

# The epithalamic verses by M. V. Lomonosov and V. K. Trediakovsky (1730<sup>th</sup> – 1740<sup>th</sup>)

Svetlana Rudakova<sup>1,\*</sup>, Tatiana Abramzon<sup>1</sup>, and Olga Kolesnikova<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University, 455000, 38 Lenin str., Magnitogorsk, Russia

**Abstract.** The paper reviews Trediakovsky's "dilogy" [1], devoted to the engagement (1729) and marriage (1730) of A. B. Kurakin and A. I. Panina, and Lomonosov's "Ode on the Day of the Marriage of Their Imperial Highnesses the Sovereign Grand Duke Peter Feodorovich and Grand Duchess Catherine, 1745". Much of the mythopoetic concept of epithalamium as lyric-dramatic genre proposed by Trediakovsky will be perceived by Lomonosov and by later writers through him. The principal innovations made by Lomonosov in epithalamic genre, became his mythological and political content and submission to the form of a solemn ode. The ode of 1745 by Lomonosov is the really conceptual ode. The phenomenon of the Royal marriage with explanation of its reasons is considered in it. The dual – erotico-political – ideological complex developed by Lomonosov and the corresponding "common places" of epithalamic odes will be crucial for poets until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

It is believed that Russian poets of the XVII–XIX centuries almost didn't write Epithalamic Verses. However, it turns not to be correct. We know at least seventy epithalamion poems created in only 18th century [2]. The odic genre rather quickly, in the mid-eighteenth century, responded to the real – dynastic – marriage of the rulers, and by the end of the century in the Russian poetry there had already existed a stable tradition of the genre [3; 4; 5], which was developed by the authors of epithalamic ode. Thus, their vector was a continuation and development of mythological and political establishment of the genre.

After firmly forgotten epithalamic experiments of J. W. Paus that took place in 1710-ies, the traditions of poetic epithalamium were revived by V. K. Trediakovsky and M. V. Lomonosov in 1730-1740.

Trediakovsky composed only five epithalamic "poems" and "songs"; a few poems were written by him on related topics. All of them are created under direct influence of the French Rococo [6]; also, traditions of folk culture were present in some of them, including carnival and obscene are guessed. Trediakovsky also introduced the first theoretical-literary definition of epithalamium given in "Method to the addition of Russian poetry" (Sposob k slozheniju rossijskih stihov) (1752): "The essence of the Poem is the circumstances of the marriage, ancient and new customs, praise to the united in marriage, successful divinations, and heartfelt wishes for joy and happiness" [7].

In "Epithalamic Verses on the Marriage of his Excellency Prince Alexander Borisovich

---

\* Corresponding author: rudakovamasu@mail.ru

Kurakin and Princess Alexandra Ivanovna" (Stihi jepitalamicheskikh na brak ego sijatel'stva knjazja Aleksandra Borisovicha Kurakina i knjagini Aleksandry Ivanovny) [1], Trediakovsky creates a fantasy world in which equal rights have all mythological characters (the Roman deities: Mercury, Hymen, Cupids, and Apollo, who plays the violin); personified emblems are appropriate to the occasion (Love, Loyalty, Constancy, Joy) [8]; there are also the bride and groom, as well as the writer. In this world, there are certain events, namely: the wedding train moves ("a great system"), ceremonial actions are made (agreement, or handshake: "Shake on the engagement!"), speeches are said.

The center of the epithalamium is Apollo's speech with congratulations and good wishes to the newly married. He wishes to the young that their marriage could not be destroyed by "harsh death"; that their life was like the Golden age and they had many children and descendants. The greater part of the speech is devoted to the description of the bride, and, apparently, this is the first in the Russian poetry description of the spiritual beauty of the woman in the unity of her external and internal features. In the portrait, there is also the combination of two ideals of beauty, which is pretty remarkable: (a) *the Christian one* and the *secular one*, examples of which were given by pagan antiquity:

Zrite vse ljudi nyne na otrokovicy  
Posjagajushhej lice, *chistoj golubicy*:  
**Palladijskoj vsja ee krasota est' ravna,**  
**Vlasami ni Venera tol' chisto pripravna,**  
Takovymi **Junona ochesy blistaet,**  
Ili **Diana**, kogda kolchany skidaet,  
Iz lesov na nebo ta pribyti hotjashha,  
**Krasitsja;** no sija v sej krasote est' vjashha.  
Takaja to u nas est' knjaginja! Dnes' tyja  
*Bozheski dary*, knjazju, zri vsja, a *blagija*  
*Svet dushi* vidja v onoj, smertnu tuju byti  
Ne recheshi, i schast'em bogam sja sravniti  
Ne ustydish'sja. <...>

Such beauty is the "rapture", the deification of the woman ("the Princess can't be called death") but without the political and related to the power associations, as it takes the place in the official panegyrics of Trediakovsky and his contemporaries.

Trediakovsky's attempt to reveal the conflicting emotions of a bride, her thoughts, hopes, and youthful fears, or, in other words, draw the "inner portrait" of a "young girl" is very interesting for the poetry of those years. She imagines ("deep thoughts reflect") as the Prince "will treat her with love" and how happy ("not rude") they will be together, but at the same time she is afraid that all her dreams and hopes will not be fulfilled ("a thought that the wind will do with vanity?"). But Apollo soothed "a great Princess" by saying that she is loved by Jupiter, Juno and "all the gods", as well as that "the all love of the Prince for you will be noble."

In the short, being written in the French language, in the "Song for this Happy Marriage" (Pesne na onyj blagopoluchnyj brak) (1730), two motives are identified: the description of a beautiful "space of love" where there is the Hymen, a "God of hearts"; and best wishes of "love to the couple."

"Ode on the Day of the Marriage of Their Imperial Highnesses the Sovereign Grand Duke Peter Feodorovich and Grand Duchess Catherine, 1745" (Oda na den' brachnago sochetanija Ih Imperatorskikh Vysochestv Gosudarja Velikago Knjazja Petra Feodorovicha i Gosudaryni Velikie Knjagini Ekateriny Alekseevny 1745 goda) (1745) [9] was the seventh original odic experience of the poet. A year later, in 1746, Lomonosov creates program texts in this genre one after the other. The basis of his ideology was the politico-historical

myth about the happiness and well-being of Russian subjects ruled by the heirs of Peter I [10]. Speaking about the above ode of 1742, among the patterns of this myth, we have identified, in particular, two: "God protects Russia" and especially being concerned about the continuation of the "Petrov's tribe". A pledge of Divine protection, according to Lomonosov, becomes the marriage of Peter Fedorovich and Catherine Alexeevna, made in heaven and sent down in 1745 through Empress Elizabeth.

The ode of 1745 is the really first conceptual ode written by Lomonosov. The phenomenon of the Royal marriage with explanation of its reasons is considered in it, indicating the people participating in it and supportive forces, providing a description of the scene of action, offering explanations of the consequences which have to follow the marriage of their Imperial Highnesses for this world and even the world beyond.

The Russian political reality offered Lomonosov a new odic "case", and the poet was quick to use it, developing and detailing the myth created by him. Now in its center, the *love of the rulers transforming all things* was placed. The marriage embodying this love unites in festive triumph and fun the heavenly world and the earthly one. The *universal harmony* is established, and the initial heavenly bliss comes back to the earth.

The returned paradise, or "other country", is no other than embodied on the earth "the kingdom of love" (see Lomonosov's "Rhetoric", § 294). Its description occupies a half of the ode and is based on the deployment of the archetypal image of a *paradise garden, the Eden*, – an image in which ideas of initial harmonious state of nature and prelapsarian innocence of a person included in it were embodied [11], so that is the way Lomonosov begins the ode. The main attributes of "other country" are the rest/silence and brightness'. Besides *gold and azure*, the poet uses such color-light marking, as *green, pale lily, milky, rosy, bright, shining, blue, snow-white, glittering, sparkling, silver, sunny*.

This is probably the most saturated with color and light ode by Lomonosov who, in general, preferred to create sound images, widely represented in the work. Beautiful "girls and boys" joyfully exclaim at the shores of "quiet rivers" and their "the cheerful voice" rushes "through the hills, groves and meadows"; "castalian Nymphs rejoice"; Zephyr "flaps his wings"; Orpheus "strikes" the harp; the trees meet in chorus; the forest exclaim with delight, etc., etc. If color and light images are intended to draw sensually perceived kingdom of love, beauty and happiness, then sound images express joy and a unification of the social and natural worlds. It is through the word, "hearing" about the "Young Couple" Russia and the peoples inhabiting it learn about their upcoming future bliss:

Teper' vo vseh gradah Rossijskih,  
Po selam i v stepjah Azijskih  
*Edinoglasno govorjat:*  
«Kak Bog prodlit chrez vечно vremja  
Drazhajshee Petrovo plemja,  
Shhastliva zhizn' i nashih chad:  
Ne budet strashnyja premeny,  
I ot Rossijskih hrabryh ruk  
Rassypljutsja protivnyh steny  
I sil'nyh iznemozhet luk.

In "the kingdom of love", all are captured by passion, subordinated to it: birds, "trees", streams, Narcissus, Zephyr:

I gorlic *nezhnoe vzdyan'e*,  
I chistyh golubic *lobzan'e*  
*Ljubvi javljajut tamo vlast'*.  
Dreva listami *pomavajut*,  
Drug druga vet'vmi *obnimajut*,

*V bezdushnyh zrju ljubovnu strast'!  
Ruch'i vo sled ruch'jam krutjatsja,  
To gonjat, to sebja manjat,  
To prjamo drug k drugu stremjatsja,  
I, slivshis' mezh soboj, zhurchat.*

In this verse, the poet uses very transparent allegories and euphemisms, describing with verbs a love game and manifestations of passion even at "soulless" (i.e. 'having no soul') animals and plants.

Throughout several verses, Lomonosov creates also an image of the Love. The poet uses all possibilities of the Baroque-classicist poetics and his imagination in order that the reader could imagine this ethereal feeling: "My spirit sees the beauty of the love". The Love appears in an anthropomorphic form. Her face is beautiful like the dawn; her eyes like stars burning in the night; her hands are whiter than marble. It strides escorted by the personified feelings and abstract concepts which accompany a happy marriage in the consciousness of a person. These are images without a shaped framework, they cannot be imagined, but it is possible to catch the feelings and emotions that own the participants of this marriage train and the audience watching the procession.

*Belejshej mramora rukoju  
Ljubov' neset pered soboju  
Mladyh Suprugov svetlyj lik;  
Sama, smotrja na nih, divitsja,  
I polk vseh nezhnostej tesnitsja  
I k onym tshhatel'no prinik.  
Krugom eja umil'ny smehi  
Vzirajushhih plenjajut grud',  
Prijatnosti i vse utehi  
Cvetami ustilajut put'.*

This picture resembles the corresponding scene in "the epithalamic Poems..." by Trediakovsky, but this one is even more abstract and allegorical. The understanding of the real situation also helps us to understand how high the degree of convention and the mythology of what is happening. At court and in Academy of Sciences, where Lomonosov served, it was well known that the groom and the bride have to each other no warm feelings. Nevertheless, it does not prevent the poet to draw the fine "kingdom of love" and "to elevate" newly married.

In the ode of 1745, Lomonosov brilliantly develops diverse forms of "elevation" – attempts "to present the ruler as the Supreme beginning and to endow him with sacred qualities", "to elevate rulers to the other sphere of the universe, where they showed the superior qualities, giving them the right to rule" [12]. So, in addition to the Supreme deity, the gods of ancient mythology and the forces of nature take part in the fate of intending spouses. For example, the 19th verse: the Sun traveling across the sky in a burning chariot sees from the height the globe and Russia:

*V Rossijskoj ty derzhave vshodish',  
Nad neju dnevnij put' prevodish'  
I v volny kroesh' plamen' svoj;  
Ty – nashej radosti svidetel',  
Ty zrish' userdij nashih znak,  
Chto nyne nam poslal sodetel'  
Chrez sej blagoslovennyj brak.*

Orpheus with his art animates the rocks and trees, which "loudly *exalt* the young Spouses

to heaven." "Castalian Nymphs" (nine muses) "with love together they triumph" and "ennoble marriage in a loud voice." Goddess of poetry, arts and Sciences, rejoice because they pin hopes with the marriage of Peter and Catherine for their own prosperity in Russia:

One sebe s vesel'em zhdut  
Imet' v Rossii imja slavno,  
Shhedrotoj obodrennyj trud.

Thus, Lomonosov directly relates love and marriage of the rulers with cultural progress.

The most important component of the myth of love and marriage of the rulers is the characteristic-the description of the newlyweds themselves. It differs significantly from what we see in epithalamium of 1730. Trediakovsky depicted people and *private* feelings; while Lomonosov, portraying the lovers, showed the monarch's *duties* and *tasks of the state*. Odic eroticism is directly related to political pragmatics:

Ot vas Rossija ozhidaet  
Shhastlivyh i spokojnyh let.

The young couple is beautiful externally and internally, but the beauty pursues very specific and even utilitarian purposes: it must capture the "heart and the eyes of the audience, the subjects in general. Petr Feodorovich personifies an ideal of the male ruler: he is famous for "the heroic spirit and power." In Catherine, the feminine principle of the autocrat is represented: "the nature had exhausted the richness of her beauty." The acts which monarchs should make will contribute to the multiplication of happiness of the Empire:

Petr siloju svoej desnicy  
Rossijski rasprostret granicy  
I v nih spokojstvo utverdit.  
Drazhajshija Ego Suprugi  
Vezde proslavjatsja zaslugi,  
I svet shhedrota udivit.  
On dobrodetel' chrez nagrady  
V narode budet umnozhat';  
Ona predstatel'stvom otrady  
Potshhitsja bednym podavat'.

Besides Grand Duchess was entrusted the honorable and most important duty to give birth to an heir and thereby to prolong Peter's family as well as the happiness of Russia:

O shhedraja Ekaterina,  
Ty procvetaj krasnee krina  
I sladki nam plody podaj.

This requirement is for the brides of Grand princes will become mandatory at the later of the authors of epithalamium.

In the final verse of the ode, Lomonosov turns to God Almighty with a prayer – a request to prolong Peter I's family and, looking in the future, sees the request has already been fulfilled: the following year, a child will have to be born. The birth of the baby is shown as a kind of sacred event, "grace" which descends from the deity:

O Bozhe, krepkij Vsederzhitel'!  
Podaj, chtob Rossov Obnovitel'  
V potomkah vечно zhil svoih.  
Vospomjani Ego zaslugi  
I, prekloniv nebesny krugi,  
Blagoslovi Suprugov sih.  
S vysot tvoih Elisavete

Posli svjatuju blagodat',  
Spodobi Tu v grjadushhem lete  
Petrova Pervenca lobzat'.

Thus, the development of a love theme in the odic genre in the mid-eighteenth century was in the direction of its fusion with issues of national importance, with those external and internal political tasks that confronted the Russian Empire. Along with the usual political resolution of public issues (war, coalition, etc.) ode offers mythological and political ways as well. For example, the nature and the elements obey Russian autocrats voluntarily, amazed by their beauty and exhausted with love to them.

In conclusion, in that century and in the Russian culture, a special "epithalamic text", including a description of the wedding (especially members of the Imperial family) and "celebrations", occurred on this occasion; speeches of secular and ecclesiastical people; engravings; depictions of the fireworks and inscriptions to them; poems were formed. The analysis of this extensive "text" could be the subject of a special work.

## References

1. V. K. Trediakovsky, *Selected works* (Moscow, 1963)
2. A. Petrov. *Marriage and wedding poetry in the Russian literary culture of XVIII – the beginnings of the XIX centuries* (Magnitogorsk, 2013)
3. T. V. Artemeva, *Russian historiography of the 18th century* (St. Petersburg, 1996)
4. E. E. Prikazchikova, *Cultural myths and utopias in memoirs and epistolary literature of the Russian enlightenment* (Ekaterinburg, 2010)
5. A. Panchenko, *Russkaja sillabicheskaja poezija XVII–XVIII* (Leningrad, 1970)
6. Russian-European Literary Connections, *Encyclopedia: articles* (St. Petersburg, 2008)
7. *Compositions and translations both verses and prose by Vasily Trediakovsky* (St. Petersburg, 1752)
8. *Emblems and symbols* (Moscow, 2000)
9. M. V. Lomonosov, *Complete works* (Moscow; Leningrad, 1959)
10. T. Abramzon, T. Zaitseva, N. Kozko, S. Rudakova, *3rd International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences & Arts SGEM 2016 Conference Proceedings*, 651-658 (2016).
11. *Peoples' myths: encyclopedia in 2 volumes*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1997)
12. R. S. Wortman, *Power scenarios: myths and ceremonies of the Russian Monarchy. Vol. 1* (Moscow, 2002)