

Gender Symbolism in the Cycle "Faina" by Alexander Blok¹

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the consideration of the gender symbolism of the cycle of Alexander Blok "Faina". Despite the fact that the work of the largest Russian poet has attracted the attention of researchers for more than a dozen years, you can still find incompletely explored areas of his poetry. These include one of the cycles of the second volume of Fain's block lyrics. It was he who became the material of research. The focus is on the gender aspect of the motivational structure of the cycle. Through the prism of a gender approach, literary criticism examines images-symbols of fire (the Dionysian basis of the world) and light (the Apollonian constructive principle) and their possible modifications that help to illuminate one of the stages of the Blok meta-plot. When developing the team of the creative interest of A. Blok, the main methods were the historical and literary method that helps to identify the existing relationships within the lyric cycle, as well as the analysis of the mythopoetic level of the poet's lyric texts, which made it possible to read symbolic images through the prism of gender. It is concluded that the complexity of the interaction of the feminine self and their relationship with the lyrical hero is explained by the peculiarity of the lyrical plot of the cycle, on the one hand, which becomes the logical result of the development of the meta-plot of the second book as a whole, on the other, which receives a psychoanalytic justification associated with a love triangle A.A. Block - A. Bely - L.D. Mendeleva and relations A.A. Block with N.N. Volokhova.

Keywords: Russian Poetry; Alexander Blok; "Faina"; Gender Symbolism; Motive Structure.

1. Introduction

In 1916, the first version of structuring the lyrics of A. Blok appeared, the foundation of which was laid by the poet himself, having created the draft of the first collection of his works and dividing all his work into three books. Each book has a

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clear chronological framework, indicating the stages of the poet's spiritual evolution: I - (1898 - 1904) - the period when Blok became acquainted with the Symbolists, his participation in the circle of Argonauts; II - (1904 - 1908) - the heyday of the poetry of symbolism; III - (1907 - 1916) - the transformation of symbolist aesthetics. Not everything written by the poet was included in the canonical text of the "humanization" trilogy; the basic principle for selecting works was their correspondence to the symbolic meta-plot of the "Block text".

With regard to A. Blok's work, the myth of the path becomes one of the main ways of realizing the idea of "humanization". Mintz (1999) builds the following model for the development of this myth in the context of the poet's entire trilogy: "a) to the hero who "knew the High" in his youth, the Soul of the world is, in particular, in the obligatory "glow" environment or directly in the guise of "Virgin, Dawn <italics author - A.A., T.B., Yu.D.>, Cupids"; the hero is "illuminated" "Her" by light; b) in the world of the earth inferno, the beautiful "dawn" turns into "life a disastrous fire", into an evil "fire", the "bonfire" of demonic passion; the hero burns in the fire of passions; c) the burned one turns into "coal" (becoming "charred", with "charred face", with "burnt mouth") or *ashes* (becoming "incinerated"); he is a living dead waiting for "eternal night"; d) but the hero's story may not end there; dead in the "terrible world" or "like a mole" "buried in the ground", buried in its depths, "coal" becomes "diamond" <...> "Diamond", "black diamond" <...> wait an hour when a pickaxe "sings in the mountains" and is transfigured into the light" (Mintz, 1999, p. 543).

Despite the fact that the work of the largest Russian poet has attracted the attention of researchers for more than a dozen years, you can still find incompletely explored areas of his poetry. These include one of the cycles of the second volume of Blok's lyrics. It was he who became the material of research.

The focus is on the gender aspect of the motivational structure of the cycle. Through the prism of a gender approach, literary criticism examines images-symbols of fire (the Dionysian basis of the world) and light (the Apollonian constructive principle) and their possible modifications that help to illuminate one of the stages of the Blok meta-plot.

2. Methods

This article continues the authors' studies in a gender approach to the study of literary texts (Afanasev & Breeva, 2016; Afanasev & Breeva, 2016). When developing the problem of creativity of A. Blok, the main methods of the group were the historical and literary method, which helps to identify the existing relationships within the lyrical cycle (see, for example: Gaynutdinova et al., 2018; Safarova et al., 2016; Gaynutdinova et al., 2018; Radhy, 2019), as well as the analysis of the mythopoetic level of the poet's lyrical texts, which allowed to read symbolic images through the prism of gender (Shevchenko & Nesmelova, 2015; Ahmadi, et al., 2014).

3. Results

The lyrical plot of Faina, summarizing the entire symbolism of the second volume, reveals the mystery essence of the element *of the element* <further everywhere - italics ours - AA, TB, Yu.D.> - the key symbol of this book - polarization of light and fire motive series, each of which represents the embodiment of one of the initials of being (*fire* - the Dionysian foundation of the world, *light* - the Apollonian constructive principle) and at the same time exposes the intimate-personal level of expression of existential meanings (*fire* accompanies the set of hypostases retirement homes image light manner correlated with lyrical hero). It is concluded that the complexity of the interaction of the feminine self and their relationship with the lyrical hero is explained by the peculiarity of the lyrical plot of the cycle, on the one hand, which becomes the logical result of the development of the meta-plot of the second book as a whole, on the other, which receives a psychoanalytic justification associated with a love triangle A.A. Block. A. Bely. L.D. Mendeleev and Blok's relations with N.N. Volokhova; therefore, unlike the cycle "City", the cosmogonic level of the lyrical plot, represented here by the motivational complex *fire* and *light*, loses its dominant status and appears indirectly through the process of initiation of the lyrical hero.

The semantic content of the initiality becomes the realization of the mythologem of dying – resurrection as the essential basis *of the element*. In this sense, "Faina" demonstrates the result of the development of Dionysianism *of the element*, activating the "soteriological function of the transformation of the soul - in all cults, initiation is symbolized by "swallowing and birth". Here the serpent (or the monster, the whale of Jonah) represents that "womb" into which the hero plunges in order to subsequently be regenerated from the beloved mother" (Hanzen-Leve, 2003, p. 122). The process of initiation of the lyrical hero is embodied in the stages of love experience, which ensure that the lyrical "I" is included in the mythology of dying and resurrection: the first stage is determined by the domination of the absorption motive, the second is formed by the duel / service model, the third is revealed as liberation.

In addition, initialism is manifested in the special subjective-objective nature of the lyrical hero, a demonstration of which is the alternate activation of his active and passive role in the mystery of being. The duality of the position is most clearly revealed through the dynamics of the functioning of the symbolic image of the "torch-cup / goblet-torch", which serves as an expression of the creative activity of the lyrical hero in the implementation of the mystery action and at the same time defining it as the recipient of the gift.

The constructive, constructing hypostasis of the lyrical "I" in the series "Faina" is ensured by its sacrificial role in the mystery of being, the sacrifice of the position of the lyrical hero is associated with his introduction to the general Dionysian nature of life, expressed by the female paradigm of images, the result is the

appearance of a constant state of burning, a symbolic embodiment which are images of a bonfire / fire and a crucifix / combustion situation.

4. Discussion

As rightly noted Z.G. Mints and Yu.M. Lotman that in the second half of the 1900s, the images of the “bonfire” and the “cross” came together in Blok's work (cf. euphonic repetition: *cstr - crst*). The connection of the images of “fire” and “bonfire” with the motive of voluntary sacrificial death is revealed and how their connection with the theme of the death of the revolutionary: “Only in the memory of the cheerful / Somewhere *candle* flashed. / And they passed, with a heavy foot / A warm body trampling ... (Block, 1971, p. 52) - and then - as itself the burning of the Old Believers ("Song of Fate"). At the same time, the signs of sacrifice and passivity do not coincide, but are contrasted: the songs of the self-immolators carry the "message of *burning* Christ" ... The self-immolation bonfire for the Bloc becomes both a symbol and a national form of rebellion and a national form of crucifixion (a folk version of Christian ethics), and the image of a person burning himself, synthesizes a rebel and Christ. Later (the end of the 1900s - 1910s), this idea was transformed into the affirmation of the human right to burn oneself in the “fire of life”, into understanding of such death as revenge, protest. As noted by Yu.M. Lotman “because in the lyrics of a mature Blok the meaning of symbols is revealed not only in the immediate context (part of the text, text), but also in contexts much wider (cycle, volume, in the limit - all creativity), to the extent and each specific mention of “lights”, “Fires”, etc. potentially includes all the above values” (Lotman, 1996, p. 674). The possibility of connecting the image of Russia to the female paradigm was demonstrated in the series “Various Poems”; in “Faina” this is evidenced by the first work of the series “Autumn Love” - “When the leaves are damp and rusty ...” and the eighth part from the cycle “Spell of Fire and Darkness” - “Oh, that I have a sunset blush ...”.

5. Summary

The duality of the position of the lyrical hero in the common mystery of being is determined by the formal restoration in "Fain" of a structure of the world similar to "Poems about the Beautiful Lady", the basis of which was the diversity of the lyrical hero and heroine, which could be overcome only if the heroine descended into the earthly world, the relationship between them fit into the plot of the ministry, etc. However, the world image of “Poems about the Beautiful Lady” is superimposed on the model of the world characteristic of previous cycles of the second volume, first of all, on the model of “world - theater”, which contributes to the complication of the general picture of the world. The diversity of heroes is now determined by the dominance of the symbolism of turnaround, which is introduced by the thematic inclusion of theatrical motifs and the special structure of the female image, combining the stable hypostasis of the *star* (vertical axis) with the multiplicity of attributes of

Egyptian mythology, which forms the hypostasis of the *fire snake* (horizontal axis). In General, the set of stable symbolic characters, creating a female figurative series (star ("I'm in the earthly world came to the Lodge...", "the wind cold shoulders..."), his "winged eye"/"eyes narrow snake" ("I'm in the earthly world came to the Lodge...", "Priya world as the sonorous gift...", "the Song Faina"), night, in a Blizzard), combined with a symbolization of the earth, portrait of details ("the Gold of your waist pulled in", "I teased your dark silk and Thin silk mill your captured") and is a system of theatrical signs, showing symbols of the face boundary. The system of portrait signs is functionally identical to national symbols as a whole, uncharacteristic of the works of symbolists; the widespread inclusion of serpentine symbolism is motivated by the restoration of the Egyptian theme, which is included in the genealogy of the heroine, while the same moment of spatial ("wild distance") and temporal ("Night daughter of other times") remoteness isolating the boundary symbolism is always indicated. The two-partness of the female image, which allows to implement both the absorption model and the duel / service model, is highlighted by the symbolization of two portrait details: *hair* as the basis for building the hypostasis by the "serpent beloved" and *eyes*, due to the appearance of the epithet "winged" forming the hypostasis *stars*; however, in both cases, the correlation of the heroine with the fiery nature remains unchanged. This ensures a special type of interaction between these two hypostases, combining polarization with internal unity; the last option is built thanks to the star / comet shaped line - comet tail / train - snake: "Only in the frosty air is it loud / Footsteps ring. I recognize / In the wrong light of the alley / My beautiful snake: / It crawls from the light into the lights, / And the train coils like the tail of a comet ..." (Block, 1971, p. 213). The formation of each hypostasis of the heroine is associated with the implementation of snow symbols: on the one hand, "snow sparks", on the other, "ice fire"; fire attributes of the female image – "your eyes are burning", fire bird, "fire of the night dawn", etc., correlates with "the power of the earth fire, the energy of the unconscious (embodied in the symbol of the earth snake – not to be confused with the Ouroboros symbol of integrity)" (Hanzen-Leve, 2003, p. 278), which allows you to restore the original Dionysian nature of the feminine, aspiring to absorb the lyrical hero. The symbolism of absorption is designated as "baptism of fire", referring to the previous cycle, this image becomes a reminder of the hero's position as a victim of creativity by the "serpent-wise" lover ("Song of Faina"), such perception is enhanced by the semantics of the name of the poetic cycle "The Spell of Fire and Darkness", identifying fiery symbolism with primordial chaos (*darkness* in this case turns out to be synonymous with *nights* as one of the figurative equivalents of the heroine).

The activation of each of the hypostases of the female paradigm of images is determined by the initial movement of the lyrical hero, therefore, in addition to the motive complex *fire - light*, the mysterious meaning of the lyrical plot is revealed through the motive series *heart - soul*. Like the first motivational complex, the motivational series *heart - soul* also receives gender content from the Bloc, *heart* is

associated mainly with the masculine principle and clearly gravitates toward the Apollonian sphere (hence the metaphorical comparison of *heart* to the “laughing boy”, “breathing schein”, with the appearance of the epithet “strict” is connected with this), in the female paradigm, the mention of *heart* arises only in relation to the hypostasis of *the star*/ Snow Maiden and is invariably a testament to her impassivity and dumbness, worldly, rather, the image is not of a beloved, but of a warrior and becoming the basis for the implementation of the duel / service model. *The heart of* appears at the Block in dynamic development, assimilating the motif of wingedness, originally assigned to the hypostasis of *star*. Wingedness, as a sign of the heroine’s eye, is associated with the projection of the fiery principle into the cosmogonic sphere, *star* is connected to the fiery, and not the luminous nature of being. In the future, winging becomes an attribute of *the heart* of the lyrical “I”, thanks to its metaphorization in the image of a bird - “heart is a flying bird”, “Heart is a light bird of oblivion”, “Heart beats like a bird languishes”, and love experience begins to be associated with the cell, moreover, such a perception determines another level of the mysterious content of the lyrical plot, thereby substantiating the inclusion of Egyptian symbolism, which indirectly demonstrates the interdependence of the Phoenix and Sphinx.

Motivational network / cell complexes determine the first stage of the initiation of the lyrical hero, the second is the symbolization of love experience as *dreams*, the attribute of which is invariably the definition of *hopping*, *hop*, etc. feelings in the final works of Cities. However, as in the first case, it is not development that is observed, but a rethinking of the significance of Dionysian ecstasy; the hero simultaneously strives to achieve an ecstatic state, which becomes synonymous with his “burning”, and confronts him, as a result of which the mythologem of dying - resurrection is activated. The block consistently uses the internal interdependence of images *sword* - *sword*, which creates the basis for the implementation of the ambivalent model of duel / service (“Snow Maiden”, “Oh, spring without end and without edge ...”, “Monk”, “I waited all my life. I am tired of waiting This model assumes a different type of relationship with the lyrical hero, not limited to his absorption by the Dionysian principle of the female self.

The sword sequentially forms several semantic levels, providing the interaction of the intimate-personal stratum with a common mystery context, characteristic of a given cycle. In the framework of the symbolic transformation of the biographical myth, *the sword* as a phallic symbol is opposed to *to the scourge*, emblematically embodying the activity of the female “I”, and accordingly it becomes one of the ways to creatively overcome the dramatic situation of the love triangle Block - White - Mendeleev. Opposition *sword* - *scourge* demonstrates the stage of initiation of the lyrical hero, slavish dependence is replaced by the literal implementation of the metaphor of a love duel. At the same time, awareness of slavish dependence is steadily combined with the mention of flagellation (“I pass from

execution to execution ...”), *sword* forms the situation of a knightly duel. At the same time, the symbolism of the *sword* includes the relationship between the Blok’s symbolism and the image of the light ray, which is traditional for the young symbolism and creativity of the Bloc, thereby updating the mystery plot, which is represented by the opposition of the motivational complexes *of fire* and *of light*. At the same time, the structure of the lyrical hero and female “I” is subordinated to the general model of the relationship between female and male versions of the Gnostic-Hermetic metaphysics of light, according to A. Hanzen-Leve: “... when the beginning of Anima appears in super-sublimated form, when its abstract-metaphysical unnaturalness prevails, the beginning of the Animus is always actualized as something concrete (it is the exalted love of a devoted soul, a “knight”, a visionary wanderer, a prophet, etc.) ... ” (Hanzen-Leve, 2003, p. 331). This is exactly what is observed in "Faina", *Snezhnaya Virgo* personifies the Dionysian ancestor, presented through the concept of *night*. The interpretation of the female image is characterized by duality, supporting the ambivalent nature of the duel / service model. On the one hand, the image of *of the Snow Maiden* as a female personification of the night world is reduced and demonized due to its “urbanization”, which has negative semantics in the second volume. On the other hand, a line of images is being built that refers to the high hypostasis of the female "I" - the hypostasis *of the star*, which, however, retains the possibility of transformation into a low hypostasis. The complexity of the heroine’s image is associated with likening the eyes to candles / lamps (“Cold shoulders under the wind ...”, “Snow Maiden”), which are reduced forms in relation to live / star fire (“live fire of winged eyes”).

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