Traditions of S.T. Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' in 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' by O. Wilde

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Abstract

This article aims to analyse the poetic traditions of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by S.T. Coleridge, which migrated into The Ballad of Reading Gaol by O. Wilde. A comparative analysis of original poems and their Russian translations reveals a thematic and structural link that connects these two poems. The article highlights the common features and the differences in literary devices used by Coleridge and Wilde to transmit the complex concepts of suffering and forgiveness through their characters and to declare values and philosophical ideas. The literary devices in point define how these concepts are covered, and serve a common theme in the work of Coleridge and Wilde. The article also provides arguments to confirm the social situation described in the works.

The lyrico-epic genre allows using both poetry analysis tools and prose research methods, which ensures high-quality research.

The article frames values of the modern culture and creates conditions for discovering a conceptual similarity in the symbolism of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

Keywords: Poetry, Reminiscence, Literary Tradition, English Romanticism, Ballad, Intercultural Communication, Literary Detail

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Introduction

The last work of Oscar Wilde, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898), was the apotheosis of confession in his poetic work. The poem speaks about the suffering of a man in prison, about a murderer and, at the same time, a victim of a beautiful and dangerous feeling of love. He wrote this poem in Berneval-le-Grand, France, after two years of imprisonment. *The Ballad* depicts the experience of the poet in prison. In his letter to the closest friend, Robert Ross, Wilde writes: *"…the horror of prison is that everything is so simple and commonplace in itself, and so degrading, and hideous, and revolting in its effect"* (Letters between Oscar and Robbie Ross, 1987: 22). It was Ross, who prompted the very name *The Ballad* to O. Wilde. Although O. Wilde told the publisher Leonard Smithers the final version of the poem title on December 11, 1897, the first six editions were published under the simple title *The Ballad* and the O. Wilde's identification number *C33* that he had as a prisoner. From the line that appears in the "*De Profundis*", it seems that O. Wilde had an intention to dedicate *The Ballad* to R. Ross, but, for some reason, this did not happen. Leastwise, it proves an emotional connection between them: *"When I go out of prison, R--- will be waiting for me on the other side of the big iron-studded gate, and he is the symbol, not merely of his own affection, but of the affection of many others besides"* (Vitkovsky, 2004: 353). In Wilde's work, affection as a deep emotional feeling may underlie the complex concept of suffering, representing a non-neutral attitude of the character towards the object of affection. Suffering arises from the conflict between the character's emotional expectations and the real behaviour of a person for whom he has affection. The circumstances that occur make the character feel the grief of this contradiction.

O. Wilde borrowed the rhythm of his poem from the English lyric poet Alfred Edward Houseman and wrote it using Ballad stanzas. The plot is based on a true story. In the summer of 1896, Charles Thomas Wooldridge arrived at Reading Gaol, as indicated in the dedication: *In Memoriam C. T. W. sometime Trooper of the Royal Horse Guards obiit H. M. Prison, Reading, Berkshire July 7th, 1896.* Wooldridge was sentenced to hanging for murdering his wife in a rage of jealousy. After the execution, his body was thrown into a pit with quicklime.

Translated into more than fifty languages, including Russian, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* became a well-known piece of poetry. Russian translators note the presence of literary associations between the Wilde's work and other written compositions. For example, Bryusov points out the apparent interrelation between this poem and the Victor Hugo's novel *The Last Day of a Condemned Man* (*Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné)*. The novel, which is a protest against the death penalty, speaks on behalf of a person sentenced to the execution. It is no accident that the author does not mention the crime, for which the narrator was condemned to die (Bryusov, 1919; Zhatkin & Yashina, 2007). This emphasises the urgency of the idea of forgiveness not only at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels but also in the context of human-society relationships. Forgiving oneself means to experience a sense of relief about a relatively stressful issue when there are no other opponents and partners except himself. Thus, self-forgiveness does not need a subject, who can grand forgiveness, but brings peace on the back of personal reasoning. Thus, the object of forgiveness (a person asking for forgiveness) plays all the roles in the process of forgiveness at the interpersonal level. Interpersonal forgiveness involves a person forgiving another and an object of forgiveness, where the result - forgiveness - is achieved through communication. The process of forgiveness is similar to any act of communication. Social forgiveness involves a pre-condemnation of "deviant" behaviour in the culture and a precedent that places such behaviour within the range of social norm, proving that it is not critical to the values of society. Such events include a revolution, war and other social upheavals, as well as the identification of positive vivid characteristics

that an object of forgiveness possesses. After these events, previously deviant behaviour becomes recognised in society as normal and thus a person achieves social forgiveness. A person in prison awaiting death is the object of public forgiveness, whose behaviour has remained critically unacceptable to society. He remains unforgiven on both levels, intra- and interpersonal: by the executioner, by his relatives, and by himself, immersed in grief experience.

In the Russian literary consciousness, the rethinking of the O. Wilde's works began in the 20thcentury when new collected editions appeared on the market to attract the interest of the Russian translators (Lushnikova, 2017). Studies concerning the reception of the Wilde in Russia cover the timeframe from the 1890s to the 1900s (Lushnikova, 2017a).

These studies opened a series of discussions regarding the influence and immorality in the Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. They discuss the late Victorian campaign against obscene literature and its victims, the original version of the novel published by the *Lippincott's Magazine* in 1890, the oblique manner in which the innuendo about its obscenity functioned during Wilde's three trials. Other matters of discussion involve the Wilde's own ironic engagement, at several critical points in the novel, with the conception of influence at work in the legal test governing the evaluation of obscenity. Similar studies also explore the relation of the painting itself, and of the famous French novel that Dorian borrows from Lord Henry to that conception of influence, and the Wilde's re-enactment of his ironic perspective at the narrative level (Stern, 2017). As demonstrated, Wilde's deep and abiding interest in Elizabeth Siddall, who is best known as the model for Pre-Raphaelites John Everett Millais's Ophelia and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Beata Beatrix, reverberated across his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, to the extent that had not been considered. Some argue that the suicide of Dorian Gray's lover Sibyl Vane, whose very name Sibyl echoes Siddall, was inspired by Elizabeth Siddall's untimely overdose (Orlando, 2017).

Other studies dedicated to O. Wilde investigate the aspect of modernity in *Salome*. The scholars believe that on the one hand, Wilde applauds the theme of *God is dead*, asserting that all the human values are to be reassessed. On the other hand, he mourns that without God's protection, the modern humankind will breed an ambivalent feeling of love and hatred toward God. Thus, *Salome* is a modernist drama that bear certain Avant-gardeness and exposes the modern humankind's disillusionment (Guoqiang, 2016). A question that they rise draws the attention to whether Wilde's *Salome* is an authentic symbolist drama or not. Symbolism in Wilde's *Salome* is different from other specimens of the genre, such as Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*, which directly deals with a spiritual issue of the salvation of soul. *Salome* also lacks the fatalistic sense of doom that dominates Maeterlinck's *Princess Maleine*. Wilde's Salome is monstrous, as Herod says: "*she seems to commit a crime against some unknown God*" (Im, 2017: 168).

O. Wilde significantly reassessed his aesthetic theory in *De Profundis*, in particular, his concept of intellectual labour by focusing on his account of the challenges of reading and writing in prison. There are studies that demonstrate how Wilde began to theorise intellectual activity as a kind of work and, in the process, redefined his aestheticism in order to include notions of physical effort. Wilde wrote *De Profundis* in response to the English prison system of the 1890s, which forced inmates to perform punitive labour as a way to inflict on them a sense of futility. For this reason, Wilde reconsidered his polemical defences of art-making and criticism as idle, and instead, conceived intellectual work as a free and productive activity: in contrast to the uselessness of prison labour. Wilde sees himself producing something of aesthetic value by writing his text. De Profundis signals a significant shift in his thought: it moves away from Wilde's earlier celebrations of dandy indolence and emphasises instead the work entailed in writing. It puts forth a critique not only of alienated labour, as Wilde had done before his imprisonment but also of alienated leisure (Gerzso, 2017). Kelly offers a new reading of the central spiritual portion of Wilde's famous

prison letter *De Profundis*, in which he contemplated his future and expresses his desire to start a new life. As he works to envision in writing a future that can integrate the suffering of his prison experience, he outlines a spiritual vision that is both startlingly original and informed by varied religious traditions, including Buddhism, Taoism, and the British Occultist movement. Wilde sets out for himself the following tasks to serve as the foundation for his new life: individual self-realisation, suffering, and acceptance (Kelly, 2016).

K.I. Chukovsky's publications devoted to the analysis of O. Wilde's works promote Wilde among Russian readers, as evidenced by the study of Chukovsky's critical view concerning Wilde (Erofeyev, 2013a). Erofeyev also investigates the critical works about Wilde by Z.A. Vengerova, which were published between 1892 and 1913. Among them, articles in the sixth volume of the *Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary*, 1892, which is considered to be the first mention of Wilde in the Russian press; articles from Vengerova's books *Literary Characteristics,* 1897; *English Writers of the XIXth Century*, 1913, with due attention to Vengerova's article *Oscar Wilde's Trial* printed in No.11 of *Novaya Zhizn* in 1912. The latter publication creates the mythologised image of Wilde as a martyr, a life constructor who voluntarily subjected himself to imprisonment due to a specific interpretation of tragic events of the writer's life (Erofeyev, 2013b).

The readers of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* may recollect some other work, that is, the poem of Samuel Taylor Coleridge *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1798, which also tells about the suffering of a person sentenced to death, not by society, but by nature (Zhatkin & Ryabova, 2011). V.Ya. Bryusov in his essay *The Thought of Wilde's Ballad* said exactly: "*Prison taught him <Wilde> the terrible beauty of suffering. With merciless cruelty, he did embody this beauty in a string of monotonous stanzas, which painfully tear the heart. But this merciless cruelty is, at the same time, forgiving love for all people. The ultimate conclusion from "The Ballad of Reading Gaol", which the poet found in the depths of his*

own suffering but beautiful soul, fits in one word: *Forgiveness*" (Bryusov, 1915: 6).

Seemingly, S.T. Coleridge's poem (1878: 27) says: "*The same string of sufferings, experienced by the Ancient Mariner, the same forgiving love but to all living things in the end. Although at first it may seem that nature is more merciful than society, since the old man remains alive, yet he is doomed to wander around the world, telling his awful story, that is, continue to suffer*".

S.T. Coleridge authored the conversation poems and was a notoriously one-sided talker, was fixated on what Romantics would have called natural signs in his poetry and personal writings. Examples include an 1803 notebook entry, in which Coleridge and W. Wordsworth exchange a disconcerting pig look. This look is contrasted to Geraldine's serpent's eye in *Christabel*, and it is concluded that poems such as *Christabel* should inform our understanding of what constitutes a conversation poem, especially if we acknowledge Coleridge's attitudes toward conversation and nonverbal components of poetry (Camarda, 2017).

In Russian literary criticism, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by S.T. Coleridge became nearly the central piece of his writing, representing a cultural phenomenon (Makhov, 1998). The Russian scholars explore the reading of the critical images (ambivalent images of the Ship - the ship of Human Life and the ship of Death) and motives in different Russian translations (Niyetova, 2010). For example, Shabanova analyses in detail the principles of N.S. Gumilev's translation using *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge as an example (Shabanova, 2008).

Opinions regarding the Coleridge's true moral in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* vary from Freudian dream theory to religious theories (Moore, 2017). Thus, people rely on religious doctrines to find the explanations for anxieties they do not want to believe in (Solms, 2000). As Coleridge kept returning to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, modernising, revising and expanding the poem over thirty-six years, most of Coleridge's seminal thinking is emergent in it. In the 1790s Coleridge's conscience seems to

have been wrestling with a dilemma, concerning the Christian idea of redemption. Throughout this period his uncertainty and scepticism about, if not his moral qualms over, the doctrine of atonement manifests itself in the sometimes horrific and nightmarish qualities of the poem's supernatural scheme. Coleridge treats the Albatross and the Ancient Mariner as Jesus figures in what amounts to an argument about the potentially negative or positive efficacy of redemption (Hillier, 2009). The scholars tend to resurvey the most established critical questions surrounding *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge (whether it provides a coherent moral order or whether its irrationality outstrips such an order). They argue that while it is common to portray the text's irrationality as the failure of Christian moral order, in fact, the most convincing explanation for this irrationality can be found within the poem's Christianity. This irrationality lies with the doctrine of original sin, which was a horrifying barbarism for Unitarianism and which remained a religious mystery resistant to explication even in Coleridge's later thought. Some scholars overturn the longstanding critical position, which sees Christianity in the poem as bound more or less to its ultimate unity, harmony and moral explicability. For Coleridge, original sin brings, by contrast, a new form of awful but compelling self-knowledge (Stokes, 2011). The structure of the paper is as follows:

The *Introduction* section provides a reader with the backstory of works written by S.T Coleridge and O. Wald in the context of social life and humanistic values of that time. Through an analysis of papers dedicated to the creativity of these authors, this section identifies the keynote of modern art and the path of its development deeply connected with the complex concepts of suffering and forgiveness. *The materials and methods* section offers information about the instruments, background theories and technologies applied to conduct qualitative research.

The *Results* section presents a critical reading of the links between *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by S.T. Coleridge and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by O. Wilde. Here, one can find results of an in-depth lexical and syntactic analysis, as well as information about values that authors and their characters possess.

The *Discussion* section discloses the content of literary compositions under consideration through the lens of philosophical ideas, social events and biographies of the authors. This section provides an opportunity for encoding the hidden meanings in the text and creates a broad platform for discussions about aesthetics and morality.

The *Conclusion* section summarises the results of the study, identifies the value of the article, and speaks of the prospects for further research.

Materials and Methods

This study investigates the content of S.T. Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and O. Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, in both original and Russian translations, as well as critical articles comprehending them. Russian translations of both poems include versions made in the late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries by F.B. Miller, A.P. Korinfsky, N.L. Pushkarev, N.S. Gumilev, N. Korn, K.D. Balmont, M. Likiardopulo, V.Ya. Bryusov, A.I. Deutch, and others . From the number of translations, literary and critical responses, and echoes found in the works written by Russian writers, one may regard *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as the most famous work by S.T. Coleridge that is known in Russia. This is also true for *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by O. Wilde, which has been dominating in Russian consciousness for a long time – from the moment Russian readers acquainted with O. Wilde until the popular editions of his fairy tales appeared in the 1960s – 1970s.

The study aims to reveal elements that can be easily recognisable by Russians through the search for thematic and structural interrelations between two poems (example, the use of ballad elements; increasing tension when describing repetitive torments and tortures). The present article analyses the use of common motives like suffering and forgiveness in detail due to their significance for the Russian cultural tradition.

The analysis bases on Bakhtin's theory of dialogue, according to which there are three approaches to use when studying cultural interaction:

1) *vertically-diachronic*. This approach refers to a correlation that exists between current culture and its prior shape. According to this approach, the writers offer creative interpretations of the cultural heritage in texts contributing to cultural continuity (Bakhtin, 1979);

2) *synchronic*. These studies provide clarification on the nature and mechanisms of a dialogue between national and ethnic cultures. The approach is subdivided into:

a) *vertically-synchronic*, which implies a retrospective study of an interaction between a recipient and a foreign cultural heritage, with a focus laid on discovering the mechanisms of transplantation, synthesis and transformation of texts in the new cultural context (Lotman, 1992);

b) *horizontally-synchronic*, which explores a specific type of contact, an active exchange of values and creative content between participants in a civilised coexistence (Stepin & Guseynov, 2005).

The diachronic and synchronic types of a cross-cultural dialogue represent retrospective interaction of a recipient either with his own or with a foreign cultural heritage, respectively. In any of these cases, the culture of the past or present appears "an active interlocutor" - raises questions and provides answers within the self, thereby discovering new edges and semantic depths.

Another theory addressed here is the Fedorov's linguistic translation theory that allows comparing originals and translations by operating with the objective language facts:

- lexical colouring of words and its transfer;
- figurative meaning of words in various combinations;
- stylistic role of word-play and its transfer;
- use of phonetic, graphic, morphological, syntactic means of a language;

On the other hand, consider preservation of:

- semantics of the original;
- its national colouring;
- characteristics connected with the time of its creation;
- individuality of the original in the translation (Fedorov, 2002).

Results

The Ballad of Reading Gaol and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* are ideologically close to each other, as their characters (Ancient Mariner, who murdered his saviour the Albatross, and the Guardian, who killed the woman he loved) had to bear the responsibility for their sins in the face of nature, people and the God. Both of them experience the fear of death and bear the indifference and rejection of other people. However, sufferings change the soul of a man, and despite pride and the voice of reason, he begins to long for forgiveness. Happy are those who can obtain forgiveness:

Ah! Happy they whose hearts can break

And peace of pardon win!

How else may man make straight his plan

And cleanse his soul from Sin?

How else but through a broken heart

May Lord Christ enter in? (Wilde, 1928: 23) –

Oh, the one, whose heart can

Break on the road, is happy!

How else to cleanse the soul

And a new way to find?

If not into the depth of broken hearts,

Where will Christ descend? (Wilde, 2004: 115) (translated by V.Ya. Bryusov).

These lines are relatable to the words of the Ancient Mariner; only by experiencing suffering, one can start loving the neighbours and find forgiveness for the committed crime:

He prayeth well, who loveth well

Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best

All things both great and small;

For the dear God who loveth us,

He made and loveth all (Coleridge, 2004: 303) –

Prayers will reach the Creator,

Prayers will give peace to the heart,

When you love every person

And every beast.

When you pray for them,

For both small, and large,

And for any life,

And love everything

The God has done and loves (Coleridge, 2004: 304) (translated by N.S. Gumilev).

In addition, there are similar images in originals and translations, for example, the ghosts of death:

The very deep did rot: O Christ!

That ever this should be!

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs

Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout

The death-fires danced at night;

The water, like a witch's oils,

Burnt green, and blue and white (Coleridge, 2004: 307) –

What a smell of rotten – oh, Christ! –

What a smell of the wave,

And creatures slimy creep

From the vicious depth.

In the night weave a round dance

The wandering lights.

Like candles of a witch, green,

Red, and white they are (Coleridge, 2004: 307) (translated by N.S. Gumilev).

The same images in Wilde's poem strike a more frightening impression:

With mop and mow, we saw them go,

Slim shadows hand in hand:

About, about, in ghostly rout

They trod a saraband:

And the damned grotesques made arabesques,

Like the wind upon the sand!

<…>

No things of air these antics were,

That frolicked with such glee:

To men whose lives were held in gyves,

And whose feet might not go free,

Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things,

Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltsed and wound;

Some wheeled in smirking pairs;

With the mincing step of a demirep

Some sidled up the stairs:

And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,

Each helped us at our prayers (Wilde, 2004: 309) –

The ghosts were invariably

Walking here and there,

Wildly dancing a saraband,

As their status told them!

Like arabesques in the brilliance of the night

That desert sands weave.

<…>

But not the play of imagination

The ghosts seemed to us:

After all, we, whose lives are in heavy fetters,

Will submit even to dreams;

Live shadows of ghosts

Appeared in the corners.

They flashed, danced,

And intertwined in pairs,

On our prison stairs

Ran up and down,

They laughed, scoffed

Over the way we shook (Wilde, 1928: 12) (translated by A.I. Deutch).

One cannot help noticing the similarity of individual lines, even the images of *Life-in-Death* by Coleridge and *living death* by Wilde, used by the authors to express the inner state of their characters, are very similar.

Coleridge and Wilde make extensive use of repetitions. They literally permeate the whole fabric of works for the sake of gradual aggravating the dramatic narrative. For example, Wilde repeats the pronoun "some" in stanzas, expressing the main idea of the poem, so that their measured current can emphasise the cruel thought, contained in the last lines, in which there is no repetition:

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,

By each let this be heard,

Some do it with a bitter look,

Some with a flattering word,

The coward does it with a kiss,

The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,

And some when they are old;

Some strangle with the hands of Lust,

Some with the hands of God:

The kindest use a knife, because

The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long,

Some sell, and others buy;

Some do the deed with many tears,

And some without a sigh:

For each man kills the thing he loves.

Yet each man does not die (Wilde, 2004: 311) –

But everyone kills the loved ones,

Let everybody know that,

One will kill with a cruel glance,

Another with a deceitful dream,

The coward one – with a false kiss,

And the one who dares – with a sword!

One will kill love in his prime,

Some other – in the declining years,

One will strangle in voluptuousness,

Another – with the sound of coins,

The kindest one will take a knife: the one, who died

Suffers no more.

One is too fast, the other is too slow,

One will buy, the other will sell,

One cries for a long time, the other, being calm,

Will utter no sigh,

But everyone kills the loved ones,

Not everyone will have the retribution (Wilde, 1904: 39) (translated by K.D. Balmont).

In the spirit of the English literary ballad tradition, Wilde also uses refrains, each time in a slightly modified form which emphasises the mood expressed in the passage previous to the refrain:

I never saw a man who looked

With such a wistful eye

Upon that little tent of blue

Which prisoners call the sky,

And at every drifting cloud that went

With sails of silver by (Wilde, 2004: 364),

…And at every wandering cloud that trailed

Its ravelled fleeces by (Wilde, 2004: 364),

…And at every careless cloud that passed

In happy freedom by (Wilde, 2004: 365)–

I never knew how could

Be so watchful the gaze,

Biting into a narrow strip,

Into the blue pattern,

That we, prisoners, call the sky,

Which is the whole world for us (Wilde, 1904: 44) (translated by K.D. Balmont).

Gradually, the image of clouds, floating freely across the sky, begins contrasting to the life in captivity in the poem by Wilde, however, without being reflected in Balmont's translation.

Coleridge also had a huge number of repetitions (Zhatkin & Ryabova, 2011). The English romanticist used them, for example, to show the inexplicable motive for killing the Albatross by the Ancient Mariner or to express, how lonely the old man was when he was paying off for his crime:

For all averred I had killed the bird

That made the breeze to blow.

Ah wretch! Said they, the bird to slay,

That made the breeze to blow!

<…>

Then all averred, I had killed the bird

That brought the fog and mist

'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,

That bring the fog and mist (Coleridge, 2004: 306)–

They reproached me: "You killed

The one pleasant to us,

Who sent the wind to us!"

<…>

…and everyone said:

"You are right to punish

The one dangerous to us,

Who sent the fog to us (Gerbel, 1875: 280) (translated by F.B. Miller);

Alone, alone, all, all alone,

Alone on a wide wide sea!

And never a saint took pity on

My soul in agony (Coleridge, 2004: 107) –

I alone, I alone was on the whole

This dead mysterious sea;

None of all souls flying around,

Wanted to understand my grief (Coleridge, 1878: 27) (translated by N.L. Pushkarev).

Both authors use the method of contrasting to show that everything, created by the nature and God, is beautiful. The people do not just understand this until a particular moment. Having committed a crime against life and repented in it, they gain love. In Wilde's poem, the horrors of prison are contrasted to the beauty of flowers:

They think a murderer's heart would taint

Each simple seed they sow.

It is not true! God's kindly earth

Is kindlier than men know,

And the red rose would but blow more red,

The white rose whiter blow.

Out of his mouth a red, red rose!

Out of his heart a white!

For who can say by that strange way,

Christ brings His will to light,

Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore

Bloomed in the great Pope's sigh? (Wilde, 2004: 206) –

They think that the murderer's heart would poison the seeds they sow. However, this is a lie. The God's kind earth is kinder than people think and red roses would bloom there redder and white roses – whiter. "*Out of his mouth a red rose! Out of his heart a white one! For who can know the ways of the Lord after the pilgrim's naked crook has bloomed in the great Pope's sight*" (Wilde, 1912: 99) (translated by M. Likiardopulo).

In Coleridge's poem, nightmares of wandering are contrasted to the beauty of the sea snakes:

Beyond the shadow of the ship,

I watched the water snakes:

They moved in tracks of shining white,

And when they reared, the elfish light

Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship

I watched their rich attire:

Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,

They coiled and swam; and every track

Was a flesh of golden fire (Coleridge, 2004: 211) –

Where the ship was sailing, where on the flow

Its shadow was falling, –

There the flame, always strange,

Was shining, night and day...

In its rays my eyes caught

Beautiful sea snakes:

They wagged on the waves

Among the living lights...

In the foam of waves their scales

Were changing their colours;

Attracted my eyes, called

Me their beauty...

They flashed here and here –

On the golden flow...

Lucky ones! I would like to

Go to you forever… (Coleridge, 1894: 33) (translated by A.A. Korinfsky).

Discussion

Many studies embrace the traditions of S.T. Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Abdulmajeed R. (2017) analyses the superstitious images in Coleridge's work according to Hoey's *Problem-Solution Pattern*, 1983, of the rhetorical structure of discourse analysis by showing how certain lexical items can signal the narrative structure of the whole texts. It has been concluded that all the stanzas have the rhetorical narrative structure components: situation, problem, response, positive or negative evaluation (Abdulmajeed, 2017).

In his early lyrics, Coleridge explored the ethical work of collective guilt, a feeling with enormous Romantic and contemporary significance, formally modelled collective guilt while making a cautious case for its social value. By reading *The*

Rime of the Ancient Mariner through recent works in social psychology and philosophy of ethics, scholars show how Coleridge created causalities of feeling, affirming meaningful relationships of responsibility that go beyond personal guilt. It has been concluded that Romantic lyric offers an ideal form not only for illustrating how collective guilt works as a "structure of feeling", but also for examining the emotion's potential to create positive social changes (Pladek, 2017).

Despite the differences in Coleridge's fantastic romantic poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and A. Rimbaud's hallucinatory symbolist poem *Le bateau ivre*, 1871, both of them show, each in their own way, a ghostly movement of the ship. The movement that seems to lead into the vastness of the globe, but finds itself confined to the narrowness of one's own self. Both of these sea poems draw a route that in the end is aimless in its bouncing and circular movement. The haunted ghost ship as a wooden skeleton without crew flies over water in Coleridge's ballad or falls into unattainable depths in A. Rimbaud's long poem. It has been wondered whether these poetic travel narratives can be described as forms of a "haunted globalisation", in which leaving the known for the unknown turns out to mean always moving around the same – the self, the known, the own writing process: even if in the self there is always found the other, the foreign, too (Zapf, 2016).

Filipszak (2016) offers a reading of *Through the Panama* by M. Lowry in light of an intertext connected with Polish literature. The allusion to a short story *The Lighthouse Keeper of Aspinwall* by a Polish writer H. Sienkiewicz received only fragmentary responses among Lowry critics. Because of this, Filipszak decided to fill in the gap by providing the interpretation of the lighthouse keeper's perilous illumination mentioned by Lowry in the margins of his work, and by analysing it in the context of primary Romantic texts, including *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge, whose text is quoted in the margins of *Through the Panama*. This choice has allowed throwing a different light on Lowry's work, which is also inhabited by echoes of

futurist attitude to the machine and the Kafkaesque fear of being locked in one of the many locks of the canal "*as if in experience*" (Filipszak, 2016: 268).

Selitrina (1999) reveals typological analogies and contact communications within clarification through the suffering of the two works of different eras – *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* of Coleridge and J. Conrad's *Falk*.

Other scholars show that Jean-Baptiste Clamence in *The Fall* by A. Camus and the mysterious Ancient Mariner in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge each experience something that radically shifts his worldview and his view of himself. Arrogant and overly confident, they are both traumatised by coming face to face with their own imperfections. Their ways of dealing with their feelings of guilt and responsibility, however, are quite different (Blakeney, 2010).

G.G. Byron's *Don Juan* contains several passages, which parody *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge. Some of these similarities are frequently treated as if Byron was simply creating a pastiche of contemporary literature. However, Coleridge had used his poem to elucidate a portion of his understanding of how literature works. Therefore, some suggest that Byron was purposely answering Coleridge in the second canto of *Don Juan* (Baker, 2007).

The Russian scholars study the literary peculiarities of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by O. Wilde (Lushnikova, 2016a), offer a philological reading of this poem in Balmont's translation (Lushnikova, 2016b), and investigate how readers understand Wilde's creative work in Russia (Lushnikova, 2017).

Because the poem's humility of style and subject matter is uncharacteristic for Wilde, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* cannot be considered simple, either in aesthetic or moral terms. Focusing on the poem's images of "*filth*", the scholars show that Wilde's swan song is a work of great power and subtlety, what makes readers rethink the key assumptions about Wilde and about literary imagination (Beasley, 2017).

In a similar way, Stoneley (2014) looks closely at the Reading Gaol archive, tracing out the lives of some of those, with whom Wilde was incarcerated and who he was saved by, and provides an analysis of the prison population in reading, while Wilde was there.

Wilde's work, so carefully tracing the tenets of the Romantic and Post-Romantic heritage, at the same time, anticipates some features attributed to modernism and postmodernism. Thus, literary modernism implies the experiments with literary forms and expressions and a slight rethreat from the traditional ways of writing. Postmodernism, in turn, is charachterised by active use of such narrative techniques as fragmentation and paradox (Eagleton, 2011). Wilde's concepts were indebted to the Keatsian theory of impersonality and aesthetic appreciation based on sensations, simultaneously denoting a transition from Coleridge and Keats to the Baudelairean predilection not only for art but also for the artificial. Conversely, in a modernist manner, Wilde in his literary output withdraws from society and avoids worldly, mundane knowledge devoid of spirituality. Finally, he is primarily concerned with the linguistic artefact itself, with the game, forming a bridge between modernism and postmodernism, where paradox, the comic device, corresponding to the theme of dual personality, stirs the clichés of the current statements into a novel meaning (Pestka, 2018).

The present article analyses traditions of Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by Wilde, with a focus laid on Russian translations. In perspective, these traditions may be studied on the examples of other writings, both foreign and Russian.

Conclusion

Despite a difference of a hundred years, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by Oscar Wilde are connected thematically and structurally. When writing their best pieces of poetry about suffering and forgiveness, both authors used the same ballad-specific devices to aggravate the tension and describe all the

sufferings and torments, which a soul underwent before asking for forgiveness. Findings reveal the depth and complexity of the concepts of forgiveness and suffering that authors accurately disclosed through writing their characters.

The study identifies the key determinants of modern literature and humanistic ideas reflected within it, which are highly relevant to the society of that time. If one looks at factors influencing the disclosure of concepts like suffering and forgiveness in the works by Coleridge and Wilde, she/he will notice that the emphasised simplification of structures does not mean the simplification of moral and aesthetic ideas when conveying the feelings of a character.

Both poems convey the ultimate images of death, fate, and references towards the idea of religion, in particular, prayers. Both writers made beautiful and realistic images. The realism like this is integral in the traditions of Russian literature. Therefore, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol"* became the most popular works of these writers in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth – early twentieth centuries. This is especially apparent from the emergence of numerous translations: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* saw the Russian market in translations by F.B. Miller, A.P. Korinfsky, N.L. Pushkarev, and N.S. Gumilev, while *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* - in translations by N. Korn, K.D. Balmont, M. Likiardopulo, V.Ya. Bryusov, A.I. Deutch.

V.Ya. Bryusov, one of the founders of Russian Symbolism, draws his attention to the Wilde's poem in his essay *The Thought of Wilde's Ballad*, which is a conceptually new field for further research. Distinguishing specific connections by symbolists and uniting them in a network will create a precedent toward integrating symbolists from around the world into a unified literary school. This step is critical de-facto to all branches of linguistics and a specific group of users (that is, , students, teachers, and scientists).

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