

AXIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ORNITHOLOGICAL TOPIC IN THE MARI AND UDMURT DRAMA OF THE SECOND HALF OF XX – THE BEGINNINGS OF THE XXI CENTURY

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to identify and describe the axiological aspects of the ornithological topic in the modern Mari and Udmurt drama of the second half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. The system of images of birds (swan, eagle, falcon, cuckoo, nightingale, duck, firebird, white bird, spring birds, blue bird, etc.) in their specific, metaphorical and symbolic meanings, in their correlation with values and disvalues is highlighted in the paper.

The principal conceptual importance of the ornithological image-symbol induces playwrights to put it in the title of the work. So, the symbolic images of birds are taken out in the title of the Mari playwrights' plays «The blue bird» by V. Gorokhov, «The golden duck» by Yu. Bayguza and V. Pekteev, «The white swan» by V. Boyarinova, of the Udmurt plays «We are spring birds» by K. Kulikov, «The white swan» and «And the Cuckoo Keeps Cuckooing...» by E. Zagrebin.

In the art world of the playwrights, one can see the systematization of birds' images according to the value principle, which is determined by either the national or their individual art perception: fearlessness (falcon), aspiration to the ideal (white swan, blue bird), talent (nightingale) are as highest values and egoism (eagle), trouble and loneliness (cuckoo) are as disvalues.

The ornithological figurative symbolism of the Mari and Udmurt playwrights is considered as an effective art method of generalization of reality and as a way of expressing the author's conception, in which a significant place is given to the universal (moral), ethnic, religious, aesthetic values or values of the society (family, social). The community and specificity of the art representation of ornithological theme in the Mari and Udmurt playwrights' works are defined in this article.

The following groups of symbolic images of birds are represented in the Mari and Udmurt drama of the second half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, in the art structure of which there are explicit invariant axiological meanings:

1) Generalized abstract images of birds: spring birds (a symbol of eternity, devotion, endlessness of life), a blue bird (a symbol of happiness, which is worthy a man who is able to overcome difficulties and work on himself, an ideal world-view and positive life attitudes), a white bird (high feelings and thoughts, a dream about family well-being and perfect world), a firebird (a symbol of happiness and family well-being);

2) Specific birds in symbolic meaning, which can express different values of the author:

– Positive: a swan (a symbol of eternity, devotion, endlessness of life), a white swan (an expression of the ideal, highly moral and sublime existence of man, a symbol of human purity and decency); a falcon (a

symbol of fearlessness, dexterity, striving for victory and individual happiness), a nightingale (an expression of the musical endowment of a person);

– Negative (disvalues): cuckoo (approach of misfortune, unprotected suffering and loneliness), eagle (egoism);

– Complex (ambiguous): a golden duck (the symbol of the world's birth, devotion to the patrimonial faith and at the same time the expression of temptations); a winged duck (a symbol of carnal pleasures and at the same time a human victim).

The research methods are historical-genetic, comparative and structural-semantic.

Keywords: art axiology, Mari literature, Udmurt literature, drama, ornithological topic, images of birds.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ornithological theme and ornithological figurative symbolism are important parts of Mari and Udmurt drama of the late 20th – early 21st century. Their study opens up interesting possibilities for studying the axiological basis of Mari and Udmurt literatures, since the image-symbol is directly connected with the world of ideas and the conceptual nature of creativity. We look at the ornithological figurative symbols used by Mari and Udmurt playwrights as an effective artistic method of generalizing the reality and as a way of expressing an author's concept, in which a significant place is occupied by the universal (ethical), ethnic, religious, aesthetic values or values of the society (family, social), as well as the value/antivalue ideologically conceptual opposition. Some of these issues, although beyond the typological approach, were previously dealt with in the works by T. N. Belyaeva (Belyaeva, 2012), T.I. Zaitseva (Zaitseva, 2017) and R. A. Kudryavtseva (Kudryavtseva, 2015).

The ornithological figurative-symbolic system of Mari and Udmurt dramaturgy of the late 20th – early 21st century includes the following bird images: a swan, an eagle, a falcon, a cuckoo, a nightingale, a duck, Zharptitsa (or 'a firebird'), a white bird, spring birds, a blue bird, etc. The objective of this paper is to reveal their axiological meaning and their artistic representations in literary works. In this sense, our research is new in the modern Finno-Ugric literary studies.

2. OPINIONS AND DISCUSSION

The conceptual importance of the ornithological image-symbols motivates playwrights to use them in the titles of their works. And then the image-symbol appears as "a powerful spotlight, in the light of which one can see the unity of the artistic whole, the author's presence in the composition" (Introduction to literary studies, 2004, p. 299). So, the symbolic images of birds are included in the titles of plays by Mari playwrights (e.g. *The Blue Bird* by V. Gorokhov, *The Golden Duck* by Yu. Bayguza and V. Pekteev, *The White Swan* by V. Boyarinova), and by Udmurt playwrights (e.g. *We Are The Spring Birds* by K. Kulikov, *The White Swan* and *A Cuckoo Keeps Cuckooing* by Ye. Zagrebin).

O. V. Vovk rightly observes that "a man has always envied winged divine creatures floating freely in the clouds above the sky, and his soul rushed after them."As a result, the bird began to be perceived as the embodiment of the human soul, the allegory of the flight of thought, fantasy, imagination, spirit ascension, and as the emblem of absolute freedom and liberation. Being a symbolic analogue of the soul, the bird could express its certain states: soaring high in the sky – the desire for high goals and ideals..." (Vovk, 2006, p. 239). And, indeed, in many works written by Mari and Udmurt authors, characters associated with a bird image tend to live in harmony with themselves, they are, or want to be, or eventually become spiritually rich and highly moral people. We find such characters in the plays *The White Swan* by Ye. Zagrebin, *The Blue Bird* by V. Gorokhov, *Save Me, My Fair God!..* by A. Ivanova, *Aksar and Yulaviy* by K. Korshunov, *The White Swan* by V. Boyarinova, *The Sacred Rowan* by Yu. Baiguza and others.

In the artistic world of playwrights, bird images are systematized according to the value principle, determined either by their folk or individual and artistic perception: fearlessness (a falcon), aspiration to the ideal (a white swan, a blue bird), talent (a nightingale) as highest values, and egoism (an eagle), misfortune and loneliness

(a cuckoo) as antivalues.

Both generalized abstract bird images (spring birds, a blue bird, a white bird, a firebird) and specific birds in their symbolic meaning (an eagle, a white swan, a falcon, a nightingale, a duck, a cuckoo) are present in the plays. These image types can be simultaneously present in one text. For example, the spring birds turn out to be a pair of white swans in the play *We Are The Spring Birds* by K. Kulikov.

The blue bird image is reconstructed in the play *The Blue Bird* by a Mari playwright V. Gorokhov. The plot is based on the life story of an orphan by the name of Alexander, who has been used to overcoming life's difficulties since childhood. Before her death, his mother Kalima wished her son to get an education, become a good person, love his people, and listened to the advice of adults. One day Alexander had a dream: his mother wanted to give him a blue bird – a symbol of happiness, which serves as a talisman to make one's life fortunate. But the bird flew out of Alexander's hands. Then the mother gave her son the following advice: "Live in good conscience, my son. Never hold grudge in your heart. Treat people well, do not deceive, live in harmony with your neighbors. And most importantly – love to work. Work glorifies a person and makes his life longer. If you live with Truth, in good conscience, Life will not leave you. But if you take a wrong step, Death will defeat her [Life]" (Gorokhov, 1992, p. 38). *Translated into English by the authors of the paper*. Alexander follows his mother's advice: he breaks free from the harmful influence of the sectarians; goes to work on a construction site; reveals the crook Roman, and even performs a heroic deed: saves children and books from a burning house. He nearly loses his sight in the fire, and at hospital he dreams about his mother again. She brings him a blue bird again, which does not fly away this time: "One thing I know for sure: if you live truly, if you have found yourself and your happiness, then the bird will never fly away from you, but will stay with you forever" (Gorokhov, 1992, p. 96). The idea of the play is expressed in the mother's words: people build their own happiness themselves, but it can leave them like the blue bird. The hero overcomes life's challenges and becomes a man worthy of happiness. The playwright reconstructs the image of a hard-working, brave, and honest young man. Gorokhov's image of the blue bird contains the ethnic value concept of happiness. The wheel of fortune goes to someone who does not break down, overcomes difficulties, and lives righteously.

There is the image of a white bird in the poetic drama *Save Me, My Fair God*. By A. Ivanova. The white bird is an attribute of the surrounding world, which Marina has chosen for herself and which she perceives in light (white) tones only:

Look, on a pine branch there is

A white bird or a white handkerchief fluttering.

In the mist as white as milk,

A child is running around. (Ivanova, 1997, p. 132).

In Mari folk consciousness, white color symbolizes such vital components as spirituality, truth, kindness, purity of thought, innocence and masculinity. In Ivanova's work, the white bird image is in harmony with the rich spiritual world of the heroine, with her hopes for a happy future. In fact, the white bird is an expression of the heroine's sublime feelings and thoughts. In this work by A. Ivanova there is also a leitmotif image of a firebird symbolizing Marina's dream of family well-being.

While generalized abstract images normally contain exclusively positive values, specific bird images in the works of Mari and Udmurt playwrights, on the other hand, can symbolize both positive and negative values. So, there is an image of a duck in the title of the play *The Golden Duck* by Yu. Baiguza and V. Pekteyev. From the earliest times, the Mari sacrificed ducks to the gods in the sacred groves during tribal and family prayers in order to mitigate the evil character of Keremet. Initially, the duck image in the fore-mentioned play seems to perform exactly this function, but as the plot unfolds, the functional goal of the image changes. It becomes clear that the play raises the age-old philosophical question: "Does money bring happiness?"

The authors artistically explore the modern life, the modern people's consciousness, its world view. The events of the play take place in an ordinary rural family which strictly follows the laws of Mari traditional religion. During the preparation for the pagan "oven feast", for which the Mari usually cook a duck, the old mistress discovered a piece of gold in the bird's stomach while gutting it. This is how the "gold rush" began. Many villagers immediately killed all their poultry in search of gold, and the Mari nouveau riche decided to buy up the land plot from the main characters to start a gold mining company there. Only the old master stayed indifferent to the gold and asked in surprise: "Did this piece disturb your minds and drive you out of your senses?" (Baiguza, Pekteyev, 2002, p. 110). The main thing for the old man is faith. Wealth, in its turn, takes away one's peace, tranquility, and grace. For that reason, the old man decided to take the piece of

gold found by his wife to a grove to sacrifice it to the Great Fair God and ask for himself and his fellow villagers the power of faith, which brings the people a happy life and health.

Therefore, in the course of the story, the author's attention is increasingly shifting from Mari mythological semantics of the duck image toward strengthening the meaning of the epithet "golden." The change in the author's accent reveals the main idea of the work: in pursuit of wealth, a person is decaying morally and intellectually, and God only protects a morally stable person. And indeed, when everything around is flooded, there is only one house left untouched by water – the house of the religious old people who refused gold.

Another version of the duck image (the image of a shot wild duck) is presented in the play *The Maiden's Heart* by A. Volkov. The symbolic image of a duck contributes to the revelation of Korshunov's character, who lives by his own rules, disregarding the moral and ethical society laws. He does not feel love or pity either for people or animals. A duck is a delicacy for Korshunov and a woman is a toy that can be played with and left behind. And it is not a mere coincidence that one of the women deceived by Korshunov is very similar to the wild duck he shot. The duck in Volkov's play is a symbol of a human victim.

The image of a falcon appears in the drama *Aksar and Yulaviy* by K. Korshunov in the monologue of Yulaviy: "Aksar! My falcon! What god sent you to me?" (Korshunov, 1979, p. 245). Yulaviy calls her beloved one a falcon, for Aksar is the embodiment of fearlessness, dexterity, and ability to win. The hero is fully correlated with the falcon image, the freedom-loving and bold bird.

The nightingale image is reconstructed in the play *The Son* by V. Domrachev and V. Sapayev. The value conception of the image is directly related to the fate of the talented Mari composer Eric Sapayev. The nightingale in the play symbolizes the extraordinary musical talent of the hero, which completely harmonizes with Mari understanding of this bird's image.

The symbolism of the cuckoo's image in the title of the play *A Cuckoo Keeps Cuckooing* by the Udmurt playwright Ye. Zagrebin gives the author an opportunity to come to broad generalizations and artistically reproduce the narrative layer going beyond the limits of everyday life. The original and somewhat controversial version of the fate of the repressed Udmurt poet Kuzebay Gerd was recreated in the play. The play is based on the conflict between a sublime romantic poet and his environment, which did not understand and did not accept him. The attitude of the masses to the extraordinary personality of Kuzebay Gerd is explained in Zagrebin's play by the manners prevalent in a remote patriarchal village ruled by the "power of darkness."

A cuckoo's voice is often heard in the play. In Udmurt culture, there is a belief that links the bird's cuckooing with a bad omen. For example, a cuckoo coming to a village and its voice heard from a house roof is the omen of death, a serious illness or a fire. The Udmurt word "sile" (to cuckoo) also has the following meanings: to cry, to grieve, to wail, and to complain. This is the symbolism behind the cuckoo's image in Zagrebin's play. The bird's voice is a warning sign of the impending misfortune. It also conveys the complete loneliness of the restless romantic poet. The cuckoo image also appears in the mystical scenes where Kuzebay Gerd talks to his mother, who comes from the world of the dead. The poet's dialogs with his mother are surrounded with the sense of tragic doom, and the cuckoo, which suddenly flew over his head and aroused fear in him, becomes its embodiment.

The swan image (both in male and female variations) is common in Mari and Udmurt drama of the late 20th – early 21st century. In many cultures, a swan is a traditional "symbol of light and purity, love and loyalty, poetry and beauty, transformation and death. A pair of swans is one of numerous emblems of lovers" (Vovk, 2006, p. 251). For most Finno-Ugric peoples, a swan is a symbolic embodiment of an unattainable ideal, harmony and beauty.

The main character of the play *The White Swan* by the Mari playwright V. Boyarinova – Tonya – is represented as a fabulous white swan, whose wings are scorched by the flame of life. At the beginning of the play, the old man Metri tells Tonya a fairy tale about a beautiful white swan that turned into a beautiful girl, and about the stupid Yivan who tricked her into marriage. The family life of the bird girl turned into an endless torture, but she found the courage to break free. There are numerous associations between the bird and Tonya in the text. After marrying a man she does not love, she has to endure insult, humiliation and abuse from her husband and mother-in-law, as well as her husband's betrayal. She lives with her husband like a beautiful bird in captivity, but suffers all this for the child's sake. The poetic nature of the heroine strives for wings to fly off. The heroine's paintings reflect her deep feelings. One of her paintings is even called *The White Swan*. In the finale, Tonya changes, leaves her husband, finds freedom and self-confidence, and meets a good man.

A play by the Udmurt playwright Ye. Zagrebin is titled *The White Swan*. This is a so-called "industrial drama", with a leader being its central character. The play's conflict is "borrowed" from everyday peasant life of the 1970s. The author pays attention to the individual's personal life along with the industrial theme. The ornithological title of the play helps to reveal its leading idea, namely, the idea of protecting the emancipation of a village woman who is not understood by the people around her.

The difficult fate of the rural girl Onis, who dreams of a happy family, a good job and respect from her fellow villagers, is central for the play. But all her dreams shatter overnight. The girl remains completely alone: her mother dies, her groom deceives her, her relatives, friends and acquaintances turn their backs on the deceived girl. Reflecting on the strength of the human spirit, the playwright writes about the heroine's loneliness and suffering, skilfully expressing the author's sympathies.

On the one hand, the play's title is connected to the heroine, but on the other hand, it is much broader as it acquires a symbolic meaning in the play. It is a symbol of human purity and decency. The "white swan" becomes a leitmotif that denotes a universal (both female and male) and eternal striving of a person for a spiritual life. It explains why the motif of one's changing inner world, their moral rebirth can be traced in the play not only in the case of the female image of Onis, but also in the case of the male driver Pasha.

The spring birds in the play *We Are The Spring Birds* by K. Kulikov are two swans. There are two characters in the author's dramatic confession – Kuzebay Gerd and Ashalchi Oki, two well-known Udmurt poets of the early 20th century who became famous as freedom fighters of their people. The play is written as a dialog between these two characters with "ethereal souls". They have the same humanistic ideals which originated from their ethnic traditions and world culture; both of them have romantic dreams and are in conflict with the totalitarian society. Gerd's reflection on the people and personality, the crowd and the poet occupies a special place in their thoughtful dialogs. He believes in the revival of his folk. The play's title is fully revealed in its finale: two swans fly up to the sky. They are the symbols of eternity, devotion, and endlessness of life.

3. CONCLUSION

So, there are the following groups of symbolic bird images with explicit invariant axiological meanings in Mari and Udmurt dramaturgy of the late 20th – early 21st century:

1) Generalized abstract bird images: spring birds (the symbol of eternity, devotion and endlessness of life), a blue bird (the symbol of happiness of a worthy person who can overcome difficulties and work on themselves, an ideal perception of the world and positive attitudes), a white bird (noble feelings and thoughts, a dream of family well-being and an ideal world), a firebird (the symbol of happiness and family well-being);

2) Specific bird images, symbolic values of which can express different values of an author:

– Positive: a swan (the symbol of eternity, devotion and endlessness of life), a white swan (the expression of one's ideal, highly moral and sublime existence, the symbol of human purity and decency); a falcon (the symbol of fearlessness, dexterity, striving for victory and personal happiness), a nightingale (the expression of one's musical talent);

- Negative (antivalues): a cuckoo (an approaching misfortune, defenseless suffering and loneliness), an eagle (egoism);

– Complex (ambiguous): a golden duck (the symbol of the birth of the world, of devotion to the patrimonial faith and at the same time the expression of seduction and temptation); a shot duck (the symbol of carnal pleasures and at the same time of a victimized human).

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