

**LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF SUNSET  
IN FYODOR TYUTCHEV'S LYRIC  
AS A FEATURE REFLECTING EUROPEAN  
ROMANTICIST POETICS**

This work considers certain linguistic peculiarities of European Romanticist lyric as a type of literary text. The linguopoetic interpretation of the peculiarities in question has been implemented through the study of a specific linguistic component of a poetical text. The component studied is termed the topos (see below for more detail). Particularly, a linguopoetic representation of a sunset (observed from the sea shore) in F. Tyutchev's text 'A Summer Evening' [«Летний вечер» ('Уж солнца раскаленный шар...')] has been compared to representations of the same natural microsituation in a number of other original romantic and pre-romantic European poetical texts in several different languages.

The Tyutchevian text considered was produced in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by which time the representation of the sunset-on-the-sea-shore microsituation in the referential space of the European transnational multilingual poetical discourse had already existed in the form of a topos for quite a long time.

The very term 'topos' in humanitarian disciplines, as is well-known, originates from the fields of rhetoric and literary scholarship (see, for instance, Ernst R. Curtius, 1948). The use of this term in the linguopoetic research undertaken in this work, however, requires a specific definition as the content of the term in this case is somewhat different. The term 'topos' in this paper is defined as a basically invariable set of components of a text's referential space (i.e. the signified of the text as a complex sign) reproduced in a multitude of texts that form a common poetical discourse. The topos is a phenomenon of the semantics of the text, not that of the word-level or utterance-level semantics. Therefore, the topos is essentially independent of what ethnic language is used to realize it in the material form of the text. The topos is functionally connected with the realization of one of the forms of intertextuality. This is the basic text-building function that the topos performs as a textual phenomenon. A component of a topos can be equivalent to an object of reality or to a particular quality of an object of reality. The material form of the text may present a topos component both explicitly and implicitly.

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<sup>1</sup> Katedra Filologii Angielskiej, Uniwersytet Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz.

The content of the specific topos analyzed in this paper can be defined as **'the sun sinking into the sea'** (metonymically – **'sunset', 'end of the day'**). In the history of European poetry, this set of textual semantic components gradually begins to acquire the quality of a topos starting from as early as Homer's period:

Cf.:

"en d' **epes Ōkeanōi** lampron phaos **ēlioio**  
helkon nukta melainan epi zeidōron arouran"  
[Iliados VIII, 485-486] – *lit.*:  
'(meanwhile) the radiant light of the **sun fell**  
**into Oceanus** drawing black night over the  
grain-giving earth'.

Cf. also examples that function as a logical supplement of the aforesaid topos. E.g., the sun rising from the sea (metonymically – **'sunrise, 'beginning of the day'**):

"**Ēlios** men epeita neon proseballen arouras,  
**ex** akalarreitao bathurroou **Ōkeanoio**  
**ouranon eisaniōn**: hoi d' ēnteon allēloisin"  
[Iliados VII, 421-423] – *lit.*:  
'the sun was just beginning to strike on the fields  
(i.e. 'to illuminate the fields'), **rising from** soft-flowing  
deep **Oceanus** to the sky when the two armies met'.

Cf. also Odyssey III, 1-2.

In Roman texts, the above-mentioned semantic complex can, considering the Greek megacontext, be regarded as a fully formed topos:

"**Desinet... dies** et in alto **Phoebus** anhelos/  
**Aequore tinget equos...**"  
[Ovidius, Metamorphoses, XV, 418-419] – *lit.*:  
'the **day will end** and **Phoebus will dip** (will  
have dipped) **his panting horses in the deep sea**'.

The mythological component in the structure of this topos in classical texts does not prevent the latter to function as the most ancient text corpus that the very same topos in postmedieval European poetry displays intertextual connections with.

Despite the commonplaceness of the natural microsituation it corresponds to (it would be natural to assume that this topos should be a common occurrence in poetical texts of most various literary epochs and ethnic cultures), the topos in question is not found in medieval European poetry.

It should be mentioned that certain medieval European poetical texts (both lyrical and epic) do use the referents ‘sunset’/‘sunrise as time (morning/evening) or space (west/east) markers. Ancient Celtic poetry (Irish and Welsh) contains both the sun and the sea as referents in its referential megaspace. As a matter of fact, in early medieval Irish lyric, the sea (the ocean) is a very frequently occurring textual component (see in this connection, e.g., Muhr, 1999). Certain ancient Celtic texts present both the referents (the sun and the sea) simultaneously in their referential spaces. Thus, the text of the Song of Amergin contains both the sea and the sunset in its referential structure. Yet the (setting) sun and the sea in early Celtic poetry are always presented as absolutely unrelated (either explicitly or implicitly) in the textual time or space. The evening sun in medieval West-European poetical texts on the whole is never explicitly presented as ‘a globe sinking into the sea’.

Cf.:

Am gáeth i **m-muir**,

Am **tond trethan**,

Am fuaim **mara...**

Am dér **gréne...**

Cia du i l-laig **fuiniud gréne?**”

[Lebor Gabála Érenn, The Song of Amergin], *lit.:*

‘I am the wind on the **sea**,

I am the stormy wave of the **sea**,

I am the roar of the **sea...**

I am the sun’s teardrop...

Who knows where the (resting)

Place of the **setting sun** is?

“...snigid gaim, ro-faíth sam;

gáeth ard úar, ísel **grían**,

gair a rith, ruirthech **rían**”

[The Fenian Cycle, ‘Scél lemm dúib: dordaid dam...’] – *lit.:*

‘...winter snows, summer has gone;

the wind high (loud) and cold, low the **sun**,

**short its course**,

strong-running the (flowing) **sea**’;

“**O lychwr y lychwr bin**”

[Aneuryn, Y Gododin, LII] – *lit.:*

‘from dusk to dusk’

“Tresvait la nuit e **apert la clere albe**”  
[La Chanson de Roland, LVIII, 737] – *lit.*:  
‘passes the night and **opens the clear dawn**’;

“Merces d’aitan qe’l miels aia eslida/  
**don par soleils jusqu’al ser que s’ajorna**”  
[Arnaut Daniel, ‘Lancan vei fueill’e flor e frug...’] – *lit.*:  
‘...from where the **sun rises** to where **it rests at night**’.

The sunrise/sunset topos is also found in medieval Andalusian Arabic and Hebrew poetry (though not in the form of ‘the sun sinking into the sea’), geographically a European textual formation too, but historically connected to a different literary megacontext and culturally different than Celtic, Romance and Germanic texts.

Cf. in an Andalusian Hebrew text:

‘štēh bayōm – ‘**ādēy yipen, wəšemeš**  
‘ālēy basəppō yəšappēh ’et zəhābō”  
[Mōšeh ’Ibn-’Ezrāh, “Zman hakkōr”] – *lit.*:  
‘drink all day till **it** [i.e. the day] **begins to draw**  
**to a close** and the **sun** gilds its [the day’s] silver’.

The semantic complex ‘the sun sinking into the sea’ as a marker of the evening coming is unknown to the referential space of European medieval poetry. It should be noted that the medieval European peoples in whose cultural medium the poetical texts in question were produced were not deeply continental, and the sea is often explicitly introduced into the referential space of the poetry they created. Thus, it is obvious that the ‘sunset’ topos (with the ‘sun-sinking-into-the-sea’ semantic complex) in the 15<sup>th</sup>-mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century lyric was borrowed from ancient Greek and Roman texts. This fact is also substantiated by frequent explicit intertextual connections of the verbal realizations of this topos in 15<sup>th</sup>-mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century lyrical texts to ancient Greek and/or Roman texts. Another factor indicating the antique origin of this topos is the frequent presence of a Greco-Roman mythological component in the semantic structure of the topos.

Cf. in 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>-century texts:

“Quando ‘**l sol bagna in mar l’aurato carro**”  
[Petrarca, Sonetto 223];

“Die **Sonne führt die Pferde trinken**  
[i.e. the horses are tired, cf. the panting horses

in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* quoted above]"  
[Günther, *Abendlied* ('Die Feierabend ist gemacht...')];

"Mais déjà l'unique **flambeau**,  
Allant **se plonger dedans l'eau**,  
A fait place aux ténèbres;  
Et les étoiles, à leur tour,  
Comme torches funèbres,  
Font les **funérailles du jour**"

[Racine, *Le Paysage ou Promenade de Port-Royal des Champs*.  
Ode VII. *Les Jardins*], cf. "jam **moriente die**" [Papinius Statius] –  
at sunset, *lit.* 'when the day is dying';

"...**padre de las aguas Ocëano** –  
de cuya monarquía  
el **Sol**, que cada día  
**nace en sus ondas y en sus ondas muere**,  
los terminos saber no quiere"  
[Luis de Góngora, *Soledades*, 405-409];

"Już **słońce padło**, już horyzont ciemny,  
Już **plucze Feba ocean podziemny**"  
[Jan Morsztyn, *Serenada*];

"The **lamp of day... sunk beneath the western wave**"  
[Burns, *On the death of Sir James Hunter Blair*];

"**Monarque aux flèches d'or** [i.e. the sun]...  
A l'heure où **tes coursiers se plongent dans les flots**"  
[Millevoye, *La Néréide*].

Romanticist texts partially continue to use the topos considered in the same way it was used in 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>-century texts (this particularly concerns mythological allusions and explicit intertextual connections to ancient Greco-Roman texts). This is a natural phenomenon. In an uninterrupted evolutionary literary process, the poetic diction of any literary epoch always retains certain features of the preceding epoch. The elements of the preceding linguopoetic code may be modified or transformed in accordance with new poetic vision. At the same time such elements may appear as pure relicts of the preceding literary epoch. In the latter case, they indicate that the text they are used in is a part of a major uninterrupted literary discourse.

Cf.

**“Plongé dans le sein de Thétis,/**  
Le soleil a cédé l’empire/  
A la pâle **reine** des nuits”  
[Lamartine, Le Golfe de Baya],  
cf. “siderum **regina** bicornis [i.e. the moon]” [Horatius].

On the other hand, Romanticist texts display a linguopoetic feature of the ‘sunset’ topos which is expressly different from anything that is found in the linguopoetic functioning of this topos in the texts of the whole 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>-century period. Particularly, this distinctive feature of Romanticist texts can be seen in the collision of negative and positive verbal associational auras in textual microfragments that contain the topos considered. F. Tyutchev’s text “A Summer Evening” demonstrates to a sufficient extent the specificity of Romanticist texts with respect to the linguopoetic functioning of the ‘sunset’ topos.

Basically, the providing of the intensity of expression in a literary text through contrast of associations (which is typical of Romanticism) has been mentioned in general terms in quite a few works on the history of literature starting from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see, e.g., a paper where this concept is defined explicitly in terms of traditional literary scholarship studies [Terteryan, 1983]. However, the language mechanisms that implement such contrast (or associational collision) have not been sufficiently investigated as yet and, which is equally important, the existing types of such mechanisms are far from being systematized. This paper presents two types of such mechanisms.

**Semasiological mechanism.** The semasiological mechanism is realized when a text contains and foregrounds referents in its referential space that correspond to objects of reality which are in distinct axiological contrast irrespective of what lexical units may be used to name these referents. The notion of foregrounding can be explained as a way of directing a text recipient’s attention to a particular part of the referential space. The specific ways in which textual foregrounding can be implemented are quite numerous. One such way is the use of an explicit denotation of a referent that is traditionally denoted only implicitly, like the ‘scorching hot’ feature of the sun in the below example from Tyutchev’s text.

E.g.,

**«солнца раскаленный шар**  
С главы земля своей скатила,  
И мирный вечера пожар  
Волна морская поглотила»  
[Tyutchev, A Summer Evening (Летний вечер)].

By the time the above-quoted text was written, the sun in European poetry had already functioned as a positive symbol for many centuries. The quality of the sun's orb referred to by the lexeme 'раскаленный' (scorching hot, red-hot, torrid) is obviously associated with physical discomfort. Such association and the foregrounding of exactly this quality of the sun in the text's referential space is supported by the literal meaning of the metaphor 'глава (земли)' – 'the head (of the earth)'.

Below are examples of the positive/negative semasiological "collision" in other Romanticists' texts:

"...**bright Sun**... beneath the **dark blue** line  
Of western distance..."

[Shelley, Evening ('O thou bright Sun! beneath the dark blue line...')].

The 'light' and the 'dark' in this text is not the night replacing the day which is found in the texts of ancient Greco-Roman or 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>-century authors. The 'light' and the 'dark' in Shelly's text coexist in the same place at the same time producing a specifically Romanticist, emotionally and associatively contradictory, landscape picture.

"...when Sunset may breathe, from the **lit** sea beneath,  
Its ardours of rest and love.  
And the **crimson pall** of eve may fall  
From the depth of Heaven above"

[Shelley, The Cloud] –

the 'lit' sea and the 'crimson' (i.e. dark red) twilight, i.e. the light versus the dark, plus the merging of color and colorless dark (dark red).

"Y desde allí **tu** [i.e. the sun's] **fúlgida carrera**  
rápido precipitas,  
y tu rica, **encendida caballero**  
**en el seno del mar**, trémula agitas,  
y **tu esplendor se oculta**,/y el ya pasado día  
con otros mil la eternidad **sepulta**"

[Espronceda, Al Sol] –

the Greco-Roman mythological reflexes in this textual fragment are obvious. The specifically Romanticist poetic feature herein is realized through the foregrounding of the main positive symbolic quality of the sun – the brilliance (representation of a quality by a grammatical substantive, rendering it as a separate entity) and the combining of this intensified form of the traditional quality with the predicate 'se ocultar';

Już daleko wy na fali;  
 Coraz dalej – coraz dalej  
 Ku wschodowi, ku jutrzence...  
 Na te góry, na te brzegi  
 Dnia już padły jasne gońce,  
**Czerwienieją skał tych śniegi,**  
**Mgła się płoni u wód końca,**  
**Za nią pierwszy promień słońca!**  
 I te białe ich szeregi/Idą prosto w to wschodzące  
**Wielkokrężne – złote słońce!”**  
 [Zygmunt Krasiński, Przedświt] –

mountain snows (a symbol of cold) reddening (a symbol of warmth); darkness aflame (no comments required); the sun's great orb and the epithet 'golden' – accumulation of one and the same quality of the sun, specifically – the profusion of light: the size of the orb means 'much light' (because of the big size); the metaphorical epithet 'golden' (even though it is a conventional or fixed metaphor) makes explicit reference to an essential quality of the sun, i.e. the profusion of light; thus, the same referent, 'the profusion of light', gets double reference in a very short syntagmatic sequence (two lexemes in a row) which produces hyperbolization, another linguopoetic feature of Romanticism.

Cf. also 'aurato carro' from Petrarch's example above which has a different structure – the sun (sol) and 'golden' (aurato) are included in different syntagmatic sequences, and the larger syntactic unit (the sentence) does not contain referents such as those that accompany the sun in Krasiński's text.

“Jako na matki odejście się żali  
 Mała dziecina, tak ja płaczu bliski,  
 Patrząc na **słońce**, co mi żuca z **fali**  
**Ostatnie błyski...**  
 Choć wiem, że jutro **błyśnie nowe zorze**”  
 [Juliusz Słowacki, Hymn] –

'ostatnie błyski' – the sun's 'last beams', 'light' as a traditionally positive symbol with 'last' as a carrier of a negative association, see an example from Keats ('farewell beam') below;

“**Solen går ned, och molnen** vandrar med vefullt sinne  
 hän over **skummande sjö...**  
**Måsen skriar på ödsligt skär**”  
 [Rydberg, Höstkväll] –

*lit.:* 'the **sun is setting** and the **clouds** are marching (slowly) with sadness where over the **foaming (storming) sea...** Seagulls are **crying** above the **deserted skerries**';



the 'sun' (positive symbolism) versus 'dark clouds' (the color of the clouds is implied by the metaphoric phrase 'in sadness'), the 'storming sea', the 'crying' seagulls, the 'deserted skerries' (all negative symbolism).

**Onomasiological mechanism.** The onomasiological mechanism is realized when the poetic effect of a textual fragment is solely determined by the specific selection of lexical units used to name the components of the text's referential space. The most frequently used approach is the selection of vehicle lexemes in figurative reference.

E.g.:

«...мирный вечера пожар  
Волна морская поглотила»  
[Tyutchev, A Summer Evening] –

the semantic structure of the lexeme 'пожар' – 'fire' (the event of destructive burning) comprises an essential semantic component 'destruction', 'damage', whereas the semantic structure of the word 'мирный' ('peaceful'), on the contrary, comprises an essential semantic component 'nondamaging'.

Below are several examples of onomasiological cases from Romanticist poets' texts:

"As o'er Sicilian seas...

Just when the **sun his farewell beam** has darted"

[Keats, To George Felton Mathew ('Sweet are the pleasures that to verse belong...')] –

'beam' – a lexical unit with a long-established positive symbolic association in the European poetical discourse; the semantic structure of the lexeme 'farewell' comprises a semantic component 'sadness' (bidding farewell implies a moment of sadness);

"...when Sunset may **breathe**, from the lit sea beneath,  
Its **ardours** of **rest** and love.  
And the crimson **pall** of eve may fall  
From the depth of Heaven above"  
[Shelley, The Cloud] –

'ardour' vs. 'rest', the 'breath' of sunset ('breathing', a metonymy of being alive) and the 'pall' of evening ('pall', an object related to the notion of death);

"**Solen** går ned, och molnen vandrar **med vefullt sinne**"

[Rydberg, Höstkväll] – the sun and the clouds 'in sadness'.

Full linguopoetic interpretation of the function that the 'sunset' topos fulfils in the postmedieval European poetical discourse (and, more specifically, in the Romantic period texts) requires the considering of the whole system of the topoi that the discourse uses. On the other hand, the topos in question should be analyzed as a part of the system of other textual components that fulfil linguopoetic functions in the discourse.

This paper, though, proposes a general interpretation of the specificity of the 'sunset' topos in the Romanticist texts. The pragmatic linguopoetic function of the above-described "collision" of positive and negative textual components used in the representation of this traditional topos in Romanticist lyric is undoubtedly aimed at increasing and intensification of the emotionality of Romanticist texts. An emotionally positive signal syntactically tied to an emotionally negative one in the topos causes the recipient of the text to synthesize the two signals into a unity and experience a qualitatively more complex and significantly more intense emotional response to the language form of a literary work.

## REFERENCES

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## ABSTRACT

This publication analyzes one of the distinctive features of the 19-th century European Romanticist poetic diction. The paper demonstrates one of the mechanisms through which the language form of a poetic text reflects the poetic and world-outlook content of a lyrical text. The original-language material of a number of European poetic traditions (classical Greek and Latin poetry to medieval texts to 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century texts) is used to present the comparative aspects of this study.