# On the Question of the Definition of the Concept of Myth in Literary Criticism

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ABSTRACT

*This article discusses the analysis of the variability of scientists' points of view on the problem of myth definition, with the identification of its basic basis, definition and functional significance. In this regard, such concepts as mythological chronotope, archetype, mythologeme, mytheme and motive become important.*

**Keywords**: Myth, mythological chronotope, archetype, mythologeme, mytheme and motif.

INTRODUCTION

Interest in myth-making in the work of modern writers is not an accidental phenomenon. The interpretation of the very concept of myth in modern literary criticism has a plurality of definitions. The myth is also considered in the context of the basis of being; and as a cultural universal and categorical structure of consciousness. We intend to analyze the variability of scientists' points of view on the problem of myth definition, with the identification of its basic basis, definition and functional significance.

Considering the myth as a cultural universality, many researchers argue that it "performs a purely practical function,

maintaining the traditions and continuity of tribal culture by referring to the supernatural reality of prehistoric events. Myth codifies thought, strengthens morality, offers certain rules of conduct and sanctions rituals, rationalizes and justifies social institutions" (Meletinsky 1976: 37). Of course, a myth is not just a story told or a narrative that has allegorical, symbolic, etc. meaning; the myth is experienced by the archaic consciousness as a kind of oral "holy scripture," as a kind of reality that influences the fate of the world and people" (Losev 1990: 38).

The structuralist concept of myth played a big role in defining myth as a categorical structure of consciousness. Its analysis is based on the use of structural analysis and the ideas of psychoanalysis. According to the ideas of structuralism, myth can be considered as a sign system that affects the category of the unconscious, which is a universal structure of the spiritual sphere.

Shkalina G.E. analyzing the myth as a structure of being, defines it as "a holistic practical reality and the basis of the life of communities through a more or less systematic connection of the rules of behavior that relate to the customs of private and public life, social order, nature, lifestyle" (Shkalina 2014: 13).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Studying modern interpretations of myth, one cannot but mention the fundamental concept of myth, which was developed by A. F. Losev in his writings of the 1920s. The central place in the scientist's reflections was occupied by the question of the relationship between the word and myth. Losev gives the following definition of myth: myth is such a dialectically necessary category of consciousness and being, which is given as a material-life reality of subject-object, structurally executed (in a certain image) mutual communication, where life, estranged from isolated-abstract objectivity, is symbolically translated into pre-reflective – instinctive, intuitively understood smart-energy face. He further clarifies that "myth is neither a scheme nor an allegory, but a symbol. …A symbol is such a thing that means

the very thing that it is in essence…" (Losev 1990: 148). Emphasizing the verbal nature of the myth, A. Losev writes that the myth "is not an invention or fiction, but a dialectically necessary category of consciousness" (Losev 1990: 567). He deduced the "dialectical formula of myth," which includes four members: 1) personality 2) history 3) miracle 4) word. Combining all four components into one definition, Losev A. comes to the conclusion that a myth is a "detailed magical name" (p. 164).

This concept is consonant with the point of view of F. Kh. Kesady, who believes that myths, being the product of the collective creativity of the people, like the heroic epos, legends, fairy tales, are the work of folk fantasy. The history of the people's worldview does not require the presence of an author and becomes the basis of a myth. F. H. Cassidy claims that: "Mythology ... is a specific worldview in ancient times. It reflects the views of primitive people on the phenomena of nature and life, the beginnings of scientific knowledge, the religious and moral ideas that dominated the tribal community, and the artistic and aesthetic feelings of the people at the dawn of its history. Fiction, faith and knowledge are intertwined in myth, but the essence of myth is not reduced to any of them" [4, p.39]. This position is confirmed by a clear conclusion that "myth is not the original form of science or philosophy, but a special kind of attitude, a specific, figurative, sensual representation of natural phenomena and social life, the most ancient form of social consciousness" (Cassidy 1972: 41).

The concept of V. M. Pivoev is based on the assertion that myth is not just an ancient idea of the world, but a way of mastering the world. Ancient myths are functionally and ideologically reinterpreted and, in essence, turn into artistic images, becoming stable stereotypes of everyday mass consciousness. Lotman Yu., reflecting on the world, identifies two aspects of the relationship between myth and literary fiction: evolutionary and typological. "The evolutionary aspect provides for the idea of myth as a certain stage of consciousness, historically preceding the emergence of written literature. Literature, from this point of view, deals only with destroyed,

relic forms of myth and actively contributes to this destruction itself. The typological aspect implies that mythology and written literature are compared as two fundamentally different ways of seeing and describing the world, existing simultaneously and in interaction, and only to varying degrees manifested themselves in certain epochs" (Lotman, Mints & Meletinsky 1980: 220).

Consequently, it is legitimate to define a myth as a special way of consciousness, which is formed on the basis of a certain type of thinking and is "a means of conceptualizing the world - what is around a person and in himself" (Lotman, Mints & Meletinsky 1980: 221).

M. Eliade connects mythological thinking with one of the ways to regulate social life: "Being real sacred, myth becomes typical, and therefore repetitive, as it is a model and, to some extent, justification for all human actions.

In other words, myth is the true story of what happened at the beginning of time and provides a pattern for human behavior. Copying the typical actions of a god or a mystical hero, or simply recounting their adventures in detail, a person of an archaic society separates himself from worldly time and magically finds himself again in the Great Sacred Time" (Medvedeva 1984: 22).

In other words, the myth is considered as a significant means of organizing and comprehending the surrounding reality by a person.

THEM. Dyakonov notes that "myth is not a symbol, not an allegory, but an emotionally colored event-based understanding of the phenomena of the world. But myth is also an object of faith" (Dyakonov 1990: 84). Understanding the world with the help of myth is associated with a special way of thinking, which I. P. Weinberg defines it as follows: "... this thinking is subject-sensory, figurative, characterized by a weak development of abstract concepts, slowness, difficulty in developing such concepts and words expressing them" (Weinberg 1986: 46).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mironenko E. A. in the book *Theory and History of Literature: Problems of Folklorism and Mythmaking* identifies three stages of the penetration of myth into literature (the first connects literature with mythology genetically, and the subsequent ones – typologically): – an allegory, for Plato – a philosophical symbol, for Aristotle – a plot), involves the study, interpretation of mythological motifs and plots in accordance with the peculiarities of the artist's thinking, his worldview and attitude. 2) Myth-making, which began with the game of traditional images, is manifested in the creation of images, situations that acquire the character of archetypal. 3) The neo-mythologism of the 20th century implies a holistic exploration of the world as a myth, as a text, the creation of a mythological model of the world. The function of myth in literature is that it is a structuring tool, i.e. artistic approach. According to S. M. Telegin, this technique allows you to systematize the work, since the myth is used as a "frame," "matrix," i.e. means of holding material. N. Medvedeva defines the term "myth as the stylistic dominant of works ... Myth, considered from this point of view, is understood as a category of formal content, as a phenomenon of style" (1984: 72). She proposes to distinguish between particular manifestations of mythologism, based on the level of their implementation in the text. Thus, she singles out two stylistic categories of different levels: myth-image (at the level of the system of characters, object figurativeness and language imagery) and myth-situation (at the plot level).

In addition, N. G. Medvedeva in her work "Myth as a form of artistic convention" highlights such ways of functioning of the myth in a literary text as

1. the use of traditional mythological parallels or integral plots. Heroes may act in a different setting, in a different time, have different names, but the situation remains unchanged.
2. works in which a well-known mythological plot is creatively continued, conjectured.
3. the so-called "author's" myths, in which the symbolic model of the world is created by analogy with mythopoetic representations or structural features of the myth. Here, in the

foreground of the narrative are the events and problems of the present.

In our opinion, it is not the myth itself that is expressed at the level of a literary text, but its artistic embodiment. Mythological images, motifs and plots are generalized artistic concepts through which the myth is realized in the work. In this regard, such concepts as the mythological chronotope, archetype, mythologeme, mytheme and motive become important. An archetype is an unconscious reproduction of mythological images, primary ideas, principles (expressed in images and symbols) that underlie human thinking, including the national worldview of an ethnos. Archetypes are not once and for all immutable data, they are transformed under the influence of the individual being of the individual and the people.

Mythologeme is the conscious use by the author in his work of any motive, plot or image taken from mythology, an integral element of myth, a similar, recurring theme in the myths of different peoples.

Mythological chronotope – mythological, unreal, not specified properties of time and space. Since the cycle is in the center of the mythological picture of the world, the mythological chronotope is characterized by cyclicity, bipolarity, which is expressed in interconnected spatial and temporal oppositions.

Motive – this term denotes the most significant "supporting" artistic techniques and means repeated in the work or in the entire work of the writer. The motif is defined as "the simplest, indivisible unit of narration, a repetitive schematic formula that underlies plots, a universal transhistorical element of the poetics of a work of literature, either self-generating in the literatures of different peoples of the world, or, along with wandering plots, wandering from one national system of literature to another in the result of cultural interaction between peoples" (Lotman 1980: 4). In myth and folklore, motifs function as a combination of invariant and variants, transferred to a literary text through their various combinations, depending on the author's intention.

Thus, speaking of a myth, three main meanings can be distinguished: 1) a specific form of thinking 2) a word with figurative content ("word-myth") 3) a form of poetic creativity

Myth is a systematized, universal form of social consciousness and a spiritual and practical way of mastering the world. The mythological principle is not reduced to mythological themes, but arises in the process of close interaction between the mythological tradition and individual author's meanings using archetypal ideas to actual historical, social, psychological, and everyday situations.The author's thinking is superimposed on the mythological, expressed through symbols ("the word-myth"). And thus a new myth is born, which may differ from its original source.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the presented definitions of the myth testifies to the ambiguity of reading, the depth of content content and the scientific desire to comprehend it in a new way in the most holistic and multilateral way in real complexity.

Thus, we can draw the following conclusion: an important dominant of mythological thinking is that it works not with the help of logical connections and rational thinking, but on the principle of associations, similarities and irrational thinking.

Consequently, the main characteristics of the myth presented in the studies are not just due to these features of mythological thinking, but also allow us to see the interrelationship of key provisions, such as: – the sacralization of the mythical "time of creation," in which lies the cause of the established world order (Eliade);

- universal animation and personalization (Losev);
- close connection with the ritual;
- cyclic model of time;
- metaphorical nature;
- symbolic meaning (Meletinsky).

Mythological consciousness, changing the strength of manifestation and vectors of influence on social processes, accompanies humanity throughout its history. The key ability of the myth to maintain its viability and effectiveness is present in various social and cultural phenomena of modern society. In the modern dynamic era, in the mosaic world of multimedia information technologies, the myth allows you to harmoniously fit a person into any contradictory situation, while maintaining its internal integrity and the integrity of the perceived being.

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