

## **MYTHOLOGY OF MYTH IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CULTURE**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

What is myth?

This question has not been asked by modern Humanities for a long time. Meanwhile, we should ask ourselves. Because in the XX century there was a growing expansion of the concept of "myth" in a variety of cultural fields. In science and journalism everything that refers to the background of unconscious ideas, usually implicated in the language has become uncritically called "myth". Структуру тут поменял. The word "mythology" itself has become an evaluative concept: Barthes' thesis "language is a fascist" was given voice, and after it a number of similar declarations. Naturally, deconstruction became the key scientific strategy in the end of the century.

It seems that in this context exactly the task is becoming urgent: not only must the content of the concept of "myth" be clarified, but also the boundary between the real myth and the pseudo-myth be distinguished. This, in fact, is the problem that provoked the emergence of this paper.

### **1. Myth is the Substantial Thing**

The concept of "myth" became an integral part of humanitarian use in the era of Enlightenment (G. Vico, D. Diderot, etc.). The initial condescending attitude to mythology as an infant symptom of humanity was replaced by another, responsible one, in the philosophy of romanticism, especially by Schelling, who placed the myth as an intermediate aesthetic link between nature and art. The discovery of the ancient civilizations of the East by the European man for the first time shook the conviction of classical science in Eurocentrism. It gave impetus to comparative studies, inside of which the theoretical aspect, allowing to organize logically the vast material of observations was bound to emerge immediately. The "mythological school" that arose at that time, of course, did not yet know that it was "mythological". It's just that the concept of "myth" became one of the pillars in its spontaneously formed theory. The

founder of "mythologism" Jacob Grimm in the often cited Preface to "German mythology" (1835) declared: "At the heart of any legend is a myth, that is, faith in the gods. <...> Without such mythological basis it is impossible to understand legend as well as without knowledge of the occurring events it is impossible to understand history"<sup>1</sup>.

Let us remember this formula, along with all the complex meanings that accompany the concept of "myth". *Myth*, according to Grimm, is the *belief in gods*. And the accompanying meanings are the idea of the proper character of historicism, which is not otherwise possible, as with the support of the evidence of knowledge or belief. Grimm sees two sides of an indivisible tradition (it is institutionally and certainly thought as a national one): spiritual tradition – "legend", based on the organic implication in "myth"; rational tradition – history in all its departments, based on the evidence of logically generalized experience. The myth, therefore, is understood by the Grimm as a figuratively manifested embodiment of the *substance of nation's life*; it guarantees the authenticity of national culture, inseparable in practice from the authenticity of national history.

By Grimm, as we have said, the concept of "myth" is an empirically induced formula, which is a generalization of the truly huge material of observations. It does not contain a reason for theoretical speculation. The reason for this is that for Grimm, by the highest standard, there was only one mythology as a subject of interest: his own mythology of his native culture. This mythology he called "Teutonic" and its study subordinated all related cultural and mythological material. The comparative method of research, to which the scientist resorted, served the only task: to reveal and identify the individual character of the continental Germans' mythology.

However, in the following decades, in the nearest generations of researchers, this soil stability was lost. Comparative studies stood out from the mythological school as an independent channel in which comparison from being an instrumental method turned into a methodology. In this sense, comparative studies opened the prospect of searching for cultural universals, and on this way theoretical construction became increasingly important. It became possible to consider the

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<sup>1</sup> Grimm J. Deutsche Mythologie. Göttingen, 1835. S. III. – To be precise, Grimm speaks about "legend" – *sage*. However, in the Russian tradition since the XIX century they speak of 'writ'. This formula strengthens the universal significance of a legend's word to the degree of sacrality.

concept of “myth” in isolation from the empirical soil and as part of a system of speculative ideas.

So the concept of "myth" became a term. And it turned out that the new term had a very sizeable valence. The search of the Humanities in the late XIX – early XX centuries opened completely new areas of ideas about man and the world whose description required language; and the word "myth" in this language was quickly filled with new meanings. It found a strong connection with a complex of ideas about the unconscious side of the human soul. Partly inspired by the concept of W. Wundt<sup>2</sup>, the Z. Freud's doctrine perfectly corresponded to the spirit of European culture, satiated with rationality. The concept of "myth" used by both scientists regarding the irrational part of the psyche connected with the post-romantic idea of collective soul and so set the stage for the Jungian doctrine of the "collective unconscious", basically developed in the early XX century.

Therefore, the twentieth century was marked by the generalization of the concept of "myth". It was generally characteristic for the Modern culture. That is why in later research the concept of "neo-mythologism" (Yu. Lotman, Z. Mintz, E. Meletinsky)<sup>3</sup>, or "neo-syncretism" (S. Broitman)<sup>4</sup>, is regularly applied in relation to the first half of the century arts. This generalization immediately received theoretical understanding. It took place in the most complete form in the work of A. Losev "Dialectics of the Myth" (1930). There, the concept of myth was subjected to dialectical construction, taking into account all the most important points that make up its content at the time of the study. The final formula proposed by Losev is: "Myth is a detailed magic name"<sup>5</sup>. This formula, of course, is rather senseless for the one who did not go all the way of dialectical construction along with the scientist. However, it clearly reveals the semantic basis of the concept of "myth": it is the substance of the Name, the Word that creates reality. Correlating this

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<sup>2</sup> Cf.: "Mythology with one its half refers to history and primarily the history of spiritual culture, and with the other half to psychology, especially the psychology of peoples". – Вундт В. *Миф и религия*. Санкт-Петербург., Б. г. С. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Минц З.Г. О некоторых «неомифологических» текстах в творчестве русских символистов. *Уч. зап. Тартуского ун-та*. Вып. 459. Тарту, 1979. С. 76–120; Лотман Ю.М., Минц З.Г., Мелетинский Е.Г. Литература и мифы. *Мифы народов мира. В 2 т.* Москва, 1982. Т. 2. С. 58–65.

<sup>4</sup> Бройтман С.Н. Поэтика книги стихов Б. Пастернака «Сестра моя – жизнь». Москва, 2007. С. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Лосев А.Ф. Диалектика мифа. *Лосев А.Ф. Миф – число – сущность*. Москва, 1994. С. 196.

Hellenistic essentially formula with the romantic (by Grimm) content of the concept, you can see the main thing that remains of Hellenism (and partially associated with it Christian “imyaslaviye”) in the mythological school. This is an idea of the *substance* of the myth. This substance provides the generating capacity of the myth, "magically" (or in any way) creating from itself forms of culture.

The Philosophy of Russian modernism, whose largest representative in the twentieth century was Losev, combined interest in antiquity and especially Hellenism with genetic involvement in Schellingism, a former original cradle of Russian thought of the St. Petersburg period. Rising to Schelling, the idea of the "national spirit" as a mythologically articulated *substantial* element of culture was irremediably preserved in the very foundation of this thought. And we will continue to insist on this, not any other understanding of the myth. However, in the XX century, other understandings were established; the further body of the paper will be dedicated to this.

## **2. Myth is the Word. Mythology of Myth**

It may seem that connection transition from the previous account to the further, where the subject becomes the semiotic concept of myth, which arose in the French science in the second half of the XX century is undue. But bringing attention to it, we follow the shift in the Russian scientific consciousness, which this epoch was marked with. And we cannot say that the connection is not there. "Dialectics of myth" is a work of High Modern, signifying the maturity of its philosophical culture. The generalizing pathos of this work implicitly opened the possibility for further hypostasis of the myth's certain sides as a theoretical universal<sup>6</sup>. In this sense, French semiology created predictable (as it is seen today) resonance in the national humanitarian sphere. During the transition from the 1920s to the 1960s, the anthropological composition of the Russian science changed. If at the beginning of this segment science was moved by people who received classical education, then at its end they were graduates of Soviet universities. Their humanitarian outlook was

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<sup>6</sup> Although Losev himself sarcastically treated such procedures, zealously defending the purity of the dialectical approach. Take his mocking Levi-Bruhl, positivistically proving the meaninglessness of ritual based on myth. – See: Лосев А.Ф. Диалектика мифа. Лосев А.Ф. Миф – число – сущность. Москва, 1994. С. 22–23.

obviously limited, all the more so for ideological reasons. Therefore, in their environment, the side of modern epistemology fraught with applied effect received a greater response than its speculative dialectical component.

Semiology, regardless of its initial research pathos, had the allure of design potential in dealing with the realities of everyday life. Generally speaking, formalistic teachings are attractive for two reasons. First, their schematism makes it possible to create explanatory models of varying complexity degrees. Secondly, in the tactical sense, they create a relatively easy possibility of dogmatism. Not excluding the second reason, the first definitely served to the popularity of semiology in the Russian scientific community. In the 1960s, European studies of this trend, fueled by the related search for structural anthropology, translated into Russia the concept of myth inherent in the second half of the century.

And it was fundamentally different from the modernist one. First of all, the fact that the semiological and structural-anthropological understanding of the myth is emphasized formally. Roland Barthes, a prominent scientist of the first direction, in "Mythologies" (1956) absolutized the iconic component of the myth. "Myth is a communicative system, a message. Therefore, the myth cannot be a thing, concept or idea; it is one of the ways of signification; a myth is a form"<sup>7</sup>. It is obvious that the substantive side of the myth is declaratively ignored by scientists in favor of formal understanding<sup>8</sup>. Taking into account the liveliness of the modernist memories in the mid-twentieth century, Barthes' theoretical repulsion from substantiality must be considered as a program, especially as he immediately reinforces what he said: "Attempts to distinguish between different kinds of myths on the basis of their substance are absolutely barren: because myth is the word, all that is worthy of the story may become it"<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Барт Р. Миф сегодня. *Барт Р. Избранные работы : Семиотика. Поэтика.* Москва, 1994. С. 72.

<sup>8</sup> Anthropological approach in this sense was milder. In the program collection of works by K. Levi-Strauss "Structural anthropology" (1958) it is established: "the essence of the myth is not the style, not the form of the narrative, not the syntax, but the *story* told. Myth is language". – Леви-Строс К. Структурная антропология. Москва, 1983. С. 178. – Substance is thus assumed, but only as the foundation of the myth; whereas the myth itself is still a special language, i.e. a form of communication.

<sup>9</sup> Барт Р. Миф сегодня. *Барт Р. Избранные работы : Семиотика. Поэтика.* Москва, 1994. С. 72.

The last statement had not only ascertaining, but also project significance. The myth in Barthesian understanding, as the form, was the subject of artificial design. This possibility is confirmed already in "Mythologies"; actually, the pathos of this book is aimed at debunking the artificial myths of bourgeois society. Further theoretical movement of Barthes intensified the negative pathos of his concept of myth, increasingly moving towards deconstruction. However, semiology as such shared a common destiny of knowledge in the technical era, becoming, among other things, also an effective scientific foundation for the commercial myth-making industry.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the production of myths was assembly-lined. Tested in the era of modernism, proved with the utmost persuasiveness of its power in the laboratories of totalitarian states, myth-making technologies began work for capital. The abundance of commercial myths, obvious to intellectuals, quickly fused into a single mythology based on the image of a unified utopia – consumer society. Its external features, in general, strive for the ideal of earthly Paradise – an ideal, naturally protected from any metaphysics.

However, since artificial myths *have no substantial basis*<sup>10</sup>, they cannot be correlated either with memory or with history, or with the legend. That is why there emerges a completely opposite effect created by implication to natural and artificial myths, respectively. The implication to tradition generated by natural myth gives the individual the power and even the might of identity. In contrast, in an artificial consumer myth, the range of possibilities for identification is extremely limited and presupposes a certainly passive position. The lack of its own substance requires the involvement of a substantial resource from the outside (from the adepts), so that the system continues to exist. Therefore, the artificial

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<sup>10</sup> In V. Pelevin's novel "Generation "P", which presents an exhaustive image of consumer mythology established in the post-Soviet space, this non-substantiality is shown. The conversation between the two PR-managers: one, the beginner, is in a difficulty, being personally faced with baseless advertising myth. "Those determine these, and these... these define those. But then... Wait... And at what everything rests?" Another, the experienced one, distracts him from the issue with a shock-technique. – "And about it" – he said, bending over the table and looking into Tatarsky's eyes blackly – "you must never think. Never, understand?" – Пелевин В. Generation «П». Москва, 1999. С. 218–219. – It is noteworthy that in a hallucinatory vision, the character realizes the essence of the media as a "garbage incineration plant": "in this life, man attends at the incineration of the garbage of their *identity*". – Пелевин В. Generation «П». Москва, 1999. С. 155.

myth does not strengthen the individual, but rather weakens them, acting on the principle of a "black hole".

Associated with this is the vector of intentionality given by natural and artificial myths. Natural myth is aimed both to the past and to the present, correlating reality with the archetype, highlighting in reality the most important elements of memory. The nature of artificial myths, at the first glance, is futuristic. Generated by them a culture is looking for its place not in the past or present, but in the future. The widely spread in the late twentieth century idea of "postfigurativity"<sup>11</sup> belongs to this mythology<sup>12</sup>. But a closer look reveals that consumer myth is not so much futuristic<sup>13</sup> as eschatological, because the realization of utopia means the end of time.

Analyzing this eschatological isolation of the consumer myth in itself, Jean Baudrillard summarized in 1970: "If the consumer society does not produce more myth, then because *it is itself* its own myth. <...> The abundance *does not exist*, but it is enough to support the belief that it exists to be an effective myth"<sup>14</sup>. But faith requires effort. In traditional myths, the effort of faith in the gods is compensated by the reverse involution – help, gaining a sense of security. "Abundance" does not ever come, because it does not belong to the nature of things, but to the nature of the relationship to things; and that is why consumerist myth constantly keeps its adherents in a neurotic state of dissatisfaction.

But because the consumerist myth must maintain its mythological status, it has to mimic: it is created following the pattern of natural mythology, using its semiotic means. In relation to the present, substantial myth, artificial commercial or ideological mythologies act as *quasi-myths*<sup>15</sup>. Having many features of the former, allowing to identic mimic and function, they nevertheless have a number of differences, which (without a claim to completeness) are presented below:

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<sup>11</sup> Cf.: Мид М. Культура и мир детства. Москва, 1988.

<sup>12</sup> In itself, the project of emancipation and creative breakthrough of younger generations seems both adequate and attractive. But the author of the concept, apparently, mixes the technological (in a broad sense) side of progress and ideological continuity, unreasonably devaluing the second item in favor of the first one.

<sup>13</sup> Futurism is a feature of modern culture, whose claims to novelty were provided by immanent correlation with tradition. Postmodern is indifferent to tradition, just like to everything in which the value component is presented.

<sup>14</sup> Бодрийяр Ж. Общество потребления. Москва, 2006. С. 242.

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, artificial mythologies in the twentieth century were created also in an artistic (or quasi-artistic) way and with relevant claims: we mean the appearance and quick adoption of the *fantasy* genre in literature.

Myth	Quasi-myth
Natural origin (primordial nature)	Artificial origin (secondary)
At its core is substantial	Made of signs without denotates
Lies is the basis of traditional cultural formations	Forms local and instable worldview systems
Mental soil: syncretism	Mental soil: rationality
Identification with the past in its status of everpresent (epic past)	Identification with the future as eschatological scope

Summarizing, we can confidently say that a quasi-myth (artificial myth) is a simulacrum, as anything that creates an insubstantial consumer culture of postmodernity. In this sense, the deconstruction developed by Barthes was a very timely project that opposed the conscious and even more unconscious bias of the bourgeois culture. It has contributed to and continues to contribute to the annihilation of artificial quasi-mythologies. Although the heuristic productivity of this procedure itself tends to zero.

Mimicry is not the only means to which the consumer myth resorts to, taking care of its self-preservation and influence. Feeling its inner fragility and vulnerability on the part of metaconcepts and related cognitive and behavioral practices, primarily deconstruction, consumer myth strives to be ahead of them by creating mega-scale epistemology claiming to inclusiveness. *So it creates its own mythology – a mythology of the myth.* Continuing the formal semiological interpretation of the term, Zh. Baudrillard summarized: "Consumption is a myth, that is *the word of modern society, told in relation to itself*, that's the way our society speaks about itself"<sup>16</sup>. This thesis obviously stands in the logocentric context of conceptions of the humanitarian science of the second half of the XX century<sup>17</sup>: L. Wittgenstein – semiology – deconstruction. And it gives an explanation of why the very idea of myth began to rapidly acquire universalism by the end of the century. We can build the following sequence: instable in itself (groundless) word

<sup>16</sup> Бодрийяр Ж. Общество потребления. Москва, 2006. С. 242.

<sup>17</sup> Of course, it had a harbinger in the science of the modern era: Ch. Pierce, Ch. Morris, F. de Saussure. – And in the Russian thought of the late twentieth century, the formal understanding of the myth became quite a common place. A.M. Pyatigorsky methodologically designated "the text as the primary object of mythological research". – Пятигорский А.М. Мифологические размышления : лекции по феноменологии мифа. Москва, 1996. С. 54.



pretends to be a myth – along with its association with the myth declares its universality (saves with its reputation) – attributing (artificially) to the myth in general relativity and ambivalence, asserts own equality (false) with other mythologies.

In order not to fall for the pressure of this manipulation, the consciousness of human science must strongly distinguish two similar, but in fact very different phenomena: *mythologism* as such and *mythology of myth*<sup>18</sup>. The traditional mythology is substantial. Mythologism of the modern era, which is used to be called "neo-mythologism" (see above), appeals to substantial mythologies. As a kind of artistic mentality, it did not stop with the advent of postmodernism. It seems to us that neo-mythologism exists in the literature today – but not with Pelevin or Lipskerov, and maybe with Peter Aleshkovsky in "Fortress", with Elena Chizhova in "Time of Women" (to say nothing of earlier Leonov with "Pyramid" or Rasputin with "Matera").

In contrast to neo-mythologism, mythology of the myth arises only in the second half of the twentieth century. And it, as is said, is a mimicry, a simulacrum. Speaking the old language, consumer myth is idolomachia. No claim for correction of mass practices, but purely for scientific purposes we should see the border between neo-mythologism characteristic for modern consciousness, and consumerist utopia. Neo-mythologism is the substantial culture, the heyday of which was in the first half of the twentieth century. And the second half of the century aggressively usurped its name. There's totally no place for neo-mythologism in the postmodern era, because *the consumerist myth is not substantial*, and therefore, essentially is not a myth, just a myth form. And mythology around it is not mythology essentially, but its semblance (*simulacrum*). Its reality is "under-sort" (S. Horuzhiy)<sup>19</sup> of reality.

Accomplished in the culture of mythologized myth concepts substitution allowed to attribute the myth such properties that it can have only with very large reservations. Here is a relatively modern dictionary definition: myth is "the state of consciousness, which is a neutralizer between all the fundamental cultural binary oppositions, primarily between

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<sup>18</sup> As far as we know, a fundamental distinction has not been made between these areas before.

<sup>19</sup> Cf.: Хоружий С. Род или недород? Заметки к онтологии виртуальности. *Вопросы философии*. 1997. № 6. С. 53–69.

life and death, truth and falsehood, illusion and reality"<sup>20</sup>. But the removal of differences, the destruction of oppositions is not a mythological property. This is just carrying out the postmodern mental strategy, designed in the famous call of Leslie Fiedler's "fill in ditches, erase the borders". And the declaration of ambivalence, constantly emerging in this context, is more of a symptom of cultural fatigue than scientific attribution. This is a democratic reaction to the healthy relativism of the modernist epoch resulting from its popularization: "mass revolt".

Apparently, another factor also contributed to the emergence of a mythology of the myth. The twentieth century largely relied on the unconscious, irrational principle in man and mankind. So the idea of myth – undifferentiated, pre-discursive was close to it. And "neo-mythologism", "neo-syncretism" naturally became the reference concepts for the characterization of the culture image of the twentieth century. The passion for the idea of myth, in addition, has a psychological background: it is the loss by a mass European man of intuitive priority of personality and responsibility. The postwar spurt in progress is superimposed on the mass mentality and strengthened by internal resonance: in this unstable, complete in itself, the self-contained mythology of the myth is fixed.

This is the present state of things. Not going into the futurological prognosis, let us note that this day, apparently, brings hard to the fore the far protruding above the horizon of "mythologism" imperative of personal responsibility. Not that the episteme of the myth has suddenly been completely eliminated. But the present order of things is that actuality is more likely to acquire life-style of personal acting (within the limit of which is the image of heroism or asceticism, as the chance may be). Postmodernist reaction (and in the historical sense postmodern is a reaction to the passionarity of the Modern) does not have an internal resource of positive life-building. And, anyway, the present is fraught with the inevitable aggravation of the conflict between the "inventors" and "purchasers", which was warned a hundred years ago by Velimir Khlebnikov<sup>21</sup>. After all, now we are not even talking about their anthropological antagonism: the catastrophic symptoms of consumer

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<sup>20</sup> Руднев В.П. Миф. *Руднев В.П. Словарь культуры XX века*. Москва, 1997. С. 170.

<sup>21</sup> "The sting of the world reason, driven by population growth, will aggressively sting all living in a place of stagnation". – Хлебников В. *Союз изобретателей. Хлебников В. Творения*. Москва, 1986. С. 615–616.

civilization simply do not leave the race of "inventors" other than to invent a way to overcome the society of imaginary abundance.

### 3. Myth and Poetics

Judgments about what a myth is in general have theoretical and heuristic value in themselves. However, let us proceed from the philosophical ground to the philological one<sup>22</sup>. In the aspect of philological problems, perhaps the most important aspect is that *the issue of myth concerns the key issue of historical poetics: the relationship of writ and personal creativity*<sup>23</sup>. Going deeper into this question induces reconsidering the balance of importance between the components of the named relation. Let us return to the judgment of J. Grimm, according to which the myth is the basis of writ, just as the knowledge of events is the basis of history. Writ and history, ideally, are united in one image, undoubted in its authenticity of the national past. Their coordination is provided by the interweaving of mythological and factual basis of tradition.

In the Russian culture, at its very source, there is a text that is deliberately designed just for the implementation of such coordination: it is the "Tale of Bygone Years". It is intended to claim the status of such a sacred text, which connects mythology and facts, thereby creating the basis for the further living relationship of legend and history. We previously had to write that the drafters of the "Tale of Bygone Years" were able to present the inextricable heavenly background of mankind and the earthly history of the Russian land and its peoples<sup>24</sup>. There was a myth, which, according to Grimm's pattern, gave rise to the legend. This legend is the basis of Russian national literature of both medieval and modern periods; as well as culture, because of its literary center<sup>25</sup>. "The

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<sup>22</sup> Of course, it will not be possible to leave the field of worldview at all, because the literary centrism of the Russian culture almost inevitably makes all philological judgments in it worldview as well.

<sup>23</sup> The founder of historical poetics has seen its task "to define the role and boundaries of writ in the process of personal creativity". – Веселовский А.Н. Поэтика сюжетов. *Веселовский А.Н. Историческая поэтика*. Москва, 1989. С. 300.

<sup>24</sup> "The old Russian scribe begins the Russian history not from somewhere, but from the biblical Flood. Due to this, the Russian history is immediately placed in the context of Sacred history and is thought inseparably. The sacred history begins in heaven – and therefore, there the future of the Russian people is providentially laid". – Кузнецов И.В. *Книжность Древней Руси (XI – XVII вв.)*. Новосибирск, 2013. С. 21.

<sup>25</sup> In the New time, it is especially noticeable in the Russian classicism, which considered the Kiev epoch as the epic past.

role of writ in personal creativity" in this case manifests itself evidently. Moreover, until a certain moment (until Pushkin's epoch) the Russian literature is highly national as it develops legend and, therefore, is based on myth.

But afterwards the situation changes. As the time moves, the writ grows new layers, whereas the former ones grain themselves, and more and more of them move to the area of myth. If Tradition is alive, the area of the Writ acquires new meanings and texts generated by history. In the eyes of new generations and with their efforts, *the contribution of personal creativity to writ* is realized. The folklorist B. Putilov gave this, quite original, characteristic of his subject area: "Folklore is a word that has become a *writ* (i.e. a tradition) and as such entrenched in the popular mind"<sup>26</sup>. But not only the spoken word can become the writ. Written word, literary works are mythologized before our eyes. Not to mention the "Odyssey" or "Iphigenia", plots of Onegin, Grinev and even the very personality of Pushkin acquire the status of national, local mythology. "Who will turn off the light, Pushkin?" – mentioning the poet's name in this reduced domestic context is akin to the mention of totem name in the battle or Vow. And the most sensitive contemporaries of Gogol understood that his "Dead Souls" was a new epic of Russian nationality: "the ancient epic, miraculously emerged in Russia <...> the phenomenon highly free and modern <...> powerfully expressed what lies in the depths, the strong, the substantial, the eternal"<sup>27</sup>.

And it points to a new mode of existence of the old tradition, that continues and supplements the previous. Today the poet hears within himself not only the voice of archaic ancestors, but the nearest fellow writers too. In the scientific aspect, this circumstance generates a vector of cognitive intention counter to the established by A. Veselovsky and additional to it. If the creator of historical poetics was interested in the influence of writ (and, accordingly, myth) on personal creativity, then today *the influence of personal creativity on writ* (and, consequently, on myth) attracts interest. By and large, this is the beginning of the reflection of the results of Theurgy proclaimed by the Modern era as the basis of

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<sup>26</sup> Путилов Б.Н. Фольклор и народная культура ; In memoriam. Санкт-Петербург, 2003. С. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Аксаков К.С. Несколько слов о поэме Гоголя : Похождения Чичикова или Мертвые души. Аксаков К.С., Аксаков И.С. Литературная критика. Москва, 1981. С. 149–150.

creativity and already implemented in the created and furtherly created culture.

Scientifically, this allows to speak, continuing on historical poetics, about the prospect of a kind of "creative" poetics The one 'creating'. It means practice (more than theory), realizing *addition* of the legend and, in scope, myth. To be precise, the theory today is thinking about its creative potential, allowing literally to create new knowledge. V. Tiupa entitled his program sketch: "Theory as Performative Practice"<sup>28</sup>. Previously, the ability of the text to generate semantics was mentioned in semiotic studies<sup>29</sup>. We also had a chance to speak on this topic<sup>30</sup>. So the practice of poetic creativity and the theory changing by the cognizing effort itself and the generating new knowledge are combined in the designated direction.

## CONCLUSIONS

The investigation of term "myth" functioning reveals following. In the philosophy of romanticism, especially by Schelling, the myth was placed as an intermediate aesthetic link between nature and art. According to J. Grimm, myth is "the belief in gods". Therefore, it is understood as a figuratively manifested embodiment of the substance of nation's life. The twentieth century was marked by the generalization of the concept of "myth", characteristic for the Modern culture. But after 1950 the substantive side of the myth was declaratively ignored by scientists in favor of formal understanding. In the second half of the twentieth century, the production of artificial quasi-myths was assembly-lined. Artificial consumerist myth mimics: it is created following the pattern of natural mythology, using its semiotic means. Consumerist myth creates mega-scale epistemology claiming to inclusiveness, creates its own mythology – a mythology of the myth. So it asserts own false equality with other mythologies. In contrast to modernist neo-mythologism, mythology of the myth arises only in the second half of the

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<sup>28</sup> Тюпа В.И. Дискурсные формации : Очерки по компаративной риторике. Москва, 2010. С. 168–182.

<sup>29</sup> Cf.: Шрейдер Ю.М. Текст, автор, семантика. *Семиотика и информатика*. Вып. 7. Москва, 1976. С. 153–169.

<sup>30</sup> Cf.: Кузнецов И.В. Адекватность и смыслополагание : две модели исследования. *Понимание : опыт мультидисциплинарного исследования*. Москва, 2006. С. 69–74.

twentieth century, and it is a simulacrum. Neo-mythologism is the substantial culture, but the consumerist myth is not substantial, and therefore, essentially is not a myth.

In the aspect of philological problems, the issue of myth concerns the key issue of historical poetics: the relationship of writ and personal creativity. Literary works are mythologized before our eyes. It points to a new mode of existence of the old tradition. Today the influence of personal creativity on writ (and, consequently, on myth) attracts interest. This allows to speak, continuing on historical poetics, about the prospect of a kind of "creative" poetics.

### **SUMMARY**

The paper problematizes the concept of "myth" in relation to the culture of the twentieth century. An excursion is made into the scientific etymology of this term, which goes back to the philosophy and philology of German romanticism. The regularity of actualization of the concept "myth" in the modern era with its changed mentality is shown. A distinction is made between the substantial understanding of the myth up to and in the modern age and the formal one as a way of expression in postmodern. The mechanism of formation of a simulacrum of "myth mythology" in the culture of consumer society is demonstrated. On the example of Russian literature the relationship of legend and history as two sides of the national cultural tradition is shown. The peculiarity of modernity is seen in the fact that personal creativity scientifically and practically begins to be realized as a continuation of tradition and, thus, the assertion of national myth.

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