

EVOLUTION OF ANTIQUE MOTIVES IN V. BRUSOV'S LYRIC HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

In V. Brusov's creativity the big gallery of images of outstanding commanders, governors, historical figures round which geroi-ko-patriotic motives are concentrated is created (protection of the state, a public debt, courage and valor in fight against enemies, etc.). Representing destinies of people of those far times, V. Brusov looked for analogies with modern to him an era, comparing surrounding reality to majestic images and events of Ancient Rome. Strong and strong-willed characters from cultural history of Ancient Rome in art consciousness of V. Brusov were opposed to everything to spiritually low and morally weak, public chaos and decline at a boundary of the XIX-XX centuries. In delineation of historical figures and known events V. Brusov leaned not only on documentary sources, but also on myths that was embodied in a number of mythological motives which purpose was a creation of an aura of heroics round this or that image (Anthony, Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, Sula, etc.). However the poet resorts not only to "poetic reconstruction" of historical color, separate details, will accept space and time, but also to creation expressive "psychological drawing" – movements of soul, passions, contradictions of characters which became, according to the concept of the artist, a reproach of the spiritless present. Geroi-ko-patriotichesky motives are often combined with psychological that leads to effect of "revival of far times and events in human images" (V. Brusov). V. Brusov's attention was drawn not only outstanding heroes, but also the characters opposed to society (the rebels, eremites, derelicts, indifferent, angry, proud, etc.) in whom symbolist motives – loneliness found reflection, sincere suffering, alienation, etc. Some of these characters were associated with spiritual decline modern to the poet of society, with moods of disappointment and moral crisis.

Keywords: lyrics, subject, motive, image, tradition, anthology, innovation.

The article deals with antique motives in Valeriy Yakovlevich Brusov's lyrics. Poems which embody the ancient events and ideas are analyzed in the research. Particular attention is paid to the heroic images and motives, their functions and methods of creation. The role of ancient traditions and motives in the formation of the poet's individual style and the paradigm of Russian symbolism is defined.

Throughout his creative work Brusov successfully mastered different cultural layers which were integrated into his lyric and, transformed by the power of poetic vision, became the key features of his individual style. The problem of artistic synthesis in the writer's works has been the study subject of many scientists (Dmitriy Maximov, Konstantin Motschulsky, Nikolai Burlakov, Nikolai Ashukin).

However, this issue has not been entirely resolved in literary studies. In this connection, it is necessary to consider in more detail the methods and forms of development of ancient motives in Brusov's works. This determines the relevance of this study.

A distinctive feature of Brusov's poetry was the engagement of historical images and events for creation of heroic images opposed to modernity. Evidence of this interest in the distant past are the cycles «Любимцы веков», «Баллады», «Правда вечная кумиров», «Властительные тени» and other. Brusov's historical images are closely related to his pursuit of heroic characters, vivid passions, saturated with intensive meaning of life. He turned to the issue of national culture at various times, trying to express his understanding of the essence of «national spirit» of various nations, creating a portrait of some figure from stories of different peoples, nations and nationalities.

Brusov had "antique passions" throughout his life. The poet had constant interest in the antiquity; for him antiquity had some magical power through which the real was perceived transfigured. And it was, of course, more profound.

Studying Brusov's creative work, we could trace antique motives from his early poetry to the late period of his literary activity.

History did not lead him away from real world; it rather brought him closer to it, deepened and explained it. The revival of interest to "эпохи перелома", centuries and millennia changing, was due to the writer's realization of destruction of the passing away values, feeling of "the end of the world", eschatological mood and the need to find a way out and gain new ideals.

The poet tried to find salvation in distant past and for that purpose took a rich collection of ancient images, motives, themes from the antiquity. In his poems many mythological and historical images are used: Orpheus and Eurydice, Odysseus and Calypso, Theseus and Ariadne, Jason and Medea, Hero and Leander, Aeneas, Kirk, Helen, Garmody and Aristogiton Alexander, Antony and Cleopatra, Julius Caesar and Brutus Pompeii, Caracalla, Nero, etc. All of these are symbolic names personifying good and evil, vices and virtues, victories and defeats, democracy and tyranny, civilization and barbarity.

Brusov did not accept vulgarity and prosaic "midway" of reality and for that reason he tried to "compensate" the absence of greatness with his heroic figures, glorifying true heroes: great patriots and fighters for homeland ("Гарибальди", "Завет Святослава"). The writer poeticized not only high, human qualities of his characters, but sometimes even completely different qualities. In a number of poems Brusov glorified figures of proud and lonely, violent and cold individualist characters. They are detached from the nation («Данте»), sometimes deeply despise it («Мойсей»), violate their civil duty in the name of a personal whim («Антоний»), and some become conquerors («Александр Македонский», «Наполеон») [9, p.26].

N.S. Burlakov in the book "Валерий Брюсов. Очерк творчества" (1975) points out that for Brusov "дышать комнатной пылью" and from his powerlessness be delighted with some artistic achievements is too little. «Медленно влачить ежеднев-

ное существование, лениво передвигаться по жизни от скуки до тоски, не видеть ярких красок – грустно. Поэту снятся «северные владыки», времена викингов, войны и борьба; даже «дикие крики» предпочтительнее медленного шевеления в пыли» [5, p. 41]. Offering the editor of “Вопросы жизни” journal his poems, Brusov said: «Это античные образы, оживленные, однако, современной душой» [2, p. 767].

Brusov’s focus on the “old centuries” had a great importance in his poetry. A lot of his poems are completely anthological, that is built upon materials of ancient cultures. However, antiquity and modernity were closely integrated in the poet’s artistic perception/consciousness. In the article “В.Я. Брюсов” (1924) [11, p. 140-141] D.P. Sviatopolk-Mirsky revealed a mixture of an ancient myth and modern mythologies in the poem “Тезей Ариадне” (1904). In Theseus’ speech to Ariadne the main plot motives of a Greek myth are reproduced (Daedalus, Labyrinth, Minotaur). The two last lines (“the author’s notes”) are full of symbols:

«И над водною могилой
В отчий край, где ждет Эгей,
Веют черные ветрила –
Крылья вестника скорбей.
А над спящей Ариадной
Словно сонная мечта,
Бог в короне виноградской
Клонит страстные уста». [3, p. 390]

In the poems of cycles “Любимцы веков” (“Третья Стража” collection), “Правда вечная кумиров” (“Венок” collection), “Властительные тени” (“Зеркало теней” collection), “В маске” (“Семь цветов радуги” collection) stories, known in history and in culture are developed. For example, the biblical legend of Adam and Eve, the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, a well-known episode of Anthony and Cleopatra. These texts often contain characteristics of people of the ancient world, drawn in many cases as their monologues. However, this characteristic is often saturated with some contemporary matter as well.

The boundaries of the poetic world of the past created by Brusov are broad. He raised the culture of the ancient East, the myths of Greece and Rome, the Scandinavian epos. The contrast between the high level of civilization and inevitable decline attracted him in particular. The poet’s interest in antiquity, especially in the era of ruin of the ancient times, was obviously based on the mental crisis of the modern era. In understanding the patterns of history Brusov went his own way, he was attracted not by mystical and religious aspects of ancient culture, but by its heroic ideals. In his creative work there is pathos of history and the idea of the mankind moving forward through disasters of all centuries.

D.E. Maksimov points out that “идеалом В. Брюсова, претворенным в его лирике, становится напряжение и подъем жизненных сил во всех сферах их возможных проявлений. И самую высшую форму напряжения В. Брюсов видел в героике. Отсюда последовательно реализуемое желание В. Брюсова связать свою поэзию с героическим содержанием древних эпох, и прежде всего с римской и греческой античностью» [8, p. 91]. “Античные мифы обладают среди нас и поныне совершенно исключительной живучестью и силой, – wrote the poet I. Anniensky. – Благодаря античным мифам возникла та категория героизма, без которой в нашем творчестве, вероятно, не образовалось бы ни поэмы, ни трагедии, ни романа» [1, p. 6].

Describing the tragic destiny of ancient civilizations’ people, V. Brusov was looking for analogies with modernity in the destinies of those people. He always compared modern life and the modern world with ancient civilizations.

Critic, theorist of literature and a close friend of V. Brusov, M. Voloshin repeatedly reported on his work: «Мне памятна одна беседа с В. Брюсовым... Одни области прошлого раскрылись, а другие замкнулись, – сказал В. Брюсов. – Египет мне совершенно чужд. А вот Ассирия очень близка. Совершенно закрыт для меня мир Библии. Из этой области я не написал ни одного стихотворения... Для меня. Рим ближе всего. Даже Греция близка лишь постольку, поскольку она отразилась в Риме» [6].

V. Brusov often drew parallels between characters of ancient and modern world, introducing in his poems the names of gods, kings, commanders and other strong personalities. The poet was attracted by strong characters given not only with distinction, human valuable qualities. There are poems, in which he poeticized the proud and cold, angry, furious indifferent to people or dispose them heroes and mythological figures. Those are the king Assargadon, Bajazet, the spirit of darkness Loki, a bloodthirsty Medea, deprived by Brusov of those human feelings, which Euripides saw in her, Swedish martial king Carl XII, cruel and sophisticated Roman dictator Sulla. These characters were raised over bourgeois civilization aesthetically, in brightness and power, but they were not certainly opposed to it by its fullness of spiritual nature [8, c. 94]. V. Brusov was always looking for answers for the difficult questions of existence in the ancient world.

In 1901, Gorky wrote to Brusov, trying to awake in young talented poet the desire to join the protest of Russian intellectuals against the autocratic government despotism: «Если вас, сударь, интересуют не одни Ассаргадоновы надписи да Клеопатры и прочие старые вещи, если вы любите человека – Вы меня, надо думать, поймете <...> Вы, мне кажется, могли бы хорошо заступиться за угнетаемого человека, вот что» [7, c. 152-153]. However the Brusov’s protest against modernity was expressed in other ways – through a retrospect.

In a cycle of poems «Pravda vechnaya kumirov» the beautiful characters are depicted – ancient figures, carved of brilliant marble words. The poet serves as the sculptor of artistic speech: his characters are figurable like the ancient bas-reliefs. «Idols» of the poet are before the readers: Demeter, Orpheus and Eurydice, Medea, Theseus and Ariadne, Achilles, Orpheus and the Argonauts, Cleopatra and Antony.

From the impressive expression of the dialogue, «Adam and Eve» dialogue, and the same dialogic poem of Orpheus and Eurydice V. Brusov moved to specific history figures. And in all that variety of themes the single principle was felt – the motive of willful craving, pride, strength, valour and promethean revolt.

The cross-cutting motive of the cycle is the motive of permanence, eternal passion constancy, which is the same for slaves and pompeian, for Antony and Cleopatra and for Adam and Eve, and for the northern Loki, and for the heroes of Greek mythology. In «Tretya strazha » the main poet’s idea was to identify the most common in of Brusov’s opinion, moments of world history [10].

Some other heroes of the cycle should be noted, they are Clytemnestra and Faust, they are not commanders or government leader, but they are strong personalities, possessing an unusual temperament. V. Brusov believes that very passionate

personalities are equal to great historical figures in their inner strength.

Clytemnestra, the sister of the Spartan Queen Helena (according to the one of the myth variants, they both were the daughters of Zeus), the wife of the Argos king Agamemnon (Atrides, son of Atreus), who is the Greeks leader in the Trojan War. At the beginning of the campaign, Agamemnon sacrificed to the gods his daughter Iphigenia. During the absence of her husband Clytemnestra became closer with Egiŝt, who according to her feelings killed Agamemnon on the day of his return. Clytemnestra tried to justify herself in mariticide telling that was a revenge for her daughter Iphigenia.

N. S. Burlakov wrote in the monograph «Valeriy Brusov. Creative essay» (1975) that «поэт продолжает считать тему сильной страсти высшей темой поэзии. Рисуя неукротимую в своих стремлениях человеческую личность, В. Брюсов не ставит перед собой задачи полного, всестороннего изображения героя: он выделяет в человеческом характере лишь одну черту и доводит ее до апогея» [5, с. 144].

The passion does not calm down in Clytemnestra's soul. Envy to Helen, because of which the Trojan War took place, where Atrides was killed, makes the young widow embittered and hate, and the poet justified the impulsion of his heroine:

«Сестра царит в надменной Трое,
Сестре – немолчный гимн времен...

А я – отвержена, забвенна,

Мне – прялка, вдовья участь мне...» [4, с. 71-72]

Using the method of «poetic reconstruction» of the poet «enlivens» the characters of Hellas, giving them a modern features (Orpheus, Eurydice, Odysseus, Calypso, Ariadne, Theseus, Jason, Medea, Daedalus, Icarus, and others.).

In the Silver Age significant moves were made in studying and recreation the Hellenistic poetry colouring, in this respect in Russian literature the richest experience was accumulated and stable traditions were created. And Bryusov's contribution in this area was huge: the stylistic decision in themes and characters development he found, was adopted in the modernist poetry of the 1900s, and he grand in intention cycle «Sny chelovechestva» (1909-1911) became the unique without any analogues in the world of poetry [8, с. 28-29].

V. Bryusov dreamed of creating a poetry anthology «Sny chelovechestva», in which he would include the ancient poets of India, China, Japan, Persia. All of these countries, their history and culture, he studied in his youth and in the end he decided to embody his grand intention of creating a book entitled «Sny chelovechestva».

In the draft manuscript of the planned book cover, its name is: «Sny chelovechestva. Liricheskiye otrazheniya vseh stran, vseh narodov vseh vremen». In the first draft of the foreword to the supposed publication he outlined his task as following: «Пред-

ставить все формы, какие прошла лирика у всех народов во все времена. Перенять самую манеру поэтов» [3, с. 316]. «От безыскусственных песен первобытных племен, через лирику древнего Востока, античной древности, народов, создавших новую Европу, и народов, населявших Америку до ее завоевания конкистадорами, через все многообразие искусственной поэзии, как она была разработана за последние три-четыре столетия, вплоть до форм, найденных недавним прошлым и отыскиваемых поэтами «сегодняшнего дня», – я хочу представить своим читателям образцы всех приемов, какими пользовался человек, чтобы выразить лирическое содержание своей души. В целом «Сны человечества» должны быть хрестоматией всемирной поэзии» [3, с. 460].

Peculiarity of V. Bryusov artistic vision was usage of historical images and events, often mythologized, which became special prism to image the modernity, Antique motives are throughout of the oeuvre of the writer. They are organically intertwined with other motives (for example with east motives, motives of Scandinavian epos, Bible etc.), which are in, motivic and thematic complex of antiquity. Filing a spiritual crises of modernity, crushing human passions and excessive pragmatism of compatriots, V. Bryusov showed great interest in creation of strong and bright characters, which he found in the past.

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