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Abstract. *The deepest reflection and longing for paradise lost have appeared in the English literature since Shakespeare and Milton. In the era of romanticism, it resulted in "cemetery poetry", a gothic horror novel, and ArtNuovo creates a true artistic tonatology, the most prominent representative of which was J. Thomson. The outcast poet, who lived his life under the oppression of misery and alcoholism, reached the limits of despair in "The City of Terrible Night", severing communication not only with somewhat non-existing God, but also with surroundings and communications of the world of the living. The ghosts of former inhabitants of the earth are his lyrical characters; the landscape is dematerialized; only the "dead" is aesthetized here. And the antithesis to the biblical New Jerusalem was justly regarded here. However, the "stopped moment" of perpetual despair does not go beyond the boundaries of the Christian cosmos. Thomson was in the orbit of Calvinism, believing that God arbitrarily chose only a few people, doomed others to infernal torment, clearly ranking himself among the latter. But his denial of God ultimately sounds like an appeal to Him. The author's consciousness remains within the limits, set by the biblical paradigm, which is characteristic of Modernism as a whole. Finally, we note, that it's just human indifference to humans' own salvation, which the same Calvinism considers the sign of renunciation, it makes us look more closely at the author's lyrical dialogue with the Creator.*

Introduction.

The phenomenon called decadence, appeared by no means in the bosom of Art Nuovo at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century: both the word itself and what it outlined were born in a precision era. A French abbot gave life to this term, indignant at the frivolity of the Rococo art and, in general, the complex of hedonistic ideas, that gave rise, for example, to the Marquis de Sade. In the Enlightenment epoch, a renaissance credulity to life was raised by the prominences of a dying bonfire; the growing new scientific consciousness destroyed the spiritualistic ideals of the Middle Ages, leaving no hope for life after death.

The great impulse of the Baroque to balance life and death within the framework of the harmony of the Christian spiritual cosmos, with the loss of faith, was reduced to the feeling, that this earthly life, perhaps, may be the only thing we have without question. But being hypnotized by the inevitability of death, it poisoned major-materialistic aspirations to live the time allotted to a person in a funny and comfortable way. The revolt of the romanticists against classicism, with its cult of life-building, is largely due to the growing loss of faith in Christian axiology and burgher nature of Modernity. No matter, how endeavored both artistic positivism and naturalism to affirm the idea, that the value of life is in life itself, in the last quarter of the 19th century a gigantic emptiness, unfolding before a thought freed from Christian dogmata, became an expression of general existential anxiety. In anticipation of the disasters of the 20th century, especially the most sensitive natures, felt more acutely subterranean hums of coming total destruction, and— whether in agreement, whether in controversy with the Bible, tried again to understand its warning about general inevitability of death.

Literary and artistic consciousness of the 19th and 20th centuries' turn creates true *artistic thanatology*. It has compensated somehow art's shift in the direction of chanting sensual shine of things and reconstruction of antique- pagan cult of Nature for several past centuries. With a new acuteness, the torment of a person obsessed with the horror of complete disappearance, the "loss" of Eternity, is experienced. At the same time, Modern and Postmodern eras, as the contemporary French philosopher O. Bulnua has definitely noted, only vary and shuffle the questions of existence, that were posed by the Middle Ages [1]. Added to the above mentioned: particularly the early Middle Ages, having yet not brought up the building of scholastic philosophy, are permeated with the light of faith and hope. In decadence, an ancient gnostic doubt sounded with renewed vigor: yes, God created the world, but was it the true God? Isn't there too much impenetrable, inexplicable darkness in his creation? And when the Renaissance raised the previously carefully tabooed "devil problem" onto the shield, a waterfall of atheism poured into the gap formed in the Christian picture of the world. English writers of the New Age actively pick up the Dantean motive of descending into hell and the central theme of Milton's "Paradise Lost" – the theme of the original sin of man's disobedience to the Creator.

All this has formed the whole artistic W. Blake's paradigm, in which the author's interpretation of Christian doctrine and symbolism is combined with peering into the secret depths of evil. But, the beginning of the open disobedience to God, was laid by Byron, who finally released the energy of negativism, implicitly condensed earlier in the Gothic novel. Byron's excuse for Cain, who rebelled against the "tyranny of the Creator," finds the widest resonance – among the Shelley spouses, Heine, Pushkin and Lermontov, Shevchenko and Eminescu, E. Poe. The symbolists, who succeeded them, were especially eager to breathe in the aroma of the "flowers of evil"; Baudelaire, Rimbaud or Bryusov, like the hero of "The Karamazov Brothers", as it were, would return the ticket for the train of life to the Creator: *I*

did not ask to be created! This may be combined with moments of Christian religious exaltation, as in Verlaine's *casus*, but in general in literature there is an expanded image of the world created by collective efforts, as a fatal abyss of despair, once designated in the symbolism of the biblical Flood. The concurrent immersion of a number of philosophers in the bowels of the unconscious further strengthened the general feeling of the fragility of life and cultural construction, the alarming foreboding of an imminent catastrophe.

However, it was precisely George Thomson, who reached the truly Herculean pillars here, an outcast poet in the bosom of Victorian England alien to him, who lived his age under the yoke of misfortunes and failures, the end of whose earthly path was overshadowed by hopeless melancholy and unbridled drunkenness. His "The City of Terrible Night" (1873) is the confession of a soul that truly feels itself in hell. "Never before has English poetry seen such a gloomy work, riddled with such bleak despair. Even in the dullest writings of his predecessor and idol Shelley, the latter always shows through something similar to divine hope. Nothing like this can be found in Thomson's poem. Consistently and relentlessly, he denies any possible hope to assist from above. This is the poetry of absolute, all-consuming, inevitable despair, a passionate, violent preaching of unbelief, a call to lose all illusions and voluntarily accept the only truth of life: God does not exist, the immortality of the soul is a fiction, nature is ruled by necessity only. With jealousy of the prophet Thomson affirms his dark postulates throughout twenty two chapters of the poem" [2].

1. Literature review.

One cannot say, that the work has been left beyond the literary world. It became a common place to note pessimistic character of Thomson's poem [4, p. 294; 5, p. 145 etc.,] however, as his life position in general. The title of one of the most well-known monographs, dedicated to his life and creativity by B. Dobell says for itself – «The Laureate of pessimism» [6]. And K. H. Byron does not only make pessimism a sense-creating problem in Thomson's world (The pessimism of James Thomson (D. V.) in relation to his times»), but studies its manifestations in different aspects – religious, philosophical, life aspect, moreover the famous poem plays here a key role, and it is placed in a special section of the monograph [7, p. 139-159]. Other concepts, which repeatedly attracted the attention of researchers, also have clearly expressed negative connotations: hell [8], insomnia [9], etc. W. Sharpe, analyzing Thomson's famous poem, not only determines its place and specificity among other works of the Victorian era, but draws interesting parallels with Marxism and the philosophy of stoicism [10, p. 69-70], emphasizing, at the same time, that Thomson did not set before himself political tasks in any way, for he was interested in humanity as a whole, and not in the problems of a particular class. The same thing is noted by W. D. Schaefer: "He believed <...> if problems of humanity were ever to be solved, for not through social or political reform, but through reform of human nature" [11, p. 83]. In general, in his work W. D. Schaefer pays great attention to worldview issues, considering Thomson's problems of theism and atheism on the basis of his life path and artistic creativity [11, p. 37-82] as well as his way from optimism to pessimism [11].

He is also interested in the fact, how the concept of the city changed while working on a poem. He was the first to point out the different ideological pathos between the parts written in 1870 and in 1873 [12]. Residents of the city of the first part are lonely victims of their own misfortunes, isolated from each other. In the second part of the poem, they make up a certain community based on atheistic ideas, for which suicide is a perfectly acceptable way of avoiding an indifferent world.

However, the shocking originality of Thomson's lyrical experiences, the author's subjective concept of reality, still remain actually outside of the researchers' attention.

2. Destruction of communication in "The City of Terrible Night"

In the poem communication is broken not only with a seemingly non-existent God, but also with real, living people. Ghostly, ethereal creatures, shells of the former inhabitants of the earth are lyrical characters of the background; the landscape is dematerialized; everything human has lost its warmth and attractiveness, turning into a mysterious simulacrum with current, fluctuating outlines.

Thomson's text is a lyric poem without a plot, consisting of rushes of vague, like a dream, images in the spirit of "black gothic", that flicker like unsteady light reflection in a piece of impenetrable black anthracite. The author's position borders on solipsism, and he does not accept any movement and development – not only in the field of filiation of ideas, but also in the sphere of matter, nature – death is conceived as the peremptory end of everything:

For life is but a dream whose shapes return,
Some frequently, some seldom, some by night
And some by day, some night and day: we learn,
The while all change and many vanish quite,
In their recurrence with recurrent changes
A certain seeming order; where this ranges
We count things real; such is memory's might.

[3, p. 4]

This "stopped moment", if not beautiful, is deeply aesthetized, because the material itself, chosen by the author, is "dead" and not "living", using the categories of E. Fromm. All this makes us recall today's attempts by postmodernists, to force us to admire D. Hirst's famous series of dead animals in formalin or G. von Hagens' "The universe of the body", undoubted manifestations of necrophilia. Therefore, we are attracted by the task of considering the specific structure of lyrical characterization in this work, which is the purpose of our study.

This isolation of man in an alien urban world, and in fact in the world as such, is one of the key ideas of the poem. At the same time, any text is still a communication. According to Y. Lotman, every lyric text is not just a monologue, as they usually think, it has

a dialogical component. We are talking about the *addressee* to whom this author's monologue is *addressed*. In civil poetry, this is an appeal to fellow citizens, rulers, warriors, or even to enemies of the fatherland; in lyrics of nature – the search for certain parallels to one's own psychological state in a landscape, in autumn foliage or moonlight; in meditative lyrics, those are melancholy conversations with oneself, reflectioning [13]. Finally, in prayer texts, the type of psalms that are not subject to the laws of Aristotle's poetics, is the desire to restore the lost connection with the Divine, to gain His attention and protection, to find support in anxieties. Who is the addressee of the lyrical dialogue in this strange poem?

It is not the inner talk of the soul before us, it is not a speculative philosophical reflection, but the image system, built mainly on mimesis, rather than on the diegesis; eventuality here is reduced to zero. Before us is a hopeless and dense abyss of despair, in which all will to action is quenched, and the ideas that have been inspiring humanity for centuries have decayed, like the flesh of those who professed them.

Yes, here and there some weary wanderer
 In that same city of tremendous night,
 Will understand the speech and feel a stir
 Of fellowship in all-disastrous fight;
 "I suffer mute and lonely, yet another
 Uplifts his voice to let me know a brother
 Travels the same wild paths though out of sight."

[3, p. 3]

J. Thomson does not just estimate the city (but also human life in general) deeply pessimistic, he does not see any future ahead in principle. The 19th century - the era of urbanization, rapidly gaining momentum, in the world of art resulted in the city being often portrayed as a monster, which sucked the juices from those who came there. The atomization of personality (which E. Durkheim defines as an *anomie*) was also (and remains) one of the defining characteristics of a city dweller. The emphasis on alienation as a characteristic feature of urban life, which we find in Thomson's poem, was not new in literature. Many writers have already noted it at the end of the 18th century. "What is new in Thomson's remarkable poem is its sense of the city as fit image of a purposeless universe" [4, p. 294].

If a typical Victorian England representative's life could be frightening, terrible, but still he cherished the hope of progress and improving it in the future, the city of Thomson leaves no hope for the future. " <...> the poem negates Victorian optimism and faith in human progress, offering instead a vision of spiritual bankruptcy amidst dehumanizing urban growth and urban consciousness" [14, p. 341].

K. H. Byron discusses the choice between optimism and pessimism, that the 19th century has provided, noting that the alternative was not so simplistically antagonistic. "One might venture into any one of four classes of belief: there were those who held that life was good, and hoped that it may become still better; those who held that life was good, but

feared its deterioration; those who held that life was evil, but hoped for its improvement; and those who held that life was evil, and likely to get worse. Thomson during his lifetime placed himself in the fourth category” [7, p. 89-90]. There were obvious reasons for this in the poet’s life circumstances (as we have already mentioned), and, from our point of view, the atheism of the poet was one of the key reasons for such a Macabrist attitude.

3. Christian doctrine as an implicit foundation of Thomson's artistic conception

The city of Thomson, correctly noted, is a clear antithesis of New Jerusalem Christian poetic cosmos [2], the crown of aspirations for all the humiliated and offended in the history on mankind, a symbol of eternal life and the kingdom to come.

They leave all hope behind who enter there:
One certitude while sane they cannot leave,
One anodyne for torture and despair;
The certitude of Death, which no reprieve
Can put off long; and which, divinely tender,
But waits the outstretched hand to promptly render
That draught whose slumber nothing can bereave

[3, p. 7]

Although Thomson did not read St. Augustine, however, the picture of the city is inherently St. Augustine’s City of Man in modern interpretation [15, p. 169]. This is the Castle of the earth, which leaves no hope for the attainment of the Castle of Heaven, it is not simply unattainable, but of which virtually there’s no memory. The city of Thomson is a city of people with their wretched dreams and desires, a meaningless whirlwind of life. D. L. Jeffrey defines it as follows: "<...> the severest and most uncompromisingly negative picture of the worldly city is James Thomson's infernal vision" [5, p. 145].

The eternal archetype of life – Woman – in this context appears as an innocent killed victim. In Thomson’s work she reminds Shakespeare's Ophelia; at the same time, there can be seen deliberately accentuated similarity of famous shroud of Holbein, so much confusing the hero of Dostoyevsky: well, in the end, can not remain Christ only a dead body, without resurrection! Otherwise, after all, as the apostle exclaimed, “and faith our vain!” (1 Cor. 14–16):

The Lady of the images: supine,
Deathstill, lifesweet, with folded palms she lay:
And kneeling there as at a sacred shrine
A young man wan and worn who seemed to pray:
A crucifix of dim and ghostly white
Surmounted the large altar left in night: –
The chambers of the mansion of my heart,

In every one whereof thine image dwells,
Are black with grief eternal for thy sake.

The inmost oratory of my soul,
Wherein thou ever dwellest quick or dead,
Is black with grief eternal for thy sake.

I kneel beside thee and I clasp the cross,
With eyes forever fixed upon that face,
So beautiful and dreadful in its calm.

I kneel here patient as thou liest there;
As patient as a statue carved in stone,
Of adoration and eternal grief.

While thou dost not awake I cannot move;
And something tells me thou wilt never wake,
And I alive feel turning into stone.

[3, pp. 27-28]

This blatant cruelty of the Universe, the death inevitability of all, that is sweet to human heart, generate a logical outcome – challenge to the Creator, which is conceived as a complete analogue of the gnostic Yaldabaoth.

"Who is most wretched in this dolorous place?
I think myself; yet I would rather be
My miserable self than He, than He
Who formed such creatures to His own disgrace.

"The vilest thing must be less vile than Thou
From whom it had its being, God and Lord!
Creator of all woe and sin! abhorred
Malignant and implacable! I vow

"That not for all Thy power furred and unfurled,
For all the temples to Thy glory built,
Would I assume the ignominious guilt
Of having made such men in such a world."

[3, p. 23]

Hatred to the Creator with such a fury will be expressed, perhaps, by the avant-gardists of the XXth century (remember Mayakovsky's: *I'll expose you, grey-bearded, from here and to Alaska!*). And, it is hard not to agree with W. D. Schaefer, who calls Thomson "mature pessimist and a confident atheist" [11, p. 77].

Here we meet, among other things, a unique phenomenon. Atheistic consciousness usually demonstrates not entirely rational algorithm: it fights with the numinous passionately, violently, seriously, though denying the very existence of it. In this way, Jacob, sweltering in the predawn darkness, collided and began to fight with someone powerful, having no idea about him: in the end, the hero became limp and, from that moment, got a new name, Israel. Thomson, however, seems to nihilistically deny the very possibility of happiness for man. And faith in his axiological system does not at all give salvation and even peace. D. Seed clearly notes it, saying, that "faith as an agency of darkness and death. The first Gothic image of The City ironically expresses the revival of faith as a morbid act of exhumation, an anachronistic appeal to the "spectres of black night" [8].

Conclusions.

The city is transformed from the beginning to the end of the poem, but it remains the same hopeless and gloomy. W. Sharpe, noting the difference in the interpretation of the city and people in it at the beginning and at the end of the poem, writes that here the contradiction isn't of great importance, but "it may be seen rather as a dialectic which teaches one to deal with life in the City. The earlier sections do concentrate on individual despair, but in the completed poem they function more strongly as demonstrations of weak or misguided responses to the City. The later portions reject these responses in favor of a more courageous communal action of self-conscious defiance, exemplified by the Melancholia of the final section" [10, p. 70].

So, the existential rebellion of the author, who did not find a place either within the framework of ordinary philistine life, or in the world of poetic sublimation of his dreams, was generated by a sense of hopeless despair. Despair is, according to the postulate of Christian theology, the greatest, unforgiving sin, in fact, it is a blasphemy to the Holy Spirit, inspiring existence.

St. Augustine spoke of Evil as the shadow of Good, which did not have its own nature. Without presence of Good in the world, Evil is an absolute phantom. In order to deny, you need to have something to deny. Therefore, all attempts to subvert the Bible's axiology, remain fatally imprisoned within the limits of its representations, in its own orbit.

Besides, Thomson was spiritually tied with Calvinism, relying on Augustine's teachings about salvation: according to him, God personally selects only a few people for eternal life, casting away others into the darkness of eternal curse. Thomson clearly attributed himself to the latter. And the addressee of the poem is not so much the reader, as the Creator himself, whom the author desperately reproaches for the lack of love to His creation.

I.e., before us is not an indifferent, but a very personal, although negative, interpretation of the Bible, a dialogue with it, testifying human tragedy, the destructiveness of ruining the ties with God. This, in fact, is a yell, addressed to the Creator from the depths of hell: *De profundis clamat Tibi, Domine!* It is worth noting, that the same Calvinism considers precisely complete indifference of a person to this problem to be the main sign of renunciation, and this leaves Thomson's "atheism" question not completely closed.

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