

# National Axiology in the Treatise of S.A. Yesenin

## "The Keys of Mary"

### Study on the Mental Features of the Russian Person\*

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**Abstract**—The article tells about the national axiology, codes and archetypes of Russian culture which were highlighted in the 1918 treatise by the poet Sergei Yesenin. Much attention is paid to the archetype of the ship / boat, which is dominant for Russian culture. This archetype is found in folklore, in folk drama, in funeral rites. The image of the ship is relevant to Russian literature. In this regard, parallels are drawn with the works of Lermontov and Voloshin. Russian embroidery turns out to be typologically significant; since a ship drawing, an ornament is observed in it. The folkloristic commentary on the text of the treatise and the reconstruction of a large cultural space allow us to show the great importance of ornament, embroidery for Yesenin's poetics and the Russian national image of the world as a whole.

**Keywords**—folklore; literature; culture of the beginning of the XX century; Yesenin; archetype; symbol

#### I. INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to talk about the Russian person, about his mental features in isolation from national axiology, which organizes the national image of the world. In our work, we will talk specifically about national axiology, from which the "Russian Spirit" is born, the connection between being and non-being is realized, the cultural distance is overcome. In the cultural and philosophical theme G.D. Gachev paid great attention to the national images of the world [1]. The scientist singled out his cultural codes, characteristic of each national image. In our article, we turn to the treatise S.A. Yesenin's "The Keys of Mary" and the codes of culture, which in it are theoretically comprehended by the poet. But since we turn to poetry, we will also talk about the moral and artistic tradition and reality in art that arose on the cut of historical and cosmic reality. In his book "Poems and Poetry" V. Kozhinov, discussing the nature of genuine poetry, comes to a very striking conclusion: "Poetry is an organic unity of the external and internal, in which the living life and the living meaning of the phenomenon, rooted in the infinity of

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the Universe, are realized" [2].

In the treatise "The Keys of Mary" S. Yesenin writes about the existence of a ship, screen saver and angelic image in poetry, as well as understanding of poetry through the "tree" system, the constant of the Spirit: "The essence of creativity in images is divided in the same way as a human being into three types - soul, flesh and mind.

The image from the flesh can be called introductory, the image from the spirit of the ship and the third image from the mind angelic" [3]. Relying on these remarks by Yesenin about "ship images", we ask about the existence of such an image in poetry "before Yesenin" and the existence of such formulas that extend into the distance in folklore and Russian literature (the term is A.N. Veselovsky). The poet's statement that "there has been an incredible dumbness in Russian literature lately" that many "gather in pieces, like a discovery" [3], although in previous centuries it was present in the artistic consciousness, also raises this question. This remark makes us turn to the poetry of M.Yu. Lermontov, which carries this "splash ship" image. We also note that one of the poets loved and influenced by Yesenin was Lermontov.

#### II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Drawing parallels with the works of Lermontov, Russian folklore makes us turn to the comparative-typological and systematic method of text analysis. The placement of Yesenin's treatise in a large cultural context allows revealing codes and archetypes that are important for Russian culture in the poet's work.

In the poem of the same name "Sail", a poetic manifesto that caused a lot of controversy and interpretations in literary criticism, Lermontov paints exactly the image that Yesenin writes about in "The Keys of Mary". Before turning directly to the analysis of "Sails", we quote one, which is important in our opinion, from Lermontov's early novel "Vadim": "Olga often forgot her sewing and observed the blue wandering waters and barges with white sails and colorful

weathercocks” [4]. The quote, at first glance, is usual, but referring again to the Yesenin treatise, we find: “The tree on the towel is the value we already know, it is not embroidered on anything except the towel, and again we must indicate that this is very hidden and very deep meaning” [3]. As shown by the studies of A.M. Panchenko, in Russian folklore, the traditional formula is "playing the harp", embroidery matters topics, that is, the combination of reality with space [5]. Here we will make a digression and say that in the eastern cultural tradition (in Islam) the extraordinary flowering of applied arts led to the visualization of oriental poetry, and the ornament was perceived as an expression of the Spirit of the Age [6]. It is noteworthy that Yesenin points to the meaning of embroidery (for the verbs “weave” and “weave” it is expressed in the meaning “the relationship between being and nonexistence” [7]), objects of peasant life and the building cosmogony of the whole hut, which was also organized in many ways by “air "Images:" all our skates on the roofs, roosters on the shutters, pigeons on the princely porch, flowers on bedding and underwear, along with towels are not simple patterns, this is a great significant epic to the outcome of the world and the purpose of man "[3]. Here it is also necessary to say about the idea of the Cosmosophy of Russia put forward by G.D. Gachev who understands "nature as a text", and this text "The people should read, understand and implement in the course of Labor, in the creation of culture on this earth" [1]. The Russian man embodies the air, which is recreated either in HUMAN, remaining unembodied, as happens with the heroes of F.M. Dostoevsky [1], or embodied in the Axis mundi, that is, the World Axis, like the lyric hero Yesenin, tearing into the Sky:

Only guest I, random guest

On your mountains, the earth.

.....

Fated to me initially

Fly into the dumb darkness. [3]

### III. RESULTS

This retreat allows us to understand the significance of the image-ship on which Lermontov’s poem is built. In this case, we have to turn to oriental poetry. This appeal is dictated by several reasons. Firstly, Lermontov himself gravitated towards the East, speaking about the pragmatism of the West, that all of Europe had become obsolete, about the need to learn the "Tatar language" (letter to S. A. Raevsky [4]). Secondly, he was familiar with oriental poetry: a young poet (1830-1832) listened to lectures by orientologists A.V. Boldyrev, M.A. Korkunov in Persian, Arabic poetry [7]. Finally, thirdly, such a typological paradigm was still declared by V.V. Rozanov [8], who called Lermontov a poet of the stars, and his poetry is the brainchild of the Chaldean cults, moreover, expressing the idea that the work of the Russian classic can be understood from the point of view of the ancient cult of the Mother of all things that comes to us from Egypt and Babylon. But what kind of internal connection can there be between all this? The fact is that oriental poetry itself (Persian, Iranian) as a dominant carries the image of a ship coming from Sufi teachings [9], it is also

connected with the cult of the Black Virgin or, according to Soloviev, Great Sofia. Analyzing the “Sail”, we turn to the poetry of M. Voloshin as a figurative parallel, who combined the image of the “winged ship” with the East, associating it precisely with Iranian shepherds “listening to the music of the worlds”, Chaldean stargazers:

And in the river deltas - the Chaldean stargazer

And the shepherds of the Iranian plateaus. [11]

Without departing from Yesenin’s treatise, we find a peculiar, but in our opinion poetically accurate, explanation of the word “shepherd”. The poet shows that the shepherds were “trained” by the stars [3] and, of course, their perception is associatively associated with the stellar “ship” image, which we also find in Voloshin:

Oh these dreams

About the golden sky!

Oh marina

Cruise ships! ... [10]

Speaking of Lermontov’s “Sail” V.M. Markovich notes that there is a kind of “breakthrough”, a way out of everyday life, a transition point, but a storm is needed for the transition to take place.

Turning to eastern poetry, to the lyrics of Nizami Ganjavi, we find the likening of a lyrical hero to a sail that is in search, trying to break out of the ocean of everyday life:

When you accidentally get on a ship, rise and don’t fall!

Sail, unable to fall, shone with the light of the sun. [11]

The “Sail” of Lermontov is associated with the image of the protagonist, explicitly expressed, in search of his helmsman, to become a ship. “We are talking about the highest search, the search for the meaning and purpose of life, the movement of a person forward” and this search is “very difficult” [12]. On the path of enlightenment, the human spirit is constantly being tested - the normal state of the tariqah - obviously, it cannot be otherwise: “in order to withstand the severe difficulties of the spiritual path, a person has to exert all his strength” [13]. He asks for the storm to break, therefore that only then will there be a meeting with the Creator. We turn to Sufi poetry, to the lines of Rumi, Hafiz:

A wave of alast came and the ship of the body is broken,

When the ship is again wrecked, there will come a time of unity in a date [14]

We see that “Sufi poets create a figurative interpretation of the ceramic plot about the origin of Creation, develop this plot, referring to the realities corresponding in the Qur’an - the sea, ship, wind ...” [14]. Thus, the Sail is a “body”, a kind of cosmic model through which a divine meeting takes place:

Under it a stream of brighter blue

Above him is the golden ray of the sun ... [4]

Many researchers in the last quatrain see an antinomy:

And he, rebellious, asks for the storm

As if there was peace in the storms! [4]

But there is no antinomy - everything is natural from the point of view of ritual logic. Before us is a "rhizome text", or rather, artistic foresight, which is based on "flickering rhizome." The space "seems to flicker in the transition from the undetected to the individual realized elements" [15]. The sail joined the divine ("above it the golden ray of the sun ..."). However, to reunite with Pilot, you need to break, so he is looking for storms. Voloshin directly says that the Pilot should bow before the gods and obey the sky:

Listen how rustling

In them the voice of the sea is hopeless

Than crying shadows ... And over the stern

Bow down, anxious and dumb,

Before the gods of the underworld ... [10]

In Voloshin's poetry, the archetype of the Way, which is associated with the feminine, namely the Moon, is more clearly read out. In Lermontov's "Sail" this is not present, only Kormchiy is supposed, but if you take Lermontov's work inherently, refer to his prose (we have already quoted Vadim) and his poems, memoirs, we will see that "knight complex": "When I was still young, I liked to look at the moon, at the various clouds, which in the form of knights with helmets crowded as if around it; as if the knights escorting Armida to her castle, full of jealousy and anxiety"[4] - because "the [poet]'s spiritual childhood ended much earlier than that of his peers"[16].

Summing up everything said. We can assume that the female archetype embodied in the poetry of Lermontov and Voloshin, the rite of becoming a knight, gaining a higher cosmic essence, which, oddly enough at first glance, is associated with a boat or a spaceship illuminated by either the Sun ("Sail") or the Moon as in Voloshin's poems:

Desert of waters ... With alarm obscure

Pushes a shuttle wave.

And blooms like a red fern,

The Sinister Moon. [10]

Returning to Yesenin's treatise "The Key's or Mary", to the theoretically substantiated poet's image "ship, saver", let's say in this connection that in Yesenin's poetry we also find a "star ship" that transforms reality into a perfectly organized space of the lyrical hero:

A month will sail and swim

Drop oars on the lakes ...

And Russia will still live,

To dance and cry at the fence. [3]

The "ship" is also assumed here, but the ship's image is read through the archetype of the moon. It is natural in this connection to turn to the etymology of the word "carnival.

Modern researchers believe that contrary to M.M. Bakhtin, it does not go back to "flesh", not to bodily delight, but to the semantics of the "wagon-ship" [17]. So, in the modern Spanish carnival, which undoubtedly experienced the influence of Eastern, Arab culture, we meet with three ships: "Hell", "Purgatory" and "Paradise". It seems to us that the connection with the Sufi ship is obvious here, though it is complicated by the influence of Catholicism. The question remains open about the existence of such representations in the Russian national tradition and about acquaintance with these traditions of Yesenin. In this context, it will not be amiss to recall the folk drama *The Boat*, the legends of Stepan Razin, in which the hero paints a ship on the walls of the prison. Therefore, with a certain degree of certainty, we can talk about Esenin's rootedness in this traditional system of views, about associations coming from Russian folklore, and about a metaphor that is born out of a myth. We find the same image of the ship in Russian embroidery, but in it at the head of the ship we find a female figure. This is due to the female archetype that can be represented, depicted by animals such as a mare (horse), a snake and a bear. Here I want to quote Yesenin's poem "Mare's Ships":

Do not stick the claws azure

From snowstorm cough-stench;

Flies by the neighing of storms

Skulls gold-coniferous garden. [3]

This excerpt from "Mare's Ships" is interesting not only in an implicitly expressed way of a "winged ship" ("neighing storms"; "raking dawn in the forests / oars of severed hands"), but also in the motive of a severed head that naturally occurs in this space-cosmos situation: lyrical hero aware of the responsibility of joining the sacred space. He realizes that after this death will come (the motive of the severed head is the motive of cosmic rebirth), but with the subsequent revival, which is why it is appropriate here to say about the cosmization of the "body", about sacred anthropology:

Beasts, beasts, come to me

To cry anger in the cups of my hands! [3]

Hands are likened to the cupola, the dome of the sky. Thus, the human body is perceived as a world axis. But this is due to the ritual situation - joining to a secret union of mares, at the head of which, of course, is a female figure, a figure of silence. It is no coincidence that the name of the little poem is based on the mare / horse archetype.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Returning to the starting point of Esenin's treatise "The Keys of Mary" on the sacred meaning of embroidery, we take into account the observation of B.A. Rybakov on the image of moose-elk women (animals could vary) on the embroidery placed next to the masts [18] (North Russian embroidery). This episode of embroidery was also cosmic in nature. Based on this, we can conclude that both Yesenin's, Lermontov's and Voloshin's poetry go back to myth, to metaculture, expressed explicitly and to a greater extent

implicitly, that is, through folkloric formulas. The heroes of their works embody the “above-ground” image of the Russian person, the third type - the winged soul, Psyche of Russia. If the heroes of L.N. Tolstoy - earthly, that is, firmly standing on the earth, rooted in natural philosophy, if the heroes of F.M. Dostoevsky - under-embodied heroes, liminal, then the hero of Yesenin is a worldly, star hero (also with V. Khlebnikov, M. Tsvetaeva). But all these three types organize the national cosmos of Russia, are synthesized into the Psyche of the Russian people. Moreover, you must always update this space. Therefore, Russian people do not think the same without absolute memory, which is why Yesenin, using the example of Indian culture, the theory of the transmigration of souls [3], once again reminds us of cosmic renewal, of Russian man as a demiurge, possessor of cosmocratic omnipotence (we borrow this concept from M. Eliade [19]).

The culturological approach, the identification of codes and archetypes of culture in various aspects, which has recently been addressed by philologists, philosophers, and sociologists [20], allows you to take a fresh look at the treatise S.A. Yesenin “The Keys of Mary.” This treatise is of particular interest not only from a historical, literary and philological point of view, but also from philosophical positions, an ontological context.

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