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### MYTHOLOGICAL CONTEXT IN THREE NOVELS ON «O» BY I. A. GONCHAROV

The article examines the mythological substratum that is present in the entire novel trilogy. The identification of the folklore and mythological context gives a new understanding of the artistic and ideological content of the novels. One of the connecting principles of all three texts is the line of movement of the individual from the «hell» of self-betrayal through the «purity» of the «sleepy kingdom» to the «paradise» of enlightenment. After analyzing these novels, we saw a trend in the development of the writer's mythological thinking. In the «The Same Old Story» Goncharov not only refers to the European tradition, but also creates the mythology of St. Petersburg. Novel «Obломov», which occupies an adjacent position in the trilogy, displays the features of world and Russian folklore. In the third and final novel «The Precipice», the author focuses more on Slavic mythology, comparing the characters with a wolf, a bird, a bear, and also includes the motif of snake fighting in the plot.

**Keywords:** Goncharov, mythological realism, mythologeme, archetype, folklore

Literary critic Y. M. Loshchits in his article «Imperfect Man» gives the following definition of I. A. Goncharov's artistic method – «mythological realism» [6, 169]. Indeed, in many of the author's works,

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there is an appeal to world and national mythologems. We will concentrate on Goncharov's novel trilogy («The Same Old Story», «Oblomov», «The Precipice»), which absorbs a rich mythological layer that is of great interest for our scientific research. The writer himself spoke about his novels on «O» as something whole, inseparable: «... I see not three novels, but one» [2, 72]. He expressed fears that his reader would not be able to read between the lines, to see the connection that would not just show this whole, but also «explain exactly what this whole says» [2, 72]. There are already many works devoted to the study of this issue. Each of the researchers interprets Goncharov's words differently. It seems to us that «between the lines» we must discern that mythological beginning, which is inseparably connected with the movement of the soul from «hell» through «purgatory» to «paradise». Associations immediately arise with Dante's «Divine Comedy», the name of the parts of which is reflected in the names of Goncharov's characters: Aduyev, Oblomov, Raisky<sup>1</sup>. Like Dante, Goncharov is interested in the possibility of moving along the «spiritual ladder» only within the framework of modern thinking [7, 126].

«The Same Old Story» (1847), the author shows how people lose themselves and their moral values in an attempt to imitate the crowd, and thereby make their way to «hell» («Infant beliefs are lost, and what have I learned new, true?. Nothing: I found doubts, rumors, theories... and from the truth even further than before ...» [5, 263]). Aduyev gradually renounces himself, having known disappointment in his ideals, and turns into Pyotr Ivanovich, his calculating and cold uncle. It is no coincidence that Goncharov focuses our attention on the cold that permeates the whole of St. Petersburg and its inhabitants, because in this way he manages to mythologize this city and show how personality is forgotten in it, its complete destruction, similar to how hell depersonalizes everyone who enters there. Translated from ancient Greek, the name Pyotr means «stone», this explains both his coolness, and the indifference and cruelty of the city itself to the fate of people. The first meeting of the uncle with his nephew becomes in many ways indicative, since Pyotr Ivanovich immediately maintains a distance with Alexander: «He was about to throw himself on his uncle's neck, but the latter, shaking his tender, youthful hand with a powerful hand, held him at some distance from himself, as if in order to get enough of him, and more, it seems, in order to stop this impulse and limit myself to a squeeze» [5, 34]. Aduyev, who has just arrived

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<sup>1</sup>In the original there is a play on words with the surnames of the characters: the first part of the surname of Aduyev includes the word «ad» which means «hell». Oblomov's surname includes the root «oblom», which means «circle» or «piece». Finally, the surname Raisky has the root «rai», which means «paradise».

from a village where the locals do not lose the «warmth of faith», the reception given by his uncle somewhat puzzles the character. But, continuing to live in St. Petersburg, Alexander does not accept the lifestyle of this soulless and «cold crowd», he himself becomes like a stone [1, 7]. Goncharov, drawing a modified hell in the image of St. Petersburg, also cannot help but include in his novel the image of a demon and the motif of diabolical temptation. The author gives the function of the serpent of the tempter to Pyotr Aduyev, who forces the character to go through trials, which as a result leads to the destruction of Alexander's illusory ideas about love, talent, friendship and gradual transformation into a product of the era.

The novel «Oblomov» (1859) occupies a borderline place in the trilogy, so it is not surprising that the Russian life depicted by Goncharov in this work can be compared with «purgatory». The author's understanding of «purgatory» is a definition of «the intermediate position of a living soul trying to climb up the spiritual ladder in its quest from hell to paradise» [7, 126]. This is, in fact, an earthly paradise, which Oblomov dreamed of as a constant immobile excess of earthly happiness («Yes, the goal of all your running around, passions, wars, trade and politics is not the manufacture of peace, not the pursuit of this ideal of a lost paradise?» [3, 181]). Unlike Aduyev, Oblomov does not waste his moral potential, does not betray his ideals, and therefore cannot be in the afterlife in any way. But this character also did not deserve the entrance to paradise, because he could not rush up to where Olga pulled him. As one of the researchers of Goncharov's creativity V. I. Miller said: «Oblomov deserved not paradise, but the peace of purgatory, like the master of M. A. Bulgakov» [7, 178]. Also Oblomovka itself, the native estate of the main character embodies the features of an earthly paradise. Goncharov puts not only the archaic meaning of the word «oblo» – circle [6, 172] in the name of the village and in the surname of the character, but also the meaning of «piece». Despite all the blissfulness and fabulousness of this place isolated from the rest of the world, Oblomovka is a piece of a once full-fledged and comprehensive life, a fragment of that very Garden of Eden. The image of Oblomovka gives Goncharov ambivalence, which confirms his heavenly and infernal beginnings: «No robberies, no murders, no terrible accidents happened there; neither strong passions, nor brave enterprises worried them»; «Everything is dead, only a variety of snoring rushes from all corners in all tones and frets» [3, 102-111]. The author himself called his novel a «big fairy tale», the core of which can really be considered the chapter dedicated to Oblomovka, because there, out of the mouth of the main character's

nanny, folk beliefs and legends about mystical creatures are fully conveyed, stories about national and world heroes (Achilles, Ulysses, Dobrynya Nikitich, Alyosha Popovich) are told. Indeed, the whole «Oblomov's Dream» is permeated with national color, but also the features inherent in the heroes of Slavic mythology are imprinted in the Oblomov himself. For example, Oblomov, like Ilya Muromets, simply lay on the couch (stove) for most of his life, but when they get a chance from above to change their lifestyle, one uses it (after the healing of the elders, the hero performs feats), and the other, despite all Olga's efforts, gives up and misses his chance.

Most of all, folklore traditions, of course, were reflected in Goncharov's third novel – «The Precipice» (1869). But before moving on to them, let's focus on the features of the image of the «author's Eden». In his novel, Goncharov focuses more not on the triumph of paradise, but on «the possibility of an ordinary sinner who has passed through hell and the purgatory of life's precipices to reach a blissful place» [7, 183]. In this case, not one, but three toposes are represented in the «The Precipice»: hell, purgatory and paradise. The sins committed by the main characters (Raisky, Vera, Tatiana Markovna) are the embodiment of hell, and their sincere repentance for what they did and their desire to embark on the path of truth symbolize purgatory. The author does not give direct hints on the further salvation and purification of their souls, so we can only guess whether these characters went to paradise reinterpreted by Goncharov. But it seems to us that their striving upward, even after a kind of fall, indicates their future fate. In talking about «The Same Old Story», we considered St. Petersburg as an infernal phenomenon, this is the place where Aduyev moves and where, under the influence of the devil (uncle), he is tempted, losing himself. Raisky, on the contrary, leaves this city, piled up with cold stones, for his ancestral estate – Malinovka, staying in which seems to him an idyll («So there is an idyll!» [4, 143]). It is there that he manages to find a real family and a real himself. Raisky justifies his surname only when he goes through all the temptations and struggles with himself, and despite the fact that in the process of his elevation he falls into a precipice, he still continues his spiritual path. What cannot be said about Mark Volokhov, who in the novel correlates with such an animal as: a wolf. But he can also be compared with the Volkh Vseslavich, because in him, as in Mark, two principles coexist: human and animal («You are all animals, ... he is a wolf» [4, 537]). In fact, the Volkh is a werewolf, because he was born from the union of a woman and a snake [1, 4]). In Mark, this werewolf essence is also well manifested: he, as a follower of the evil spirit, is a denial of all that is bright and divine (the character is a nihilist who treats love

consumeristically, for him it is exclusively the receipt of sensual pleasures). Mark's place of residence is also related to the snake: a river, islands on the Volga, a precipice (the snake lives in a river, lake, in a cave), and the motif of the tempter snake, snake fighting. The characters of the folklore plot are Volkhov and Tushin, whom Vera compares to a «Russian, honest, intelligent bear» [4, 537]. The duel takes place because Mark encroaches on the whole of Russia, on its Faith<sup>1</sup>, Tushin, like the Russian snake wrestlers Ivan Tsarevich and Dobrynya Nikitich, wins. Moreover, it is interesting that the fight takes place «in the den of the snake»: in the precipice, at its very bottom. There is an animal incarnation in Vera: it is compared to both a snake and a bird («glides like a snake down from a precipice»; «like a bird ... just fell off a precipice into the bushes» [3, 430-533]. In general, a bird in world symbolism is associated with the soul of a person, «a bird is closer to heaven, to angels» [1, 6]. It is no coincidence that when the spiritual displaces everything base and mean in her consciousness, she turns from a bird of prey into a bird of paradise. So Tatiana Markovna compares her voice «with the singing of a bird of paradise» [4, 660].

So, the idea that three states of the other world: hell, purgatory and paradise are completely equivalent to the state of the soul of the characters runs through the entire narrative of the trilogy. The author shows the spiritual growth from Ad-uyev (Hell-uyev) through Oblomov to Rai-sky (Paradis-ky). The main character of «The Precipice» took the traits of both Alexander and Ilya: he also makes mistakes and falls, goes astray, but unlike others, he finds the path of truth, strives for it, and eventually finds himself. The folklore and mythological context also manifests itself in the topases: Petersburg, Oblomovka, Malinovka, in comparisons of characters with animals: bear, wolf, with heroes: Ilya Muromets and Dobrynya Nikitich, in motifs: temptation by a snake, snake fighting. Identifying mythologems in the texts, we found that Goncharov was gradually moving away from world mythology, focusing his attention on national traditions.

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<sup>1</sup>The name Vera means faith.

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#### **МИФОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ КОНТЕКСТ В ТРЕХ РОМАНАХ НА «О» И. А. ГОНЧАРОВА**

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В статье рассматривается мифологический субстрат, присутствующий во всей новой трилогии, анализируются мифологические подтексты всех трех романов И. А. Гончарова. Выявление фольклорного и мифологического контекста дает новое понимание художественного и идеологического содержания романов И. А. Гончарова. Одним из связующих принципов всех трех текстов является линия движения индивида от «ада» самообмана через «чистоту» «сонного царства» к «раю» просветления. Проанализировав романы, мы увидели тенденцию развития мифологического мышления писателя. В «Обыкновенной истории» И. А. Гончаров не только опирается на европейскую традицию, но и создает мифологию Петербурга. Роман «Обломов», занимающий смежную позицию в трилогии, отображает черты мирового и русского фольклора. В третьем и заключительном романе «Обрыв» автор больше акцентирует внимание на славянской мифологии, сравнивая персонажей с волком, птицей, медведем, а также включает в сюжет мотив борьбы змей.

**Keywords:** Гончаров, мифологический реализм, мифологема, архетип, фольклор

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