



ARTÍCULOS

UTOPIA Y PRAXIS LATINOAMERICANA. AÑO: 25, n° EXTRA 7, 2020, pp. 417-423
REVISTA INTERNACIONAL DE FILOSOFÍA Y TEORÍA SOCIAL
CESA-FCES-UNIVERSIDAD DEL ZULIA. MARACAIBO-VENEZUELA
ISSN 1316-5216 / ISSN-e: 2477-9555

Reception of Mythological Image of the Bird at Bunin Cycle «The Bird's Shadow»

Recepción de la imagen mitológica del pájaro en el ciclo Bunin «La sombra del pájaro»

Sara MAHBOBZADH

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1428-1870>
sara.mahbub1992@gmail.com
Kazan Federal University. Russia

Liliya Harisovna NASRUTDINOVA

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5406-7636>
Liliya_nasrutdin@msil.ru
Kazan Federal University. Russia

Marzieh YAHYAPOUR

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8195-6909>
myahya@ut.ac.ir
University of Tehran. Iran

Este trabajo está depositado en Zenodo:
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4009776>

RESUMEN

El artículo señala que el interés del escritor en Oriente está en sintonía con el arte típico de las tendencias de la edad de plata sobre los orígenes indoeuropeos de la cultura rusa, que se asocia con reflexiones sobre la esencia de su intermedio (entre Oriente y Occidente). La elección del escritor de una modificación de género inusual - "poema de viaje" - le permite crear una imagen artística de varios niveles de la ciudad oriental. El análisis del ciclo por I.A. Bunin "La sombra del pájaro" da testimonio de la divergencia de su interpretación de la imagen del mítico pájaro Huma con el contexto de la edad de plata rusa y el acercamiento con la tradición oriental.

Palabras clave: I.A. Bunin, literatura persa, mitología, orientalismo, poemas de viaje.

ABSTRACT

The article notes that the writer's interest in the East in tune with the typical art of the silver age trends about the Indo-European origins of Russian culture, which is associated with reflections on the essence of its intermediate (between East and West). The writer's choice of an unusual genre modification - "travel poem" - allows him to create a multi-level artistic image of the eastern city. The analysis of the cycle by I.A. Bunin "The Bird's Shadow" testifies to the divergence of his interpretation of the image of the mythical bird Huma with the context of the Russian Silver age and rapprochement with the Eastern tradition.

Keywords: I.A. Bunin, mythology, orientalism, Persian literature, travel poems.

Recibido: 03-08-2020 • Aceptado: 07-09-2020



INTRODUCTION

The culture of the Silver age, which is characterized by an interest in the first principles of the universe and human existence, actively turns to folklore, archaic, and myths. There is a particularly clear interest in the oldest Slavic myths, which have preserved their connection with Indo-European roots. Explaining this phenomenon, the researcher E.V. Shakhmatova focuses on the fact that in the era of the Silver age, "Russia realized a close relationship with the East..." (Shakhmatova: 2014).

In the life and work of I.A. Bunin, the theme of the East appeared in 1903. The concept of "East" in the writer's work includes countries of the Near and Middle East, such as Iran, Turkey, Palestine, Judea, and Egypt. In 1903-1906, in the cycle "Islam", he refers to Eastern religious images and stories as a starting point for posing the problem of the ways of world culture and civilization. This series also includes the stories "The Death of a Prophet", "In the Land of the Ancestors", "The City of the King of Kings", "Brothers" and poems from 1900-1916. Oriental images and motives are especially significant in the philosophical reflections of the writer about the "intermediate" essence of Russia, which has incorporated the specific features of the West and East. Researcher T.N. Kovaleva writes:

Bunin's poetry impresses with its author's knowledge of history, culture, way of life, and the realities of Eastern countries, as well as with its sharp-eyed details in landscape sketches and rich "Eastern" vocabulary. In his works, Bunin used words from Eastern languages (Arabic, Persian, Turkish), transmitting them as accurately as possible using the transliteration technique (Kovaleva: 2017).

In this regard, it can be argued that the writer's creative heritage is an interesting material for studying the specifics of the dialogue between Russian and Eastern literature and philosophies, and also allows us to pose the problem of the perception of "Alien" (geographical space, language, culture).

METHODS

In our work, we rely on the methodology of comparative analysis of literature and cultures. The theoretical and methodological works of the Kazan school of literary studies are particularly important in this context, since its representatives not only study various aspects of comparative poetics as a means of studying literary dialogues (Yuzmukhametova et al.: 2018). Their research interest is focused on the problem of the specifics of the literary dialogue between Russian and Eastern literature (Galimullin et al.: 2016; Khairullina et al.: 2019). From this point of view, they also realized a comparative analysis of the existence of the same genre in different national literatures (Fakhrutdinova et al.: 2018; Khaybullina et al.: 2019).

For our study, works that reveal various aspects of the reception of the Alien (especially the East) in Russian literature are also important. First of all, these are scientific works in which the opposition "East-West" and "native space-alien space" are studied in Russian literature (Spirchagova et al.: 2018; Bekmetov et al.: 2019). There are also interesting articles in which the nature of the perception of various eastern countries (for example, India (Mrathuzina & Nasrutdinova: 2015), Japan (Spirchagova et al.: 2019)) in Russian literature is analyzed, as well as the understanding by individual Russian writers of the East as a special space and special mentality (Edikhanov & Bekmetov: 2016).

As a methodological basis for the research, we also used articles whose authors addressed the study of the creativity of those Russian writers who, like I.A. Bunin, are characterized by a special autobiographical narrative that brings a lyrical beginning to the literary text (Kolesov et al.: 2018).

RESULTS

We appeal to the story "The bird's shadow", which was written after the second trip of I.A. Bunin to the East in 1907.

It should be noted that the writer repeatedly turned to the genre of travel essay, which by definition dictates the need for direct expression of the author's worldview. Moreover, the tendency to introduce a lyrical beginning to the epic narrative, which is characteristic of the work of I.A. Bunin in general, also penetrates this essentially artistic and documentary genre. A peculiar transformation of the genre canon of the travel essay is taking place, which allowed researchers to define the genre of the cycle "The bird's shadow" as a "travel poem".

The significance of the lyrical beginning allows the author-narrator, starting from the real plot of movement in space and the accompanying change of the "video sequence", to offer the reader the story of the life of the soul and mind of a person. Numerous quotes, reminiscences, and allusions become a kind of "milestones" of this mental journey.

DISCUSSION

In the "travel poem", "The bird's shadow" there is an impressive list of proper names, and this is not only the expected list of historical places and events in the travel essay but also references to literary and mythological primary sources. One of the significant literary sources of the cycle to which the writer refers the reader is "Tazkirat", but not all quotes are given from this work; there are also fragments from other books of Saadi, such as "Bustan" and "Gulistan".

According to the narrator, the "Tazkirat" of the great Persian poet Saadi is a source of inspiration, awakening to thought: "On the way with me is Tezkirat Saadi..." (Bunin: 1987). In other words, the writer directly informs about the introduction of the Iranian poet's heritage into the structure of the work of art. This allows I.A. Bunin not only gives the work an oriental flavor, a special atmosphere but also to clarify for the reader the basic concept of the text. As is well known, the Persian Sufi poet and thinker in his poems depict the world of truth, goodness, and justice talks about love, youth, and the rules of communication.

The first chapter of "The bird's shadow" describes the narrator's journey to Istanbul, while the rest describes the ancient capital itself. The author portrays the city in such a subtle way that the reader perceives it not only visually, but also affecting sound emission and smells.

To show the reader the beauty and grandeur of the past, I.A. Bunin uses the ornamentation of the narrative. I.P. Vantenkov points out that the cycle uses "a contrasting juxtaposition of the majestic past and the miserable present," and suggests that "using this comparison, Bunin validates their ideas about reality and the existing world order" (Vantenkov: 1947).

Thinking about the meaning of the name of the cycle, the researcher puts forward the version that the title contains a kind of metaphor that reflects the author's attitude to what he saw and what he understood: "The shadow of a bird is a shadow of a majestic past that has already gone but left its mark in the memory of mankind." (Vantenkov: 1947).

We note, however, that the writer calls Turkey a country that is not just in the "shadow" of its great past, but which, according to Saadi, has the shadow of Huma. In this regard, it is necessary to turn to the semantics of this mythological image.

The writers and poets of the Silver Age often turned to the image of this sacred bird, which in importance in Persian culture and literature can be compared with the Phoenix in Egyptian and Greek mythology and the Dragon in ancient China. Significantly, the word "huma" in the Persian language means simply - "mythical bird", without individualization.

In General, the images of magic birds, as noted in the encyclopedia "Myths and legends of the peoples of the world", "are associated with many significant life situations, rituals, spells and other manifestations of a national-specific worldview, which are unconditionally reflected in the language, more precisely in linguistic culture, of any nation" (Tokarev: 1991). Another explanation of this interest is proposed by A.N. Afanasyev: "the bird by peoples of Aryan origin understood as rapid atmospheric phenomena to which the properties of these animals were attributed. At the same time, mythical representations borrowed from natural phenomena were transferred to the birds themselves" (Afanasyev: 2008).

Researcher T.S. Pechagina considers it possible to divide all images of birds in Slavic mythology into three groups. The first group includes magical and mythical birds that have some exceptional abilities, such as the gift of foresight, the ability to bring people happiness and trouble. The second type is the fairy birds (for example, the Firebird). "The third type includes all birds that do not carry anything unusual in their appearance, exist in the real world. For example, a raven, a blackbird, a swan. Representatives of this group also have magical abilities, but most often they are companions of fairy-tale characters: Baba Yaga and Koshchei Immortal" (Pechagina: 2014).

Huma (Gamayun), undoubtedly, belongs to the first category of mythical birds, since it is primarily a prophetic bird. It is interesting that, according to studies of ancient Russian literature, initially the semantics of this image was associated with the category of the miraculous (Tadevosyan: 2014).

Modern Russian language mythological dictionaries note a negative connotation in the image of this mythical bird: "Its prophecies are available to a selected group of people, and its appearance can cause deadly elements" (Shuklin: 2001). In the dictionary "Culturology" it is noted that even in the days of the existence of folklore, "Flight of Gamayun is often accompanied by a deadly storm approaching from the east".

And in the literature of the Silver age, Gamayun appears as the source of tragic prophecies, as, for example, in the poem by A. Blok "Gamayun, the prophetic bird". And in the poem by A. Akhmatova "I am deadly for those who are gender and young..." in the opening and final lines, Gamayun appears as a "bird of sadness". This literary series can be continued.

Perhaps the specifics of the perception of this mythological image in the era of the silver age was influenced by the V.M. Vasnetsov's painting "Gamayun" presented in 1899 at the exhibition at the Academy of arts, which depicts a black-winged bird with a "darkly beautiful" mournful, anxious face.

However, this interpretation of the image of the Gamayun bird in Russian literature is still somewhat unexpected, given that in Indo-European mythology, this image has a completely different meaning. Thus, in ancient Iranian mythology, Huma is a bird of joy.

Even the etymology of the word Gamayun, as noted by O. Trubachev, is associated with the "young Avestan hu-māiia – "skillful, clever, miraculous" (Trubachev: 2005). There is also a version that the word Huma is a combination of two Avestan words Hu, which means creator/maker and ma – the first being of all things, that is, the word Huma means Creator of the Universe.

That is why in the Iranian and Arabic texts, Huma is a magical, prophetic bird that makes the person king, when casts shadow on him. In the ancient literature of Iran, it is said that when a king dies without an heir, people gather in an open area, and if Huma flew over someone's head or threw a shadow on him, then he became the ruler. It is not surprising that the "Huma (Humayun)" was used as an address to sovereigns in the East. T.D. Tadevosyan reminds that Russian tsars in letters to the Turkish sultans and Iranian shahs called them Gamayun (Tadevosyan: 2014). The parallel between the images of the bird and the ruler is also found in the first chapter of Bustan, where Saadi reflects on the rule of Atabak Abu Bakr.

In Persian literature, Huma is a symbol of bliss, and in the poems of many famous Persian poets; this bird appears as a bird of happiness, a symbol of magnificence and glory. Moreover, the most famous Persian poet Shamsuddin Muhammad Hafiz Shirazi compares the shadow of a loved one with the shadow of a bird Huma and sees his happiness in the fact that the beloved looked at him.

It should be noted that the images of the Huma as a blessed bird and owl as a sinister are known in Persian literature. In Russian literature, it was as if a kind of "imposition of meanings" of images of mythological

birds occurred, because, as we know, many "prophet" birds in Slavic mythology predict exactly the coming troubles and sorrows (for example, owls, crows). Therefore, the image of the Gamayun bird takes on a tragic meaning.

Also, let us assume that interest in the East during the Silver Age was not limited only to interest in Persian mythology and literature. Perhaps the authors knew that in the east of Iran, the Huma bird lives, which looks like a horned owl and feeds on bones.

CONCLUSION

The above observations allow us to conclude that the "travel poem" by I.A. Bunin "The bird's shadow" reflects the Persian understanding of the image of the bird Gamayun. The writer notes that it is "a legendary bird and that its shadow brings royalty and immortality to everything it falls on" (Bunin: 1987), and remembers that Saadi, whose legacy he often refers to in his essay, once wrote: "I wanted the broad-winged Huma to light up my bleak house with joy!"

In the East, the concept and meaning of shadow are quite different from what exists in the West, where the sunlight is not so sharp and the shadow is not so distinct. "Because of these optical effects that surround us, Europeans, every day and everywhere, it is more difficult for us to separate light from shadow and evil from good in our souls" (Bunin: 1987), - the narrator reflects in the story of I.A. Bunin. In Islam, the world is simply and completely divided into sun and shadow. Without this sharp division of the world, it is impossible to understand any of the Eastern religions. The shadow of the Eastern people has a sacred meaning: the shadow is a priceless gift because even without water, a person will live longer in the summer than without a saving shadow.

From this point of view, it is interesting to trace the history of the choice of the title of the book: initially, the essays were called "Temple of the sun", but finally the cycle was named after the title of the first essay – "The bird's shadow".

Thus, the eastern "travel poems" I.A. Bunin has an oriental character not only due to the attention of the author-narrator, not only due to the constant mental dialogue with Saadi but also because he managed to comprehend and reproduce in his work the worldview characteristic of this culture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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BIODATA

Sara MAHBOBZADH: born in 1992. In 2014, she graduated from the undergraduate program of Tehran University with a degree in Russian Language and Literature. In 2016, he graduated from Tehran University with a degree in Russian Literature. The theme of the master's thesis: "Literature of Russian and Persian abroad (on the example of works by contemporary writers of Russia and Iran)." Post-graduate student of the 2nd year of study at the Department of Russian and Foreign Literature of IFMK KFU. Research interests: literature of the Russian foreign countries, modern Russian literature, modern Persian literature.

Liliya Harisovna NASRUTDINOVA: born in 1972, candidate of philological sciences. In 1995 she graduated from the Faculty of Philology of Kazan State University with a degree in Russian Language and Literature (Qualification: Philologist. Teacher of Russian Language and Literature). In 1998 - graduate school at the Department of Russian and Foreign Literature of KSU. In 1999 she defended her thesis on the topic "" New Realism "in Russian prose of the 1980-90s (the concept of man and the world)," Associate Professor, Department of Russian and Foreign Literature, IFMK KFU. Research interests: literature of the Russian foreign countries, modern Russian literature, Russian children's literature.

Marzieh YAHYAPOUR: born in 1958, candidate of philological sciences. In 1989 she graduated from the undergraduate program of Tehran University with a degree in Russian Language and Literature. In 1993, he graduated from the Department of History of Russian Literature of the 19th Century at Moscow State University. In 1997 - graduate school at the Department of History of Russian Literature of the 19th Century of Moscow State University. The theme of the dissertation: "Poetics of the novel by L.N. Tolstoy "Anna Karenina" (in the aspect of the religious and moral views of the writer). " Professor, Department of Russian Language and Literature, Tehran University (Iran). Research interests: literary criticism, pedagogy, methods of teaching RCTs, cultural studies and translation studies.