

**TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF
TRADITIONAL IMAGERY IN GERMAN POETRY****Madiyeva Adiba Dovudovna**

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Abstract

This article explores the evolution and transformation of traditional imagery in German poetry, spanning from the late Romanticism of Heinrich Heine and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff to the modernist poetics of Paul Celan and Sarah Kirsch. Drawing on the scholarly insights of Gertrude Eva, Heike Kristina Behl, and Barbara Mabee, the study analyzes how elements of nature, spatial symbols, and geological metaphors serve as profound vehicles for philosophical, socio-psychological, and historical reflection.

The first section contrasts the dynamic, freedom-seeking landscapes of Heine with the restrained, dualistic mythopoetics of Droste-Hülshoff. The second section examines Paul Celan's transition toward a "geological" language, where crystals, stones, and mines symbolize the depths of memory and the search for truth in the post-war era. Finally, the research highlights Sarah Kirsch's innovative use of winter and nature imagery to confront the tragic legacy of history and the fragility of human existence. The analysis concludes that the system of natural imagery in German literature is not merely decorative but functions as an essential mirror of the human spirit's spiritual and historical development.

Keywords

German poetry, Romanticism, Modernism, nature imagery, mythopoetics, Paul Celan, Sarah Kirsch, Heinrich Heine, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, historical memory, geological metaphors, literary symbolism.

Western literary criticism, particularly the system of traditional imagery in German classical and contemporary poetry, is regarded not merely as an aesthetic embellishment but as a complex metaphorical layer reflecting the philosophical and socio-psychological landscapes of an era. Amidst the shifts in literary genres and trends, elements of nature and symbols of space and time acquire new substance, becoming the primary means of expressing the creator's individual worldview. The research of scholars such as Gertrude Eva, Heike Christina Behl, and Barbara Mabee demonstrates that the trajectory of German literature—from the romantic landscape descriptions of Heinrich Heine and Droste-Hülshoff to the modernist symbols of Paul Celan and Sarah Kirsch, which captured the tragic memory of the post-war period—is a history of the transformations of the human spirit. Through the prism of achievements in contemporary German literary studies, this article analyzes the process of traditional imagery transitioning from classical traditions to modernist thinking, exploring their mythopoetic roots and their connection to historical memory.

Gertrude Eva, in her study "Nature and Art in Heinrich Heine's Travel Sketches and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's Prose" (*Natur und Kunst in Heinrich Heines Reiseschriften und in Annette von Droste-Hülshoffs Prosa*), extensively illuminates the mythopoetic images in the works of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff through the lens of Romantic artistic thought. Symbols in the poetess's work, such as the angel of death and moonlight, are described in consonance with human existential fears, as the author analyzes these images in indissoluble connection with the mystery of existence (Gertrude Eva Keilbach-Sabath, 2001, 122). Elements such as the sky, day, and night are not merely landscapes but instruments for reflecting various states of the soul, revealing dualistic concepts in Droste-Hülshoff's worldview. The blue, yellow, and vermilion-

red colors used by the poetess serve not to convey the diversity of the material world but to express the complexity of the spiritual realm, harmoniously merging with elements of nature. The images of wind, tree, and earth are interpreted as an artistic echo of the confrontation between life and death in ancient Western mythology, while simultaneously pointing to the primordial roots of humanity. The study shows that Droste-Hülshoff's descriptions are elevated aesthetic means for expressing experiences such as silence and hope, through which the poetess reveals the philosophical essence of being (Gertrude Eva Keilbach-Sabath, 2001, 127). The connection between earth and sky is evaluated as a flight of the human spirit, resulting in each element of nature being saturated with a distinct mythological content. According to the author, this system of imagery in the poetess's work is a product of late Romantic artistic thinking and acquires new meanings while preserving classical traditions. The natural landscapes in Droste-Hülshoff's prose compel the reader to reflect deeply, as hidden meanings of human destiny and a succession of spiritual sufferings lie behind every depiction.

The second part of the study analyzes Heinrich Heine's work *Travel Pictures (Reisebilder)*, where dynamic natural landscapes are juxtaposed with the serene world of Droste-Hülshoff. Through the imagery of the sea, waves, and the road, Heine expresses Romantic longing and an infinite striving for freedom; consequently, nature in his works is depicted in constant motion (Gertrude Eva Keilbach-Sabath, 2001, 129). Eva interprets Heine's shifting images of the sky and wind as symbols of the poet's inner freedom, serving as a key factor in revealing his psychological state. Droste-Hülshoff's profound and restrained mythopoetic landscapes contrast with Heine's vital energy; as a result, fundamental differences in the descriptive styles of both creators are uncovered through scholarly evidence (Gertrude Eva Keilbach-Sabath, 2001, 135). For Heine, nature is not merely a backdrop but an active artistic instrument reflecting the creator's complex relationship with society and history. The researcher establishes that the images of nature and art assume different meanings for both authors, thereby confirming the existence of diverse currents within German Romanticism. While for Heine the sky and wind act as symbols of adventure and renewal, for Droste-Hülshoff they manifest as signs of tranquility and eternity. Through the image of the road, the process of self-discovery for both poets is examined, contributing to the understanding of the philosophy of nature in the history of German literature. Based on the literary texts, the researcher defines the aesthetic function of nature and, through this system of imagery, masterfully conveys the individual worldviews of the authors. The final conclusions demonstrate that the image of nature in the works of Heine and Droste serves as a distinct mirror of the spiritual development of humanity.

In the scholarly work of Heike Kristina Behl, there is a profound analysis of the modern-era renewal of archetypal images such as the road, the trace, and the river, which stand at the center of Paul Celan's poetics. In the introductory part of the study, Celan's phrase "endless streets" is adopted as a central metaphor, as this expression fully reflects the poet's yearning for the "Other" or for the truth (Heike Kristina Behl, 1995, 25). According to Behl, the image of the road in Celan's poetry is not merely a space but a modernist form of a spiritual journey into the depths of memory and history. The poet's poem "The Meridian" is interpreted as an event expressing the desire to reach someone, since for Celan, this movement is the only path to self-discovery (Heike Kristina Behl, 1995, 36). Traditional images such as the sun and the moon acquire entirely different meanings in the poet's language: in his work, they serve not to celebrate beauty but to illuminate a tragic reality. The author explains Celan's need for a dialogue with the "Anderer" (Other) through the metaphor of the path and connects this process with the collective pains of humanity (Heike Kristina Behl, 1995, 39). The process of searching for truth through Celan's language transforms into a complex system of symbols; consequently, traditional images are enriched with the new interpretation of modernist poetry. The images of the river and water in the poet's work recall the flow of time and unforgettable memories, acquainting the reader with the author's internal tragedy. Analyzing these symbols,

Behl skillfully elucidates the essence of perceiving truth in Celan's poetics through geological imagery, such as the mountain, stone, mine, and crystal (Heike Kristina Behl, 1995, 42-443). These solid and enduring elements express the poet's relationship with language, as for Celan, the word must be as transparent as a crystal and as weighty as a stone. The study traces the traditional philosophical roots of natural imagery, a method that demonstrates the inextricable link between Celan's poetry and the past. The images of the mountain and the mine symbolize the poet's penetration into the deep layers of the psyche, serving as a unique method for the author to express his pain. The symbol of the crystal reflects clarity of thought and the pure essence of poetry; consequently, Celan's works are elevated to a degree of geological precision. The author justifies the weight and complexity of Celan's language through these natural elements, as each image serves as an expression of the poet's post-war psychological trauma. Water and other fluid elements create a contrast with the geological imagery, demonstrating a balance between the mutability and stasis of life. Behl's analysis confirms that traditional imagery in Celan's work has adapted to modernist thinking, creating a new aesthetic world. The poet utilizes models borrowed from nature to illuminate the darkest corners of the human soul, lending his work a distinctive character. It becomes evident that the system of natural imagery is a solid foundation of Celan's poetry, through which the poet expresses his sense of responsibility toward history.

Barbara Mabee, in her scholarly research, conducts an in-depth analysis of the symbolic expression of historical memory and suffering in the poetry of the German poetess Sarah Kirsch. The work scientifically substantiates that images such as snow, ice, winter, and autumn are the primary means reflecting the poetess's attitude toward historical reality (Barbara Mabee, 1998, 12). Through these images, which personify cold and depression, Mabee seeks to reveal Kirsch's psychological state following wars and losses. In the poetess's work, snow appears not merely as a natural phenomenon but as a potent symbol concealing the traces of the past and covering history in a white shroud. While images of ice and winter express spiritual silence and frozen emotions, autumn marks the withering of human life and beauty. According to Mabee's analysis, Kirsch employs these images to capture the bitter lessons of history and the unhealed wounds in the human soul within artistic frames (Barbara Mabee, 1998, 76). Images of stone and dust embody philosophical ideas regarding the transience of life and the fact that everything eventually turns to ash. The white and black colors used by the poetess are aimed not at viewing the world in sharp contrasts, but at conveying the tragic hues of history. Each image for Kirsch is a sign that awakens personal and social memory, pointing the reader to the bridge between the past and the present. The researcher evaluates Kirsch's poetic language as a unique phenomenon that speaks of historical truths through the language of artistic symbols.

This scholarly work highlights the role of such images as the tree, the star, and the butterfly in the poetess's work and their connection to the striving for life. The image of the tree in Kirsch's poetry is interpreted as a symbol of survival and taking root despite all hardships. Stars serve as a flicker of hope in the darkness, while the image of the butterfly is an artistic medium expressing the fragility and beauty of life. Mabee emphasizes that the traditional content of these images in Kirsch's work is saturated with historical memory, giving rise to new layers of meaning (Barbara Mabee, 1998, 112). The poetess's system of imagery serves not to heal psychological traumas but to reveal and comprehend them in their primordial form. The stone as a sign of historicity and dust as a symbol of the frailty of human existence reflect the author's worldview. Through these symbols, Kirsch succeeds in expressing not only personal suffering but also the collective pain of an entire nation's past. Based on scientific evidence, Mabee confirms how masterfully the poetess linked human emotions with descriptions of nature. The study clearly demonstrates that the distinctive aesthetics of Kirsch's poetry lie in her innovative approach to traditional imagery. In conclusion, the researcher acknowledges that Sarah Kirsch's poetic world consists of an inseparable unity of historical memory and nature, establishing her as a prominent figure in German poetry.

In conclusion, it can be said that the investigations of researchers such as Gertrude Eva, Heike Kristina Behl, and Barbara Mabee show that traditional natural images in German literature are not merely aesthetic ornaments but instruments of deep philosophical, mythopoetic, and historical memory. While the traditional dualistic images in the works of Droste-Hülshoff and Heine reflect the final glimmers of Romanticism, in the poetry of Paul Celan and Sarah Kirsch, these symbols transform into complex metaphors expressing modernist thought and post-war psychological trauma. These studies allow for an artistic analysis of the most hidden layers of the human psyche—specifically, fear, hope, and painful memories associated with the past through the elements of nature.

Bibliography

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