

**Artículo de investigación**

**THE FIGURES OF THANATOS AND EROS IN A. S. PUSHKIN'S  
POETICS**

ФИГУРЫ ТАНАТОСА И ЭРОСА В ПОЭТИКЕ А. С. ПУШКИНА

LAS FIGURAS DE THANATOS Y EROS EN LA POÉTICA DE A. S. PUSHKIN

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**Abstract**

The article deals with ontological issues of creativity and mortal implied sense of Pushkin's fairy tale. The study object is the figures of Thanatos and Eros in 'The Tale of the Golden Cockerel' fairy tale. The images of King Dadon and the Queen of Shamakhan are revealed in symbiotic relationship with folklore aesthetics. Reference to folklore is caused not only by genre of the work but also by metaphysical nature of oral tradition since the Russian people have a special attitude to the theme of death. This is evidenced by the Russian fairy tale with search of "the other kingdom" in which a hero must suffer a temporary death in order to get a wonderful object, save a prophetic bride and obtain the sacred knowledge.

**Keywords:** Thanatos, philosophy, Eros, archetype, folklore, Pushkin.

**Аннотация**

В статье рассматриваются онтологические вопросы творчества, смертельный подтекст пушкинской сказки. Предметом исследования выступают фигуры Танатоса и Эроса в «Сказке о золотом петушке». Образы царя Дадона и Шамаханской Царицы раскрываются в неразрывной связи с фольклорной эстетикой. Обращение к фольклору обусловлено не только жанром произведения, но и самой метафизической природой устного народного творчества, так как русский народ особым образом относится к теме смерти. Об этом свидетельствует и русская волшебная сказка с поисками «иног царства», в которой герой обязательно должен пережить временную смерть, чтобы добыть чудесный предмет, выручить вещью невесту, приобщиться к сакральным знаниям.

**Ключевые слова:** Танатос, философия, Эрос, архетип, фольклор, Пушкин.

**Resumen**

El artículo trata sobre cuestiones ontológicas de la creatividad y el sentido implícito mortal del cuento de hadas de Pushkin. El objeto de estudio son las figuras de Thanatos y Eros en el cuento de hadas "El cuento

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del gallo de oro". Las imágenes del rey Dadon y la reina de Shamakhan se revelan en una relación simbiótica con la estética del folklore. La referencia al folclore es causada no solo por el género de la obra sino también por la naturaleza metafísica de la tradición oral, ya que el pueblo ruso tiene una actitud especial hacia el tema de la muerte. Esto se evidencia en el cuento de hadas ruso con la búsqueda del "otro reino" en el que un héroe debe sufrir una muerte temporal para obtener un objeto maravilloso, salvar a una novia profética y obtener el conocimiento sagrado.

**Palabras clave:** Thanatos, filosofía, Eros, arquetipo, folklore, Pushkin.

## Introduction

Philosophical questions associated with a person's life and death and ontological issues are pretty much the most attractive for a researcher. On the one hand, the theme of death was under the ban in the Soviet literature studies for a long time; no one wrote about religious and metaphysical aspects of creativity. On the other hand, this taboo theme occurs in the works of many great writers and deserves careful attention. Thanatology in Russia began to develop as early as in the second half of the 20th century. Nowadays there are many works dedicated to mortal imagery in poetics of Pushkin, Lermontov, Yesenin and Bunin. The object of our study is Pushkin's "The Tale of the Golden Cockerel" in which the theme of death is expressed latently and a love conflict is brought to the forefront. Of course, we should raise the question of folklore tradition in this work since here we deal with a fairy tale.

## Materials and methods

The Problem of Pushkin's folklorism is sufficiently developed, it is especially difficult to write on this subject after the publication of monographs and articles by D.N. Medrish (1980, 1996) and V.A. Smirnov (2009). However, scientists highlight that the folkloric tradition in the poet's work was studied mainly at the "external level": "... cases of " open "folklore (description of rituals, folklore epigraphs, explicit quotations) are fully taken into account and considered by the Pushkinists, hidden folklorism, when people's ideas penetrate into "neutral", seemingly pictures and episodes, dissolving in the author's speech and as a result becoming an essential element of poetics, often goes unnoticed" (Medrish, 1996). This remark makes us re-read in the light of folklore tradition, its refractions, "The Tale of the Golden Cockerel", about which, on the one hand, is written a lot (articles by V. Nepomnyashchiy (1972), D.N. Medrish (1980, 1996), V.E. Vatsuro (1995), on the other hand, there is no complete clarification of the "story" of the fairy tale and some of its cultural realities. The methodology of

our research assumes the use of historical-functional, historical-genetic, system-typological and structural methods.

"The Tale of the Golden Cockerel" is one of the most complicated works written by A.S. Pushkin. Behind the imaginary simplicity, beyond the genre itself, lies the complexity of Pushkin's creative laboratory. On the one hand, A.A. Akhmatova revealed the source of Pushkin's work. The tale is based on the short story "Legend of the Arabian Astrologer" by Washington Irving. This idea was developed in the article by K.A. Boyko (1979). On the other hand, the author of the study emphasizes that it is not enough to understand the fairy tale's fact of revealing all possible sources. Of course, the initial elements for the study are already available. In the same article, Boyko, through careful analysis, reveals another source of Pushkin's work-an Arabic anonymous essay in the French translation of P. Vatier, which indirectly influenced the Russian version of the tale. However, there are many ambiguities: "The efforts to find in different sources and maps the unknown Egyptian toponyms were unsuccessful. They could not be successful, and as it turned out later, there was no such city on the banks of the Nile" (Boyko, 1979) (about the Borsa land), besides, revealing the archetypal code requires special comment. So, let's turn to Pushkin's fairy tale and the archetypal structures inside it. It is very difficult to digress from the Irving's text, but behind the external similarity lies the deep understanding of both authors of female eidology in the culture. If Irving is given a direct indication that it is the priestess who creates this miracle animal, the ram and the rooster sitting on it (the skoptsy, the sage is only the embodiment of her idea), if Irving could just borrow from the Arabic work, as indicated by the remark Boyko, the toponym of "Borsa" (the name of the great priestess of fire in the Arabic work and the name of the terrain in Irving), Pushkin, as we see it, consciously establishes the connection between the Queen of Shemakha and the cockerel. In this connection, there is only one question: Why does

a fairy tale need a figure of a king need? Is it just poetic liberty? It seems that the answer lies not only in the composition of the American writer, but also in Russian folklore or even the world cultural tradition - the notions of a marvelous bride and totemic cults associated with it.

There is a detailed explanation of one of the main ideas of the Russian fairy tale, is present in the work "Another kingdom and its seekers in the Russian folk tale" by E.N. Trubetskoi (Trubetskoy, 1922), the idea of deliberate and even necessary overcoming of obstacles by the hero, experiencing temporary death for the sake of real knowledge, which is represented by special things by the bride - we are talking about the female archetype of the Great Goddess (Trubetskoy, 1922). However, the ideas about the woman-progenitor are connected with the totemic cult, with its animal totem. The typology of cultures demonstrates the presence of such representations, details, nuances associated with them: it is present in Russian fairy tales, as shown by V.Ya. Propp (1986), N.V. Novikov (1974) (the plot of the fairy tale about Ivan the Bear's ear is especially indicative (Bernshtam, 2011)), it always existed in Georgian folklore, which Russian literature often used, as shown by the studies of E.B. Virsaladze (1976), this was reflected in the choice of the "May King and Queen", the triple incarnation of the Muses in the Western tradition, as shown by the works of R. Graves (2007). In such case, the idea of the gold cockerel as a sign of the upper world, as an animal-totem, arises by itself. Where did Pushkin get such knowledge? First, his interest in Egyptian culture, expressed later in the story "Egyptian Nights", is extremely important in this regard.

## Results

A cult in honor of the Omnipresent goddess, who could incarnate as a cow / bull, or a falcon / eagle (Betrò, 1996) and carry cultural heroes (animals could vary - the main realization of the principle of the cosmic body model, winged totem animal) is found in the Egyptian cosmogonic myths and funeral rituals. V. Irving could also consciously or not experience the influence of Egyptian culture, it is no coincidence that his Arabian astrologer came from Egypt. Secondly, perceiving Pushkin's creativity is immanent, let us turn to the lines from the novel "Eugene Onegin":

In those old Lyceum days,  
In the first bright flower of youth,  
*Apuleius won my praise,*

*While Cicero I loathed, in truth.*  
(Pushkin, 1977-1979)

The place has already attracted the attention of researchers. Thus, V.A. Smirnov in his article explains this preference by the fact that it is in the "Metamorphoses" of Apuleius that the cultural hero is represented, his exposure to solar knowledge through the travestion of the bear / ass (the totem of the Great Goddess, Artemis), which attracted and was present latently in Pushkin's poetics, expressing himself in the plot of Tatyana's dream (Smirnov, 2009). It seems that the comment deserves special attention and can be supplemented with the following clarification: the work of Apuleius was influenced by funeral rites, cosmogonic myths of Ancient Egypt. The latter is important in the light of our problem. Thus, the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann, analyzing a fragment from Apuleius, writes that the work presents a "ritual descent to the after world" (Assman, 1989), this is due to the solar secret knowledge and the female cult. We can speak of the indirect contact of Pushkin's artistic system with the Arab, and through it the Egyptian archaic tradition (cosmogonic myths, funeral rites, totemic beliefs). So, this ethnographic comment can finally explain the triad of King Dadon - the skoptsy - the Queen of Shemakha, in which the golden cockerel is not just a "talisman", as Boyko writes about it, but an animal-totem in honor of the great Goddess. This complex of ideas is complicated by interaction with the Russian fairytale tradition and, I think, epic, which, according to the remarks of specialists (works of E.M. Meletinsky (2004), V.Ya. Propp (1986), are also genetically related to the absorption of the totem beast and competition with the virgin warrior. We can see the feminine principle, the Creative Goddess (Elfrod, 2009) in the Egyptian culture, the Russian fairy tale knows the "prophetic princess", and "women warriors" - and in either case the hero must "grow" to his chosen one, or descend into the kingdom of Dead, visit the afterlife, or engage in battle with a virgin warrior - in any case, you can talk about the agony, the space struggle (Freidenberg, 2008). The remarks of V.E. Vatsuro are very important, because the "high" and "low" hero of the fairy tale, that "the king can not be the hero of the fairy tale precisely because the accession is the final result of the fantastic tests" (Vatsuro, 1995). However, we emphasize once again, Pushkin "does not follow" folklore, his folklore is not secondary (Gorelov, 1979) - Dadon was given a golden cockerel "to grow", but he did not take place as a hero - the king is not worthy of his knowledge. At first sight, it is an oxymoron, but in the light of

initiatory actions, the ritual ornament is built by Pushkin correctly. The Golden Cockerel is seated on the spoke:

*Cockerel from the top of spire  
Watches round for the fire.  
Is the danger seen by chance -  
Faithful sentry wakes at once.  
(Pushkin, 1977-1979)*

And everything would be fine, if suddenly there would not be a collision - in the East an "incomprehensible" battle unfolds, two sons do not return from the battlefield:

*No armors, helmetless  
Swords run through each others' chests,  
Cold and breathless.  
(Pushkin, 1977-1979)*

In studies about the cult of the Great Goddess, according to historical mythology, we find one important refinement - the hero always fights to death for the sacred knowledge that he wants to receive, the unworthy one awaits death. The queen's tent is located "between the mountains", on a hill, which also indicates a high semantics, on the ritual nature of the situation:

*Tsar brought troops to highland country  
There, amidst sky-touching peaks  
Stands a silky tent on sticks.  
(Pushkin, 1977-1979)*

In Egyptian ritual there also existed the notion of a "lofty hill", an island / land of cosmic creation (Elfrod, 2009), in Slavic culture there was a cult of red mountains, "girlish mountains" (Rybakov, 2013) - establishing a typology of cultures, revealing the relationship of a female archetype and Axis Mundi. The spire on which the rooster sits are a kind of World Axis, and the cockerel itself is a symbol, the totem of the high world of the Queen of Shemakha (the hypostasis of the Great Goddess). D.N. Medrish (1980) pays attention to the fact that somehow "suddenly", without words the queen disappears, but it disappears, it is worth noting, together with the cockerel:

*Cockerel swooped from spire's top,  
Flew to carriage and alighted,  
On Tsar's crown like the cockfighter,  
Spread his wings, pecked once the Tsar  
And soared up in deep blue sky  
From the carriage Tsar Dadon  
Fell on earth and he was gone.  
And the Queen - she disappeared,*

*As if she was never her.  
(Pushkin, 1977-1979)*

So, the queen and the cockerel disappeared after Dadon's death. What lesson can be learned from the Pushkin fairy-tale? Is it just a fairy tale about the greed, cunning of the tsar, the insidious beauty? Of course, V. Nepomnyashchiy, analyzing the poetics of Pushkin's fairy tales, notes: "Where is a miracle, edification is excluded," morality "is not needed" (Nepomnyashchiy, 1972), however, as shown by the fundamental work of folklorists, finally, E.N. Trubetskoi, Russian fairy tale, folklore, myth are always aimed at the cultural growth of the hero, overcoming himself; In folklore man is thought in the cosmic plane.

The fairy tale resolves the "secret paradox", which is the same for all peoples: "... in contrast to the genuine, that is, magical wisdom and everyday meaning: the first is a complete overthrow and shame of the latter" (Trubetskoy, 1922). Thus, the tsar is the embodiment of everyday truth, and the queen is not at all evil and not cruel, as the researchers write about it (Belkin, 1979), she is some sort of "test", a test on the crowning life of the king, a test of the authenticity of the title "king", which he didn't pass. And this is not so much orientalism, stylization under V. Irving's story, as a deep expression of the folklore tradition (perhaps world), its transformation, beyond which Pushkin not simply follows but enters into a poetic dialogue-dispute.

## Conclusions

So, the folkloristic commentary on the fairy tale allows us to look at the figures of Thanatos and Eros in Pushkin's poetics in another way. The theme of love and death creates a special synthesis. The female archetype expressed through the image of the Queen is a core-forming one in a fairy tale. Love which Dadon was looking for was inapproachable to him; he did not grow to it. The King's initiative way ended in death since the hero neither understood nor guessed the nature of the Golden Cockerel which personified the World axis in the fairy tale.

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