

NININS 2020**International Scientific Forum «National Interest, National Identity and National Security»****MYTHOLOGEMES OF HEROISM AND THEIR REPRESENTATIONS (P. BLYAKHIN “THE LITTLE RED DEVILS”)**

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Abstract

The article traces the emergence and development of the theme of a heroic deed and a young hero, a fighter for revolutionary ideas and a bright future of the Soviet country, in Pavel Blyakhin's story “The Little Red Devils” (1921). The mythologeme of revolutionary heroic spirit is considered, firstly, as a syncretic fusion of the archetypes of an infant who can act like a hero and a trickster (superhuman, demonic, and embodied in youth and heroism); secondly, it is described as central in Soviet literature for young people in the 20–30s. Pavel Blyakhin pays particular attention to folklore stories about the noble robbers who influenced the story. The impact on the author's plan, produced by the Western adventure novel (Louis Boussenard) and the “Adventures of the Indians” genre is also shown. Special emphasis is put on the paradoxical combination of an atheistic and religious worldview and symbolic elements in the motives of an infant who can act like a hero. The synthetic nature of the mythologeme of a young heroic spirit in children's Soviet narratives of the 30s is associated with the combined influence on the author, plot and its representation of the Slavic folk tradition, the foreign literary tradition of the adventure novel and Soviet ideology (on the one hand, neo-mythological in its nature, and on the other, romanticizing heroes, thirdly, conveying the so-called “religious atheism”).

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Archetype, myth, P. Blyakhin, soviet culture



1. Introduction

Archetypes begin to merge from the depths of the collective unconsciousness during critical, crucial, turning points, which forms a new wave of neo-mythology. During the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, the socio-cultural stage, following the revival of mythologism, is the transformation of many archetypal images and schemes, which have been fixed not only in the oral format but also through art.

We consider the mythologeme of revolutionary heroic spirit, first, as a syncretic fusion of the archetypes of an infant who can act like a hero and a trickster (superhuman, demonic in bodily); secondly, it is described as central in Soviet literature for young people in the 20–30s.

2. Problem Statement

It is necessary to disclose in a descriptive way the mythological motives of the Soviet heroic story of the 30s (based on the work of Pavel Blyakhin “The Little Red Devils”).

For stating the syncretic nature of Soviet literary mythologism, we plan to analyze its archetypal components.

3. Research Questions

Why are mythological motives most pronounced in the genre of heroic tales?

How did folk traditions and the genre of the Western adventure novel influence the mythologism of the Soviet heroic tale?

What are archetypes symbolically embodied in Soviet literature for young people?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research underlying the article is to discover the general cultural and specifically aesthetic prerequisites of neo-mythologism in Soviet literature of the 30s of the XX century.

5. Research Methods

The well-known works about the civil war by Gaidar, Belyaev "The Old Fortress" (1937), Ostroumov "Makar the Pathfinder" (1925–1926) were repeatedly analyzed in Soviet literary criticism for the formation of revolutionary heroic spirit (Englert, 1980, p. 2–17). Much has been said in literary criticism about the embodiment of a heroic feat in the genre of the story of the 20-30s, about the image of a hero in acute situations. Many works have been written about the process of forming the image of a young hero in Soviet literary criticism (Grechishnikova, Ivich, Lupanova, Razova, Pernovsky).

Maximova in the framework of the study of the "neo-myth" of Soviet culture of the 1930s distinguishes "juvenile mythology". Noting that in the 1930s, in the period of the establishment of the renewed idea of culture and the formation of the image of Soviet people, and especially important place belongs to the mythology of childhood; Maximova highlights the archetypal motives of birth, Mother and

infant (Maksimova, 2016, p. 11). From our point of view, the merging of childhood mythology and revolutionary heroic spirit is the most striking feature of Soviet culture of the 30s. Also, the motive of contiguity becomes the third component (tricksterism or marginality is manifested even in the name of the analyzed story – "little devils").

Semikina, researching the issues of the formation of totalitarian state neomythology, considers that the rejection of "mythological" history can be manifested through the motif structure of a literary text. Motives, essential for the author's idea understanding, can perform several functions:

Contribute to the formation of the plot.

Serve as a kind of code that allows interpreting the episode in the context of "modern" myth.

Help to understand characters' philosophy of life, the strategy of behaviour.

Allow placing the literary text in the context of world art.

Express writer's worldview (Semikina, 2008).

The authors of the article deal with the issues of remythologization in Russian literature, especially noting the archetypal nature of the images of heroes during different phases of history.

We rely on the ideas that are set forth, for example, by the researcher Bloshenko (2012): "Creative mythology of the Soviet state actively used references for the pre-experience, the pre-memory of people. Many phenomena of totalitarian symbolism were based on the rituals of Christian and pagan times. There was an appeal to archetypes" (p. 10).

Borisov rightly note, that;

The wide distribution and popularity of the genre of adventure or red romance in the children's literature of the 1920s on the civil war /.../. In the 20s, the authors of military adventure stories highlighted the ideal of a revolutionary-minded young man, a child during the years of revolution and civil war. The vivid romance they created, an adventure book about young revolution fighters' exploits clearly combined expressively defined revolutionary tendentiousness, captivating exposition (an adventure plot) and an image of a child hero being in the circumstances which allowed being most fully revealed (Borisov, 1984, p. 52).

6. Findings

In 1921 Blyakhin left Kostroma, as the Central Committee sent the writer to Baku. However, the transport worked so poorly that it took the author of the story to go to Baku instead of three days for a whole month.

During this time, he wrote the story "The Little Red Devils" and entered with it the fiction for children: "The breath of the civil war still so clearly felt in it, the three brave heroes appeared before the readers in such a vivid way that the author was bombarded with letters asking them to give the children's addresses" (Blyakhina-Toporovskaya, 1978, p. 39).

It is known that Western European adventure literature for children and youth influenced the formation of children's literature of the post-revolutionary period in Russia. However, the causes and sources of the formation and emergence of revolutionary heroism in the stories of the 20–30s lie, in our opinion, not only in this but also in the rethinking of mythopoetic and folklore traditions from the point of view of the communist ideology of the emerging young Soviet state. The stories have absorbed all the

previous experience of Russian literature, as well as the folklore and mythopoetic traditions of the Russian people. However, the innovation of these stories lies in the fact that based on tradition writers of the 20-30s rethink them in a completely different ideological vein.

We are going to analyze the influence of the genre of the legend of the robbers and the role of the genre of the legend of the fight against external enemies on the poetics of the tales for young people of the 20–30s.

We cannot fully agree with Engler Jerzy's statement that "revolutionary heroic spirit has incorporated the best centuries-old ideas of the people about the valiant character. At the same time, it has had a lot of innovative, time-born features" (Englert, 1980, p. 4). The author also claims that the romantic beginning, along with the genres of folklore (bylina, fairy tale, raree-show), plays a central place in creating the revolutionary heroic spirit of the novel by Blyakhin. In "The Little Red Devils" the images of the heroes Dunyasha, Misha, and Chinese Yu-Yu are demonstrated in close connection with the images of epic heroes who defeat evil or resemble fairy-tale heroes who can undergo any test in the name of victory over social evil. The images of "The Little Red Devils" are recreated following the folk tradition: the characters seem to be timeless, deprived, like fairy-tale and epic heroes, of profound psychologism, they are carriers of only one feature – they are "avengers".

The image of the revolutionary hero in "The Little Red Devils" was also formed under the influence of legends about robbers and the struggle against external enemies. The colossal impact was also exerted by Russian classical literature, primarily Pushkin. The plot of the story "The Little Red Devils" contains allusions to the plots of the stories by Pushkin "Dubrovsky" and "The Captain's daughter" (Panova, 2000, p. 8–23).

Blyakhin strives for romance in the image of the revolutionary heroic spirit, avoiding the principles of psychologism. In this regard, we agree with the assessment of Bloshenko, who writes: "Soviet mythology is simple and understandable; it operates not with abstract representations, but with intelligible, visually representable images such as the enemy, comrade, social unity, equality" (Bloshenko, 2012, p. 11). Folklore becomes the forming device that allows creating an adventure storyline, the images of the popular «Avengers», and develop the theme of feat and revolutionary heroism under the conditions of the Civil War. Perhaps, these are precisely the reasons that largely account for the writer's appeal to folk traditions in which social issues are relevant. Compositionally, the story "The Little Red Devils" is divided into two parts: in the first one, the author addresses the traditions of the robbers, in the second – the traditions of the struggle against external enemies.

Let us dwell in more detail on the functioning of the legends about robbers in the narrative structure of the text. The art space of the story is divided into two camps that are at war with each other: the camp of the bandit Old Man Makhno (the robber proper), the camp of young robbers (noble robbers). "The civil war broke the village into two hostile camps: the poor and the kulaks, the red and white, those who are for and against Soviet power. The children of the poor and the kulaks also divided into two parties and fought desperately among themselves, marching "wall to wall" (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 3). The central characters are young heroes who are actively involved in adulthood (they socialize) through the game. The people pretend in a game to be noble robbers, fighters for social justice. Like romantically minded robbers, they wear masks, attack the rich and rob them, hide in the forests, perform feats,

protecting the Soviet regime from bandits. Thus, in the structure of the story, the motives of traditions about the noble robbers are realized systematically.

The story was also influenced by foreign adventure literature, most likely by Cooper: the guys in the process of the game use the nicknames of the Indians (Pathfinder, Blue Fox), assemble the council of leaders, show courage in battles like the redskins:

In the minds of the children, modern events and the heroes of the civil war were so intricately intertwined with book images that they themselves did not even know where a wonderful fairy tale and fiction end, and where a genuine harsh life begins. Talking to each other, they even created their special language, borrowed from the Indians by Fenimore Cooper and Mayne Reid, understandable only to them alone. They called the Red Army soldiers red-skinned soldiers; white counter-revolutionaries were called pale-faced dogs. The White Army General Wrangel received the nickname of Black Jackal, the bandit Makhno was dubbed the name of the evil and treacherous apakh – Blue Fox (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 8).

Thus, in the principles of depicting the characters of the story, in the ways of showing revolutionary heroic spirit, on the one hand, Blyakhin was influenced by Western adventure literature: Fenimore Cooper, Mayne Reid, Jules Verne, on the other hand, folklore (fairy tales, bylina, raree-show, legends about robbers and legends about the struggle against external enemies) reflected on the poetic manner of the novel. In this vein, we would like to single out, first of all, the development of an adventure plot based on the unthinkable courage and unusual feats of adolescent “avengers”, the lack of psychologism, since it is not the person who comes to the fore, but the adventure itself. Melodramatic situations also become the object of representation in the story “The Little Red Devils”.

If we return to the genre of legends and the question of their influence on the ideological and aesthetic nature of the story, it is important to add that the art space of the story is divided into two antagonistic camps (“native – alien”), which corresponds to the mythopoetic folklore space of traditions: “The formation and interaction of these motives in the system of traditions were largely influenced by the semantic opposition “native – alien”, the most universal for primitive thinking (Krinichnaya, 1987, p. 171). The natural world is the conquests of the Great October Revolution; this is the Red Army, the alien world is capitalist Russia, this is the monarchy, this is the White Army, the world of counter-revolution. Such an archetypal opposition is introduced into the general mythological picture of the world, built by a totalitarian culture (Brunova, 2012).

Accordingly, the robbery's actions (alien world) are embodied in the structure of the story of Old Man Makhno (alien space):

It was too late: shooting at full gallop, an avalanche of horsemen with a wild howl and whistle rushed through the streets of the unfortunate village. Captured by surprise, the villagers ran out of the huts in a panic and immediately fell, struck by bullets or hacked by sabres. The bandits did not spare either the elderly, women or children.

– Beat! – the small horseman screamed in a womanish voice, brandishing with a sabre.

Bandits burst into the yards and huts, robbed belongings, rolled the heads to geese and hens, stole sheep and cows.

Strangely enough, the raiders did not disturb the huts of the kulaks and the village rich. The house of the priest Father Pausicakius was left undisturbed, either.

Soon the flames of the conflagration lit up a terrible picture of defeat (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 2).

Among the legends about the struggle against external enemies, there are such stories in which not heroes, not princes and military leaders speak out against their enemies, "but ordinary peasants, men and women. In the fight against enemies, they display not only valour and bravery, but also resourcefulness: they often deceive enemies and lure them into a trap" (Sokolova, 1970, p. 41).

The legend about the struggle against external enemies takes on a social connotation, which is consonant with the plots of the novels of the 1920s and 1930s reflecting the historical reality of this period. "But it should be noted that due to the aggravation of social contradictions and the growth of class antagonism, stories with acute social problems, depicting social relationships and utopian dreams of the people in different aspects, became more widespread" (Sokolova, 1970, p. 48). The adventure plot of the story largely correlates with the actions of the legends about the struggle against external enemies. These are the plot motives of the traditions that are easily reconstructed in the story structure of the novel "The Little Red Devils", forming its compositional core. Let us follow the example of the story, how some events in the plot correlate with the archetypal opposition "friends – foes". This theme, which has its roots in the motive of fighting external enemies, unfolds at the moment when the guys enter adulthood when the game at noble robbers ends, and the service in the cavalry army of comrade Budyonny begins.

The story begins, as well as the legend, with the "motive of the surprise attack, when the local population is busy with everyday affairs" (Krinichnaya, 1987, p. 153): it was a quiet night on the street, nothing-signalled trouble. People slept peacefully in their homes. Suddenly "a detachment of horsemen immediately flew out of the forest and, fanning in a wide field, rushed to the village" (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 2).

Then, the bandits begin to ruin and rob civilians, destroying everything around: "Bandits burst into the yards and huts, robbed belongings, rolled the heads to geese and hens, stole sheep and cows (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 2) (motive of the destruction of civilians, the devastation of villages (joins with the previous two motives). Sokolova (1970) characterizes such a plot of legends in the following way: "This is a traditional characteristic of all ancient foreign aliens – they beat and tormented the population, raped women, robbed and burned villages" (p. 35). Following a folk tradition, Blyakhin continues to develop and expand on the theme of village ruin by gangsters. This situation has historically developed in the 1920s in the country of the Soviets. The civil war was behind, but gangs of bandits were operating throughout the district, and the young "avengers" in the story "The Little Red Devils" boldly confronted the enemies of the Soviet regime. The author, following the composition of folk traditions, also begins his narrative with the listed above motives.

Further, we continue to observe the interlacement of the plot of the novel "The Little Red Devils" with the stories of legends, the compositional scheme of both genres is not violated but, on the contrary, the borrowing of the storylines suggests that the author followed the folk traditions of legends, relied on the poetic manner and structure of the genre. The writer sequentially, step by step, wove motifs of folk traditions into the plot of the story, pursuing specific artistic and aesthetic goals. In the story, "the motive of the abuse of enemies over the shrine" is realized (Krinichnaya, 1987, p. 160): "Robbers were already operating in the church: they tore brocade robes to pieces, stripped gold icons, stuffed bags with church utensils" (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 2).

"The most common pattern of such traditions: enemies, robbing and beating up the population, do not spare even shrines; they commit sacrilege, rob and burn monasteries, shoot icons" (Sokolova, 1970, p. 45). As we see, the author here does not depart from the plot scheme of tradition, developing the motive of blasphemy.

"The motive of solving a difficult task", as well as "the motive of fighting enemies with the help of cunning" (Krinichnaya, 1987, p. 164) are embodied in the story in the situations where the young "avengers" fight with the White Guards, showing ingenuity and keenness of wit. This is embodied in the episodes demonstrating the sudden attack of the enemies on the Red Army, the theft of secret documents, the hero's escape from the captivity of Father Makhno, the girl's dressing up as a young man and penetration into the enemy's camp.

"The motive of a real fight against external enemies in open battle" (Krinichnaya, 1987, p. 164) runs through the whole book "The Little Red Devils". Clashes between Budyonny's cavalry and the White Guards, between the scouts and the Makhno gang, between the young "avengers" and the enemies of the revolution, take place throughout the development of the story.

The motive of the hero's overcoming space with extraordinary speed and the motive of the enemy's escape (Krinichnaya, 1987, p. 169) are realized in the situation of the flight of the White Guards and Makhno's gang from the battlefield.

The motive of false hospitality is realized in the story several times: Gadfly, disguised as a young man, entered the bandit Makhno's camp, or Pathfinder Mishka, being captured by the bandit, got directly to the revelry of the robbers:

The guests made way for him. Pathfinder Mishka with bound hands was led to the middle of the hut and placed in front of the chieftain.

Having stopped the feast, everyone watched him with interest from head to toe, like an overseas curiosity. Mishka was in a battered Red Army uniform (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 33).

The motive of the false betrayal is embodied in a situation where the bandit Makhno offers Pathfinder to go to his service: "– Hey, lad, – shouted the third bandit, – go to the service of Old Man Makhno. Bold guys have a good life here. Mishka proudly straightened and punched himself in the chest:

I am a budyonovets, and I do not want to rob people with you. And I will flog Makhno at the first opportunity ...

Even the very experienced Makhno was taken aback for a minute by such insolence" (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 33).

The motive of a hero's fight against plenty of enemies is realized in the situation where Makhno promises Pathfinder freedom if he defeats the bandit Bityuk in fisticuffs:

– Fight, beast! If you beat Bityuk, go to all four corners of the earth.! .. And that is it!

– Aren't you lying? – Mishka doubted

– Wha-aat? – Makhno enraged. – The word of the chieftain is holy, as the Lord God's one. Start, Bityuk!..

/.../. A furious Bityuk, in a rage, rushed at Mishka, delivering blows randomly /.../.

– Well, I will kill you, dog! – Bityuk wheezed and, bending his furry head, rushed to Mishka like a bull, directing a blow to his stomach. But Mishka, like a cat, jumped to the side and with such a force

banged Bityuk with his fist on the back of his head, that he crashed to the floor with his whole body and furrowed with his nose (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 34)

The motive of abducting a woman by an enemy (Krinichnaya, 1987, p. 159) also finds its implementation in the story “The Little Red Devils”. Makhno fell in love with a young girl and abducted her by force:

– Okay! He hissed evilly. – You didn’t want to submit voluntarily, I’ll take you by force ...

With a half-dead girl in his arms, Makhno stepped outside and walked quickly toward the horse.

Someone's light shadow bounced silently from the window, lurking in the bushes.

Makhno safely reached the horse. He put the girl across the saddle and began to untie the bridle (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 39).

The young heroes, Pathfinder and Gadfly, realize the motive of the rescue of the abducted woman (Krinichnaya, 1987, p. 164) in the salvation of the girl:

Two figures suddenly appeared behind the bandit. At the same instant, a wide sack fell on his head and immediately sank to his feet. Before Makhno could figure out what had happened and grab the sabre, he was already lying on the ground, tightly twisted with ropes, panting in a flour sack /.../. Gadfly and the Pathfinder carefully removed the girl from the saddle and, lowering her to the ground, began to bring to life (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 39).

The story ends with the motive of reprisal against the robber, a function borrowed by the author from the legends about the robbers themselves: “Everyone tried to push forward, to the platform, and at least to catch a glimpse of the reckless Budyonny's cavalymen who managed to put nobody but Makhno into the bag” (Blyakhin, 1968, p. 42).

Interestingly, there are legends about the struggle against external enemies, involving active fight of women against enemies (Sokolova, 1970, pp. 44–45).

An interesting fact is that the motive of deliverance from enemies as a result of a miracle (Krinichnaya, 1987, p. 161) is missing from the story. The reason lies in the fact that Blyakhin wrote many anti-religious books: “Down with the devils, down with the gods, down with the priests, down with the monks”. The book quickly received recognition from the public, subsequently was reprinted many times and was titled in different ways: “How priests make a fool of folks”, “In the stifling (suffocating) smoke of incense” (Blyakhina-Toporovskaya, 1978, p. 36). Of course, both the plot and the language of a work of art are the imprint of the essence of the personality, its author's attitude, its individual picture of the world (Chernitsyna, 2015, p. 29). The writer’s atheistic views influenced the story’s plot structure: the heroes pinned their hope in their victory over the enemy not on a miracle, not on the intervention of higher providence, but on their own strengths, their wit, courage, resourcefulness, ingenuity, and courage.

Nevertheless, Blyakhin uses the mythologies of the Christian anti-world in the story. For example, it is clear that the title of the story “The Little Red Devils” and the title of the chapter “Evil spirit” are borrowed from the Christian mythopoetic system. Heroic deeds, their sudden, swift and bold raids on gangs are correlated with the actions of evil spirits. Enemies are afraid of young scouts because they are an indestructible force associated with the world of darkness. Young fighters for Soviet power are fighting, as Blyakhin has repeatedly emphasized, for a “sacred cause”. By the “sacred cause” the builders

of the new state, revolutionaries, Red Army soldiers, and defenders of the new government in the Civil War understood the fought for Soviet power: “Yes, he will try to die bravely, without tears and pleas for mercy. After all, he is dying for Soviet power, for that power that will bring freedom and happiness to all the poor of his dear Homeland ...” (Blyakhin, 1968, par. 4, p. 27). It is known that communist morality in the new atheist state adopted the principles of the Christian ethical system of values. An attempt is made to transfer the high ideals of the Christian religion from the Holy World to the world of earthly, vital, everyday realities. The author of the story “The Little Red Devils” is no exception, portraying young people fighting for a “holy cause” with fury – the principles of communism. Hence, it was no coincidence that the image of a noble robber is romanticized, his actions are not just poetized, but elevated to the rank of heroic ones. But by the folk’s consciousness such a heroic ideology is conceived as destructive, taking the other side of the good, belonging to the anti-world, heroic spirit, plunging a noble robber into the world of darkness (Panova, 2010, p. 5–23).

Both noble and robbers proper, regardless of the motivation for their actions, were comprehended by the collective unconsciousness of the Russian people as carriers of a dark origin. In contrast to the people who composed the legends of the robbers, and the Russian classics Pushkin and Leontyev, the authors of numerous stories about the noble robbers, Blyakhin recreates the heroic appearance of the young “avengers”. We should add that in Christianity, the very concept of “revenge” is interpreted as a serious sin. This polarity of positions in understanding the image of the robber is unequivocally determined by the presence of two different worldviews: religious and atheistic. In the first case, the actions of young heroes are interpreted as sinful, comparable to robber actions, although noble, in the second – as heroic, since the heroes are fighting for a “holy cause”, which means building communism.

7. Conclusion

The main contents of the adventure plot of the Soviet heroic tale is a social struggle, a clash of two worlds. These are in the events of the revolutions of 1917, the events of the civil war that manifested the breakdown of society into two opposite camps. This social struggle became the main contents of the adventure literature of this time. In this vein, the revival of folk traditions in the literature of this period becomes clear, including the actualization in the structure of the stories of folk legends about robbers, legends about the struggle against external enemies. The writers are interested in the storylines of traditions, the figurative system, poetics, and ideology of the folklore genres listed above. In them, the collective unconsciousness of the Russian people is most fully revealed. The synthetic nature of the mythologeme of juvenile heroic spirit (superhuman, demonic) in children's Soviet narratives of the 30s is associated with the combined influence of the Slavic folk tradition, the foreign literary tradition of the adventure novel and Soviet ideology (on the one hand, neo-mythological in its nature, and on the other, romanticizing heroes, thirdly, conveying the so-called “religious atheism”).

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