

УДК 821.111-31Д. Л. 09

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/tps2663-4880/2022.21.2.49>

FEATURES OF THE CHARACTERS' ARTISTIC IMAGE IN THE LATE PROSE AND POETRY BY DORIS LESSING (ON THE MATERIAL OF THE DILOGY 'MARA AND DANN' AND POETRY 'IN THE LONG DARK', 'THE MISFIT')

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ХУДОЖНЬОГО ЗОБРАЖЕННЯ ПЕРСОНАЖІВ У ПІЗНІЙ ПРОЗІ І ПОЕЗІЇ ДОРІС ЛЕССІНГ (НА МАТЕРІАЛІ ДИЛОГІЇ «МАРА І ДАНН» І ПОЕЗІЯХ 'IN THE LONG DARK', 'THE MISFIT')

Proskurina N.Y.,

orcid.org/0000-0002-9265-6618

*Lecturer at the Department of History of Foreign Literature and Classical Philology
Kharkiv V.N. Karazin National University*

Стаття аналізує пізню поезію Д. Лессінг, нобелівської лауретки з літератури 2007 року. Антологія *'The Wolf People'* (2002), що належить до пізнього періоду творчості авторки опинилася поза межами літературної дискусії. Існують лише поодинокі дослідження (Nick Bentley, Christine Murray), присвячені ранньому доробку авторки – збірці *'The fourteen poems'* (1959). Однак проблеми, які тематизує Д. Лессінг в поетичному тексті, виявляються і у прозових творах письменниці. Зокрема, однією із значущих проблем є проблема власної ідентифікації ліричного героя, його повернення до першоджерел, яке зумовлює своєрідне «відновлення» часу («перезапуск» згідно з концепцією Дж. Кембелла), а відтак відтворюється космогонія, тобто впорядкування хаотичного всесвіту. Дослідження виконано на матеріалі збірки *'The Wolf People'* і дилогії *«Мара і Данн»* (1999-2001). Стаття аналізує вплив тематичний вплив і зв'язок, а відтак і взаємопроникнення поезії у прозовий текст Д. Лессінг. Зроблено висновок, що світ антології Д. Лессінг виступає простором для авторського експерименту у створенні власного космогонічного й есхатологічного міфів. Невеликий за обсягом поетичний текст зображає період життя первісної громади: від «зародження» людства, його розвитку і диференціації до есхатологічного кінця-катастрофи – стихії що знищує, повертаючи до

висхідної точки («початку початків») усе живе. Авторка розвиває ідею катастрофи, що вже відбулася в постапокаліптичному світі діалогії, та розкриває детальніше її природу в тексті антології. Д. Лессінг змальовує непереборну безособову стихію, що зводить нанівець усі досягнення людства. Нездоланна сила змушує усе живе підкоритися та «зібратися гуртом», намагаючись вижити у ворожому доквіллі. Як у поезіях, так і в прозових творах Д. Лессінг знаходять відображення проблема маргинала, відщепенця. Д. Лессінг, як в прозовій діалогії, так і в антології, вдається до прийому імітації давніх часів, що є своєрідною саморефлексією авторки.

Ключові слова: Д. Лессінг, неоміфологізм, поезія, роман, ініціація, космогонія, трикстер, деміург.

The article analyzes the late poetry of D. Lessing, the 2007 Nobel Laureate in Literature. The anthology 'The Wolf People' (2002), which belongs to the late period of the author's creativity, happens to be out of the literary discussion. There are only a few studies (Nick Bentley, Christine Murray, Robin Graham) on the author's early poetry, 'The Fourteen Poems' (1959). However, the problems themed by D. Lessing in the poetic text are also manifested in the prose works of the writer. In particular, one of the significant problems is the problem of the lyrical hero's identification, his return to the origins, which causes a 'restoration of time (restart according to J. Campbell's concept), and thus reproduces cosmogony, ie ordering the chaotic universe. The research is based on the poetry collection 'The Wolf People' and the prose dilogy "Mara and Dann" (1999-2001). The article analyzes the thematic influence and connection, and hence the interpenetration of poetry in the prose text of D. Lessing. It is concluded that the world of D. Lessing's anthology is depicted as a space for the author's experiment in creating her own cosmogonic and eschatological myths. The poetic text represents the period of life of the primitive community: from the birth of mankind, its development, and differentiation to the eschatological end-catastrophe – the element that destroys, returning everything to the zero point. The author establishes the idea of catastrophe, which has already taken place in the post-apocalyptic world of dilogy, and reveals in more detail its nature in the text of the anthology. D. Lessing depicts an irresistible impersonal element that nullifies all the achievements of mankind. Invincible force forces all living things to submit, trying to survive in a hostile environment. Both in poetry and the prose works of D. Lessing the problem of the marginal, the renegade is reflected. D. Lessing, both in prose dilogy and in the anthology, resorts to the imitation of ancient times, which is a kind of self-reflection of the author.

Key words: D. Lessing, neomythologism, poetry, novel, initiation, cosmogony, trickster, demiurge.

Introduction

The name of D. Lessing in the literature of the XX–XXIth centuries is traditionally associated with her novels. Such novels as the 'Golden Notebook' (1962), the pentalogy 'Children of Violence' (1952–1969), and the science fiction series of novels 'Canopus in Argos' (1979–1983) received scholars' careful consideration. One of the focuses of the prose study in literary studies is the gender issue, psychological, and problems of interpersonal relationships in particular. However, D. Lessing's heritage is not limited exclusively to its prose component.

There are only a few studies on D. Lessing's early poetry (Nick Bentley [1], Christine Murray [2]). Therethrough, literary criticism on a large scale is devoted to the early poetry – the collection of poems 'The fourteen poems' (1959). D. Lessing's late poetry is included in the anthology 'The Wolf People' (2002), has not been the subject of any scientific research for a long time.

Literature Review

Doris Lessing's collection of early poetry 'The fourteen poems' (1959) and the anthology 'The Wolf People' (2002) are chronologically separated by almost half a century.

Notwithstanding, the problems that are themed by D. Lessing in the poetic text are also present in the prose works of the writer. In particular, among the significant ones there is the problem of the lyrical hero's identification, the return to the origins, which causes a peculiar time 'restoration' ('restart' according to the concept of J. Campbell [3]), and thus

reproduces cosmogony, i.e. harmonizing the chaotic universe.

The theme of a return to ancient times, its 'imitation' in the poetry of D. Lessing is a characteristic feature of her work. The purpose of this reception is to find the lost firstborn lyrical hero, who gets rid of the feeling of his unrootedness, coming back from forced exile to his dream home.

The problem of finding the lost roots is accordant with some facts of D. Lessing's biography. The author had been banned from her Motherland, Southern Rhodesia, for twenty-five years because of her creativity and active citizenship. After Robert Mugabe's rise to power (1980), the country became independent and got a new official name – the Republic of Zimbabwe. The writer had received permission to enter her formerly forbidden homeland, so she has made four trips to Africa (1982, 1988, 1989, 1992). The gained impressions and experience, as well as the material collected during the trip, became the basis for writing a series of notes 'African Laughter (1992). D. Lessing noted: 'You cannot be forbidden the land you grew up in, so says the web of sensations, memories, experience, that binds you to the landscape' [4, c. 11].

Alice Ridout, an English researcher, hypothesizes D. Lessing's affiliation to the so-called 'third culture', the children of an expatriate who do not attach themselves to a particular location, but rather feel an allegiance to a transnational, cosmopolitan culture [7].

Purpose of the article

Due to the lack of existence of any critical review on late D. Lessing poetry the main purpose of this

article is to approach previously unknown text and analyze using the mythocritical methods. The paper aims to reveal the feature of poetry and its influence on the prose of late D. Lessing's creativity.

Presenting main material. The anthology 'The Wolf People' includes eight poems by D. Lessing, preceded by an epigraph: 'Verses suggested by recent scientific speculation on the possible behavior of our very distant ancestors' [6, c. 577].

The author builds a primitive world in which mankind has not yet mastered and destroyed the environment, but, instead, she is devoted to the insurmountable elements.

The collection begins with the poem 'In The Long Dark'. The title of this poem embodies the infinity of darkness, which is built into an associative series: darkness, fear, ignorance. Mankind seems to be locked in the space of a cave, outside of which there is eternal darkness and danger. It is dark all around, and only one guard stares into the darkness of the night, which can become eternal. The danger, which at first is only foreseen, later turns into an eschatological myth – the end of all living things, the disappearance of the life-giving light, eternal cold, and darkness. However, for now, the human race must meet the physical embodiment of the unknown – the claws of wolves watching outside the cave.

The picture of the eternal night in this poetic text is created by repeating the adjective 'dark' many times. As the matter stands, this state of darkness is well known to the lyrical hero and he does not feel threatened: 'No danger./ He knows each stone branch log, / By its shadow as his feet know the earth./ Nothing that is not known is near./ Threat begins at the trees' edge' [6, c. 577].

The adjective 'black' is used in poetry to depict a new unknown danger, meaning the complete absence of light and symbolizing the total fear of the cave dwellers. Absolute darkness, which also reigns outside the cave, frightens the guard, while the flash of light – a blaze of flame, does not pose a mysterious danger but the white claws of wolves do. Pitch-black darkness retreats before this light, transforming from an abstract feeling of fear into its physical embodiment.

Thus, the adjective 'black', which embodies danger and describes absolute fear, is later replaced by the adjective 'dark', which transforms this total horror into a feeling of danger and already experienced fear.

The personification of human fear of the unknown, danger, and alien is embodied in the image of a black wolf, and it is impossible to escape from it. The tribe dozing by the hearth in the cave feels not only uncer-

tainty about the distant future, but is also anxious about the present: a wolf sneaks to the entrance of the cave, and his pack watches for the leader, waiting for the signal to attack.

The poem ends with the use of an artistic device of a ring: a description of a dream about the eternal night. However, at the beginning of the poem, cave-men's fear of the dark is expressed by the modal verb 'may', which is used to denote the probability, the expression of assumptions about the future: 'Light may never return'. At the end of the verse is an affirmative sentence that leaves no doubt about the infinity of darkness: 'They dream of endless night' [6, c. 578].

The poem 'The Misfit' recreates the fate of an outsider, a marginal, a loser, who stands out from other members of the community is excluded from society and has no right to exist. In the poetry, D. Lessing depicts a lyrical hero to be an exile who survived only by chance. He is given the name Wolf as if to emphasize his isolation and dissimilarity to other members of his community. The only adjective used to characterize a lyrical hero is small: 'Small, but he ran like a wolf./ Small, but he threw a stone to kill./ Small, but used an ax and made them./ Nothing like him had been born before./ They named him Wolf, for his speed' [6, c. 579].

Anaphoric construction – 'Small, but' repeated three times manifests the alien nature of the lyrical hero. Not only do physical characteristics distinguish Wolf from the rest of the tribe, but his amazing ability to talk to birds determines his fate – a renegade must die.

The poetic text vividly presents the phenomenon of onomatopoeia (sound imitation), which is expressed by cognate word a participle of the present time 'gurgling' 'guggling', 'coughing', 'hissing', 'spitting'. The cacophonous effect is emphasized by the alliteration of the sound combinations gur- / gug-, gh- / ss- / tt- to enhance the noise impression.

The killing of a bird by a fellow tribesman causes the voluntary escape of Wolf, who accepts neither the killing of an innocent bird nor the social rules and norms of the tribe, so he refuses to be part of this society and its main principle: 'Never go alone / Never far from spear or ax' [6, c. 579].

The lyrical hero, renouncing his imposed social role, leaves the community and goes into voluntary exile. In D. Lessing's poetry, this stage of Wolf's 'separation' is emphasized by the opposition of two personal pronouns within one poetic line: 'He' and 'They': 'He is alone. They never go alone' [6, c. 579].

The portrait characteristic of the Wolf reveals his dual nature: The Wolf is endowed with both the

traits of an omnipotent cultural hero and a trickster character.

According to the mythocritical tradition, the cultural hero differs from the rest by his magical abilities and virtues, which enable him to carry out divine instructions. J. Campbell, an American mythologist, notes that the task of a cultural hero is to 'live' through the stages of the cosmogonic cycle, return from the plane of trials to the real dimension with acquired knowledge to fulfill his main function – to become the leader of potential demiurge [3, c. 205]. The lyrical hero of the poem is manifesting his nature as a trickster that is not marked by beauty or physical strength, even his trials end not in ritual, but in real physical death. The lyrical hero separates himself from the tribe, as a trickster questions the moral foundations / principles of the community, becoming a provocateur that turns the still harmonious world into a chaotic one.

Unlike the poem 'In The Long Dark', danger lurks outside the cave in complete darkness, the wolves depicted in 'The Misfit' watch not only at night but also during the day. However, the threatening force for the human race now is not the world around (the environment), but human nature itself, which is dual. Feelings of envy, limitation, and fear of the tribe in front of everything that in one way or another differs from the norm, 'determine' the fate of the loser.

As J. Campbell points out, a cultural hero is characterized by 'absolute reconciliation with his death' [3, c. 207]. The wolf, endowed with an unusual ability to listen to nature, shows resilience, not paying attention to the claws of wild animals, he meets his own death with singing. The death of the lyrical hero is an allusion to the cultural hero and the mythical image of Orpheus, who is torn to pieces by madmen.

Wolf, as an artist whose extraordinary talent remains unrecognized by contemporaries, 'receives recognition' only after his death. The finale of the poem testifies to the sacrificial death of Wolf as a cultural hero, as members of the community have now gone beyond the cave, trying to understand the bird-song and learn about the environment.

The problem of identification of the person is themed by the author and in her prose work. In particular, the poetry of the late period is closely connected with D. Lessing's novel trilogy 'Mara and Dann' [5]. The anthology, which included poetry by D. Lessing, was published in 2002, i.e. between the release of the first (1999) and second (2005) parts of the prose trilogy 'Mara and Dann'.

The scene of the trilogy is laid in the future, after the global environmental catastrophe that almost

destroyed humanity. The catastrophe nullified all the achievements of culture, rebounding its development to a primitive state.

In D. Lessing's prose, the problem of personality identification is revealed employing a complex of initiation. According to the mythological tradition, initiation is an important stage, a ritual aimed at changing the status of the initiatee, as well as the transfer of sacred knowledge about the world order and the rules of existence in it. The result of initiation is the acquisition of a self, spiritual integrity, self-knowledge. Refusal to pass the initiation, ignoring the 'call' or unsuccessful initiation leads to the exclusion of the hero from social life, loss of its meaning.

Dann, one of the protagonists of the novel, is experiencing a crisis of identification, he is unable to take on the role of leader, ruler of the nation. Dann suffers from recurrent schizophrenic personality disorders and desperately tries to gain a sense of 'selfhood' and reconcile with himself. The protagonist is a descendant of the ruling dynasty of the continent Ifrik. However, in his early childhood, he witnessed a coup d'état and was forced into exile, change his name, and go into hiding. In this way, Dann 'loses' connection with a part of his personality, does not 'perceive himself as a ruler. In adulthood, the protagonist is forced to return and take responsibility for the revival of his own family. Dann until now led the life of an exile and had to fight alone for his survival, feels the complexity of the ruler's mission, and is experiencing a crisis of self-identification.

The quest that Dann has to complete is aimed at passing the complex of initiation by the main character and overcoming the identity crisis. The initiation of the hero involves the separation and reintegration stages. During the trials, the initiate experiences a 'ritual' death and is reborn in a new state and status. Acquisition of 'selfhood' by Dann determines the salvation of the world, bringing cosmic harmony to the prevailing chaos.

Results and Discussion. Thus, the world of D. Lessing's anthology serves as a space for the author's experiment in creating her own cosmogonic and eschatological myths. The poetic text depicts the period of life of the primitive community: from the birth of mankind, its development, and differentiation to the eschatological end-catastrophe – the element that destroys, returning everything to the ascension point (ground zero) all living things.

The author elaborates the idea of catastrophe, which has already taken place in the post-apocalyptic world of trilogy, and reveals in more detail

its nature in the text of the anthology. D. Lessing depicts an irresistible impersonal element that nullifies all the achievements of mankind. Invincible force urges all living things to submit and gather in a group trying to survive in a hostile environment. Both in poetry and the prose works of D. Lessing the problem of the marginal, the renegade are depicted in detail. Marginal denies the existing system, showing both traits and trickster, which brings chaos to the existing world, testing it for strength, and the demiurge-creator, rebuilding a new world on the ruins of the old one.

In the poetic text, such an apostate is the Wolf, who renounces the foundations of the community, accepting almost martyrdom.

D. Lessing, both in prose dilogy and in the anthology, resorts to the imitation of ancient times, which is a kind of self-reflection of the author. Some foreign literary critics (A. Ridout) note the significant influence of biographical aspects on the work of the writer. In particular, D. Lessing was considered a representative of the 'third culture', which after the forced expulsion from Southern Rhodesia, in her own work 'returns' to the familiar space of the African continent.

REFERENCES:

1. Bentley, N.P (2015) Unanchored fragments of print: Lessing's Experiments with Drama and Poetry in the Late 1950s. *Doris Lessing Studies*, pp.19–26 (8)
2. Christine Murray. 'Fable' and 'Oh Cherry Trees You are Too White For My Heart' by Doris Lessing [Electronic resource]. Retrieved from: <https://poethead.wordpress.com/author/poethead/>
3. Kempbell J. Tsyachelikiy geroy. Moskva: Vakler, Refl-buk, AST, 1997.
4. Lessing D. *African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe*. HarperCollins, 1992. 442 p
5. Lessing D. *Mara and Dann: An Adventure*. HarperCollins e-books; Reprint edition 2009.
6. *Partisan Review*. Doris Lessing's poetry 'The Wolf People'. Boston University. Vol. 68 No. 4, 2001, pp. 577–590.
7. Ridout A. 'Doris Lessing's Under My Skin: The Autobiography of a Cosmopolitan 'Third Culture Kid'.' *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings*. Ed. Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins. London: Continuum, 2009.