; Tristram Shandy mentions this scientific direction with a smile; Inflammable Gass, Blake's hero, brings and then inadvertently breaks "a bottle of wind ... took up in the bog house", which can spread the pestilence. Like Sterne, the narrator of "The Island on the Moon" possesses not only omniscience, but also omnipotence: he can interrupt the course of the narrative, suspending the action of the hero in the middle. Blake's text resembles the text of *Tristram Shandy* even graphically: it also has frequent

long periods, sentences are torn apart by multiple dashes, "dangling" dashes are at the end of paragraphs, graphical inseparability of the statements of characters. A detailed study of these correspondences needs to be done; probably it could help outline a special line of development of English literature, leading from Enlightenment satirical novels to the Romanticism.

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Keywords

William Blake, Jonathan Swift, Lawrence Stern, Romanticism, Enlightenment, continuity, tradition, English romanticism, allegory, satire, irony, parody.

Introduction

William Blake has a special creative destiny. Having lived all his life in London and its environment, he managed to create an epic picture of eternal conflict of world history.

Researchers describe different historical and cultural strata which became the sources of the unique talent of Blake, the *causa efficiens* of his work. The main predecessors of Blake are considered to be mystics – Swedenborg, Boehme, Paracelsus and Neo-Platonists; philosophers – Plato, Berkeley; The Bible, Kabbalah and the mythological history of England. But there is a widespread view of his cultural isolation, which was already opposed by Northrop Fry, one of the founders of the modern study of Blake. If Blake enters the context of English literature, then his predecessors are most often called the epic Milton and Shakespeare, the allegorical Benyan and Spencer. But creating a mythological system, Blake's satire remains one of the important keys of his works [Gilpin, 2004]. Satire is generally one of the bright colors of Romanticism [Jones, 1993]. Blake, the author of poisonous parodies of society and the very nature of man, could not remain far from the ridiculous tradition of English literature. In particular, in the works of Blake, you can find the techniques of satire, which have a lot in common with the creative findings of J. Swift [Bullard, 2013; Adair, 2016] and L. Stern [Fanning, 1997; Ross, 2001; Battestin, 2003].

Blake has an unfinished work "The Island on the Moon." Critics often call it satire, although the first publisher of Blake's complete works, Jeffrey Keynes, defines the genre of an unfinished work as a novel [Keynes, 1972, 884]. "The Island on the Moon" has neither plot, nor brevity, nor completeness

of the novel; but the English literature of the 18th century is characterized by novels, which are similar with Blake's works. They can be allegorical (and only conditionally mimetic), include fragments of various stylistic and genre affiliations, a bright figure of the narrator, who sometimes deliberately refutes reader's expectations. Novels remain enlightening: with all the parody of the genre, they nevertheless are aimed at correcting morals - with a scathing mock or softened irony. Examples are Gulliver's Travels by Swift and The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman by Stern.

These names are chosen not randomly. References to "Swift's irony" or "Blake's "Stornian tone" are quite common in the works of Western researchers. Such assumptions have a metaphorical character, without describing the correspondences between the texts, although they could represent the work of Blake in a new way - a non-romantic romantic and a non-classical classicist.

Blake's satire, in our opinion, is connected with the Swift and Stern novels by multiple threads of motive and thematic correspondences. But two aspects of the communicative code are the most interesting for the analysis: the principle of allegory and the figure of the narrator.

Swift, Stern, Blake: Inheritance

The place in the work of Blake, The Island on the Moon, is a sign of allegorical reality for the English literary tradition, an allegory of the allegory. Such are the "lands" from Gulliver's Travels, and Blake's Island resembles Laputo: its inhabitants are also fond of in ephemeral sciences; such is the island that Tristram Shandy mentions: "The lower beings ... deduce with the help of their noses; however, there is such an island floating on the seas (although not quite calmly), whose inhabitants, if my information does not deceive me, are endowed with a remarkable ability to deduce in exactly the same way, often achieving excellent results "[Stern, 1968, 212-213].

The prototype of the satirical and allegorical Islands is the island of travel novels, the extraordinary habits and appearance of the mythical inhabitants of which Swift parodied. For English literature, this allegorism is especially significant due to the island location of the state. Blake directly indicates the location of his Island: "In the Moon is a certain Island near by a mighty continent". Unlike Swift, who created an unprecedented country of guigngs and liliputs, Blake immediately showed his allegory in action, "turning it out" in front of the reader: *which small island seems to have some affinity to England, & what is more extraordinary, the people are so much alike, & their language so much the same, that you would think you was among your friends* [here and further original text: Blake, 1972].

An explication of the role of the narrator, the disclosure of the mechanism of narrative influence is a characteristic feature of Blake's satire and Stern's narrative. Like the author of Tristram Shandy, the

poet plays with the reader: *Then Mr Inflammable Gass ran & shov'd his head into the fire & set his hair all in a flame & ran about the room No — no, he did not; I was only making a fool of you.*

The type of storytelling in the work of Blake is close to Stern. Like Stern, the narrator of “The Islands on the Moon” has not only omniscience, but also omnipotence: he can interrupt the course of the narration, suspending the hero’s action in the middle or “thinking” what might have happened (example cited above). Despite the fact that the action of Blake's satire happens at the same time as the story about him, while Stern has a story about the past, the methods of addressing to the reader and time are identical.

It is interesting to note that Blake’s text resembles the text of “Tristram Shandy” even graphically (which is explained by the syntactic uniformity of the narrative): it also has long periods, sentences are torn by multiple dashes, “hanging” dashes are at the end of paragraphs, and graphical inseparability of characters' statements. As a result (it differs from Swift's precise alignment), a special state of immersion in the narrator's word is created; graphic fusion of monologue and dialogue make the text a special discursive integer.

Stern’s shortcut of chapters serves as a peculiar means of avoiding a novel form, and Blake also uses it (referring to the tradition of speaking names). Here is one of the chapters from “The Island on the Moon”:

Chap 2d

Tilly Lally, the Siptippidist, Aradobo, the Dean of Morocco, Miss Gittipin, [&] Mrs Nannicantipot, Mrs Sistagatist, Gibble Gabble, the wife of Inflammable Gass, & Little Scopprell enter'd the room. (If I have not presented you with every character in the piece, call me Ass.)

The names of the most "significant" heroes of Blake have a bright emblematic coloring - literally "Combustible Gas-Wind Seeker", "Etruscan Column Antiquarian", "Essence Kynik", but the names of secondary heroes are often produced by the Swift method, imitatively and multiformely. Let us compare: “Guinggnm” (imitating the neighing of a horse), “yehu” (a combination of exclamations of disgust) in Swift; “Gibble Gabble” (variations of the imitative verbal root with the meaning “chatter”), Tilly Lally (according to Damon (5, 264) going back to the emotional exclamation of "TillyValley!") in Blake. "Foreign" proper names in Gulliver’s Travels (Glumdalklich, Struldrugi, Glabbdobrid) find similarities in Blakes work: Syptypidist, Aradobo, Sistagatist.

This unity of the nominative principle extends to the allegorical images. Like most images in Swift, the characters of Blake's satire are the creatures and illustrations of one principle: experimental science (Combustible Gas), adherence to ancient culture (Etruscan Column) or naivety (Aradobo). They, like yehu and scholars, strudelbrugs and giants met by Gulliver, are signs of ideas, and most of ideas are as alarming as dangerous, like in Swift.

The main object of the image in Blake's satire is a secular society. Carefully reproducing meaningless conversations on "high" topics, Blake follows Stern's manner, but without his soft morality:

"Pray," said Aradobo, "is Chatterton a Mathematician?"

"No," said Obtuse Angle. "How can you be so foolish as to think he was?" "Oh, I did not think he was – I only ask'd," said Aradobo.

"How could you think he was not, & ask if he was?" said Obtuse Angle.

"Oh no, Sir. I did think he was, before you told me, but afterwards I thought he was not."

Obtuse Angle said, "In the first place you thought he was [not] & then afterwards when I said he was not, you thought he was not. Why, I know that—"

"Oh no, sir, I thought that he was not, but I ask'd t to know whether he was."

"How can that be?" said Obtuse Angle. "How could you ask & think that he was not?"

"Why," said he, "it came into my head that he was not." "Why then," said Obtuse Angle, "you said that he was."

"Did I say so? Law! I did not think I said that."

The poet makes a peculiar analysis of the society. In this work he follows the traditions of the classic moral-descriptive novel: his characters talk about Voltaire and Locke, Chatterton and Pindar, make scientific experiments, sing, they can even be lyrical. Each of them can no longer cope with the dialogue, just like Swift's laputians. The characters are only parts of the mosaic of manners and views built by Blake. And if Stern's Uncle Toby likes to sing Lillibuliro out of place, then one of Blake's characters sings an "Italian song" in the middle of the conversation:

Fa ra so bo ro

Fa ra bo ra

Sa ra ra ra bo ro ro ro

Sa ba ra ra ba rare roro etc.

Textual correspondences are interesting. Gulliver talks about a scientist evaporating human excrement deliberately in a serious tone; Tristram Shandy mentions this scientific direction with a smile; Combustible Gas, Blake's character, brings and then accidentally breaks the a bottle of wind took up in the bog house, which can spread the pestilence. These curious actions are the satirical rethinking of the experiments of Paracelsus, who actually evaporated the excrement in order to obtain a miraculous extract; and if this is an obvious sign of pseudoscience for Swift and Stern, then for Blake a bottle of Fuel Gas is already a sign of the direct danger of an enthusiasm for experiences.

Conclusion

There are a lot of such correspondences of motives, themes and scenes, but the purpose of the article is only to outline the prospects for further research.

Summing up, we can say that Blake's narrative in "The Island on the Moon" is organized according to Stern's storytelling, and the allegorical code of satire is close to Swift's work. Both novels are sources of a complexly organized communicative code that Blake uses in his work. Textual interplays between these works are multiple, obvious and lead to interesting conclusions, although the complex genre nature of "The Island on the Moon", including lyrics and verse satire, is determined not only by a genetic link with Stern and Swift novels. A detailed study of these correspondences needs to be done; probably, it could help outline a special line of development of English literature, leading from educational satirical novels to Romanticism.

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Сатирическое иносказание в английской литературе Просвещения и романтизма: Дж. Свифт, Л. Стерн, У. Блейк

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена вопросам преемственности в английской сатирической литературе: авторы прослеживают развитие свифтовских и стернианских традиций в сатире Уильяма Блейка «Остров на Луне». Сатира Блейка связана с романами Свифта и Стерна множественными нитями мотивных и тематических соответствий. Место действия в произведении Блейка, *Остров на Луне*, для английской литературной традиции является знаком аллегорической реальности. Пробразом сатирического и аллегорического Острова является острова романов путешествий, необычайные привычки и облик мифических обитателей которых пародировал Свифт. Тип рассказывания в произведении Блейка близок стернианскому. Интересны текстуальные соответствия: Гулливер к Свифта нарочито

серьезным тоном рассказывает об ученом, выпаривавшем человеческие экскременты; Тристрам Шенди с улыбкой упоминает об этом научном направлении; Горючий Газ, герой Блейка, приносит с собой в гости и затем нечаянно разбивает «бутылку с воздухом из сортира», который может распространить мор. Как и у Стерна, нарратор «Острова на Луне» обладает не только всеведением, но и всесилием: он может прервать ход повествования, на середине приостановив действие героя. Текст Блейка напоминает текст «Тристрама Шенди» даже графически: у него также часты длинные периоды, предложения, разрываемые множественными тире, «висячие» тире в конце абзацев, графическая неотделенность высказываний персонажей. Подробное исследование этих соответствий еще предстоит; вероятно, оно могло бы помочь наметить особую линию развития английской литературы, ведущей от просветительских сатирических романов к романтизму.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

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Ключевые слова

Уильям Блейк, Джонатан Свифт, Лоренс Стерн, романтизм, Просвещение, преемственность, традиция, английский романтизм, аллегория, сатира, ирония, пародия.

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