

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60797/RULB.2024.56.3>

MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGE OF THE TRIPLE MUSE IN THE ROBERT GRAVES' POETRY

Research article

Dzhaparova E.K.¹*

¹ Crimean Engineering and Pedagogical University named after Fevzi Yakubov, Simferopol, Russian Federation

* Corresponding author (edie.07[at]mail.ru)

Abstract

The article examines myth-making features of a well-known writer, poet and myth critic of the XX-th–XXI-st centuries' English literature Robert Graves. It is noted that Robert Graves is the author of critical works, novels, poetry collections. Robert Graves attributed himself, first of all, as a poet whose main task was considered to be free and eternal service to the Muse. It is indicated that the poet used various images of Celtic mythology, among which a special place is given to the Triple Muse appearing in various hypostases. The Triple Muse is represented in Graves' works as the White Goddess, the Goddess of the Moon, the Triple Moon Goddess.

The analysis of the poetry of Robert Graves shows that Robert Graves personifies the Triple Muse, describing her appearance and character, endowing her with qualities inherent in women. It is emphasized, that the Triple Muse, directly or indirectly, being present in the poet's poems, contributes to the realization of the author's plan and gives originality to the poetic works of the outstanding English poet, writer and myth critic Robert Graves.

Keywords: myth, poetry, image, Celtic mythology, Triple Muse, concept.

МИФОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ОБРАЗ ТРОЙСТВЕННОЙ МУЗЫ В ПОЭЗИИ РОБЕРТА ГРЕЙВСА

Научная статья

Джапарова Э.К.¹*

¹ Крымский инженерно-педагогический университет имени Февзи Якубова, Симферополь, Российская Федерация

* Корреспондирующий автор (edie.07[at]mail.ru)

Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются особенности мифотворчества известного в англоязычном мире писателя, поэта, мифокритика XX-XXI веков Роберта Грейвса. Отмечается, что Роберт Грейвс является автором критических работ, романов, поэтических сборников. Роберт Грейвс считал себя, в первую очередь, поэтом, основной задачей которого является безвозмездное и вечное служение Музе. Указывается, что поэт использовал различные образы кельтской мифологии, среди которых особое место отводится Тройственной Музе, которая выступает в различных ипостасях. Она представлена в творчестве Грейвса как Белая Богиня, Богиня Луны, Тройственная Богиня Луны.

Анализ поэзии Роберта Грейвса показывает, что Роберт Грейвс персонифицирует Тройственную Музу, описывая ее внешний вид и характер, наделяя качествами, присущими женщинам. Подчеркивается, что Тройственная Муза прямо или косвенно, присутствуя в стихотворениях поэта, способствует реализации замысла автора и придает оригинальность поэтическому творчеству выдающегося английского поэта, писателя, мифокритика Роберта Грейвса.

Ключевые слова: миф, поэзия, образ, кельтская мифология, Тройственная Муза, концепция.

Introduction

The analysis of complex and insufficiently studied modern literary problems are considered to be the main features of the XX-th–XXI-st centuries' world literature. In this regard, a lot of studies are devoted to the literary creativity of the famous English poet, writer, myth critic and researcher of ancient mythologies Robert Graves. Robert Graves owns collections of poems, numerous novels and mythological works, which made it possible to appreciate his contribution to the world English literature. In Russian research literature, the literary creativity of Robert Graves has not been sufficiently investigated and requires a systematic study of various aspects of his rich heritage. Versatility and originality of Robert Graves' works allow to put him on the level of talented and outstanding writers of modern English literature. The works of Robert Graves are well-known and popular in the English-speaking countries and are included into the collection of demanded publications of the foreign literature.

The aim of the article is to present the functioning of the Triple Muse's image in the literary works of Robert Graves.

In order to study the mythological heritage of Robert Graves and functioning peculiarities of Triple Muse' image in Robert Graves' creative activity, the main theoretical and practical methods and research technologies such as description, analysis, concretization, generalization were used.

When analyzing the preconditions of Robert Graves' views' formation and the use of various mythological images in his works, the historical and contextual principles have been chosen.

Main results

Graves was especially attracted to books on Celtic mythology and the materials from Celtic literature were used in his creative literary activity in his own original way. He was imbued with the idea of worship to a woman and strived to synthesize the images of all Celtic goddesses into a single image of the Great Goddess, intending to find some kind of primary myth that could underlie not only Celtic, but all mythology.

Noticing that most classical ancient poetry begins with an appeal to the Muse, Robert Graves comes to the conclusion that it is she who is the magical source of inspiration for poets that he so passionately sought.

Muse is the personage often used in Celtic mythology. The image of Muse in the of Robert Graves' works is presented in various hypostases. As a result of creative quest, Graves invented an unusual approach and original mythopoetic concept in which the central mythical image of the Muse is the Triple Moon Goddess, appearing in a variety of incarnations: the Triple Muse, the White Goddess, the Goddess of the Moon. Here it should be clarified that, according to the mythopoetic theory of R. Graves, the White Goddess, the Triple Muse is not some kind of abstract entity, but is capable of incarnation in earthly women. This is described quite metaphorically in the poem "In Her Praise": "...each new lovely woman whom she rides, / Straddling her neck a year or two or three..." [7, P. 196]. In these lines, Robert Graves argues that when incarnated in earthly women, the Goddess cannot remain in her for long. And when she leaves, falling in love with a woman also passes.

The whole chapter in the fundamental book by Robert Graves "The White Goddess: A historical grammar of poetic myth" is titled "The Triple Muse". There Robert Graves asks: "Why do poets invoke the Muse?" [8, P. 383] and further answers: "...no poem was considered auspicious that did not begin with an appeal to the Muse for inspiration" [8, P. 390].

Robert Graves describes the Triple Muse: "The Triple Muse is woman in her divine character: the poet's enchantress, the only theme of his songs" [9, P. 388]. So, Robert Graves who always was concerned about the reason of poets' invoking the Muse states that the main function of Muse is to inspire the poets. He comes to this conclusion because he considered himself to be "more a poet than a writer" [3] and he couldn't write without inspiration of the Muse. Robert Graves is sure that only the Muse and eternal service to the Muse is the main task of the poet. At the same time in Graves' interpretation of poetic creativity is considered to be free and original. An English literary critic wrote: "The true poet must always be original, but in a simpler sense: he must address only the Muse – not the king or the Chief Bard or the people in general - and tell her the truth about himself and her in his passionate and peculiar words" [9, P. 444]. Graves continues: "A poet cannot continue to be a poet if he feels that he has made a permanent conquest of the Muse, that she is always his for the asking" [9, P. 444]. It means that the poet cannot remain a poet if it seems that the Muse has been conquered by him forever and will appear at his first call. From this moment on, the Muse becomes the central object in his work.

Robert Graves, an expert on ancient Greek myths, always pointed out the multifunctional abilities of the Muse, possessing an inspiring power for those who turned to her. In Graves' concept the Muse is "the Triple Muse, or the three Muses, or the Muse in nine persons, or Cerridwen, or whatever she is called, is the Great Goddess in her poetic, or witchcraft, manifestation" [2, P. 167]. Graves endows the Triple Goddess with the qualities of omnipotence she can exist and be present in the cult of witches "secretly existing in many parts of the British Isles" [2, P. 201]. The Triple Muse, acting as a Triple Goddess, forces poets to write poetry: "It inspires, fills with feelings, devastates and kills in order to give hope for rebirth" [3, P. 561].

The examples above show that peculiarity of Graves's creation is that he did not create new myths, he used ancient myths and mythological images in his individual "Gravesian" interpretation.

In general, love is the organizing principle of the entire mythopoetic concept of Robert Graves, because it is love that is the embodiment of the Muse for the poet, which awakens in him all the richness and depth of feelings and forces him to create, devoting to her not only his poetic works, but also himself and own life. Robert Graves connects the inspiring function of the Muse with the main stages of love: origin, development, "death" of love associated with separation and breakdown of relationships, and the rebirth of love, but with another woman. Accordingly, he points to three stages of creativity. The first stage is the search for the Muse, the second stage is finding it, followed by selfless service to the Muse – the most fruitful period of creativity, the third stage is the time when inspiration is exhausted, any poet loses the Muse, experiences this painfully and decides to stop writing, which is a kind of death for him. Only having found the Muse again, the poet is reborn and begins to write and serve her again [9]. Graves wrote: "the Muses were at this time three in number, an invisible Trinity, as the medieval Catholics recognized when they built the church of their own Holly Trinity on the site of the deserted shrine of the Heliconian Muses" [9, P. 386]. In our opinion, the identified stages of love among poets can be conditionally correlated with the versatility of the Muse, which Robert Graves calls Triple.

Robert Graves indicates that every poet is individual and unique and writes all his life, dedicating his works to her – the Triple Muse, the Triple Goddess, the White Goddess. According to Robert Graves, the poet renounces the titles and honors for the sake of serving the Triple Muse, and only after physical death he gains immortality and glory. He addresses to the poets and equates them to a mythological hero, capable of feats in the name of the love to the Triple Muse, self-sacrifice for her through death, for gaining immortality.

According to the Graves' mind, poetic creativity depends on the inspiration of Triple Muse and the main task of such creativity is selfless and unchanging service to the Goddess-Muse. Graves writes: "The function of poetry is a religious appeal to the Muse," and its essence is the mixed feeling of "delight and horror that the presence of the Goddess evokes" [2, P. 12].

Exalting the inspiring role of the Triple Muse's image and the immense service of poets to her, Graves, at the same time, warns her against the danger from the poets. An example and confirmation of the above are in the lines from the poem by Robert Graves, "Beware, Madam!" [8, P. 198]:

*"Beware, madam, of the witty devil,
The arch intriguer who walks disguised
In the poet's cloak, his gay tongue oozing evil.
Would you be a Muse? HE will so declare you,
Pledging his blind allegiance, yet remain secret and uncommitted."*

It is no coincidence that Graves calls a poet "witty devil", "oozing evil", "arch intriguer". The author of the poem calls on the Muse beware of the poet and asks if she can be the Muse for the poet, who will swear his blind devotion to her and remain secret and uninvolved.

Graves personifies the Triple Muse similar to a woman and asserts that women's love is deeper, stronger, more tender, unpredictable and unexpected than men's. In the poem "Turn of the Moon" [7, P. 189] Graves points that the Triple Muse suddenly comes out of nowhere, as if by some kind of magic, her single drop gives rise to hope, she is a balm for wounded souls, exhausted by expectation, life-giving moisture, a single rain-drop to surprise with hope each haggard, upturned face. She is very gentle and affectionate, penetrating to the very heart and creating the impression that this is the first true love, the first rain of our lives.

Discussion

An outstanding English poet, prose writer, mythologist, literary critic, author of numerous literary critical works, novels, short stories and a huge number of collections of poems Robert Ranke Graves (1895-1985) was born in Wimbledon (England) in the family of the Irish poet Alfred Percival Graves. Robert Graves grew up surrounded by books of ancient writers. It was the main reason that he investigated the origin of myths and wrote a great number of critical literary books, collections of poems and novels. The majority of Robert Graves' works deal with myth. His literary critical works and studies on mythology are "White Goddess: Historical grammar of poetic Myth", "Greek Myths", "On English Poetry". Novels by Robert Graves "I, Claudius", "Divine Claudius" and collection of poems "Collected Poems", "Poems Selected by Himself" are famous among the readers of English literature.

There are publications describing the life and creative activity of Robert Graves in foreign literary criticism. Most researchers investigating the fiction of the author point in their works that Graves focused his poetical and prose works only on one aspect – the mythopoetic concept of the White Goddess. Among the researchers of Robert Graves' literary activity the names of the following foreign investigators should be mentioned: J. Birlin, R. Kenery, R. Richman, J. Steiner, M. Seymore, M. Smith, R. Shumaker. They focus on the views of Robert Graves and note the one-sidedness of them in the literary works of the mythic writer and critic. An in-depth analysis of the poetic works of Robert Graves was carried out by J. Smeds, who stressed that the author's poetry contains not only mythological motives, but lyrical ones as well [9]. The specifics of the reflection of mythological motives in the poetry of Robert Graves and the influence of J. Fraser's teachings on his works is stated by domestic authors E.K. Dzharparova, A.S. Kozlov, A.A. Tahoe – Godey, T. M. Fadeeva, T. V. Shadrina.

Graves did not create a new myth, but turned to an old myth, as centuries-old wisdom, in the hope of finding answers to a number of both literary and philosophical problems. Some critics consider Graves to be old-fashioned. In the preface of the book "The White Goddess: Selected Chapters" we read the phrase by H.L. Borges that "Graves never tried to be modern, declaring that the poet should write as an individual poet, and not as a whole era" [2, P. 5].

Robert Graves is trying to find the origins of poetry, and therefore turns to the poetic works of antiquity, as the period closest to the primitive era. His goal is to search for traces of poetry of the "witchcraft type" in Hellenistic poetry and as always happens with hermeneutics, "interpreters who set out to find something in the text sooner or later find what they wanted," notes J. Smeds in this regard [13, P. 208].

As mythopoetic world of Robert Graves was formed on ancient sources, he carefully examined ancient literary and the mythology of different peoples, looking for the remnants of an old myth ("remnants") in them and considered their embodiment in the artistic works of the following periods of the history.

The further study of Robert Graves' poetry and his place in literary criticism, will contribute Russian readers to learn more about poetry and literary criticism of Robert Graves.

Conclusion

Robert Graves is known as a renowned author of numerous works on criticism and fiction. His works are famous among the readers preferring books on mythology.

In critical works mostly related to poets and poetry, Robert Graves points out the stages of work on poetry. These stages are: the search for the Muse, the finding of the Muse, selfless service to the Muse, the loss of the Muse, and when inspiration is exhausted and the poet stops writing, then he finds the Muse again, is reborn and begins to write and serve her again.

According to Graves' views, all myths were originally based on rituals of worship to the White Goddess and its various hypostases Triple Muse, Triple Moon Goddess. Thus, it is the myth of the White Goddess and her hypostases that makes it possible for Robert Graves to combine two still parallel concepts: a critical one – about the importance of the emotional state of the poet at the moment of creativity, and an anthropological one, developed by him under the influence of the ideas of J. Fraser and his followers in literary criticism.

Robert Graves did not create new myths, he used ancient myths and mythological images in his "Gravesian" individuality and their interpretation. The Triple Muse from Celtic mythology is compared with love and symbolizes the birth, development and "death" of love. At the same time, in Robert Graves' works personification of the Triple Muse and description of the appearance and even character can be found.

The analyses of Robert Graves' poetry showed that some Robert Graves mythopoetic works are dedicated to the Triple Muse. The Triple Muse is functioning in the poetic works as Muse, inspiring poets for writing. "Beware, madam" is the poem dedicated to the warning the Triple Muse, be careful of unpredictability and strength of poets. It means that a poet and the Triple Muse cannot exist separately and at the same time are able to destroy each other.

The poetic and literary originality of Robert Graves enriches world's literature and puts him on the level of world outstanding writers.

Благодарности

Спасибо большое за поддержку и понимание!

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

Acknowledgement

Thank you very much for support and understanding!

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

Список литературы / References

1. Бирлайн Дж. Ф. Параллельная мифология / Дж. Ф. Бирлайн; пер. с англ. А. Блейз. — М.: КРОН-ПРЕСС, 1997. — 336 с.
2. Грейвс Р. Белая Богиня: избранные главы / Р. Грейвс; пер. с англ. И. Егорова; [предисл. Х. Л. Борхеса]. — СПб.: Амфора, 2000. — 382 с.
3. Грейвс Р. Белая Богиня: историческая грамматика поэтической мифологии / Р. Грейвс; пер. с англ. Л. И. Володарской. — Екатеринбург: У-Фактория, 2005. — 656 с.
4. Джапарова Э.К. Теория поэзии Роберта Грейвса / Э. К. Джапарова // Культура Народов Причерноморья. — 2007. — № 122. — С. 49 — 51.
5. Козлов А.С. Литературоведение Англии и США XX века / А.С. Козлов. — М.: Московский лицей, 2004. — 256 с.
6. Музы: Википедия. Свободная энциклопедия. — URL: <https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/музы> (дата обращения: 20.03.2024).
7. Canary R.H. Utopian and Fantastic Dualities in Robert Graves's Watch the North Wind Rise / R.H. Canary. — URL: <http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/4/canary4art.htm> (accessed: 20.03.2024).
8. Graves R. Poems Selected by Himself / R. Graves. — Edinburgh: Penguin Books, 1966. — 222 p.
9. Graves R. The White Goddess. A historical grammar of poetic myth / R. Graves. — New York: Ferrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006. — 511 p.
10. Richman R. The Poetry of Robert Graves / R. Richman. — The New Criterion homepage. — URL: <http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/07/oct88/richman.htm> (accessed: 20.03.2024).
11. Schumaker R. Prose & Poetry – Robert Graves: A Twentieth Century Life / R. Schumaker. — URL: http://www.firstworldwar.com/poetsandprose/graves_article.htm (accessed: 20.03.2024).
12. Seymour M. Robert Graves: Life on the Edge / M. Seymour. — New York: Doubleday, 1995. — URL: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-17611610.html> (accessed: 20.03.2024).
13. Smeds J. Statement and story: Robert Graves's myth-making / J. Smeds. — Åbo: Akad., 1997. — XV, 341 p.
14. Steiner G. The Genius of Robert Graves / G. Steiner. — London: Publishing House, 1960 — P. 340—365.

Список литературы на английском языке / References in English

1. Birline J.F. Parallel'naya mifologiya [Parallel mythology] / J.F. Birline; trans. from English by A. Blaze. — М.: KRON-PRESS, 1997. — 336 p. [in Russian]
2. Graves R. Belaya Boginya: izbrannye glavy [White Goddess: selected chapters] / R. Graves; trans. from English by I. Egorova; [preface by H. L. Borges]. — St. Petersburg.: Amphora, 2000. — 382 p. [in Russian]
3. Graves R. Belaya Boginya: istoricheskaya grammatika poeticheskoy mifologii [White Goddess: a historical grammar of poetic mythology] / R. Graves; trans. from English by L. I. Volodarskaya. — Yekaterinburg: U-Factoria, 2005. — 656 p. [in Russian]
4. Dzhaparova E.K. Teoriya poezii Roberta Grejvsa [The theory of poetry by Robert Graves] / E.K. Dzhaparova // Kul'tura Narodov Prichernomor'ya [Culture of the Peoples of the Black Sea Region]. — 2007. — No. 122. — P. 49 — 51 [in Russian].
5. Kozlov A.S. Literaturovedenie Anglii i SSHA XX veka [Literary studies of England and the USA of the 20th century] / A.S. Kozlov. — М.: Moscow: Lyceum, 2004. — 256 p. [in Russian]
6. Muzy: Vikipediya. Svobodnaya enciklopediya [Muses: Wikipedia. Free encyclopedia]. — URL: <https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/muses> (accessed: 20.03.2024) [in Russian].
7. Canary R.H. Utopian and Fantastic Dualities in Robert Graves's Watch the North Wind Rise / R.H. Canary. — URL: <http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/4/canary4art.htm> (accessed: 20.03.2024).
8. Graves R. Poems Selected by Himself / R. Graves. — Edinburgh: Penguin Books, 1966. — 222 p.
9. Graves R. The White Goddess. A historical grammar of poetic myth / R. Graves. — New York: Ferrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006. — 511 p.
10. Richman R. The Poetry of Robert Graves / R. Richman. — The New Criterion homepage. — URL: <http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/07/oct88/richman.htm> (accessed: 20.03.2024).
11. Schumaker R. Prose & Poetry – Robert Graves: A Twentieth Century Life / R. Schumaker. — URL: http://www.firstworldwar.com/poetsandprose/graves_article.htm (accessed: 20.03.2024).
12. Seymour M. Robert Graves: Life on the Edge / M. Seymour. — New York: Doubleday, 1995. — URL: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-17611610.html> (accessed: 20.03.2024).
13. Smeds J. Statement and story: Robert Graves's myth-making / J. Smeds. — Åbo: Akad., 1997. — XV, 341 p.
14. Steiner G. The Genius of Robert Graves / G. Steiner. — London: Publishing House, 1960 — P. 340—365.