

THE POLYSEMY OF SYMBOLS IN THE NOVEL "OBLOMOV" BY IVAN GONČAROV

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Abstract

The polysemy of the symbols "house", "path", "light" in the novel "Oblomov" by Ivan Gončarov is discussed in the article. The attention is focused on how these symbols help to reveal the images of the main characters in the novel: Il'ja Oblomov, Andrej Štol'c, Olga Il'inskaja, Agafia Pšenicyna.

Keywords: *image, symbol, home, way, light, food, sun*

Rezumat

În articol, supunem cercetării polisemia simbolurilor „casă”, „cale” și „lumină” în romanul lui Ivan Gončarov „Oblomov”. O atenție deosebită se acordă felului în care aceste simboluri dezvăluie chipurile personajelor centrale din roman: Ilia Oblomov, Andrei Shtoltz, Olga Ilinscaia, Agafia Pșenițina.

Cuvinte-cheie: *imagine, simbol, casă, cale, lumină, mâncare, soare*

We considered the problem of interpreting the image of Oblomov in the cultural, historical and literary aspects in our previous articles. We concluded that Oblomov is an integral artistic image, whose unambiguous interpretation leads to a simplification of the meaning of the novel (Brajuc, 2018a). We showed the unity of "type" and "character" in the structure of Oblomov's image. We explored the artistic devices that the author uses to create the image of the main character. We found that the dominant device in the novel is a multi-stage antithesis. We proved that the peculiarity of I. Goncharov's antithesis is that it does not convey total separation and difference, but it paradoxically expresses synthesis, unity (Brajuc, 2018b). We compared the image of Oblomov with the concepts of Russian culture and literature ("laziness" and "peace"), and we also compared his image with other characters in the novel (Andrej Štol'c, Olga Il'inskaja, Agafia Pšenicyna) (Brajuc, 2019a). We characterized the symbols "house", "path", "light" and we demonstrated their artistic role in the structure of Oblomov's image (Brajuc, 2019b).

The author also uses the symbols "house", "path" and "light" when describing the characters of the novel, when creating a figurative system, using lexemes included in the semantic fields of these names.

Štol'c's father mentally paved a rut for Andrej, a "path", but the son should not follow exactly the path that his father intended for him. Accord-

ing to Gončarov, the Russian university will make Štol'c the son not a philistine, but a doer:

"Since olden times, doers have been cast in five, six stereotypical forms, lazily, half-eyed looking around, put their hand to the public machine and moved it along *the usual rut* drowsily, *putting their foot in the trail* left by their predecessor. But the eyes woke up from drowsiness, *brisk wide steps*, lively voices were heard... How many Štol'c should appear under Russian names!" (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 171).

As we can see, Štol'c's path, his life purpose is the antithesis of Oblomov's life path.

The father treats Andrej in the same way as his father, Andrej's grandfather, did to him, "letting go to all four sides":

"—...*The lamp burns brightly, and there is a lot of oil in it.* You are well educated: all the careers are open to you... Well, if you don't have the skill, if you *can't suddenly find your own way*, if you need to consult, ask —go to Reingold: he will teach you. ...He has a four-story house. I'll tell you the address... "Don't tell me", Andrej objected, "I'll go to him when I have a four-story house, and now I'll do without it..." (*idem*, p. 165).

Štol'c wants to go his own way, he is confident that he can build a house. Štol'c's father compared his life to the burning of an icon-lamp, which burns brightly, and there is plenty of oil in it. It is no longer the image of Oblomov's sun, which is part of nature and which shines regardless of people. The lamp burns brightly because it contains oil. As I. Pyrkov noted, "...one of the light images of the novel concerning Štol'c the son bears, as we would say, a generic, family seal. This is an image of a burning lamp" (Пырко́в/Pyrkov, 2000). Štol'c prefers "the slow burning of fire".

The dominant in the symbolism of Štol'c's "path" is movement, running, and he is compared to a horse. The horse is a symbol of strength, speed, indefatigability. Štol'c manages both transactional and heart duties with dexterity, he knows how to notice the "curvature" in his path in order not to stumble and go properly. Oblomov, on the other hand, thought that there was a stone on his way that prevented him from realizing in life. Štol'c does not have such stones, he does not doubt the correctness of his path:

"He went firmly, vivaciously... It seems that he controlled both sorrows and joys... as with the steps of his feet... A simple, that is, *direct*, real outlook on life, that was his constant task, and, gradually reaching its solution, he understood its whole difficulty and he was internally proud and happy whenever he happened *to notice a curvature in his path and take a straight step*... He *felt the ground under his feet* even among enthusiasm" (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, pp. 167-169).

Despite the fact that in the description of Štol'c's life path, the verb "to leap" is frequent:

"...he said that" the normal purpose of a person is to live four seasons, that is, four ages, *without leaps* and carry the vessel of life to the last day, without spilling

any drop in vain, and *that an even and slow burning of fire is better than a fierce blaze, no matter what poetry burns in them. ...And he kept going and going stubbornly along the chosen path*" (*idem*, p. 170).

Štol'c, unlike Oblomov, is able to follow the chosen path stubbornly, not relying on "chance" and "fate", hence the different perception of the "abyss" by Oblomov and Štol'c. The abyss is impassable, irresistible for Oblomov. But any obstacle, any barrier is surmountable for Štol'c:

"There is no need to add that he went towards *his goal, bravely going through all obstacles*, and unless he gave up the task when a wall arose in his path or *an impenetrable abyss* opened. But he was not able to arm himself with the courage that, closing his eyes, *would leap over the abyss* or rush to the wall *at random*. He *will measure an abyss or a wall*, and if there is no sure means to overcome, he will go away, no matter what someone may say about him" (*idem*, p. 171).

When Štol'c says that they want to build a pier and build a highway in Verkhlyov, "so *Oblomovka will be not far from the main road*," Oblomov is horrified by this news, because the long road violates the holistic, closed world of solar eden of Oblomovka. Štol'c thinks that at last "the rays of the sun have fallen" on Oblomovka, that the "dawn of new happiness" is rising over it. This is in that Oblomovka, which, in the view of Il'ja Il'ič, is "all in shine, in the rays of sun...".

Štol'c is trying to bring Oblomov onto the "high road", where there is progress, civilization, movement. He constantly calls him abroad with him. Arriving at Oblomov, he does not listen to his objections, but demands "physical and mental gymnastic". Štol'c's life path is conveyed through the metaphor "on the move", that is, without stopping. He says to the distraught Oblomov:

"We will have lunch somewhere *on the move*, then we will go home at two, three, and... *On the way you will shave: I'll take you*" (*idem*, p. 177).

"Well, Il'ja, *hurry, hurry!*" (*idem*, p. 179).

Under the influence of his friend's speeches, youthful dreams and desires light up in Oblomov, he asks Štol'c to lead him wherever he wants:

"Give me your will and mind and *lead me* wherever you want. Perhaps I will follow you, but I *will not move alone*" (*idem*, 1981, p. 190).

Štol'c vows that he will take Oblomov first abroad, then to the village and help find a case for a friend, he says that he will not lag behind, everything will be decided now or never. Under the influence of Andrej's speeches, Oblomov is full of decisiveness. The question of the "path" for Oblomov becomes a Hamlet question:

"What should he do now? *Go forward or stay?* This Oblomov's question was deeper than Hamlet's for him. *Going forward* means suddenly throwing off a wide

robe not only from your shoulders, but also from your soul, from your mind... *What's the first thing to do? ...To go abroad for six months, ...to go where everyone goes, by railroads, by steamers, ...to go to the fields, to go to elections, to a factory, to a mill, to a wharf. ...It means going forward... And so the whole life! Farewell to the poetic ideal of life! This is not life, but some kind of forge; there is eternal flame, chatter, heat, noise... when to live? Wouldn't it be better to stay? To stay means ...to grow old peacefully in the apartment of Tarantiev's godmother... "Now or never!" "To be or not to be!" Oblomov got up from the chair, but he was not immediately able to put on a shoe and sat down again" (idem, pp. 193-194).*

Hamlet's suffering turns into a comic situation. Oblomov's path does not run where there are railways and steamships, where there is flame, chatter, heat, noise – all this is in the antithesis of the peace and sun of Oblomovka. The character's feet do not have time to get out on the Štol'c road, because they do not fall into the shoes. Oblomov's preparations for the journey proposed by Štol'c are also comical. The combination of "Oblomov and the Sea" sounds like an oxymoron, it does not fit into the mind of the reader, just as a travel coat and a travel bag are incompatible. The only thing that is associated with the image of Oblomov is a bag for provisions, but this already sounds like an oxymoron for Štol'c's "path".

Štol'c still managed to influence his friend to some extent and try to change his life path. He introduced him to Olga. Olga's image is also revealed through the symbolism of "path" and "light":

"...She, although unconsciously, *went a simple, natural path of life* and by a happy character, by a sound, not outwitted upbringing, *did not avoid* the natural manifestation of thought, feeling, will, even to the slightest, barely noticeable movement of eyes, lips, hands. It is because, perhaps, she *went* so confidently along this *path*, that from time to time she heard nearby some other, even more *confident steps* of the "friend" whom she believed, and measured *her step* with" (idem, p. 197).

"Olga *went* with her head bent slightly forward, so slender, nobly resting on her thin, proud neck; she moved with her whole body evenly, *striding lightly, almost imperceptibly*" (idem, p. 200).

Olga strides confidently in the same way as Štol'c, especially since he, like a loyal friend, tries to direct Olga's movements. And at the same time, her step is light, almost elusive. It is noteworthy that Olga, just like the main character, believes in fate, despite all her determination, intelligence and desire to build and change not only her life path, but also Oblomov's "path":

"I am waiting, looking only for happiness, and I believe that I have found it. If I am mistaken, if it is true that I will cry over my mistake, at least I feel here (she put her hand to her heart) that I am not to blame for it; it means that *fate didn't want it, God didn't give it*" (idem, p. 270).

The name Olga means "saint", "torch", her surname comes from the name Ilia, the name of the god of thunder. Olga's planet is the Moon, a source of

light, one of the celestial luminaries deified by the Slavs (Ермолаева/Ermolaeva, 2006, p. 21).

When the reader gets to know Olga, her "light" portrait is imperturbably calm, she was very glad when she met Štol'c:

"...although her eyes *did not sparkle*, her cheeks *did not glow with a blush*, but an *even, calm light spread* over her whole face and a smile appeared" (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 196).

"Olga was not a beauty in the strict sense, that is, *she had neither whiteness, nor bright colors of her cheeks and lips, and her eyes did not shine with rays of inner fire...*", but at the same time the author points out that thin and compressed lips are "...a sign of a thought continuously directed at something, the same presence of a speaking thought *shone* in the sharp-sighted, always vigorous, never letting through the gaze of dark, gray-blue eyes" (*idem*, p. 200).

Sharp light fluctuations (from burst to fading) form the basis of Olga's "light" portrait.

Driving around the houses of Petersburg with Štol'c, Oblomov feels, "...how unhappy he is, how all good things perish from lack of participation, activity, how *faintly life flickers...*" (*ibidem*). But Oblomov transforms, begins to "burn", having come to Olga, his beloved sun appears:

"During lunch, Oblomov experienced the same torture as the day before, he chewed under her gaze, spoke, knowing, feeling that above him, *like the sun*, this gaze was standing, *burning* him, disturbing him, stirring his nerves, blood" (*idem*, p. 201).

Something lit up inside Olga with the appearance of Oblomov, too:

"...a smile crawls over her face, then it *lights up her eyes*, then it *spills* over her cheeks, only her lips are compressed, as always" (*idem*, p. 202).

For Oblomov, Olga's singing is like lightning, from which he "flashes", which destroys him:

"His heart was beating, his nerves were trembling, *his eyes sparkled* and flooded with tears from words, from sounds, from this pure, strong girlish voice. ...Oblomov *flared up*, exhausted, holding back tears with difficulty, and it was even more difficult for him to stifle a joyful cry, ready to escape from his soul ...*At that moment he would have gone even abroad, if he had only had to sit down and go.* In conclusion, she sang *Casta diva*: all the delights, thoughts in the head, rushing by *lightning*, trembling like needles running through the body – all this *destroyed* Oblomov: he was exhausted" (*idem*, p. 204).

The author's irony in the words that Oblomov would even go abroad emphasizes the power of the influence of Olga's singing on the character. Oblomov sees only light and burning in Olga, she "flashes" from his words when he compliments her, as Oblomov "flashes" from her singing:

"My God, how pretty she is! There are such in the world! ...This *whiteness*, these eyes, where, as in the abyss, it is dark and at the same time something *shines...* it

must be the soul! ...At the heart, right here, it seems to begin to *boil* and beat..." (*idem*, p. 207).

"Sing it! he said. —This is the compliment I've been waiting for! —she interrupted him, *flashing* joyfully" (*idem*, p. 208).

"...Don't ask me to sing, I won't sing like that anymore... Wait, I'll sing one more..." she said, and immediately her face *flushed*, *her eyes lit up*, she sat down on a chair, took two or three chords strongly and began to sing" (*idem*, p. 209).

The experience of Olga's future love and passion and the experience of Oblomov's true love-passion are described in parallel, "light" lexemes reveal the reciprocity of feelings and the unity of experiences here: to glow, to sparkle, lightning, to flash, ray, fire, flash, to shine, dawn, brilliance:

"Her cheeks and ears *were red* with excitement; sometimes the play of *lightning* of the heart *flashed* on her fresh face, *a ray* of such ripe passion *flashed*, as if she was experiencing a distant future time of life in her heart, and suddenly, this *instantaneous ray* *extinguished* again, again the voice sounded fresh and silvery. And the same life played in Oblomov; it seemed to him that he was living and feeling all this —not an hour, not two, but for years... Both of them, motionless from the outside, *were bursting with inner fire*, trembling with the same trepidation; there were tears in their eyes, caused by the same mood. All these were symptoms of those passions that must, apparently, once play in her young soul, now still subject only to temporary, flying hints and *outbursts of dormant forces of life*. She ended with a long melodious chord, and *her voice was lost in him*. ...*The dawn* of the awakened, from the bottom of the soul of rebellious happiness *shone* on his face; a look filled with tears was fixed on her... *His eyes shine*, my God, there are tears in them! —...This look was motionless, almost *insane*; it was *not Oblomov* who looked at them, *but passion*" (*idem*, p. 210).

Il'ja Il'ič and Olga's explanations and conversations take place on the move, they walk in the park, walk along the paths, Olga tries to bring Oblomov onto the road of life, where there is no sleep and peace, she wants to be a "guiding star" for Oblomov:

"She instantly weighed her power over him, and she liked this role of a *guiding star*, *a ray of light* that she would pour over a stagnant lake and she *would be reflected* in it" (*idem*, p. 241).

"...But more and more often she *pushed him forward*, further, knowing that he *would not take a single step himself* and he would remain motionless where she left him" (*idem*, p. 242).

The metaphor "guiding star" emphasizes the symbolism of "path" and "light" in Olga's image. Emotional and mental experiences, mood swings and inner excitement of the character are described using "light" metaphors:

"*Her eyes suddenly opened wide and flashed with amazement*" (*idem*, p. 218). "*She changed in her face: two pink spots disappeared, and her eyes dim*" (*idem*, p. 218).

"...*Her affectionate and curious look began to burn him again*" (*idem*, p. 219).

"...Then suddenly her face lit up with a ray of a smile..." (*idem*, p. 220).

At the same time, there was a "ray of thought", "sparks of the mind" in her gaze. Her face "lit up with consciousness". Gončarov uses a detailed simile to show the maturation of Olga Il'inskaja, comparing the soulful vigilance that came to her with the sun that illuminated the earth:

"Then her face was gradually filled with consciousness: *a ray of thought*, guesswork made its way into every feature, and suddenly the whole face *was illuminated* with consciousness ...*The sun* also sometimes, coming out from behind a cloud, gradually *illuminates* one bush, another, the roof and suddenly *floods* the whole landscape with *light*" (*idem*, p. 228).

Štol'c wanted the cheerful Olga Il'inskaja to shake apathy and drowsiness from his friend:

"Stoltz thought that if the presence of a young, pretty, intelligent, lively and partly derisive woman was introduced into Oblomov's sleepy life, it would be like bringing *a lamp* into a gloomy room, from which *an even light*, a few degrees of heat, would spread in all dark corners, and the room will become more cheerful. That was the whole result that he achieved by introducing his friend to Olga. He did not foresee that he would bring in *fireworks*, and Olga and Oblomov did not anticipate that, even more so" (*idem*, p. 233).

But there is no place for fireworks in Oblomov's dreams, he is afraid of insane passions leading to explosions, and expects a "quietly flickering ray of sympathy" from his chosen one:

"...And in twenty, thirty years he would have met in her eyes the same meek, quietly *flickering ray of sympathy* on his warm gaze. And so on to the grave!" (*idem*, p. 212).

"He would run away from a woman in horror if she suddenly *burns* him with her eyes or moans herself, falls on his shoulder with her eyes closed, then wakes up and wraps her arms around his neck until he suffocates... This is *a firework, an explosion of a barrel of gunpowder*; and what's next? Stunned, blinded, and scorched hair" (Гончаров/Goncharov, 1981, p. 213)!

In Oblomov's dream, the "path", the "river" should be calm, without fireworks, as well as feelings:

"But isn't this the secret goal of everyone: to find the unchanging physiognomy of peace, the *eternal and even flow* of feeling in your friend? After all, this is the norm of love... ...To give passions a legal outcome, to indicate the order of *the flow, like a river*, for the good of the whole region" (*idem*, p. 212).

Oblomov thinks that with the angel Olga, his dream of quiet and bright love will come true. But Olga's "river", her life and feeling, her "road" are not like the "quiet stream" in Oblomov's dream:

"This voice *will sound* someday, but *it will sound so strong*, it will burst out with such *a chord* that the whole *world will stir up!* Both the aunt and the baron will recognize, and there will be a rumble from this voice far away! That feeling will

not make its way as *quietly as a stream*, hiding in the grass, with a barely audible murmur" (*idem*, p. 259).

Oblomov and Olga's love is combustion, fire, light. All their experiences, thoughts, doubts, joy, pain are conveyed by "light" metaphors and epithets, from bright glow to extinction:

"Happy, *radiant*, as if "with a month in the forehead", in the words of the nanny, he came home, sat down in the corner of the sofa and quickly drew the name "Olga" across the dust in large letters on the table" (*idem*, p. 221).

"The pride played in him, the life *began to shine*, its magic range, *all the colors and rays* that did not exist until recently" (*idem*, p. 225).

"Suddenly his face *darkened*" (*idem*, p. 226).

"He's having fun, easy. It's so clear in nature. All People are kind, everyone enjoys; everyone has happiness on their faces" (*idem*, p. 226).

"From the previous mistake he was only scared and ashamed, but now it is hard, awkward, cold, *sad at heart, as in wet, rainy weather*" (*idem*, p. 234).

"Perhaps that *spark* of participation, which he so carelessly extinguished at the very beginning, will completely disappear. It *was necessary to inflate it again*, quietly and carefully, but he definitely did not know how" (*idem*, p. 241).

"...Sometimes a *glimpse* of feeling erupts from her, like *lightning*, like an unexpected whim, and then, suddenly, she concentrates again, withdraws into herself..." (*idem*, p. 242).

"...*The colors* started to *play* on the cheeks; thoughts moved; desires and will *flashed* in her eyes" (*idem*, p. 245).

"She... read the book, and there were certainly lines with *sparks* of her mind in the book, here and there *the fire* of her feelings *flashed*..." (*idem*, p. 246).

"Now both day and night, every hour of morning and evening took its own image and was either full of *rainbow radiance*, or *colorless and gloomy*, depending on whether this hour was filled with Olga's presence or passed without her..." (*idem*, p. 247).

"He looked at her like a *burning glass*, and could not look away" (*idem*, p. 249).

"Oblomov's face was *blooming*, his eyes were filled *with rays*" (*idem*, p. 255).

The light and the sound, the light and the melody in various variations reflect the love of the characters:

"This is how the same motive played out between them in various forms. The Meetings, the conversations, it was all one *song, sounds*, one *light* that *burned brightly*, and only its *rays* were refracted and split into pink, green, yellow and trembled in the atmosphere surrounding them. Every day and hour brought new *sounds* and *rays*, but *the light burned the same, the tune* sounded the same. Both he and she listened to these *sounds*, caught them and rushed *to sing*, which everyone

heard in front of each other, not suspecting that other *sounds* would sound tomorrow, other *rays* would appear, and forgetting the next day that there was another *singing* yesterday. She dressed *the outpourings* of her heart in those colors that *burned* her imagination at the moment, and she believed that they were true to nature, and hurried in innocent and unconscious coquetry to appear in a beautiful headdress in the eyes of her friend. He believed even more in these *magical sounds*, in a *charming light* and hurried to appear to her fully armed with passion, to show her all *the brilliance* and all the power of *the fire* that devoured his soul" (*idem*, pp. 256-257).

In a fit of feelings, Olga and Oblomov do not think about the difference in their life positions, about the different paths they have to go, believing in the power of their love and in the opportunity to become happy. Oblomov wants the rays of Olga's light to live in him forever, and Olga dreams that from her "ray" Il'ja Il'ič would be revived to life:

"Oblomov, in essence, did not care whether Olga was Cordelia and whether she would have remained true to this image or she *would have gone a new path* and transformed into another vision, if only she would appear in the same *colors* and *rays* in which she lived in his heart, if only he was happy. And Olga did not ask if her passionate friend would lift her glove if she threw it into the lion's mouth, whether he would throw himself into *the abyss* for her, if only she saw the symptoms of this passion, if only he remained faithful to the ideal of a man, and, moreover, a man waking up through her to life, if only from *the ray* of her gaze, from her smile, *the fire* of cheerfulness *burned* in him and he would not cease to see in her the purpose of life. And therefore, in the flashed image of Cordelia, in *the fire* of Oblomov's passion, only one moment, one ephemeral breath of love, one morning, one whimsical pattern was reflected. And tomorrow, tomorrow something else *will shine*, maybe just as beautiful, but still different..." (*idem*, p. 257).

The image of Olga is always in front of Oblomov in the morning, day and night, but he would like to experience only the "warmth of love" and not feel anxious:

"...No, life *touches*, wherever *you go*, it *burns*! How many *new movements* and activities have suddenly been pushed into her! Love is a very difficult school of life" (*idem*, p. 248)!

Oblomov does not imagine how it is possible to part with Olga, to leave to solve matters on his estate, he wants to be with her always. But one day he doubted whether Olga really loved him, whether it was a deception, how she could generally fall in love with him, for what. The author, with the help of "light" metaphors, conveys the inner state of the character. After Olga's confession of love, Oblomov returned home, watched the setting summer sun with his eyes, without taking his eyes off the dawn, recalled Olga's "ray of gaze", thought only that the warmth and light would return tomorrow. But:

"Tomorrow morning Oblomov got up pale and *gloomy*; there were traces of insomnia on the face; the whole forehead was wrinkled; there was *no fire* in the eyes, no desires. ...The image of Olga was in front of him, but he was hovering as

if in the distance, in a fog; *without rays*, as a stranger to him; he looked at him with a painful gaze and sighed" (*idem*, p. 258).

"...And, it seems, yesterday he looked into Olga's soul and saw a *bright* world and a *bright* fate there, read his and her horoscope. What happened? ...It often happens to fall asleep in the summer on a quiet, cloudless evening, with twinkling *stars*, and think how good the field will be tomorrow with morning *light* colors! How fun it is to go deep into the thicket of the forest and hide from the heat! ...And suddenly you wake up from the sound of rain, from *gray* sad clouds; cold, damp..." (*idem*, p. 259).

"Isn't this a mistake?" suddenly flashed through his mind *like lightning*, and this *lightning* struck his heart and broke it. He groaned" (*ibidem*).

Oblomov thinks that in Olga's life there should appear a young happy man with a "fluttering spark" in his eyes, like Olga's, with a "bouncy gait" and with a "sonorous voice." Then Olga will "flare up", according to Oblomov. He believes that Olga's love burns with a "false light" due to the absence of "fire" (true love). Il'ja Il'ič writes a letter to Olga, in which his love with Olga is presented in dark colors, in the form of an abyss on their path of life:

"...I realized how quickly *my feet slide* only tonight: only yesterday I managed to look deeper into *the abyss* where *I am falling*, and *I decided to stop*. I talk only about myself – not out of selfishness, but because when I lie at the bottom of this *abyss*, you will all fly high, like a *pure angel*, and I don't know if you want to look into it. Listen, without any hint, I will tell you straight and simple: you do not and cannot love me" (*idem*, p. 261).

"...Your present love is not true love, but future love; it is only an unconscious need to love, which, due to the lack of real food, in the absence of *fire*, burns with a *false, non-heating light*" (*idem*, p. 262).

When Oblomov "with animation" writes a letter, his eyes shine, his cheeks burn. He wants happiness for Olga and he is afraid to be a burden on her path, full of storms and movement. Oblomov awaits with trepidation Olga's reaction to the letter. Her tears, which he did not expect, "seemed to *burn* him, but in such a way that it made him feel *warm, not hot*" (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 267). Olga reproaches Oblomov for seeing only gloomy in the future, for not enjoying today's happiness and burning, for selfishness, for the fact that in words he rushes into the abyss, is ready to give his life, but he is afraid to live and to love in reality:

"Go", she said quietly, "where you *wanted to go*... *Lie* on your back again," she added later, "you won't be mistaken, *you won't fall into the abyss*"...Farewell, Ilia Ilich, and *be... at peace*; because your happiness lies in this" (*idem*, p. 270).

Oblomov begs for forgiveness, says that now he is not afraid of anything and wants everything to return and be as before. He asks her for a branch of lilacs as a sign of reconciliation. To which Olga replies, " – Lilacs... *moved*

away, disappeared! ...Look, what are left: faded! —*moved away, faded!* He repeated, looking at the lilacs. —*And the letter moved away!* he suddenly said" (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 272). The symbols "path" and "light" coincided in one phrase: everything passed, moved away, faded. Oblomov wants everything to freeze and not change, but this is impossible. The pre-destination of their path is also expressed through the symbolism of flowers. N. Zolotnickij writes about lilacs, "In the east, where, as we know, lilacs originate, it serves as an emblem of sad parting, and therefore a person in love usually gives it to his beloved there only when they disperse or part forever" (Золотницкий/Zolotnickij, 1994, p. 252). Choosing lilacs as an emblem, a symbol of love, the characters are unaware of it. Oblomov, who says: "...I do not like mignonettes or roses, and he does not assume that he refuses those flowers that are symbols of love and love attraction, and he, together with Olga, prefers lilacs to them, which at the very beginning of their relationship prophesies separation" (see Грачева/Gračeva, 1997).

Olga saw not only selfishness in Oblomov's letter, but "tenderness," "caution", "care for her", "fear for her happiness", "clear conscience", everything for which she loves Oblomov:

"She seemed to Oblomov in brilliance, in radiance, when she said this. Her eyes *shone with* such a triumph of love, a consciousness of her strength; there were two *pink* spots on her cheeks. And he, he was the reason for it! With the movement of his honest heart, he threw this *fire*, this game, this *brilliance* into her soul" (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 275).

A "hot summer reigns" after Olga and Oblomov's explanation, only sometimes "clouds come and go". If Oblomov has difficult dreams and doubts knock at his heart, "Olga, like *an angel*, stands guard; she looks into his face with her *bright* eyes, finds out what is in his heart, and everything is quiet again, and the feeling *flows smoothly* again, *like a river*, with the reflection of new patterns in the sky. "The power of Olga's love is conveyed through a detailed metaphor: "It *burns* here..." she pointed to her chest... "Don't bother me, let me cry... *the fire will come out in tears*, it will be easier for me..." (*idem*, p. 282).

And constantly in Oblomov's dreams there is a house full of light and love:

"He rushed to write, to think, he even went to the architect. Soon the plan of the house and garden was located on a small table. It was a spacious family home with two balconies. "Here I am, here Olga is, here is a bedroom, a nursery... smiling, he thought" (*idem*, p. 278).

"...Oblomovka, *bright* as a holiday, all in *shine*, in the sun's rays, with green hills, with a *silver* river swung open before him; *he walks with Olga* thoughtfully along an extended alley, holding her by the waist, sits in the gazebo, on the terrace..." (*idem*, p. 288).

The symbols of "home", "path" and "light" are always intertwined in the descriptions of the main characters, revealing the essence of artistic images.

Oblomov is worried about what other people will say about his relationship with Olga, he is afraid that they will not be able to fight the passion, which is like an abyss:

"Olga, you are young and do not know all the dangers. Sometimes a person is not in control of himself; some infernal power infiltrates him, darkness falls on his heart, and *lightning flashes* in *his eyes*. The clarity of the mind fades: respect for purity, for innocence, all this is carried away by the whirlwind; the person does not remember himself; passion breathes on him; he ceases to control himself, and then *an abyss* opens under his feet" (*idem*, p. 293).

Olga is not afraid of the abyss, she says: "Let it open!" Moreover, Olga does not see any lightning in Oblomov's eyes. Oblomov has a fever inside, he decides to make Olga a marriage proposal, but "what seemed so simple to him at home, natural, necessary, smiled at him so much, which was his happiness, suddenly became some kind of *abyss*. He was afraid *to step* over it. He had to take a decisive, bold *step*" (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 296). Moreover, Olga teases him, "*The abyss opens up, the lightning flashes... be careful*" (*idem*, p. 298)! Oblomov, having made a marriage proposal, expects from Olga not pride and firmness, but tears and passion, he would like Olga to follow him along his "path" and could sacrifice herself for him:

"Sometimes love doesn't wait, it doesn't endure, it doesn't expect... I don't know which *path* it is. The *path* where a woman sacrifices everything: calmness, rumor, respect and she finds a reward in love... it replaces everything for her. Do we need this *path*? – No. – Would you like to seek happiness in this *path* at the expense of my calmness, loss of respect? ...Would you like to know if I would sacrifice my peace of mind to you, *if I would go with you along this path*? ...*Never, no way!* she said firmly. He thought about it, then sighed. – Yes, that is a *terrible path*, and *it takes a lot of love* for a woman to follow a man *on it*, to perish and still love... Why would you *not follow it*... – Because... later people always... part on it..." (*idem*, pp. 299-300).

This dialogue shows that Olga, for all her love for Oblomov, is not able to follow him always and to the end, she has her own "path" on which she hopes to lead Oblomov. And for another woman, Pshenitsina, the "path" of the character is not important, Oblomov is the main thing for her, so she is ready to sacrifice everything in her life "path".

After Olga's confession, "Oblomov *was shining* when he went home. His blood *was boiling*, his eyes *were sparkling*. It seemed to him that even his hair *was on fire*. So, he went into his room and suddenly *the radiance disappeared* and his eyes stopped motionless in unpleasant amazement in one place: Tarrantiev was sitting in his chair... He forgot that *gloomy sphere*, where he had lived for a long time, and he lost the habit of its suffocating air. In an instant,

Tarantiev pulled him down as if from heaven again into *the swamp*" (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 301). The third part of the novel tells that the "rays of love" are gradually extinguished, "the poem passes". Oblomov needs to work, build a house, build roads, "duty, serious life begins." He thinks what step to take first: ask the aunt for Olga's hand or go to the ward "to write some paper", he needs to look for an apartment, and this is "the second step". Olga says "You first take two steps, and then..." But it is difficult for Oblomov to follow the "path" proposed by Olga and Stoltz. He suffers on these trips to the town, trying to solve the difficult questions of the way of life for him, there is not enough money for anything. The end of August is coming, it rains, the summer cottages are emptying and Oblomov moves to the Vyborg side of town:

"...Autumn evenings in the city were not like long, *bright* days and evenings in the park and grove. ...And this summer, blooming love poem seemed to stop, went more lazily, as if there was not enough content in it" (*idem*, p. 316).

Olga "sadly" sees off Oblomov with her eyes, "her heart cries," "she wants to sing, but she cannot". She demands from Oblomov that he moves more, and he gets more and more tired of this and he admires Agafia Pšenicyna more and more, who does not rush him anywhere, cooks deliciously and has "strong, like a sofa cushion, never worried chest". Oblomov comes up with an illness in order to postpone the meeting with Olga, she cries, urges him not to be lazy in letters:

"He lay down with loud sighs, got up, even went out into the street and kept looking for *the norms of life*, such an existence that would be full of content and *flow quietly*, day by day, *drop by drop*, in silent contemplation of nature and quiet, barely creeping the phenomena of family, peaceful and busy life. *He did not want to imagine it as a wide, noisily rushing river, with seething waves, as Stoltz had imagined it.*" "This is a disease," Oblomov said, "a fever, a jumping with rapids, with dam breaks, with floods" (*idem*, p. 353).

Oblomov returns to his ideal – walking in a circle of life's "path", like a quiet river, which he finds in Pšenicyna.

Olga refuses to believe that the unbuilt bridges across the Neva and Il'ja's illness prevent them from meeting, she worries, goes to Oblomov on the Vyborg side, and this has a stunning effect on him. Olga sees that Oblomov deceived her, that he goes down again. The character admits that passions and worries take away his strength, that he will die if Olga is not around:

"Now I breathe, look, think and feel you. Why are you surprised that in those days when I don't see you, I fall asleep and fall down? Everything is disgusting to me, everything is boring; *I am a machine*: I walk, do and do not notice what I do. *You are the fire and power of this machine*," he said, kneeling down and straightening up. His eyes *sparkled as they used to* in the park. The pride and the will-power shone in them again. "Now I am ready to go where you tell me to, to do whatever you want. I feel that I live when you look at me, speak, sing..." (*idem*, p. 367).

Olga is the "fire" that makes Oblomov live. But is he able to go for the sake of Olga to hardship and sacrifice? Olga says:

"I am your goal, you say and go to it so *timidly, slowly*; and you still *have a long way to go*; you have to get higher than me. I expect this from you! I met happy people, I saw how they love", she added with a sigh, "everything *boils* with them, and their peace is not like yours; they do not lower their heads; their eyes are open; *they hardly sleep, they act!* And you... no, it doesn't seem like love, that I am your goal..." (*idem*, p. 367).

For all their attraction to each other, they speak different languages. For Olga, love is movement, burning, boiling, for Oblomov it is sunny peace of Oblomovka. Neither Olga is able to follow Oblomov to the end, nor he is able to give up the peace for her sake. This is the tragedy of the character, because he gradually "goes out", dies even with all his positive qualities:

"Look, look at me: am I not *resurrected*, am I not living at this moment? ...Let me live today with this feeling... Oh, if the same *fire burns* me, which *burns* now, and tomorrow and always! After all, if you are not there, I *go out, I fall!* Now I revived, resurrected..." (*idem*, p. 368).

"How easy it is to breathe in this life, in Olga's sphere, in *the rays* of her virgin *brilliance*, vigorous strength, young, but subtle and deep sanity! ...How she *clearly* sees life! How she reads *her path* in this otherwise book and guesses his path by instinct! *Both lives must merge like two rivers*: he is her head, leader" (*idem*, p. 369)!

But the two lives never merge into one "path". Olga's "fire" and "angelic light" could not change Oblomov; in the end, she despaired of fighting the character's laziness and apathy:

"You would fall asleep deeper every day, wouldn't you? And I? Do you see what I am? I will not grow old, I will never get tired of living. And with you we would begin to live from *day to day, wait for Christmas, then Shrovetide, go to visit, dance and not think about anything*; we would go to bed and thank God that *the day is soon over*, and wake up in the morning wishing that *today would be like yesterday...* this is our future, am I right? Is this life? I will pine, I will die... for what, Il'ja? Will you be happy..." (*idem*, p. 386).

But Oblomov had just such an ideal of life from the beginning: "the path of the circle", "the path of the sun", all-repetition, family stability, as in Oblomovka. Olga did not understand Oblomov's ideal from the beginning, for her this is not life.

In Pšenicyna's house, life moves from day to day in a circle, and the character is happy with such a life. The characters living in the solar circle incline towards roundness: Oblomov is full and round, Agafia Matveevna has grown plumper, even the objects in this house are round: there are pot-bellied and miniature teapots, cups, jars, pans in the kitchen, a round table in the dining room, sugar loaves, tubs, pots, baskets in the pantry. There are objects that have a certain color around Oblomov: "a curtain with a red festoon, which is the work of Agafia Matveevna's hands", teapots "with flaming

hearts", geranium. There are bunch of the rowan above the fence. In the folk worldview, red symbolizes the sun:

"A joyful ray of sun beat through the windows from morning to evening". The room on the Vyborg side, where Oblomov lives now, is "*bright*, clean and fresh". Agafia Matveevna is "very white". She is "at the zenith of her life". Her chest and shoulders shone with "contentment and fullness, her eyes *shone* with meekness and only housewifely solicitude". Oblomov "approached her like *a warm fire*, and once approached very close, almost to the blaze, ...to the outbreak". "He approached Agafia Matveevna, as if he was approaching a fire, from which it becomes warmer and warmer..." (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 401).

However, in this case, we are not talking about the fire of passion, the fire of love, but about the fire of the hearth, the focus of the house, family. The hearth is the beginning that unites people into a family. Oblomov, brought up at his home in Oblomovka, "among the meek and warm manners and customs of his homeland, passing for twenty years from embrace to embrace of his relatives, friends and acquaintances", was deeply "imbued with the family element" and always yearned for him. The image of a hearth around which his whole life would be built, the life of his friends, relatives, lives in his dreams. Gončarov compares worshipping the fire of the hearth in Oblomovs' house with Vesta's worshipping the fire. The inhabitants of Oblomovka did not know another fire and did not want to know any. Vesta in Roman mythology is the goddess of the hearth, "eternal fire" was maintained in her temple.

The dream and the life largely coincided on the Vyborg side. Everything is calm and quiet here. The fire of the hearth burns in the house of Agafia Matveevna, who appears to the character as "kind" (Agafia from the Greek is "good", "kind"), "God's gift" (this is how the name Matthew is read), and she plays the role of a hearth keeper, its mistress. The service to the home and the service to Oblomov merge into one for her. God the Thunderer Il'ja the Prophet is understood by the Slavs as a deity creating harvests, he is praised as the patron saint of harvest and fertility, a sower, a reaper. The fact that the character bakes pies, cheesecakes, bread is important in the context of the novel. She bears the "bread" surname Pšenicyňa. As Olga is intended for Oblomov, because she is Il'inskaja, so Agafia is intended for him, because she is Pšenicyňa. Olga, in the fate of Oblomov, symbolizes the divine, angelic light to which the character is attracted, dreaming of a solar paradise, and Agafia is the light of the earth, domestic, home, associated with tradition and family. Il'ja Il'ič is the sun that shone in the life of both Olga and Agafia. For them Oblomov "radiates", "shines". They themselves "shine" in the rays of the sun – Oblomov, they revere him.

The symbolism of the "home" is also revealed through the theme of food, associated with the image of Pšenicyňa. The plot center of the novel is the

everyday and spiritual life of the protagonist – Il'ja Il'ič Oblomov. For Oblomov, the kitchen was the basis of life, most of the time was allocated to food. In the text of the novel, the attitude towards food acts as a measure of attitude towards the world, life, and also becomes a kind of "language" that allows one to express one's own view of the world. Therefore, the food, as well as sleep, is not only a satisfaction of physical needs, people eat and sleep as much as the "soul" wants, as much as the "soul" asks for. Hence, in Gončarov's novel, the characters eat often and tasty. Nothing "occupied the minds" to such an extent as care for food in Oblomovka. The characters liked to eat here:

"The kitchen and the dinner were the main concern. The whole house discussed the dinner..." (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 114).

According to the life philosophy of the inhabitants of Oblomovka, "a decent person must first of all take care of his/her table". They do not just eat and drink: their appetite imperceptibly turns into true gourmandise, cooking, into virtuoso skill, and the kitchen appears in a kind of temple (Краснова/Krasnova, 2000).

The apotheosis and symbol of Oblomov's satiety and general contentment is the gigantic pie, which was baked on Sundays and holidays. This cake required twice the usual amount of flour and eggs. Hence, as a result, "there were more groans and bloodshed in the poultry yard" (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 115). The pies were baked with chickens and fresh mushrooms in Oblomovka. This pie "the gentlemen ate the next day; the remains fell into in the maiden room on the third and fourth day; the pie survived until Friday, so that one completely stale end of the pie, without any filling, was given in the form of a special favor to Antip, who, crossing himself, fearlessly destroyed this curious fossil with a crash" (*ibidem*). The feast continued until it was time to bake a new pie. As noted by J. M. Loshchits, a real cult of pie reigns in Oblomovka. In the folk worldview, a pie is one of the most graphic symbols of a happy, abundant, blessed life. Pie is a "nosh-up", a cornucopia, the pinnacle of universal fun and contentment. Feasting, celebrating people gather around the pie. The warmth and the fragrance emanate from the pie. Thus, a kind of mythologeme "pie", containing the meaning of being, appears in the novel. "The "kingdom of sleep" of Oblomovka revolves around its pie, like around a hot star" (Люшиц/Lošic, 1977, pp. 172-173). It is these pies that Agafia Pšenicyna prepares, it is no coincidence that Zahar says that they are no worse than Oblomov's pies.

Sharing food in this world is not an everyday detail, but a symbol of unity. From immemorial time, food, both in one's family and in the world, has been a sacred act, a rite among the Russian people. It began and ended with a prayer of thanks. Cheerful and informal communication, friendly family conversation, discussion of upcoming affairs happened at the table. The ta-

ble was the rallying of family brotherhood, a symbol of unity. In the dream-world of Il'ja Il'ič Oblomov, "food" must certainly be shared with spiritually close people, with a "colony of friends" living in the neighborhood, it is then that it acquires its true, social content. When Štol'c visits Oblomov during his birthday for the first time on the Vyborg side, he shares a table with a friend. There is a commonality of topics, openness, trust, correctness, sensitivity in their dialogue. The dialogue ends with a toast to Olga. Both characters eat and drink the same things, which stimulates rapport in conversation. Štol'c urges Oblomov not to "extinguish the fire", not to "remain in the dark" again, he says that he promised Olga "to dig him out of the grave". During Štol'c's second visit to Oblomov, the conversation testifies to the spiritual disunity of the characters. Oblomov alone talks about food at the table:

"Štol'c winced as he sat down at the table... Štol'c did not eat any lamb or dumplings, he put down his fork and watched with what appetite Oblomov was eating it all" (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 456).

Upon learning that Olga was married to Štol'c, Oblomov says:

"No, tell her, remind her that I met her in order *to put her on the path*, and that I bless this meeting, *bless her on a new path*" (*idem*, p. 453)!

At first glance, it seems that Oblomov's dream-world is manifested in the life of Il'ja Il'ič on the Vyborg side. Indeed, Oblomov is trying to realize his idea of an ideal life arrangement, his life norm here, on the Vyborg side: "Life is like poetry"; he tries to build an ideal, idyllic world, like the world living in his dreams. Everything flows according to a long-established, unchanging routine in the life of the character on the Vyborg side, breakfast, lunch and dinner are also the main events of the day, and "taking care of food" becomes the main concern of the inhabitants of the house of Agafia Matveevna Pšenicyna. Their "menu" is striking in its variety and abundance and is mainly represented by dishes of traditional Russian cuisine: soups, cereals, pies, and a variety of pickles.

The world of Oblomovka and the Vyborg side is the apotheosis of the material principle, which is greatly facilitated by Gončarov's pictorial narrative style. "Spirit" is not here. There is nothing that in Oblomov's dream world constituted "spiritual harmony": there is no "colony of friends", no "pensive silence", no arguments with his wife about what they read, no "joy", "pleasure" from exercise (Il'ja Il'ič walks out of necessity: so, the doctor prescribed) and, finally, there is no desired peace, to which Oblomov has been striving all his life. There is no that "fun", that "sweetness", that fullness of human existence, which consisted in the harmony of the bodily and spiritual principles.

Štol'c urges on Oblomov, "Get out of this pit, out of the swamp, into the light, into the open space, where there is a healthy, normal life!" To this Ob-

Iomov replies, "I am fused to this *pit* with a sore spot: try to tear it off – there will be death... Oh, Andrei, I feel everything, I understand everything: I am ashamed to live in the world for a long time! But *I can't go your way with you*, even if I wanted to..." (Гончаров/Gončarov, 1981, p. 506). Before Štol'c "...suddenly "an abyss opened", a "stone wall" was erected, and Oblomov seemed to have disappeared..." (*idem*, p. 507). So, the character remained faithful to his life "path" and "sun". Shortly before his death, he thoughtfully observes how "the evening sun is drowning in the fire of the dawn".

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