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Mythological Images And Motifs In The Works Of Sergey Yesenin

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses mythological images and motifs in the works of Sergey Esenin. The authors of the article consider that mythological motifs have played an important role in the genesis of literary subjects; mythological themes, images, characters are used and reinterpreted in literature almost throughout its history. Yesenin's mythological picture of the world became part of his poetic philosophy, reflecting the connection between man and the world, as well as the inseparable unity of all living and non-living things on earth.

KEYWORDS

Literature, Traditional Myths, Artistic Purposes, Religion, Interpretations, Generalisation, Syncretism, Biblical, Ancient.

INTRODUCTION

Literature has long used traditional myths for artistic purposes. Myths are characterised by translating general ideas into sensual-concrete form, i.e. by the very imagery that is specific for art and that the latter inherited to a certain

extent from mythology; the most ancient mythology as a kind of syncretic unity comprised the germs of not only religion and the oldest philosophical conceptions, but also art, above all verbal art. The art form inherited

from myth both the concrete and sensual way of generalisation, and syncretism itself.

MAIN PART

What are myths? This notion has many interpretations. According to the dictionary "The myths of the peoples of the world" by S.A. Tokarev, myths in the "school" sense are primarily ancient, biblical and other ancient "fairy tales" about the creation of the world and man, as well as stories about the deeds of ancient, mostly Greek and Roman gods and heroes - poetic, naive, often bizarre [18, p.600]. In the "Illustrated Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Terra Lexicon" the term "myth" has the following interpretation: myth, 1) a narration about gods, spirits, deified heroes and forefathers, originated in the era of primitive communal system. Myth interweaves early elements of religion, philosophy, science, and art. Myths of different peoples share similar and recurrent themes and motifs. The most typical are myths about the origins of the world (cosmogonic myths) and man (anthropogonic myths); about the origins of the Sun (solar myths), the Moon (lunar myths), the stars (astral myths); myths about animals; calendar myths, etc. Myths of the emergence of crafts as well as of the establishment of certain social institutions, rules, rituals and customs occupy a special place. Myth is characterised by the personification of nature. In primitive society, myth is the main way of cognising the world, relying on a peculiar logic (identity of subject and object, object and its designation, creature and its name). 2) The figurative meaning of "myth" is false, uncritical, detached from reality states of consciousness, concepts and notions [17, p.560]. "Literary encyclopedia of terms and concepts" by A.N. Nikolukin defines the term "myth" as follows: myth (Greek mythos - legend) is the most ancient legacy, which is unconsciously artistic narrative of important, often mysterious to ancient man

natural, physiological and social phenomena, the origin of the world, the mystery of human birth, feats of gods, kings and heroes, their battles and tragedies [10, p.53]. Myth was the offspring of a particular phase in the development of human consciousness that attempted to reflect and explain reality artistically, in personification, through concrete and sensual images and associations, and perceptions that are peculiarly logical in nature. A fundamental feature of myth is its syncretism - the fusion and indivisibility of various elements - artistic and analytical, narrative and ritual.

Let us turn to the concepts of motif in literature.

A motif in literature is the simplest, indecomposable semantic unit in myth and fairy tales ("the bride's carriage"). The combination of several motifs constitutes the plot (story). The motifs in the epic of different nations are often similar. Folkloric motifs may be used in later eras. In modern literature, motifs are the simplest units of plot development: dynamic, moving the plot, or static, descriptive, but essential to the plot. The significance of the motif depends not on its own meaning, but on its role in the artistic construction.

When considering the history of the emergence and formation of the mythological tradition in literature and literary studies, one should first note the works of the German Romantics August and Friedrich Schlegel, F. Schelling, the Grimm brothers, R. Wagner, F. Nietzsche and others. Thus, developed by F. Schelling's philosophy of myth in 1801-1809 served as the basis for many works on myth [6]. He believed that myth-making continues in art and can take the form of an individual creative mythology, proceeding from the fact

that mythology symbolizes eternal beginnings and is the material of all art.

According to O.M. Freidenberg, "figurative representation in the form of several metaphors, where there is no our logical, formal-logical causality and where a thing, space, time are understood undivided and concretely, where man and the world are subjective-objective united - this special constructive system of figurative representations, when it is expressed in words, we call a myth" [6, p. 28].

Representatives of various scientific schools (psychoanalytic, ritualistic-mythological, ethnographic, structuralist, etc.) emphasized different sides of myth. For example, B. Raglan (Cambridge Ritual School) defined myths as ritual texts [11, p. 85]. J. Campbell, a representative of the Jungian school, believed that myth has been a source of human inspiration throughout world history [4, p.262].

While O.M. Freidenberg regarded myth as a "special constructive system of imaginative representations" expressed in words [6, p. 28], A.N. Afanasiev calls myth the most ancient poetry [1, p.78], and P. Ricoeur in the spirit of phenomenological hermeneutics prefers "to consider myth as a story and sometimes as a holistic consciousness that seeks to explain nature without separating man from it...". [19, p. 75]. R. Barthes, considering the poststructuralist approach to myth, believes that "everything that is covered by discourse can become a myth" [3, p. 265], "myth is defined neither by its subject nor by its material, since any material can be arbitrarily endowed with meaning" [3, p. 266], myth is a communicative system, a message.

K. Levi-Strauss saw myths as an expression of the common cultural philosophy of humankind [18, p. 213]. A.J. Greimas argued that mythology

"is a form of figurative thinking inherent in humanity, which solves the basic ideological and philosophical problems" [7, p. 81].

The mythological basis takes place in many works of world literature, and Russian literature is no exception. In Russian literature mythological images and motifs can be found in such works as "Captain's Daughter" by Alexander Pushkin, "Thunderstorm" by Alexander Ostrovsky, in the entire work of N.V. Gogol, F.M. Dostoevsky, Sergey Esenin and others. Mythopoeics of Russian literature has been studied by many renowned scholars, such as L.A. Khodanen, A. Hansen-Löwe, V.A. Maslova, L. Szilard (Italy; works in Russian), developing the ideas of V. Ivanov and G. Shpet, works of V.N. Toporov, B.M. Gasparov, E.M. Meletinsky, S.M. Telegin and others. The study of the theory of myth was carried out by such scholars as J. Fraser, J. Campbell, R. Graves, M. Eliade, E.M. Meletinski, S.M. Telegin and others [15, p.32].

The mythological picture of the world in the works of S. A. Yesenin has many features and represents a new level of artistic processing of ancient images [15]. It is in this picture that the poet's main aesthetic principles and his unique worldview are embodied. Yesenin paid much attention to mythology, considering it the root of the oldest symbols, the key to understanding the world view of the people, the connection between nature and man, as well as between everything alive and inanimate on Earth. Acting as an art theorist, S.A. Yesenin created two articles that are of great significance for understanding the poet's world outlook, his creative attitudes and objectives. In the theoretical article "Maria's Keys" Yesenin talks about searching for the keys to the mysteries of the universe. The questions that troubled our ancestors touched everything around them, likening phenomena and elements to mundane things, the ancient

man tried to find his place in the vast world, to make "an arrangement accessible to his understanding" [15,p.33].

Yesenin had a keen interest in mythology. The origins of the formation of his creative views are in the very culture of the Russian people. The perception of the surrounding world as something animated, the poet, undoubtedly, drew from myths, tales, his appeal to folklore and mythology became the key to understanding the world view of the people. The poet creatively reworked the archetypal images and stretched an intertemporal thread in his poetry. Well versed in folklore, oriented in the mythopoetics of the people, Yesenin opened the secrets of Slavic culture, breathed new life into the images that had been created in ancient times. The poet made full use of the rich possibilities of folk art, thanks to which his poems have a bright national flavour, he is often called the national poet and thinker. The relationship between Yesenin's work and folklore has been the subject of research by many scholars, the nature of this relationship was changing throughout his work, it "was becoming more and more profound and original" [3, p.243]. S. A. Yesenin embodied in his poetry the idea of poetic myth-making. He thought not only in images but also in archetypes affecting the subconscious of the reader, reaching the deepest depths of his fore-memory. Characteristic of mythology, the unified cosmic space with all animate and inanimate nature, Yesenin set as a bright and memorable background for his poems, a background that is constantly moving and renewing. «Разбираясь в узорах нашей мифологической эпике, мы находим целый ряд указаний на то, что человек есть ни больше, ни меньше, как чаша космических обособленностей» [2, p.184]. // "Dissecting the patterns of our mythological epic, we find a number of indications that man is neither

more nor less than a bowl of cosmic detachments". Thus, the mythological worldview is characterised by anthropomorphism - the spiritualisation of natural phenomena and animism - the belief in the animated nature:

Рассвет рукой прохлады росной

Сшибает яблоки зари. [2, p.107] // The dawn's dewy hand crushes the dawn's apples.

Вяжут кружево над лесом

В желтой пене облака. [2, p.118] // The clouds knit lace above the forest in yellow foam.

Yesenin often stresses the belonging of human life to the cycles of nature. The poet subordinates all inanimate, inorganic things to the laws of organics and makes them compatible with man: «Все мы яблони и вишни голубого сада» [2, p.271]. // "We are all apples and cherries of the blue garden".

One of the characteristic features of Yesenin's early work is cosmism, the poet organically combines the objects of the upper and lower worlds in his poetic model of the world, indeed, "the artist is a catcher of such mystery, such a word that unites space and earth" [6, p.39]. The cosmos is "brought to life", appears in expressive zoological comparisons, which is directly linked to folk beliefs, representations, myths, and is widely represented in the oral folk art of the Slavs. According to the poet's creative concept there is nothing inanimate, unspiritual, everything is based on allegorical meaning. As N. M. Solntseva notes, Yesenin's cosmism derives from peasant cosmic consciousness and from biblical tradition [15, p.34].

Animals have always played an important role in the symbolism of all cultures, so the world of

wildlife in literary works is a kind of cultural code [6; p. 38]. The poet presents all the phenomena of nature as animate, compares them with animals: «Пляшет ветер по равнинам, // Рыжий ласковый осленок» [2, p.120]. // "The wind dances across the plains, // A red-headed gentle donkey". This is why in Esenin's lyrical world the moon is beating, the stars are chirping and the river is cooing: «И туманно по быльнице тощей // Меж кустов ворковала река» [2, p.128] // "And mistily the river cooed through the skinny plains // Between the bushes".

CONCLUSION

Thus, mythological motifs have played an important role in the genesis of literary subjects; mythological themes, images, characters are used and reinterpreted in literature almost throughout its history. Yesenin's mythological picture of the world became part of his poetic philosophy, reflecting the connection between man and the world, as well as the inseparable unity of all living and non-living things on earth. Archetypes influence our consciousness, using archetypes, the poet reconstructed preimages and resurrected collective memory in his poetry. Yesenin also showed the relationship of imagery to ancient symbols and the characteristics of mythopoetic thinking that personifies everything.

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