MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGES IN THE POETICS OF A. S. PUSHKIN

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Abstract. The article examines the specific functioning of mythological images in the works of A. S. Pushkin. Based on the analysis of *The Mermaid*, *How Happy I Am…*, *The Domovoy*, and *The Demons*, the study explores the transformation of traditional representations of supernatural beings within the poet's artistic system. Particular attention is paid to the images of the mermaid, domovoy, and demons, as well as to the interaction between the real and the irrational planes in Pushkin's poetics. The study demonstrates that Pushkin's engagement with mythological heritage is not limited to reproducing folk beliefs: mythological images become a means of psychological and philosophical reflection on human existence.

Keywords: A. S. Pushkin, mythology, mythopoetics, mythological image, mermaid, domovoy, demons, folklore, Slavic mythology, Romanticism.

Mythology is one of the significant sources of A. S. Pushkin's artistic creativity. The poet's use of folk legends, Slavic beliefs, and folkloric characters is motivated not only by his interest in national culture but also by his desire to explore universal problems of human existence through mythological imagery.

Of particular importance in Pushkin's poetics is the reinterpretation of images associated with traditional folk ideas about the supernatural. Mermaids, domovoi, demons, and other characters retain their connection with folklore

traditions; however, within Pushkin's artistic world, they acquire new psychological and philosophical functions.

The image of the mermaid is particularly illustrative in this regard. In Slavic mythology, the mermaid is associated with natural forces, water, death, and the liminal state between the human and supernatural worlds. In the drama *The Mermaid* (1829), the folk belief that a girl who dies by drowning becomes a mermaid serves as the basis for the tragic story of the miller's daughter.

In the first part of the work, the heroine appears as an embodiment of passionate and genuine love. However, the betrayal of her beloved leads her to a tragic decision — to drown herself. After her death, the heroine acquires a new, mythological status. Thus, her transformation into a mermaid can be interpreted as an artistic metaphor for the transition from the world of human relationships into the realm of the supernatural.

The chronotope of the mill is also of particular importance. The setting is not merely a neutral location but functions as a kind of liminal space. The symbolism of the mill is associated with movement, rotation, cyclical processes, and may be correlated with ideas of celestial millstones, the Wheel of Fortune, and the cyclical nature of existence. In the drama, this image contributes to the fusion of the real and the irrational planes.

A different meaning is attributed to the image of the mermaid in the poem *How Happy I Am…* (1826). Here, there is no tragic story of transformation, and the mermaid appears as a beautiful natural being:

"Her eyes now fade, now brightly shine,
Like stars that flicker in the sky…" [2, p. 43]

Particularly significant are the comparisons of her speech with "an infant's first babbling," "the murmuring of waters," and "the Maytime rustling of the heavens." Through these images, the mythological character becomes directly connected with nature. The mermaid embodies harmony between the human

being and the natural world, while the mythological motif serves to express the lyrical experience of the speaker.

Thus, a comparison of the two works reveals different forms of artistic transformation of the same mythological image. In *The Mermaid*, the image is associated with the tragedy of love, death, and revenge, whereas in *How Happy I Am…* it is associated with the beauty of nature, harmony, and the emotional experience of the lyrical speaker.

Another aspect of Pushkin's mythopoetics is represented in the poem *To the Domovoy* (1819). In Slavic tradition, the domovoy is perceived as a household spirit and protector associated with the well-being of the home and its inhabitants. Pushkin preserves this function of the character, addressing him as a real guardian of the estate:

"Remain, secret guardian, beneath the ancestral shade…" [2, p. 118]

The domovoy becomes the guardian not only of the house but also of the surrounding environment: the garden, fields, waters, and household. Thus, the traditional folkloric character is incorporated into a specific cultural and personal context. The mythological element becomes connected with the themes of ancestral space, memory, and the relationship between human beings and nature.

A distinctive form of interaction between the mythological and the real is demonstrated in the poem *The Demons*. In this work, natural forces gradually acquire the characteristics of supernatural power. Initially, the reader is presented with a picture of a winter blizzard:

"The clouds race, the clouds are swirling;
The moon, invisible,
Illuminates the flying snow;
The sky is dim, the night is dim." [2, p. 83]

However, as the plot develops, the real plane begins to interact with the irrational one. The speaker finds himself in a space where it becomes

impossible to determine the boundary between a natural phenomenon and the influence of supernatural forces:

"The demon leads us through the field, it seems…"

As a result, the blizzard acquires symbolic meaning. It becomes not merely a natural phenomenon but also an artistic expression of anxiety, uncertainty, and the human confrontation with incomprehensible forces.

The circular composition of the poem plays a particularly important role in creating its mystical atmosphere. The repetition of the opening lines intensifies the sense of enclosed space and the impossibility of finding a way out. The hero's movement becomes circular, corresponding to one of the central motifs of the poem — the inability to overcome the chaos and uncertainty of the surrounding world.

Thus, Pushkin's image of the demons goes beyond the traditional folkloric representation of evil spirits. It acquires psychological and philosophical meaning. Through this image, the poet addresses the problems of fate, good and evil, human purpose, and the incomprehensibility of existence.

The analysis demonstrates that mythological images in A. S. Pushkin's works represent the result of a complex transformation of folkloric tradition. The poet preserves recognizable features of traditional characters but places them within new artistic and psychological contexts.

The images of the mermaid, domovoy, and demons perform several functions simultaneously: narrative, symbolic, psychological, and philosophical. Through them, Pushkin reveals the inner world of the human being, their relationship with nature and the surrounding space, and addresses universal questions of existence.

A distinctive feature of Pushkin's mythopoetics is the constant interaction between the real and the irrational, the human and the supernatural, the natural and the transcendent. The mythological image thus becomes a mediator between a specific artistic event and a universal meaning.

Mythological images occupy a significant place in A. S. Pushkin's artistic system. Their use is based on a profound knowledge of folk culture and Slavic mythological traditions; however, the poet does not limit himself to reproducing traditional beliefs.

By transforming the images of the mermaid, domovoy, and demons, Pushkin creates his own mythopoetic model of the world, in which folkloric heritage becomes a means of interpreting love and death, nature and humanity, fate and freedom, good and evil.

Therefore, mythology in Pushkin's works serves not only as a source of artistic images but also as a means of philosophical understanding of the world, allowing national cultural memory to be connected with universal problems of human existence.

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