



Intertextuality as a Method of Myth Creating in the Russian Press

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KEYWORDS Articles. Intertextuality. Pushkin. Recontextualisation. Script

ABSTRACT The present paper investigates the use of quotations from the poetic texts of Alexander Pushkin in modern Russian newspaper articles with the purpose of discovering how Russian mass media create myths about Pushkin by transforming his famous texts into new signs filled with new sense by developing the theoretical framework of semiotic analysis and cognitive approach to discourse studies. The analysis investigates semantic transformations that several specially selected quotations expose to in new newspaper contexts with an emphasis on the modification of extension, mapping of source text scripts, redistribution of semantic features of source context models. The purpose of the study is to point out the role of mass media in constructing and reproducing some modern myths about Pushkin. The analysis commences with the overview of the “myth” as an ideologically loaded message, and the potential capacity of classical texts is investigated to be converted to myths.

INTRODUCTION

Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin was a Russian poet, playwright, and novelist of the Romantic era who is considered by many to be the greatest Russian poet and the founder of modern Russian literature. Critics consider many of his works masterpieces, such as the poem *The Bronze Horseman* and the drama *The Stone Guest*, a tale of the fall of Don Juan. Pushkin is also known for his short stories. Pushkin himself preferred his verse novel “*Onegin*”, which he wrote over the course of his life and which, starting a tradition of great Russian novels, follows a few central characters but varies widely in tone and focus. “*Onegin*” is a work of such complexity that, while only about a hundred pages long, translators needed two full volumes of material to fully render its meaning in English. Because of this difficulty in translation, Pushkin’s verse remains largely unknown to English readers. Even so, Pushkin has profoundly influenced western writers (Gulshat et al. 2016).

There is no specific date for the history of the creation of the myths. Various legends were created over time from natural events to other human and social phenomena with turn of human life, and with the events that occurred around it.

Although the origins of some of these legends were unfortunate and not up-to-date with current

standards, however, numerous of these stories can yet be employed with passion for innovation, education, and children’s education, a familiarity with the culture, and it requires a history of the folklore of every land.

Nowadays, there are some schools worldwide that have accompanied this trend and are working on adolescent myths to elaborate on the complicated scientific problems of myths and legends.

It can be a different and creative alternative to avoid scientific deviations in the interest of students in boring lessons. The fairy tales are presented to the students with interesting performances in these schools. They awaken their curiosity and scholarly interest in different scientific and historical subjects (Rubins 2017; Baron 2019).

The literary language is the most potent form of the national language (Galiullina et al. 2016), and the culture occurs via a textual foundation (Yusupova 2016). Pushkin has been selected for the analysis in the present research because of an extraordinary unique role that he played in the Russian culture, which is comparable to the role of William Shakespeare in the English-speaking world (Hillier 2015; Wu 2018).

The approaches used for cult research primarily include the methodologies and viewpoints

related to the sociology of literature and reading studies. As regards the unique position Pushkin possesses in Russian culture, the Pushkin myth and cult represent distinct phenomena. Pushkin cult researchers regularly view this cult as a closely related aspect of Russia's cultural myth as well; in other words, the nature, variations, and models of the Pushkin myth are analyzed from the perspective of how communal respect is paid to the poet. To date, research on the Pushkin cult therefore analyzes phenomena related to the social usage of literature, an area generally examined in literary cult studies, which generally analyzes the applications, reader actions and attitudes that emerge in relation to a literary work or an author's name. Literary cult studies is expressly not interested in the internal, auto-poetic workings of the literary work itself. The reasons for the emergence of the Pushkin myth and cult stem from aspects surrounding the Pushkin oeuvre, biography as well as the special nature of the Pushkin reception. Pushkin gained unprecedented success within a very short period of time in the modern literary institutional system of Russian literary culture, which was still emerging at the time.

Pushkin's texts consist of the nucleus of the Russian literature and are involved in the obligatory section of the literature syllabus of a secondary school. The research is conducted within the theoretical frameworks of semiotic analysis (Barthes 1991; Eco 1979) and cognitive approach to discourse analysis by developing the frame theory (Attardo 2001; Van Dijk 2006; Fauconnier 2007; Cienki 2007; Ibragimov et al. 2017; Khaybullina et al. 2017).

The empirical research was on the basis of eight well-known quotations from Pushkin's (1964) texts employed in 88 Russian newspaper articles from 2001 to 2014. In 33 articles, Pushkin's quotations were represented explicitly and marked by quotation marks, and 55 articles (62.5%) incorporated Pushkin's texts without any manifest markers (Berger 2018).

The Russian mass media seems to play an essential role in shaping such an image of Pushkin in society by considering a flagging interest in reading classical literature that can be observed in Russia nowadays. Fairclough explains that mass media are conditioned by the society within which they operate, and conversely, they reproduce the

allowed values, transform them and create new ones: "media texts constitute a sensitive barometer of sociocultural change" (Fairclough 1995).

Since Pushkin is most frequently quoted and alluded by the authors of Russian newspapers, the examination of his texts included in newspaper texts may give insights into the method named as mass media frame information to attain the desired consequence in shaping the opinions of the reading audience. Because the primary matter of concern in this study is how due to recontextualisation, Pushkin's texts obtain new semantic features and may assist in the remodelling of their context structures, the semantic analysis based on the frame theory, a more detailed elaboration of which is presented in the next section (Weiss 2016).

Objectives

The purpose of the study is to point out the role of mass media in constructing and reproducing some modern myths about Pushkin. The analysis commences with the overview of the "myth" as an ideologically loaded message, and the potential capacity of classical texts are investigated to be converted to myths.

METHODOLOGY

The analysis is on the basis of a limited number of quotations to take into account their application and semantic transformations in several (more than one) newspaper articles. It was required to perform a comparative semantic analysis of the same quotation in as many new contexts as possible to discover if some tendencies existed in the on-going transformations. Consequently, the quotations occurring in the body of texts were analysed concurrently with those used in headlines, though they certainly fulfilled various functions within the article. 41 quotations of 88 occurrences in newspaper texts were employed in headlines either independently. For instance, "Не пой, красавица, при мне" or "Sing, lovely one, I beg no more or as part of a bigger headline" ("Кавказ подо мною на целый отпуск" or "Below me the silver-capped Caucasus lies during the whole vacation"), which implies to the appeal of Pushkin's texts for journalists who expect to invite their readers to the article by resorting to famous and clearly recognisable quotes.

Further investigation focused on semantic transformations of the quotations in new target contexts and was conducted based on the frame analysis. According to Barthes' definition, a myth is a message (Barthes 1991), and therefore, it is assumed to possess a narrative structure. The equivalent definition is true about a quotation, the context model of which may include some frames. Furthermore, a quotation extracts two context models related to each other by referring to the source text and target text simultaneously.

The semantic structure of the quotation supports meaningful transformations, and its fundamental and accidental semantic features are redistributed in the target text because of recontextualisation. Consequently, the context model of the quotation in the target may be different considerably from which in the source (Wiggins 2017).

The analysis of context models of the quotations of the source and target is according to Attardo's 'script' (2001), which is consistent with the 'frame' as represented by van Dijk (1977) and Fauconnier (2007). The scripts are assumed here as complex structurally arranged cognitive units of information about the world. "A script is an organised complex of information about some entity, in the broadest sense: an object (real or imaginary), an event, an action, a quality, etc." (Attardo 2001) The principal features of the script are that it is informative in nature, has a complex and definite structure, is a set of 'essential', 'typical' and 'possible' features (Van Dijk 1977), and according to Eco, 'essential' and 'accidental' properties, the status of which is dependent on "the textual topic" (Eco 1979). As Eco and Attardo stated, a script is evoked by a lexeme at the simplest level and is equivalent to a set of its semantic features (Eco 1979; Attardo 2001).

Scripts evoked by units higher than a word, such as a quotation, regularly reflect not only the 'linguistic' but also 'encyclopaedic' knowledge (Attardo 2001). Scripts are activated by such textual fragments because quotations mainly depend on their presuppositions, and their proper interpretation is on the basis of the information included in the preceding context. The singularity of Pushkin's verses is that they appear ambiguous because of his implied manner of writing, and hence, their correct interpretation requires satisfactory textual competence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Semantic transformations of quotations are conditioned by fragmentary and selective mapping of the source scripts, and most articles disregard the presuppositions and implications of Pushkin's verses. Several scripts are activated in the source of the textual fragment «иных уж нет, а те далече» ("some are distant, some are no more"): Death, Prison; closely connected to them are the implied scripts termed as Crime and Revolt (Opposition). The activation of all of the scripts, also in the source, requires a background understanding for the reader. The quotation is accommodated to issues of targets, transported to new contexts, and consequently, the context model of the quotation is required to be restructured, and not all of its scripts will be activated. The structure of the quotation presupposes the activation of minimally two scripts since it narrates two events: "some are distant" and "some are no more". Two scripts in 12 articles, three scripts in 7 articles, and one script in 4 articles of 23 articles with this quotation are activated. In the articles in which only one script is activated, the quotation supports a rather strong simplification of the semantic structure and loses its intertextual connections with the source, which is treated as a cliché. For example, in the article Рюмка водки, хвост селедки (Glass of vodka, the tail of herring, GZT.ru, 09.04.2009) the quotation refers to cheap cafés, that disappeared from Moscow, and activates the script termed as Non-existence (variation of Death script).

More particularly, the scripts termed as Prison, Death (Non-existence), Crime, and Opposition (Dissent) were respectively mapped by 5, 12, 8, and 5 articles. Furthermore, new scripts emerge due to the redistribution of essential and accidental features of the quotation in targets, which are as follows: Non-activity (14 articles) and Departure (5 articles).

For instance, the article headlined Иных уж нет, а те далече (Some are distant, some are no more, Delovoy Peterburg, 07.02.2008), which is about a Russian businessman who was arrested on charge of many crimes (murder, fraud), generally relates to all Russian businessmen who were involved in organised crimes. The paper is related to the scripts of the source termed as Prison and Crime, and the mapped features are 'crime' and 'prison'.

The article Новые декабристы, партийность и футбол на деньги (New Decembrists, partyiness and football for money, Novaya Gazeta, 22.12.2003) maps features from two source scripts termed as Crime and Opposition, which excludes the Death and Prison scripts. The quotation in the article implies the Russian industry tycoons who are in opposition to the government (their names are not mentioned just as it is done in the source), and the correct interpretation relies on the background knowledge of the reader:

Кроме того, в России родилась серьезная непарламентская оппозиция. (...). Кто может быть спонсором? Олигархи. Но иных уж нет, а те — далеке.

“Besides, a serious non-parliamentary opposition has emerged in Russia. (...) Who can sponsor it? Tycoons. But some are distant, and some are no more”.

The comparative analysis of the quotations extracted from Pushkin's poems, which were employed in modern Russian newspapers, leads to discuss some general tendencies in their semantic transformations. Among them are widening and diversification of extension, selective and simplified mapping of source text scripts due to the adaptation of the quotations to new contexts, redistribution of fundamental and accidental semantic characteristics of context models of the source text, which leads to the emergence of new scripts which are non-existent in source texts. Pushkin's texts are generally treated in the Russian press in simple terms, resulting in slighting the contexts of his texts, deteriorating their connotations, reducing their importance, and as Culler states: ‘disrespectful deformations’ (Culler 1981).

However, in some instances, the transformations that the quotations are exposed to in the newspaper indicate some conscious efforts at re-reading Pushkin, mainly when journalists show Pushkin's authorship of journalistic variants of his quotations. In some cases, such distortions of the sense of outstanding texts may reveal the writer's hidden feeling of superiority to the texts written before him, which results in his passion for lowering the sacredness of a classical text (Bloomfield 1976). In some newspaper contexts, new senses that are read into the quotation appear to load it with an ideological message. The duplicated application

of the quotation in the aforementioned new imposed sense will result in the deformation of the context model of the source text. Furthermore, new ideological components associated with them and continuously reproduced by mass media may create a specific cognitive bias and conclusively influence the readers' understanding of the individuality of the classic, and also the myth termed as “Pushkin as the last bulwark of the Russian world”.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of the quotations extracted from Pushkin's poems, which were employed in modern Russian newspapers, leads to discuss some general tendencies in their semantic transformations. Pushkin's texts are generally treated in the Russian press in simple terms, resulting in slighting the contexts of his texts, deteriorating their connotations and reducing their importance. In some instances, the transformations that the quotations are exposed to in the newspapers indicate some conscious efforts at re-reading Pushkin. In some cases, such distortions of the sense of outstanding texts may reveal the writer's hidden feeling of superiority to the texts written before him, which results in his passion for lowering the sacredness of a classical text. The duplicated application of the quotation in the aforementioned new imposed sense will result in the deformation of the context model of the source text. Furthermore, new ideological components associated with them and continuously reproduced by mass media may create a specific cognitive bias and conclusively influence the readers' understanding of the individuality of the classic, and also the myth termed as “Pushkin as the last bulwark of the Russian world”.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Pushkin's biographical myth, which is also propagated through Pushkin's heroes and subjects, possesses the power to inspire works throughout different regions and cultures. The Pushkin myth has contributions to many works of European Literature. Using Pushkin's works and cult to interpret these novels gives the reader a unique view, and these works can be studied further in future studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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Paper received for publication in October, 2019
 Paper accepted for publication in December, 2019