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**IMAGE OF PROMETHEUS IN THE LYRICS OF P. SHELLEY AND G.
BYRON**

***Annotation:** In the article being studied the mythopoetic image of Prometheus in English romanticism based on the material of the poem G. Byron's "Prometheus" and the poem of P. Shelley "Prometheus Unbound". The specificity of the image of Prometheus, the God-fighting and gnostic motives in these works in which the ancient heritage is reinterpreted from the standpoint of romantic aesthetics is revealed.*

***Keywords:** Prometheus, Shelley, Byron, English romanticism, God-fighting motives, antique image, romantic image.*

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ОБРАЗ ПРОМЕТЕЯ В ЛИРИКЕ П. ШЕЛЛИ И Д. БАЙРОНА

***Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается мифопоэтический образ Прометей в английском романтизме на материале стихотворения Д. Г. Байрона «Прометей» ("Prometheus") и поэмы П. Б. Шелли «Прометей Освобожденный» ("Prometheus Unbound"). Выявляется специфика образа Прометей, богоборческих и гностических мотивов в этих произведениях, в которых античное наследие переосмысливается с позиций романтической эстетики.*

***Ключевые слова:** Прометей, Шелли, Байрон, английский романтизм, богоборческие мотивы, античный образ, романтический образ.*

The mythological image of Prometheus is one of the eternal images of literature and art that have multiple variations and interpretations. So, for example, already in antiquity, there were various versions of the myth, in which the image of Prometheus varied from a cultural hero, creator and benefactor of the human race, to a cunning trickster, a chthonic force opposing Zeus. In this regard, there were various approaches to the interpretation and perception of Prometheus, up to the condemning ones, as indicated by A. A. Taho-Godi [3, p. 832]. Thus, in different historical epochs and in different artistic systems, the semantics and symbolism of this image could be very different, in which certain cultural tendencies were manifested. English literature of the first half of the 19th century was no exception. During this period, works of art, different in genre, were created, in which the image of Prometheus, under the influence of romanticism, was filled with a new meaning. Lord Geogre Gordon Byron in 1816 created the poem "Prometheus", Mary Shelley wrote the novel "Frankenstein, or Modern Prometheus", and Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1820 wrote the lyric drama "Prometheus Unbound".

Despite the difference between these works, especially in the novel by Mary Shelley, the image of a powerful and tragic hero, opposing the world order, appears in them. In the works of Byron and Shelley, in contrast to the tragedy of Aeschylus "Prometheus the Chained" ("Προμηθεύς Δεσμώτης", 444–443 BC), semantic accents are shifted from the tragic fate of Prometheus to his prophetic and god-fighting nature. In particular, Shelley writes about this in the preface to his "Prometheus ...", pointing out its differences from the unprecedented second part of the tragedy of Aeschylus: "To tell the truth, I did not like such a pitiful denouement as the reconciliation of the Defender of people with their Oppressor. The moral power of the myth, contained primarily in the sufferings of Prometheus and his inflexibility, would be reduced to nothing if we could imagine that he renounces his proud speeches and trembles before the victorious and insidious enemy"[6, p. 375].

Moreover, Shelley's intention is actually completely opposite to what was supposedly in the tragedy of Aeschylus. If Prometheus Aeschylus, in exchange for his release, tells Zeus the secret of his defeat, if Thetis gives birth to a son from Zeus, then Prometheus Shelley turns out to be unbroken. In this regard, the power of the tyrant Jupiter himself in Shelley's lyric drama is deposed by his son Demogorgon, described by Shelley as a "monstrous darkness incarnation" [6, p. 461]. This is preceded by the curse and prophecy of Prometheus himself, the first in the universe to challenge the tyranny of Jupiter: "Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this Curse, / Ill deeds; then be thou damned, beholding good; / Both infinite as is the universe, / And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude. / An awful image of calm power / Though now thou sittest, let the hour / Come, when thou must appear to be / That which thou art internally; / And after many a false and fruitless crime, / Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space and time!" [6, c. 456].

It is noteworthy that, in Shelley's interpretation, Prometheus is not himself the force that overthrows Jupiter, but is a tortured and tormented prisoner reflecting on his fate, deed and the universe. The inexhaustible strength and audacity of the spirit interspersed in Prometheus with a certain inactivity, doubt and reflection, which gives this image a distinctly romantic character.

At Shelley and Byron, Prometheus becomes not just the protector of humanity, but the very spirit of Man: "But baffled as thou wert from high, / Still in thy patient energy, / In the endurance, and repulse / Of thine impenetrable Spirit, / Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse, / A mighty lesson we inherit: / Thou art a symbol and a sign / To Mortals of their fate and force" [1, c. 49]. In this regard, the release of Prometheus from Shelley turns into total freedom of mankind and the onset of world harmony and a golden age. Byron's poem is in less major tones. Here, the power of Jupiter is not overthrown, and Prometheus, rather, by his sacrifice paves the way for humanity, becoming the winner in defeat: "And a firm will, and a deep sense, / Which even in torture can

descry / Its own centered recompense, / Triumphant where it dares defy, /
And making Death a Victory” [1, c. 50].

However, like Shelley, Byron's Prometheus is full of unbreakable will and prophetic power: “All that the Thunderer wrung from thee / Was but the menace which flung back / On him the torments of thy rack; / The fate thou didst so well foresee, / But would not to appease him tell” [1, c. 49].

Due to the coming of the Golden Age in Shelley's “Prometheus...”, the cyclical nature of time is disrupted in the space of the ancient myth and a rather Christian perception of a story that has an end arises. On this basis, I. B. Kazakova points to serious ideological and philosophical discrepancies in the interpretation of the myth by Aeschylus and Shelley: “In the “Prometheus Unbound” it is impossible to find either with the neoplatonic doctrine, or with the cosmological myth from Plato's “Politics”. Zoroastrianism, which influenced the concept of good and evil presented in the drama, was reflected in other essential moments of the work ”[2, p. 84]. The mention of Zoroastrianism and the dualism of good and evil in Shelley's “Prometheus Unbound” is not accidental, since another characteristic feature of the romantic Prometheus is his demonism, manifested in the fight against God. This is partly indicated by Shelley himself in the preface to the poem: “The only fictional image, somewhat similar to Prometheus, is Satan” [5, p. 18]. And although Shelley writes that he considers the image of Prometheus better and more poetic, it is obvious that he refers to the image of the devil by D. Milton.

Proceeding from this, the romantic interpretation of the myth of Prometheus and his confrontation with Jupiter gravitate towards the gnostic picture of the world, in which there are also dualism, the dichotomy of the material and spiritual, as well as the Demiurge-tyrant, who doomed peace in the territory and suffering. Hence, the idea of rejection of the world as a vicious creation of a criminal higher power and the struggle with this very power. Shelley's fascination with gnosticism and related teachings, such as Manichaeism, is evidenced by his article “On the Devil, and the Devils”, in

which the poet writes: “The Manichean doctrine of the origin of the world and that it is ruled by it, if not true, then although would be a hypothesis that does not contradict reality and experience. The assumption that the world was created and governed by two opposite, but equal in strength of the beginning is only the embodiment of the struggle between good and evil, which we feel, in ourselves and observe in the world around us”[4, p. 534]. All these features and motives, combining different mythological and philosophical systems, turned out to be close not only to the worldview picture of the world of Shelley and Byron, but also to the romantic image of an exceptional hero, a rebel, challenging the world order.

Thus, Prometheus in Shelley's lyric drama “Prometheus Unbound” and in Byron's poem “Prometheus” is reinterpreted in accordance with the romantic worldview. Prometheus in these works is perceived as a hero oppressed by an unjust higher power, endowed with colossal capabilities and unbreakable will. Added to this are infernal motives that bring the romantic image of Prometheus closer to Milton's devil, who rebelled against God. In the works of Shelley and Byron, the idea of liberating Prometheus from the despotic Demiurge becomes very important, with the fall of his power, universal harmony will be established on earth. This motif brings the romantic interpretation of the image of Prometheus closer to Gnosticism, the influence of which was quite characteristic of the literature of the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, not only in the works of Shelley and Byron, but also, for example, in the works of W. Blake and German romantics. Based on this, Prometheus in the literature of English romanticism has become an ambiguous and multifaceted image, combining the ancient heritage, Gnostic and Christian motives and romantic aesthetics.

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