

SECTION II SLAVIC LANGUAGES

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THE INTERPRETATION OF MYTHOLOGEMES IN A. PUSHKIN'S WORKS: PSYCHOLINGUISTIC ASPECT

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Abstract

The article highlights the fact that at the present stage of the development of linguistics, linguistic and cultural studies are held at an interdisciplinary level that involves the synthesis of data of ethnolinguistics, cultural linguistics and psycholinguistics as well. Within the framework of the last discipline, the problem of interpreting the text is relevant, in the process of which the highest measure of understanding is realized.

It is worth noticing that the problem, related to the theory of the picture of the world, remains relevant in the works of the linguists of recent years. In Ukraine, such studies are conducted taking into account not only the peculiarities of the ethnic consciousness of both Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking population, but also traditions, rituals, beliefs and mythology.

The aim of the article is to describe at an interdisciplinary level, taking into account the knowledge of folk mythology, as well as the beliefs of the Russians and the Ukrainians, polysemantics of the mythologemes of the Cat and the Mermaid in Pushkin's works. The attention is paid to the author's interpretation of knowledge about mermaids, which is preserved in the memory of the Eastern Slavs. The national peculiarity in the mythological picture of the world of the Russians and the Ukrainians is partially identified. The presented information will contribute to the formation of the most complete 'contents image of the Pushkin's text'.

The authors have used the method of contextual-interpretation analysis and the method of reconstruction of ethnic stereotypes in describing the national features of the mythological picture of the world of the Russians and the Ukrainians.

The results of the research might be useful for linguists when interpreting A. Pushkin's works and researching the national peculiarities of the linguistic picture of the world of different peoples.

Keywords

Psycholinguistics, Cognitive Picture of the World, Linguistic Picture of the World, Mythologeme, Ideologeme, Prologue, Mermaid, Cat.

1. Introduction. Modern Ukrainian and Russian linguistics, as well as the West European ones, solve the common global problem – the modelling of the picture of the world, in other words, the modelling of the picture of knowledge about the world that is peculiar to one or another ethn³. The process of understanding the texts of classical Russian and Ukrainian literature plays an important role in the solution of this problem (in particular, the texts by A. Pushkin that are based on the mythological concepts of the Slavic peoples).

Such concepts as the *cognitive picture of the world* and the *linguistic picture of the world* are clearly dis-

tinguished in linguistics; they are not equal to each other, since the first, cognitive, is immeasurably broader. The study of the conceptual sphere of the nation and their knowledge of the world is possible only through the prism of the linguistic picture of the world, which is represented 'in the form of the meanings of linguistic signs that form the cumulative semantic space of the language'⁴.

Within this framework, the texts of A. Pushkin are an inexhaustible source for studying the linguistic picture of the world of not only the Eastern Slavs, but other Slavs as well. However, without an interpretation of individual lexemes (mythologemes) in the psycho- and ethnolinguistic aspect, understanding the texts of the classic of Russian literature is hardly possible.

Taking into account the fact that the understanding of the term 'ethnolinguistics' is ambiguous⁵, and this discipline studies the language through the prism of mythological representations, which are the part of the semantic space of a language or a common part of the semantics of related languages (in our case – Ukrainian and Russian), the **purpose of the paper** is an analysis of the importance of individual mythologemes in the poetic picture of the world of A. Pushkin.

It is noteworthy that the legacy of Pushkinists is enormous all over the world. American and European

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³ Chornopyskyj 2008, 116

⁴ Gridina 2004, 6

⁵ Selivanova 2010, 163-168

⁶ Bethea 1998; Briggs 1998; Gershenzon 1996; Greenleaf 1994

scholars have paid much attention to the research of A. Pushkin's texts⁶.

Philologists, whose attention is attracted to the study of texts of the oral tradition and who encounter such concepts as 'myth', 'mythologeme', 'archetype', 'ideologeme', 'concept', 'symbol', etc., understand the need for their specification. In such a situation, the objective associated with the choice and definition of terms will be of paramount importance. N. Lysiuk noted that in the scientific studies the concept of 'archetype' has lost its connection with psychology, and the term 'mythologeme', which is common among folklorists and mythologists, is often used in a vague sense⁷. The term, which is given preference to, has a transparent internal form: *mythologeme* (from Greek *Mythos*) is 'a legend, a tradition that appeared in the high antiquity and conveys the notion of the world in a personified form'⁸ and (Greek *Logos*) – 'knowledge, concept, thought'⁹. Thus, the object of our research in this article is the knowledge of the *Mermaid* and the *Cat* as the creatures of the underworld, and this knowledge is preserved in myths, folk representations of the Russians and the Ukrainians.

2. Methodology.

The method of contextual interpretation analysis and the method of reconstruction of ethnic stereotypes are used when describing the national features of the mythological picture of the world of the Russians and the Ukrainians.

3. Results and Discussion.

D. Medrish stated that A. Pushkin as a great poet described the folklore of many peoples more than once. The 'alien' folklore was translated into the literary series through the prism of the native, Russian, and due to this fact, not decreasing its originality, it ceased to be an 'alien' one. In this regard, Pushkin's experience is invaluable: he discovered in the folk art such deposits of beauty, which in the subsequent epochs began to be developed by the efforts of the most diverse artists of the word¹⁰.

The mythologeme *mermaid* occurs in the prologue to the poem "Ruslan and Lyudmila". A. Pushkin is known to have created a romantic poem in the southern period of his work (1820–1824), which became a popular genre of Russian literature in the 1820 – 1830s. According to T. Zueva, it was the romantic poems that were transformed into the famous tales by Alexander Pushkin¹¹.

In the prologue to the poem "Ruslan and Lyudmila" the Pushkin's understanding of a folk fairy tale is reflected. T. Zueva pays the reader's attention to the mosaic structure of the prologue and the fact that the prologue ideologically and thematically is much broader than the poem itself. It is this extraordinary, 'oxymoronic' construction that makes it possible to treat the prologue as an independent work¹². However, the author notes that the composition of the prologue is not an arbitrary collection of fantastic 'shatters', but an artistically organized unity. The movement of pictures is developing successively and only in the sequence that corresponds to the author's logic¹³.

In the Pushkin text of the prologue to the poem "Ruslan and Lyudmila", the mythologeme *mermaid* occurs in one line: '... *Midst branches shines the mermaids' tail...*'¹⁴.

This image is associated with an ancient pagan holiday, which was called *Rusalii* (Ukrainian: *Rusalni tyzhden*, *Rusalna nedilia*, *Rusalni sviatky*, *Rusalni Velykden*, *Rusalni rozghry*, *Rusalnia*, *Rusavni*, *Kostrub*) among the Slavs. *Rusalii* ceased with the holiday of Ivan Kupala Day, and were known to all Slavic peoples as a holiday of transition from spring to summer. This celebration was closely connected with the Greco-Roman holiday of roses (*Rosalia*), which symbolized the beginning of the summer and was also a memorial day.

The *mermaid* is an ambiguous image. In Russian mythology, she was most often portrayed as a young beautiful girl with long hair and fish tail. Mermaids are lovers of music and singing, who attract young men. According to some researchers, such a characteristic was influenced by literary sources, in particular, romantic works of the beginning of the nineteenth century by V. Zhukovskii, A. Pushkin, N. Gogol, M. Lermontov, T. Shevchenko, L. Ukrainka, A. Mitskevich and et al.

In folk representations, recorded in the middle of the nineteenth century, in particular among the inhabitants of Saratov Governorate, mermaids were shaggy, hunchbacked creatures, with a big belly and sharp claws, with a long mane and a large iron hook, which they used in order to catch passers-by. In Vitebsk Governorate, mermaids were dirty, evil and sullen old women with a stick in their hands¹⁵. They were called in different ways: *shutovki* (from Russian 'shut' – devil); *chertovki*; *mertvushki*; in Belorussia – *vodianitsy*, *kupalki*; in Ukraine – *rusavky*, *kupalky*, *vodianytsi*, *loskotukhy*; *mavky*, *navky* (from Ukrainian *nav*, *navi* – the souls of the dead, the dead).

In Ukrainian mythology, mermaids could also be male representatives. In the times of paganism, they were associated with lush vegetation, a field and a crop. This is illustrated by the folk beliefs of the Ukrainians of the Dnieper region, where the names of the mermaids' sisters are preserved: *Ovsianytsia*, *Zhytynytsia*, *Pshenytsia*, *Travnytsia*, *Berezytsia*, *Verbytsia*,

⁷ Lysiuk 2001, 265

⁸ Petrov 1987, 420

⁹ Gridina 2004, 283

¹⁰ Medrish 1987, 71

¹¹ Zueva 1989, 119

¹² Zueva 1989, 18

¹³ Zueva 1989, 20

¹⁴ Pushkin 2012, 224

¹⁵ Madlevska 2006, 343–345

Vyshnytsia, Slyvytsia, Yablunysia, Hrushenytsia, etc. Each of these sisters had responsibilities. For instance, Rosianytsia took care of watering the grass, which was the main food for cows. Our distant ancestors were sure that the power of plants was passed into milk and ensured the health of children. The Ukrainian proverb said: *Rosianytsia feeds with milk*¹⁶.

The peasants believed that on the territory where mermaids ran and had fun, the grass grew thicker and greener, and wheat was more abundant. Mermaids are the keepers of crops. At the same time, they could damage crops by sending storms, torrential rains and hail¹⁷.

Much later, mermaids were associated with those who died unnatural deaths (deadborn or unbaptized children, drowned girls, i.e. with 'wrong' and therefore dangerous dead, who were associated with evil forces – 'the greatest devil'). Christianity could not irrevocably get rid of folk beliefs about this character, so people still celebrate the seventh week after Easter, the *Mermaid week*, which precedes the holiday of the Holy Trinity. The most dangerous day of this week was Thursday, which was called the Mermaid Easter or Dry Thursday, when the mermaids came out of the water ponds, combed their hair, swung on the branches of trees and lured young girls and boys. To protect themselves from the evil creatures, young people had herbs, which possessed a protective force in the folk beliefs. Most frequently those herbs were lovage and wormwood. A special rite of seeing a mermaid off or the funeral of a mermaid was arranged on the last day of the *Mermaid week*. Tearing, burning or abandonment of a stuffed mermaid in the rye fields were widespread during this ritual. According to folk beliefs, these actions contributed to better growth of cereal plants. Sometimes a scarecrow was burned, and the participants of the rite jumped over the fire, poured each other with water to clean themselves of diseases, evil spirits and sorcerers¹⁸.

In the *Mermaid week*, it was forbidden to swim in the water, rinse clothes there, work in the field and go to the forest. The following women's duties, such as spinning, sewing, washing, sweeping the floor, coating the oven, etc., were forbidden as well. People sacrificed bread, honey, pancakes in order to cajole mermaids. In return, mermaids could generously reward with a good harvest of flax, linen or a spinning. In Perm Governorate, it was believed that if you saw how a mermaid combed hair from which sil-

ver was poured out, you could make a fortune. Sharp iron objects, a prayer, a magic circle were protective charms¹⁹.

The rite of the mermaid's seeing off was accompanied by special ritual songs in which it was sung about mermaids sitting on a white birch, catching girls, asking women for linen or clothes and making riddles. Girls often chose their mermaid. Each region had its own peculiarities of this holiday.

Pushkin has a poem "Rusalka" ("The Mermaid") and a homonymous dramatic work. In the poem, the poet conveys folk ideas about mermaids very accurately:

And sudden, light as night-ghost wanders,
A female thence her form uprais'd,
Pale as the snow which winter squanders,
And on the bank herself she plac'd²⁰.

Leaving the water, a mermaid usually combed her long wet hair, nodded to the one who looked at her and beckoned into the water. Only few could avoid such a look. The monk also succumbed to the charms, despite the fact that he prayed diligently. The next night the apparition repeated:

The moon midst clouds is seen to sail,
And once more on the margin resteth
The maiden beautiful and pale.
With head she bow'd, with look she courted,
And kiss'd her hand repeatedly,
Splashed with the water, gaily sported,
And wept and laugh'd like infancy –
She names the monk, with tones heart-urging
Exclaims «O Monk, come, come to me!»
Then sudden midst the waters merging
All, all is in tranquillity²¹.

The poem ends with the death of the hermit:
On the third night the hermit fated
Beside those shores of sorcery,
Sat and the damsel fair awaited,
And dark the woods began to be –
The beams of morn the night mists scatter,
No Monk is seen then, well a day!
And only, only in the water
The lasses view'd his beard of grey²².

In the folk beliefs of the Russians and the Ukrainians, there is some information on how to protect themselves from mermaids on those days of the Mermaid Week, when they came out of the water and hunted, first of all, for beautiful young men, fascinating them with their songs. Having caught someone, mermaids started tickling, often to death, and then dragged him into the water. Sometimes it was said that the field mermaids tickled while the water ones drowned²³.

As it has been mentioned above, mermaids played a positive role in the mythology of not only the Russians and the Ukrainians, but also other Slavs. They came out on the ground so that the peasants' crops bloomed faster. Furthermore, the grain crop was much better at the place where they danced.

¹⁶ Voitovych 2005, 449

¹⁷ Madlevska 2006, 349

¹⁸ Madlevska 2006, 357–358

¹⁹ Madlevska 2006, 355

²⁰ Pushkin 2012, 45

²¹ Pushkin 2012, 46

²² Pushkin 2012, 46

²³ Voitovych 2005, 449–450

However, in the unfinished Pushkin's drama "Rusalka (the Water-Nymph)" this image is associated with negative connotations. Pushkin's "The Songs of the Western Slavs" are based on a similar plot. The prime example is Pushkin's "Ianysh Korolevich". Here, a beautiful maiden, deceived by the prince, rushed to Morava and became a water queen. She gave a birth to her daughter Vodianitsa, who, when meeting her father, spoke of her mother: 'My mother is a queen of water; she rules over all the rivers, over the rivers and over the lakes; she does not only rule the blue sea ...'²⁴.

The action of the Pushkin's dramatic work "Rusalka (the Water-Nymph)" is set on the banks of the Dnieper, in the mill, where the Miller and his beautiful daughter live. The Prince often comes to them and the girl loves him sincerely. Her father does not forbid his only daughter to be a mistress of the Prince, hoping that she will be happy with him. However, the Prince offers the girl to split up because he decides to marry another woman. The Miller's daughter rushes into the river, drowns and turns into a mermaid. At the wedding of the Prince, in the midst of merriment, a voice is heard to be singing about a beautiful maiden: 'Just yesterday a maiden drowned, / And, drowning, cursed her charming lad'²⁵.

One day the Prince does not return to his young wife after hunting. He stayed alone in the forest on the banks of the Dnieper. At night, mermaids come out to the bank in the moonlight. The moon is the sun for the mermaids:

Late at night we sisters gladly
Quit the deep in which we lie,
Rising from the river madly,
Bursting forth to reach the sky;
We can hear each other crying,
Voices ringing through the air,
As we shake our long and drying
Strands of green and dripping hair²⁶.

The Prince recognizes the place where the mill is. Having met an old man who speaks about his 'prophet-daughter'²⁷ and saying that he is not a Miller, but a raven, the Prince thinks that the old man has gone mad.

According to folk beliefs, Pushkin describes the bottom of the Dnieper, where the mermaid's house is located. Like ordinary girls on the ground, they spin near their queen. She orders her mermaids to leave the yarn, since the sun has set:

Have done. Swim up and dance beneath the stars;
Go play, but don't molest a soul tonight –
Don't dare to tickle any passerby,
Or tangle up the nets of fishermen
With weeds and mud, or lure a little child
With tales of fishes to the murky deep²⁸.

Recalling her death, the drowned girl in the likeness of a mermaid conveys the people's notions of herself as a representative of the underworld, which people are afraid on the ground:

It's seven years
Since, mad with grief, I leapt into the stream.
Oh, what a desperate, foolish girl I was!
And deep within the Dnieper I became –
A cold and terrifying water-nymph.
Full seven years have I, each day, made plans
And brooded on the vengeance that I crave²⁹.

As it has been pointed above, Pushkin did not finish this dramatic work, and we do not know what happened to the Prince who reminisced on the river bank, how he was happy here once with the Miller's daughter, who he loved sincerely. His daughter, a little mermaid, went ashore, and the Prince was stunned by her beauty.

In the myths of different peoples of the world, the image of the cat that a man tamed in the Neolithic age was preserved. In ancient Egypt, the cat was elevated to the rank of goddess, who was portrayed as a woman with a cat's head. Later, cats came into prominence in ancient Greece and Rome as attributes of the goddess Diana. The Scandinavians consider cats to be sacred animals of the Goddess of Love. They pull her cart. Cats symbolize the feminine, since they can hunt at night, change the colour of the eyes, i.e. they behave like women. Moreover, they are associated with the dark power of sorcery. The negative attitude towards a black cat is explained by an aggressive attitude toward the female essence (in English the lexeme *cattish* means malicious, sarcastic, tricky, and insidious; it is applied towards women).

In Japan, there is a temple of cats and the Japanese put cat figures at the gate of houses as a symbol of home and cosiness.

The Russians and the Ukrainians have a tradition of letting a cat into a new dwelling firstly³⁰.

In the Russian folklore, *Bayun-Cat*, who lives on a golden pillar, symbolizes the world tree. The world tree is connected with the three-tiered division of the world. When the cat goes down, he sings songs, when he rises up, he tells fairy tales. Connecting the worlds, the cat conveys knowledge of them. He lulls listeners with songs and fairy tales, sometimes even to death. For this reason, it is not easy to cope with such a cat. To overcome this cat, you need to go to the end of the world, taking three caps, pliers and three rods with you. Three miles from the "thirtieth kingdom" the traveller begins to fall sleep, and then he should put on three caps to cope with a nap. The pliers will help

²⁴ Pushkin 1985, 554

²⁵ Falen 2007, 189

²⁶ Falen 2007, 194

²⁷ Falen 2007, 195

²⁸ Falen 2007, 199

²⁹ Falen 2007, 200

³⁰ Istomina 2003, 411–414

to pull the cat off the pillar, and the rods, made from iron, copper and tin, will help to subdue it. Therefore, the cat was associated with the underworld and with evil forces. He served the witch as well³¹.

In the prologue to the Pushkin's poem "Ruslan and Lyudmila", it is the Bayun-Cat who tells tales to the poet:

All breathes of Russ, the Russ of old
There once was I, friends, and the cat
As near him 'neath the oak I sat
And drank of sweet mead at my leisure,
Recounted tales to me.... With pleasure
One that I liked do I recall
And here and now will share with all...³².

In children's folklore (lullabies, riddles, games), a cat is an amazingly gentle and calm animal. In sixty percent of Russian and Ukrainian lullabies, cats are central images. In folk texts they are called: (*Russian*) *kot, kotik, kotok, kotia, kotenka-kotok, kot-kotovich, koshka, kotenok, kiska, kisonka*; (*Ukrainian*) *kit, kit siryi, kit bilyi, kotyky siryi, dva kotyky, kotochok, koty-chok*³³.

In the lullaby songs, certain mythological features of a cat are preserved. In particular, the cat comes to children from a magical land, the overseas, and brings a dream or drowsiness. In folk representations, the cat is a symbol and personification of sleep, which was associated with death. The cat can grab a child by the side of the body and drag it into the forest (into the other world). The magic clew is more frequent in fairy tales. However, it is also common in the Russian and the Ukrainian lullabies. The threads of the clew connect the hero of fairy tales with the other world, where ancestors live. Such ideas are laid down in the mythologeme of the cat, which is present in the Pushkin's text.

4. Conclusions.

The analysis of the semantic space, associated with the mythologemes of the *mermaid* and the *cat* in the context of the picture of the world created by A. Pushkin, has taken into consideration the folk beliefs and myths about these creatures in the Slavonic mythology. Based on the results of this analysis, it can be summarized that: 1. When reading classical literature, the interpretation of the mythologemes in the psycho- and ethnolinguistic aspect helps to comprehend partially the features of the national cognitive picture of the world of the Eastern Slavs and approach one of the most interesting fragments of the linguistic picture of the world, which is connected with mythology. 2. Each mythologeme is polysemantic. In the diversity of the presented semantics, the dualism of meanings stands out clearly: a mermaid with a pejorative connotation is a mythological creature of the underworld, which poses a threat to the life of every person if protection measures are not taken. Positive connotations in the meaning of the mermaid are associated with moisture, which is necessary for a good crop and which remains in the fields these creatures have visited. A cat in mythology is a narrator who can lull or even kill a listener. On the other hand, in popular beliefs, he is a nanny for a child, who can lull, calm and bring sweet dreams to children.

The psycholinguistic aspect, as well as the data of ethnolinguistics, linguistic and cultural studies, are also important for interpreting national symbols, which abound not only in texts of oral folk art, but also in the works of classical Russian and Ukrainian literature. Thus, further research work is supposed to be aimed at the description of symbolic meanings at the interdisciplinary level.

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³¹ Korolev 2005, 261

³² Pushkin 2012, 225–226

³³ Gridina 2004; Tsekhmistruk, 2006

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Анотація

Актуальність статті зумовлена, в першу чергу, тим, що сучасні лінгвістичні дослідження проводяться на міждисциплінарному рівні, який передбачає, зокрема, синтез даних етнолінгвістики, лінгвокультурології, психолінгвістики тощо. В рамках останньої дисципліни актуальною є проблема інтерпретації тексту, в процесі якої і здійснюється найвища міра розуміння. По-друге, актуальною в сучасних лінгвістичних дослідженнях залишається проблема, що пов'язана з теорією загальної картини світу. В Україні такі дослідження проводяться з урахуванням етнічної свідомості як україномовного, так і російськомовного населення. Особлива увага при цьому приділяється традиційним віруванням, обрядам та міфології. Враховуючи вищезазначене, метою даної статті є описання на міждисциплінарному рівні з урахуванням народної міфології, вірувань українців та росіян полісемантики міфологем русалка (мавка) і кіт у поетичних творах О. Пушкіна. Увага звертається на авторські інтерпретації традиційних народних поглядів на русалок, які зберігаються в пам'яті східних слов'ян. Виділяється національна специфіка в міфологічній картині світу російських та українців. Подана інформація буде сприяти формуванню найбільш повного «образу змісту пушкінського тексту». У процесі написання статті автори користувалися методом контекстуально-інтерпретаційного аналізу та методом реконструкції етнічних стереотипів, аналізуючи національні особливості міфологічної картини світу українців і росіян. Результати дослідження можуть бути корисними лінгвістам у процесі інтерпретації текстів А. Пушкіна та при вивченні національної специфіки мовної картини світу слов'янських народів.

Ключові слова

Психолінгвістика, когнітивна картина світу, мовна картина світу, міфологема, ідеологема, пролог, мавка, кіт.