

## TRADITIONS OF THE LAKE SCHOOL IN ROBERT BROWNING'S AND OSCAR WILDE'S CREATIVE WORK

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**Abstract. Objectives:** The article is aimed at finding traditions of the Lake School – of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey – in the creative work of Robert Browning and Oscar Wilde. **Methods:** The comparative and historical, comparative and typological research methods, technics of the comparative analysis were used in the article. **Findings:** Traditions of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey are found in works by Robert Browning. “The Dance of Death” is created under the influence of Coleridge’s war eclogue “Fire, Famine, and Slaughter”, “The First-Born of Egypt” has features similar to Southey’s dramas and “The Ruined Cottage” of Wordsworth; both works are characterized by the form of a drama monologue borrowed by Browning from Romantic poets. In the poem “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” Coleridge’s innovation (“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”) and Wordsworth’s poetic language (“Peter Bell”) are notable. Browning actively realizes the ballad genre developed by Romantic poets in his poems. Traditions of the poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge are seen in “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” by Oscar Wilde. The thematic and structural interrelation is manifested in the characteristic imagery and use of close motives and literary details (common elements in the interpretation of suffering and forgiveness and ballad elements designed to emphasize tension and to add monotony and tediousness to descriptions of grief and torment). **Novelty:** The poems by Robert Browning, which attracted Russian translators at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Korney Chukovsky, Raul Rabinerson, etc.), caused the greatest interest among Russian translators (O.V.Valetova, V.V.Rogov, etc.) at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The work of Oscar Wilde, being close to the peculiarities of the Russian perception of the world, also became popular in Russia what was manifested in the emergence of translations created by K.D.Balmont, M.F.Likiardopulo, V.Ya.Bryusov, A.I.Deutch at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Key words:** Lake School, Robert Browning, Oscar Wilde, poetry, reminiscence, literary tradition, English Romanticism, ballad, intercultural communication, literary detail.

**1. Introduction.** With the death of Byron, Shelley, Coleridge in the 1820-s – 1830-s English Romanticism hasn’t disappeared and for a long time has been a significant phenomenon of the literary process due to works of such famous Victorian poets as Tennyson, Arnold, Browning, Wilde. Unlike his contemporaries, who were substantially influenced by traditions of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey at the initial stage, the period of Browning’s interest in the poets of the Lake School was short. Despite this, many things in Browning’s poetry are borrowed from Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s creative work. The influence of the poets of the Lake School on literary activity of Robert Browning is confirmed by two poems from the collection “Incondita” destroyed by the author – “The Dance of Death” and “The First-Born of Egypt” and his well-known poem “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came”, on Oscar Wilde – his last work “The Ballad of Reading Gaol”.

**2. Materials and Methods.** While analyzing and comparing the poems, we used M.M.Bakhtin’s theory of dialogue and “another’s word”, developed in works of Yu.M.Lotman, A.A.Guseynov and others, according to which there are three approaches to the cultural interaction study – vertically-diachronic [Bakhtin 1979], vertically-synchronic [Lotman 1992], horizontally-synchronic [Dialog kul’ tur v globaliziruyushchemsya mire: mirovozzrencheskiye aspekti 2005].

**3. Results.** “The Dance of Death” (1827) by Robert Browning was created under the influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s war eclogue “Fire, Famine, and Slaughter” (1798) in which three sisters witches announced William Pitt the reason of all misfortunes and tortures experienced by the Irish. The English prime minister is known as the organizer of cruel repressions concerning the Irish who fought for independence of their country. Browning’s poem presents a surprisingly similar picture, but mentions five evil spirits – Fever, Pestilence, Ague, Madness and Consumption. While narrating about their atrocities over people and pleasure from their tortures Coleridge’s witches repeat a refrain spell:

*The same! the same!  
Letters four do for his name.  
He let me loose, and cried, Halloo!  
To him alone the praise is due.  
[(Lobão and Pereira, 2016)] –  
Vsyo on! Vsyo on!  
Chetvyorkoy buk v on zakleimyon  
Pustil I kriknul: ulyu-lyu!  
Yego ya odnogo khvalyu.*

[Coleridge 2004: 295, 297] (translated by V.V.Rogov).

Their monologue is close to Pestilence's monologue in Browning's poem:

*'Tis for me, 'tis for me  
Mine the prize of Death must be;  
My spirit is o'er the young and gay  
As on snowy wreaths in the bright noonday  
They wear a melting and vermeil flush  
Even while I bid their pulses hush.*

[New Poems by Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barret Browning 1914: 16] –

Lish moy, lish moy,  
Priz Smerti dolzhen byt' za mnoy;  
Moy dukh nad yunym i vesyolym,  
Kak v yarkiy polden' na sugrobakh  
Rumyantsa rastvoril pechat',  
Tak ikh zastavil zamolchat'.

[Valetova 2004: 36 – 37] (translated by O.V.Valetova).

A poem “The First-Born of Egypt” (1827) is an attempt, typical for Romantic poets, to recover a Bible story and to combine it with a modern perspective. The work is written in blank verse and, according to the researcher of Browning's creative work Ioan M. Williams, in style reminds Byron's and Southey's poetic dramas [Williams 1967: 17]. And the plot has similar features with “The Ruined Cottage” by William Wordsworth in the center of the narration of which there is a story of the soldier's widow Margaret who lost her children. In Browning's poem the father experiences the death of his son:

*I marked one old man with his only son  
Lifeless within his arms – his withered hand  
Wandering o'er the features of his child  
Bidding him [wake] from his long dreary sleep,  
And he led his old blind father from the crowd  
To green meadows.*

[New Poems by Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barret Browning 1914: 16] –

Ya videl, kak starik derzhal v rukakh  
Edinstvennogo syna umersheye telo, yego issokhshaya ruka  
Skol'zila po rodnym chertam,  
Pytayas' probudit' yego ot sna,  
On uvodil nezryachego ottsa podal'she ot tolpi  
V zelyoniye luga...

[Valetova 2004: 37] (translated by O.V.Valetova).

Initially, there is an impression that the narration is on behalf of the author, but at the end of the work there is another story-teller, who describes the Bible events presented in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of “Exodus”. And it is this inclination to a monological form that connects Browning with Wordsworth and Coleridge. Wordsworth seeks to create a new genre in order to reflect feelings and thoughts of people in excitement or less passionate emotions, but, anyway, he wishes to express in a lyrical form not his own experiences, but experiences of other people. Nevertheless, he claims that the poet surpasses other people in sensitiveness: “...the Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men” [Wordsworth 1909: 935].

Coleridge in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798) goes further. “He almost completely eliminated the author, having destroyed thereby the contrast between him and the hero, created an image of the seaman on the basis of impressions of his companion, “a wedding guest”, and outlined with scarce touches a situation alien to the present, having refracted it in the image of the seaman” [Kozhanova, M. B., Svechnikova, N. V., Akhmetzyanova, G. N., Kondrashova, E. N., Maksimova, N. L., & Zakharova, Z. A. (2016)]. Browning uses similar methods seeking to connect a historical background with psychology of heroes, to give vivacity to the retrospective monologues caused by special circumstances, which awakened memoirs. It gives agitation, tension and dramatic nature to the narration.

Poems “The Dance of Death” and “The First-Born of Egypt” are an elementary form of a drama monologue, a form, which Browning borrowed from Romantic poets and which glorified him at the top of his creativity.

In the well-known poem by mature Browning “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” (1855) there is also an association with Coleridge's and Wordsworth's poetry. The poem begins with characteristic ex abrupto creating an effect that the conversation is continued and peculiar to Wordsworth's creative work. For example, in a prologue of the poem “Peter Bell” (1819) of Wordsworth it is said that the poet, having fallen into a reverie, suddenly remembers that his friends, who he promised to tell a curious story, are waiting for him:

*I spake with faltering voice, like one  
Not wholly rescued from the pale  
Of a wild dream, or worse illusion;*

*But, straight, to cover my confusion,  
 Began the promised Tale.  
 Part First  
 All by the moonlight river side  
 Groaned the poor Beast – alas! in vain;  
 The staff was raised to loftier height,  
 And the blows fell with heavier weight  
 As Peter struck – and struck again.  
 “Hold!” cried the Squire, “against the rules  
 Of common sense you are surely sinning;  
 This leap is for us all too bold;  
 Who Peter was, let us be told,  
 And start from the beginning.”*

[Select Poetical Works of William Wordsworth in Two Volumes 1864: 320].

We see here the use of definite articles (since this is the beginning of the story, we would expect indefinite ones) and a personal name with which we do not know who is named by. All this is fully characteristic of Browning's poems:

*My first thought was, he lied in every word,  
 That hoary cripple with malicious eye  
 Askance to watch the working of his lie  
 On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford  
 Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored  
 Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.*

[Poetical Works of Robert Browning 1888: 194].

There is no hero's question to “the hoary cripple”, no answer to it, only Roland's reaction – his feeling of mistrust. Such design comprises the idea of irreversibility what is also indicated by the word “victim”. Besides, Browning calls the hero by a personal pronoun “he” though he is told about for the first time; it creates an impression as if the reader perfectly knows what there is a speech about.

Oscar Wilde's last work – the poem “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” (1898) – was the apotheosis of confession in his poetic work. Foreign researchers, for example, Peter Raby [Raby 1988] have repeatedly discussed the role of this work in Wilde's creative heritage. The poem narrated about the torments of a man in prison, who, being a murderer, at the same time, was a victim of a beautiful and dangerous feeling of love. Wilde created the poem in the village of Berneval, France after two years of imprisonment, under the influence of his experience in prison. “...the horror of prison is that everything is so simple and commonplace in itself, and so degrading, and hideous, and revolting in its effect” [Vitkovsky 2004: 379], the writer wrote to his closest friend, and later the publisher of his works, Robert Ross on October 8, 1897 (Villa Guidice, Posilippo). It was Ross, who proposed the name “The Ballad” to Wilde. And although Wilde had already told the publisher Leonard Smithers the final version of the poem title on December 11, 1897, in the first six editions the work was entitled simply “The Ballad”, with the author's pseudonym “C33” – Wilde's cell number in prison. Wilde wanted to dedicate “The Ballad” to Ross with something like the words from “De Profundis”: “When I go out of prison, R- will be waiting for me on the other side of the big iron-studded gate, and he is the symbol, not merely of his own affection, but of the affection of many others besides” [Wilde 1905: 16; Vitkovsky 2004: 379]. But later he removed this dedication.

According to Wilde, he borrowed the rhythm of his poem from lyrical and almost epigrammatic in form poems of the English classical scholar and poet Alfred Edward Houseman. Wilde used the stanza of “the English ballad”, but not on two, on three rhymes. He based the plot on a true story. As it is said in the dedication, in the summer of 1896 Charles Thomas Wooldridge was brought to the Reading Gaol: “*In Memoriam C. T. W. sometime Trooper of the Royal Horse Guards obiit H. M. Prison, Reading, Berkshire July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1896*” [Wilde 2004: 200]. Wooldridge was sentenced to hanging for killing his wife in a rage of jealousy. After the execution his body was thrown into a pit with quicklime.

Being well-known and translated into more than fifty languages, “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” attracted the attention of such Russian translators as K.D.Balmont, A.I.Deutch, V.Ya.Bryusov, M.F.Likiardopulo (prose translation), etc., caused certain literary associations. For example, V.Ya.Bryusov pointed out the obvious interrelation between Wilde's poem and the French poet, novelist and dramatist of the Romantic movement Victor Marie Hugo's novel “The Last Day of a Condemned Man” (“Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné”, 1829). The novel, being a protest against the death penalty, was written on behalf of the person, who was sentenced to the execution, and it is not accidental that the crime, for which the narrator was waiting for death, was not named [Bryusov 1919: 2; Zhatkin, Yashina 2007: 87 – 89].

When reading Wilde's poem, one can recollect Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798) which also tells us about the suffering of a person sentenced to death, but not by society, by nature (the poem was translated by such Russian writers as F.B.Miller, N.L.Pushkarev, A.A.Korinsky, N.S.Gumilev, etc.) [Zhatkin, Ryabova 2011: 194 – 218].

Coleridge makes an albatross the reason of that penalty which his murder involves. The Ancient Mariner kills the albatross unexpectedly, without any motive. This evil doesn't have any reasonable explanation, and, therefore, is the result of the original sin which led to damage of human nature. This is what Coleridge wrote to his brother in March, 1798, when the first version of the poem had been just finished: “I believe most steadfastly in Original Sin; that from

our mothers' wombs our understandings are darkened; and even where our understandings are in the Light, that our organization is depraved; and our volitions imperfect" [Collected Letters of S.T. Coleridge: In Six Volumes 1956: 396]. Sailors of the ship silently accuse the Ancient Mariner and hang a dead albatross on his neck instead of a cross. Obviously, Coleridge meant not a cross, worn on the neck, which was a symbol of disposal of an original sin for Christians, but a cross as an ordeal [Saintsbury 1922: 63]. Also, this image is associated with a "mark of Cain", a cross, burned, according to the legend, into Cain's and a wandering Jew's foreheads. The myth about Cain who killed his brother Abel, as well as the myth about Ahasverus, the wandering Jew condemned for violation of Christ, occupied Coleridge's imagination, while he was creating the poem. Wilde also mentions the original sin:

*Since first Man took his brother's life,..*

[Wilde 2004: 246] –

(S tekh por, kak perviy chelovek

Byl bratom umershchvlyon),..

[Wilde 2004: 341] (translated by V. Ya. Bryusov).

In his essay V. Ya. Bryusov said precisely about Wilde's poem: "Prison taught him <Wilde> the terrible beauty of suffering. With merciless cruelty he did embody this beauty in a string of monotonous stanzas which painfully tear the heart. But this merciless cruelty is, at the same time, forgiving love for all people. The ultimate conclusion from "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" which the poet found in the depths of his own suffering but beautiful soul fits in one word: Forgiveness" [Bryusov 1915: 10]. Coleridge's poem says the same: the same chain of sufferings experienced by the Ancient Mariner, the same forgiving love, but to all living things in the end. Although at first it may seem that nature is more merciful than society, since the Ancient Mariner remains alive, yet he is doomed to wander around the world telling his terrible story, that is, continue to suffer. "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" are ideologically close to each other. Their characters who committed the crimes (Ancient Mariner who murdered the Albatross, who had saved him and his comrades, and the Guardian who killed the woman he loved) had to bear the responsibility for their sins in the face of nature, society and God. Both of them experience the fear of death and bear the rejection and indifference of people. But sufferings change the soul of a man, and in spite of the voice of reason and pride, he begins to long for forgiveness. Happy are those who can obtain forgiveness:

*Ah! happy they whose hearts can break*

*And peace of pardon win!*

*How else may man make straight his plan*

*And cleanse his soul from Sin?*

*How else but through a broken heart*

*May Lord Christ enter in?*

[Wilde 2004: 252] –

O, shchastliv tot, chyo serdtse mozhnet

Razbitsya na puti!

Kak inache ochistit' dushu

I noviy put' naiti?

Kogda ne v glub' serdets razbitykh,

Kuda Khristu soiti?

[Wilde 2004: 319] (translated by V. Ya. Bryusov).

These lines are close to the words of the Ancient Mariner, for only having experienced sufferings, a person can start loving the neighbours and find forgiveness for the crime he committed:

*He prayeth well, who loveth well*

*Both man and bird and beast.*

*He prayeth best, who loveth best*

*All things both great and small;*

*For the dear God who loveth us,*

*He made and loveth all.*

[Coleridge 2004: 106 – 108] –

Tot molitsya, kto lyubit vsekh,

Bud' ptitsa to, il' zver'.

Tot molitsya, kto lyubit vsyo –

Sozdaniye i tvar';

Zatem, chto lyubyashchiy ikh Bog

Nad etoy tvar'yu tsar'.

[Coleridge 1919: 39] (translated by N.S. Gumilev).

Coleridge and Wilde use repetitions extensively. They literally permeate their poems with them for the sake of gradual aggravating the dramatic narrative. For example, Wilde repeats the pronoun "some" in stanzas expressing the main idea of the poem, so that their measured current can emphasize the cruel thought of the final lines, which do not have any repetition:

*Yet each man kills the thing he loves,*

*By each let this be heard,*

*[And all men kill the thing they love,  
By all let this be heard,  
Some do it with a bitter look,  
Some with a flattering word,  
The coward does it with a kiss,  
The brave man with a sword!  
Some kill their love when they are young,  
And some when they are old;  
Some strangle with the hands of Lust,  
Some with the hands of Gold:  
The kindest use a knife, because  
The dead so soon grow cold.  
Some love too little, some too long,  
Some sell, and others buy;  
Some do the deed with many tears,  
And some without a sigh:  
For each man kills the thing he loves.  
Yet each man does not die.*

[Wilde 2004: 204 – 206; 254] –

No ubivayut vse lyubimikh, –

Pust' *znayut* vse o tom, –

[Pust' *slyshat* vse o tom.]

Odin ub'yot zhestokim vzglydom,

Drugoy – obmannym snom,

Trusliviy – lzhivym potseluyem,

I tot, kto smel, – mechom!

Odin ub'yot lyubov' v rastsvete,

Drugoy – na sklone let,

Odin udushit v sladostrast'i,

Drugoy – pod zvon monet,

Dobreyshiy – nozh beryot: kto umer,

V tom muki bol'she net.

Kto slishkom skor, kto slishkom dolog,

Kto kupit, kto prodast,

Kto plachet dolgo, kto – spokoiniy –

I vzdokha ne izdast,

No ubivayut vse lyubimikh, –

Ne vsem palach vozdst.

[Wilde 1904: 3 – 4; 54] (translated by K.D.Balmont).

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

*I never saw a man who looked*

*With such a wistful eye*

*Upon that little tent of blue*

*Which prisoners call the sky,*

*And at every drifting cloud that went*

*With sails of silver by.*

[Wilde 2004: 202],

*...And at every wandering cloud that trailed*

*Its ravelled fleeces by.*

[Wilde 2004: 210],

*...And at every careless cloud that passed*

*In happy freedom by.*

[Wilde 2004: 234] –

Ya nikogda ne znal, chto mozhet

Tak pristan'nyim byt' v zor,

V pivayas' v uzku polosku,

V tot goluboy uzor,

Chto, uzniki, zovyom mi nebom

I v chyom nash ves' prostor.

[Wilde 1904: 31] (translated by K.D.Balmont).

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

Coleridge also has a huge number of repetitions [Zhatkin, Ryabova 2007: 138 – 142]. The English Romantic poet used them, for example, to show the inexplicable motive for murdering the Albatross by the Ancient Mariner, or to express, how lonely he was, when paying off for his crime:

*For all averred I had killed the bird  
That made the breeze to blow.  
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,  
That made the breeze to blow!*  
<...>

*Then all averred, I had killed the bird  
That brought the fog and mist  
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,  
That bring the fog and mist.*  
[Coleridge 2004: 52 – 54] –  
Mne uprekali, "ti ubil  
Togo, kto nam priveten byl,  
Kto veter nam poslal!"  
<...>

Umolk, i kazhdiy govoril,  
"Ti prav, chto nakazal  
Togo, kto nam opasen byl,  
Kto nam tuman poslal."  
[Coleridge 1875: 214] [Angliyskiye poeti v biografiyakh i obraztsakh 1875: 214] (translated by F.B.Miller);

*Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide wide sea!  
And never a saint took pity on  
My soul in agony.*

[Coleridge 2004: 68] –  
Ya odin, ya odin ostavalsya na vsyom  
Etom mertvom tainstvennom more;  
Ni odna iz vsekh dush, proletavshikh krugom,  
Ne khotela ponyat' moyo gore.  
[Coleridge 1875: 27] (translated by N.L.Pushkarev).

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

*They think a murderer's heart would taint  
Each simple seed they sow.  
It is not true! God's kindly earth  
Is kindlier than men know,  
And the red rose would but blow more red,  
The white rose whiter blow.  
Out of his mouth a red, red rose!  
Out of his heart a white!  
For who can say by that strange way,  
Christ brings His will to light,  
Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore  
Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?*  
[Wilde 2004: 240] –

"They think that murderer's heart would poison the seeds they sow. But this is a lie. The God's kind earth is kinder than people think, and red roses would bloom there redder and white roses – whiter. Out of his mouth a red rose! Out of his heart a white one! For who can know the ways of the Lord after the pilgrim's naked crook has bloomed in the great Pope's sight". [Wilde 1912: 283] (translated by M.F.Likiardopulo).

In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" nightmares of wandering are contrasted to the beauty of sea snakes:

*Beyond the shadow of the ship,  
I watched the water-snakes:  
They moved in tracks of shining white,  
And when they reared, the elfish light  
Fell off in hoary flakes.  
Within the shadow of the ship*

*I watched their rich attire:  
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,  
They coiled and swam; and every track  
Was a flesh of golden fire.*

[Coleridge 2004: 72 – 74] –

Gde pyl korabl', gde na strui  
Yego lozhilas' ten', –  
Tam plamy strannoye vseгда  
Sverkalo, noch i den'...  
V luchakh yego moy vzor lovil  
Morskikh krasavits-zmei:  
Oni vilisya na volnakh  
Sredi zhivykh ognei...  
Na pene voln ikh cheshuya  
Menyala vse tsveta;  
Manila vzglyad, zvala k sebe  
Menya ikh krasota...  
Oni mel'kali zdes' i tut –  
Po zolotym struyam...  
Schastlivitsi! Hotel by ya  
Uiti naveki k vam...

[Coleridge 1894: 7] (translated by A.A.Korinsky).

**4. Discussion.** A remarkable fact in the work by Browning “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” is the opposition, traditional for European literature, of “broad” and “narrow” roads as true and false ones. But in the poem the “broad” road belongs to the deceitful cripple, i.e. leads to death, and the “narrow” one is pointed out by the same cripple, i.e. also leads to death, but not so unambiguously:

*So quiet as despair, I turned from him,  
That hateful cripple, out of his highway  
Into the path he pointed. All the day  
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim  
Was setting to its close, yet shot one grim  
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.*

[Poetical Works of Robert Browning 1888: 196].

It is the choice not between the good and evil, but between two types of the evil, just as for Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner the choice between Death and Life-in-Death was determined by a throw of dice: “Death and Life-in-Death have diced for the ship’s crew, and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner” [Coleridge 2004: 64]. Coleridge realizes a possibility of infinite repetition, rotation in the closed orbit. Owing to such choice, his hero is doomed to an infinite cyclic movement in time and space. He has to repeat his story again, and again, every time finishing where he has begun. This recurrence of a plot, similar to the “snake with its tail in its mouth” is implemented also by Browning when his hero tries to reach the Dark Tower, which knights have already tried to reach “so many times”, i.e. there was an infinite movement in the closed route. “The common end of all narrative, nay of all, Poems is... to make those events, which in real or imagined History move on in a straight Line, assume to our Understandings a circular motion – the snake with its Tail in its mouth” [Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 1967: 545]. Besides, a keynote of the whole work is the same borderline state between life and death.

In “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” of Coleridge and “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” of Wilde there are similar images of ghosts of death. In Coleridge we read:

*The very deep did rot: O Christ!  
That ever this should be!  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea.  
About, about, in reel and rout  
The death-fires danced at night;  
The water, like a witch’s oils,  
Burnt green, and blue and white.*

[Coleridge 2004: 56] –

Kak pakhnet gnil'yu – o, Khristos! –  
Kak pakhnet ot volni,  
I tvari slizkiye polzut  
Iz vyazkoy glubini.  
V nochii spletayut khorovod  
Bludyashchiye ogni.  
Kak svechi ved'mi, zeleni,

Krasni, beli oni.

[Coleridge 1919: 16] (translated by N.S.Gumilev).

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

*With mop and mow, we saw them go,*

*Slim shadows hand in hand:*

*About, about, in ghostly rout*

*They trod a saraband:*

*And the damned grotesques made arabesques,*

*Like the wind upon the sand!*

<...>

*No things of air these antics were,*

*That frolicked with such glee:*

*To men whose lives were held in gyves,*

*And whose feet might not go free,*

*Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things,*

*Most terrible to see.*

*Around, around, they waltzed and wound:*

*Some wheeled in smirking pairs;*

*With the mincing step of a demirep*

*Some sidled up the stairs:*

*And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,*

*Each helped us at our prayers.*

[Wilde 2004: 224 – 226] –

I prividen'ya neizmenno

Shagali tam i tut,

Plyasali diko sarabandu,

Kak ikh velit statut!

Tak v bleske nochi arabeski

Peski pustyn' pletut.

<...>

I ne igroy voobrazhen'ya

Kazalis' dukhi nam:

Ved' mi, chi zhizni v tyazhkih putakh,

Pokorni dazhe snam;

Zhiviye teni prividenii

Stoyali po uglam.

Oni mel'kali, tantsevali,

I parami splelis',

Po nashim lestnitsam tyuremnym

Sbegali vverkh i vniz,

Oni smeyalis', izdevalis'

Nad tem, kak mi tryaslis'.

[Wilde 1928: 23 – 24] (translated by A.I.Deutch).

One can not help noticing the similarity of some lines, even the images of Coleridge's "Life-in-Death" and Wilde's "living Death", used by the authors to express the inner state of the characters, are very similar.

**5. Conclusions.** Robert Browning's poetry is connected with works of the poets of the Lake School mainly in three aspects. First, through the ballad genre which was actively developed and acquired in Browning's poems. Secondly, through Coleridge's innovation in the genre sphere. It was similar to free genres of Browning who had rare intuition and taste to any manifestations of artistry. And, thirdly, through poetic language the merit of basic updating of which, according to Browning, belongs to Wordsworth. The Victorian poet appreciated clear and accented, free from tough regulations of rules, expressive, rhythmically relaxed poetic speech of Wordsworth and considered it that fruitful soil, on which his own style was created.

There is certain thematic and structural interrelation between "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by the poet of the Lake School Samuel Taylor Coleridge and "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" by Oscar Wilde. Having created their best works on the theme of suffering and forgiveness, both authors used ballad elements for creating tension, giving monotony to the description of torments and tortures, which exhausted the soul of a man and, at the same time, caused him to receive forgiveness.

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