

MYTH AS A LITERARY STRUCTURE IN PAVEL KRUSANOV'S WORK

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Abstract: *The artistic method of Pavel Krusanov comes from the following sources: the traditions of the St. Petersburg text, the aesthetic, cultural and philosophical views of the literary association of St. Petersburg fundamentalists, the desire to model the artistic reality from the perspective of mythological consciousness.*

Keywords: *Pavel Krusanov, myth, urban prose of St. Petersburg.*

INTRODUCTION

An increasing interest in the mythological type of consciousness has appeared in the literature of the 20th-21st centuries. Writers' resorting to myth is explained by the desire to relive and resurrect the traditions of the past in culture, to revitalize not only mythological subjects, mythological characters, but the structure and functions of myth. In their work writers also turn to myth as a way by which it is possible to comprehend the identity of culture. S.M. Telegin, explaining the present-day interest of writers to myth as a source and to myth as an author's work, writes, "Mythopoeia appears to be a decisive statement of spiritual traditions and values (love and death) lost in the era of rationalism and materialism which receive adequate expression only in language and images of myth" (Telegin, 2009). One of the representatives of modern Russian prose for whom mythologization becomes the main instrument of historical narration is St. Petersburg writer Pavel Krusanov. The mythopoetic analysis of the works *The Night Inside* and *The Angel's Bite* by Pavel Krusanov presented in this study aims to prove that the literary structure of P. Krusanov's works is focused on the actualization of universal archetypal structures, archetypal motifs and images.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

The Influence of the St. Petersburg Text on P. Krusanov's Work. To give a full understanding of P. Krusanov's mythopoetic picture of the world, it is necessary to consider where the aesthetic and literary interests of the writer emerge from. The literary traditions of the Petersburg prose and text had undoubtedly a special influence on P. Krusanov's work. The elements of the Petersburg text are realized in P. Krusanov's literary world primarily as an antinomic intenseness in the field of relations between the two central literary ideas: imperial power of St. Petersburg and mysterious reality of the northern capital. The appearance in the literary criticism of the phenomenon of urban Petersburg prose is associated with the works by V.N. Toporov who was first to introduce the term Petersburg text. His fundamental work Petersburg and the Petersburg Text of Russian Literature (Introduction to the Topic) studies the general Petersburg space which appears to be not only a place of action, but also "supersaturated reality", coupled with "myth, and the entire sphere of the symbolic" (Toporov, 1995). V.N. Toporov's work is one of the first attempts to add common features to St. Petersburg literature, to combine it into a kind of integral phenomenon, with its fixed and unified motif structure and repetitive motif meanings.

In addition, the influence of foreign writers is traced in P. Krusanov's literary worldbuilding. Literary critics, characterizing Krusanov's imaginative style, rightly note the interest of the Petersburg writer in the works by modernist W. Faulkner, in the new Latin American novel and his outstanding representative G.G. Marguez, and in the work by Serbian postmodern writer M. Pavich. Krusanov's genre-style searches, incorporating the elements of modernism, postmodernism and realism, are concerned more with neo-mythology, neo-mythological consciousness as the main dominant of his artistic worldview. Neo-mythological consciousness is one of the main directions of the cultural worldview of the 20th century. V. Rudnev, the author of The Dictionary of the Culture of the Twentieth Century, refers intertextuality, the use of historical traditions, everyday mythology, historical and cultural reality of previous years, literary texts of the past, as well as the formation of his own author's mythology, "restoring the general laws of mythological thinking" to the basic categorical features of this direction (Rudnev, 2009).

The Role of Mythological Thinking in the Formation of the Writer's Literary Worldbuilding. The fact that the most important modelling principle of Krusanov's poetics is mythological thinking is indicated by the following features of the construction of the literary worldview in the writer's works. First of all, it is the binary nature of mythological logic and its focus on the central binary opposition "cosmos-chaos". P. Krusanov's work reveals such neo-mythological touches as personalization, animism, mythological symbolism, identification of micro- and macrocosm, essence and phenomenon, the abstract and the concrete, an indistinct differentiation between subject and object, the material and the ideal, thing and its attributes, the single and the multiple, the static and the dynamic, spatial and temporal relationships. An important feature of P. Krusanov's literary method is striving for universalization. This applies both to the choice of the very genre (a family epic, an alternative history spanning several decades) and the very coordinates of understanding of the world. The literary vocabulary of motifs by P. Krusanov turns to archetypal images that reflect the memory of the nation, of all mankind (such are the archetypes of mother, orphanhood, wise old man, land, water, home), as well as to the plots of ancient myths about heroes; to biblical stories about

the fall of mankind, the search for the promised land, about the Golden Age, etc. The previous chapters of the dissertation analyze all of these motifs.

P. Krusanov's novels *The Night Inside* and *The Angel's Bite* represent the author's view of the past and the future of Russia. *The Night Inside* is a comprehension of the Soviet and post-Soviet past, embodied in dramatic stories about family decline, fratricide, loss of God, suicide, and tragic accidents. *The Angel's Bite* is a fictional idea of Russia. In the literary world of *The Angel's Bite* the myth of the ideal World Empire dominates. It is this main myth from which other key myths, images and themes come up, such as the myth of the East and the West, the myth of the ideal ruler, the myth of St. Petersburg and, finally, the myth of the end of the world. Eurasian motifs develop from the first pages of the story. So, the novel *The Angel's Bite* begins with the love story of a Russian officer, Nikita Nekitayev, and a Chinese commoner, Jan the Third. One of these motifs is a motif of transmigration of souls, realized in the fate of Jan the Third – Ivan's mother, who was reincarnated into bleak after her death. The images of eastern mythology emerge during the military operation in Tabasaran. It is worth noting that bleak is also found in another novel by P. Krusanov, *The Night Inside*. Bleak is a part of Krusanov's authoring mythology and in both novels symbolizes the world of the dead, or rather penetration of the "other" world into the world of the living.

The myth of an ideal ruler is realized through the image of the main character, Ivan Nekitayev and comes up from the myth of cultural hero. An important role in creating the image is played by the theme of initiation, the image of the elder, the theme of "supernational" origin, fantastic devices, the theme of fortune-telling and predictions. The initiation motif in the plot of the novel is of great importance, since the whole life journey of Ivan Nekitayev from the moment of conception is a pervading continuous initiation throughout all the main elements of the plot. As a result of initiation, the hero breaks with the profane and sides with the sacred, combining both worlds. The character of the old man being a fateful figure for the hero defines and directs the further behavior of Nekitayev. The old man opens the mind's eye of Ivan and a new view of things. Ivan's "supranationality" consists in his origin: Russian and Asian blood flows in the hero's veins. The use of fantastic means in creating, for example, the figure of invincible and immortal Ivan the warrior, as well as the themes of fortune-telling, predictions, ghosts, are the important components of Krusanov's myth of the ideal ruler, as well as the Petersburg myth. Petersburg phantasmagoria of Krusanov is permeated with the motifs of illusiveness, the motif of "crystal city" and the dream of returning the city to the status of the capital, which is the embodiment of the cultural center. Also, imperial motifs of the novel are connected with the image of St. Petersburg.

The key images and motifs of the novel are of archaic origin. Symbolic motifs are the versions of traditional symbols of mythology. These are the image of tree into which the father of Peter transforms, representing the most important symbol in various mythologies; the image of paradise; the motif of transformation, dating back to the primitive past, to the era of the archaic worldview – the time of Metamorphosis. Reincarnation is the most important feature of primitive consciousness: "The Times of Metamorphosis – writes V.V. Ivanov – the era of an archaic worldview, based on ideas about those fuzzy (vague) sets, the members of which can be gods, as well as animals, people and inanimate objects, sometimes passing into each other due to metamorphosis" (Ivanov, 1988). The motifs of illusiveness, mirage, reflectivity are associated with the natural and architectural-landscape features of the Northern capital, with its fogs and the ubiquitous water. However, V.N. Toporov notes that

illusiveness and transparency are related not only to the “physical” and “atmospheric” characteristics of the city in the Petersburg text but also represent the spiritual and metaphysical essence of the Northern capital (Toporov, 1995).

Krusanov’s resort to the above motifs of the Petersburg myth can be traced in the following passage: “Петербург походил на запаянную хрустальную сферу, в которой менялись лишь оттенки холодного внутреннего свечения” (Petersburg looked like a sealed crystal sphere in which only the shades of the cold inner luminescence changed) (Krusanov, 2013). The image of crystal sphere, consisting of water and air, also symbolizes transparency, mirage of the space of St. Petersburg. The transparency of the crystal space allows looking beyond it and revealing the events being secret, hidden for a person, at the same time, a complete isolation of Petersburg excludes external influences, such as time. Thus, the motif structure of the novel *The Angel’s Bite* comprehends at least three mythological layers: Eurasian, archaic, and St. Petersburg. The plot of the novel *The Night Inside* unfolds according to the logic of the eschatological myth – from space to chaos. Eschatologization can be traced at the historical, social and individual levels. The eschatological space also fills the general historical and social layer of the novel, through the image of the destructive revolution, the decline of Meln and its inhabitants, further – the central motif of eschatologization concerns the Zotovs and the gradual destruction of their family space.

At the end of the novel, the idea of cycling of time takes place. The novel does not end with the final victory of chaos over space, death over life, the destruction of family values. The cyclical motif, as it were, “neutralizes” the eschatology of the novel. The main structure peculiarity of the novel *The Night Inside* is the binary principle of constructing the literary picture of the world, which is based on the logic of mythological thinking. The key antinomies that organize the picture of the world of the work encompass the spatio-temporal oppositions center and periphery, our and their, outer and inner, top and bottom, cyclicity and linearity, past and present, as well as a number of separate spatial images known for their central function in archaic texts – path, house, circle; the spiritual and the material – an ambivalent conflict due to which the substantial, material is spiritualized, and the matter is able to lose its physical properties; the living-non-living opposition includes the motifs of death, decay, perishableness, immortality. The central clash of the novel lies in the antinomy of the particular and the universal, through which the opposition “Self” – “universal everything”, social and personal, man and the universe is revealed. This conflict is realized via existential motifs.

The concept of the novel is the extinction and finiteness of kinship family, which approaches the structure of *The Night Inside* to the genre of the mythological history of family, which is based on the following sequence of events: family begins to flourish, then family begins to fade and gradually degrades to degenerate and become impoverished with the last weak descendants with whom their story ends. Creating the figures of the main characters of the novel *The Night Inside*, P. Krusanov resorts to various mythological material to the mythological image of the leader, a cultural hero. The system of characters is built with the help of antinomic pairs: the figure of a loose woman is contrasted with the figure of a “righteous”, “immaculate” heroine, a loving mother is contrasted with a predator mother. In creating the images, the archetypal motif of incest, oblivion, transformation, as well as the motif of the loss of family traits are important. The chronicle of the Zotov family begins with Anna’s childhood memories. The starting point of her story is the events related to the flight of her family from her native places. Forced to flee from the plague, the Zotovs

abandon the house, starting on a journey. In mythopoetic representations, the image of the path is the boundary between the center and the periphery, “our” and “their” space and appears to be an important mythologeme that structures the spatio-temporal unity in the work of literature. According to the definition of the Ethnolinguistic Dictionary, “path (road) is a ritually and sacredly significant locus with multivalent semantics and functions. Road correlates with the life’s journey, the soul’s journey to the afterlife, and is semantically distinguished in transitional rituals (Levkiyevskaya , 1999). So, the Zotovs break the only link – the connection with their native land – which united their family.

V.N. Toporov contrasts this path with the movement to the sacral center and characterizes it as follows, “The path to the alien and terrible periphery that interferes with the connection with the sacral center or reduces the sacredness of this center; this path leads from a sheltered, protected, safe “small” center – one’s home, or rather, from the image of the sanctuary inside the house (red corner with images, a hearth with live fire, a house altar, etc.) – to the realm of ever-increasing uncertainty, insecurity, danger” (Toporov, 1995). According to the scholar, it is precisely the movement from the center towards the alien space that is characteristic of mythopoetic consciousness, which is characterized by the ideas about fate, spontaneous actions, uncontrolled choice. These features fill the mythology with extreme drama and risky situations. The structure of figurative system in the novel is also subordinated to the mythopoetic task. The main feature of constructing the figurative system is the antinomic relations of the central characters of the novel. The characters are not only opposed but are in an ambivalent relationship with each other.

Male personages line up in a complex system of characters and their doubles. The Zotov brothers Mikhail-Yakov-Semyon represent various realizations of an atheist character, imbued with the spirit of the era of disengagement. The following antinomies are embedded in these images: faith-lack of faith, indifference-concern, loneliness-unity, freedom-lack of freedom. The main conflict in the personage system lies in complex kinship between male characters, which at the same time break up into separate individuals and are combined into a single image. Strong and powerful ancestors are at the base of the kin. At the head of the family is the image of the leader, Mikhail Zotov, who decides the Zotovs to leave their native steppe. The archetype of leader is rooted in the basis of mythological ideas about cultural heroes, or according to E.M. Meletinsky, ancestral demiurges. One of the fundamental reasons for the emergence of the archetype of cultural hero is the urgent need of the primitive man in defense, in the leader, the organizer, i.e. in a special patron. As a rule, cultural hero was endowed with divine powers and could act as a creator. The main purpose was to procure and to pioneer the creation of various cultural objects for people, such as fire, tools, etc. Also, his duties included organizing society, introducing marriage rules, rituals, holidays (Meletinsky, 1990).

The actions and deeds of Mikhail Zotov suggest that his image comes up from the universal archetype of cultural hero. First, the qualities of a cultural hero were manifested in the leader of Mikhail and in the complete lack of fear of the unknown: “Он сорвался и повлек за собой братьев. Михаил в ту пору над ними правил” (He darted away and led the brothers. Michael at that time ruled over them) (Krusanov, 2014). The image of mother is revealed through female characters – the antipodes of Natalia Zotova and Nina Khaimi. Here is an antinomic basis of the pair. The first is a symbol of maternal sacrifice and excessive concern, the second is a predatory mother using her child to take revenge. Both heroines personify one

hypostasis of the archetype of the Great Mother (K.G. Jung), in the image of whom there is archetypal completeness and positive-negative polarity. Other female characters complement the main type of heroine of the novel *The Night Inside*. The vision of the past events of is realized through the image of the narrator, Anna Zotova, and the historian, Nikolai Vtorushin. Nikolai tries to unravel a tangle of painful memories interpreted by Anna “in her own way”. Completely immersed in the past of Anna’s family, he seems to harmonize and order the history of the Zotovs, to understand and justify their actions. So, a system of polemic points of view of the story is built up in the novel: Anna interprets the events from the point of view of hatred, and Nikolai from the point of view of love. Nicholai’s point of view helps to go beyond a small world of Anna’s hated memories and to interpret the story impartially.

CONCLUSIONS

The literary structure of Krusanov’s works, in many of its elements, dating back to the myth’s structure, forms the individual poetic mythology of the Petersburg prose writer, the mythopoeitics of his works, which allows for the consideration of Krusanov’s work as a part of the historical and literary process of mythologization in Russian literature of the turn of the 20th-21st centuries. The writer’s resort to certain mythological or archetypal structures at the level of plot, motifs, and images is largely due to the author’s intention to comprehend the unchanging, eternal, primordial constants of human and natural being.

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