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FUNKCJE STYLISTYCZNE BIBLIYNYCH JEDNOSTEK FRAZEOLOGICZNYCH W TEKŚCIE LITERACKIM
Stylistic functioning of the biblical phraseolgcal units in belles-lettres text

Streszczenie: Artykuł poświęcony rozpatrywaniu funkcji stylistycznych frazeologizmów biblijnych w tekstach powojennych powieści amerykańskich.…………………………………………………………

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Summary: *This article deals with the stylistic functioning of biblical phraseological units in the text of the post-war American novel.*

Słowa kluczowe: frazeologizm biblijny, funkcja stylistyczna, tekst literacki

Key words: biblical phraseological unit, stylistic function, belles-lettres text.

The aim of this article is to trace the stylistic functions biblical phraseological units (BPUs) perform in the texts of such post-war American novels as "God Knows" by J. Heller (1984), "Pontius Pilate" by P. Maier, (1968), "The Violent Bear It Away" by F. O'Connor, (1960), "Moses and the Ten Commandments" by P. Ilton, M. Roberts, (1956), "Son of the Morning" by J.C. Oates (1978).

The language of the Bible has enriched the English literary language with many words denoting objects of reality, becoming the source of religious and poetic symbolism, figurative means, aphorisms, expressive rhetoric and phraseology.

Currently, there is no unified opinion concerning the definition of the term "*biblicism*".

A biblical word or expression which entered everyday language is defined as a *biblicism* in the linguistic dictionary.[1]

According to the lexicon of general and comparative literary criticism, *biblicism* is a word or expression from the Bible used in a belles-lettres work.[2]

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[1] Ахманова О.С., 1969, *Словарь лингвистических терминов,* Москва, с. 66

[2] Волков А., 2001, *Лексикон загального та порівняльного літературознавства,* Чернівці, с. 68

A. Birikh and Y. Mateshych define *biblicisms* as linguistic units borrowed from the Bible or having undergone the semantic influence of biblical texts.[3]

O.V. Safronova considers all set expressions with the complicated meaning containing proper names of biblical origin: anthroponyms, toponyms, ethnonyms, and assumes that the lower boundary of a biblical phraseological unit (BPU) is a two-word combination which might include a connective word as one of the components *(with Jesus)* and the upper boundary is a complex sentence (a proverb or a saying).[4]

O.M. Lysenko includes in the BPUs "directly or indirectly borrowed from the Bible assimilated set word complexes with the structure of a word combination or a sentence having the properties of figuratively interpreted objects as well as the semantic stability arising as a result of the full or partial reinterpretation of its components".[5]

I.B. Dubrovska indicates that a *biblicism* may not only be an expression but also a word.[6]

O.D. Soloshenko presumes that *biblicisms* comprise the following five main classes: 1) proper names, 2) biblical notions, 3) words and expressions grouped in accordance with biblical thematics, 4) lexical units formed from biblicisms under the influence of extralinguistic factors, 5) aphorisms and phraseological units.[7]

I. Kharazynska defines the term *biblicism* as a linguistic unit having certain meaning and originating from the biblical text or plot. "The notion biblicism combines the units of different language levels and the fact of their connection to the Bible as a source lies at the basis of this. So, there are three groups of biblicisms: lexical (e.g. *a pharisee, Methuselah,*

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[3]Бирих А., Матешич Й., 1994, *Из истории русских библейских выражений,* Русский язык за рубежом. – № 5 – 6. – С. 41 – 46.

[4]Сафронова Е.В., 1997, *Структура и семантика фразеологических единиц с ономастическим компонентом библейского происхождения в современном английском языке*, Киев, с. 5

[5] Лисенко О.М., 2000*, Дериваційні процеси в німецькій фразеології,* Київ, с. 22
[6]Дубровська І.Б., 2001, *Біблійно-християнська метафора в німецькій мові: номінативний аспект,* Київ, с. 131

[7] Солошенко О.Д., 1999, *Про визначення і типологію біблеїзмів*, Львів. – Вип. 111. – С. 132 – 135.

etc.), phraseological (e.g. *a scapegoat*), and paroemiological (e.g. *He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword (Matt. 26:52)*).[8]

I. Kharazynska's segregation of the units of phraseological and paroemiological character into separate groups is connected with the definition of a phraseological unit suggested in her dissertation. In accordance with Yu.A. Gvozdariev's theory, she gives the following definition of a phraseological unit (PU): *phraseological units* are stable in a language and reproduced in speech complex linguistic units having an autonomous meaning correlated with a notion and consisting of two or more words, with at least one of which having a phraseologically bound meaning.[9] Such a definition enables I. Kharazynska to assert that phraseology includes all three types of PU distinguished by V.V. Vynogradov with the exception of proverbs as they represent a judgment (not a notion).

According to I. Kharazynska, "a biblical phraseological unit is a complex linguistic unit originating from the Bible, having stability and autonomous meaning, consisting of two or more words, of which one, at least, has a phraseologically bound meaning and points out a certain concept of an object, phenomenon or quality".[10] We use this definition of a biblical phraseological unit in our research. However, we refer to biblical proverbs and sayings as communicative phraseological units.

As we can see, the linguists have no single definition of this term. Specifying the term *biblicism,* we understand by it lexemes, phraseological units and biblical quotations originating from the Bible.

The evaluative character of the semantics of BPUs determines their extensive expressive possibilities and significant potential in communication. The presence of a great number of BPUs describing character can be explained by the fact that the Bible is a source of understandable meaningful situations, and the BPUs reflecting concepts connected with human values and anti-values have a strong charge of evaluation.

The following nominative and nominative-communicative BPUs have a clearly expressed positive evaluation: *the land of promise (the promised land, the land of the covenant), the land flowing with milk and honey, the olive branch, flesh of the flesh, bone of the bone, to live off (or on) the fat of the land, the apple of one's eye, David and Jonathan, the alpha and omega, Noah's ark, to separate the husk from the grain, to beat swords into*

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[8] Харазиньска И., 1987. *Библеизмы в русской фразеологии,* Ростов-на-Дону, с. 11
[9] Ibid, с. 12
[10] Ibid, с. 12

ploughshares, balm in (of) Gilead, from Dan to Beersheba, etc. However, these BPUs may acquire other connotations in the text.

For instance, let us consider the use of the substantive BPU *the promised land* in the novel "The Violent Bear It Away" by F. O'Connor: "A faint evening breeze had begun to stir. He [Francis] stepped over a tree fallen across his path and plunged on. A thorn vine caught in his shirt and tore it but he didn't stop. Farther away the wood thrush called again. With the same four formal notes it thrilled its grief against the silence. He was heading straight for a gap in the wood where, through a forked birch, the clearing could be seen below, down the long hill and across the field. Always when he and his great-uncle [Mason] were returning from the road, they would stop there. It had given the old man the greatest satisfaction to look out over the field and in the distance see his house settled between its chimneys, his stall, his lot, his corn. He might have been *Moses* glimpsing ***the promised land***".[11]

In the present context the BPU *the promised land* with the anthroponym *Moses* performs the allusive and expressive function of rendering Mason's love for his native place. The implicit comparison of Mason Tarwater with Moses facilitates drawing a parallel between the emotional states of the two personages, of whom the former treated his native land the same as the latter the *promised land*. As we know from the Bible, Moses climbed Mount Nebo from where he viewed Canaan, the Promised Land, which he was doomed not to tread (Exodus, 2; Deuteronomy, 34). Mason Tarwater loved his lot of land so much that it was the greatest pleasure for him to view it from the hill. So, we instantly observe several stylistic functions of the BPU in the given example.

In addition to the allusive function of BPUs, their use in the belles-lettres text contributes to the argumentation, specification and emotional emphasis of the opinion, etc.

1) In the novel "Moses and the Ten Commandments" by P. Ilton and M. Roberts the substantive BPUs *the land flowing with milk and honey* and *the land of promise*: "That would lead them to a *land flowing with milk and honey*. There *is no honey and little milk* in the wilderness of Paran! Are you to remind the people that this *land of promise* is a land of walled towns and an armed people?"[12] are used in Moses' conversation with Joshua in order to warn people that they should not forget about armed people living in *the land flowing with milk and*

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[11] O'Connor F., 1983, *Wise Blood, The Violent Bear it Away. Everything that Rises Must Converge*, New York, p. 263

[12] Ilton P., Roberts M., 1956, *Moses and the Ten Commandments,* New York, p. 180

honey. The BPU performs the expressive function of giving a warning. The components of the substantive BPU *the land flowing with milk and honey* during the decomposition in the second sentence: "There *is no honey and little milk* in the wilderness of Paran!" revive their primary meaning *milk* and *honey*. At first the whole expression is perceived as allusive. However, its decomposition into components used in their primary meanings contributes to its expressiveness.

2) Here is the second case of usage of this BPU in the same novel: "*The promised land* might be *a land of milk and honey*, but the goats that produced *the milk* would have to be herded, *the honey* would have to be stolen from the hives, and there, as always, the dirt would have to be scratched and the seed sown and fertilized *with salt sweat*".[13] In this example as well as in the first one, we observe the decomposition of the phrase into the elements *milk* and *honey* that acquire their primary meaning. The word combination *salt sweat* is antonymous to *honey*. This BPU adds expressiveness to the author's opinion emphasizing that even in *the land flowing with milk and honey* the desired luxury in life is obtained by hard work.

3) For the third time we come across the above mentioned BPU accompanied with the reiteration of *promised* (Participle II) and *promise* (Noun), in the same novel performing the expressive function of showing the deep disappointment of people sick and tired of looking for *the land flowing with milk and honey*: "Moses *had promised* to bring them over the salt sea and care for them in the wilderness unto Sinai, and these things he had done. And now did he consider that he was released from his *promise*? Where was this *land of milk and honey*? Who was to guide them, find food and water, give them the law?"[14]

4) The substantive BPU *the land of promise* performs the emotive function in the leader's speech rendering his assuredness expressively: "I would hope so – there can be another miracle, and we will come upon this *land of promise*. It may exist, brothers!"[15]

Examples 3 and 4 present the antithesis of diffidence, disappointment in the interrogative sentence *Where was this <u>land of milk and honey</u>?* (example 3) and certainty, encouragement (example 4) in the paragraph ending with the exclamatory sentence *It may exist, brothers!*

In the text of the novel "God Knows" by J. Heller the BPU *the promised land*, is used together with the BPU with the negative connotation *to wash one's hands of* and performs the function of creating an ironic effect: "Forty years this went on, with God wrathful and

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[13] Ibid, p. 285
[14] Ibid, p. 296
[15] Ibid, p. 298

fulminating and the people recalcitrant, stiff-necked, and disobedient. Till that day arrived when – weary enough to want *to wash his hands of* it all, I'd bet – he [Moses] hiked up Mount Nebo to the top of Pisgah for his look across the Jordan at *the Promised Land* he was barred from entering for some undisclosed trespass neither I nor anyone else has been able to figure out. And shortly thereafter, though his eye was not dim nor his natural force lessened, Moses died, and no one even knows the place of his sepulcher.

Some *Promised Land*. The *honey* was there, but the *milk* we brought in with our goats. To people in California, God gives a magnificent coastline, a movie industry, and Beverly Hills. To us He gives sand. To Cannes He gives a plush film festival. Our winters are rainy, our summers hot. To people who didn't know how to wind a wristwatch He gives underground oceans of oil. To us He gives hernia, piles and anti-Semitism".[16]

The ironic effect is created in the present micro-context by the play on words (pun) *the honey was there, but the milk we brought in with our goats,* which is an allusion to the BPU *the land flowing with milk and honey*, as well as by the main personage's (King David) use of the indefinite pronoun *some* before *Promised Land*, anachronisms *movie industry, a plush film festival, wristwatch* (as is known, such things could not exist during the prophet Moses' life) (Exodus, 2; Deuteronomy, 34), zeugma *To us He gives hernia, piles and anti-Semitism*, four times repeated *He gives* and the BPU with the negative connotation *to wash his hands of it all* in the narration about the canonized personage Moses.

As we can see, one BPU may perform different stylistic functions apart from the allusive one in various micro-contexts: the expressive function of accentuating the author's opinion, rendering assuredness, warning, disappointment and the function of ironic effect creating in order to express king David's critical attitude to God who put the Israelites on trial.

Let us consider two instances of using the substantive BPU *the olive branch* (the symbol of reconciliation) in the novel "Pontius Pilate" by P. Maier:

1) "Pilate agreed, but wondered if *the olive branch* waved by Caiaphas was as much a diplomatic screen as his own efforts. Yet the two men had met, the pair who would virtually control Judea over the next years, and this had been the primary purpose of Gratus' reception".[17]

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[16] Heller J., 1997, *God Knows,* New York, p. 40

[17] Maier P., 1981, *Pontius Pilate*, Wheaton (Illinois), p. 67

2) "The change of venue rid him [Pilate] of a sticky case involving a probably innocent man [Yeshu Hannosri] whom it would have been wrong to convict, and yet dangerous to acquit, in view of the Sanhedrin's attitude. It was also a bit of diplomacy toward Herod Antipas, who could not fail to recognize this as *an olive branch* in their perennial feud".[18]

In the first case the BPU is used to express Pilate's disbelief in Caiaphas' diplomacy. It is emphasized by Participle II *waved*. The BPU performs an emotive function in the micro-context.

In the second case the mentioned BPU is used to express the argumentation of the author's thought about Pontius Pilate's good intentions.

King David uses the substantive BPU *flesh of the flesh, bone of the bone* in the interrogative sentence in the conversation with his son Solomon in the novel "God Knows": "No, Solomon. Are you sure you are *flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone*? It will take much to persuade me"[19] to express annoyance about his son's behaviour. Solomon pretended that he did not understand him. The BPU mainly conveys the protagonist's irritation.

For the second time in the novel "God Knows" the nominative substantive BPU *flesh of the flesh, bone of the bone* is presented as grammatically transformed *my bones and my flesh* and *of my bone and my flesh*:

"Say to them," I gave stern orders, "that they are my brethren, they are *my bones and my flesh*. And say you also to Amasa that he is *of my bone and my flesh*, and that God do so to me, and more also, if he be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab, and more, if he but declare for me now. Say all that".[20]

The expressiveness of emphasizing David's opinion in his addressing Amasa as a military leader concerning the fact that his son and the rebels represent one nation and ought not to show enmity towards each other, is rendered by the structural transformation of the BPU *my bones and my flesh* and *of my bone and my flesh*. The author intensifies the expressiveness of the utterance by means of grammatical transformation.

In the following micro-context the substantive BPU *the apple of one's eye*: "I took him [Absalom] in my arms and held him and burst into tears before he even began to justify himself for the slaying of his brother Amnon. I never forced him to beg my forgiveness. I put him to work as my surrogate, to deal with people with complaints for which I had no patience.

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[18] Ibid, p. 220
[19] Heller J., 1997, *God Knows,* New York, p. 185
[20] Ibid, p. 332

Once again he was *the apple of my eye*"[21] performs the emotive function of emphasizing father's love for the son who killed his brother Amnon.

In the novel "Son of the Morning" by J.C. Oates the substantive BPU *the Alpha and Omega* expresses the feeling of the preacher Nathanael Vickery's affection in worshipping Jesus Christ: "<u>You are</u> *the Alpha and the Omega*. <u>You are</u> the soul, and at once the whisperer unto the soul: I am thy salvation. <u>You are</u> He who writes these words and He who reads them, <u>You are</u> both myself and my terrible longing for You, spread out now throughout my body, packed tight against the envelope of my skin"[22] (Revelation, 1:8, 11). The expressiveness of the BPU is intensified by the metaphor *You are both myself and my terrible longing for You* and the four times repeated anaphora *You are*.

The lexico-semantic and storyline borrowings from the Bible perform several functions in the belles-lettres texts. On the one hand, they serve as 'building blocks', forming the contents equally with words and word combinations, setting the addresser free from the necessity to invent other verbal formulae. On the other hand, such borrowings perform aesthetic functions, increase the emotive expressiveness of the utterance and help to reach a certain pragmatic effect.

Biblical phraseological units characterize personages, their deeds, feelings, emotions and their attitude to events, assisting the reader in revealing the leitmotif of the work.

Biblical phraseological units used in the belles-lettres text serve as sort of cognitive incentives making readers think over a moral ideal which is essential for the ideological understanding of a work. They also appeal to human conscience and outlook permitting to digress from the historical or national subject and pay attention to the spiritual world of an average person, going beyond the plot of a certain belles-lettres work.

As we have observed from the analyzed examples, one BPU, apart from the allusive function, may perform different stylistic functions depending on the micro-context in which it is used.

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[21] Ibid, p. 198

[22] Oates J.C., 1978, *Son of the Morning*, New York, p. 156

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