

MULTILINGUAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE IMAGE OF BABEL IN BRITISH POETRY OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

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The article presents the analysis of multilingual associations of the image Babel based on British poetry of the 19th and 20th century with special emphasis on peculiarities of its representation and perception.

The main purpose of the research is to determine basic concepts of the multilinguism phenomenon, its history, the consideration of theories of the creation of universal language and the study of the verbalization of the concept of Babel.

To achieve the aim of our research the following tasks were solved: 1) theoretical questions on the given problem are studied: the definition of the term “multilingualism” is given and the main conditions of its development are stated; definition of the term “polyglossia” as a literary multilingualism is studied; the main ideas of mankind concerning the creation of a universal language are described; the main theories of the origin of the image of Babel are considered; 2) the means of verbalization of the concept of Babel on the material of poems “Candles in Babel” by D. Levertov, “The Burgler of Babel” by E. Bishop, “By the Waters of Babel” by K. Rozetti and others.

In order to achieve the objectives and the ultimate goal of this study, the following methods are used: research methods as the critical analysis of literary sources and the method of comparison.

The analysis proves that the concept of Babel is still perceived differently. The results of the study can be used by students and EFL teachers who are interested in the phenomenon of polyglossia.

Key words: *multilingualism, polyglossia, poetry, the image of Babel, protolanguage.*

В'юнов Р. В., Тетеріна Л. М. Мультилінгвальні асоціації образу Вавилона в англійській поезії XIX-XX століття. У статті представлено аналіз мультилінгвальних асоціацій зображення Вавилона на основі британської поезії XIX-XX ст. Особливим акцентом є своєрідність його уявлення та сприйняття.

Ключові слова: *мультилінгвальність, полігlossія, поезія, образ Вавилона, протомова.*

Вьюнов Р. В., Тетерина Л. М. Мультилингвальные ассоциации образа Вавилона в английской поэзии XIX-XX века. В статье представлен анализ мультилингвальных ассоциаций изображения Вавилона на основе британской поэзии XIX-XX вв. Особым акцентом является своеобразие его представления и восприятия.

Ключевые слова: *мультилингвальность, полигlossия, поэзия, образ Вавилона, протоязык.*

Defining the problem and argumentation of the topicality of its consideration. Multilingualism has long been of interest to researchers during last decades. The recent growth of research of multilingualism has expanded into many new areas in the last ten years and a critical mass of information and experience in research techniques has been built across this complex field [6]. Staying essential for the coexistence of different ethnic groups and cultures, the concept of multilinguistics carries a lot of contradictions and sometimes causes quite polar thoughts: from full approval to fierce resistance and prejudice. It undermines the very possibility of the existence of a monolingualistic culture and in this sense raises fears for its preservation but at the same time expands the cultural range of the association with the experience of foreign-speaking communities, accumulates the potential of the assimilation of universal values. Detailed research of this concept and its reflection in the literature determines the relevance of this work.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In recent years such linguists and literary scholars as E. Nedelcheva [4], T. Zhikhareva [3], O. Ponomareva [5],

A. Dulichenko [2], A. Goryanin [1] and others worked on the problem of defining the concepts of “multilingualism”, “polyglossia”, “protolanguage”. In the works of these authors we can observe an attempt to clarify the meaning of the concept “multilingualism”, trace the process of its development, describe and study general ideas of the creation of universal languages, the origin of the image of Babel and its symbols.

Among foreign researchers we can single out scientists such as Eugene Jolas [10], Einar Haugen [9], Uriel Weinreich [15], Dominic Charpin [8], Andrew Roberts [14] and others. Most of them define multilingualism as the use of two or more languages in speech according to communicative situation. However, it is not only the ability to speak several languages. It is also a special way of thinking which absorbs the cultural values of different civilizations. Scientists consider multilingualism to be one of the means to resist globalization and imposition of a single style of life and thinking by preserving national cultures, mentality and languages.

Setting the goals and tasks of the article. Whereas the concept of multilingualism as a language phenomenon was thoroughly investigated, multilingualism in literature

is understudied. That is why the **purpose** of this article lies in consideration of the notion of literary multilingualism and analysing the representation of the multilingual association of the image of Babel in poetry.

Practical value of the work lies in the study of a literary phenomenon "polyglossia" which, unlike multilingualism, has not been sufficiently studied and in the analysis of English-language poetry for the existence of multilingual associations and relevant ideas of the creation of artificial universal language or the reconstruction of the protolanguage described in the Biblical legends.

The outline of the main research material. The term "literary multilingualism" or "polyglossia" primarily refers to the more or less extended mix of two or more languages in the same text entailing a cross-cultural or experimental effect.

Despite increased interest in multilingualism, this term is not new. There were some cases of the usage of multilingualism in literature reached from medieval diglossia and courtly polyglossia to the linguistic hybridisation of baroque. But since the 20th century in the context of global communication and the transgression of the limits between the literary genres modern world had increased the usage of multilingualism [11].

Mostly, the literary multilingualism has been produced in the modern and postmodern era. The most common cases of polyglossia are the usage of foreign words as well as some grammatical constructions, anagrams, neologisms, quotation of documents, etc.

Multilingualism in literature is also revealed in the connection of the large fragments written in different languages in one text (one of the songs of the troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras was composed of stanzas written in Italian, French, Galician languages and Gascon dialect). The transition of the author who wrote in one language to another in order to attract a larger audience is also the case of polyglossia [1].

Multilingualism in literature traces back to a biblical story. It takes its origin from a punishment for the construction of the Tower of Babel that was regarded as an act of human hubris and rebellion against God. The obsession with Babylonian confusion, together with purism and xenophobia, were the main obstacles to an early development of multilingual literature [11]. The modern literary treatments of the image of Babel include the appearance of multilingualism, nostalgia for the common protolanguage, metaphor of the human progress and reason for humans' polarisation and division.

In his poem "The Ballad of Babelabour" by the contemporary English poet Tony Harrison there is a hidden sense closely connected with the image of modern England represented through the confusion of Babylon. The main role in its representation is played by the sound aspect of the poem. The title itself is the author's occasionalism that can be understood in more than one way [6].

The first meaning appears out of the combination of the words "babel + bour". According to the Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture *babel* is a scene of confusion, disorder, and the noise of many voices. The word *babel* is also associated with the word *babble* (a confused sound of many people talking at the same time).

In the text of the poem this word is used both as proper and common noun that is supported by the epigraph the words of which belong to B. Brecht "This Babilonian confusion of words results from their being the language of men who are going down" [6, 138].

The second part of the occasionalism *bour* is the base morpheme for the city's names in French (Bourges, Burgundy), English (Bournemouth) and German (Freiburg, Freydenburg) languages. Thus, Harrison's Babelabour is the modern London or England itself while the "Babilonian confusion of words" represents the English language and probably the contemporary poetic language which even in Harrison's poetry shows the tendency to be beyond the limits of the national language by the usage of foreign occasionalisms or their formants, widespread abbreviations and even signs.

The second meaning appears out of the combination of the words "babble + labour". It appears in the very first line: 'What Ursprache did the labour speak?' The basic vowels [b] and [l] in such words as *ballad*, *Babel*, *labour* are also repeated in another important word *gobless* in the word-combination "gobless workers" which introduces the theme of the poem: the author is speaking on "wordless, speechless workers" behalf [6, 141].

Thus modern associations with ancient Babel are actualized and enriched through sound organization of the text.

An English poet of the nineteenth century Christina Rossetti was famous for works on romantic and religious themes. Her poem "The Waters of Babel" is written in the form of a dramatic monologue of the Jew during the Babylonian pilgrimage. Without detailed analysis the work may seem like a retelling of the biblical story but it is clear in more detail that Rossetti explores the deployment of a Jewish prophecy from a Christian point of view including this "Jewish voice" in the author's Christian structure. The book contains numerous references to "Jeremiah's Cry". The author takes over the structure of "Lay" in which the narrator changes the description of his personal suffering to describe the suffering of other people:

"Here I am dwelling, I waste to skin and bone; / The curse comes upon me, and I waste / ... So we the elect ones perish in His ire. / Vainly we gird on sackcloth, vainly kneel" (1, p.98).

The change from the first person in the first lines to the collective "we" in the twelfth reflects the fact that "Jewish voice" is embodied as the vision of one single Jew and of all Jews in general.

The use of such a stylistic device as enjambement with the words "waste", "proud", "bowed" emphasizes the mythic nature of the crime of the Jewish people in their futile waste of God's mercy in their pride in which lies the reason for the loss of God's love. Rossetti emphasizes the narrator's subjectivity through the repetition of the image of the resignation of God and the futile repentance of the people:

"Vainly we gird on sackcloth, vainly kneel / With famished faces towards Jerusalem: / His heart is shut up against us not to feel" (2, p.120).

The title of the poem testifies to the end of the Jewish nation in the Babylonian Empire, the narrator is not a forerunner to the atonement but the future disappear-

ance of Judaism which will end like this history having changed the history of Christianity returning to the image of Babylon as a pay for human pride.

The Welsh poet Gwyneth Lewis in her poem "Pantecost" compares traditional English poetry with Welsh poetry. She notes that the poetry traditions of England and Wales have different tendencies depending on the language in which they were written. In Wales there are unwritten rules about what you can or cannot do with the language. The main emphasis is on the purity of the language because to be a poet in Wales you have to write in English or Welsh but not in both languages. Some writers who predominantly write in Welsh even refuse to be translated [13]. Therefore, it is not surprising that the metaphor of Babylon as a symbol of one for all protolanguages is permeated with criticism.

Gwyneth Lewis observes every individual language as a reflection of the Ursprache. In her thinking about vision of language she addresses herself to such themes of the Babel story as linguistic division and nostalgia for a protolanguage. Her poem is entitled "Pantecost". Pantecost is the Christian festival celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Jesus after his Ascension held on the seventh Sunday after Easter.

The polyglossia in her poem is performed by the usage of rhapsody («*prepare your perpetual Pentecost*» [12]), which is the remnant of the cynghanedd, a traditional way of sound-organization of Welsh poetry. One of the qualities which marks the whole Welsh tradition is a desire for a kind of epigrammatic terseness, a desire to say much in little. Cynghanedd makes each different line or phrase seem to belong to and be contained by some overall hidden idea binding it. The reproduction of these techniques not only evokes Welsh terseness in the English idiom but also displays a larger vision which comments on catholic acceptance of the gift of languages and the blurring of minor and major idioms.

The poem begins as a kind of hymn or sermon, the kind of poetry that seems to correspond with a general characteristic of Welsh poetry. The expression "*to act unnatural* [12]" is also a characteristic of South Welsh dialects when in colloquial practice adverbs are replaced with adjectives. In the spirit of the title, 'Pantecost,' to act unnaturally might refer to the act of writing in complicated forms and to the kind of linguistic play in which Lewis engages here [13].

In contemplation of the vision of a language by poetry Angharad Price uses the following topics of the Biblical narrative of Babel as a linguistic department and nostalgia for protolanguage. From his point of view, Lewis is absorbed by the ideas of Ursprache (the German word for "protolanguage", from which all other languages are derivatives). Price says that Lewis's bilingualism is "*the vision of every single language as the reflection of the Ursprache*" the Scriptures, of which Walter Benjamin said. As a result Price states: "*For a Christian poet such as Gwyneth Lewis the words of any language are paths leading to God's original word*" [13].

Price rightly notes that English and Welsh idioms in Lewis's poetry are interlinked emphasizing that the symbolism of Babylon is the assumption that the presence of many languages is a negative phenomenon and the desire to combine languages into one. In the search of religious metaphors, the image of Babel is compared with the spirit of Pentecost since in the New Testament Acts of the Apostles. Pentecost is a story that tells how the Holy Spirit is leading the Apostles, which allows them to speak in new languages [13].

To sum it up, the multilingualism in literature is embodied in the notion of polyglossia or intentional usage of lexical units and grammar structures from different languages within the composition. Multilingualism takes its origin from the Biblical story of the confusion of Babel, the image of which is represented in many samples of British poetry.

Tony Harrison's poetry shows that the phonological organisation of the text can create the sound image, which generate different associations and carries the deep message of the poetry.

For Gwyneth Lewis and Christina Rossetti the interest in Babilon as a symbol of protolanguage is of primary importance. The use of both Welsh and English idioms can be considered as an idea that all languages have common roots.

Conclusions and perspectives of further research in this field. The results of the study can be used by students and EFL teachers who are interested in the phenomenon of polyglossia. Prospects for further research may be the study of theories of the creation of universal language and the study of verbalization of the concept Babilon in the English poetry of the XXI century.

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