

FUNCTIONING OF THE MYTHOLOGICAL PLOT IN THE STORY "KURBAN-ROMANCE" BY I. ABUZYAROV

^aADELA N. NABIULLINA, ^bVENERA R. AMINEVA,
^cKAZBEK K. SULTANOV

^{a,c} Kazan Federal University, 18 Kremlyovskaya street, Kazan
420008, Russian Federation

^b A.M. Gorky Institute of World Literature of Russian Academy
of Sciences, Leninsky Ave, 14, Moskva, Russia, 119991
e-mail: ^aeditor@ores.su, ^bmineva1000@list.ru, ^cglobal@ores.su

Abstract: The works by I. Abuzyarov as an original phenomenon in the modern Russian historical and literary process has not received a scientifically consistent and aesthetically good conceptualization and re-evaluation thus far. In the meantime, the realization of the phenomenon of cultural frontier in the writer's works makes them significant to reveal the fictitious and aesthetic nature of Russian-language prose, understanding its status in relation to the literature of metropolis and mainstream. The concept "sacrifice" is important for I. Abuzyarov who reproduces one cultural codes and deconstructs the other ones. This is a central, dominant theme in his works, most fully realized in the novel "Kurban-Romance". The methodological system for studying the works by I. Abuzyarov from the standpoint of the features of the functioning of mythological story lines in them is based on the theory of transculturalness and the mythopoetic approach to the analysis of literary text.

As a result of the conducted investigation, it has been established that in the novel "Kurban-Romance" the traditional mythological plot about Ibrahim and Ismail becomes an object of deconstruction. The ceremony of offering sacrifice, on the one hand, and victimization of another person, on the other hand, is opposed to self-sacrifice – denying oneself for the sake of the well-being of others. The deconstruction of a traditional mythological narrative is accompanied by the transformation of the semantics of key images of Islamic mythology. Musical allusions and reminiscences, intertextual relations to ancient myths are a way of revealing the logic of events being characteristic for neomythological reality. The results obtained are significant for understanding the originality of the creative method of the writer, the principles of his poetics and style, as well as the tendencies of modern historical and literary process.

Keywords: Russian literature, mythological plot, the ceremony of offering sacrifice, the theme of self-sacrificingness, deconstruction.

1 Introduction

I. Abuzyarov is a modern Russian writer, laureate of numerous awards, whose works have attracted the attention of critics and literary scholars. The article by D. Uffelman, which investigates the post-colonial perception of post-communist reality using the example of I. Abuzyarov's novel "Chenghis-Romance" and analyzes the features of the image of subordinate masculinity under the guise of nomadic culture (Uffelman, 2017; Sulkarnaeva et al 2018). We consider the works by I. Abuzyarov not so much in the context of postcolonial discourse, but rather as a phenomenon of cultural frontiers, literature that is realized in intercultural dialogue.

The writer in his works reproduces and synthesizes certain cultural codes and deconstructs the other ones. From this point of view, the theme of a victim is the central one, dominant in the writer's work, is of particular interest. Self-sacrificingness is one of the key concepts in the human mind, especially in the consciousness that retains its religious backgrounds or is based on settled moral values. As a universal motif, it permeates all art, from myths (Prometheus), biblical and Quranic tales to the heroes of Soviet literature. Variations of this motif are diverse: it comprehends the semantics of the sublimity, and the fateful impending doom of man over it, and its meaninglessness for a free individuality. In Russian literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, unlike the western literature, this motif remains relevant, but, unlike the eastern one, it is problematized (Kurganov, 2001).

2 Methodology

Investigating the fictitious and aesthetic nature of I. Abuzyarov's prose, in whose work different cultural traditions interact, we refer to the theory of transculturalness, which assumes "the state of virtual belonging of one individual to many cultures" (Berry & Epstein, 1999). The conception of the proposed study was influenced by the works by domestic and foreign scholars, covering the analysis of this phenomenon (Tlostanova, 2004; Bhabha, 1994; Meletinsky, 2000). The theoretical and methodological basis of the study are also the works by well-

known scholars (Eliade, 1989), in which the methodology of the mythopoetic analysis of the artistic text is developed. To solve the tasks set, intercultural approaches are expected to be used, the effectiveness of which has been revealed in a number of works (Birova, 2013; Smirnova et al, 2016; Krylov, 2017; Golikova et al, 2017).

3 Results and Discussion

The theme of offering sacrifice in "Kurban-Romance (2006) is exposed on several structural-content levels. Firstly, the ceremony of offering sacrifice, actualizing spiritual and moral values, connected with the Muslim consciousness, is described thoroughly and in detail. The actions of the characters who decided to offer a cow in sacrifice on Kurban Bairam are motivated by a certain idea: "Rabbyam, take this poor sacrifice for poor Marysya, - Vitosh said out loud that we all have said to ourselves many times".

Secondly, the theme of sacrificingness and love becomes the subject of self-awareness of the characters. In the conversation of young people who met in "Music Café" after the ceremony of offering sacrifice, several important aspects of this theme are highlighted: what or who is sacrificed, in the name of what and to whom. Krysy projects the victim's collision onto troubled relations between Stasik, Marysya and Vitusha, and raises a number of questions, which primarily have a moral and psychological meaning and concern the choice that a person makes, sacrificing oneself for the sake of the well-being of others. First Vitosh, then Vitusha, and finally Yunus (or Yუსya) introduce these problems into the religious and philosophical context. Vitosh explains the essence of the feast of sacrifice to Marysya and tells about the readiness of prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ismail to God. For Ganusya, the meaning of the rite of offering sacrifice is that Ibrahim and Ismail elevate the love for God above the love for man. Vitosh sets the sacrifice to God against the sacrifice to man, believing that the latter offends Ibrahim's feat and will not be taken. In response to these words, Yूसya emphasizes that the sacrifice must be performed organically and naturally – "with all of one's heart", without the participation of the intellect reasoning about it, continually – "throughout life", one is not to demand compensation, to come with the readiness at any moment to give up the values being vital for people: "... but only a person who sacrifices wholeheartedly throughout all his life can go over this bridge, thin, like an edge of blade, and get to paradise. And for the sake of the Highest, being ready to sacrifice his own life whether it be life with a beloved woman at any, even at this last minute" These arguments do not contain any objection to Vitosh and go beyond the bounds of such logic, asserting certain high-order truths (Khabibullina et al, 2016; Villalobos Antúnez, 2015).

Thirdly, the theme of sacrifice is revealed in the narrative through the motif of self-sacrifice. The things done by Marysya in the name of the love-mate take the form of self-sacrifice. She sacrifices her professional future for the sake of Stasik's happiness, denying herself the possibility of creative self-realization – the value to be important for her inwardly. In order to meet Stasik, Marysya gets out of hospital and protects him with her selfless love from the attacks of friends in "Music Café".

Comparing Marysya to a holy cow animal begins with the coincidence of the name: milkmaid Maria, "like Mother of God, having come down into the farm directly from Raphael's canvases" [13, p. 9], calls the cow, chosen for ritual killing, Marysya. The cow has "the eyes very black, fathomlessly sad". Marysya's eyes are sad and unfathomable, too. The narrator, observing Stasik, Vitusha and Marysya behave in "Music Café", identifies Marysya with a sacrificial lamb: "And our Marysya <...> our meek sacrificial lamb, whose deaths we tried to avert at the expense of a heifer with a Russian name, meekly smiled only. And her eyes became even sadder". Stasik turns out to be a

kind of supreme deity who accepts sacrifices. It is in this way that he appears in the eyes of both Krysyia and Vitosh: "And this deed of Ibrahim is a reproach to all of us who has forgotten that there is a boundary between who you imagine yourself to be and who you actually are". Then Vitusha rebukes Marysya for her denying everything she has for the sake of the other person.

In "Music Café" Stasik refuses Marysya's request to play the violin and hurts her painfully. The narrator deliberately activates the mythological complex, recalling the legend of Paganini, who, in order "to better play, made the violin strings from the tendons of his beloved girl" The analogy between the trembling of Stasik's musical fingers on the warm neck of the cow at the moment of its slaughter and the trembling of his hands holding "a burning" violin is also not accidental: "I do not know why he refused. <...> frightened, may be, for his reputation as a musician, not having been scared for the human reputation, as he has done many times before. Or his fingers still remembered the trembling and vibration of the cow's neck. And now he felt the same trembling in the neck of the violin, the strings of which with the cord went to Marysya, - who knows?".

Finally, Marysya becomes a victim no longer metaphorically, but in reality, when she together with Vitusha appears to be one of the donors for Stasik who is in a comatose state. The sacrifice, offered by two loving women, is the hardest, since Stasik is doomed to forgetfulness. After seeing the photograph taken at the passing-out concert of the ballet school, in which Marysya and Vitusha, being bosom friends at that time, "on points, in white tutus of small swans", "looked like two fluffs on the mirror-like stage to be blue from the spotlights", he recognizes two angels in them who were descending to him, when he was lying in coma.

Stasik was an inspirer of the idea of offering in Kurban-Bairam. The cow in sacrifice is intended to substitute for the human sacrifice. Marysya's friends, who performed this rite, hoped for her miraculous recovery. However, the story reveals the action of a different logic of events, referring to the model of the oldest ritual and reviving it in all its cruelty - human sacrifice, which takes the form of self-sacrifice. Marysya's and Vitusha's self-sacrificingness is the highest reality, being tragic in its authenticity, that is expressed not in ritual actions, but in their very life practice. The religious ritual of making sacrifice, if not abolished, then recedes before this self-sacrificingness necessary for the continuation of life and the preservation of the inner basis of being.

Substitute of a sacrificial animal for a man is in the mind of the character suffering from "strange amnesia": "It seems they came to help me go over a bridge, thin, like a stretched violin string, and sharp, like a nerve, like a saber blade, to the other side of the river". Both killed women in this case are identified with sacrificial animals, which according to Islamic eschatology are destined to help a person cross the Sirat Bridge. In the second variant of the development of events, the characters' ritual function gives way to their fulfillment in their lives: to preserve, protect, and save the person they love: "Yes, indeed, they, on the contrary, dissuaded me, did not let me go, besetting the way".

Stasik, who discovered for himself at the time of the slaughter of the cow, that "it is so easy to kill", accepts Marysya's and Vitusha's self-sacrifice. He can be unfaithful to this role, only being no longer him. The metaphysical oblivion to which the character is doomed is also a sacrifice: "... The two most beautiful girls of the world loved him, and they did more than love him, they loved him devotedly and wholeheartedly, unfortunately he did not remember their self-sacrificing love". In the very character's opinion, expressed by him in "Music Café", "the sacrifice is more precious the longer it is kept in memory" than that which no one knows about.

White color dominates in the range of colors of the final scenes: "He was sitting in the chair, in the center of a white sterile ward. White as Bialystok in February. In front of him on a plastic table there were white sheets of paper with the numbers and letters". In different cultures different meanings are given to white color.

The novel "Kurban-Romance" actualizes the semantics of white universal for all traditions. It correlates with the psychic state of Stasik, whose entire previous experience of life is "erased". White color symbolizes the original "purity" of man who has become tabula rasa, who, thanks to the selfless and self-sacrificing love of the two women, is given another chance to start everything from scratch - literally, not metaphorically, as for all others (Abuzyarov, 2009).

The theme of self-sacrifice transforms the semantics of one of the key images of Islamic mythology - the Sirat bridge. From the symbol of the "end of the world", organically inscribed in the eschatological problematic and figurative system, it turns into "an internal bridge" and is identified with a sword of Damocles, symbolizing the readiness of one to fall on the sword at any moment for another person. According to Yusha, "in each of us there is a bridge called Sirat, which connects being and non-being, which is also a sword, left overhead". Recalling the conversation in "Music Café", the narrator repeats and concretizes this definition: "In each of us there is an internal bridge of the Sirat; it is at the same time an inner sword, allowing to pass from being into non-being. It is like a sword of Damocles over a throbbing neck. It is closer to us than the jugular vein. It cleaves and hurts into the very heart ...".

Fourthly, the theme of sacrifice is revealed at the level of musical allusions and reminiscences, as well as intertextual links with ancient myths. The hero-narrator enumerates the operas that end with a sacrifice in the name of love: "Traviata", "Rigoletto", "Nabucco", "Iolanta", "Fidelio", etc. Musical allusions perform primarily the identifying function: they reveal the role behavior of the characters and predict their tragic fate. This is the identification of Marysya with Giselle, whose party she danced before illness in the Bialystok Theater, and Vitusha with the Sylphide. "Giselle" and "Sylphide" are romantic works about the tragic meaning of love in human life. In the libretto for the ballet "Giselle", written by T. Gautier on the basis of the Slavic legend about the Wills, written by Heine, Giselle, shaken by Albert's deceit, goes mad and dies, but after death, by continuing to love him, rescues the Wills from revenge. In the libretto for the ballet "Sylphide", based on the fantasy story by Ch. Nodier "Trilby, or the Spirit of Angel", a young man James, charmed with Sylphide, neglects his bride and rushes for a beautiful maiden of air, but trying not to let her go, throws a magic shawl over her and kills her. In the ballet "Giselle" self-sacrificing love and forgiveness are poetized. On the one hand, the comparison of Vitusha with Sylphide emphasizes her alertness, on the other hand, comprehends the prophecy of her tragic death. Musical allusions emphasize the difference between the sacrificingness of Marysya and Vitusha - "free" sacrificingness (according to E. Kurganov's terminology), which is the result of free choice and deeply meaningful movement towards one's destiny, and, therefore, quiet, humble, and forced sacrifice, to which man is doomed by coincidence of circumstances.

Meaningful is the parallel between Stasik and N. Paganini. It does not only point to the musical talent of the poet and his performing skills but also reveals the unrevealed features of his character in the plot. This allusion becomes a kind of key to understanding the mysterious power of Stasik over women loving him. Krysyia utters the words that become prophetic: "When Orpheus was carried away by the music of furies, Eurydice was forced to descend by herself to hell". The mention of Orpheus and Eurydice creates a tragic background of the narrative and anticipates the course of the story, actualizing the presence in the life of the characters of the elemental, irrational, fatal forces that are the expression of that universal law that rules over the happiness and misfortune of people.

4 Summary

Thus, a neo-mythological reality is created in the novel "Kurban-Romance", in which the concept of "sacrifice" is significant. The ritual of sacrifice, actualizing the spiritual and moral values, connected with the Muslim consciousness, is described in a natural way. The theme of sacrifice becomes the subject of self-

awareness of the characters and is contained in the religious-philosophical context. However, the rite of sacrifice, on the one hand, and offering another person in sacrifice, on the other hand, is opposed to self-sacrifice – self-denying for the sake of the well-being of others. Musical allusions and reminiscences, intertextual links with ancient myths perform an identifying function – expose the role behavior of the characters and predict their tragic fate.

5 Conclusions

The traditional mythological story about Ibrahim and Ismail becomes the subject of deconstruction. The story reveals the action of a different logic of events, referring to the model of the oldest ritual and reviving it in all its cruelty - human sacrificial offering, which takes the form of self-sacrifice. The religious ritual of sacrifice is not abolished but not changed before this sacrifice being necessary for the continuation of life and the preservation of the inner basis of being. The deconstruction of the traditional mythological plot implies the transformation of the semantics of key images of Islamic mythology and the actualization of the anticyclical function of musical allusions and reminiscences, intertextual links with ancient myths.

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