

## Mythologems of Primordial Elements in the Novel “Yuliia’s and Herman’s Dreams” by Halyna Pahutiak

H.I. Bokshan

Kherson State University, Kherson, Ukraine

**Abstract.** The purpose of the paper is to characterize the peculiarities of resemantizing mythologems of primordial elements in H. Pahutiak’s literary work. The specific features of the author’s mythological thinking in the novel “Yuliia’s and Herman’s dreams” manifest themselves in transforming cosmogonic and eschatological myths; in using oneiric techniques for actualizing the archetypal images representing the mythologems of primordial elements; in broadening the semantic coverage of these images by adding occasional meanings to traditional ones.

**Key words:** *allusive correlation, ambivalent semantics, mythologems of primordial elements, neo-mythologism, oneiric visions*

Halyna Pahutiak’s novelette “Children”, included in her debut book of the same name (1982), revealed the author’s inclination to depict traumatic effects of the civilization’s crisis. In this work the author originally interpreted the destruction of the children’s world by the war resemantizing the biblical story about Adam and Eve. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century H. Pahutiak goes back to the theme of the Second World War: her novel “Yuliia’s and Herman’s dreams” (2011) represents a neomythological interpretation of Kenigsberg’s tragic destiny. In “Kenigsberg diary” the writer connects the fatal events of the past with the present crisis of humanity: “The tragedy of the city deprived of its name, dwellers, buildings does resemble the tragedy of a modern man who has been deprived of his personality and given illusions, phantoms instead of it” [16, p. 191].

The specifics of reflecting tragic experiences of the war in H. Pahutiak’s works was studied by I. Bila (analysis of the motif of lost childhood in the novelette “Children”) [5], N. Bukina (explanation of the peculiarities of “gothic discourse” in the novel “Yuliia’s and Herman’s dreams”) [6], M. Zhulynskiy (characteristics of “profound psychological analysis of a person’s complicated inner states” in the writer’s first book) [20, p. 111] and by other scientists and literary critics. The peculiarity of neomythologism in the novel “Yuliia’s and Herman’s dreams” has not been a subject of a separate research paper yet, and this fact stipulates the topicality of the chosen theme.

The purpose of the research is to characterize the specifics of neomythological interpretation of Kenigsberg’s tragic destiny in H. Pahutiak’s novel “Yuliia’s and Herman’s dreams” and determine the peculiarities of resemantizing mythologems of primordial elements in this literary work.

In neomythological works “dreams are quite often used as constructive techniques aimed at recreating primordial archaic mythological meanings” [19]. In the essays, which we use as hermeneutic keys to the writer’s literary works, H. Pahutiak maintains that her “real life is dreams” [16, p. 196]. Thus, we have the reason to assume that the oneiric intertexts reflect the specifics of her mythological thinking in the most vivid way. The writer comments on the compositional characteristics of her novel in “Kenigsberg diary”: “<...> I have chosen the form of dreams for my novel, because they are more real than reality itself, and more truthful. These dreams are caused by the unbearable existence” [16, p. 244]. H. Pahutiak explains “the movement towards mythical depiction of Kenigsberg” as “the manifestation of creative consciousness” [16, p. 278]. The writer directs her artistic energy towards repeating the original cosmogonic act and rebuilding Kenigsberg’s world using four primordial elements to overcome the chaos, caused by the war.

Conceptual significance in H. Pahutiak’s literary works is ascribed to the idea of Universal harmony, which implies harmonious coexistence of nature and humans and also living in accordance with fundamental natural principles. In the writer’s axiology primordial elements have exceptional value, because they possess psychotherapeutic features: “This has always saved me – going back to the simplest things: earth, water, stone. Restoration of connections between them and myself” [16, p. 278]. The writer’s imagination made the main characters of the novel “Yuliia’s and Herman’s dreams” learn the fundamental sense of these principles under tragic circumstances. Having found herself in the underground bunker of burning Kenigsberg, the main character acknowledges that “she has light, water and food. Everything, which is necessary for life” [17, p. 100].

The mythologem of fire in the novel is embodied in the images of a flame, a bonfire, a magic lantern and ash. Herman has dreams visualizing a horrible picture of Kenigsberg on fire, associated with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the ruins of Carthage and Pompeii and Dante’s inferno. The semantics of fire in this context correlates with the motif of punishing for sins. The fire in the city situated on the river bank reveals the semantics of mythological chaos, because it is mostly concretized as “non-organized interaction of water and fire” [15]. The image of the city on fire in Herman’s dreams acquires the function of “oneiric anticipation” [13, p. 80], since it predicts that “Kenigsberg will soon turn to a fiery hell” [17, p. 56].

Herman's prophetic dreams actualize the allusion to the Swedish philosopher E. Swedenborg's prediction about the fire in Stockholm at the end of 1759, connecting the oneiric intertext of the novel with the cultural-historical intertext. In "Yuliia's and Herman's dreams" there are episodes about the spiritual seances, associated with the mystic voices and visions of Swedenborg, who claimed that he "heard and saw spiritual beings" and "had experiences of hearing and seeing things that others could not" [12, p. 8]. In this way the mystical atmosphere of the novel is emphasized, but it does not become dominant. H. Pahutiak underlines that this "novel has to be psychological, and not historical or mystical" [16, p. 259].

Accentuating psychologism as a genre-marking feature, the writer encourages the readers to involve psychoanalytic explanations into decoding the images of the novel. Realizing mystical and prophetic character of his dreams, Herman accepts that fire and destruction are also "explained as anxiety. The reasons of it were understandable: the changes, his new life, loneliness and something like that" [17, p. 115]. Psychoanalytic semantics of fire is realized through the images of the people from Herman's visions: in their eyes "under the ash of despair there was a burning fire of obsession" [17, p. 141]. Using the semantics of primordial elements allows for detecting emotional stress in the characteristics of Yuliia: "there is no enough water to put out the fire in her heart" [17, p. 26]. Herman's nervous exhaustion, his "burn-out", is accentuated by the literary detail, connected with the image of fire: "<...> he will be able to wash off the ash from his soul and calm down a bit" [17, p. 169].

The ruin of Kenigsberg is accentuated as punishment which is connected with the image of "the fiery circle of death": "The whole Germany is surrounded by the circle of retribution, which is narrowing" [17, p. 48]. This image correlates with the semantics of eschatological myths which "express the same archaic and extremely widespread idea of the progressive "degradation" of a Cosmos, necessitating its periodical destruction and re-creation" [8, p. 60]. Apocalyptic rhetoric is concentrated in the inner monologue of Yuliia's grandfather, representing Kenigsberg as Hell: "<...> ten years of my life were stolen by the world, inflamed by hate and desire for power. <...> The world is absurd, the world is deceitful, the world is evil" [17, p. 52]. In this context the image of fire acquires symbolic meaning of the hellfire, emphasized by the allusions to "The Divine Comedy" by Dante.

The image of ash in Herman's dreams highlights the semantics of fire as a destructive force and the idea of the wages of sins. However the allusive connection with the biblical image of Job suggests another explanation of it: the fire in Kenigsberg could be considered not only as punishment for sins but also as a trial of patience and faithfulness. In "Kenigsberg diary" this city is represented as the core of humanity and high culture of the Age of Enlightenment, that is reflected in I. Kant's works. In her essays H. Pahutiak often appeals to the philosopher's ethics, and Kenigsberg being his native city is the place where his moral theory was developed. Thus, Prussia as a former cultural centre of Europe is more associated with the image of righteous Job, than with that of a sinner. H. Pahutiak's conclusion appears to be significant in this context: "If Prussia still existed, the world might not be slipping so quickly into the abyss of moral and cultural destruction" [16, p. 197].

In connection with the image of Yuliia the mythologem of fire reveals the semantics of life-giving warmth and light: being in the basement the girl had to burn books to warm her grandfather and herself. Overcoming her moral scruples, Yuliia sacrificed only those books "which did not evoke any feelings" [16, p. 26]. H. Pahutiak resemantizes the symbolic image of the book: in her interpretation it acquires an additional occasional meaning of a source of life-giving warmth. In the world destroyed by war books stop being a universal symbol of culture, therefore the act of burning them by the Russian soldiers reflects the decline of civilization, its cultural crisis: "Their fire was partly the fire of hate, because they could read neither Latin nor German. Wardrobes, ceilings, desks produced more warmth, but it was more pleasant to watch the pages with a gothic font writhing in the flame" [17, p. 26–27].

The image of a burning Kenigsberg bakery "where rolls and cakes have been baked for tens of years" [17, p. 49] emphasizes the ambivalent symbolism of fire as a life-giving and destructive substance, "cooking and apocalypse" [3, p. 7]. The ambivalent semantics of fire is also articulated in Herman's reflections: "Now he feels the difference between the fire burning and the fire warming" [17, p. 111].

The mythologem of fire is represented by the image of the magic lantern, the object of Yuliia's appeal: "Good night to you, Lantern, God's lamp, because only God's lamp can shine so long" [17, p. 111]. The semantics of light realized through this image acquires sacred character. H. Pahutiak's comments in "Kenigsberg diary" allow for interpreting the semantics of light using a psychoanalytic approach: "People have inner light which must appear in the dark. It is a sign of their freedom and independence" [16, p. 241]. Yuliia meant the inner light, speaking that "she could live long without food and water, but she could not live without light" [17, p. 104]. The image of the lantern also emphasizes the character's moving towards true

values, because it “symbolizes individual life in the face of cosmic existence, transitory fact in the face of eternal truth, ‘distraction’ in the face of essence” [7, p. 180].

The mythologem of water is traditionally associated with a female element, therefore the aquatic images in H. Pahutiak’s novel are mostly correlated with the image of Yuliia. G. Bachelard writes: “The human mind has claimed for water one of its highest values – the value of purity” [4, p. 14]. Using traditional mythosemantics of water in the novel, the writer adds a contextual antithetical meaning to it, emphasizing the ability of war to destroy basic things of life: “In this water there is all the dirt of the war: ash, dust, blood, urine” [17, p. 53]. However H. Pahutiak accentuates the ability of water to cleanse and restore itself, emphasizing its primary fundamental meaning: “In the dead silence of the motionless cellar the dirt of water can settle and it will turn to something necessary” [17, p. 53]. The theme of purity and impurity of water, analyzed by G. Bachelard, is originally interpreted by H. Pahutiak in the image of the underground lake: “It might be the purest water in the world. And it might be poison” [17, p. 132]. Water metamorphism which symbolizes impermanence and changeability is reflected in the antithetic aquatic images: “<...> a stream flowing from a gorge to a wide plain and not finding anything to join turns to a fusty bog” [17, p. 39].

Since primordial elements are gender-related, the following G. Bachelard’s reflections acquire special significance for our research: “Water is the profound organic symbol of woman who can only weep about her pain and whose eyes are easily “drowned in tears” [4, p. 82]. The described “female” essence of water is accumulated in the main character’s dreams: “Tears were pouring down Yuliia’s face, she was drowning in her own tears and flowing together with the sea of tears. The sky and the low horizon marked the edge of the world, endless water, where ships of hope had sunk” [17, p. 164]. The “female” nature of water is highlighted in the writer’s reflections about the river which has taught her freedom, resistance and independence, formed her character: “<...> I could not be the one I am without the Bystrytsia” [18, p. 16]. The archetypal image of the River is characteristic of H. Pahutiak’s works.

The main characters of the novel “Yuliia’s and Herman’s dreams” have no parents, and it should be stressed that the semantics of the mythologem of water related to them correlates with the Mother archetype. Emphasizing “motherhood” of water, G. Bachelard’s writes: “Water rocks us. Water puts us to sleep. Water gives us back our mother” ([4, p. 131]. Depressed by his childhood memories, Herman walked around Kenigsberg and found consolation and tranquility near the water: “His childish fear dissolved in the huge mass of water like a pinch of salt, and in the middle of the river there was blueness” [17, p. 38]. The image of milk also represents the mythologem of water: “Warm milk of dream” [17, p. 109] protects Yuliia from the unbearable reality, nourishes and gives her support like Mother.

In Yuliia’s oneiric visions the mythologem of water is represented by the image of the sea “with its bitter water and restless soul” [17, p. 124]. Such dreams reveal the girl’s anxiety, her fear of the unknown. G. Bachelard accentuates hostile features of seawater and considers stormy water to represent not a female but a male element [4, p. 9].

The mythologem of water in H. Pahutiak’s novel is connected with the images of swans which acquire the meaning of ominous symbols in correlation with Sophia’s death in the river: “<...> there was something sinister in the fast and purposeful movement of their chests cutting the water” [17, p. 130]. Such interpretation of these ornithological images is similar to their meaning in Germanic mythology: the ancient Germanic people believed swans to be the embodiments of dead girls’ souls. Furthermore, a swan is considered one of “the essential symbols of the mystic journey to the other world” [7, p. 322].

The mythologem of earth in the novel is embodied in the images of a basement, a cave, sacred stones and farmlands. At first Yuliia hides from the horrors of the war in the basement serving her as a shelter and its image acquires the semantics of a mother’s womb: “It was dry and warm, nothing threatened her here” [17, p. 100]. On the other hand, correlating with the images of dead people in Kenigsberg, the mythologem of earth accumulates the semantics of eternal shelter. In his inner monologue Yuliia’s grandfather identifies the basement with the place of burial: “There is a real crypt” [17, p. 23]. The semantics of eternal shelter is realized through the image of the cave with dead bodies found by Yuliia in her underground wandering. It is expedient to refer to M. Jakubczak’s work: “The examples of the opposite face of Mother-Earth <...> are the symbolic representations of Earth as a grotto, a cave and also a cemetery, a tomb” [11, p. 38]. The cave is represented as the Country of the dead in Herman’s oneiric visions. Yuliia takes the dead people for the sleeping ones and it accentuates the semantics of dream as eternal rest and evokes allusive relations to the mythological images of the brothers Hypnos and Thanatos: “Death is a dream” [17, p. 27].

The cave acquires character of the Shelter, the Kingdom (recurrent topoi in H. Pahutiak’s prose) for Yuliia. The image of the door in this context symbolizes a passageway between two worlds: “This door is for those who have no other place to go” [17, p. 56]. Developing the idea of different worlds in her literary works H. Pahutiak mentions: “I have always been attracted by old caves as an entrance to another world. The

perception of the time which is not subject to the Sun" [16, p. 281]. Temporal peculiarities of the cave are perceived by Yuliia: "<...> the underground time differs from that on the surface" [17, p. 143]. The girl's being in the cave with water can be interpreted as a trial in the rite of initiation. Her getting out of the cave respectively actualizes the motif of "birth from the womb of Mother-Earth" [11, p. 54], which is correlated with the beginning of a new life for Yulia in H. Pahutiak's novel. The features of the rite of passage are traced in the act of the old man's handing the keys over to his granddaughter since "they are symbolic representations of initiation and knowledge" [7, p. 167].

The embodiment of the mythologem of earth is the image of sacred stones worshiped by the Baltic peoples [16, p. 277]. This image is used to generate temporal aberrations emphasizing the existence of the other reality: "If we compare the life of stone with that of humans, then the hours spent underground and centuries are equal" [17, p. 110]. M. Eliade explains mythological hierophany of stone by the fact that its stable character reveals "an absolute existence, beyond time, invulnerable to becoming" [10, p. 156]. The semantics of indestructibility and transcendence is realized through the image of the stones left after the fire in Kenigsberg: "The stones and bricks will be taken to Russia and new houses will be built of them" [17, p. 84]. In such interpretation of this image we can see the allusive correlation with the prophetic words from the Book of Habakkuk: "The stones of the wall will cry out <...>. Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by injustice!" (Chapter 2:11–12). The specific features of H. Pahutiak's mythological thinking are reflected in her animistic views about stones which the writer explicates in "Sentimental journeys through Halychyna": "They seem alive to me. I heard that stones also have hearts but they beat very slowly" [18, p. 145]. Such perception of stone, according to M. Eliade's words, is characteristic of many world myths: "If the Earth is thought of as a living and fecund Mother, all that she produces is both organic and animated, not only men and plants, but also stones and minerals" [9, p. 195].

The mythologem of earth in H. Pahutiak's novel realizes polyvalent semantics reflecting numerous earth-human relations. The interaction of various meanings is articulated by S. Krymskyi: "<...> earth is not limited to the concept of soil or humus; it is a topos for life, sacred environment, "native land", "mother-earth", Sophia beginning of life, compatriotism etc" [14, p. 17]. In the novel "Yuliia's and Herman's dreams" the mythologem of earth embodied in the image of Herman's inherited farmland reveals the semantics of a fertile element which correlates with the archaic cult of agrarian peoples: "They did not decompose soil into chemical elements, they did not know anything about nitrogen, potassium or magnesium, but rubbing a clod of soil between their fingers, they could say what it needed, what it lacked. <...> they thought that it was not good to plough it" [17, p. 149]. The prejudice against using a plough in this context can be interpreted as a respectful attitude towards Mother Earth and unwillingness to wound her. Herman's coming back to the inherited estate – to his parent's land – acquires a symbolic meaning of ancestor veneration.

The mythologem of air associated with a male element mainly correlates with the image of flying killing machines, "murderous metal birds", which appear in Herman's dreams. Thus in the main character's oneiric visions the semantics of the earth element is contrasted with that of the air element: the earth gives shelter and the air threatens with destruction. The sounds of thunder and wind represent the element of air. Herman names them "sky artillery" that suggests the semantics of destruction. In addition, the depiction of the "firefall" – the firework covering the full moon on the night of Sophia's death reveals the ominous meaning related to the image of fire.

Restoring the image of Kenigsberg, "reconstructing it" [16, p. 279], H. Pahutiak actualizes the cosmogonic myth with "King's mountain" as Axis Mundi. The oneiric house in G. Bachelard's works appears as a castle: "The chateau planted on the hilltop had a cluster of cellars for roots" [2, p. 56], the roots are considered as "a mysterious tree, a subterranean tree, an inverted tree" [1, p. 84]. In H. Pahutiak's novel "the cellars under the King's castle branch off in different directions of Kenigsberg" [17, p. 101]. Thus the existence of the underground and the overground city is associated with the archetypal image of the World Tree with the inverted vertical structure: the destroyed overground Kenigsberg corresponds to the world of the dead, and its underground part gives shelter to the alive.

H. Pahutiak depicted the tragedy of Kenigsberg describing the dramatic destiny of the people related to this city, believing in their ability "to maintain their personalities even having lost their names" [16, p. 267]. Searching for the lost city the readers are made to wander through the main characters' dreams, because they "keep memories about the past when there is no trace of it" [18, p. 12]. The specific features of H. Pahutiak's mythological thinking in the novel "Yuliia's and Herman's dreams" manifest themselves in resemantizing the cosmogonic and eschatological myths; in using the oneiric technique for actualizing the archetypal images representing the mythologems of primordial elements; in broadening the semantic

coverage of these images by adding occasional meanings to traditional ones. The prospects for further research lie in analysis of the writer's works as examples of neomythological prose.

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Мифологемы первостихий в романе Галины Пагутяк «Сны Юлии и Германа»

Г. И. Бокшань

**Аннотация.** Цель статьи – определить специфику ресемантизации мифологем первостихий в произведении Г. Пагутяк. Особенности авторского мифологического мышления в романе «Сны Юлии и Германа» проявляются в ресемантизации космогонических и эсхатологических мифов; в использовании онирических приёмов для актуализации архетипных образов, коррелирующих с мифологемами первостихий; в расширении семантического объема этих образов за счёт окказиональных значений, дополняющих традиционные.

**Key words:** аллюзийная связь, амбивалентная семантика, мифологемы первостихий, неомифологизм, онирические визии.