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MITOLOGINIAI HEROJINIO EPO MOTYVAI: MENINĖS FUNKCIJOS IR JŲ VAIDMUO FORMUOJANT HEROJAUS ĮVAIZDĮ

Mythological Motifs in the Heroic Epic: Analysis of the Artistic
Function and Influence on the Formation of the Hero's Image

SUMMARY

In the context of modern literary criticism and cultural studies, it is particularly important to re-establish the link between mythology and literary tradition, to reveal new aspects of interpretation and to promote a deeper understanding of the heroic epic. The analysis of the artistic function of mythological motifs and their influence on the formation of the hero's image provides a deeper understanding of the evolution of literary works, as well as an important contribution to the disclosure of the universal principles of the heroic epic. The study aims to reveal the internal mechanisms of interaction between mythological elements and the storyline and to identify their contribution to the revelation of psychological aspects of the characters in the heroic epic. To achieve this goal, a few methods were used, including semiotic and psychoanalytic analysis, as well as historical, cultural and hermeneutic methods. The main results of the study point to the significant influence of mythological motifs on the heroic epic, which is manifested in the formation of character images and the development of the plot. The analysis has shown that mythological elements not only play a decorative role in the text, but also contribute to the structural depth of the epic, giving it an additional layer of meaning and symbolism. It has been found that mythological motifs help to intensify conflicts, convey ethical paradoxes, and create a unique emotional connection with the reader or viewer. It was also found that mythological motifs influence the formation of characters' psychology, revealing their internal conflicts, motivations, and character development. In addition, the results suggest that mythological motifs are an important element in understanding the cultural and historical contexts intertwined with the heroic epic. Their contribution to the creative process is manifested in their ability to reproduce collective images and values that define the identity of society. Thus, mythological motifs not only enrich the aesthetic aspect of the epic, but also penetrate deeper into the essence and meaning of the

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: kultūrinis kontekstas, simbolizmas, personažo tapatybė, psichologinis aspektas, estetika.

KEY WORDS: cultural context, symbolism, character identity, psychological aspect, aesthetics.

heroic narrative. The practical significance of this study lies in the fact that it provides a scholarly basis for understanding and applying mythological elements in the modern literary and cultural context, thus contributing to the development of a scholarly approach to the heroic epic.

SANTRAUKA

Šiuolaikinės literatūros kritikos ir kultūros studijų kontekste ypač svarbu atkurti mitologijos ir literatūrinės tradicijos ryšį, atskleisti naujus interpretacijos aspektus ir skatinti giliau suprasti herojinį epą. Meninės mitologinių motyvų funkcijos bei jų įtakos herojaus įvaizdžio formavimuisi analizė leidžia geriau suprasti literatūros kūrinių raidą ir svariai prisidėti, atskleidžiant universalius herojinio epo principus. Šio tyrimo tikslas – parodyti vidinius mitologinių elementų bei siužeto sąveikos mechanizmus ir nustatyti, kaip jie padeda atskleisti psichologinius herojinio epo personažų aspektus. Šiam tikslui pasiekti buvo pasitelkti įvairūs metodai, pavyzdžiui, semiotinė ir psichoanalitinė analizė, taip pat istoriniai, kultūriniai bei hermeneutiniai metodai. Pagrindiniai tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad mitologiniai motyvai padarė didelę įtaką herojiniam epui: ji pasireiškia veikėjų įvaizdžių formavimu ir siužeto plėtojimu. Analizė atskleidė, kad mitologiniai elementai tekste atlieka ne tik dekoratyvinį vaidmenį – jie taip pat prisideda, kuriant struktūrinę epo gelmę, suteikdami papildomą prasmę bei simbolikos sluoksnį. Nustatyta, kad mitologiniai motyvai padeda sustiprinti konfliktus, perteikti etinius paradoksus ir užmegzti unikalų emocinį ryšį su skaitytoju ar žiūrovu. Taip pat išsiaiškinta, jog šie motyvai turi įtakos veikėjų psichologijai, atskleidžia jų vidinius konfliktus, motyvaciją ir charakterio raidą. Be to, rezultatai rodo, kad mitologiniai motyvai yra reikšmingas elementas, padedantis suprasti kultūrinius bei istorinius kontekstus, susipynusius su herojiniu epu. Jie prisideda prie kūrybos proceso, gebėdami atkurti kolektyvinius įvaizdžius bei vertybes, apibrėžiančias visuomenės tapatybę. Taigi mitologiniai motyvai ne tik praturtina estetinį epo aspektą, bet ir prasiskverbia giliau į herojinio pasakojimo esmę bei prasmę. Praktinė šios studijos reikšmė ta, kad ji suteikia mokslinį pagrindą suprasti ir taikyti mitologinius elementus šiuolaikiniame literatūriniame bei kultūriniame kontekste, taip padėdama plėtoti mokslinį požiūrį į herojinį epą.

INTRODUCTION

The study of mythological motifs in the heroic epic is an integral part of literary analysis, which attracts the attention of scholars due to the decisive influence of motifs on the formation of characters. However, mythological motifs in the heroic epic become not only a source of aesthetic pleasure, but also a key element for understanding the basic aspects of human existence, such as morality, heroism, devotion, and conflict. Considering modern challenges and socio-cultural transformations, the study of mythology contributes to the discovery and understanding of universal values that cross different eras and cultures. Therefore, the relevance of this topic is determined

not only by the high artistic value of the heroic epic but also by its influence on the formation of cultural and moral values in modern society.

The research aims to reveal the influence of mythological motifs in the heroic epic on the formation of the hero's image. It is necessary to determine how these mythological elements interact with the plot, influencing the development and structure of the epic. The problem is to analyse the mechanisms by which mythological motifs enrich the literary text, giving it depth and symbolism.

The literature analysis in the field of heroic epic and mythology shows that, despite the considerable research, many

aspects of this topic remain unexplored and require further consideration. Some studies are limited to describing facts, while others focus on the specifics of a particular epic or mythological system, leaving aside general principles and patterns.

N. Sharifzad et al. investigate the mytho-epic motifs associated with the image of the bull and cattle in ancient Persian epic poems (Sharifzad et al. 2021). The authors analyse the different contexts of the functioning of these images and their symbolic meaning. In particular, the motifs of battles between heroes and mythical bulls, images of sacred and magical bulls, etc. are considered. The important role of these mythologies in the structure of epic plots and their connection with ancient Iranian mythology is shown. However, the article is rather narrowly focused on the material of the Persian epic. In addition, the authors do not consider possible historical and genetic connections of these motifs with the mythology of ancient nomadic tribes of Central Asia, nor do they analyse changes in the artistic and ideological function of these mythologies depending on the historical and literary context.

The work of S. Kaxxarova and Z. Baxronova is dedicated to the exploration of positive and negative traits of mythological figures in epics from various cultural traditions (Kaxxarova and Baxronova 2020). The authors emphasize identifying characteristic features of these figures and their impact on the development of the plot. However, the work is notable for the absence of consideration of contextual factors, such as cultural, historical, or social dimensions, which

could also influence the perception and interpretation of mythological figures in respective epics. Additionally, there is no examination of the potential interaction of these mythological figures with the contemporary reader and their role in transforming the meanings of these epic works in a modern context.

T. Tham explores specific motifs in the epic (Tham 2020). The author's study aims to identify and analyse the characteristic motifs that define the epic of a particular region. T. Tham identifies specific motifs used in epic works, considering their significance and role in shaping the cultural heritage of the region. The study aims to identify the unique elements that characterise the epic of this cultural area. The study focuses on specific motifs in the epic but does not sufficiently consider their transformation and evolution over time. Consideration of changes in the interpretation and meanings of motifs can reveal the dynamics of their emergence and development (Kieliszek and Gocłowska 2021).

The work of B. Aitbayeva et al. is dedicated to the study of the genealogical foundation of the epic as a historical and cultural heritage of the people (Aitbayeva et al. 2023). The analysis conducted in the paper aims to identify connections between genealogical elements and epics, considering their role in shaping historical and cultural heritage. The authors focus on important aspects such as lineages that contribute to the affirmation of identity and cultural traditions. However, the paper lacks a detailed examination of methods for analyzing genealogical data in the context of epics,

as well as the influence of sociocultural changes on the perception and interpretation of genealogical figures in the modern world. Additionally, exploring the interaction between genealogical motifs and other mythological aspects could be beneficial in understanding deeper layers of semantics and symbolism in heroic epics (Pavlichenko 2023).

Ł. Kubicki analyses the life of the Byzantine emperor as an example of a heroic epic narrative that reflects the mythologisation of the hero's path to power (Kubicki 2023). The author examines the use of traditional mythologies and plot devices to create an idealised image of a ruler endowed with a divine mission. However, the study does not examine the possible influence of folk epic on the formation of these mythological and epic narratives, nor does it determine to what extent heroisation helped to legitimise the power of these rulers in the public consciousness.

The book by D. Leeming is dedicated to the study of mythological themes, in particular, heroic journeys (Leeming 2023). The author examines various aspects of mythology, focusing on the role of heroic journeys in shaping mythological narratives. The book explores general themes related to the formation of the hero, the trials he faces, and his development as a symbolic archetype. However, at the same time, the work does not include a study of the archetypes and psychological aspects underlying mythological images and the hero's journey.

Given the shortcomings of previous studies, the study aims to determine the role of mythological elements in the cre-

ation of the artistic structure of the epic and their influence on the formation of heroic images in literature (Kaxxarova and Baxronova 2020; Tham 2020; Sharifzad et al. 2021; Aitbayeva et al. 2023; Esemuratova 2023; Kubicki 2023; Leeming 2023). The main objectives of the study are to analyse the artistic function of mythological motifs; to analyse the influence of mythological motifs on the hero's image, and to determine the impact of mythology on the literary context.

To analyze the artistic function and influence of mythological motifs in the heroic epic on character formation, the study employed historical and cultural, hermeneutical, semiotic, and psychoanalytic methods. These methods collectively explored the integration of myth into the cultural and literary narrative, revealing deep connections between mythology and societal values, and traditions manifested in literary works. Semiotic analysis identified the symbolism and deeper semantic layers mythological motifs bring to the narrative, enhancing plot development and emotional impact on readers. Hermeneutics provided insights into the complex semantic aspects of myths, considering historical, cultural, and literary backgrounds essential for understanding these motifs' meanings within the grand narrative. Psychoanalytical analysis delved into characters' psychological dimensions, examining how mythological motifs shape heroes' inner worlds and conflicts.

For this study, a variety of materials were used to help study and analyse the subject matter. Literary texts of the heroic epic, namely heroic poems, and leg-

ends from different cultures to identify mythological motifs, as well as works that include heroic images and plots were used. These are the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Nibelungenlied* by Homer

(Rees 2020; Haymes 2023; Stocking 2023). In addition, the approaches, and conclusions of other researchers in the field of heroic epic and mythology were analysed to form a scientific basis.

PSYCHOANALYTIC INSIGHTS INTO MYTHOLOGICAL MOTIFS IN THE HEROIC EPIC

The study of mythological motifs in the heroic epic is important for revealing the universal archetypes and semantic codes that underlie literary works. Understanding these aspects allows to better reveal the deeper meaning and psychological characteristics of the characters and contributes to the formation of cultural capital and common cultural memory.

The historical and cultural analysis of the influence of mythology on the literary genre has revealed deep connections between traditions, values, and mythological motifs that shape the text and its perception in the cultural context.

The historical analysis of the stages of the development of the heroic epic confirms that each historical stage reflects changes in worldview, values, and artistic expression, marking important moments in the study and evolution of this genre. The Archaic period is the time when the foundations of the heroic epic were formed. The oral folk art of this period is associated with mythological ideas and cults of ancestral heroes. The first epic songs and stories about the exploits of heroes appear. The Classical period is marked by the flowering of the Homeric epic in ancient Greece. The great poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*,

dedicated to the exploits of the mythical heroes of the Trojan War, are created. The established canon of the heroic epic is formed. The Hellenistic-Roman period is the time of secondary processing of the plots of the heroic epic, and the creation of literary reworkings and imitations. Various versions of myths about the exploits of heroes spread. The Middle Ages was a period of creative reworking of ancient stories in folklore and literature. Knightly epics dedicated to the exploits of kings emerge. The Modern period, which covers the 20th and 21st centuries, is a time of great transformations in the heroic epic. Socio-cultural and technological changes have affected how heroic narratives are created. The modern heroic epic actively interacts with contemporary mythology, including science fiction and fantasy elements. Authors often transform mythological motifs, adapting them to modern realities (Esemuratova 2023).

A historical analysis of the stages of the formation of the heroic epic has allowed to better understand the influence of mythology on the formation of this genre and to draw certain conclusions. In the early stages, the plots of the heroic epic were directly formed based on myths about the exploits of heroes and legend-

ary tribal ancestors. The images of epic heroes are closely related to the ideas of gods and supernatural forces. For example, Achilles is a descendant of the goddess Thetis, and Odysseus has a patron goddess Athena. The themes and poetics of early epic works reflect mythological ideas about the universe, and its division into three spheres (heaven, earth, and the underworld). Myths explained the origin of epic heroes, their fate, and adventures, and became a kind of background to the plots of heroic epics.

In the context of historical and cultural analysis, mythological motifs are considered a key element of cultural heritage that shapes a literary text and determines its perception in the context of a particular culture. The interaction of mythology and literature is becoming not only a means of transmitting ancient stories, but also an important tool for understanding contemporary cultural and social dynamics (Nimani 2023).

The heroic events described in myths and literary works reveal a deep relationship with the socio-cultural context in which they occur. The images of heroes in myths reflect the ideals, values, and expectations of society. They act as models that embody the most important aspects of culture (Demchuk 2023). For example, in Greek mythology, the hero Achilles is seen as the embodiment of courage and military prowess, important values for the Greeks. Characters' trials are often woven into a political context, reflecting the political realities and ideas of the time. They can be used as allegories for political events or conflicts. This can be observed in Homer's *Iliad*, where

the Trojan War reflects the political relations between the Greek city-states. Analysing the plots of epic poems through the prism of mythological elements shows the relationship between literature and the socio-cultural context (Rees 2020; Takovski 2020). The images of the protagonists and their exploits turn out to be not only the plot of epic stories but also important reflections of the deep social and cultural realities of their time.

The semiotic analysis of the artistic function of mythological motifs in the heroic epic demonstrates the significant contribution of these motifs to the structure and semantic content of works of art. In particular, the analysis has shown that the heroic journey in many epic works acts as a mythological motif that symbolises not only the external path of the hero but also his internal transformation and growth. For example, in Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus' journey becomes a symbol of his trials, self-improvement, and return home. In addition, the use of archetypes in the heroic epic was revealed. Such an archetype as the "heromessiah" is manifested in heroic actions aimed at saving the world or community (Rees 2020). Semiotic analysis has also highlighted how nature can serve as a mythological symbol. In Homer's *Iliad*, for example, the sea acts as a force of threat and uncertainty, reflecting the heroes' struggle with the unpredictability of life (Stocking 2023).

Through the symbolic interpretation of mythological motifs, the deep subtexts, and meanings they carry in the formation of characters and plot development were revealed. Mythological animals and

beasts in the heroic epic often act as symbols of internal conflicts of the heroes or images of the forces of nature. The use of certain colours and shapes is also symbolic. For example, in *The Song of the Nibelungs*, the motif of gold and the Nibelung ring plays an important role. Gold symbolises wealth, power, and the desire for material possessions. The ring made of gold is also endowed with magical power and becomes an object of desire, causing conflicts and tragedies. In addition, the work uses dark images and motifs of death, especially those associated with the death of great heroes and the emergence of conflicts. Darkness determines the tragic turn of events, and death becomes an important element of the heroic epic (Haymes 2023).

The results of the emotional and aesthetic semantics of mythological motifs in the heroic epic revealed important aspects related to the emotional impression and aesthetic perception of the text. Emotional semantics has revealed that mythological motifs of heroic deeds can evoke deep emotions in the reader, such as admiration, pride, or even anxiety for the hero's fate. One of the most prominent emotions in the *Iliad* is the pride associated with heroism (Dayirbekova et al. 2019). The heroic deeds of Achilles, Hector and other warriors inspire respect, as well as the impression of greatness in the readers. Aesthetic semantics has revealed how the struggle of heroes against evil is often framed in the epic as an aesthetically pleasing element (Stocking 2023). Some mythological motifs lead to emotional conflict and tragic impressions (Spytska 2023a). For example, in the *Od-*

yssey, Odysseus goes through various trials and separations, which can cause the reader to feel sadness, sympathy and hope for his return home (Rees 2020). In addition, emotional semantics has revealed how mythological motifs help to create an emotional atmosphere and determine the mood of a work. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, for example, Aeneas' journey creates an atmosphere of adventure and trials that arouses interest and suspense (Beck 2023). These examples demonstrate how the emotional and aesthetic semantics of mythological motifs in a heroic epic help to shape the reader's impression, making the text emotionally rich and visually appealing.

The application of the hermeneutic method allowed to reveal various cultural contexts of mythological motifs, reflecting their role in the formation of the heroic tradition. As a result of using this method, the semantic codes embedded in mythological motifs were revealed. This involves considering symbols, allegories, and images in context, which helped to understand how these motifs are perceived and used in various heroic epics. In particular, in Homer's *Iliad*, the shield of Achilles can serve as a symbol of strength and power (Stocking 2023). Its detailed description, considering mythological elements, reveals not only physical strength but also the ethical principles of the hero. In *The Odyssey*, an allegory of mythological elements can also be observed through the journey of Odysseus (Rees 2020). The colour motifs and images of the islands he visits have a deep symbolic meaning, reflecting the inner conflict and evolu-

tion of the hero. Hermeneutics has revealed that mythological motifs interact with other works, creating a multidimensional picture of the epic. In particular, the epic is interwoven into the cultural and literary context through allusions, quotations, and intertextual connections. Thus, the hermeneutic method has made it possible to understand and analyse the artistic functions of mythological motifs in the heroic epic in a deeper way, revealing their influence on the image of the hero and the overall course of events.

Psychoanalytic analysis in the context of the influence of mythological motifs on the image of the hero reveals deep psychological processes that determine the character and actions of literary characters. The results of the analysis point to archetypal elements in mythological motifs and hero images. For example, the archetype of the hero who goes through trials is highlighted in such heroic poems as the *Odyssey*. Deeply rooted in the collective consciousness, the hero archetype reflects the typical structures and properties of the hero, his exploits, transformations, and internal conflicts (Rees 2020). In addition, it is necessary to note the archetype of the mother, which expresses maternal aspects such as protection, feeding, tenderness and guardianship; the archetype of the father, which represents aspects of authority, protection, nurturing and teaching; and the archetype of the shadow, which reflects the dark, unconscious aspects of the personality, which often highlight contradictions and internal conflicts.

The analysis also shows that mythological motifs can reflect the internal

mental conflicts of characters. For example, in Greek mythology, Achilles' struggle with his own anger and internal contradictions becomes an important element of the *Iliad*. The inner psychic conflict of this hero makes him a character with a deeply developed inner world, deepening the intrigue and significance of his heroic image. Therefore, the *Iliad* becomes not only an epic about war but also a story about the hero's internal struggle with his mental demons (Stocking 2023).

Mythological motifs often provide the hero with the basis for forming his identity and understanding his life's calling. Through adventures and trials, the hero develops his values and beliefs. Odysseus in *The Odyssey* forms his identity and discovers his life's calling during the journey home, where he faces numerous challenges and finds his place in the world (Rees 2020). The archetypes contained in myths can serve as psychological projections that reflect various aspects of the human psyche (Spytska 2023b). The hero, identifying himself with the archetype, can thus express his inner world. In addition, conflict situations that arise in mythological stories can create emotional tension and affect the mental state of the hero. This can be, for example, the fight against evil, internal conflicts, or controversial choices. Therefore, it is worth noting that the formation of the emotional sphere and mental state of the hero in mythological stories is comprehensively determined by the influence of various factors, including trials, relationships, symbolism, conflicts, and archetypes. These aspects interact to form a multifaceted

psychological portrait of the hero in the context of mythology.

The analysis results also confirm the influence of ideologies and metaphors on the hero's thinking and perception of the world around him. The symbolism and images of myths form the cognitive structures and views of the hero. Ideologies, present in myths, determine the belief system. These ideologies can be religious, ethical, or socio-cultural, influencing the hero's thinking and decisions. In ancient Greek myths, belief in the Olympic gods and adherence to their laws formed the belief system of the heroes (Dadash-zade 2022; Kim and Chung 2023). In addition, myths can reflect the social ideals and cultural meanings of an era, which influences the thinking of heroes. This reflection is important for the formation of heroic or non-heroic traits of characters. For example, in the Greek myth of the Odyssey, Odysseus is defined by heroic qualities such as courage and intelligence, which correspond to the cultural values of the time (Rees 2020).

Thus, summarising the above conclusions, it is possible to say that the psychoanalytic analysis of mythological motifs in the heroic epic has revealed the profound influence of mythology on the formation of the hero's image and his

psychological portrait. Analysing the myths from a psychoanalytic perspective, mythological plots and images were determined to serve not only as an external history, but also as an internal space for revealing the deep psychological aspects of the heroes. Psychoanalysis has profoundly illuminated the influence of mythological motifs on the formation of the hero's personality, pointing to the role of archetypes, symbols, and emotions in this process. Analysing specific examples, the deep layers of the hero's subconscious were also revealed, and his internal motivations and conflicts were revealed.

In general, the study results provide a deep understanding of the role of mythology in the heroic epic, emphasising its significance for the cultural heritage and literary tradition. The heroic epic, enriched with mythological motifs, remains an important aspect of the perception of the world, rethinking the ideas of heroism and human nature. In light of this, the heroic epic is defined not only by its high stylistic skill but also by its deep philosophical underpinnings. Thus, the heroic epic retains its relevance, contributing not only to the preservation of cultural heritage but also to the continuous development of human understanding of the essence of existence.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MYTHOLOGICAL MOTIFS IN THE HEROIC EPIC

The study found that mythological motifs in the heroic epic permeate literary traditions, and not only reflect but also shape cultural perceptions. These motifs become an inexhaustible source

of deep meaning that gives significance to the adventures and trials of the heroes. The heroic epic, rich in mythological elements, acts as a boundless reservoir, illuminating universal aspects of

human experience (Kieliszek 2023). Its importance for cultural heritage is marked by the way it contributes to society's understanding of itself through the prism of heroic deeds and internal conflicts of the characters. The analysis has both common and different conclusions compared to the findings of other researchers in this area.

J. Farrell examines narrative forms and the use of mythological materials in classical epic works, in particular the poems of Homer (Farrell 2019). He analyses the wedding song, the recognition scene, the scene of the hero's armour and other traditional narrative elements of the ancient epic. Moreover, the author shows the close connection of these narrative forms with mythological ideas and images. Similarly, this study also analyses the functioning of certain narrative elements and mythologies in epic works. In contrast to the author's work, which is rather theoretical and generalised, this study provides a specific analysis of the functioning of certain mythological motifs in the heroic epic and their role in the formation of an idealised poetic image.

The work of G. Goethals and S. Allison is dedicated to the analysis of the process of creating hero images and identifying key aspects such as courage, competence, and virtue (Goethals and Allison 2012). In their study, the authors explore the socio-psychological mechanisms of forming heroic images, particularly how individuals and groups perceive and construct the values of heroism. The paper attempts to uncover universal aspects of heroism and its construction. However, in comparison to the research on mythological motifs in

heroic epics, the authors' work focuses on contemporary socio-cultural and psychological realities rather than analysing the structure of the epic or studying its historical and mythological roots. Nevertheless, such a comparison allows for identifying complementary findings and emphasizes the importance of the mythological foundation in shaping the hero image in epics.

The article authored by K. Abiyr is dedicated to the study of folk foundations of heroic figures in contemporary literature (Abiyr 2020). The author analyses the folklore roots that underlie the creation of heroic characters in modern literary works. This research sheds light on how traditional folk motifs influence the understanding and conception of heroic figures in literature. In contrast to the conducted study on mythological motifs in heroic epics, Abiyr's work focuses on the specific folklore foundation of the character Raimbek Batyr and examines the impact of these foundations on contemporary literature. At the same time, the analysis conducted in this work is directed towards a broader spectrum of mythological motifs in heroic epics, particularly their influence on shaping the hero image in the context of artistic function and psychological aspects.

G. Izadi analyses heroic legends and epic works as an important source for the study of myths, folklore, and ideology of ancient civilisations (Izadi 2017). The author examines the common features of heroic stories in the mythology of different nations, in particular, the motives of the hero's descent from the gods or his endowment with supernatural powers. The functions of these tales

in legitimising the power of rulers and forming a collective identity are shown. Some of G Izadi's generalisations on the typical functions and features of the heroic epic coincide with the results of the analysis in this study. In particular, the emphasis on the role of mythologies of origin and endowment of the hero with supernatural powers, as well as the functions of epic works in shaping national identity and worldview is common.

D. Beck analyses the use of similes in ancient Greek and Roman epic poems (Beck 2023). Based on the analysis of the works of Homer, Virgil and other authors, the functions, sources, and development of similes in the classical epic are investigated. It is shown how the epic similes based on mythological and folklore motifs contribute to the creation of traditional poetic style and imagery. Unlike the work of D. Beck, the present study concerns not similes or other means of poetics, but the functions of mythological motifs in the heroic epic. However, the study of the role of epic similes as a way of realising mythological images is interesting and useful for further studying the links between poetry and the system of imagery of epic works.

J. Park discusses the definition of "heroic epic" and questions the identification of this concept exclusively with the poems of Homer (Park 2020). Based on the analysis of the oral epic traditions of nomadic peoples of Asia, the author offers an expanded understanding of the genre of the heroic epic and its features. In particular, the author emphasises the importance of improvisation and variability in the process of oral epic perfor-

mance. Unlike the article by J. Park, the study is not devoted to theoretical discussions on the definition of the heroic epic. It is based on the established understanding of this concept and focuses on the analysis of specific material of the heroic epic. Nevertheless, some of Park's considerations regarding the variability and improvisation of oral epic poetry resonate with the peculiarities of the functioning of the heroic epic.

D. Quint analyses the episode of Odysseus's meeting with the Thebans in Homer's poem *The Odyssey* (Quint 2023). The article considers how the Theakian episode represents a model of an ideal society and utopian ideas about the future. Parallels are drawn with the legends of the founding of Carthage and other ancient stories about ideal communities. The peculiarities of the reception of this episode in Western literature are analysed. In contrast to the author's article, the study focuses on other aspects of the role of mythological elements in the epic, particularly their influence on the formation of an idealised heroic image. At the same time, the idea of the function of epic projection of the future can be interesting and useful for analysing the specific "time perspective" created using archaic mythologies in historical and heroic poems.

M. Imanov analyses the problem of historicity in the epic (Imanov 2023). The interaction of the archetypal (mythological) and historical principles in epic poetry is considered. It is shown that universal archetypal plots and images, realised in a specific historical context, acquire features of national originality, and are enriched with new semantic

shades. Similarly, to this work, the present study also examines the interaction of mythological (archetypal) and historical elements based on the heroic epic. Both articles show how universal mythologies are adapted to a specific historical and cultural context.

Thus, the analysis carried out revealed the specifics of the functioning of mythological motifs in the heroic epic, as well as compared the results of this

study with other works, which testifies to the importance of the topic and emphasises the relevance of mythological motifs in the heroic epic. The variety of approaches indicates a wide range of possibilities for understanding the role of mythology in literature. This gives grounds to speak of the original character of the heroic tradition and the important role of mythological representations in shaping the epic image of the hero.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examines mythological motifs in the heroic epic, analyses their artistic function, and reveals their influence on the formation of the hero's image. The results provide a deep understanding of the role of mythology in the literary tradition and cultural heritage.

Based on the historical and cultural analysis, it is possible to state the significant and multifaceted influence of mythology on the formation and development of the literary context of different eras. Mythological plots, images and motifs have provided writers with rich material for artistic interpretations in literary works since ancient times. The results of the analysis also confirmed that mythology left an imprint on the formation of national literary traditions, as myths often served as a source of stories about the past of the nation, its heroes, etc. The appeal of artists to national mythological traditions contributed to the establishment of the literary language and national identity.

A semiotic analysis of the artistic function of mythological motifs in the

heroic epic shows that mythological motifs act as a key resource for creating an artistic image. They not only decorate the narrative but also create a deep semantic layer, enriching the plot and revealing the inner world of the hero. Mythological motifs help to reveal the inner world of the characters more deeply. Their actions and reactions to trials can reflect aspects of heroic archetypes, allowing the reader to interact more easily with the character.

The results of the study indicate that mythological motifs have a significant impact on the formation of the hero's image. They add depth and symbolism, allowing the reader or viewer to immerse themselves in the unique world of the heroic epic. Psychoanalysis indicates that mythological motifs influence the mental development of the hero, contributing to his transformation and self-knowledge. Furthermore, the analysis confirmed the existence of archetypal elements in the hero's image that can be common to different mythological works. The archetype of the mother or father can be manifested through the images of divine or wise

figures, influencing the behaviour and development of the hero.

The practical significance of this study involves the discovery of new depths of understanding of the heroic epic through the prism of mythological motifs, which can serve as a basis for a broader literary analysis and interpretation of classical texts. The study contributes to the development of cultural studies by helping to reveal the influence of mythological motifs on the cultural landscape and identity of society.

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