

BLESSING AND CREATION IN IVAN GROZEV'S POEM "THE SWAN OF ETERNITY"

Chief Assistant Professor Velislava Doneva, PhD

Department of Bulgarian Language, Literature and Art,

"Angel Kanchev" University of Ruse

E-mail: doneva_v@uni-ruse.bg

***Abstract:** "Visions and contemplations" (1919) is the only published collection of poems by the poet-symbolist and theosoph Ivan Grozev, which compiles his later works. This is poetry of the sacred orbits of being in Space, where galactic lights and fires light and rearrange the chaos. The visions roam through deep, spiritual insights and the contemplations emanate thirst for the absolute, resulting from the encounter between meditation and poetic reflection. The poem "The Swan of Eternity" is an introduction to the remaining 46 poems in the collection – ceremonial, glamorous manifesto, in which the symbols of Indian philosophy and the mystical world intertwine with the images of the author's imagination.*

***Keywords:** symbolism, theosophy, Indian philosophy, poetry*

INTRODUCTION

The plays, the articles and the poetry of Ivan Grozev form a mural of texts that signals a self-contained creative model – a version of Bulgarian modernity, related to the meaning of modernism and its "residing" in the national cultural space of "isms". It is hard to combine fully the creative writing of Grozev with other Bulgarian voices of literature, or to attach it formally to a common paradigm. It remains generally unheeded (he himself is far from the noisily lauded signs of modernity), enclosed within the limits of the readable context, with the readers' perception open to the symbolism and mystic philosophy of the East.

„Visions and Contemplations“ (1919) is the only published collection of poems of the poet-symbolist. The poem „**The Swan of Eternity**“ is a theosophical and mystic manifesto, solemn, ceremonial, glorious, illuminated by the call of the sacred three-letter unity *AUM*, which structures the text formally into five poetic expressions. Each of them brings a revelation and each revelation brings out reflection. It was probably this very atmosphere that had inspired the contemporary interpretation of the poet Ivan Teofilov, who discerned in Ivan Grozev's poems the signs of temple art and saw them as hieratic poetry:

“I like his poetry, so closely related to the concept of temple art in Egypt, with its ecstatic litanies to God, Path, Eternity, Love and Truth... Visions that have obsessed so many European minds in art during the 1920s. What a great loss to our poetry is the neglect of these poets and how sad the price of this negligence“. (Teofilov 2013: 30)

EXPOSITION

„**The Swan of Eternity**“ is a testimony of creative imagination and a strong propensity to super-sensitive fiction. This text is an entrance into the kingdom of visions and contemplations in the remaining 46 poetic pieces in the poetry book, a focus of Grozev's religious beliefs. Tzvetana Georgieva defines it as „cosmogenesis, close to Hindu mythology“ (Georgieva 2008, 353). The symbols of the world of India intertwine with the images of the poet's own imagination. The swan is an image, characteristic of Baudlaire's and Mallarme's works and as a symbol of the poet's pure soul, it is present in the poems of P. K. Yavorov., T. Trayanov, N. Liliev, Hr. Yasenov.

The poem has two epigraphs – from *The Voice of Silence* of Blavatska and from the Indian Rigveda collection. *The Swan of Eternity* is a symbol of Brahma – the swan of space and time, endless and infinite, the symbolic bird, which laid the egg, the golden fetus, generating the Universe from the abyss of chaos. The Death of the White Swan and the wild enthusiasm of the

Black one are related to occultism. Hamsa (Hansa) from Sanscrit (the mystic swan or goose) presents the Devine Wisdom, inaccessible to human beings. This sacred mystic name is preceded by Kala (The Endless Time), meaning „a bird in space and time“. In *The Secret Doctrine* Blavatska says that „Brahman (the unseen) should be viewed as Hamsa-vahana (He who uses the Swan as His carrier), and not Brahma – the Creator, who is the true Kalahams, but Brahma is Hamsa and A-Hamsa“ (Blavatska 1994, 70).

Ivan Grozev used the name for Wisdom from the word for wisdom in the Indian Rigveda collection – *kalahansa*. Rigveda is the first and most significant of the four Vedas. According to legend, it was created by the Eastern oral Brahmas. The occult tradition holds true that this Veda was told by the Great Wisemen on the banks of Man Lake, on the side of the Himalayas, tens of thousands of years before the appearance of the collected works. *Kalahansa* is the Brahma (logos, knowledge, speech), female and male, connected to the inknow and the darkness. The Swan appears to be the emanation of Brahma as the Creative Force. The White Swan is associated with the image of Christ, illuminated by the All-burning Flame, and the Black Swan – with the image of anti-Christ at the Second Coming. Symbols and theosophic concepts collaborate in the poem. Its poetics constructs cosmic scales, to ensure super-terrestrial communication. What is interesting is the fact that Grozev builds the image of Hell, using both Christian and Ancient Greek mythological elements – the night – the Reaper Hala; the Time defeated – Perseus cutting Medusa’s head; Hercules, who defeats the fearful Terber, the soul keeper in Hell, in the dark Aid.

According to Yordan Eftimov (2008) the three calls AUM trace the structural scheme. „OM“ or „AUM“ is a mystical consonance, one of the most sacred words in India. In its essence, it is a blessing, call, assurance and promise. It is truly sacred because it can also be a word at the “low breath” of the original, occult Masonry. When it is uttered, no one should be around. Usually, this consonance is put in the beginning of the Sacred Scriptures, prayers start with it and it is uttered during meditation. According to popular belief, the three letters symbolise three Vedas, but also three Gods – A (Agni-Fire), U (Varun-Water), M (Marut-Air). In esoteric philosophy, this it the triple fire in the Universe and in Man, along with many other fires that burn there. In the Occult, this fire also represents higher Tetraxis (a sacred Four, in which the Pythagoreans vow). It means Unity of One in Four aspects. It is also an expression of the original Triad (triangle), gathering in a divine monada. The tetraxis also symbolises Agni (A) – the fire and its conversion into three sons, who drink the water. This means that the material desires have been eradicated.

Some of the most active symbols in Ivan Grozev’s poetry are water, fire, sun and abyss. Fire– Agni is a specific image with the hard but significant role of a mediator between two essences, two forces. It is the bearer of a message, ruler of energies; a symbol of specific perceptions, desires, states – i.e. a certain type of identification of the unlimited potential of creation, with its overt and hidden psychological mechanisms outside of any order, logically inexplicable and unknowable.

The Lake of Silence, dead waves, dead waters, heavenly waters are key images, present in various mythologies with various meanings. Theosophy is willing to enclose the exact sciences as part of the Great Truth, explaining the world. In this case, water is not water in the material sense; it delineates the image of potential fluid, which is contained in the boundless space:

*Разцъфва Вечний Миг
над Езерото на Безмълвието – там
възпламва белий плам
на Лотуса над мъртвите вълни
на ноцни мрачини –
на Бога на Небесните Води.
[с. 7]*

*Eternal moment blooms
Over the Lake of Silence –*

*The white flame of the Lotus flashes there
Over the dead waves of the darkest night –
The God of Heavenly Waters.*
[p. 7]

Waters are an essential image for theosophers and are present in different mythologies while *Heavenly waters, Eternal waters* are an image of the circle of life. As images of world cataclysm, fire and water have identical symbolism – creation, punishment, catharsis. In Hinduism, „Narayana is moving over elemental waters. This is one of the names of Brahma, the Creator, which appears mostly in the Universal Ocean. From Narayana’s path grew a cosmic tree. Two birds had landed on its branches: Agni – the fire and Indra – the God of waters. Everything was created by these two opposing elements”. (Priyor 1991, 174)

In *The Swan of Eternity* the anti-thesis silence – sound is built through the unfolded images of water. In the first verse, figures of silence are drawn through suggestions of death and night. In the second and third part, silence is faced by song, sound, cry, and moan. „The single wisdom is in the Sound – say the theosophs, implying that Sound is Lotus.“ (Blavatska 1994: 494)

The image of the Cosmic Lotus completes the picture of cosmogenesis. As a plant with occult sacred meaning, worshipped in Egypt and India, called „a child of Universe“, because it bears the likeness of its mother in its chest, it contains the allegory that there was a time when the world was a „Golden Lotus“. This image is also a symbol of the Master of Universe – God the Creator (the Lotus-born creator Brahma). The Lotus is a product of heat (fire) and water. It is a favourite ancient symbol of Cosmos, but also of the very life of Man because in *The Secret Doctrine* Blavatska claims that the elements of the two are the same. The Lotus root, immersed in silt, is the material life; the stem, shooting upward through the water, symbolises existence in the astral world, and the flower itself, floating on the water and opening to the sky, is emblematic for the spiritual being. (Blavatska 2005: 109) “The cosmic Lotus in Grosev’s poem,” claims Tsvetana Georgieva, “is this particular universal principle, which rules the world and develops life; the cosmic Lotus is an image – symbol of the creative force, of the emergence of the world from the cosmic waters, on which the sleeping Vishnu floats. Vishnu (demiurge of the Universe), creates from his body the giant Lotus, on which the creator Brahma, born by the Lotus, resides; with the growth of the Golden Lotus grows the Universe and the features of Nature“(Georgieva 2008: 353).

Giorgio Nurigiani writes that in AUM „we find one of the best verses on death in Bulgarian poetry, reminding so much of Yavorov’s and Pencho Slaveikov’s verses”. (Nurigiani 1941, 40) *Dark-winged Night, horror storm, hot frost and cold heat suns, Dead waters, Black Swan – deadly shadow* are death’s projections in the text. The dead waters are the mirror, symbolising the astral world, located between the Earth and the Heaven. The mirror reflects the higher waters; what is below is just like what is above; the Earthly objects are interpreted only through the objects in Heaven (*the giant shadow of the Silver White Swan is reflected in the Dead Waters*).

The Swan of Eternity – the bird of creation, embraces what is laid there, the last irrevocable intent of being – Jesus Christ.

*О, Смърт, надвластна Смърт,
ти побеждаваш и самото време [....]
... О, Смърт,
Кого не закачи
косата ти звънтяща?
Ти с песен покосяваш
народи, поколения;
пред тебе се възправят легиони –
и миг един, и те са прах... [....]
Oh, Death, overwhelming Death,
Defeating Time itself [...]*

... Oh, Death,
Who has remained untouched
by your clinking scythe?
You mow down
Peoples, generations with a song;
One moment legions stand before you –
Another one and they are gone... [...] ¹

CONCLUSION

The verses of „The swan of Eternity“, contemplative and ecstatic, glorify, preach, trump. They show that Ivan Grozev is more of a mystic, a poet-worshipper, and less of a symbolist. It can be assumed that he has applied the artistic system of symbolism, in order to fill it with content, leading directly to cosmogenic theosophic concepts and major Buddhist mantras. This is one of the faces of his poetic world.

Using the poetic systems devised by modernity for expression and modelling of the world, for disclosing the manifestations of modern consciousness and expressing himself and his obsession to a certain degree, Ivan Grozev goes beyond the prohibitions of traditional ideas and concepts, rational poetics and aesthetics. That is why he must be seen as one of the preachers of new art, embedding man in the Universe medium – a new type of reaction of literature to the problems of the individual.

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