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**MYTH-AND-RITUAL SOURCES OF ART
(FROM IDENTITY TO IMITATION)**

SUMMARY. Meaning by myth a way of perceiving and interpretation of the world, the author explores ways of its transformation and suggests that the ground of transfiguration of a myth-and-ritual core into other types of creative work (literature, philosophy, art) implies a semiotic mechanism of loss of identity between a signifier and a signified. Realization of a representative essence of myth images leads to understanding of their non-genuineness, as a result a mythological story is not perceived literary. Mythological characters from now on do not signify themselves but turn into signs, indicating other phenomena (they become symbols of natural powers, atmosphere events, taking place in the sky, or may express abstract notions). Rituals — active reproduction of mythological plots — change respectively. Firstly, participants of action identify themselves with the characters of narration, which was supported by various types of art (mystery drama — a play itself; music, decorations, creating emotional atmosphere). Further on it becomes clear that a ritual performance does not repeat a mythological event, but depicts it. Art, born within the frames of a ritual, which was perceived as a complete transfiguration and identification with a mythological character, is now realized as a copyism and imitation.

KEY WORDS. Myth, demythologization, ceremony, symbol, art.

Taking into consideration the variety of approaches of the myth studying, discordance in definition of the essence, functions, meaning of mythology, it is necessary to outline those initial statements which the researcher uses when putting forward his own hypotheses. In our opinion two main theses should be mentioned, as defined ways and tendencies in the myth's studying in the 20th century that are actual today. On the one hand, we see C. Levi-Strauss' tradition regarding the attitude to the myth as a way of perception and description of the world, due to which mythological understandings rise to the rank of the entire worldview defining the strategies of harmonious existence with the world [1]. On the other hand, we know the views of E. Cassirer, who was the first to perform the comparison of mythology, religion, science and art. Initially the philosopher considers them as individual and independent from each other kinds of activity [2; v.1; 30-31], further he declares that understanding of these or those images and perceptions, not only of an irrational but also of a rational character, is impossible without consideration of their evolution out of mythological images [2; v.2].

We shall try to find out what myth transformation is connected with and what mechanism is activated at the initial stage of its conversion into other forms of creative activity.

The dominant 19th century attitude to myth as to a narration led to the prevalence of works in which the mythology genesis was linked with the genesis of literary genres, which is legitimate, as the myth presents itself through narration and already exists as a literature form. In the works by Russian authors similarity of compositional schemes of the myth and the fairy-tale is analyzed. In V.Y. Propp's opinion [3] their closeness is conditioned by the fact that both the mythological story and the fairy tale are verbal realizations of the initiation ritual which reflects its structure. Moreover, the origin of the fairy-tale is considered to be dependent on historical changes in society, on development of social relations, processes of self-consciousness encouraging growth of realistic tendencies in the narration. With transformation to the genre of the fairy tale the translation of the plot is made from the space level to the social one. Instead of a mythological character, possessing magic power and getting benefits for his tribe, in the fairy tale a real man becomes the main character, and his aim is quite usual — his personal well-being. Existential coordinates, where the events take place, change. If mythological time develops out of historical boundaries, the fabulous, though being uncertain, is woven into real time. As for the space, the situation is completely opposite: mythical events develop in a familiar real world; whereas in the fairy tale the character is deported into some undefined kingdom located nowhere.

If closeness of mythological and fairy plots is absolute, their relatedness to the epos is not so evident. E.M. Meletinsky [4] connects the given genre development with the realization of objective factors, with social principles in particular, which had to be reflected in fables. According to the researcher, as a result of the state consolidation, confabulation of the historical past stops and new genres evolvement becomes possible. The need for ethnic self-identification brings about changes in the mythological plot; the war against beasts is replaced by the war against the enemy from another tribe. Eschatology is projected on the history of destructive wars between tribes and kingdoms ("The Mahabharata" can serve as an example). Besides plot changes, E.M. Meletinsky traces how peculiar genre means and methods (such as rhyme and rhythm), characteristic of epic narration, emerge out of primitive forms of verbal culture (with repetitions, incantatory formulae, intonations intensifying the perception), i.e. literary forms establishing takes place.

In foreign scientific tradition, as regards the question of genres' origin, the attention is given not so much to peculiarities of the language and verbal devices as to plots. In N. Frye's interpretation a psychological emotional aspect prevails. The myth is preconditioned by perception of nature and man's emotional experience regarding his destiny. So the plot about the origin of a hero is literally connected with a baby's birth. Similar phenomena in the nature create similar parallels: images of the dawn are associated with the beginning of a new day, spring is associated with awakening of nature. The spring-summer cycle of man's and nature's life produce the archetype of a comedy, idyll and romance. Eschatological plots inspired by the dusk, autumn

or death create the archetype of a tragedy [5]. It means that genre establishment is dependent on the contents of the narration. C. Falck renders the myth wider. According to him, mythological systems, being a form of poetry, are at the same time the basis of human cognition, which is possible due to validity of inspiration and intuition [6]. C. Falck suggests that philosophy and theology were taken over by literature in archaic times.

The researchers H. Frankfort and J. Wilson [7] are sure that early Greek philosophy still resembles spiritual searches of the primitive man and is the result of the initial intuition being a visionary way of acceptance going beyond human experience. For the myth any event is always unique and occurs for a certain reason. Gods, their actions and deeds stand for such reasons. The intellect looks not for universal laws governing processes and phenomena of nature, but for certain will which performs actions: “If the river does not flood, it refuses to flood”, the authors mention. The moment of philosophy birth is connected with transformation of mythological symbolism into theoretical notions. F.H. Kessidy [8] finds out similar tendencies in the works by Homer, explaining mythological characters by means of comparison with really existing phenomena and subjects. It is from these metaphorical comparisons and analogies that many notions, initially appearing in the form of antithesis are formed — thus, based on poetic associations, spontaneous dialectics of natural philosophers emerges. Gradually passage from a sensitive character to an artistic comparison takes place (in works by Zeno), then it moves to an abstract notion finally fixed in works by Thales. A rational way of thinking is formed while passing from the imaginative-sensitive perception to the notional-logical one. In other words, the process of demythologization is linked by the researcher with rational cognition and is preconditioned by the development of knowledge and loss of belief into mythological reality.

The myth looks for specific reasons of separate phenomena but not their general consistency. For rational cognition, any case is seen as an occurrence of nature’s general law. Mythological stories are not perceived as an eventful and emotionally rich reality any more.

What gave an impulse to the development of positive knowledge and loss of belief in mythology? For mythological thinking mythology is a true reality. And the existence of the world itself is the evidence and the proof of “mythological verity”. The world described in myths is completely similar to the real one. If the man observes a similar identity, he has no grounds to doubt in the truthfulness of origin of things and phenomena. Opportunities of mythological explanation are so extensive that it is always possible to match the most suitable version with the observed phenomena. But this very opportunity of new explanations causes doubts for as a result of re-interpretation, one and the same characters are given different meaning, i.e. the mythological character stops to be equal to himself, similar to what it means. Cognition of the symbol’s conventional nature is the beginning of transformation of the myth into other kinds of the creative activity. This process is the most evident in the field of art.

It is not necessary to speak about the fact that different types of arts originate from a ceremonial action. Nobody doubts that the drama theatre originated from mysterious images recreating scenes from gods' lives. It is most likely that the archaic "musical drama" of the primitive tribe grew into the reproduction of a ritual and possibly real hunting, during which the participants put whole-piece skin on themselves. Creeping to a herd and imitating animals' habits, they could get closer to the victim. A biologically justified action preconditioned peculiar cultural senses and psychological experiences inaccessible to a modern man: the hunter, who appeared to be in an animal's skin, had to feel himself as that animal, had to think like an animal, to react like an animal and to show all outer features of an animal (movements, voice, look). Today a similar experience can be found only in art, when the spectator likens himself to the character and tries to be in his shoes.

Appearance of music and dancing in the environment of primitive hunters is connected with a mimetic reproduction of the plot. Whether they imitated the animal's habits or copied their own working action, the mimetic nature of the archaic creativity is apparent. At its sources the art is connected with the desire of likeness to the surrounding world, with an attempt to imagine that one is some other creature: an animal, a victim, a god, a dead ancestor, the Moon, the wind or a spike. A mysterious action reproduces events of the sacral past, making the contemporaries not only its witnesses but identifying themselves with characters-ancestors acting in the original times. In archaic art it is more important not to conquer "someone else's" world but to become "friendly" in it: to learn to be a man among people and to look like an animal among animals. Especially vividly manifested itself the mimetic part of ritual actions in initiation ceremonial actions during which manipulations were performed over the body of the initiated person, giving his appearance zoomorphic features of the animal-totem. The man was to look like the totem ancestor. The crocodile genus children made skin scarifications that created likeness to the skin of the zoomorphic ancestor. Spot-like tattoos resembling the leopard's skin patterns were accordingly provided for the "offsprings" of this animal. Sharpening of teeth to make them look like a wolf's teeth meant belonging to the class of this animal. People were supposed not only to obtain features of the zoomorphic ancestor but to appropriate his properties together with the appearance: acuity of vision, incredible hearing, physical power and fitness, courage and strength. They feel how they turn into an animal, becoming it from now on.

The identity is possible unless the representative nature of art and attributes used in the ritual is understood. Initially a whole-piece skin and later some details point at the transformation leading to identification. It is not imitation, it is a complete transfiguration. The skin, teeth and bones of the killed animal, appropriated by the man, become not just his property or a decoration but belong to him as if they were the organs of his own body. Belief in possibility of such transformations has been preserved up to the present days in the form of skin-changing vision, recorded by ethnographers rituals and celebrations with the zoomorphic subject of N.L.Gondatti [9], who was present at the ceremony of an Os-tyak shaman's shamanistic ritual and told about his unusual actor talent which made

everybody, including the ethnographer himself, believe in turning of the magician into a bear, or a bird. The ethnographer is sure that a mass hypnotic séance had taken place. By this he explains his vision, real and clear, when instead of a man an animal appeared in front of him. The power of transfiguration hides reminiscences of archaic rituals performing the identification semantics with the performed thing. Today the spectator craves for a complete transformation of the actor, with this understanding that the play on the stage is just an imitation. Capability of driving into affective conditions, when “self” dissolves in the flow of emotions, and the man feels his proximity with any object; capability of visualizing other worlds and by this witnessing their existence, all these indicate closeness of the myth-ritual action to art. Besides this, art makes the perceiver forget about his/her own nature’s conventionality and believe in the equality of the image and the indicated thing, the symbol and the meaning, the actor and the character. Both for the ritual action and the stage one it is necessary to be able to leave the boundaries of one’s own essence, imitating Another Thing. Essentially, it is like an ecstasy — “going out of oneself”.

The most ancient ritual forms might have supposed an overall ecstasy: each participant of the action was put into a trans-condition to feel himself someone else (a spirit, a god or an animal), which was reflected in various mysteries of a later period. Those fragmentary descriptions and the character of antique sacraments, admitted by the devoted people, tell about the participants’ attempts to be the same as a god, whether they are Kore, Demeter, Dionysus or Egyptian Osiris and Isis. K. Kerényi, [10] analyzing Eleusinian celebrations, supposes that people who were present there felt their “transformation” at the climax moment, becoming the Mother or the Daughter (regardless of the sex of a participant). Ecstasy or enthusiasm (enthousiasmos from entheos — literally, “is filled with a god”) was the marker of such identification, later estimated as obsession and madness (mania).

The participants of mysteries called for a divined being not for its presence. They let it move into their own bodies. Behind it a more ancient ecstatic experience of identification with a divine being is found.

In archaic dedications the neophyte acquires features of an animal, “turns” into an animal once and for ever, inconvertibly. The sign of such transformation is a corporal transformation. Essentially, in mysteries the same cultural phenomenon is detected, only its meaning is a temporary transformation of a man who felt himself as a god for a short moment and thus was blessed the god’s grace. These temporary transformations were accepted as an absolute transformation, identical to the performed thing, when the man forgets about himself and loses his anthropological essence. Let us remember the plot of the tragedy by Euripides, in which Bacchae led by Agave, celebrating the party in honor of Dionysus, in the state of ecstasy, tore the leader’s son Pentheus into parts, having taken him for a lion. Plutarch informs of a similar accident in Orchomen, where during the Dionysus celebrations the women tore the son of one of them [11; v.2; 331]. Similar events demonstrate a complete identification of oneself with the mythical characters, about the state of non-detection of “self” and some archetype given in the narration. The man does not act for another character, but is this character, in any case, at the moment of the happening events. Furthermore,

a similar state becomes the prerogative of oracles, the rest participate as observers who can see the transformation, sympathize with the characters, but they do not identify themselves literally with the characters of the performance.

The artistic sphere started gaining its independence when the representative nature of such activity is understood. The oracle is not identified with the character, he does not become the same body with him, but he represents it. This is the moment from which theatre takes its origin. It is possible that the same tendencies are typical of both the drama art and literature genres development: desacralization, conversion from the space to social plane, i.e. all events, happening to the characters, are now realized more in a human than in a supernatural sense. Since in the desacralizational environment identification is not needed any more, there is an opportunity to replace the oracle by actors. Thus, professionals appear, their functions do not include transformation into and identification with the character, their task is to represent characters of another world. In drama performances archaic mimetic foundation, which presupposes a complete transformation, has been preserved for a long time. The initial coincidence of a sign with a symbol is observed in other kinds of art.

Holes and traces left by strokes of spears and stones over the picture pattern of animals in the paleolithic rock painting witness the fact that in the consciousness of the archantrope a real animal was inseparable with his own image. The image does not point at something different, it does not refer to a different thing, it is identified with the specified thing. The same is with the mythological image — it is not a representation, but an identity. “For the myth, the relations of a real equation exist there, where we can see the relations of a pure “representation”, if it has not deviated from its general and initial form and has not lost its authenticity” [2; v. 2;53]. This is testified by forms of gods esteem in ancient cultures, when they exhibited some treat or gave clothes in front of statues on the altar. The Athenians, for example, covering the sculptural image of a goddess, placed inside the temple, were sure that they put a woven peplus on the head of Athena herself. According to ethnographers, indigenous peoples of the North of Siberia fed their gods by greasing a wooden idol’s lips with grease or blood of the sacrificial animal and from time to time they changed its dress. The custom, about which researchers of the Ob Ugrians wrote with surprise, is even more demonstrative, as to identification of a god and his image.

“If, when fishing, the Ostyaks can’t catch the fish coming out of the sea at once, they return and take up for him (the Ob old man — the god of the Ob River) with curses and crying out strong words... They take him out of the place of storage, tie up with a rope and pull him over the mud, stamp with feet, spit at him and treat him badly until fish harvesting gets better” — writes K.F. Karyalainen [12; 30]. The researcher confirms that this custom is not rare and is common for many peoples, including the European ones: “The Neapolitans even beat St. Peter, if he, in their opinion, was not ready to help them” [12; 31]. Strange as it may seem, such attitude to hieratic images demonstrates a sincere and firm belief, naïve and artless, that God is among people and he sometimes does not act even after having been given gifts.

It goes without saying that the ideas on the artistic self-value appeared in the Ancient Times.

In Greece the attitude to mythological characters, as means of language, with the help of which they speak about real events, emerges. Such interpretation of the myth is found among the stoics, trying to decipher fables as an allegoric description of environments and atmospheric phenomena; it is also found in works by Euhemerus thinking that the prototype of gods is real men whose biographies have been covered with a fantastic fictitious narrative for such a long time. In the process of associating myths as some means of expression, the imaginative-sensitive form breaks free from the idea found in it, and the reality of the image disappears. Now mythological characters mean something and point at some object, but they are not this something. It means that demythologizing is a loss of identity. The plot about Pygmalion, the oracle of Aphrodite, due to whom the statue of a beautiful girl came alive (in another version the statue of the goddess herself), is significant in this context. On the one hand, the myth reflects the growth of rational understanding of the thing that the statue only portrays a man and represents his outer look. On the other hand, the myth conceals not so much the metaphor of the power of love as an unconscious regressive eagerness to reconstruct the identity, which means reconstruction of the entity of the world, in which things are essentially real, i.e. they do not function as conventional symbols replacing other things. Every object coincides with itself, but still possesses an unlimited semantic multifacetedness.

Critical attitude to mythology is possibly caused by understanding of the conventional character of designations, which also manifested themselves in terms of art. The patronship institution would not have been possible in Rome, if sculptures had been identified with the portrayed characters, but had not been recognized as their conventional symbols.

The survived images of Roman gods in their majority are imitations of Greek patterns. This imitation is of another kind, not an imitation of a divine being, but a reproduction of some esthetic pattern accepted not as a cult object but as a piece of art. Clear understanding of the semiotic essence of images is demonstrated in statues of canonized emperors. The sculptural portrait did not “replace” the real person at all, it did not point at his presence, but it reminded of him, his power, strength and might.

The research of ways of the myth’s evolution to other kinds of human activity makes it possible to reveal the reasons and principles of its transformation. It is possible to see that new forms are separated from the myth and acquire autonomy when the representative nature of such activity is understood; when the myth becomes a means of expression, its images lose the equality to the described subjects and phenomena and turn to the designation of (feelings, experience, ideas, roles, etc.). The myth remains as such until it is accepted as a reality, until it is perceived unconsciously and with all that evokes a complete credibility. When its contents do not seem adequate to the world, its re-thinking takes place. An important moment, marking the beginning of demythologization and turning it to other forms of activity, is undoubtedly connected with the process of understanding its foundations. The corresponding branch of culture appears depending on what side in the myth is exposed to understanding. The problem of literature origin is a question of plot development in connection with understanding of the narrative form and style. If relations of characters, their fantastic hierarchy are subjected to reflection, conditions for appearance

of justice and other social institutions of (government and marriage), which are no more spontaneous establishments, but are approved and socially fixed forms, are created. Philosophy is born when mythological characters stop to be themselves and point at ontological foundations of being. The main question that appears on the boundary between the two zones is the question of the authentic existence of things, the man and the space. Science appears when in the semantic field of the myth the question of the authenticity of experience emerges. Theatre appears at the moment when the ritual ceremony is understood as an imitation. The mechanism of the myth's transformation is connected with the process of symbolization growth. If, initially, the characters of the myth are accepted as identical to themselves, further their imitative nature is understood. When characters of the myth become only conventional symbols, their development is possible in any directions: they can become means of expressing notions that reflect epistemological tendencies, but they can become polysemantic symbols with an escaping sense, which is common to the irrational character of perception reflected in religion and art.

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