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БИБЛЕЙСКИЕ АЛЛЮЗИИ В ПЬЕСЕ «В ОЖИДАНИИ ГОДО» СЭМЮЭЛЯ БЕККЕТА

В статье рассматриваются библейские аллюзии, использованные в пьесе «В ожидании Годо» Сэмюэля Беккета. Предлагается характеристика главных героев и хронотопы с точки зрения связи пьесы с библейскими сюжетами. Выявляются основные свойства аллюзий, найденных в тексте.

Ключевые слова: *драматический текст; абсурдистская пьеса; Сэмюэль Беккет; В ожидании Годо; Библия; библейская притча; скрытый смысл; аллюзия.*



”**W**aiting for Godot” created by playwright Samuel Beckett in the middle of the 20th century (September, 1952) is considered to be one of the first plays related to the Theatre of the Absurd. Absurdism is based on the belief that life is meaningless, so the theatre should not have any sense either. As an absurdist play, “Waiting for Godot” gives little attention to plot, characterization theme, and includes ideas of existentialism. Hence it completely rejects realism.

The revolutionary ideas of the play are not the only interesting feature it possesses. The later English version [hereinafter referred to as 9] is actually Beckett’s self-translation of his original French-language play *En attendant Godot*. Despite the fact that Beckett was an Irishman and his early works were written exclusively in English, he lived most of his life in France for political reasons and it was French in which he found his mature language and freedom. All things considered, Beckett’s play cannot be attributed to one language or one nation; it goes beyond one culture and covers all of the humanity that

meets existentialist ideas. The play reflects the historical realities, the deep sense of loss of humanity after the Second World War. "Waiting for Godot", born from the ashes of modernism, inaugurates the era of postmodernism, which claims that the world is endowed with chaos. The French version of the play debuted on January 5, 1953, at the Theatre de Babylone in Paris, and the English one premiered in August 1955 at the Arts Theatre in London. Afterwards, in 1969 Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his revolutionary contribution to drama and literature.

The amount of criticism and number of interpretations generated by "Waiting for Godot" impresses and revolves both around the literary merits of the play and its value as a philosophical work. Being one of the most influential and enigmatic plays in the history of the theatre, "Waiting for Godot" is still read, staged and disputed. The popularity of the play can be explained by the fact that the problems that are raised in it are still relevant and the meaning has not been determined if it exists at all. For instance, Irish critic Vivian Mercier describes it as the play in which "nothing happens twice."

The text itself abounds in various stylistic devices. The most frequent ones are metaphors, elliptical constructions, rhetorical questions etc. However, it is allusions that best of all reveal the subtext or non-obvious details. Therefore, we are going to concentrate on them. Before analyzing their use, it is essential to define allusion itself.

The term 'allusion' derives from the Latin word *allusio* meaning 'a joke' or 'a hint'. In Literary Encyclopedia the following definition of allusion can be found: a reference to a well-known statement, a fact of literary, historical, and more often political life, or to a work of fiction [8, s. 28]. Consequently, there is an important characteristic of allusion: it is to fit into the context, which is supposed to be familiar to the audience.

According to the Great Russian Encyclopedia, allusion is a hint of a literary text or real person or event, which is not directly pointed out [3]. Thus, among the key features of allusion is its non-obviousness for the reader.

The point is, the linguistic identity is capable of associating, that is establishing the connection between some objects, based on personal experience [17, s. 31]. According to Yu. N. Karaulov [7, s. 216], there are precedential texts, which are essential for the linguistic identity, as one perceives them either on the emotional level or on the intellectual one, from the viewpoint of the personality's horizon. Such texts are well renowned by the wider environment, including ancestors and contemporaries. Speaking of the English written speech, it is essential to point out that the main sources of precedential texts are the Bible, folklore plots, Greek, Roman, Celtic mythology, Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, etc. Due to allusions, one can research the way popular plots represent author's views. On the other hand, judging by the main patterns used in the text, one can study the author's field of interests.

As for the play itself, it must be said that this text is deprived of categories of time and place. The reader has no idea of where the action takes place or when. Although here one can find several images, which might help the reader to find the answer. For instance, the author mentions some objects on the background: a country road, a tree, a mound, and a ditch.

Speaking of the tree, the characters give it different names: a bog, a willow, a tree. The reader's (spectator's) supposition is that the tree might symbolize hope for salvation. First it is mentioned in the following dialog:

Vladimir: He said by the tree. (*They look at the tree.*) Do you see any others?

Estragon: What is it?

Vladimir: I don't know. A willow.

And then:

Estragon: Where are the leaves?

Vladimir: It must be dead.

Thus, in the beginning the tree has no leaves, it seems to be dead.

In Act II there is another image:

Vladimir: But yesterday evening it was all black and bare. And now it's covered with leaves.

Estragon: Leaves?

Vladimir: In a single night.

Estragon: It must be the Spring.

At the end of the play the tree is covered with leaves, the characters *feel the Spring*, which has always been associated with the kingdom of heaven. Another essential feature is that the characters call the tree *a willow*. In Christianity this tree is associated with spring, joy and hope [2]. On the other hand, Vladimir and Estragon try to hang themselves on the tree. So, it might also be related to the tree on which Judas hanged himself [12]. Finally, we come to a conclusion that the symbol of a tree does not have the only meaning and can be perceived both as the tree of life and as the tree of death.

Speaking of the category of time, we must mention that the characters expect Godot to come on Saturday. According to Jing Wang [20], such choice of the day may also symbolize hope. First, Saturday is the day when man was created [6]. Then, it is Saturday when Jesus was resurrected [13]. Obviously, according to the Christian tradition, this day is associated with hope for universal salvation.

Apart from the above-said, there is another vivid image in the text. The already mentioned country road gives an important clue about the place. It may be assumed that, if the road and its hikers Pozzo and Lucky can be associated with movement, Estragon and Vladimir symbolise lack of motion. They seem to be stuck near the tree; however, the characters long for a journey. They make numerous attempts to start it throughout the play:

Estragon: Charming spot. (*He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium.*) Inspiring prospects. (*He turns to Vladimir.*) Let's go.

Vladimir: We can't.

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're "Waiting for Godot".

This circle is endless, as in the very end of the play they still endeavor to leave:

Vladimir: Well? Shall we go?

Estragon: Yes, let's go.

They do not move.

Curtain.

Thus, all the attempts to move are in vain.

Another important characteristic of the play is its timelessness. The characters cannot remember the exact day they were going to meet Godot:

Vladimir: He said Saturday. (*Pause.*) I think.

Estragon: You think.

Vladimir: I must have made a note of it. (He fumbles in his pockets, bursting with miscellaneous rubbish.)

Estragon: (*very insidious*). But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? (*Pause.*) Or Monday? (*Pause.*) Or Friday?

They even have no idea what time of the day it is:

Pozzo: What time is it?

Vladimir: (*inspecting the sky*). Seven o'clock... eight o'clock...

Estragon: That depends what time of year it is.

Pozzo: Is it evening?

Silence. Vladimir and Estragon scrutinize the sunset.

Estragon: It's rising.

Vladimir: Impossible.

Estragon: Perhaps it's the dawn.

Categories of the past, present and future also do not exist:

Estragon: We came here yesterday.

Vladimir: Ah no, there you're mistaken.

Estragon: What did we do yesterday?

Vladimir: What did we do yesterday?

Estragon: Yes.

Vladimir: Why... (*Angrily.*) Nothing is certain when you're about.

Taking into consideration the fact that the characters have no right to leave the place and the reader or spectator knows nothing about the time when it all happens, we can come to a conclusion that they are stuck between two worlds: the Earth and the kingdom of heaven. According to the Christian tradition, after its death a soul waits until it is decided whether it will be placed in hell or in heaven [4]. There is no certain answer; however, pointless waiting, which forms the basis of the play, can be explained in this way with the help of the Bible.

This point can be confirmed by a biblical parable of the Marriage Feast, which was provided in the article written by Natalia E. Mikeladze [15]. According to this parable, a king sent his servants to invite some guests to a wedding banquet of his son. The guests refused to come, some of them even killed the king's servants. In response the king burned the city of the murderers. Then the king decided to invite any people standing on the crossroads. Finally, the wedding hall was full of guests, however, one of them did not wear wedding clothes. The king ordered: "Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are invited, but few are chosen" [11].

If one compares the parable to the plot of the play, one can find more or less similar patterns. First of all, as it has been mentioned above, the brightest symbol of the play is a road, near which the characters are “Waiting for Godot” to come and take them to his “kingdom”. Secondly, the characters, especially Vladimir, pay too much attention to the way they look and behave. For instance, Vladimir does not allow himself to smile or laugh:

Vladimir breaks into a hearty laugh which he immediately stifles, his hand pressed to his pubis, his face contorted.

Vladimir: One daren't even laugh any more.

Estragon: Dreadful privation.

At the same time Estragon worries about the way they look:

Estragon: (*pointing*). You might button it all the same.

Vladimir: (*stooping*). True. (*He buttons his fly.*) Never neglect the little things of life.

All these funny moments can be compared with the requirement of the king to wear wedding dresses. Obviously, speaking about the kingdom of heaven, one means moral beauty, but the characters understand it literally.

Thus, speaking of the categories of time and place, it is worth mentioning that the characters seem to be stuck both in time and in place. However, we come to a conclusion that some Christian allusions in the play can either give or deprive the reader of hope for characters' salvation and happiness.

As for the characters of the play, Beckett emphasizes the considerable difference between Vladimir and Estragon. Vladimir is more spiritual than Estragon: he reflects on religious and philosophical issues. Estragon is only concerned about what he can eat and how to relieve his physical pain, all his needs are down-to-earth. Therefore, the salient detail of Vladimir's image is his hat and Estragon's his boots. Vladimir knows the Bible and the Gospels well while Estragon does not remember whether he has even read it:

Vladimir: Did you ever read the Bible?

Estragon: The Bible... (*He reflects.*) I must have taken a look at it.

Vladimir: Do you remember the Gospels?

Estragon: I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim. We'll be happy.

It is important to note that Estragon's name comes from the French word “tarragon”, the plant which serves in the Bible as a symbol of straying, distancing from God. Estragon is not committed to “Waiting for Godot” and repeatedly suggests leaving. It is Vladimir who makes him stay and keeps him awake reminding him of their purpose. It seems to us that the fact that Estragon twice falls asleep in the play is an important detail as it can be the reference to the Gospel of Luke: “... Keep your shirts on; keep the lights on! Be like house servants waiting for their master to come back from his honeymoon, awake and ready to open the door when he arrives and knocks. Lucky the servants whom the master finds on watch” [10]. Estragon is not as devout as Vladimir that might suggest different outcomes of their lives.

As mentioned by Natalia Mikeladze [15], there is the biblical proverb “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life...” [18] in the play. Vladi-

mir inaccurately quotes this parable (its first part) having heard of the “last moment” and can't remember “who said it”. Vladimir forebodes “the coming” that makes him feel “relieved” and “appalled” at the same time and concludes that nothing to be done. We believe that this episode introduces the motif of the Day of Judgment and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

It is possible to predict the presence of apocalyptic references already in the title of the play. This is not only the mysterious name of the title character, “reminding” of God, but also the expectation of the Epiphany itself. Vladimir and Estragon, in fact, do not know why they are “Waiting for Godot”. They simply believe in his coming, believe that he is able to change their lives and give them a meaning. In the Gospels Jesus replied: “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority” [1]. This explains the reason why the characters hesitate about the precise day of His coming. What concerns the Day of Judgment and the Second Coming, it should be mentioned that these events are preceded by a number of omens; one of them is the advent of antichrist that be symbolized by Pozzo in the play.

First of all, Pozzo`s arrival in anticipation of Godot coming disappoints the expectations of the characters and makes them take him for Godot for a moment. It reminds of the antichrist whose function is to impersonate Christ and take control over people`s minds by the means of deception. Hence, there is another coincidence: Pozzo is imbued with the power over Lucky. He fully controls his mind and makes him do whatever he wants against his will. Our idea is that the bone which Pozzo gives to Lucky and Estragon is another symbol in the play. According to Holy Scriptures, a person who does not obey antichrist will not be able to have any benefits [16]. In other words, the earth will cease to give birth, there will be devastation everywhere and a person will have a choice — to worship the beast and get food or hope for the help of the Lord. It is noteworthy that Vladimir does not take the bone.

Taking all the above-mentioned suggestions into consideration, we can suppose that Lucky represents human beings carrying a heavy burden without even being asked to. The significant detail that Lucky cannot think without his hat may mean that people cannot think independently as well as distinguish between good and bad and expose antichrist.

When Beckett was asked why Lucky was so named [5, s. 407], he replied that he is lucky because he doesn't have expectations anymore. This makes the difference between him and Vladimir with Estragon. These two have a hope as the reference to the parable of two thieves from the Bible implies:

Vladimir: <...> One of the thieves was saved. (*Pause.*) It's a reasonable percentage.

There are still grounds for hope for Vladimir and Estragon considering that they are able to feel compassion for Lucky and love each other in their own way:

Vladimir: (stutteringly resolute). To treat a man... (*gesture towards Lucky*) ... like that... I think that... no... a human being... no... it's a scandal!

Being often asked about the theme of “Waiting for Godot” [19, s. 9], Beckett quoted St. Augustine, who urged not to lose hope. One of the thieves was saved, it is not necessary to take into account that one was convicted. The reward depends not on human merit, but on the grace of God. Beckett`s characters hope for Lord`s mercy being brought to divine justice and await for it:

Vladimir: <...> We have kept our appointment and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?

To conclude, we would like to mention that this text abounds in different types of allusions. Nevertheless, all main categories of the play refer to the Bible — starting with the chronotope and ending with the names of the main characters. Hence it is the Bible that helps the reader or spectator make their own interpretation of the text.

Developing the topic, we also would like to point out that the allusions in the text show heterogeneity. Some part of them point out at a particular Biblical plot, while the others are polysemantic and create several layers of the text. Samuel Beckett's play questions many biblical postulates. Absurd and meaningless episodes contradict each other in some ways and have different interpretations that express the modernist line in the text. Consequently, Samuel Beckett did not give the only answer to the reader or spectator; understanding and interpretation of the play and its hidden senses is in fact a matter of everyone's choice and/or horizon.

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BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS "IN WAITING FOR GODOT" BY SAMUEL BECKETT

The absurdist play *Waiting for Godot* written by Samuel Beckett abounds in Biblical allusions, which help the reader or spectator understand the idea of the play better. Most of these stylistic devices are heterogenous and can be interpreted in different ways. The authors' hypothesis is that allusion is one of the major devices used by Beckett to enhance the text by providing further meaning.

Key words: dramatic text; absurdist play; Samuel Beckett; *Waiting for Godot*; the Bible; Biblical parable; hidden sense; allusion.

