

IMAGES OF WATER AND LAKE IN A.P. CHEKHOV'S PLAY "THE SEAGULL": SYMBOLIC AND MYTHOLOGICAL ASPECT

Viktoriya Kondratyeva

Russia, Taganrog
viktoriya_vk@mail.ru

(Translated by Elizaveta Kondratyeva)

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Abstract. The paper is devoted to the image of lake, the role of which in the play "The Seagull" is complex. It is shown that with the help of this image and also with symbolic and mythological images of water, tree, moon and sun which are all interconnected, the author structuralizes the artistic space of the play, in which basis there is a principle of bi-worldness and vertical world order. The image of theatre is also included in the worldview and this fact adds ontological feature to it. On the symbolic mythological level, connection of different motifs (lake, seagull, theatre, etc.) appears.

Keywords: Chekhov, drama, space, symbolism, lake, water image, theatre image.

ВОДА И ОЗЕРО В ПЬЕСЕ А.П.ЧЕХОВА «ЧАЙКА»: СИМВОЛИКО-МИФОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ АСПЕКТ

Виктория Кондратьева

Россия, Таганрог
viktoria_vk@mail.ru

(Перевод Елизаветы Кондратьевой)

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается образ озера, роль которого в пьесе «Чайка» сложна. Показано, как помощью образа озера, а также сопряженных с ним символично-мифологических образов воды, дерева, луны, солнца в пьесе структурируется художественное пространство, в основе которого лежит принцип двоемирия и вертикального миропорядка. В эту картину мира включен образ театра, что придает ему онтологический характер. Сцепление разнородных мотивов и образов (озера, чайки, театра и т.д.) возникает на уровне символично-мифологическом.

Ключевые слова: Чехов, драматургия, пространство, символика, озеро, образ воды, образ театра.

A.M. Gorkiy said that Chekhov's dramas disturb people from reality and lead them to philosophical generalizations. In A.P. Chekhov's works he noted one specific feature of realism: rising to an inspired and deeply considered symbol. Z. Paperniy noticed that in "The Seagull" the playwright, from one point of view, "lessens the unity of action which is connected with 'monohero' and single-track action", and, from the other point of view, "he

enforces figurative and symbolic unity of the play, its structural properties, correlation of parts and details”[Paperniy 1980: 40].

A pond, which reminds actress about her childhood, appeared in first notes to “The Seagull”. In the final variant it turns into a lake. In minds of characters this image is changed, and it reflects peculiarities of their view of life. For Nina water is a familiar environment, she “longs... to the lake, like a seagull” (C. XIII,10). After being away for two years she confesses that “from the arrival <...> I was wondering here... near the lake” (C. XIII, 56). In the world view, created in the play by Treplev, lake is an essential part of the universe. On the contrast, Trigorin perceives it as a beautiful stage set. Peculiar, nearly sacred attitude to the lake is emphasized in the cue by Dorn, who called it magical.

Mythological ideas about water, which has been usually understood as a life-spring, relate to the image of lake. A. Golan admits that in ancient times water was understood as a source of power and was used in quack medical treatment [Golan 1994: 249]. In the play we can find the motif of water healing. For instance, Arkadina thinks that Sorin should go “to some watering-place” in order to recover (C. XIII, 23). Treplev also experiences the unconscious wish to go to this healing element when he takes hard the flop of his performance and Nina’s alienation of affections. In world perception of ancient people sacral attitude towards water was of a great importance. Traditionally, water separated their own world from the strange one. Lake and river were one of the boundary modifications between the world of the dead and the world of the living. It is a well-known fact that there are flowage lakes and that is the reason why in this case there is no difference between lake and river. The most important thing about it is that it is a water space. Famous etymologist M. Fasmer shows direct connections between the Slavic word “lake” and words “boundary, edge and border” [Vasmer 1996, v. 4: 549], and also with the Greek name of “the river in underworld” – Archeron [Vasmer 1996, v. 3: 125]. There is a spatial semantics in Nina’s surname, it is connected with water as a boundary (Zarechnaya → literally “beyond the river”). This meaning creates literal play-spacing: Zarechina’s house is situated on the opposite shore of the lake from the Sorin’s manor. Nina relates this house with her late parent’s image “Can you see the house and garden on the opposite shore? <...> It’s a manor of my late mother” (C. XIII, 31). Moreover, the surname “Zarechnaya” contains meaning of transition, crossing the space. In order to get to Sorin’s manor she crosses the lake. The situation of Nina’s coming to the theatric performance has symbolic details: “The sky is scarlet, the moon is rising. How I urged my horse to go faster and faster!” (C. XIII, 9). In the world perception of ancient people horse is a chthonic creature which was used to get to the realm of the dead. V.Y. Propp noticed that in religions and in fairytales horse is considered to be “creature from the world of the dead” [Propp 1946: 173], its main feature is “dead nature” [Propp 1946: 180]. The young lady rushed from one world to the other riding a horse and crossing a water boarding (the lake) between these worlds.

Chekhov reinterpreted the archetypal situation: the main character makes transition from the manor of her late mother to the world which she considers to be interesting and happy. It is a symbolic way from death to life, and it will become a metaphor of character's life, of a story not only about her death as a seagull, but also about her moilsome revival. That is why the situation which happened later when father wouldn't let her enter the ancestral estate is quite logical, because there is no way back. Nina's life will be not so cheerful how she expected it to be. At the beginning she plays "mechanically", "senselessly". And before Zarechnaya will understand how to "live" on stage, she will learn about death of a child, she will be left by her beloved man. Treplev noticed in her manner of acting one feature: "he always attempted great and difficult parts, but her delivery was harsh and monotonous, and her gestures heavy and crude. She shrieked and died well (emphasis added – V. K.) at times, but those were but moments" (C. XIII, 50). The revival starts with understanding the main issue: "I understand at last, Constantine, that for us, whether we write or act, it is not the honour and glory of which I have dreamt that is important, it is the strength to endure. One must know how to bear one's cross, and one must have faith. I believe, and so do not suffer so much, and when I think of my calling, I do not fear life" (C. XIII, 58). Her final leaving from the living-room is also symbolic: she runs away through a solid glass door. With the help of the image of the solid glass door Chekhov reminds us the idea about worlds' differentiation. On the other hand, glass is one of modifications of water. So happens the mythologization of the threshold. Nina's leaving from Sorin's house, the situation of crossing the threshold of his house means that she leaves the world which related to her old life. The last talk between Zarechnaya and Treplev becomes confirmation of this fact. Everything is experienced like has never happened before: first stage experience, youthful dreams and hopes, love to Trigorin, etc. In the end of the play Zarechnaya does total transition, a new period starts in her life.

G.I. Tamarli notes that there is a "constant direct or indirect linking" between the image of the lake and motifs of arts and creation [Tamarli 1993: 91]. In the second act Dorn and Arkadina read an extract from G. Maupassant's book with a notable title "On the water".

The basis for Trigorin's short story will be Nina Zarechnaya: "A young girl grows up on the shores of a lake, as you have. She loves the lake as the gulls do and is as happy and free as they. But a man saw her who by a chance was wandering that way, and he destroyed her out of idleness, as this gull here has been destroyed" (C. XIII, 31-32).

By the way, in Treplev's staging the lake becomes an important special component of the performance, theatre and life are indirectly connected with each other with the help of the water image through the motif of fishing. Noteworthy is the fact that for Trigorin, a man of arts, theatre and fishing are of the same value. In the first act after the performance being interrupted Boris Alekseevich speaks about the pleasure which he got from it (though he

“couldn’t understand it at all”), appreciates Nina’s “sincere” way of acting and “beautiful” setting (the lake, sky) and after it he suddenly changes the subject of conversation: “There must be a lot of fish in this lake” (C. XIII, 16). In the other cue of a famous writer these both activities become equal finally: “As soon as I stop working, I rush off to the theatre or go fishing (emphasis added – V. K.)” (C. XIII, 29). Fish is the very beginning; it is a beginning of life itself. In folk culture it denoted charity or gifts (remember the fairytale about Emelya the Simpleton or “The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish” by A.S. Pushkin). The image of fish “in religious symbolism <...> correlates with natural power of reproduction and conceiving which are considered to be a prior evidence of divine omniscience (emphasis added – V. K.)” [Hall 1994: 301]. In the context of the play it can be interpreted as inspiration. Fishing (Trigorin’s favourite activity) can be interpreted as a creative activity when he becomes self-absorbed.

In Treplev’s phrase about theory one can also notice a connection which appeared between concepts of theatre and fishing: “When the curtain rises on that little three-walled room, when those mighty geniuses, those high-priests of art, show us people in the act of eating, drinking, loving, walking, and wearing their coats, and attempt to fish out (emphasis added – V. K.) a moral from their insipid talk; when playwrights give us under a thousand different guises the same, same, same old stuff, then I must needs run from it, as Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower that was about to crush him by its vulgarity” (C. XIII, 8). Staged stories are as boring, uninteresting and monotonous as rural life which is called a “minnow-pond” by Sorin.

The lake takes an important place in the play’s artistic space. Arkadina tells that there are six country estates on the shore of the lake. So, in “The Seagull” the lake is the center around which artistic space is formed and harmonized. This principle is similar to the ancient idea that the center and the world’s axis was “The world tree”. There are a lot of researches about the connection between tree and water. We will mention only several facts. J.G. Frazer showed that Roman Diana was honored as a goddess of forests, but simultaneously she was synonymous with water nymph Egeria – protectress of posterity and family [Frazer 1983: 16]. In a big research devoted to mermaids Russian scholar D.K. Zelenin purposely emphasizes the question about habitat of these mythological creatures and makes an amazing conclusion. Despite the common opinion that mermaids are water maids, the belief shows that they have connection not only with water, but also with a forest [Zelenin 1995: 154]. A.K. Baiburin notes that “the image of a tree <...> was used as a representation of an idea about Universe structure... In this image ideas about space, time, community, life, death and many others which are important (from the point of view of this community) for better understanding of the world and finding one’s own niche in it” [Baiburin 2005: 36-37]. So, one more mythologem – a tree – is introduced to the play. N.I. Ishchuk-Fadeeva commenting on casual mention of the elm tree in “The Seagull”

emphasizes the fact that in Chekhov's plays tree is a "must-be" character: "A tree here <...> is not a specific elm tree at all, it is a symbolic tree which was honored by ancient Slavic people" [Ishchuk-Fadeeva 1999: 224]. In Shamraev's cue we can notice metaphorical comparison of acting technique with a tree: "The stage is not what it was then, Irina Nikolaevna! There were sturdy oaks (emphasis added – V. K.) growing on it then, where now... but stumps remain" (C. XIII, 12). Dorn replies: "It is true that we have few dazzling geniuses these days, but, on the other hand, the average of acting is much higher (emphasis added – V. K.)" (C. XIII, 12). In this small dialog three phases of vital rhythm are mentioned: blossoming ("There were sturdy oaks"), death ("now... but stumps remain") and revival, growth ("the average of acting is much higher"). Theatre lives according to the law of a lifetime circle as well as everything else does.

First of all, the idea of "the world tree" relates to the idea of a vertical world order. It is this idea which becomes a determinative factor when it comes to organization of the stage structure of theatre. In Treplev's performance a vertical line is outlined with a help of the lake's image. Against the background a "Father of the Eternal Matter" should appear. World-soul – Nina Zarechnaya – is on the hill, she is sitting on a stone. On the top of the space there are essential performance attributes: the sky and the moon. That is how alignment of forces related to confrontation of the good and the evil, light and darkness is determined. However in the play of a young playwright there is a story about the outcome of this confrontation, it is also tells us that after a consistent and brutal struggle (where the world-soul should win) "matter and spirit will then be one at last in glorious harmony, and the reign of freedom will begin on earth" (C. XIII, 14). In Chekhov's play the lake reflects integration of opposite things just like a tree is a "synthesis of sky, earth and water" [Cooper 1995: 69]. Once Chekhov pays our attention that water in the lake reflects the sky, the sun and the moon. In the first act there is a notice: "The moon hangs low above the horizon and is reflected in the water..." (C. XIII, 13). In the stage direction which appears in the second act it is said: "The lake, brightly reflecting the rays of the sun, lies to the left" (C. XIII, 21).

The theatre outstrips its certain and realistic sense when interacting with mythologems of lake and tree. It is not only an important element of social life, it also conveys and reflects main laws of existence: eternal alternation of life and death (theatre itself passes this life cycle: it is born and it dies in front of the viewers), equilibrium and connection of opposite origins. So, in the play "The Seagull" the image of lake is complex. With the help of this image and also with symbolic mythological images of water, tree, moon and sun which are all interconnected the author structuralizes the artistic space of the play in which basis there is a principle of bi-worldness and vertical world order. The image of theatre is also included in the worldview and this fact adds ontological feature to it. On the symbolic mythological level connection of different motifs (lake, seagull, theatre, etc.) appears. Implica-

tion in Chekhov's plays is created by mythopoetic images and methods. The implicated sense isn't "pronounced", but it is created in the viewers and readers' conscience on the basis of "ready" symbolic meanings of things and phenomena which already exist in culture. Thus, Chekhov's plays perception implies both direct (plot) impression and a figurative one. So, the author creates a dialog between these things which he proposes and that cultural matrix which readers or viewers already have in their minds.

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Kondratyeva Viktoriya – candidate of Philological Sciences, Professor at the Department of Russian Language and Literature in the Taganrog Institute named after A.P. Chekhov (filial branch) "RSEU (RINE)"

Contact details / Dane kontaktowe:

Кондратьева Виктория Викторовна – Таганрогский институт им. А. П. Чехова (филиал) «РГЭУ (РИНХ)» 347936. Россия, Ростовская область, г. Таганрог, ул. Инициативная д.48.

ПОВЕСТЬ А.П. ЧЕХОВА «СТЕПЬ» (ИЗ РУКОПИСНОГО НАСЛЕДИЯ А.П. СКАФТЫМОВА)

Наталья Новикова

Россия, Саратов
novikovanv@mail.ru

Аннотация. Данная работа представляет собой публикацию отдельных заметок из рукописного фонда А.П. Скафтымова, посвящённых целенаправленному рассмотрению внутреннего состава повести А.П. Чехова «Степь», а также осмыслению её в контексте прозы, предваряющей пьесу «Чайка». Во вступительной статье все подготовительные материалы, относящиеся к заявленной теме, характеризуются с содержательной стороны, прослеживается выявление замеченных исследователем мотивов, мотивируется порядок расположения рукописных фрагментов, тем самым выявляется логика развития исследовательской мысли применительно к изучению конкретного художественного явления.

Ключевые слова: А.П. Чехов, «Степь», А.П. Скафтымов, время и логика исследования, рукописные материалы.

"THE STEPPE" BY A.P. CHEKHOV (FROM HAND-WRITTEN HERITAGE OF A. P. SKAFTYMOV)

Natalya Novikova

Russia, Saratov
novikovanv@mail.ru

Abstract. This work represents the publication of the separate notes from hand-written fund of A.P. Skaftymov devoted to purposeful consideration of internal structure of the story "The Steppe" by A.P. Chekhov and also to its judgment in the context of the prose preceding the play "Tea". In the introductory article all preparatory materials relating to the announced subject are characterized from the substantial party, identification of the motives noticed by the researcher is traced, the order of arrangement of hand-written fragments is based, the logic of development of a research thought thereby comes to light in relation to studying of the concrete art phenomenon.

Keywords: A.P. Chekhov, "The Steppe", A.P. Skaftymov, time and logic of a research, hand-written materials.

Настоящая работа примыкает к вышедшей ранее, посвящённой повести А.П. Чехова «Скучная история» [Новикова 2018: 131–150]. Уже там было оговорено, что отдельные замечания о ней, а также о «Степи», «Палате № 6», «Моей жизни» появились в черновых набросках А.П. Скафтымова ещё в первой половине 1930-х годов. Постепенно накапливаясь, исследовательские наблюдения и суждения становятся узловыми элементами подготовительных материалов к статье «"Чайка" среди повестей и рассказов Чехова»¹ и затем концептуально значимыми пунктами собственно её содержания. Вместе с тем характер аналитического рассмотрения названных повестей новаторски выявляет