

# WESTERN AND EASTERN TRADITIONS OF ROSE IMAGE'S SYMBOLIC REFLECTION IN THE VLADIMIR SOLOVIEV'S POETRY

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## ABSTRACT

*Vladimir Soloviev's poetry, while relying on existing literature tradition, a romantic one first of all, is nevertheless representing an independent, peculiar field of his legacy. Reference to motive-imagery structure of Vl. Soloviev lyrics allows to disclose and complement the image of Sophia, the key image in his philosophic-aesthetic system. In lyrics of Vl. Soloviev the symbolic image of a flower is the most meaningful of all subject symbols and requires a separate study. Poet's interest to symbolic designation of flowers is explained by general synthetic orientation of "silver age" of Russian literature and culture for searching of those sense dominants which, being a focus of ambiguous semantics, would at the same time represent general meaning and general accessible realias. Flowers match stated signs.*

**Key words:** lyric, subjective image, symbol, cultural tradition, image of Sophia, synthesis.

## INTRODUCTION

Poetic legacy of outstanding Russian philosopher, publicist, literal critic Vl. Soloviev, who stood at the origins of Russian spiritual renaissance at the end of XIX– beginning of XX century, is, on one side, closely connected with Russian classic tradition, representing the expected result of a whole era of Russian poetry started by Zhukovskiy, continued by Tyutchev and received its completion in lyric of late Phet. At the same time its' symbolical in spirit of a new time that determines aesthetic of new literature phenomenon, symbolism. Symbolic images of Vl. Soloviev asserted influence over works of A. Blok, A. Belyy, Vyach, Ivanov [Payman, 2000], [Niva, 1995]. Although, as researchers note, symbolic images of Soloviev are usually manifested "in immobile and undeveloped form, as permanent metaphorical cliché", approaching by its nature "to traditional religious symbolics" [Zhirmunskiy, 2001], but nevertheless the image level of lyric accumulates within and is an artistic expression of philosophy-aesthetic ideas of the thinker. Semantically capable subject symbol "flower" in Vl. Soloviev's lyric that had adsorbed cultural ideas of West and East requires an independent consideration as the case of transgression to verbal symbolization in a word. Because it clearly reflects the ratio between a subject and a word that means it. Philosophic language of "landmark" era could determine such understanding as "integral sameness of ideal and material" [Losev, 2000].

The flower symbolic is highly characteristic for the end <of XIX century> and especially for the beginning of XX century. Interest to symbolic designation of flowers is explained by general synthetic orientation of "silver age" of Russian literature and culture for searching of those sense dominants which, being a focus of ambiguous semantics, would at the same time represent general meaning and general accessible realias. Flowers match stated signs because

due to their centuries-long symbolic load "had synthesized pagan and Christian motives, determining diverse symbolic meanings in different contexts" [Yeliseeva, 2001].

### **METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretic-methodological base of the article became conceptual provisions on works of leading domestic and foreign literature theorists V.M. Zhyrmunskiy [Zhirmunskiy, 2000], Yu.M. Lotman [Lotman, 2000], Z.G. Mintz [Mintz, 1974], A. Hanzen-Leve [Hanzen-Leve, 2003] as theorists of literary text, including symbolist. In the field of aesthetic the works of A.F. Losev [Losev, 2000], Yu.B. Boreev [Boreev, 2002], V.V. Bychkov [Bychkov, 1999] are valuable.

Comparatively-historical method allow to disclose the history of ideas of symbolic image of rose flower in centuries- old Western and Eastern cultural tradition.

Comparatively-benchmarking <analysis> had granted the ability for correlate content of meaningful for work of Soloviev symbolic image of rose with all other possible fillings of this image existing in the world culture.

### **RESULTS**

#### **Symbolic Image of Rose in the World Cultural Tradition**

Flowers were chosen as symbols due to many reasons. Researcher of such mystic teachings as Freemasonry, Kabbalah, Rosicrucian symbolic philosophy, Manly Palmer Hall notes that a vast diversity of flora allows to find some plant or flower that would be suitable for some abstract quality by form. A plant could be chosen due to some myth connected with it (laurel tree, jonquil), to specific conditions of its growth (orchid), to form (passiflora, Easter lily), to flower's beauty and odor (verbena, lavender), due to preservation for indefinite period of time (immortelle) or due to its unusualness (on case of sunflower and heliotrope that were worshiped as sacred due to their ties with the sun) [Holl, 2003]. Besides, qualities of local flora were determining one or another choice. So, for example, German medieval poetry "picked" the linden, Russian folk song selected arrow wood, cherry, rue, periwinkle etc. Flower's beauty calls out a row of associations, whose quantity and diversity depend on capacity of image, at this "the flower's image almost disappears behind the human content suggested to it" [Veselovskiy, 1989].

Of all flowers, rose is one of the most complicated symbols having a century-old cultural tradition. It symbolizes heavenly perfection and earthen passion, time and eternity, love and death, fertility and virginity. Being a flower of female deities, rose means love, life, creativity, fertility, beauty. As far as the flower was spreading from Persia through Phrygia and Makedonia to Greece and Rome, and then to northern part of Europe, the establishing of symbolic image and enrichment of its internal content was going on. Understanding of rose as a symbol of martyr's blood and martyrdom in general comes from myths of Ancient Greece. According to myth, rose was created from blood of Adonis mortally wounded by boar. Aphrodite, who was in love with him, mixed his blood with nectar and turned into a blood-red flower. According to other legends, rose was white at first, but became red from blood of Aphrodite pricked by thorns when she was looking for Adonis [Kun, 1975]. Rose is considered as sacred flower both in Christianity and in Islam. Since times of st. Ambrosius rose became a symbol of blood spilled by crucified Christ in Christianity. That's why for Christians a blood-red rose and its thorns are a symbol of passions of Christ and martyrdom, a symbol of Christ himself, of suffering Christ. Cross in combination with

five rose petals becomes a symbol of Resurrection and joy. And Koran says that rose emerged from sweat drops of prophet Mohammad.

In Christianity the image of rose also gets close to image of Holy Mother that is either sitting in a rose orchard, or crowned by roses. Virgin Mary pictured in Italian paintings as Santa Maria della Rosa holds a rose (or rose is held by the infant Christ). Comparison of Holy Mother to rose is not of catholic origin, it belongs to Efraim the Sirian and exists in the most ancient theotokions of East liturgy, and then appears in West at Sedulius the Caelian. And finally, the fact should not be forgotten that rose was a symbol of Rosicrucians - a cross made of roses or wooden cross with a rose in the center. Large quantity of petals symbolized a degrees of devotion, and the center of rose, by opinion of order's members, represented a point of unity, the heart of Jesus Christ, divine light, the sun in the center of wheel of life. Rose grows on the Tree of Life, this symbolizes rebirth and resurrection.

### **Rethinking of Rose Symbolic Image in Vl. Soloviev's Lyric**

Vl. Soloviev, being involved in studying of mystic teaching, was acquainted with teaching of Rosecrucians. It's not surprising that rose attracted him by its ambivalence, complicated sense semantics. That's why the image of rose can be met within all period of his work and is directly connected with image of Sophia – the key image of philosophical-aesthetic system of Vl. Soloviev.

Three stages could be distinguished in lyric, dependently on apprehension and transformation of this dominant image.

#### **1. Early Lyric (1875-1879)**

Year 1875 is a landmark for this period, because that's when date of young poet with Sophia in Cairo happened). In early poem "My czarine has high palace" (1875) the image of rose is presented and a flower that grows in orchard of the woman whom poet calls "my czarine". Epithet "czarina" is an often characteristic of image that appears in front on lyric hero in splendence of its beauty. M.F. Murianov points at possibility of comprehension of rose as a symbol of heavenly garden of Eden, symbol with features of knight erotics, connected with serving to Lady Fair and ascending to ancient interpretation of rose as the flower of Aphrodite [Murianov, 1999]. In poems of this period the image of rose is a characteristic of "heavenly" ("flaming roses of the sky", "rose of heaven") and is connected to image of Sophia, her appearing or waiting for her appearing. Approximation of images of Sofia and Holy Virgin, characteristic for Byzantium-Russian and Catholic traditions, is also characteristic for lyric of Vl. Soloviev. Symbolic image of rose is one of signs of connection existing between these two images. An example is the poem "Lauds and prayings to the Holy Virgin" (1883). While calling it "acathistus" (genre of church canticle, poem-hymn in honor of saint or holiday, written by the example of "The Great Acathistus" - a hymn in honor of Holy Mother, the monument of Byzantium literature of V-VII centuries), Soloviev, nevertheless, uses the same image row as in poems dedicated to Sofia ("Today she came all in azure", "My czarina has high palace...", "Pray for revelation of great mystery") [Soloviev, 1994].

## 2. Poems of Years 1880-1892

Image of rose in poems of this period does not undergo substantial changes and stay a symbol of Sophia's divine beauty ("And Zion fortresses do not waver, "and beauty of Saron gorgeous roses does not fade...", "And suddenly roses spilled like evening dawn...")

In translations of Hafiz, made from German, Vl. Soloviev is also addressing to image of rose, fancied by Sufi poetry, filling it with the same content: "Он попал внезапно в секту // Злых еретиков, // Опьяненных и влюбленных // В розу соловьев". ("And suddenly he find himself in sect of evil heretics, of nightingales inebriated and enamored in rose"). Structurally, the ghazel should be ended by *beit* (*distich*) that included a name or plum-name of poet. As we can see, Vl. Soloviev had written his name in concluding row of the poem (nightingale - соловей). For Sufi love lyric is characteristic to fill the confession of poet in love to a woman with mystic sense. Behind this confession stands the striving of Sufi to behold the God, because namely this is understood under "love," and under the image of Beloved Sufis understand the divine truth. Exactly as in poetry of Hafiz, a nightingale that glorifies a rose is an embodiment of that spiritual perfection necessary for comprehension of this divine truth.

## 3. Poems of 1892 and Following Years

In this period of his creativity Vl. Soloviev comes to dialectic uniting of images of Sophia (impersonating divine, unearthly, Eternal Femininity) and the Soul of the World (impersonating earthly, human) and underlines that existence of one *hipostasis* is impossible with existence of the other one. Illustration of this process in lyric is the poem "DasEwing-Weibliche". Here Soloviev develops ideas of Plato about existence of earthly and heavenly Aphrodite and writes two images. Soloviev calls the first image "mundane", representing the "image of beautiful body", i.e. characterized by exterior beauty and being an embodiment of earthly love. To this Aphrodite is opposed an unearthly, heavenly Aphrodite, impersonating Eternal Femininity. Now the rose could be associated with the Soul of the World too ("Do you remember roses over foam white, // Purple glow in azure waves? //Do you remember image of a body fair...") and with Sophia ("And I fall asleep, and when I woke alert - // the earth and heaven sphere was breathing roses") [Soloviev, 1994].

As A. Hanzen-Leve writes, the theurgic idea of "godmanhood" put force by Soloviev "ascends to hermetical-gnostic idea about joining of heaven and earth, some *syzygy* of divine and human origins" [Hanzen-Leve, 2003]. In this case Sophia is an impersonation of principle of alliance, archetype of unity and striving of the world's soul to unity.

## DISCUSSIONS

The problem touched on in this research was studied in literary studies mostly in plane of impact of philosophic and literary-poetic works of Vl. Soloviev on symbolism of the silver age. So, for example, Sukhodub T.D. analyses connection of Silver age symbolism with teaching of V.S. Soloviev in aspect of philosophic and literary work in details. Review of different approaches to this problem with use of methodology of heremeneutical understanding of the truth allows author to consider ideological succession between philosophic and world view position of philosopher and creative paradigms of symbolism theoretics [Sukhodub, 2012].

General Ancient Greek myth-poetic tradition in literature of Russian modern and, particularly, in work of Vl. Soloviev were considered in monograph of Arefieva N.G. [Arefieva,

2007]. From the point of view of ambiguity and versatility of symbolic image of Sophia, the undoubtedly interest is presented by works of Kravchenko V.V. [Kravchenko, 2006] and Karpeev A.M. [Karpeev, 2007]. The aspect we are interested in, the subject symbol of rose and its re-thinking by Vl. Soloviev, was not considered.

## CONCLUSION

Versatile symbolic image of rose in lyric, connected to image of Sophia that is a dominant for all works of Vl. Soloviev, allows to comprehend the idea of unitotality and synthesis that received the theoretic comprehension in his philosophic-aesthetic works. The concept of "synthesis" which is so important for Soloviev and symbolist poetics is usually considered under influence of Hegelian terminology, as removal of oppositions of "thesis" and "antithesis". But Z.G. Mintz was already pointing at completely different comprehension of "synthesis", "harmony", "unity" in frames of the same traditions, not as controversies removal but as their "aggravates antithesis, "dialog" co-existence in frames of new complicated wholeness" [Mintz, 1974]. Poems of the last period are illustrating this saying in the best way. While defining such ideal in contemporary terminology as polyphonic structure of the world, one should not forget about its connection with Soloviev's synthesis.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Materials of this article can represent interest for specialists and students involved in studying of Russian philosophic-aesthetic thought and literature of the beginning of XX century.

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