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MYTHOPOETICS OF THE POSTMODERNIST NOVEL: AT THE LEVEL OF STRUCTURAL-COMPOSITIONAL PROPERTIES

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ABSTRACT

The postmodernist novel is an original genre modification of the late 20th-21st century postmodernist trend in world literature, which differs in its unique content, form and functional characteristics in the metatext space. The typological specificity of the postmodernist novel, which combines universal and specific features, is characterized by a dialogue with the historical past. Postmodernist novel revives mythopoetic thought and context, archetype-plot and archetype-images become relevant in such novels, mythologems manifest themselves in the form of plot, motif or image. In the article, the interaction and unity of the archetype-plot and archetype-image division is revealed and analyzed as the poetics of the postmodernist novel. The author of the article studies the postmodernist novel as a unique type of incitement in terms of structure-composition and content, and draws the myths and mythologems involved in the text into the object of investigation.

KEYWORDS

Mythopoeics, C.G. Jung, Y.M. Meletinsky, Postmodernist Novel, Myths, Structural-Compositional Properties

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Introduction.

In postmodernist prose of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, mythologisms appear in the form of games with mythologems and archetypes as the author's premise. In such a description, the principle of irony and artistic conventionality of the postmodernists reduces the mythological pathos and opens the way for parallels between the modern world and the ancient world. The sources of mythologies that determine motif, image-meaning and plot-genre characteristics bring clarity to novels based on archetypes. According to C.G. Jung: "mythological images become archetypes and form the basis of the artistic creativity of the human generation in later periods" (Guliyev, 2011). Such an approach, on the one hand, determines the national uniqueness of any literature, and on the other hand, at a certain stage of literature's development, the elements originating from myths act as the "genetic code" of national literature in a unique way. For this reason, the analysis of archetypal images helps to reveal the universal invariance of primary images.

Fiction is rich in myths, mythical plots and mythologems, and if human civilization was moving away from myth, according to Y.M. Meletinsky, then in the literature of the 20th century we are witnessing a return to myth (Meletinsky, 1976). This is due to the fact that mythology determines the personality model and social behavior through its symbolization. Mythologism means "introduction" of mythological elements into the text consciously by the author. The author's use of hero, motif, mythologem and mythological composition enables the author to bring his work to the universal level. It is known that existence in myth is described with all its features, and therefore the use of mythological motifs is equivalent to the creation of a special, unified world model. On the other hand, myths are based on the traditional opposition of chaos and space, good and evil. The use of mythologems in the modern work indicates the universality of its subject and problematic. The symbolism of the myth and mythological motifs open the way for a multi-layered interpretation of the artistic

work, and indicate the wide spectrum of image and problem setting. By mythologem, we mean the realization of themes and motifs taken from myths, archetypes, “crumbs” of mythological text, metaphorical sharing and metonymy with the world of myth, and the substitution of plots and events in an artistic work (Yung, 1996).

Y.M. Meletinsky, speaking about the mythological novel in the work “Poetics of the Myth” (Meletinsky, 1976), talks about mythologisms in the modern novel and notes that in the prose of the 20th century, it acts as a semantic and compositional feature of the text in connection with the traditional myth. This important point can also be attributed to the postmodernist novel. The postmodernist novel has its own duality, which manifests itself both in terms of structure and content. On the one hand, if the use of myth in the postmodernist novel appears in the form of mythologems, on the other hand, it does not take those same mythologems “seriously” and uses them indirectly, not directly, in the creation of a new text. The mythologems that influence the content of the postmodernist novel are divided into episodes and motifs, participate in the theme corresponding to the text, and are “placed” in the plot. At first glance, mythologems, which are not directly involved, create a new author’s text in the form of ideas, images, and motifs. In the development process, if the myths taken “from the original” form the idea base of the novel, the use of mythologems creates a new text. The postmodernist novel is situated between the “original” and the emergent text. Apparently, myth or mythologems define mythological components in interaction with the text of the novel.

The ever-changing form flexibility of the postmodernist novel leads to the selection and collection of mythologems from different types of allusions. In such novels, the structure of the work can’t be directly determined by the myth due to the fact that the main plot line is not a myth. The diversity of mythologems may indicate that they do not play a major role in the organization of the structure.

Most of the time in the postmodernist novel, fragmentary, collage, mosaic principle and pastiche divide the myth into several parts, and the most important mythologems are selected and used in the text of the new work. At this time, mythologems manifest themselves in the form of a plot, motif or image. In other words, the interaction and unity of Y.M. Meletinsky’s archetype-plot and archetype-image division leads to the emergence of a new postmodernist novel. The postmodernist novel is a unique type of narrative in terms of structure and content. In the postmodernist novel, myths and mythologies are “spoken” to the recipient in the language of the narrator. We can clearly see it in the novels of British writers such as Malcolm Bradbury’s “Doctor Criminale”, Kazuo Ishiguro’s “The Buried Giant”, Lawrence Norfolk’s “Lemprière’s Dictionary”, Ian McEwen’s “Nutshell”, Neil Gaiman’s “American Gods”.

A certain duality in the postmodernist novel is related to how postmodernists understand reality and truth. On the one hand, in the postmodernist novel, like a traditional myth, the author does not reckon with individual morality, and at the same time denies the opposition of good and evil. This is due to the fact that in postmodernism, reality and truth are multifaceted and assembled from various elements and act according to conditions and situations. According to the ideology of postmodernism, it does not appreciate anything, it does not try to be objective, and on the contrary, it shows the world with all its imperfections and diversity.

The double nature of the use of mythologems in the postmodernist novel is also related to the fact that while the mythological plot is considered the opposite of reality, in postmodernism reality itself is questioned. In such a narrative, mythologems are reconstructed as archetype-plots in several variants (“Lemprière’s Dictionary”, “The Buried Giant”, “American Gods”), archetype-motives (“What a Carve Up!”), archetype-images (“Doctor Criminale”, “Nutshell”) appears in the form. Postmodernist narrative creates a unique world model by referring to mythological narrative. In such novels, mythologems enter the context of their narrative with “parts” of reality. Fiction merges with reality, but never claims objective reality, does not pursue a true description of events.

In such novels about the past in British prose, mythologems appear in real historical events as well as in fictional author’s narrative. In a postmodernist novel, just as an ordinary event becomes a world scale in the narrative of a myth, family events can describe the history of a country (Jonathan Coe’s “What a Carve Up!”) or the life of any person can create a world model (Graham Swift’s “Waterland”). As a rule, in such works, reality and fiction, reality and imagination alternate with each other throughout the work. The postmodernist novel revives famous archetypes (Malcolm Bradbury “Doctor Criminale” – Don Juan, Ian McEwen “Nutshell” – Hamlet), applies mythological motifs to ordinary human life, and compresses world history into a family history in the narrative. This is due to the fact that reality is not the basis for postmodernist narrative, but how they are depicted.

According to Y.M. Meletinsky, one of the main features of mythologems is that they are able to change the dual peculiarity of nature. The cultural hero and his demonic-comic version are divided into the hero and his trickster in fiction. And C.G. Jung defines the trickster as the unconscious presence of the human heart, which

differs little from the animal. Unconsciousness is a hallmark of this archetype, and in order to fulfill his desires, the trickster resorts to lies, fabrications, and breaks the usual rules. For C.G. Jung, the archetype is a structural element of the psyche and it originates in the primitive world of primitive man. C.G. Jung suggests that archetypes live in each of us until now, and he is “the undeniable common heir of all humanity” (Jung, 1991). Therefore, the human psyche is based on some ancient images that we know from mythologies and dreams.

The trickster defined by C.G. Jung falls within the scope of the postmodernist novel and “appears” again in the form of the trickster of the archetype-image in the archetype-plot.

Results.

Joseph Campbell’s “hero’s journey” monomyth can be followed as an archetype-plot in British writer Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel “The Buried Giant” (2015). The play begins with an elderly couple named Axl and Beatrice, who live in a British community and suffer from amnesia, living their normal lives. According to J. Campbell, the heroes are “in their ordinary world”. But gradually they realize that something unusual happened to them, but they do not understand the reason. Axl and Beatrice sometimes vaguely remember something, then forget it, and continue to live as if nothing had happened. After the forgetfulness is lifted, they remember that they also had a child and for some reason left the community and lived in the neighboring village: “Why didn’t Axl turn to the neighboring village for help?” Why don’t the villagers think about the past, even the most recent past?” (Ishiguro, 2015).

The presence of her son prompts the elderly Beatrice and her husband to search for him. The second stage of J. Campbell’s monomyth theory, “calling for adventure”, comes into play: “We have to go and we can’t delay anymore.

- My prince, are you going? Where?

- To our son’s village. It’s not that far off, and we both know it. If we go slowly, we will spend several days on the road, we will go a little to the east, behind the great plain” (Ishiguro, 2015).

No matter how old she is, Beatrice’s desire does not prevent her from going on the road. However, the hero can’t take the first step; he and his wife need the permission of the community leadership to leave the village. The hero hesitates because of this, and the “hero with a thousand faces” phase of “not responding to the challenge” begins. After a long struggle, they set out to find their boy. During this journey, the hero encounters several adventures. In order to name these adventures, along with those who help the hero, he also encounters people who can prevent his journey. The first conflict, which Axl himself does not understand, but which hinders him, takes place in the monastery: “Axl looked out the window and saw all the monastery brothers. More than forty monks were scattered in groups across the courtyard. There was a suspicious atmosphere between them and it was as if they were hiding something from their religious brothers. Axl saw that they looked at each other suspiciously” (Ishiguro, 2015).

Taking refuge in a mysterious abbey and deciding to rest here for a few days, Axl and his wife accidentally learn a secret that has been hidden for years. Because of this, several priests of the abbey send Axl and Beatrice to the airless and waterless basement, so as to prevent the revelation of the secret they have been keeping for years, thus creating the conditions for their death. J. Campbell’s monomyth theory comes into play again, and in this case, he comes to help in the image of British knight Gawain (“Supernatural Guardianship”). The secret kept in the abbey is to ensure the survival of the dragon Querig because the agreement between the Britons and the Saxons will not be violated and new massacres will not occur. Querig the dragon spews oblivion into the air every day. Knight Gawain watches over the dragon’s survival. Another Saxon knight, Wistan, on the contrary, calls on him to kill him and save everyone, especially the Saxons from this oblivion, in other words, to be merciless against the Britons who committed the Saxon massacres: “Axl, did you hear? The dragon creates the lack of memory! If Knight Wistan or that old knight we met on the road kills this creature, our memory will return!” (Ishiguro, 2015).

Axl-hero passes the first stage and again the monomyth theory comes into play (“Overcoming the first frontier”). The events taking place in the basement seem to recall the stage that J. Campbell called “underground or otherwise sinister”. This part moves from the first part of J. Campbell’s monomyth theory, “The beginning of the path” to the “Initiation” part. This part of the work is the stage of approaching the supreme transcendental. In the language of the characters, this part sounds like this: “The abbot insists that we keep everything as it is. But there are others who say it’s time to stop. There is no pardon for us at the end of this road. We must reveal secrets, learn to face the past” (Ishiguro, 2015).

The hero must either accept lifelong oblivion and continue to live without knowing anything, but in doing so he must erase everything about his son and himself from his memory, or he must accept everything

as it is, but at the same time he must face the wars that will arise between the Saxons and the Britons, which at the same time lead to greater things. This part of the work ends with the “inner cave” of the hero, the battle with himself in his inner world and the desire to restore memory and re-remember what happened from the past. However, this memory evokes more difficult memories and it turns out that he had an argument with Beatrice, whom he loved dearly, because of treason, and his son witnessed this argument and went to the neighboring village in anger. He was stricken with a fatal disease prevailing in the village and was buried there. Axl’s punishment to Beatrice, as the mastermind of what happened, is forbidden by not visiting her son’s grave and never talking about him again.

Although the events were related to the past, the memory of the years was erased by the mist of oblivion that the dragon Querig spewed into the air, and thus he lived in peace with his wife. In the stage of the monomyth “Path of Trials”, the hero - Axl is stuck between the past and the present. But now he does not want to forget his past, because the past is a part of his life - his memory. The comfort of today is weakened by the desire to remember what happened in the past, and Axl restores the glory of selfhood by recovering his memory. Entering the stage of inner purification, the hero reaches the stage of spiritual exaltation. Axl witnesses the death of the dragon with the knight Wistan, who wishes for the death of the dragon Querig and goes in search of him. And this triggers the “Meet the Goddess” part of the monomyth. But this goddess is the trickster of the dragon Querig, the character of the postmodernist novel. The dragon Querig, who appeared as “The Seducer”, is no longer in his former power. Axl feels at peace with the fact that he is waiting for his death tomorrow. He no longer cares whether the dragon survives: “It’s a potential liberation that everyone can reach” (Campbell, 2018). For the hero, this is the “rewarding at the end of the road” stage of the monomyth, in other words, it is equivalent to finding “oneself”.

In the third part of the monomyth theory, “The Return”, Axl learns the secret of his adventures, but Beatrice is dying, and the boatman is already waiting for her on the shore. In order not to be separated from his beloved wife, he does not want to return to the community without Beatrice. The “refusal to return” stage comes into play in this case, but a new challenge awaits the hero. The boatman slyly asks Axl about the ominous incident between them in the past, and Axl tells the truth: “Until now, the dragon poisoned the air with its breath and took away our sad memories as well as our good ones. But he is dead now and many things have become clear to me” (Ishiguro, 2015).

This truth, the revelation of the real events, destroys the bond between him and Beatrice once and for all. The boatman says that he can only take Beatrice to the island where the couple wants to cross. Due to not being separated from his wife, the hero experiences the “refusal to return” phase of the monomyth. However, the end of the play prepares the boatman for Beatrice to find peace, to reunite with her son, to the island of her dreams - to leave this world, and he takes her alone under the pretext of the weight of the load on the boat and the possibility that it will sink: “Here, my wife has already remembered everything... our son crossed to the island before us, saying he was buried either in the forest or somewhere on a quiet beach” (Ishiguro, 2015). The hero-Axl has already reached the “border of the world of transition to ordinary life”, understands the existence of both worlds and enters the stage of “Judge of Two Worlds”. As a result of the dialogue between him and the boatman, he realizes that he was deceived: “I thought that you and I understood each other and I will go to the island with my wife. Didn’t you repeat many times that you don’t ask questions just like that, because of this issue?” (Ishiguro, 2015).

J. Campbell’s “The hero with a thousand faces”, in other words, the monomythic hero Axl’s journey (read: continuation of life!) and entering a “new life” ends with his “cleansing” and his return to life with a “new” face: “Goodbye my only love. I could hear him paddling in the water. I wonder if he will talk to me? He said he would make up. But when I turned and looked at him, he didn’t even want to look at me, he was only looking at the beach, at the sunset on the horizon. I no longer try to catch his eye. And he swam forward without looking back. “My friend, wait for me on the shore,” I say in a quiet voice, but he doesn’t hear me at all and continues on his way, driving his boat” (Ishiguro, 2015).

J. Campbell writes in “The Hero with a Thousand Faces”: “What is the final result of a wonderful transition and return. The field of color symbolizes the field of life, where each being lives by the death of another... And this happens through the realization of the true relationship between the transient phenomena of time and the eternal life that lives and dies in everything” (Campbell, 2018).

Conclusions.

Mythopoetic elements and mythological way of thinking are actively involved in the genre system of the postmodernist novel, as well as in the plot-composition and image layer of textual poetics. First of all, let’s note

that the actualization of the mythological perception, as well as the myth in the postmodernist novel, is related to the modernity's desire to understand the classical period, historical past and universal concepts. The intensity of the appeal to the myth is related to the perception of this historical stage as a period of progress, prosperity and high values, and the conclusion that modernity can be fully understood precisely against this background. However, mythopoetic elements are also revealed in the plot-compositional structure of the postmodernist novel and in the world of images. These elements appear in the postmodernist novel of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century mainly in the form of play with mythologems and archetypes.

In the dynamic and multi-layered inner world of the postmodernist novel, classical myths and mythologems are not revealed in their fixed content and functions. Because postmodern text is characterized by fragmentary, montage, and quotation, myth can't form the main plot line of novels, and it is often not easy to determine the direct connection of the intertextual core of the work with the myth. The diversity and fragmentary nature of mythologems within the text indicates that they do not play a major role in the organization of the structure. In the postmodernist novel, the decisiveness of the principle of irony reduces the initial functionality and mythological pathos of myths, in the work the myth becomes relevant not by itself, but as a material that paves the way for parallels between the modern world and ancient times.

The postmodernist novel undermines the original meaning and functions of the myth, fragments it, and actualizes mythologems that have significance only in the text of the new work. The way mythologems become relevant and determine the poetics of the work is clearly revealed in postmodernist novels of the 20th-21st centuries. In the text of the postmodernist novel, such mythologems with functional significance are reconstructed as archetype-plots and appear in the form of archetype-motives, archetype-images, and serve to create a unique postmodernist artistic worldview.

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