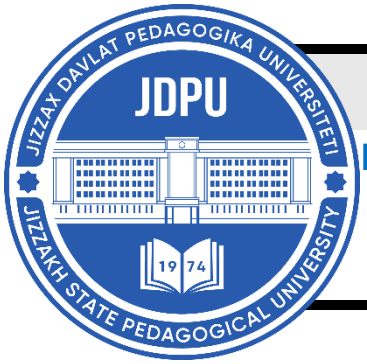
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37547/mesmj-V5-I3-17 Pages: 116-122

MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC – METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL



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REFLECTION OF MYTHOLOGICAL SOCIAL VALUES AS MAIN CONCEPTS IN TOLKIEN'S WORKS

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: mythology, concepts, hero, democratic, embodiment, value orientations, Christianity, secrecy.

Received: 09.04.24
Accepted: 11.04.24
Published: 13.04.24

Abstract: In this article, the mythological works of J.R.R.Tolkien are considered as sociocultural phenomena associated with value systems that existed in European culture. The author believes that myth represents social identity and retains this function even after it loses its ideological functions. Literary myths collect and convey the core values of humanity, which makes them successful. Tolkien combines traditional values with new value formations characteristic of the modern era, which makes him an excellent example of the literary embodiment of socially significant values. The article shows that the pagan basis, Christian values and worldview characteristic of the 20th century deeply penetrated into Tolkien's works. Tolkien's works organically combine the concepts of heroism, Christian mercy, democracy and the idea of freedom.

INTRODUCTION

Any society needs self-awareness, the development of stable ideas about its own identity, and the recording in a publicly accessible form of its most significant value systems. One of the forms of such self-awareness is mythology, which since ancient times has embodied the ideas of various sociocultural communities about themselves, their goals and values, and their idealized past. Mythology continues to perform this function even when, as an instrument of knowledge, it is supplanted by philosophy and science. While yielding cognitive functions to them, mythology largely retains ideological and social functions, partly because of this, mythological consciousness, criticized from scientific and philosophical positions, turns out to be ineradicable.

THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Moving to the periphery of cultural life, the myth disintegrates and disguises itself, but does not disappear. Some of its forms become part of everyday consciousness and continue to claim objectivity, hiding their mythological origin. Its other forms become a literary myth, which positions itself precisely as a myth, which is now directly identified with fiction, and, unlike ancient mythology, no longer claims to be “true.” However, even a literary myth, which has formally ceased to be a story about the true heroic past or the structure of the universe, can retain some features of the former, original myth: in figurative and emotional form it still personifies the self-awareness of the culture that gave birth to it. Such a literary myth invariably embodies her value systems, and therefore turns out to be dear, valuable and in demand to her. This is what distinguishes it from countless crafts based on fairy-tale and mythological subjects, which, while retaining the attributes of the former mythology, no longer express anything except the personal fantasies of their creators.

In the history of European culture, literary myth-making as a special direction is actively formed in romanticism. Romantics, especially German ones, studied mythology with great interest and admired it. Of course, they no longer considered it true history, but saw in it an expression of the people's spirit, which must be preserved and supported. For the romantics, “the collection and study of folklore goes beyond the scope of purely scientific and artistic activity, and becomes a social act, its purpose being, so to speak, the promulgation of the “national spirit”, the awakening of national consciousness” [1. P. 73].

In modern language, for the romantics, myth was a concentrated embodiment of the value orientations of their ethnic group. Therefore, they not only collected folklore, but also actively tried to engage in myth-making, while in the axiological aspect, romantic myth-making turned out to be ambivalent: it not only absorbed the values of the previous myth, but also introduced into it the value preferences of the new, 19th century. This created a complex fusion of past and present, traditional values and their modifications in relation to modernity.

In the 19th century, the most successful here, in our opinion, was the experience of Richard Wagner, who managed not only to combine literature and music in his work, but also to express fundamental European values in accordance with new cultural and historical conditions [2].

The decline of romanticism reduced the intensity of literary myth-making, however, even in the 20th century, authors appeared in Europe who continued the development of literary myth. They also managed to solve the problem that the romantics once set for literary myth-making - to express through the fantastic imagery of myth a system of values that always remains relevant for society as long as it retains its integrity and identity, but at the same time interpret it in accordance with new historical conditions and a new stage of cultural and civilizational development.

The most famous Western myth-maker in the 20th century was the English scientist and writer J.R.R.Tolkien. His literary work, upon superficial acquaintance, is often classified as "fantasy," but the author of this "fantasy" is a doctor of science and professor who did not at all consider it as an element of mass culture. Like the romantics, he is characterized by an extremely serious attitude to mythology; in his view, myth is not a lie, but true knowledge refracted through human concepts and inventions [3. P. 64]. In the epic he created, he put the results of his research into the entire previous Western myth-making tradition, and he himself was guided by the task of creating a kind of analogue to ancient mythological systems, based, however, on European material using his figurative system. He most consistently realized this dream in his works "The Lord of the Rings" [4] and "The Silmarillion" [5], which S.A. Gogolev belongs to a special genre - professorial prose [6].

The success of Tolkien's mythological world is due not only to the fact that he uses countless mythological images, familiar and familiar to Europeans from tales and legends, and not only to the purely artistic merits of his works. Researchers note that the mythological world created by Tolkien is distinguished by its scale, integrity and consistency [7. P. 37]. The careful thoughtfulness characteristic of Tolkien's work, constant attention to detail and small details creates a feeling of special, realistic authenticity.

However, in our opinion, Tolkien's success is predetermined primarily by the fact that he managed to incorporate values fundamental to European culture into his mythopoetic world and at the same time update them in relation to the 20th century.

Tolkien's sincere Catholicism is emphasized by all authors who have seriously studied his work [8. P. 88]. This means that his personal value system was Christian in nature and thus coincided with the fundamental, basic values of European culture, since Christianity was at the origins of the self-awareness of European peoples.

Naturally, this foundation was not homogeneous. Already at the time of the Christianization of Europeans, the old, pagan heroic ideas penetrated into it, and later, as the European peoples became established, new national and social values were superimposed on the Christian and pagan basis, due to the change of historical eras, the secular ideologies of the New Age, and various ideological trends.

This entire complex ensemble of value systems is captured in Tolkien's mythology. First of all, it is permeated with Christian motifs, despite the formal pagan attributes. These motives are more muted than, for example, those of Wagner, who also relied on a similar value foundation, since Tolkien was inclined to "camouflage" his views, but they were introduced to him more consciously [3. P. 119].

This combination of Christianity and paganism fully corresponded to the situation of the early Middle Ages, when it took place in reality, and not just in myth. But the “secrecy” of Christianity in Tolkien had another important significance for the success of his epic: Europe of the 20th century no longer felt reverence for its Christian past. Based on his value system, she preferred to forget about their Christian origins. Tolkien’s approach responded to this attitude perfectly: Christian ideas without Christianity still found an echo in the souls of Europeans and still remained “theirs.”

Although Tolkien initially planned to create mythology for England [7. P. 36], the national principle remained unexpressed in it, since the action of the mythical epic dates back to the era before the emergence of nations. It thus reflects the general heroic-romantic spirit of the early medieval European North-West, when nations did not yet exist.

At the center of the epic remains the heroic principle, universal in nature, since the archetype of the hero is universal for myth, serves as its basis and is at the same time in demand by modernity [9]. But Tolkien is characterized by a rethinking of the heroic principle in the spirit of the 20th century. If in the 19th century, for example, Wagner’s hero is interpreted in the spirit of Rousseauism and romanticism, as the embodiment of simplicity and individualism, then in the 20th century the time has come for the masses. The hero is now a simple person, “one of many,” not initially endowed with any special qualities. Therefore, Tolkien brings to the fore the figures of hobbits, ordinary people who become heroes due to prevailing circumstances, and not due to their inner calling. This completely conscious attitude of Tolkien corresponds to the growing democratism of European consciousness of the 20th century.

It is interesting that the most colorful and lively of the hobbits, Sam, was created under the influence of Tolkien’s impressions from his time at the front. The prototypes for him were his colleagues, ordinary soldiers, whom he could observe during combat operations and everyday soldiering [10. pp. 12-13].

Finding himself in unusual circumstances, an ordinary person is transformed under their influence, revealing his potential; through forced heroism, he grows and overcomes himself - and the hobbits return to the Hobbits completely different, having acquired a “heroic dimension.”

It is curious that a similar theme will later become central in later American mythology, where a loser from the crowd traditionally turns into a hero.

Tolkien's heroic beginning is closely intertwined with the theme of the struggle for freedom. Freedom is the most important value of European culture by the 20th century, and the new mythology can no longer ignore it. If the hero of traditional mythology is the defender of his tribal community from destruction, the hero of the romantics is a fighter for his own individual freedom, then the era of the masses brings “social” and “universal” freedom to the forefront. We are no

longer talking about the freedom of heroes, but about the freedom of entire nations. Tolkien's Middle-earth initially looks like a similarity to the contemporary European world, where separate independent tribes and peoples live on their own and unite only in the face of the threat of enslavement from the Dark Lord. In essence, from a political point of view, we have before us an exemplary Europe of the mid-20th century, consisting of many small state entities vigilantly protecting their freedom through the creation of temporary unions and federations.

However, Tolkien is still far from turning freedom into a supreme value. This attitude towards freedom will be characteristic of later Europe, already completely secularized. For the earlier European consciousness still under the influence of Christianity, freedom is ambivalent, being granted to beings as free will, it opens up possibilities not only for voluntary service to the Creator and union with Him, but also for self-will as the source of evil. The history of evil according to Tolkien is a history of increasing abuses of freedom and creativity, growing pride and ambition, an attempt to go beyond the limits of freedom outlined for it by the Creator, Ilúvatar.

In Tolkien, the duality of freedom also turns into the duality of free creativity. It is either an imitation of the Creator, if it goes in line with his plans, or an expression of pride, leading to fall. The creation of the two trees in The Silmarillion is the greatest act of creation of the great elemental spirits, which enriched and ennobled Middle-earth. But Tolkien’s most daring creators—Fëanor, Melkor—are at the same time fighters against God, whose creativity turns out to be a curse for themselves. It is this kind of creativity that shapes their own destiny.

The theme of fate is also traditional for pagan mythology, first ancient, then European. Present in pre-Christian consciousness, it is partly preserved later, interpreted as a kind of higher predestination established by Providence. Accepting one's fate is an unconditional blessing; confrontation with it is pointless and only causes suffering. The fates of the hobbits Bilbo and Frodo are an example of following your destiny and fulfilling your destiny. But this traditional understanding of fate is opposed by the idea of its free construction by man himself, which has been strengthened in European consciousness since the Renaissance. Therefore, Tolkien’s attitude towards fate turns out to be ambivalent: fate is created by the actions of the heroes, but at the same time it is destined.

In the foreground we see the free expression of the heroes, but this free expression, paradoxically, turns out to be inscribed in the general plan of the mystery being played out, which, as it were, “takes into account” the possibility of the heroes choosing different behavior scenarios. Each of these freely chosen scenarios, however, leads to the same ending: for example, the One Ring will inevitably be destroyed, but the manner of its destruction depends on the moral choices of the Ring's guardians. Each of their actions entails consequences that must be atoned for if the action was dictated by selfishness, anger or pride. This moral responsibility for what is happening,

echoing the existential philosophy fashionable in the mid-20th century, pushes aside and obscures the motive of fate, and also makes Tolkien's epic consonant with the European consciousness of that time.

Among Tolkien's predecessors, the romantics, and in the mythopoetic world of Wagner, love occupies a huge place. "Love is that powerful mysterious force that shakes and transforms the deepest foundations of existence" [11. P. 175], breaking the chains of fate, it leads the hero both to death and to triumph. It was Christianity that made love the highest value, although later secular culture shifts its emphasis and, instead of love for God, puts love for one's neighbor in the foreground: love between a man and a woman, love for family, homeland, etc.

In Tolkien's world, love is diverse, and secular forms of love are also played out in the epic: this is love for one's land, friends, love between a man and a woman. But in the first place for him it is still not "eros" or "philia", but rather "agape", Christian pity and mercy as a way of breaking the chains of sin and retribution: thus, the constant mercy shown by the hobbits towards Gollum , saves both the world and themselves [12].

The romantic attitude towards nature is preserved in Tolkien's works, although the poverty of his feelings towards it is obvious in comparison with the romantics. However, although Tolkien does not have such an acute experience of natural phenomena (with the exception, perhaps, of his special relationship with trees), he views the natural elements as the embodiment of the creativity of great spirits, subject to the Creator and playing the role of angels. Hence, in Tolkien's world, it is the elements that take on the role of conductors of the highest will, and hence the reverent attitude of people and elves towards them.

Nature turns into a kind of temple, where there is a place for elves, people, and animals, who are servants of the spirits of the elements. Nature as a whole (where it is not distorted) represents the idea of the order established by Ilúvatar. The desecration of nature is a challenge to the Creator; God-fighting forces first of all spoil and destroy the natural world. Disfigured nature always accompanies the dominion of the forces of evil, and here Tolkien suddenly again found himself in tune with the European world of the 20th century with its concern for environmental issues [13].

Even where Tolkien opposes his contemporary civilization, for example, by denying the idea of progress, he turns out to be in tune with its nostalgic memories of its own past, lost harmony with the natural world, and dreams of Rousseau returning to a "natural" state.

The popularity of Tolkien's epic, the emergence of the Tolkienist movement, which in a playful form strives to embody the realities of Tolkien's world, testifies to the success of Tolkien's plans, which resonated with millions of readers [14–15].

CONCLUSION

Thus, the reason for the success of Tolkien's works is not only artistic merit, not only the imagery familiar to European culture, but also the reliance on those values that formed its foundation for many centuries, together with the skillful introduction into this system of their vision, which was already characteristic of its present.

In turn, the decline in interest in Tolkien in the 21st century indicates a value shift in the consciousness of modern Europe. The growing variety of critical statements about Tolkien, "too intolerant", "too undemocratic", indicate the continuing erosion of the value basis of the former Christian Europe. A change in the cultural climate brings to life new mythopoetic systems that are more consistent with Europe's modern ideas about itself: de-Christianized, liberal, devoid of clear moral guidelines, valuing only success.

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