

# Mythologeme as a mechanism of translation for historical memory

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**Abstract** - Cultural dynamics can be represented as the change of dominant myths, created by the culture within itself. At a certain stage of historical development of culture, a dominant idea appears that needs to be formalized and tried on up-to-date material. The mythological form creates tense experimental space, in which the idea is developed and ripened to conscious establishment. Art can represent the disruptions of cultural consciousness and objective existence through new forms: images, symbols, simulacra that are archetypes in specific cultural layers. Stable myth architectonics reflects the objectively existing style of the epoch, the spirit of the time, general cultural traditions. Every cultural type adds up modern, historical, national and fashionable components to the image structure. The trends mentioned are evident in artistic material, such as poetry, animated images, and cinema. The phenomenological approach serves as the methodological basis for the analysis of the sources identified and the definition of mythologemes. An epoch's specific features, its cultural patterns can be seen in the cinema, influencing the transformation of historical memory in modern society through mythologemes. Within the communicative and cultural memory model, events happened 80-100 years before the reflexion moment make the strongest emotional impact. Therefore, the memory of the Russian citizens is influenced by historical films: Soviet (relevant) and modern (retrospective) representing such mythologemes as the enemy, the victory, the people, the motherland.

**Keywords** - myth, archetype, historical memory, our, foreign.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A vast body of value-oriented relationships reproduced and translated by human culture has a mythological structure. A myth reflects stable patterns of world perception, understanding, sensation and construction, which become static construction due to their archetypal nature. The most unique, individual phenomenon in culture represents typical, commonly accepted and valued - universal phenomena. The myth as a medium of public worldview connects private and individual with public and relevant, making a person experience itself. From the ontological point of view, the myth does not have limits between the thought and the existence, the idealist fiction and reality. It has its own space and time that are totally subjective. The human does not come into the spatial and temporal coordinate system, but into a specific condition (fear, anger, happiness), and lives this passion as an altered

state of consciousness, perceiving the world from a different point of view. It is in the depths of collective unconscious that the culture keeps latent traces of humanity's memory. Archetypes are atemporal patterns, helping formulate thoughts and feelings of all people. They are the basis of panhuman symbolism and include all of the mythological themes. Myths, fairytales, and legends reflect shared spiritual experience, collective unconscious, which is close to the entire humanity due to its archaic (and thus tried by centuries-long experience) and impersonal nature.

One should not see an archetype as a stable and complete image. It is more of an image structure, its psychological background. Archetype is a form, a narrative pattern that acquires content during rational processing in a certain culture. Each of the culture types adds up to this image pattern modern, historical, national and fashionable component. The archetype itself, crystallized in a mythologeme, is unchanged, but it can be arranged and transposed differently [1]. Thus, a mythologeme is not the only (as discussed later), but a universal mechanism of the functioning of culture.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS (MODEL)

The phenomenological approach serves as the methodological basis for the interpretation of cultural phenomena, alongside with the typology and the analysis of archetypes and mythical plots in the light of "ours-foreign" dichotomy.

Phenomenological reading allows for approaching primary perceptions. The theory of E. Husserl concerning artistic material, especially visual, helps enhance the connection between affectability, memory and recollections. Precognitive attachment is influenced by both the outside world and the consciousness of a person, a recipient of artistic reality. I am both constituting and constituted [2].

Analyzing plots, topics and contexts of specific fiction works calls for the use of archetype - myth - mythologeme structure. Finding out and analysing the latter is a problem of the interpretation of these phenomena. From global ones, where an archetype equals a mythologeme, to more narrow ones, where a mythologeme is a structural part of a myth. Therefore, the "ours - foreign" dichotomy is both a cultural concept and a culture deployment algorithm, which was formulated in phenomenological tradition.

The opposition of “ours” and “foreign” (“other”, “theirs”) is generally typical for the fictional reality of online and offline cultures [3].

This methodological vector helps address cultural phenomena on different levels: civilizational, national, historical, and artistic. Besides, these phenomena can be seen in retrospect and in the current context. Let us address every aspect.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Studying the most important archetypes allow for the detection and analysis of the most pressing problems of human and society development, and consequentially the key images-symbols of any culture. Thus, Jungian archetype of “Shadow” as a composite of all bad traits of characters in people allows marking cultural phenomena as “ours” and “foreign”, not only through language and speech but also at a deeper level of stable cultural dominants. A myth is a specific way of cultural conceptualization, differentiating “ours” from “theirs” geographically, topologically, ideologically and mentally. The “cultural fabric” is full of mythologemes in both traditional and modern cultures. A myth is always seamlessly interwoven in sociality and it generalizes its numerous specificities. Within the mythologemes created, “ours” and “foreign” in culture become clearly defined and help assert oneself as normal, right and adequate.

The mythologically constructed image of “foreign” does not have to be embodied in something material. It is a deep structure grounded in collective perceptions of a nation or a culture. Originally existing on a personal level as a dark, hidden, diabolical character component, it changes into collective perceptions, projected on various social groups or nations. This shadow is connected to the ancient, undifferentiated, syncretic consciousness level, which forms an alter ego as a double image, becoming US in sociality. Since a collective image of the Shadow as a kind of “foreigner” is a representation of negative personal traits on social communities, the “foreign” (THEM in this case) is represented as a fact of a lower, negative, primitive character, repulsive due to its underdevelopment and thus invoking fear and suspicion.

A myth creating cultural fabric along the axis of “ours - foreign”, addresses antagonistic differences, fundamental otherness, aimed at showing the “normality of “our own” via the contrast with the strangeness (sometimes on the border of abnormality and inacceptability) of “theirs”, and demonstrating “foreignness” of what is not included in “our” cultural mythologeme [4].

Art, as one of the primary forms of cognition developed by culture, uses a vast number of mythologemes, including the mythical images of “ours” and “foreign”. Art shows mythical reality as the true world. Let us consider the demonstration of reality in two art forms: poetry and cinematography. Poetry and literary fiction as the most classic forms of art and cinematography as a complex synthetic art form and a leading-edge form of modern artistic creativity both use plenty of mythologemes, though stressing different points in every specific case.

The “Golden Age” of Russian culture, during which a vast number of genius artists appeared, is the age of meeting the “foreign” world - the world of the Caucasus. This meeting was corrupted by war, totally monologic in nature, but proving to be a good historical material for creating the images of “ours” and “theirs”. The Caucasus is the mythologically constituent East, and as such, it is represented by romanticists are exotic, flamboyant, real and non-hypocritical; a far but attractive place, speaking of extreme feelings and states.

In this respect, it is necessary to understand that the topos takes into consideration the notions of “ethnic mentality” and “ethnic tradition”, which enable us to speak of sacrality and archetypal character of the spiritual and the material world [5]

The mythologeme of “foreign” in the historical memory of an average Russian Empire citizen of that time is based on a stereotype of cultural backwardness and underdevelopment of the Caucasian world, justifying the civilizing mission of Russia in this region. Art, regardless of and contrary to the official authorities, strived to expand this mythologeme.

The foreignness of Russia in the consciousness of Caucasian authors of the early 19th century is also mythologically based. There was no solemn and romanticised mythological understanding of the foreigners, so we can speak of the traditional “other” mythologeme, evident in the categories of hostility and heroism as the value anomaly of “ours” [6].

A culture needs a hero when it is undergoing a crisis. Peaceful routine does not need a hero.

Modern Caucasus studies researchers claim that the relevance of the Caucasian issue is still defined by the imperial approach and its typical attitude towards “others”. The historical memory of the people of North Caucasus preserves and translates the theme of Russia’s patronizing acceptance of their cultural worlds. However, it can be said that the myth itself blurs the border between “ours” and “theirs” (through taboos and rituals), and the art - more so.

Mythology in modern culture, including the media, can be perceived through one global plot - that of conspiracy theories [7].

Due to this, any further process of phenomenon analysed, especially those of political and (or) historical nature, can be at least revised, and depreciated at the maximum.

We claim that there are two myth models in a culture that have an archetypal character: cosmogonic and eschatological myths, depicting the beginning, the creation of the world and its end, the perfection of the beginning and its degradation.

Cosmogonic myths reproduce a situation of some cosmic battle between the old and the new, representing the active nature of the new culture - the hero defeats the old world and its archaic traditions and values. He invades the new lit space of the reality being formed to exercise his sacred creativity. He is not opposed by the powers of the old world, their archaic backwardness; he is completely free and demiurgic.

In order to illustrate the way these myths work in a culture, we take cinema as a leading form of modern art.

Just like any other art, cinematography is mythological, because it creates an imaginary symbolic reality that has some features of the true reality. Just like any literary fiction text, the plot in cinematography is based on certain cultural patterns, some archetypical paradigms that serve as a symbolic form reflecting the events that are most crucial for the individual history - the establishment, the fulfillment and the identity of a hero.

In the huge number of films, it is easy to find a heroic or individual scenario with a final battle between the good and the evil. Action films are the most widely spread form of modern epics. The overarching task of a hero sets the sequence of his actions that are aimed at the restoration of justice. It is also implemented within the framework of a mythical plot, represented by the necessary elements, such as the hero's initiation, his acquisition of magical invincibility, heroic battle, and the hero's metamorphoses as a warrior, a savior, and a lover.

An example of such a highly artistic mythological plot in cinema is the Lion King cartoon. Its plot develops according to the cosmogonic myth model: creation - deterioration - recovery through a heroic deed. The mythical space in the film is clearly divided between the two opposing areas: the land of light where the Pride lives and lions - sacred animals symbolizing wisdom, power, strength, justice, harmony, and spiritual energy - live, and the land of darkness (the elephant cemetery) where the hyenas rule who take the lowest level in the mythological hierarchy of animals (in European myths hyenas symbolize hypocrisy, cowardice, and greed). However, in some African rituals, hyenas act like a lion's helpers. That is why in the cartoon they serve the Scar who represents the concealed, "shadowed" semantic of the solar symbol, namely violence, evil, death. The story of the main character is also built on a mythical plot, featuring the main deeds of an epic hero: miraculous birth, parents' unlimited love, wilfulness, playfulness, trials of strength and agility, marital fidelity, timely or supposed death, return in new quality. All the events, connected to the main character, have a sacred meaning. The final scene of the film refers to the first scene: harmony is recovered after the disaster, and the land of ancestors recovers the features of paradise. The birth of the daughter of Simba and Nala is the symbol of eternal rebirth, procreation, eternal love and the prize for victory [8].

The cyclicity of the plot is the same as in myths. The Lion King can be a vivid example of some aspects of archaic culture and archaic heroism. It provides an opportunity to demonstrate some universal models, on which cultures are built, in modern art. Besides, the cartoon shows that mythical thinking, categories and images of which we often use to perceive and assess reality, can exist in new cultural forms.

The hereditary mechanism in culture revives only those previously used models that are relevant due to a number of facts.

The need for these models is connected to various circumstances: heterogeneity of content (the same problems, plots, values) allowing to use ready-made and tried pattern;

or complementary principle, eliminating some cultural gap and providing for alternative choice options and axiological procedures.

Tense dramatic nature of the current existence of the culture calls for mythologemes that are stored in the cultural experience and which would demonstrate the ideas of social equality, ideological unity and ethic unselfishness in a clear, emotional and persuasive manner. They are demanded because while they are archaic, they are also necessary for social balance. The attitude of modern recipients towards these models varies from complete nostalgic acceptance to nihilistic rejection, but, in any case, the perception of these idyllic myths gets a hold of recipients' consciousness.

In modern culture, one must remember about the problem of "doubling reality", in which recipients distance themselves from the objective reality due to image construction and its repetitive reproduction [9].

Let us remember the art of the Khrushchev Thaw of the 1960es. It represents a specific state of the Soviet nation living in the atmosphere of miracle, waiting for the new life to bring freedom, happiness and youth. The cinematography of that period uses the theme of "the joy of paradise", depicting the sun-lit world, cheerful young characters, their sincere and simple intentions, total unification of social endeavours, agreement of all values. Comedy films of that period granted the viewers with ideal characters, created by M. Zharov, P. Kadochnikov, L. Tselikovskaya, L. Orlova during the 1940es and 50es. Soviet films of that time show an artificial image of earthly paradise, already possible in Soviet mentality (Don Cossacks, Circus, Pigwoman and Herdsman, etc). In the routine consciousness, miracles, desires and possible things did not contradict reality and impossible things.

The art of this period represents a specific "socialist mentality" as a cross-section of social psychology and public consciousness.

Art was first to express the new hatching model of Soviet totalitarianism - the "united family model" as the primary basis in social relations. The domesticity feel means constant attachment of people to the community, informal collectives, starting from smaller groups of Little Octobrist Stars and labor teams up to trade unions and the party organisation. The community totally forms the personality, which M. Foucault calls "supervising and punishing". This new social moral, unconditional in its unity and its unambiguity of expression, cultivates the feelings of shame due to the opinion of the general public in the collective unconscious. Only the opinion of the community, which is right by default, can be just and unselfish.

Individual existence is subdued by the public, even personal happiness is impossible without the approval of the community. The entire human's life from its first moment and up to the last ones is performed in front of the public. A person is deprived of personal space (the communal flat phenomenon) and personal opinion (the unanimity syndrome). Disagreement with the opinion of the community is marked as the opposition of "ours - foreign", "friend-enemy". Labor, rest, happiness and sorrows - all takes place in the public, where there is no place for the personal.

All of these was seen as a natural, normal and the only possible way of life. In the 1950-es and 60es, Soviet cinema creates a model of a “Soviet person”, ready for labor heroism for the community, even if it means the loss of the personal. It is evident in such films as *Volunteers*, *Girls*, *Height*, *Spring in Zarechnaya Street*, etc.

The art shows mythical reality as the true world. One can safely say that socialism won in socialist realism art of that time: the life in works of art is “better” than real life.

Idealism as an indispensable creative method of socialist realism entrusts the scripts with the endeavour towards the perfection, success. This romanticist component demands the demonstration of the icon - the future as present, real and possible today. The future as a part of the present must be presented in a real rather than fantastical and symbolic manner. The aberration of vision takes place: what is the best becomes normal, average. Take *VDNKh*, representing the real world of abundance (a single fact in a specific reality is presented as typical and achievable).

The value of supertemporal cultural experience is not only significant for cosmogonic but for eschatological myths as well. The problem of the present and the future is intensified by the knowledge of the past, totally defining the destiny of the characters. Sacral knowledge of the past maintains connections with both specific facts occurred and with metal and spiritual endeavours, defining characters’ deeds, corresponding to the specific plotline.

The features of historical memory, characterizing the values of the modern society, are based on interconnected modifications of several myth models, replication and adjustment of which are possible in the mass culture of the 21st century. Cinema significantly influences the formation and change of historical memory in modern human. One can access its works in the cinemas as well as the internet.

According to the theory of a German historian J. Assman, studying culture and religion, the “horizon” of social memory is within the range of 80-100 years [10].

Thus, the most emotionally rich events represented in the cinema must be the Great Patriotic War.

We assume that relevant (in the Soviet period) and retrospective (created immediately after the war and nowadays) films have great ideological capacities, that can be decomposed to a number of clearly perceived mythologemes, formulated within decades of distancing oneself from the participants of historic events.

The phenomenological approach provides for the detection of dominating images, plots and mythologemes in cinematography at various levels. The multilayer structure of the cinema is evident in E. Husserl’s note on “back to the things”. The things themselves, taking the role of the “self-evident”, are the most complex element in the interpretation and analysis of cinematographical material. This idea is of special importance for the mass cinema, especially its share appearing in the majority of the cinemas. Modern films about the war are most often blockbusters (with rare exceptions like *Anna’s War*, 2018). Each of the war films has an explicit hero.

In this respect, a heroic myth accumulates other myth models (eschatological and cosmogonic) in itself. The hero

is responsible for the construction of the world and its maintenance, he participates in the final battle and wins over the forces of evil, which can give an opportunity to preserve the life as it is, or change it for the better. Among the mythologemes providing for the connection of all myth models are the following: war (fighting the evil), enemy (the impersonation of absolute evil: Germans, traitors, collaborationists); motherland (the topos, absolute values to be protected at any cost); the people (a united community having the power and the truth); the victory (the result of hero's efforts, his capability of sacrificing himself and asceticism, the ability to lead).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

A myth is a stable model providing for the construction, analysis and interpretation of cultural processes and phenomena. The myth’s constant and durable character, its groundedness in history and its specific features ensure the connection with the culture’s archetypal basis, which is a supertemporal element of the collective unconscious. Myth and archetype enable comparing the personal and the public in their ontological aspect.

Unlike an archetype, a myth has specific historical forms and it is interwoven into the social structures and artistic systems.

Jungian archetype typology enables structuring the cultures around the opposition of “ours” and “foreign”. Mythologemes denote this dichotomy in a clearer way. The effect of “ours” - “foreign” opposition is evident in chronological and thematic contexts. From the traditional culture, we can see that the Caucasus represent mythologically constructed East for romanticist artists, while the commoners faced the mythologeme of foreign cultural space.

Two myth models - cosmogonic and eschatological - have archetypal character. Animated cinema shows both models interacting, which can be found in the following plot twists: miraculous birth, wilfulness, supposed and real death, repeated deeds, etc.

In cinema interpretation, recipients are hugely influenced by historical plots with an explicit hero. A hero is an impersonation of the victorious nation. Relevant Soviet cinema and rethinking Soviet realia, especially the Great Patriotic War, today enhances a number of mythologemes, such as war, enemy, hero, people, motherland, victory.

The core plot, in this case, is heroic. The respective myth model comprises the cosmogonic and eschatological components.

All the mythologemes mentioned are built on the opposition of “ours” - “theirs”. It provides for the survivability of the mythologemes, their universal character and adaptability in the representation of the fictional reality of historical processes and phenomena that are vital for modern society, and in the use of various genre and style forms and mediums to describe the entire world and its fragments.

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