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Mykhalkchuk, T.

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Biblical Allusions in Expressionist Poetry in the Context of Austrian, German, and Ukrainian Literature: A Comparative Analysis[1]

Tetiana MYKHALCHUK, The Netherlands

Abstract

With the application of comparative methodology, this article analyzes biblical allusions, reminiscences, paraphrases, direct and indirect quotations, and symbols in the poetry of Austrian, German, and Ukrainian writers (Georg Heym, Mykola Bazhan, Mykola Khvyliovyj, Todos Osmachka, Pavlo Tychyna, Georg Trakl, Stefan Zweig, Franz Werfel). It explores literary connections between interpretations of Old and New Testament quotations in the original languages (Hebrew and Greek) and poetry in the original languages (Ukrainian and German). Comparison of literary and biblical texts written in the original languages with literary and biblical texts in translation shows both similarities and significant differences in the interpretation of biblical elements. Hamartiological, pneumatological, Christological, apocalyptic, and eschatological motifs and their comparison with Ukrainian and German poetic texts are treated as a model of comparison for the transformation of categories of expression as one of the basic principles for many expressionist texts.

Keywords: biblical allusions, reminiscences, paraphrases, comparative literature, expressionism, hamartiological, pneumatological, Christological, apocalyptic, and eschatological motifs, Europe, European culture.

About the author

Tetiana Mykhalchuk is a founder of the Amsterdam Ukrainian Research Institute, and an affiliated researcher of Scandinavian and German Studies at the Amsterdam School for Culture and History at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. She has taken part in studies at Leiden University, was a visiting PhD researcher at the University of Duisburg-Essen, and also an affiliated researcher at Utrecht University. Her current research topic is “Cultural and Scientific Exchange through Unintentional Mediators.” Mykhalchuk has also studied theory, history, and comparative literature at National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, and Ukrainian philology, world literature, and culture at Nizhyn University. She is one of the editors and coordinators of Religion, State, Society and Identity in Transition: Ukraine (2015) and is the author of recent books on European identity and cities: Discourses of European Expressionisms: The Image of the City in Expressionist Poetry of Twenty-Seven Countries (2014), and Reconciliation of East and West: German Mediations of Expressionist Scholarship after 1973 (2014).

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Introduction

In the history of world literature the Bible has inspired many writers to search for a spiritual understanding of man in the world, to realize the need for personal spiritual salvation and the understanding of God as creator of the universe. Very often, the political-historical situation in a given country, or life circumstances, or a phase in the writer’s personal development prevented them from speaking openly in their artistic works about a Christian, spiritual search; despite this, however, we can find many examples of indirect appeals to the Bible, the Word of God. The brightest examples of literary appeals to biblical truths in the form of biblical elements (allusions, references, paraphrases, direct and indirect quotations, characters) are the literary works of European Expressionists.

Expressionism is called the “new objectivity” in the sense of presenting a new look at spiritual reality, the internal human condition, and internal reactions to everything that happens in the surrounding world. The history of Expressionism as a “new look at reality” goes back to the Romantic period when the specific principles and techniques of style became philosophically justified and underwent systematization, re-structuring, and appeared in the historic arena at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, bringing the internal expression of human consciousness as the “objectively” true and undistorted response of the human spirit toward its time. The Expressionist trend in literature and art preserves a general tendency to make itself known. In Germany and Austria Expressionism (1910–1925) developed into an independent movement, while in Ukraine and in the literature of other countries (1889–1930) Expressionism did not manifest itself strongly enough to extend the history of national literature. In particular, Expressionism as a phenomenon started to appear in the local modernist situation conferring its aesthetic and philosophical foundations on the indigenous development of literature.

Expressionism regards the world as chaotic, originating in chaos, where the only authenticity is the inner human being which becomes the central focus of the writer who searches for the necessary language-expression to depict this essence. The Expressionists’ quest for the necessary language was channeled through interest in the category of “pure form,” which is detached from materialism and considered an advanced objectification of will that preserves the ingenuousness and sensitivity of language that is intended to be a transmitter of the “naked condition of the soul.”[2] For this reason, some Expressionists use the sacred language of the Bible which was preserved for centuries and is a source of connection with the transcendent being.

In this context we may mention an idea of the German theoretician Eckrat von Sydow, who, in his article “Religious Consciousness of Expressionism” [Das religiöse Bewußtsein des Expressionismus, 1919] commented that the religiosity of the Expressionists is neither uniquely Christian, nor of Nietzsche’s point of view, but

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rather both types of religious worldviews coincide in it.\[3\] From the Expressionist point of view, a religious person realizes that the world of power and grandeur, splendor and abundance, is behind him and he turns away from it for the sake of something that is more important—the desire to burn with passionate emotional experience that has become hard and frozen. For Expressionists, the unification of personal inner-being and “eternal spirit” into one entity could happen only if the personal inner-being does not transgress the “spiritual law” of its existence. However, for human nature this is an impossible variant since the phenomena of “I” and “self” include the realization that the self bears both eternal “good” (possession of “the divine spark” as an authentic part of the soul) and “evil” (carnal principles of human nature) and is the bearer of “sin.” The study of “sin” is part of hamartiology and in this article we will look at biblical allusions in Expressionist poetry from a hamartiological perspective as well.

The use of biblical language in Expressionist texts undergoes a certain process of desacralization and we could speak of a desacralized and almost dehumanized interpretation of biblical allusions. The same idea is expressed by Christoph Ekyman in a chapter entitled “Towards a Theology of Expressionism” [Zur Theologie des Expressionismus]. There he states that the theology of Expressionism is associated with an attempt to join the world of God (Gott-Welt) and find a “distinct neutral point for the inner world, so that by means of expression, by means of biblical language, [man] could move away from fear and find sinlessness while immersed in the secularized world.”\[4\] Therefore, through Expressionism, texts with desacralized biblical language draw close to the contemporary human spirit while simultaneously acting as a mediator between the human subject and transcendental reality, creating a spiritual history of man through “expression.” The conveyance of veiled biblical elements in Expressionist poetry becomes a kind of method of abstraction and permits the construction of a practical hierarchy of principles of expression.\[5\] Biblical elements and the comparison of their use in German and Ukrainian texts will also serve as the framework for comparing transmission in the expression process, which is a general principle of all Expressionist texts, but each is distinguished from the other by the choice of image, because the category of “expression” is foundational to Expressionism. Therefore, for a comparative analysis of biblical allusions in Expressionist poetry we will focus on the following key issues: (1) biblical allusions as related to the “expression” “I” and “You/Thou” from within the interpretation of the “time–space” category in Expressionist poetry; (2) comparison of biblical allusions as a means of the dual “expression” of “I” in the poetic practice of Austrian, German and Ukrainian Expressionism; (3) biblical allusions as the realization of

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poetic dynamics and “expression” in Expressionist lyrics (attention is given to the movement’s characteristics as a way of expressing its “dynamics of existence”).

1. Biblical allusions: Realization of the “expression” of “I - You/THOU” in the category of “time/space”

Biblical allusions in Expressionist works are closely connected to the genre’s main category, namely “expression.” The category of “expression” is inseparable from the category of the “temporal-I” — “You/THOU” that is constantly in motion and serves as the active focus of expression, which, in turn, is also constantly in “movement” and has a vital character. As an example, we will analyze and compare the expressive claim of pneumatological biblical motifs (spiritual expression) in the poem Decay [Verfall, 1913] by Georg Trakl (1887–1914) with the poetic passage Not Zeus, not Lord [Ne Zevs, ne Pan, 1918] by Pavlo Tychyna (1891–1967) from the book Clarinet of the Sun [Soniachni Klarneyt, 1918]. In both cases the category of “I” opposes the category of “You/THOU” in time as well as in space, proclaiming its eternal existence by merging into one unity via expression. In this case, the phenomenon of expressing the internal intentions by the lyrical hero is grasped through intuitive comprehension. In the intuitive grasp of expression, the lyrical hero is in contact with the spiritual world, as we see in the example of a poetic passage from a poem by Georg Trakl, Decay:

Hinwandelnd durch den dämmervollen Garten
Träum ich nach ihren helleren Geschicken
Und fühle der Stunden Weiser kaum mehr rücken.
So folg ich über Wolken ihren Fahrten.

Da macht ein Hauch mich von Verfall erzittern.
Die Amsel klagt in den entlaubten Zweigen.
Es schwankt der rote Wein an rostigen Gittern,
Indes wie blasser Kinder Todesreigen
Um dunkle Brunnenränder, die verwittern,
Im Wind sich fröstelnd blae Astern neigen.  

In the aforementioned poem, spirituality is expressed through images of movement (“...and hardly feel the hand of time advancing/beyond the clouds on travel through the skylight...”) which, along with the cessation of physical time, conveys spiritual motion. The category of “I,” as the expression of “self,” does not stop for a moment but moves as light, and is equalized to the universal flow of time. The same may also be observed in the poem by Pavlo Tychyna Not Zeus, not Lord [Ne Zevs, ne Pan, 1918] from the book Clarinet of the Sun:


The integration of “I” with “You/THOU” in the poem cited above indicates a spiritual breakthrough to transcendent realities, to unknown worlds both internal and external, which are in direct communication and merge into a single entity on the spiritual level. Expressionist manifestations allow the demonstration of certain metaphors (“planets were on fire,” “I arose,” “burning worlds”); inverse and direct epithets (tautological epithet “clangor sounds,” “creative coat of the shadow,” “Good-news hands,” “musical river”). The integration of worlds (the world of “I” and the world of “You/THOU”) is nothing less than a momentary fixation of the expressive process in regards to the internal intention of the personality:

I was not I. Just musings, a dream. 
All around are ringing sounds, 
And the tunic of creative darkness 
And blessed tiding hands. 
I awakened — and already I am You. 
Above me, below me 
Worlds glow, worlds stream 
Like a musical river. 
I watched, and springtimed: 
The planets harmonized. 
Forever I learned that YOU are not Wrath, 
But only Clarinets of the Sun.

As the epithet “rhythmic movement” indicates, the category of “I” seeks to break away from the geocentric time-space framework. Biblical symbols of purity may be traced in the reflection of the expressive-rhythmic process of “I” in the metaphor of the “Dove-Spirit,” which we also see in the New Testament text, where the image of a dove points to the image of the Holy Spirit: “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him” (Matthew 3:16, KJV).

All the differences in the direct translation of the words indicate the presence of biblical pneumatological motifs. Similar inclusions of biblical characters in poetic methods may also be observed in German in the Expressionist poetry of G. Trakl:

Not Zeus, not Lord, and not the Dove-Spirit – But Clarinets of the Sun.
In dance I am, in rhythmic movement, 
In the immortal— all the planets.


Translated by V. V. Proshak.
The epithets “bells of peace” and “pilgrims to salvation” presented in the passage above are reinforced by the stylistic inversion of representation, but the poetic lines: “...I watch the birds’ miraculous migration /outstretched in queues, like pilgrims to salvation...” again draws our attention to the previously quoted New Testament texts. The words “birds,” “pilgrims to salvation” are connected to the phrases used in the German translation of the biblical text: “Und da Jesus getauft war, stieg er alsbald herauf aus dem Wasser. Und siehe, da tat sich ihm der Himmel auf über ihm. Und er sah den Geist Gottes gleich als eine Taube herabfahren und über ihn kommen” (Matthew 3:16). The metaphor “pilgrims to salvation” is of particular note since it directly appeals o biblical symbolism in which the categories of “I” and “You/THOU” are in absolute unity — “WE”; and this is what the Expressionist poet aspires to, to demonstrate the principle of expression. The aforementioned idea could be supported with biblical references to pneumatological motifs: “τὸ πνεῦμα ὁ που [...].”[16] In the original language, the Greek word „πνεῦμα” literally means both “spirit” and “wind,” while in the Ukrainian translation the meaning of “wind” is lost: “God’s Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. It’s the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8, CEB).

The Ukrainian translation does not capture the dual semantics of the word „πνεῦμα”, thus losing the quality characteristics of the noun “Spirit.” The same is true in the German translation of the New Testament passage: „Der Wind bläst, wo er will, und du hörst sein Sausen wohl; aber du weißt nicht, woher er kommt und wohin er fährt. So ist es bei jedem, der aus dem Geist geboren ist.” (John 3:8). The word “der Wind” loses one of the meanings of the Greek word „πνεῦμα”, namely “spirit,” and this separates the German and Ukrainian versions of the poetry from interpretation in terms of pneumatological biblical allusions when only one meaning is present in both languages.

Meanwhile, the Greek variant unites the two passages of Expressionist poetry and captures this semantic movement with both meanings in the one word „πνεῦμα”, which is important for understanding the Expressionist concept of “expression.” In this manner, poetic expression is correlated and contrasted with the Expressionist understanding of the principle of “expression,” namely in bringing together semantic meanings of biblical symbolism with dual expressions of the category “I” that is in opposition to the category of “You/THOU.”

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Biblical allusions are presented in this scheme of coding positions, accompanying the context of the opposition and carrying out the “expression.” But quite another question is to monitor the flow of the nature of “expression,” its intensity that depends on the type of biblical allusion, when they are presented in literary texts. Here are examples of two poetic passages of poetry by Stefan Zweig (1881–1942) and Teodos Osmachka (1895–1962).

The first excerpt, by Teodos Osmachka, contains an implicitly declared biblical allusion with Christological motifs (references to Christ and his disciples, or art-ecorated description of the betrayal of Christ, as indicated by the following poetic turns of phrase, “cocks are shouting,” “heralding happiness and visits,” “they ...in andering,” and “I have not [a room] at this point without strange witnesses”):

І тільки з-за лісу із палої брості
Кричать у баварів уперто півні,
Які віщували і щастя і гості/
В далекій черкаській моїй стороні.

А що вони значать тепер в блуканні?
Вже певно не те, що співанням раніш,
Коли і кімнати не маю я нині
Без свідків чужих прочитати хоч вірш.

Не те тут говорить і сміх для привіту,
Й душа у молитви вже, певно, не та,
І тільки на тлі безконечного світу
Та сама і незмінна моя самота...

The allusion will be much closer to perception and recognition if we give the biblical text to the references, but this will become clearer not in the Ukrainian translation of the biblical text, but if we quote the original Gospel in Greek (Luke 22:54–62). It will help us to explore the Greek connotation of values, since some of the biblical allusions that are implicitly declared could have very deep meaning for explaining the Expressionist category of “expression.” The existing relationship between the literary text and the biblical text could be observed in translation, but a closer look at the semantic meaning of the words “distance” and “location at a distance” allows us to notice an indirect connotation as well — alienation from people because of a committed action, especially when these people take the position of witnesses to the act. Thus, we see that implicitly declared Christological allusions are used as a means of expression in Expressionist texts. This example from Ukrainian poetry of changes of thesis in antithesis, and antithesis in thesis, serves as the means of expression of the emotional stress of the lyrical hero. The role of biblical allusions in German-language poetry we will discuss in the examples of poetic texts by Stefan Zweig and Georg Heym (1887–1912). First, we will quote from Zweig’s Steigender Rauch [Arising Smoke]:


[18] Translated by V.V. Proshak.
At first glance, biblical allusions are not detected in the text, although the phrases “melting and weightless,” “shining heavenly vision,” “flame child,” “paternal waves,” “boundless being” could refer to the story of Christ’s Ascension. Literary images from the poem Middle of Winter [Mitte des Winters] by Georg Heym give more information for the interpretation of biblical elements, especially the last two lines of the stanza:

Weglos is jedes Leben. Und verworren Trackless is every life now. And a muddle
Ein jeder Pfad. Und keiner weiß das Ende, is every path. And none can say where that ends,
Und wer da sucht, daß er Einen finde, And him that seeks it, if he any yet finds
Der sieht ihn stumm, und schüttelnd leere Hände. He sees it mute and trembling emptied-out hands.

The content of the poetry echoes the biblical text, but not the translated text; the original text presents images more transparently. By reading the New Testament text in Ukrainian, we can directly observe the use of the images: “І вивів за місто їх аж до Віфанії; і знявши руки свої, поблагословив їх. І сталося, як поблагословив їх, то зачав відступати від них, і на небо возноситись” (Luke 24:50–51). The aforementioned biblical text indicates the presence of biblical allusions in the poem and allows us to compare the difference of phrases in the text and their semantic meaning in the German translation: “Er führte sie aber hinaus bis nach Betanien und hob die Hände auf und segnete sie. Und es geschah, als er sie segnete, schied er von ihnen und fuhr auf gen Himmel. Sie aber beteten ihn an und kehrten zurück nach Jerusalem mit großer Freude und waren allezeit im Tempel und priesen Gott.” (Luke 24:50–53). Similar examples allow us to observe the way biblical allusions can have

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dual expression. The duality of expression is also imposed on the active attempt of the eternal human “I” to draw closer to the absolute re-creation of things, states, emotions, or inner feelings: the expression of the individual meaning of “thing” or “thing-in-itself.” This was also mentioned by Kant, namely that expression requires an appropriate language; a language that is able to convey not only a true reflection in the true meaning of all things, but also to grasp this inherent meaning in the movement from immanent to transcendent. Therefore, double expression can be understood as an expression of the inner world implanted in an immanent continuum that goes on into transcendence by means of using sacred language, i.e. biblical allusions. Thus, biblical allusions are sacred or truly existential ingredients of vivid Expressionist expression and are a direct connecting process between the trans-subjective “I” (“I” that is in the process of moving, i.e. “I” that is not static) and the transcendent being to which this “I” is moving. Hence, the dual understanding of the “expression” of “I” is embedded in the concept of “double expression.” The first “I” is understood as “I” resulting from contact with the immanent and the second “I” is understood as a timeless “I” that contains a link with transcendence. This “time-I,” or as German theorists call it, “Uhr-Ich,” appeals to the active principle of life, making the motion of the inner life a way of active “expression.”

Thus, we can observe the various uses of biblical allusions in the works of Osmachka and Zweig. For example, some apocalyptic motifs may be observed in the following poetic text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Träumerisch ins Abendwerden</th>
<th>Мій край в короні вечорів погідних</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lehnt sich langsam Haus um Haus,</td>
<td>Зо мною ще. Але душа тримить</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asche dunkelt auf den Herden,</td>
<td>На звук пісень бездомних і безрідних</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Und löscht letztes Glühen aus.</td>
<td>І чує біль незнаних лихоліть.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alles sinkt in Nacht zusammen,</td>
<td>Дим, підноситься</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nur von stillen Dächern bebts</td>
<td>Мрійно в тиші смеркання</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noch ein Mahnen an die Flammen,</td>
<td>Туляться ряди домів,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rauch, der steil zur Höhe strebt.</td>
<td>Тліє в печах жар останній,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seiner Glut nicht mehr gehörend</td>
<td>Рух зник і вижас гомін.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Und von ihr doch hochgeweilt,</td>
<td>Лиш над дахом ще тремить</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sich in seinem Flug verzehrend</td>
<td>Ніжна нагадка про промінь:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Und schon Wolken beigesellschaft[22]</td>
<td>Дим, що йде в нічну блакить.”[23]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A presentiment of the last times resonates with longing for the lost, which could be associated with the lost Eden, the memory of which is present on a subconscious level. Thus, the apocalyptic motif correlates with the beginning and the end, with Alpha and Omega, where Alpha is the beginning of the Old Testament narrative:

(Genesis 1:1) "ךֵלֶו אַל הוֹי אַל הָאָדָם אָי אַל הָאָדָם“

Or, in Ukrainian: “На початку сотворив Бог небо й землю” (Genesis 1:1); or, in German, which is closer to the poetic lines of the German Expressionism: “Am Anfang schuf Gott Himmel und Erde” (Genesis 1:1). These already lay down the division of reality that accompanies the existence of the individual in the immanent dimension (earth) and the desire to reach the transcendent dimension (heaven). And Omega is an apocalyptic end that elicits fear; here we can observe hamartiological motifs (the problem of the Fall, sin). Transcendent reality is the source of the rise of the inner condition associated with “הַשָּׁמַיִם” (hashamayim – heavens) and the immanent level relates to “הָאָרֶץ” (haaretz – earth), which accompanies the presence of the imperfect aspects of human nature through the Fall, and is the source of a sense of temptation, fear, and tragedy.

Thus, the biblical motifs presented demonstrate the interaction of the immanent category “Ich” (“I”) with “Uhr-Ich” (“Time-I”), which is submerged in a timeless transcendence where past, present, and future are one dimension. In this way, the idea of not entering into the dimension of timeless realization produces fear, making the temporal “I” being unrecognized at the time.

Klaus Strohmeyer, in his book on Expressionism, Aesthetics of Crisis, refers to aesthetic and philosophical basics in understanding the Expressionist’s fear, saying that the inner skepticism of “I” arises from dissatisfaction with the personal level of spiritual inner-being. The level of spiritual inner-being leads the lyrical hero to search for a transcendental dimension as a way of existence through sacredness and unconscious memory of the lost eternity and the lost Eden. It becomes a higher internal conscious choice to return to the lost, at least by aspirations which are established by active personal expression.[24]

2. The Expressionist’s category of “movement” as the dynamics of the “spiritual” existence of man

The general European character of Expressionism opens new prospects for its positioning through the declaration of signs of disintegration that are full of fear, not for the world, but for its conscience.[25] In Expressionism, disintegrated consciousness can no longer hide behind the extrapolation of the “fragmented world” which is associated with the category of movement.[26] Biblical allusions are also inextricably linked with the category of movement, which, in turn, accelerate its rate of occurrence in time, the only transcendent time, proclaiming the exit of “I” beyond immanent space through the image of the “Cross” (and according to expression of Gaulle, “cross” stands for the “crossroads of all ages and souls”). We may observe the same thing in the poetry of T. Osmachka and F. Werfel (1890–1945). As an example we quote an excerpt from Osmachka’s poem from the collection “Iz pid svitu” [From under the World]:

[24] Klaus Strohmeyer, Zur Ästhetik der Krise (Frankfurt am Main; Bern; New York; Nancy: Lang, 1984), p. 89
For Osmachka, the center of expression is the suffering God-man, Christ, whose rivers of blood bring purification for the world and righteousness for humanity; but, according to the New Testament references, it happens only through suffering.[29] We use the same text for the purpose of an example only in the Ukrainian translation, observing the contrast in words “Golgotha” (skull) in the context of the original language and its translation:

In the original text of the New Testament, the image of “suffering” is emphasized and reinforced by the word “Golgotha,” while in Ukrainian it loses its intensity. In the original language, it adds the additional connotation of the expression of “suffering,” endured for the whole world. As mentioned by Zborowska in regard to the poetry of Osmachka, which can be attributed to the poetry of Werfel as well, the symbol of suffering and the “bloody mark as brand,” is an Expressionist form, but along with this appears a correlation to an expression of the clash of the ages represented by sacrificial suffering:

And blood splashes on up to the ceiling of the worlds; from drops of blood the bloody rivers rising in valleys of the ages; Along the wood of torment From the wounds of the man —

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[27] T. Osmachka, Iz pid swity [From under the World], p. 82.
[28] Translated by V.V. Proshak.
Thus, Expressionist art focuses on the human existential condition of confusion, horror, and the destruction of clear life meanings and guidelines, and centers on all forms of internal expression. In particular, Adorno formulates expression as confusion which declares itself in opposition to what is visibly obvious. Arising from this, the disharmony of meaning appeals to visible “expression”: the features of expression, firmly imprinted in works of art, represent the demarcation lines that separate them from what is obvious.

3. Apocalyptic and eschatological motifs in expressionist poetry

Before we analyze and compare apocalyptic and eschatological motifs in Ukrainian and German-Austrian Expressionist poetry, we should differentiate the aforementioned two concepts since the meaning of “apocalyptic” and “eschatological,” besides their synonymous use, also have a fundamental distinction. As is well known, eschatology deals with issues relating to the finality of the existing world as a whole, combining together the whole process of the beginning and end of the last days with its influence on the universe as a whole, which actually includes both negative and positive aspects of the process. The use of the concept of apocalypse in theology points to the events concerning the “Last Judgement” on the people and the land, including Armageddon as well. Of course, from this point of view, the use of apocalyptic motifs is more characteristic for Expressionist poetry, since its main prerogative is the category of “expression,” which is often caused by the withdrawal of expression-rich dimensions of fear. After all, poetry only shows the aesthetic images subjugated to the aesthetic visibility of the expression. So, in this sense, an aesthetic appearance of “expression” of internal intentions of identity and its higher effect in the form of poetic images in the lyrics are just an approximation of the truth. In Expressionism, the reaction of the individual to the uncertainty of the image of truth is presented by fear in the form of apocalyptic and eschatological motifs. The loss of validity in the dimension of existence is perceived by Expressionism as finiteness of life; therefore, the category of “expression” in Expressionism becomes a means of getting closer to the truth, of grasping it even in an artistic, veiled form. Poetic works, claiming transcendence in relation to being in a higher sphere, also emphasize their inherent semantic point of instability (precariousness), perishability, which appears as the result of the powerlessness and uselessness of “expression” in the empirical world.


[31] Translated by V.V. Proshak.
Apocalyptic and eschatological motifs are present in Expressionism in Ukrainian poetry.\[32\] We will compare apocalyptic and eschatological motifs in Expressionism in Ukrainian poetry with apocalyptic and eschatological motifs presented in Expressionism in German and Austrian poetry.\[33\] As comparative study shows, the characteristic feature of apocalyptic and eschatological motifs in Austrian, German, and Ukrainian Expressionist poetry is the presence of energetic tension, oppressive images, astral symbols in the text, as well as the broad representation of a horizontal-vertical schism in space and the separation in time between a culminating act or sudden incident. The distinction between the German, Austrian, and Ukrainian versions of the discussion presented above is that almost every text shows its own time-space division, which demonstrates itself according to its own cultural, historical, and geographical features. And only then it turns to the global unifying sense of being, to the transcendent being.

As an example, we compare a few passages of the of German and Ukrainian poetry with the previously quoted poetic lines that presents the general characteristics of apocalyptic and eschatological motifs. We turn our attention to poems by George Heym “God of the City” [Der Gott des Stadt], “Umbra vitae,” “In the middle of winter” [Mitte des Winters], and by Khvyliovyj “Orudni vashe sviato,” “Mlity v polum’ii vik, bex kintsia” [To Faint in Flame the Age without End], and “Uryvky” [Fragments]. We specifically focus on apocalyptic evangelical paraphrases in the poem “Umbra vitae” by George Heym:

**Die Menschen stehen vorwarts in den Straßen**

Und sehen auf die großen Himmelszeichen,

Wo die Kometen mit den Feuernasen

Um die gezackten Türme drohend schleichen

Und alle Dächser sind voll Sternedeuter,

Die in den Himmel stecken große Röhren.

Und Zauberer, wachsend aus den Bodenlöchern,

In Dunkel schräg, die einen Stern beschwören,[…]

Die people stand forward in the streets

They stare at the great signs in the heavens

Where comets with their fiery trails

Creep threateningly about the serrated towers.

And all the roofs are filled with stargazers

Sticking their great tubes into the skies

And magicians springing up from the earthworks

Tilting in the darkness, conjuring the one star.


The first lines of the first stanza (“The people stand forward in the streets/ They stare at the great signs in the heavens”) contain information on the duality of space and time boundaries in the poem: the vertical or geocentric (earth) dimension of space is described with the image of “streets”) and the horizontal dimension is described with the words “in the heavens.” Along with these images, which testify to the division of space, the astral symbol is presented in the form of a visual image: “They stare at the great signs in the heavens.” Actually, the metaphor, “the great signs in the heavens,” correlates with the poetic image of the days of the apocalypse and lines from the second and third stanzas and directly point to a biblical paraphrase, confirming that the lines above are closely connected with texts in the New Testament Book of Revelation: “But for the cowardly and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

Since the poetry of G. Heym is translated from the German, we give a biblical quotation in German translation as well: “Die Feigen aber und Ungläubigen und Frevler und Morder und Unzuchtigen und Zauberer und Gotzendiener und alle Lugner, deren Teil wird in dem Pfuhl sein, der mit Feuer und Schwefel brennt; das ist der zweite Tod” (Revelation 21:8). And for the purpose of making a comparison with German language Expressionistic texts, in which a division of autochthonous time-space dimensions with astral symbols is also present, we quote an example of a poetic variant of a Ukrainian-language interpretation of apocalyptic motifs in Expressionist poetry and compare the quotes with a passage from the poem “To Faint Flame of Age Without End”:


The first lines of the first stanza, “flame of age, without end” bring us to the time of apocalyptic events, while the metaphors “iron muscles” and “barrel of red fires” indicate the presence of attributes of the Last Judgment and punishment: “And the third angel sounded, and fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter” (Revelation 8:10–11, KJV). For the purpose of making an extensive analogy of attributes of the astral–imaginary description, we quote another piece of poetry of Khvyliovyj, *Fragments*:

> To molder in the flame of age, without end
> To throw a glance on cars,
> To Squeal like little pig,
> To brake all things, to get to know them.
> In the arms of the hardened days
> To straighten the iron muscles
> Full barrel of red fires
> Is scudding along the roads and paths.\(^{[38]}\)

The first lines of the first stanza, “flame of age, without end” bring us to the time of apocalyptic events, while the metaphors “iron muscles” and “barrel of red fires” indicate the presence of attributes of the Last Judgment and punishment: “And the third angel sounded, and fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter” (Revelation 8:10–11, KJV). For the purpose of making an extensive analogy of attributes of the astral–imaginary description, we quote another piece of poetry of Khvyliovyj, *Fragments*:

\[^{[37]}\] Мліти в полум’ї вік, без кінця
По машинах очима плигать,
Верещать, як мале порося,
Все поламать, пізнать.
У обіймах гартованих днів
Розправляти залізні м’язи
Повну діжу червоних огнів
По шляхах і по стежках носить.\(^{[37]}\)

In another poetic passage we see other attributes of “Apocalypse” as well, that correlate to the following New Testament text: “And I beheld, and heard an eagle, flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound”(Revelation 8:13, KJV). We see a similar variation of the apocalyptic astral symbols in another poem of G. Heym “The God of the City” [Der Gott der Stadt]:


\[^{[40]}\] Translated by V. V. Proshak.

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For the purpose of indicating the similarities with German-language poetry, we quote the German translation of the New Testament text of Revelation 8:13: «Und ich sah und hörte, einen Engel fliegen mitten durch den Himmel und sagen mit großer Stimme: Weh, weh, weh denen, die auf Erden wohnen, vor den andern Stimmen der Posaune der drei Engel, die noch posaunen sollen! Very often the apocalyptic motifs in Expressionist poetry resonate with motifs of sorrow (sadness) which is as a kind of shadow and may take all sorts of forms of heterogeneous existence, serving as an excess of the inner life of the individual, or the inner life that the individual seeks to assert.

As we can see from the abovementioned examples, the theological heritage of Expressionist poetry is mostly presented by the secularization of the revelation ideal and all kinds of dimensions of its expression. The same may also be observed in the poetic works of Franz Werfel (1890–1945). Making spirituality and religion the basis of the plot, Werfel places a mere mortal man at the center and not divine providence. The same idea is implemented in practice in his text *A Prague Ballad*. However, his first book of poems *Friend of the world* [Der Weltfeund], which was published in 1911 by Max Brod, reveals more biblical motifs:

Ich lebte im Walde, hatte ein Bahnhofsamt,  
Saß gebeugt über Kassbüchcher und bediente ungeduldige Gäste.  
Als Heizer stand ich vor Kesseln, das Antlitz grell überflammt,  
Und als Kult aß ich Abfall und Küchenreste.  

The poetic lines of M. Bazhan from “The Night of Hoffman” (1930) are not so harsh sounding. The theme of global chaos, as well as signs of apocalypse, is transmitted through the Expressionistic category of manifestation which contrasts the expression for “I” with the motion of intensity:

Wie Korybanten-Tanz dröhnt die Musik  
Der Millionen durch die Straßen laut.  
Der Schlot Rauch, die Wolken der Fabrik  
Ziehn auf zu ihm, wie Duft von Weihrauch blaut.  

Das Wetter schwelt in seinen Augenbrauen.  
Der dunkle Abend wird in Nacht betäubt.  
Die Stürme flattern, die wie Geier schauen  
Von seinem Haupthaar, das im Zorne sträubt.  

Er streckt ins Dunkel seine Fleischerfaust.  
Er schüttelt sie. Ein Meer von Feuer jagt  
Durch eine Straße. Und der Glutqualm braust  
Und frißt sie auf, bis spät der Morgen tagt.  

The music drones a Corybante dance  
Of millions ambling loudly through the streets.  
The chimney smoke, the clouds of manufacture  
Unto him clung, blue scent of incense sweet.  
The weather smolders in his eyebrows twain.  
The dark of evening unto night is dulled.  
The storm winds flutter, like great vultures gazing  
From out his great locks, in his wrath all horrid.  

The poetic lines of M. Bazhan from “The Night of Hoffman” (1930) are not so harsh sounding. The theme of global chaos, as well as signs of apocalypse, is transmitted through the Expressionistic category of manifestation which contrasts the expression for “I” with the motion of intensity:

The tension used to depict the imagery aims at cleansing the text from everything that is used to express the subjectivity of randomness in character. Subjectivity, which is random in its essence, ascribes a fragmentary nature to itself by its own language to create a greater magnitude of verbal expression. In this case, language correlates with the Expressionist category of “expression.” Otherwise, the term “espressivo” could be replaced with other words that denote certain moods or feelings requiring expression. The category of “expression” directly correlates to the issue of spirituality that cannot be verbalized more than by a language. For the Expressionist, spirituality in the expression of “I” is associated with various forms of religiosity.

Thus, in 1920 Gottfried Benn (1886–1956) published the manifesto “Des Moderne Ich” in which he continues the discussion of spiritual unification. According to his ideas, spirituality is built on the basis of universal ideals, as we see it in the poem “Schutt” (1919). The lack of spirituality is associated with the image of death — it is fear that is present in the apocalyptic motifs and causes death — and, on the other hand, personal spiritual fullness results in inner peace. The assurance, and even benefits of spirituality were proclaimed by Ludwig Rubiner (1881–1920) in the collection of poems Das Himmlische Licht (1916), where, on the final pages the writer refers to the people: “You — are the light/In your hands, like fruits on the tree/The land will blossom again.” And this is the eschatological scene of ultimate victory of good over evil, of light over darkness, proclaimed in the last chapters of the Gospels and in the Book of Revelation. It is about spiritual peace and spiritual inspiration proclaiming freedom, the will to live, and peaceful expectations of its own future.

As noted by Oksana Chernenko in particular, Expressionism places human freedom and autonomy of consciousness at the center of everything. What is rejected by Existentialists is proclaimed by Expressionists as a pledge to enter the transcendent and spiritual absolutes:

The human being is the only self-conscious creature in the universe that is dominated by blind, material elements. Only man himself can define the meaning of his existence in conscious opposition to the absurd existence of the world. For expressionists, man is a spiritual being who has been torn off the spiritual Absolute because of the Fall. He lives in the broken contradiction of the universe only to achieve again the unity with the absolute.}

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[45] Translated by V.V. Proshak.
[47] Chernenko, *Expressionism u tvorchosti*
In contrast to this side of eschatological motifs, apocalyptic motifs were a creative expression of fear that was the result of cultural-historical circumstances at the turn of the century. Also Max Scheler, who was literary figure active during the peak of Expressionism’s popularity, argued that “society” is not a comprehensive concept that affects all “communities”; on the contrary, this word is designated only in relation to remnants, or dregs, left after the internal decomposition of communities:

There, where the unity of community is no longer evident ... we are dealing with “society” — an institution founded on a simple contractual agreement. When the “contract” and its validity expire, the result is a quite unorganized “mass” that aligns only by direct emotional stimuli and the ability to “infect” one another with moods.

Therefore, Expressionists are actually fighting for the freedom of the spirit from the social forms of cultural space. In “Der Konflikt der moderne Kultur” (1914), Simmel gives an example of opposition against form, indicating how opposition expresses itself in the artistic sphere. He writes that with all this mixture of aspirations combined under the common name of Futurism, only Expressionism has some identifiable degree of unity and clarity. The essence of Expressionism is that literary works perpetuate the inner aspirations of their creator, the writer; or, more precisely, these aspirations are fixed in their creation just in the way that they are perceived. The intention of the author is not to express or preserve these aspirations in the form imposed by something external, regardless of whether this external is ideal or real. For years Expressionists tried to proclaim that, intrinsic to their time, the Expressionist movement exists as an art movement. If the emotional experience that they embodied was not the embodiment of experience, then it risked losing the main Expressionistic principles since the period before the First World War. Expressionism was a reaction against the epoch. In this case, it was actually the biblical elements that communicated a double form of expression in inverse communication, in suggesting allegory, in dynamism of action, in unreal and mostly phantasmagoric situations of dramatic action, in the abrupt and somewhat illustrative development of the lyrical plot, in contrasting proclamations.

Conclusion

In this way, we have established a direct relationship between Old- and New-Testament quotations in the original (Hebrew and Greek languages) and poetry in the original languages (Ukrainian and German), which showed a wider field for comparative analysis of biblical allusions, reminiscences, paraphrases, direct and indirect quotations, and symbols. The juxtaposition of literary and biblical texts written in the

Vasylia Stefanyka (München: “Sychasnist”, 1989), p. 25 (the quotation was translated by V.V. Proshak).


György M. Vajda. Outline of the Philosopicha Backgrounds... p. 68.
original literary and biblical texts given in translation showed significant differences in the interpretation of biblical elements. Hamartiological, pneumatological, christological, apocalyptic, eschatological motifs and their comparison with Ukrainian and German poetic texts were treated as a comparison model of the transmission of categories of expression as the principle for all Expressionist texts. Therefore, we have compared the biblical elements in relation to the abovementioned motifs to indicate the differences in the depicted category of expression of “Uhr-Ich,” “Du” (“You/THOU”) as form of “trans-subjective” phenomenon in the poetry of Austrian, German, and Ukrainian literatures. In this context, we found that the category of expression “Uhr-Ich,” “Du,” (“You/THOU”) and the category “time-space” in the two literatures are differentiated by the intensity of their appearance. The poetic dynamic of expression of this intensity in Ukrainian lyrics is more quantitative than in Austrian and German lyrics since it has a more unifying beginning that affects mainly the presence of apocalyptic and eschatological motifs. As we have seen, different biblical motifs are closely related to the Expressionist category of “expression” and are inseparable from the category “Uhr-Ich,” “time-I” and “Du” (“You/THOU”), which are constantly in the motion and are active cells of the expressive state.

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