

Figures of Thanatos and Eros in “The Tale of Peter and Fevronia of Murom”: The Experience of Cultural Modeling*

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Abstract—The article discusses the cultural philosophical paradigm of Thanatos - Eros, which manifested itself in the old Russian "Tale of Peter and Fevronia of Murom". The question is raised about the transformation of the folk tradition, about the emergence of ritual reality in the text of the story. The Christian worldview of the era of the creation of this work did not exclude the ideas of mythological and folklore consciousness. The story, chosen as the research material, is unique in its content, since it reflects the processes of transition from the traditional to the “revolutionary” type of culture, which is captured at the level of details and symbols in the text; it reflects socio-cultural transformations. As the main text in the text, the borderline (marginal) situation was chosen - illness and marriage and the complex of motives associated with it (the motive for searching for a narrowed bride, the motive for things of the wife, the motive for snaking, etc.). The methodological basis of the work was the materials of V.Ya. Propp, V.Ya. Petrukhnina, V.M. Zhirmunsky, E.M. Meletinsky, M.B. Plukhanova. The comparative typological, structural-functional and systematic method of text analysis is applied. As a result, the contradiction between the interaction of two cultural traditions is resolved. Ethnographic parallels made it possible to read the work of Old Russian bookishness in a different way; raise the question of the interaction of folklore and literary tradition in theoretical terms.

Keywords—Old Russian literature; Thanatos; Eros; myth; folklore; dialogue of cultures

I. INTRODUCTION

Faces of Thanatos in Russian culture are presented in philosophical, artistic, scientific versions. Thanatos in the Russian national image of the world enters into different paradigmatic relationships - with laughter, irony, fear, love, etc. Mythology, folklore, literature allow us to form a holistic view of the idea of death. The paradigm of Thanatos - Eros, permeating all world cultures, is also characteristic of Russian

folklore, for example, for a fairy tale in which Ivan Tsarevich descends to another kingdom for the sake of his beloved, the things of his bride, thereby overcoming the space of death. By fair remark, T.V. Mordovtseva, “the colorful palette of the faces of Thanatos in the domestic spiritual tradition has been transformed by the power of creative genius into the nature of the culture of death and dying, which serves as the motive for our national identity” [1].

In the articles of philologists, culturologists, philosophers over the past ten years of Russian humanities, there is an active interest in mortal problems [2] [3] [4]. Much attention is paid to the works of the XIX - early XX centuries. In our article, we will talk about the philosophy of love and death in the Old Russian "Tale of Peter and Fevronia of Murom", which is of particular interest, since it is based on a social situation that is not typical of canonical medieval texts: the prince marries a commoner. The originality of the work consists in genre synthesis. On the one hand, there is a strong living tradition, Peter and Fevronia become saints and die on the same day, this also shows high love. After their death, a miracle happens - the holy bodies of Peter and Fevronia lay in the city in the cathedral church of the Most Holy Theotokos, in one coffin, which they themselves commanded to create. On the other hand, we have before us a story with traces of a fairy tale, as indicated by the “miraculous” element: the prince’s feat, his struggle with the serpent and the victory over him with the help of a magic sword, healing the wounds of the conspiracy water of Fevronia, her assistant, magic hare, etc. For these reasons, we will turn to the folklore tradition in a work that will allow us to look at the images of the title characters from different sides.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To solve the tasks of our research, we used the methods of related sciences, among them general scientific methods (observation, analysis, description) and private scientific

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methods: a cultural method of modeling, which involves creating a model of a certain period in the development of culture to identify its most significant features; method of comparative typological analysis, which allows to compare folklore and literary facts and phenomena; method of categorical literary analysis; the method of structural-semantic analysis when considering the images of the main characters of the story; a structural analysis method that allows you to identify the elements of culture and model the relationship between them; hermeneutic or interpretative method.

Extremely indicative of the interaction of folklore and literature is the layer of Old Russian literature, which, at first glance, “denies” the very phenomenon of folklore, is not reconciled with its worldview, value system. It is precisely on this that the opinion of scholars, even the most prominent ones, going by comparing oral art and ancient Russian literature, is often based. So, D.S. Likhachev notes: “Folklore and literature oppose each other not only as two to a certain extent independent systems of genres, but also as two different worldviews, two different artistic methods” [5]. V..P. Adrianova-Peretz also emphasizes the significant difference between these systems: “The problem of the relationship between literature and folklore in Ancient Russia is the problem of correlating two worldviews and two artistic methods, which came close to complete coincidence, then diverged in principle intransigence” [6]. The consideration of this problem within the framework of Old Russian literature seems appropriate, since the question of “borrowings” and “influences”, always raised with respect to classical literature, remains relevant and not resolved with respect to Old Russian literature, which, we note, is much closer (chronologically) to folklore than literature of the XIX - XX centuries. The fusion of pagan and Christian elements is significant for the entire Russian culture, the national worldview [7]. In this regard, the observation of V.Ya. Propp on the interaction of two systems: “Early, first literature is entirely or almost entirely folklore. <...> True, this is not just folklore, but folklore in reflections and refractions. <...> What happens to folklore and literature at this stage of development is full of great importance for understanding the history of spiritual culture in general” [8]. In this article, we are interested in precisely this “refraction” of the folklore tradition in literature and the possible forms of this “refraction”. So, for example, referring to the “Tale of Peter and Fevronia of Murom” of the 16th century, “far from the canon of life” and “close to a folk tale” [9], according to experts in ancient Russian literature, we really find echoes of not only folklore in its traditions, but also the deepest archetypes associated with the female cult. The following details make you pay attention to yourself: Prince Peter is cured of a disease by a woman who “blesses the sticks” that have become large trees in the morning. Turning within the framework of the comparative paradigm, on the one hand, to the Greek, Roman (closest to our culture) traditions, we find in them Demeter, Persephone, Diana and other life-giving goddesses of the Earth, and on the other hand, for example, North Russian embroidery, we meet with embroidered a tree on a towel, which famous ethnographers and folklorists understand through a whole system of encrypted sacred

symbols associated with the Great Goddess, with totem animals: elk, horse, snake, dipper. Moreover, in domestic and foreign literature (in the works of S.N. Zamyatin, A.P. Okladnikov, J. Frezer, R. Graves), the opinion about the sacred connecting role of a woman as a “magical assistant in hunting (the future mistress of animals in developed mythologies), and as ancestors in totemic communities united by kinship with an animal totem” [10].

Researchers of the ornament, North Russian embroidery came to the conclusion that the embroidered towels, especially those that depict the World Tree, make up a whole semiotically significant system, which imprints the image of the world as it seemed to an ancient person [11]. It is impossible to ignore all this, while studying the medieval story, which has caused and still causes a lot of controversy in literary criticism: the dating issue (XV-XVI century), the question of genre nature, the question of the clash and synthesis of two traditions - folk and everyday. So, M.O. Skripil already in the first half of the 20th century wrote about the complex interaction of the literary author’s word with folklore elements in this story; the scientist’s conclusion was as follows: two stories are combined in the story - the legend about the fiery serpent and the wise maiden [12]. This observation alone may prompt researchers to think about the genre nature of the story and the presence, the peculiarities of the transformation of the folk tradition in the text of Old Russian bookishness, as well as the possibility of considering the poetics of the whole work from the point of view of the “ritual” element, ritual reality. The last in her work “The Tale of Peter and Fevronia in the Context of Traditional Ritual Practice” was carried out by Yu.G. Fefelov. The researcher identifies in the story several ritual elements, realities associated with the wedding and agricultural cult [13].

III. RESULTS

So, referring to the text of the story, to the first ritually significant episode, to the killing of a serpent by the prince, we first find one important detail: “And he appeared to her in his natural appearance, and to the people who came to the prince, he was the prince sitting with his wife. In this obsession, a lot of time has elapsed. The wife did not conceal this and told the prince and her husband about everything” [14]. It is important to note that the serpent is in two forms - in the human and the animal, so we can raise the question of the serpent-totem, which contains the female (male) principle, evolution, archetypal modification. It is the comparative-typological method that helps to trace the stadial development of the archetype of the snake and the motives associated with it. The motive of snake-fighting, “snake” symbolism, at different stages of its development and being, underwent changes [15] not for the better - the Snake / snake was perceived negatively at a certain stage of development. If we turn to studies on the culture of West and East V.M. Zhirmunsky, we will see from the observations of the scientist that many motives underwent changes at different stages of their development and existence. The works deal with Germanic epic legends and Russians, as well as Turkic and indirectly many others. Apparently, the Old Russian

literary tradition at certain points in its development entered into a "dispute" with ancient mythological ideas.

The importance of typology, whatever the remoteness of ethnographic and literary parallels, brings us to the connection of serpentine symbolism with cosmogonic myths and cults of ancestors. According to experts, the "masters" (that is, the spirits of nature, the higher world) "often take on a human face when they invade the world of people, usually as wonderful spouses" [10]. "And taking Agrikov's sword, he came to rest in his daughter-in-law. There he saw a snake in the guise of his brother, and, making sure that it was not his brother, but a seducer of snakes, hit him with a sword. And the serpent appeared in its true guise <...> " [14]. Let us note that "at the time of the creation, the first ancestors (demes) appeared in women in such guise, but these events were primarily related to acts of creation," and here folklorists note: "Spirits, whose real appearance is usually serpentine, appear already in texts such as fairy tales close to fairy tales about a wonderful wife" [10]. If the story did not have this motive of kiteboarding, then there would be no motive for a wonderful meeting - the prince with Fevronia. Only after killing the Serpent, being in a near-death state between "here" and "there", Peter joined the sacred knowledge through death (ritually), washing himself with his blood. The Russian heroic epic, epic about Dobryn and the Snake illustrates a complex motive, on the one hand, snake-fighting, and on the other hand, a duel / marriage / familiarization of the hero with the power of the Earth.

Turning to Greek mythology, we find three aspects of the goddess of fertility Artemis: fallow deer, dipper and snake. It is safe to say that these incarnations of the female archetype have gained world cultural distribution, as evidenced by research B. A. Rybakov in the field of Slavic antiquities. "To kiss a snake" meant to join her strength and wisdom. According to M.B. Plukhanova, who considered The Tale of Peter and Fevronia of Murom in the context of the time of creation, this work is filled with details that are ritually marked and consistent. Given this judgment, the plot connected with the Agric sword cannot but go unnoticed. The sword is in an "unusual" place, in the temple: "And he showed him in the altar wall in a niche between two clay plates a lying sword" [14]. A parallel with the West European "Breton" courtesan novel of the 12th century will help clarify the "dark" place with the plot about the sword. On the one hand, it would seem how distant are the secular novel and the old Russian novel, but E.M. Meletinsky in his monograph on the medieval romance of the West and East of the 11th-12th centuries showed that the medieval romance is filled with different mythologies, genetically related to Irish myths, cultural heroes: "All these myths are" subtracted "from extant Evegimerized Irish myths that accepted a kind of pseudo-historical legend about the settlement of Ireland, and from an Irish heroic tale with a mythological background (cycles of Kuhulin, Finn, etc.), of course, with appropriate coverage by comparative material " [19]. Noteworthy is the "Meadow spear, the Nouadou sword and the Fal stone shouting under the feet of the rightful king - their talismans" [19]. In this context, the accuracy of describing the whereabouts of Agrikov's sword in the Old

Russian text is not in doubt and the "bewilderment" about the implausibility of combining the sword with the temple topos disappears, because the sword is between two clay plates and it is intended exclusively for Prince Peter. The warrior must obtain a sword to join the sacred knowledge - the epic world and the most ancient cults that are best preserved in the kenning of the Scaldic poetry, demonstrate this ritual gesture. Such an unexpected and ethnographically distant parallel is necessary due to the fact that the Varangians had a horse cult, adjacent in the ritual sense to the cult of the serpent and a characteristic rite of military initiation, in which the finding / obtaining of a sword was the determining element of the whole action [20]. Projecting all this on the Old Russian text, of course, with certain reservations, it should be said that the literature of the XV-XVII centuries was distinguished by a special worldview, the formation and development of a world outlook with a personal beginning in the value system, according to the A. N. Uzhankov, famous specialist of this culture [21]. Thus, we find the productivity of the typological method, which allows us to better understand the complexity of the interaction of two cultural platforms, Christian and folklore (pagan, mythological), which is based on the "Tale of Peter and Fevronia of Murom."

In this context, the appearance of the theme of love in the Old Russian story, which differs from many works of that time by a pronounced author's beginning, does not seem strange either. Love between a simple girl Fevronia and the prince is not possible from a social point of view, since the characters are not equal to each other. However, the folklore ritual context arising at the time of solving the riddles, the "dark" speech of the wise virgin, first shows the failure of the prince. He must go his own initiation path in order to get himself a "clothing bride", to earn Fevronia's hand. In social terms, according to the laws of that time, this seems absurd, but in the ritual space the laws of wedding ritual are observed. Love in this case takes on a sophisticated character and equalizes Prince Peter and the ordinary girl Fevronia. However, this love is given to the prince only on the "threshold" of existence, in the dying hour, when the hero must make the right choice - not to deceive the girl who healed him.

IV. CONCLUSION

The consistent folkloristic commentary on the most complex "dark" places of the Tale of Peter and Fevronia of Murom and their cultural research, appeal to Western tradition, Greek mythology in the typological plan allows us to see not only saints behind the images of Peter and Fevronia, which is certainly true, but and cultural heroes, their initiation path, genetically related to the aesthetics of a fairy tale. It is in a fairy tale that a cultural hero descends into his "other kingdom" for his beloved, overcoming the space of death, obtains a horse, a magic sword or other object to defeat Chaos, to be reborn in a new quality. Thus, Thanatos is always associated with Eros, as a force reviving and renewing the hero. Also, the Old Russian story is an example of pure love and the union of lovers after their death, which is characteristic of Russian literature as a whole [22]. This important observation allows researchers to further compare

the Russian and Western literary traditions, in which lovers do not reunite after death.

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