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Bestiary in Modern Media Art (Based on the Tales of P. P. Bazhov and the “Shan Hai Jing” Materials)

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Abstract. The relevance of the study of bestiary in media art is due to the need to trace the links between traditional and digital culture in the modern world. The methodology of semiotic analysis of wild culture codes is used. Bestiary codes of the Ural and Chinese cultures are considered as such codes. The subject of the research focus is the bestiary of Bazhov's tales and “Shan Hai Jing” in media art. The goal is to identify the forms of existence of the Ural and Chinese tales in contemporary media art. The conclusion is made about the content continuity of traditional and modern media art. Bazhov's tales are reinterpreted in the form of literary and pictorial works of modern authors, and the Chinese legends “Shan Hai Jing” in the form of animated films, com-

puter games and serials. Keywords: Bestiary, culture, medi -art, P.P. Bazhov, “Shan Hai Jing”.

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1. Rationale

The research into bestiary in media art is relevant due to the need to trace the links between traditional and digital culture in the modern world. In the European cultural tradition, a bestiary is a medieval collection of zoological articles (with illustrations), in which various animals were described in detail in both prose and poetry, mainly for allegorical and moralising purposes. Similarly, any collection of fairy tales, stories or legends about fictional animals can be called a bestiary including literary works and film series, where fantastic animals act as characters, since in the descriptions of animals, truth has always been largely mixed with fiction, and absolutely fantastic explanations were given to fairly real facts. In a broad sense, bestiaries are moralising books rather than scientific ones.

2. Theoretical and methodological background to the research

To study the forms of existence of bestiary in the modern cult and media art, the methodology of semiotic analysis of wild culture codes was used on the example of the bestiary code. This methodology was developed by such representatives of modern Russian semiotic science as A.S. Makhov, O.M. Dovgy and others. Bestiary codes of the Ural and Chinese cultures are considered as such codes. The bestiary code can be interpreted as part of the mythological code because the images of certain animals are often used in modelling the world, and are an integral part of the linguistic picture of the world.

The bestiary cultural code is typical of the mythopoetic consciousness of traditional culture or for the ideas of a society of a particular era. That means that the bestiary cultural code will act as a cultural code only within the framework of a particular system of ideas and representations characteristic of a particular people or time period. The bestiary cultural code is able to encode stable ideas of the cultural community about a person and the world around it.

Through the conceptual animal sphere, understanding of the world and man takes place, and this turns the archaic images of animals into an all-in-one package of metaphorisation. Accumulated in cultural memory, man's imaginative ideas of the animal gradually deepened and were associated with

key economic activities, everyday concerns and beliefs of human society, thereby turning into signs and symbols.

In labour activities and everyday communication, figurative representations of an object or phenomenon important for the whole society were shaped, which required the consolidation of this meaning in the collective memory in the form of one or another sign denoting not only the object itself but also a certain set of ideas associated with it. In addition, a symbol retains the features of the archetype that produced it, and provides a connection between a person, who has separated from nature, with his sources.

3. Target of the research study

The target of the research is the bestiary of the Ural tales of Bazhov and the Chinese tales 'Shan Hai Jing', and the embodiment of the bestiary images of the characters of those legends in the works of modern media art.

4. Research outcomes

4.1

Today, media art is the most powerful tool with which the cultural space of the whole world is shaped, where the use of new high technologies is widespread in almost every area of social life. Of all the varieties of media art, I am primarily interested in screen art and culture manifestations, such as cinema, animation and computer games.

The images in the tales of Pavel Petrovich Bazhov gave rise to an almost boundless array of visual replicas made in the Soviet period of the Russian culture, as far as both quantity and diversity are concerned. Since the first edition of the Malachite Box to the present day, Bazhov's tales have been accompanied by a growing stream of visual representations. Colourful illustrations for dozens of publications, monumental panels and murals, sculptural works, fiction and animation films, theatrical performances, porcelain plastic and other decorative and applied art items, jewellery design, and finally fashion design — a significant part of the encyclopedia dedicated to the writer focuses on even a simple review of this visual setting [Bazhovskaya encyclopedia 2007: 99–109; 405–410; 465–471; 489–490]. In a word, Bazhov's creative work is immersed in an unusually dense context of visual representations of his figurative world, primarily the characters of his mountain mythology, from malachite boxes to the monumental Stone Flower fountain in the city of Ekaterinburg.

Today, it has become a commonplace to assert that the vast array of visual representations of the fantastic characters of Bazhov's tales in book illustrations, fiction and animation films, porcelain plastic and decorative and applied arts is archaic without meeting the needs of modern culture but degenerating into kitsch. Visual representations of Bazhov's images still reproduce the clichés prevailing in the Soviet visual culture of the late 1940s and 1950s and are focused on the Russian painting traditions of the 19th century.

Questions are raised about the prevailing style or canon of Bazhov's visualisation and how this style meets the trends of modern culture. This last question is far from idle, since visibility has become almost the dominant factor of our time. Today, the viability, relevance and efficacy of a literary work are therefore associated with the degree of suggestiveness of its visualisations to a great degree.

A pre-condition for updating Bazhov's creativity in contemporary culture is the renewal of his visual representations, the penetration of some tendencies of modern mass culture into Bazhov's visualisation (comics, cosplay), which meets the need for upgrade. But modern visual variations on Bazhov's themes do not go beyond the usual framework, although they are seemingly subject to the influence of modern mass culture without a sign of any deeper rethinking of Bazhov's tales. Rather, there is a tendency to degenerate into kitsch in its purest form.

The most successful artistic replica of Bazhov's bestiary cultural code is O. Slavnikova's novel. In her novel '2017' [2006], the writer creates scenarios for the visualisation of Bazhov's characters in the spirit of the newest screen culture, which is based on computer animation. She describes how the fantastic characters of Bazhov might look on the screen and radically reinterprets Bazhov's mountain mythology in the spirit of neo-mythology of mass culture.

In the novel, the images of Bazhov's mountain mythology are refracted in this medial environment emerging from the pictorial static imposed on them by the previous tradition. Slavnikova does not only form new scenarios for visualising the Bazhov mountain mythology but also upgrades its deep semantics by highlighting the chthonic fundamental principle of the Bazhov mountain spirits. Bazhov's fantastic characters are not only anthropomorphic but are socialised and even moral to some extent. Mountain spirits favour kind, honest and courageous workers and are irreconcilable in respect of those who oppress them, also unfavourable to those who violate

moral principles. Such an upgrading highlights both the creative potential of Bazhov's tales and their undervaluation and lack of demand in modern screen media art.

4.2

There are many fantastic animal creatures in Chinese mythology; and they have been an integral part of culture since ancient times, when the Shan Hai Jing legends were collected and written down. Shan Hai Jing is a masterpiece of the Chinese pre-Qin culture. This is a book that contains myths and legends of ancient ancestors, as well as many classic images of magical animals.

Many images of traditional stories and lore retain their symbolic meaning in modern culture. So, Taote is a fierce beast and in the ancient Chinese book of legends it eats a lot; it has only one big head and a big mouth, is very greedy, eventually it ate itself. It is a symbol of greed, which is why it is often used to describe voracious or greedy people. The fox spirit or nine-tailed fox is a mythical creature in ancient Chinese myths and legends; it arose from the Shan Hai Jing compiled during the Chunqiu (770–476/403 BC) and Warring States periods (476/403–221 BC).

In fact, the nine-tailed fox in the pre-Qin period had somewhat of a witchcraft image; and it turned into well-being as early as the Han Dynasty. The atmosphere gradually changed during the Six Dynasties, gradually deteriorated after the Tang Dynasty, and again the Nine-Tailed Fox turned into a negative image. Obviously, this change is actively used in the mass culture aesthetics at the present stage.

In modern China, the image of the Nine-Tailed Fox often appears in films and television plays; gradually it has turned into a sweet and beautiful goddess loved by the audience.

Qionqqi, one of the four evils in ancient Chinese myths and legends, combines the characteristics of gods, monsters, and evil people, and are the symbols of evil representing the most evil-minded things. Like the Nine-Tailed Fox, Tao Te, Qionqqi and other magical creatures are described in Shan Hai Jing, and in modern China they were introduced into bestiaries in films, television plays and games. Those works that have been adapted and created on the basis of ancient themes and characters of Shan Hai Jing represent various genres of media art, have a great modern aesthetic value and communicate the atmosphere of oriental mythology and connotations of the Chinese traditional culture loved by the audience.

Painted Skin I is a film about oriental love magic, and was released on 26 September 2008. The nine-tailed fox is the female protagonist of this film. The film tells the story of the love between the protagonist, his wife and the nine-tailed fox demon Xiao Wei. Xiao Wei fell in love with Wang Sheng, she consistently seduces Wang Sheng with sorcery by trying to replace Wang Sheng's wife. As of 19 October 2008, the box office grossed RMB 212 million; the film was a great success; after four years, the film follow-up was released.

In 2017, the film *Three Lives Three Worlds, Ten Miles of Peach Blossoms* was released. The film tells the convoluted story of love between the female protagonist of the Nine-Tailed Fox Baiqian and the future emperor. In the same year, the eponymous series *Three Lives Three Worlds, Ten Miles of Peach Blossoms* was released. In the series, the Nine-Tailed Fox Bai Qian is the queen of the Kingdom of the Nine-Tailed Foxes (who, along with the Phoenixes and Dragons, are descendants of the ancient gods); it is the future heavenly empress.

Soon the series *Three Lives, Three Worlds. Personal Diary* is a sequel to the Chinese television series *Three Lives, Three Worlds: Ten Miles of Peach Blossoms*, in which the central characters are the red nine-tailed fox Bai Feng Jiu (Bai Qian's niece) and the former emperor of Heaven and Earth Dong Hua Dijun. Both TV shows are widely loved by the Chinese. The series *Three Lives, Three Worlds* adapted and created on the basis of the ancient themes of *Shan Hai Jing*, is a large screen cycle of great modern aesthetic significance characterising the oriental mythology and connotations of the Chinese traditional culture. The authors of the series are committed to showing the vitality of the Chinese classical mythology; they tell Chinese stories well and inherit the excellent Chinese conventional culture.

The *Great Wall* is a Chinese film released in 2016 and is a fantasy action movie directed by Zhang Yimou that tells the story of an ancient Chinese elite army fighting the Tao Te monsters on the world's famous Great Wall to protect humanity in ancient times. Qiungqi is a demonic bestiary character in the 2018 TV series *Ashes of Love*. In this play, the focus remains on the theme of mythology, the protagonists of the play are mostly immortals and monsters, ancient monsters appear endlessly, and Qiungqi is one of them, a truly fierce female protagonist, her goal being to harm humanity.

A variety of protagonists of the ancient Chinese bestiary also appear in computer games, where they have also long gone beyond the game form of media art and have provided the basis for updating cultural heritage and

implementing innovations. For example, the first and currently the most popular mobile game in China is called King of Glory. The game currently has over 200 million users, with over 80 million daily active users at its peak. The characters are based on real protagonistes in the history of China or in Chinese literary works, the depth of the historical reconstruction of the atmosphere of the past in this game is known. The nine-tailed fox, Taote, and Qionqi also appear as playable characters in that game. It uses popular arts to create more influential Chinese cultural symbols, promote young people's interest in traditional culture, and nurture responsibility towards the inheritance and development of the traditional Chinese culture.

5. Conclusion

Conclusion 5.1. The bestiary of Bazhov's tales has not yet become the basis for the modern bestiary code of the Ural culture because modern cartoons, film series or computer games have not yet been created on the basis of his tales. The images of Bazhov's tales are reinterpreted by modern authors in the framework of literary or pictorial creativity.

Conclusion 5.2. In the Chinese mass culture, traditional bestiary images in film series, animated films and computer games are vigorously brought up to date and visualised in the media. This allows maintaining the continuity of traditional values and modern artistic forms of communication.

We can summarize a conclusion about the continuity of content in the Chinese traditional and modern media art. Bazhov's tales are reinterpreted in the form of literary and pictorial works of contemporary authors, and the Chinese Shan Hai Qin legends in the form of animated films, computer games and serials.

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Upgrade of a Fungus in Contemporary Art: From Media to Co-Author

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Abstract. The article examines the problem of the author's potential of non-human agents in biological art. In the context of critical posthumanism and new ontologies, their role in the process of creating a work is being revised. Based on the example of bio-art projects, it is concluded that a performative work changes the status of a biological organism, from a medium it becomes a co-author of the artist.

Keywords: author, bioart, non-human agent, critical posthumanism