

MOTIF AS A CONCEPT OF COMPARATIVE POETICS

V.R. Amineva, M.I. Ibragimov, E.F. Nagumanova, A.Z. Khabibullina

Kazan (Volga region) federal university

(Russia)

E-mails: amineva1000@list.ru, mibragimov1000@mail.ru,

ehlviran@yandex.ru, alsu_zarifovna@mail.ru

ABSTRACT

The features of the formal content structure and functioning of the motif in works of writers belonging to different national literatures are defined. It is found on the material of the short stories of Sh.Kamal that the motives in the works of this Tatar writer act not as important narrative elements, but as semantic units identical to a theme and an artistic image. The connection of the motives in the story is not causal, but psycho-emotional.

Keywords: theme, plot, subjective sphere, Russian literature, Tatar literature, Sh.Kamal

Introduction. “Motif” is among the debatable theoretical concepts: in the domestic literary criticism (in works of A. Veselovsky, O. Freudenberg, V.Propp, A. Skaftymov, V. Shklovsky, B. Tomaszewski) different concepts of the motif were settled at different times (1, p. 15 – 76). Within the historical (A.Veselovsky, O. Freudenberg) and theoretical (V. Propp, V. Shklovsky, B.Tomaszewski) poetics the problems of semantics of the motif, the connection

between the motif and a character (hero), a theme, a chronotope were being investigated.

The theory of the motif, which has originated within the comparative method was formed in connection with the poetics of the plot. A. Veselovsky identifies the plot as “a combination of motives”: “Under the plot, I consider a topic in which different positions - motives scurry about... The more complex a combination of the motives is... the more they are illogical and the more there are composite motives, the harder it is to suggest that with the similarities of, for example, two alike, mingled tales that arose by psychological spontaneous creation on the basis of identical representations and common basics. In such cases, a question about borrowing of the plot emerged in one nationality by the others may be raised in a particular historical time” (2, p. 305).

In the foreign literary tradition the motif became a subject of research in works of S. Thompson, R.Grubel, E. Frenzel, etc. (3, 4, 5, 6). E.Frenzel (“Motive der Weltliteratur”) determines the motif as a situational element associated with the content of the text and acquiring specific implementation in the context, acting as a principal, a companion, or as an ornamental element. In “A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms” a motif is considered as an element of the structure of text and speech: “The structure in its significant manifestations is a skeleton of the text, texture (speech) as, for example, meter and rhythm – that is its skin. But some elements can be compared with the muscles. For example, the motif is a structural element, so as it makes us see the images in a specific circuit, on the other hand, the motif is a speech element as it can be delaminated rhythmically. And finally, the motif is certainly a more meaningful element, rather than formal, because only the chain of motives, as a consistently interrupted integer, carries a unique meaning that the interpreter “collects”. An unrepeated image will not be so important” (7, p. 100).

In the eastern poetics the theory of the motif evolved in connection with the notion of the canon. A.B. Kudelin, exploring the concept of the canon in

medieval Arabic poetics, writes: "... under the motif in Arabic poetry, we understand that was called a ma'na (pl. ma'ani) by the medieval Arabian grammarians. It is a small generally degradable material particle of the topic" (8, p. 128). He points to the stability of the motives of the classical Arabic poetry, noting that "ma'na is not just a thematic element of the classical Arabic poetry but a thematic model, an invariant, which in practice, obviously, can match a large number of specific individual author's implementations, options" (8, p. 130).

The theory of the motif in the eastern poetics is also closely connected with the concept of beauty, which has developed in the literatures of the Arab-Muslim East. According to G.Gryunebaum, "beauty is an ornament arbitrarily applied on a developed poetic motif" (9, p. 161). Such a mechanical and too formal understanding of beauty as something contributed from outside led to the fact that the originality of the prose came to improvement and the better transmission of the traditional motives. In particular, in the eastern literatures it was considered that "the writer of each succeeding generation finds hidden connections between the elements of the motif, notices that the untapped opportunities to remove them to the fore and seeks to evoke in a listener or a reader the pleasure that is associated with the disclosure of the unknown and unexpected perception of the conceptual connections, i.e. the kind of pleasure that was marked < ... > in discussions about the metaphor, which Aristotle and the Arabs considered the "queen of jewelry"" (9, p. 162).

Ideas of stability, repeatability, integrity of the motif became decisive for his theory. The notion of a motif from the middle of the last century is associated with the personality of the author (with repetitive thoughts and feelings in one, several, or the totality of his works). These properties of the motif are universal for both "Eastern" and "Western" literatures.

Methods. Motif belongs to universals of lexical art, having a variety of representation in different national literatures. This makes the question about the

features of the functioning of the motif in the works, belonging to different literary traditions, actual. As it is known, in the theory of a plot by A.Veselovsky, the motives in the plot are connected with the causal relationships. “The simplest kind of motives”, he writes in his “Poetics of the plots”, “can be expressed by the formula $a + b$: a grimalkin does not like the beauty and gives her a life-threatening problem” (2, p. 301).

It is found that “as a rule, plot is the aesthetic dominant in Russian literary works. Descriptive elements are subordinated to its goals and secondary towards the narration. Narrative structures are mainly alien to the rhetoric of teaching, imperative and monologic speech” (10, p. 2097). In the 19th century Russian literature a causal character of the motives is adequately manifested in M.Yu.Lermontov's prose. In particular, in his novel “A Hero of Our Time” various motives (fairly stable and recurring in the works of Lermontov in general) such as loneliness, paths of revenge, destiny and fate, are the elements that create the meaning and participate in the creation of the narrative in the artistic integrity of the work. Woven into the plot outline of the work and creating a variety of psychological situations in it (e.g. Pechorin meets Bela, relationships with Maxim Maximych, a love affair with Mary, etc.), they provide a constant interest of the reader in the character of Pechorin, the disclosure of its main internal quality called individualism. We find a causal motivic organization of the text in another “eastern” work of Lermontov, a Turkish tale named “Ashik Kerib”. A psychological component of the tales by Lermontov is strongly reduced: a deterministic plot about wandering Ashik, in which such constantly developed motives as a motif of wedding, false news about death, fate comes to the fore.

In the Tatar literature the motif has a different nature, due to the peculiarities of the construction of the plot, in which there appeared a logic of the creation of the meaning peculiar to this type of culture: “Tatar writers have a concrete moral and ethic goal and build the verbal-ideological world of a literary

work from a “high hierarchical position” (M.M. Bakhtin). The main idea is objectified with the help of various relations of “pointing out the meaning” <...> The monologic concentration of characters on their emotional state and self-determination in Tatar literature is contrasted with the dynamic contentious model of events and dialogues inherent in the dramatic concept of Russian novel in the second half of 19th century” (10, p. 2096-2097). The works of Tatar authors of the beginning of the 20th century indicate reduction of the causal connections between the motives. In this regard, the development of the methodology, which can be described by the ratio of understanding of the motif in Russian and Tatar literature, should be considered. The influence of the nature of identity on the use of the nominative and discursive strategies enshrined in the texts is of great importance.

Main body: The work on the description of the functioning of the motif in Tatar literature was carried out on the material of the literary works of Sh.Kamal, one of the Tatar writers of the early twentieth century.

His stories “The Wanderer” (1910), “In a snowstorm” (1910), “In Pursuit of Happiness” (1911), “In a strange land” (1912), the story of “The Seagull” (1914) were interconnected by the theme of the fate of the person that is revealed by the writer in two plans: realistic (fate as a result of social circumstances) and existential (fate as a manifestation of unfathomable transpersonal forces). In “The Wanderer” the author portrays the tragedy of the wanderer who was forced to leave his home and family in search of work. This social motivation of the disadvantage was connected by the writer with the existential one. The chain of events (leaving his native village, detention, the inability to find a job), revealing to the reader the social conditions of the protagonist’s life, develop a single suggestive image in his mind: “Memories, one after another, floated out of the darkness. For a long time people and accidents were associated with a string and, finally, everything became entangled. Here they are - factories, restaurants, pubs, rooming houses, nights

under the fence, prisons - all weaved into a nightmare” (11, p. 33). Every motif in the story represents its subject. Connection of the motives in the story is not causal, but psycho-emotional: motives reflect a psychological state of the protagonist and create a corresponding emotional tone.

Thus, the motif contains a description of the house, in which the hero's experiences come to the fore when he sees an abandoned house, from which a powerful and formidable spirit of nothingness emanates: “An izba (a peasant's house) sank to one side, windows failed, and it was as black as the grave inside” (11, p. 31). The narrative in this part of the story becomes subjective and expressive (narrator's and protagonist's consciousnesses merge together). This mood in emotional modulations is present in the following motives. In the motif of meeting (when Ghali meets his sister) the author focuses on the consciousness of the listener of the complaints of the protagonist's sister, “Ghali, however, has been listening attentively, not even understanding much. His thoughts were occupied by some other things. He felt beaten, cheated, wanted to say something rude, swear, to accuse someone of dishonesty. But he did not know – who he should curse, whom he ought to blame ...” (11, p. 33). Ghali's feelings turn into a protest against the cruel and impersonal fate: “And Ghali spat with disgust, “Ugh!”. Spittle fell on his face. He wiped it out with his sleeve, lay down flat, and wept bitterly” (11, p. 34). The motif in the final outcome of the story contains a description of the nature, which gives it a symbolic meaning. The view of the snowstorm covering the sun is contrasted with the landscapes in the exposition, where the author depicts the beauty of the hours before sunset. Snowstorm, on the one hand, corresponds to the image of the protagonist of the story, it indicates the ordeal expected, on the other hand, it gives the final philosophical and generalized sense, acting as a symbol of the tragic fate of a man.

In the story “In a snowstorm” the burden of the snowstorm becomes the main element of the creation of the meaning. The plot is the life story of

Mustafa, who hurries home to his mother to ask for forgiveness for the offences inflicted on her once. The motives of the story, as in “A poor thing”, have no storyline in the traditional sense. Thus, at the beginning of the work the motif of a snowstorm is connected with the motif of the baby crying and the image of the mother leaning over the cradle and forms a single complex of an image and a theme that acquires a symbolic meaning in the story deployed by the writer.

The motif of the way stands as a symbol of the protagonist’s repentance, which is conscious of his cruelty to his mother. Such semantics of the way is universal: it is sufficient to point out numerous variations of the plot of “a prodigal son” (“a prodigal daughter”) in the world literature. It is not the semantics of a motive, but its shape is specific. Mustafa’s way home seems not only as a movement in space, but as a movement in time: the protagonist recalls his childhood in his mind, the moments when he was cruel to his mother floated out. The author, using the techniques of psychological analysis, reveals to the reader the emotional experiences of the protagonist. The narrative in this part of the story becomes subjective and dramatized simultaneously. The motif of the way acts in the story as a psychological one: it is important for the author to convey the emotional state of the hero during the journey, the conflicts he experiences.

An extremely dramatized culmination (Mustafa does not have time to ask forgiveness from his mother, who has died a moment before his return), is replaced by the denouement in which the motif of a snowstorm reappears. In the beginning of the story the motif of a snowstorm creates the mood of alarm and anxiety, which corresponds to the psychological state of the hero, his desire of going home to his mother at any cost. In the end, the mood of hopelessness prevails: Mustafa did not have time to say goodbye to his mother and ask her for forgiveness for his cruelty, callousness and selfishness. The burden of the story, thus, is relevant to the character and, simultaneously, the main emotional tone of

the story. It (a burden) is involved in the creation of an “internal”, psycho-emotional plot of the story.

In the story “In Pursuit of Happiness” a philosophical topic is in the title. The theme of happiness is developed in the motives of the story representing its psychosemantic modulations. A psychosemantic halo of the motif of a road is in exposure, conveying the mood of the narrator - indifference, aimlessness, wandering. The story of Marfuga, her brother Khalil and her husband Gumer gives it new connotations. Behind the private fate of people in the works of Sh.Kamal the universal laws of human life, submitted by the writer to psychological form are revealed. In an episode when an old Dagestani plays his mandolina the author contrastively connects the scenic and majestic views of landscape with the poor decor of the barracks where Marfuga dies: “We immediately imagined that hot, sobbing sounds that the sallow man with sunken eyes draws from his saz is a song about the distant past of the Caucasus and a wide Caspian sea, about the past of the banks of the Volga, about someone else’s life. But when you look at a woman close to death with a haggard face and chapped lips that lay on the rotten bed under the decrepit blanket, it is completely different as if saz complains: “Nope, there's no happiness in life”. The moans of the melodious rustling saz mingled with the whistling of the wind that came from the street” (11, p. 121). Consciousness of the narrator is “inseparable and unmerged” (S. Broitman) from the consciousness of the heroine, that allows to identify her perception of the world as something devoid of happiness and as the author's point of view.

In the story “In a strange land” Sh.Kamal does not focus our attention on the event of the death of a shakird (a student), dying in a strange land. The death of the shakird acts as a psychological motif which determines the emotional tone of the narrative, which brings together all the characters with common collective experience.

In the story of “The Seagull” landscape descriptions, fabulously mythological images and motives, techniques of psychological images used by the writer create allegorical tendency in the narrative. It fills the motives of a journey, search for happiness, meetings with the philosophical and metaphysical content and forms a deep existential plot of the work.

Conclusion. Thus, the analysis of the form and functions of the motives in the stories of Sh.Kamal suggests that the motives act not as elements used to create the plot (in the traditional sense of the plot as a sequence of events), but as the semantic units identical to a theme and a hero in the semantic and emotional modulations of which the meaning of the work is represented.

Such a specific feature of the motif in the work of Sharif Kamal is connected with the peculiarities of the plot in the tradition of “Eastern” literature, in which not a causal connection between the events, but the connection, based on the specific, relevant “Eastern” type of thinking procedures of forming the semantic integrity is dominated.

Thus, we can draw the following conclusions:

- The traditional understanding of the motif in contemporary literary tradition requires supplements that take into account the peculiarities of its formal structure and functioning of the various national literatures;
- The motif in the works of Tatar writers of the first thirds of the twentieth century connects the subjective and objective plans of the story, overcoming the boundaries between the event told about and the event of the storytelling itself;
- The motives in the stories of Sh.Kamal are not acting as elements creating the plot, but as semantic units identical to a theme and a hero.

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