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Драматизация посмертной любви в русском сентиментализме: «Поликсена» В. А. Озерова

Аннотация: В настоящей статье аргументируется положение о том, что уникальные открытия Владислава Озерова, выдающегося русского драматурга XIX в., проложили путь к созданию нового жанра неомифологической драмы в европейском театре. Исследуется интертекстуальная адаптация Озеровым известных классических источников легенды о Поликсене («Илиада», «Троянки» и «Гекуба» Еврипида и «Троады» Сенеки) на фоне русской мифологической драмы XIX в. Автор статьи предполагает, что Озеров внес вклад в русский театр, драматизируя тему посмертной любви, органично сочетая анахроничные психологические и сентиментальные мотивы с каноническими чертами классической драмы.

Ключевые слова: В. А. Озеров, русская драма, классическая рецепция, интертекстуальность, мифология, сентиментализм.

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Research Article

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Dramatising Posthumous Love in Russian Sentimentalism: Vladislav Ozerov's *Polyxena*

Abstract: The present article argues that the unique innovations of Vladislav Ozerov, a prominent 19th-century Russian dramatist, paved the way for creating a new genre of Neo-mythological drama in European theatre. The article investigates Ozerov's intertextual adaptation of well-known Classical sources of the Polyxena legend (*The Iliad*, Euripides' *Trojan Women*, and *Hecuba* and Seneca's *Troades*) against the background of Russian mythological drama of the 19th century. It proposes that Ozerov contributed to Russian theatre by dramatising the theme of posthumous love, organically blending anachronistic psychological and sentimental motifs with canonical Classical dramatic traits.

Keywords: V. A. Ozerov, Russian drama, Classical reception, intertextuality, mythology, Sentimentalism.

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Since its emergence in the age of Baroque, Russian drama, including ballet and opera librettos, has acquired a vast number of plots from Classical mythology. The turn of the 19th century marked a period of political and cultural developments in Russia's identity as a state and an increase of interest in national history and folklore [Devlin: 500]. In the literary arena, the patriotic, civically orientated traditions of Russian Classicism still retained their attraction for readers accustomed to the works of Karamzin and Kheraskov, the author of the national epic *Rossiada*, which was passionately welcomed by the Sentimentalists. The genre hierarchy established by theoreticians of Classicism persevered in Russian literature of the last decades of the 18th century due to an entrenched belief that the use of the high genres of epic, tragedy and the ode marked the pinnacle of authorial talent and creativity, resulting in their continued use in the early 19th century [История русской драматургии: 181]. Although tragedy prevailed in the early 19th-century stage, the changing cultural situation in Russia and the formation of novel creative interests inevitably resulted in the widespread expectation that the tragic genre would adapt while authentically Classic, tragic heroes would be reconceptualised and acquire spiritual and moral sensitivity, as well as ontological and religious awareness [История русской драматургии: 181]. Unlike the preceding generation of dramatists, who drew on both Ancient Greek tragedy and contemporary European drama, nineteenth-century playwrights, such as Vasilij Narezhnyi, Alexandr Gruzintzev, Pavel Katenin, and Apollon Maikov, knew Classical Greek, and could base their plays directly on Classical tragedies. In his play *Krovavaja noch, ili konechnoe padenie domu Kadmova* (1800), which goes back to Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Sophocles' *Antigone*, Narezhnyi attempted to reproduce characteristics of Classical tragedy rather than innovate within the genre: he gave the Chorus a prominent role in the development of the action, placed an emphasis on ancient customs and included an abundance of Greek toponyms and proper names [Бочка-

пев: 26]. Imbuing the tragic genre with an ideological-political agenda (the rebellion of citizens against autocracy) became dominant in the interpretation of Classical plots by Alexandr Gruzintzev and Pavel Katenin, the latter of whom was well acquainted with Classical texts which he read in the original [Макаров: 27]. Katenin's tragedy *Andromakha* (première 1827), based on Seneca's *Troades*, Euripides' *Trojan Women*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*, provides an insight into his ideological aims (Katenin was a member of *Sojuz spasenija*, a society of 'aristocratic revolutionaries') [Shatskov: 107–118]. Alexandr Gruzintzev's tragedies, *Elektra i Orest* (1809, based on Sophocles' *Electra*), *Iraklidy ili spasennye Afiny* (1815, modelled on Euripides' *Heracleidae*), and *Tsar' Edip* (1811, founded on Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*) include allusions to contemporary political events and use Classical mythology to express the ideological views of their author.

However, the present article proposes that Vladislav Ozerov, a poet of extraordinary talent, contributed most to the development of Russian mythological tragedy as a genre by infusing it with the spirit of Sentimentalism and discovering new tragic forms, imbued with emotional sensitivity and complexity¹. Ozerov's psychological representation of characters and his introduction of elegiac monologues enabled him to modernise the genre of mythological tragedy, resulting in the creation of a new direction in Russian theatre, mythological sentimental drama, showcased in his finest and most celebrated play *Poliksena* (1809) with its relatively simple plot offset by emotionally complex characters². The present article argues that Ozerov's innovations left a lasting legacy in Russian theatre, which endured in Slavic drama in the 20th and 21st centuries and led to the emergence of a new genre of Neo-mythological drama, characterised by the modernisation, sentimentalisation, intellectualisation, aestheticisation, psychologisation and desacralisation of mythology. In order to assess the true extent of Ozerov's contribution to Russian theatre, the present article will have two primary objectives. Firstly, it aims to fill a lacuna in the study of Ozerov's drama by investigating the intertextuality of his adaptation of well-known Classical sources of the Polyxena legend (the *Iliad*, Euripides' *Trojan Women* and

¹ According to Vissarion Belinsky, Ozerov's appearance marked a new "era in Russian literature" ("появление его было эпохою в русской литературе"). [Белинский: 130].

² Vjazemskij is said to have credited Ozerov with the creation of new drama [Тынянов: 93].

Hecuba and Seneca's *Troades*). The article proposes that Ozerov contributed to Russian theatre by introducing the theme of posthumous love, organically blending anachronistic psychological and sentimental motifs with canonical Classical dramatic traits. Secondly, the article establishes the nature of Ozerov's dramatic innovations and traces their role in laying the foundation for the novel genre of Neo-mythological drama, unprecedented in European drama.

Ozerov's *Poliksena* presents a rare example of a literary treatment of the Polyxena mythological plotline in 19th-century Russian drama, with the legend predominantly featuring in French theatre, with which Ozerov was very well acquainted. Ozerov's education at the Shljahetsky Cadet Corps in St Petersburg (his father enlisted him as a seven-year-old boy in 1776) equipped him with an outstanding knowledge of French (as testified by his contemporary Sergei Glinka: "в памяти Озерова вмещался весь театр Корнеля, Расина, Вольтера. Превосходно знал он французский язык, играл французские трагедии в некоторых домах вельмож и с блеском высказывал свои речи") [Глинка: 171]. Although Voltaire appears to have had a greater influence on Ozerov's drama, with his liberal, creative approach to Ancient plots, his focalisation on human passions and anachronistic interpolations, Ozerov idolatrised Racine and was especially captivated by his Classical plays [Озеров 1960: 9]. Indeed, in *Poliksena*, Ozerov directly engages both with Racine's *Andromaque* (when his Cassandra prophesizes that Andromache will avenge the destruction of Troy) and *Iphigenie* (in his emphasis on the suffering of a young woman sacrificed for the alleged good of the Greek host). More broadly, Ozerov appears to have been influenced by Racine's view, expressed in his preface to *Iphigenie*, paraphrased by Sumarokov in his discussion of tragedy in *Epistle II, on Poetry*, that tragedy has the paradoxical effect of reproducing obsolete, barbaric customs (e.g. human sacrifice) for the pleasure of ostensibly civilized, humane modern audiences. Thus, literary reception and strategies of adaptation are inscribed into a particular theory of progress which associates both the past and the present with specific characteristics (structures of feeling, social organization). However, since most modern studies devote considerable attention to Racine's influence on Ozerov, the present article will not dwell on the topic and instead turn to a brief investigation of prominent European treatments of the Polyxena legend and their impact on Ozerov [Иванов В.: 37–64; Вяземский: 32; Pomar: 16–25]. Jean-Baptiste Lully's opera *Achille et Polyxène*,

1687 (libretto by Jean Galbert de Campistron), which was finished by his disciple Pascal Collasse several months after Lully's death. The focal point of Lully's opera contains numerous allusions to contemporary historical events at Louis XIV court and is set before an intra-textual audience of the Muses, Mercure and Jupiter. Since the plot wholly revolves around the love of the living Achilles for Polyxena, the latter's role in seeking peace between the Greeks and Trojans and her hesitation before her marriage, it appears unlikely that *Achille et Polyxène* was a central source for Ozerov. Although it is possible that the soliloquy of the grief-stricken Polyxena and her ultimate suicide at the end of the opera inspired Ozerov in his depiction of his heroine's extreme grief and her decision to end her own life (rather than being sacrificed)¹, the extent to which Ozerov may have been indebted to Lully is speculative. An instrumental treatment of the Polyxena legend was offered in the 1763 opera *Polixène* (music by Antoine Dauvergne, libretto by Nicolas-René Joliveau), in which Polyxena and Pyrrhus (rather than Achilles) wish to marry. The goddess Juno played a crucial role in breaking up the union between Polyxena and Pyrrhus due to her hatred of Ilium and desire to avoid any union between the Greeks and the Trojans. In the libretto Hecuba gives her consent to the marriage of Polyxena and Pyrrhus, transforming it from a lucrative and forbidden association into a formal union. However, it appears unlikely that Ozerov was greatly influenced by *Polixène* since not only does Juno not feature at all in the Russian play but the character of Hecuba is marked by an inherent passivity and frailty, absent from the French opera².

Thus, since it appears that Ozerov could not have relied substantially on French sources of the Polyxena legend for the plot outline of *Poliksena*, it is necessary to turn to the Classical accounts of the myth, the *Iliad*, Euripides' *Hecuba* and Seneca's *Troades*, for prototypes of the Russian play. Few attempts have so far been made to assess Ozerov's adaptation of the legend's Classical sources, know to him in French translations (Ozerov's education did not include the study of Ancient Greek), and discern his artistic rationale

¹ Gordin notes that Ozerov's choice of Polyxena's death is remarkable in that the heroine commits suicide in a way reserved primarily 'for villains or rebels' in Antiquity and herself yearns for death [Гордин 1991: 163].

² Ozerov's use of imagery and motifs inherited from French tragedy not centrally preoccupied with the Polyxena legend (e.g. Châteaubrun's *Les Troyennes*) have likewise been investigated in modern scholarship [Иванов Д.: 37–64].

for recreating a Classical plotline. Views expressed in previous scholarship concerning Ozerov's approach to Classical literature have so far been markedly diverse. Some scholars have judged *Poliksena* to be derivative and inferior to its Classical models [Гуськов: 204; Мерзляков], while others argued that the play is innovative and must be admired as a work in its own right, entirely independent of its Classical predecessors [Озеров 1960: 65; Родина: 132]. However, as far as is known, no attempt has yet been made to analyse Ozerov's deployment of Classical sources in terms of an intertextual dialogue with Classical antiquity, stemming from a desire to innovate and recreate a Classical mythological narrative through the inclusion of contemporary literary allusions.

The nature of Ozerov's adaptation of the legend of Polyxena can be determined by analysing the major Classical accounts of the mythological plotline, ranging from c. 8th century BC to c. 5th century AD. In the oral tradition, the earliest surviving reference to Polyxena, daughter of Priam and Hecuba, can be found in a fragment of the epic poem *Cypria* where, in contrast to later Classical sources, Polyxena's death is independent of Achilles¹. Polyxena is injured by two Greek heroes, Odysseus and Diomedes, during the sack of Troy and dies as a result of her wound [Gantz: 569]. A more 'familiar form of her death', being sacrificed on the tomb of Achilles, occurs first in the *Iliupersis*, a lost epic poem which is attributed to Arctinos of Miletus and was later summarised by Proclus in *Chrestomathia ii* [Gantz: 569]. In this source, Polyxena's death is recounted as one of many tragic episodes which took place in the aftermath of the sack of Troy and is given no sequence of causation [Mangieri: 112]. The sacrifice is treated as 'one of the spoils to be divided' among Greek heroes and occupies the same amount of Proclus' attention as, for example, the bloodless capture of Andromache [Mangieri: 112]. It appears that Polyxena was chosen purely because of her beauty or because she was the 'last surviving virgin of the royal house of Priam' [Fantuzzi: 15], rather than because she was favoured by Achilles.

The first, so-called 'erotic implications' of Polyxena's death appear to have emerged in the Hellenistic age [Fantuzzi: 15] and can be found in Lycophron's poem *Alexandra* (c. 3rd century BC) [Mair: 18]. Although Achilles' love for Polyxena is not explicitly mentioned, the *Alexandra* suggests the possibility of a wedding ritual between the couple [Gantz: 659], conducted after the

¹ All citations of Greek epic fragments are taken from: [West].

death of Achilles (323–327). Any 'erotic implications', hinted at by the first few words of line 323, are, however, subsequently brushed aside in favour of a more traditional graphic representation of the slaughter of the innocent maiden. The main focus of Lycophon's account still lies on the sacrifice itself, the violent nature of Polyxena's death and the vicious role of Neoptolemus, 'a murderous serpent'.

The motif of Achilles' love for Polyxena appears only much later in Roman accounts, such as Dictys' *Ephemeridos belli Troiani* (4th century AD) and Dares Phrygius' *De Excidio Troiae Historia* (5th century AD), where the hero's emotions are made explicit [Fantuzzi: 15]. In Dares' account Achilles' love for Polyxena is strong enough to make him desert the Trojan War and betray the Greek army. However, although in both sources Polyxena's sacrifice takes place after the death of Achilles (caused by a trap set by Alexander, an alternate name for Paris, and Hecuba) and upon his tomb, it does not appear to be caused by any 'erotic implications' [Gantz: 659]. Dares suggests that Polyxena was nothing more than a share of Trojan booty ('we divided the spoils... at the request of Ulysses Polyxena was given to Neoptolemus to sacrifice to Achilles', 5.13) [Dictys Cretensis: 22; Maclean: 99]. Achilles does not demand the sacrifice of Polyxena, and it is not clear whether he maintains any feelings after death. The only Classical account which introduces the motif of Polyxena's love for Achilles and makes it the cause of her death is Philostratus' *Heroicus* [Gantz: 659]. However, in this version, the ghost of Achilles is absent, and consequently, so is any indication that his love for Polyxena has transcended death. Thus, since, in no surviving Classical source is the motif of Polyxena's love for Achilles' and her voluntary death syncretic with the motif of his apparition from the dead and his need for a human sacrifice, there is no indication of posthumous love.

The legend of Polyxena and Achilles is also extant in three dramatic Classical sources, Euripides' *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* and Seneca's *Troades*, which present the motif of the heroine's sacrifice in more detail than the accounts mentioned above. The first of these sources, Euripides' *Trojan Women*, preserves little to inspire Ozerov's interest in shifting the narrative focus of the Classical legend towards psychologisation, manifested in the introduction of the novel theme of posthumous love. Polyxena's name is mentioned only six times in the whole play, of which two are cursory¹.

¹ Quotations from Euripides are from: [Euripides; Kovacs]

The motif of Polyxena's sacrifice is recounted in two stichomythic exchanges, between Hecuba and the messenger Talthybius and between Hecuba and Andromache. The first of these exchanges is based on the dramatic irony of Hecuba remaining oblivious to her daughter's fate while the audience, familiar with the Polyxena myth, understands Talthybius' veiled references to her death (264–268). The cause of Polyxena's sacrifice and the emotional conflict surrounding it is referred to by Andromache as an event executed off-stage an indefinite time ago (622–627). The audience learns only of the location of Polyxena's slaughter (Achilles' tomb), a reduced reason for her sacrifice (a gift for Achilles), and the grief of a fellow Trojan woman. Polyxena's death functions not as the central theme of a plot but rather as a foil for the much more prominent death of Astyanax and as an example of the fate of the Trojan women: death (Polyxena), slavery (Andromache, Hecuba) or madness (Cassandra). Thus, Euripides' *Trojan Women* appears to be of limited use for Ozerov's innovative transformation of the legend, in which the sacrifice of Polyxena lies at the foundation of the dramatic action and of his interest in the emotional world of both Achilles and Polyxena.

In his attempt to increase the emotional and psychological complexity of his central characters, Ozerov is more indebted to Seneca's *Troades*, chronologically the latest Classical dramatic source of *Polyksena*. In the first scene of Seneca's play Talthybius, the herald of Agamemnon, reports the words of Achilles' ghost to the Chorus of Trojan women. In contrast to Euripides and later Ozerov, Seneca has Achilles specify the name of his victim and express the desire to wed Polyxena after death (*Troades* 202). Conversely, despite having a mute role, Polyxena exhibits both hatred and scorn for Achilles, which is manifested at her sacrificial ceremony: she strikes Achilles' mound 'with an angry crash' (1149–54). Thus, despite being the first dramatist to suggest matrimony as a motivation for Polyxena's death and so hint at an emotional rather than purely material interest (lack of proper war spoils) on Achilles' part, Seneca's adaptation cannot be credited with more than merely suggesting a foundation for Ozerov's introduction of the theme of posthumous love into the mythological plot.

Polyksena's final dramatic source, Euripides' *Hecuba*, is named by Ozerov himself in a letter to Alexei Olenin, dated 2nd July 1809, in which he emphasised both the temporal and cultural gulf between the age of Euripides and his own time and stressed the paradoxical capacity of tragic "language of feeling" to appeal to modern audiences. Ozerov's declaration sheds light on

several parallel structural elements running throughout the dramatic form of *Polyksena*, which were inherited by Ozerov from his Greek predecessor: Hecuba's exchange with Odysseus, Pyrrhus' narration of his father's apparition, Hecuba's lament and Polyxena's role in consoling her mother. However, despite the similarity of certain 'snippets, situations and thoughts' [Потанов: 813], the focus of Euripides' *Hecuba* is not on Polyxena but, as the title of the play suggests, on the fate of Hecuba [История русской драматургии]. As in the *Trojan Women*, Polyxena's plotline in *Hecuba* is reduced to one of many catalysts for Hecuba's anguish. After line 995 Polyxena's name vanishes from the text of the play, and her fate appears forgotten by all characters on stage.

Although it appears unlikely that Ozerov relied upon *Hecuba* as a model for the overall structure of his play (since, unlike *Hecuba*, it is focused primarily upon the fate of Polyxena), it is possible that Ozerov deployed Euripides' play as a source for his schematic plotline, which he adapts in order to imbue his reconceptualisation of the Classical myth with sentimental value. This suggestion appears all the more plausible since Euripides' *Hecuba* is the first of all extant dramatic sources of Polyxena's sacrifice to reveal the 'purpose for the deed' [Gantz: 659], suggesting that the death of the Trojan maiden was caused not only by the bloodthirstiness of Neoptolemus. The two pivotal points of the 'purpose' of Polyxena's sacrifice are revealed in the prologue to *Hecuba*: firstly, that Achilles has risen from the grave to demand her sacrifice as a recompense for not receiving his due of spoils ('Appearing over his mound, he requests that my sister Polyxena be sacrificed to him to soothe his injured pride', 40) and secondly, that the Greeks' *nostos* is conditional on her sacrifice ('But however desirous of going to their native land, the Greeks have to wait here on the shore of Thrace, sails slack because Achilles ceased the winds', 37–39). In Ozerov's play the motif of Polyxena's sacrifice is closely adapted from Euripides' tragedy since it is pivoted on the same two points: Achilles demands the slaughter of a Trojan maid to quieten his angered spirit and restore his slighted honour. In both plays, despite the words of Polydorus, Achilles does not specify the identity of his Trojan victim, leaving it to the Greek host to decide whom to choose: Ozerov — 'Троянки требует разгнѣванный Ахилль' ('Enraged, Achilles claims the Trojan maid'), Euripides — 'the Greek army came together and voted for Polyxena... it has been resolved that she will be sacrificed to Achilles' (110).¹ Ozerov's depiction of Polyxena's death

¹ For quotations from Ozerov see [Озеров 1846].

underlines the extent of his debt to Euripides since he retains several pivotal elements of the Classical tragedy. Firstly, Neoptolemus is given the central role in conducting the sacrifice: in both Euripides' and Ozerov's play he performs the function of a priest overseeing a ritual slaughter and tries to take Polyxena's life himself. Secondly, both Ozerov and Euripides have recourse to the same dramatic device of assigning Polyxena a monologue before her death, in which she requests that she not be touched by a man's hand. Thirdly, in both plays Polyxena professes that her death is voluntary and consequently more akin to that of a hero than an unwilling victim. Ozerov's intertextual dialogue with his Classical sources is made manifest even at a lexical level since Polyxena's proud affirmation of her death in the Russian play rests upon the same three concepts as in Euripides' rendition: she addresses an internalised, hostile audience (Ozerov: 'Взирай', 'Behold!'; Euripides: 'Greeks who sacked my home'), demands their recognition of her actions (Ozerov: 'Взирай, какъ умирать умѣю', 'Behold, how I can die'; Euripides: 'know that I die') and affirms her own agency (Ozerov: 'Сама иду на холмъ', 'I go upon the mound myself'; Euripides: 'I die of my own free will').

However, despite the striking similarities between the schematic structure of the episodes of Polyxena's sacrifice in Ozerov's play and Euripides' tragedy, there is a significant and unsurpassable discrepancy: whereas the focus of Ozerov's attention is on Polyxena's and Achilles' mutual love, Euripides makes no mention of any form of attachment between the two characters. In Euripides' play, Polyxena is selected by the Greek host simply because she is 'among the most beautiful of the captives, and is, therefore, an appropriate gift for Achilles to choose' [Gantz: 658], rather than because of any amorous feelings, whereas in Ozerov's play Pyrrhus (an alternate name for Neoptolemus) singles out Polyxena, since she was the bride of his father. Consequently, as with all the other Classical sources of the Polyxena legend analysed above, Euripides' *Hecuba*, cannot be credited with providing the impetus for Ozerov's innovative psychologisation of the legend. Unlike the proud and scornful princess of Euripides' *Hecuba*, who even in death tries to strike her prospective husband, Ozerov's Polyxena openly acknowledges the extent of her passion for Achilles, likening its effects to intoxication ('упоенна', 'drunk') and its beauty to apotheostic glory ('сіяніи лучей', 'rays of light'). Instead of the ominous wedding ritual found in Euripides' *Hecuba*, in Ozerov's play, marriage is not only welcome to Polyxena but also considered binding despite not actually taking place.

Once the true depth of Polyxena's feelings has been revealed, Ozerov expounds the magnitude of Achilles' love: Polyxena pictures Achilles' spirit awaiting her in Hades, with his love still intact, to consummate their marriage. For Polyxena, death is nothing more than a gateway to a reunion with her beloved; the sword which kills her becomes the instrument of her wedding ceremony, and her coffin is conceptualised as a joyful marital bed. For the first time in the entire transmission of Polyxena's legend, the motif of Achilles' love transcending death appears in world literature. Whereas in Dictys' *Ephemeridos belli Troiani* and Dares Phrygius' *De Excidio Troiae Historia*, Achilles' love is explicitly terminated by his death, in Ozerov's *Polyksena*, his love lives on even in the Underworld [Dares Phrygius: 22]. A similar pattern may be observed in the myth of Protesilaus, the Greek hero whose love for his wife Laodamia (her marriage, like that of Ozerov's Polyxena, was not consummated) transcends death and motivates him to reunite with her first on earth and then, after Laodamia's voluntary suicide, in Hades. Thus, the two necessary yet entirely original prerequisites of Ozerov's introduction of the theme of posthumous love into the play are present: Polyxena holds Achilles dearer than life, while Achilles' own love for her has transcended death.

The scene is set for the final stage of Ozerov's innovative sentimentalist treatment of the Classical plot: Polyxena's voluntary sacrifice to reunite with her beloved, who awaits her beyond the grave. Polyxena reveals that the ending of her life is a welcome liberation, for which she herself yearns. Her life is burdensome (бремя) and weary (тосклива), and so holds no attraction for her, as compared to a union with her husband. In keeping with Classical sources, at the start of the Russian play Polyxena's sacrifice seems to be imposed on her by Neoptolemus' choice and so is initially involuntary. However, subsequently, Ozerov explicitly rejects this traditional attribution of responsibility by making Polyxena mount Achilles' tomb herself. Polyxena's final words on stage point forward to her meeting with her 'gentle' husband, rather than back towards the young life she is losing and her bereaved mother: 'Прими меня, супругъ, ты ласковой рукой / И утоли мой плачь, и въ гробъ успокой!', 'Accept me, husband, with a tender hand / allay my lamentations and in your tomb grant me peace'. The loyalty and passion which Ozerov introduces into the characterisation of Polyxena are indicative of his desire to imbue the shell of the Classical legend with ostensibly anachronistic sentimentalist values, unprecedented in Ancient sources.

The development of the theme of posthumous love, through which Ozerov endows the Classical legend in question with original psychological complexity, can be traced in *Polyksena* on the level of *dramatis personae*, provisionally divided in the present article into two categories: agent and auxiliary characters. The first group is directly responsible for imbuing the Classical legend with innovative emotional complexity. This group consists of Polyxena, Hecuba and Agamemnon, whose characterisations are radically altered from their Classical models. The second set of characters (Pyrrhus, Menelaus, Helen, Nestor, Ulysses, the Greek host and the Trojan women) can be termed secondary in relation to Ozerov's sentimentalist agenda since their role in the play does not radically alter its development. Instead, this set of characters has two subsidiary functions: they help adapt the Classical setting of the play, aimed at creating a chronologically appropriate backdrop for the main action and perform certain structural functions (such as those of a messenger, advisor, lamenters etc.). In his portrayal of auxiliary *dramatis personae*, Ozerov remains loyal to his Classical sources by directly adapting their traditional characteristics and functions.

In contrast to *Polyksena's* auxiliary characters, three so-called 'agent' characters (Agamemnon, Hecuba and Polyxena) condition Ozerov's transformation of the legend. In Classical sources, the character of Agamemnon, like Ulysses, is represented in contrasting terms: on the one hand, the king is depicted as mild and lacking initiative (e.g. in Seneca's *Troades*) and on the other hand, as ruthless and unrestrained (e.g. in the *Iliad*). The first of these characterisations is adapted by Ozerov from Seneca's *Troades*, in which Agamemnon is represented as a monarch shattered by the burden of power. Conversely, the Agamemnon of the *Iliad* is characterised by an excess of ruthless activity. An intertextual adaptation of both Seneca's and Homer's representation enables Ozerov to endow Agamemnon with an entirely original, developed and complicated personality, torn between pity and anger, which in turn leads him to hasten Polyxena's sacrifice. The Russian Agamemnon inherits the active ruthlessness of his Iliadic counterpart (he unnecessarily escalates the conflict with Pyrrhus by threatening to demolish Achilles' mound [История русской драматургии: 200]) and on the other hand, he shares a deal of benevolent sympathy of Seneca's Agamemnon towards the innocent Polyxena. Ozerov's representation of Agamemnon is closer to the Homeric model since, unlike Seneca's king, his desire to stand up for Polyxena is determined chiefly by personal rather than charitable reasons:

his love for Cassandra and his own hurt pride. Agamemnon changes his passive sympathy for Polyxena (as in Seneca's *Troades*) to physical protection only after Cassandra, his concubine and prospective bride, asks him to help her [Karlinsky: 202]. Ozerov underlines that Agamemnon's active support of Polyxena is caused primarily by his desire to punish the haughty Pyrrhus [Герасимов: 202] and avenge the slight to his honour caused by Ulysses' entrance into his tent.

The motivations (pity for Polyxena, love for Cassandra and hatred for Pyrrhus) which lie behind Agamemnon's desire to defend Polyxena by engaging in physical combat with Pyrrhus, create one of the two motives for Polyxena's sacrifice: her desire to prevent violence. The war which Agamemnon plans to wage against his enemy Pyrrhus would inevitably result in the murder of the last surviving Trojans, whom Polyxena would not wish to see slain. Her desire to save the Trojans leads her to sacrifice herself in order to preserve their lives. Thus, had Agamemnon retained the passive benevolence of the king in Seneca's adaptation or the simple violent ruthlessness of the Iliadic character, Polyxena's decision to die would not have acquired sufficient psychological complexity. Since Agamemnon's offer of help is motivated both by violent ruthlessness and by pity for the heroine and her mother, it becomes more difficult for Polyxena to reject it. Polyxena's ultimate resolve to die is thus all the more psychologically motivated and emotionally complex since in addition to being a courageous sacrifice for her country, it also entails the rejection of a kindly and effective offer of help (being commander-in-chief of the Greek army, Agamemnon would have gathered more soldiers to his side than Pyrrhus). Consequently, it can be suggested that since in *Polyksena* the character of Agamemnon becomes central to the development and complication of the emotional world of the eponymous heroine, his representation has to be altered and endowed with more depth than his Classical counterparts.

The character of Ozerov's Hecuba also has a similar function to Agamemnon since she brings a further complication to Polyxena's death. In Classical dramatic sources, Hecuba is traditionally portrayed as a strong and proud queen, who, despite her slavery, retains her royal dignity. In Euripides' *Trojan Women* Hecuba, despite her recent loss of Polyxena, is able to forget her own grief and comfort the distraught Andromache (637–40). Instead of exhorting her son's widow to honour his memory and showing her own grief for him, Hecuba is noble enough to step back from the interests of her

own blood family and strive to protect Andromache: 'But you, my dear child, cease to speak of Hector's fate; you cannot save him with your tears now. You must honour your current master' (696–700). In Euripides' *Hecuba*, the power and courage of the old queen are taken further since, instead of performing traditional female *threnoi* over the corpses of her son Polydorus and daughter Polyxena, Hecuba takes over the male task of blood vengeance, comparable to Achilles avenging the death of Patroclus by slaying Hector, and murders the children of her enemy Polymestor.

The representation of Hecuba in Ozerov's play is not adapted from Classical sources, since in contrast to the strong queen of antiquity, she is represented primarily as a broken old woman ('жалкая старушка'), who has fully succumbed to her present misfortunes. Unlike Euripides' heroine who avenges her losses and dishonour with blood, Ozerov's Hecuba is prepared to grovel before her captors. Hecuba is so crushed by the weight of her grief that she appears insensible to the shame she brings upon her royal husband Priam and son Hector by humiliating herself before the enemy. In addition to this, Ozerov robs Hecuba of her traditional compassion towards both her two daughters (Polyxena and Cassandra) and the chorus of Trojan women. Unlike Euripides' Hecuba who, despite her own grief, has the strength to console Andromache, Ozerov's queen expects support and consolation from her daughters. Hecuba's prime consideration is for her own comfort, rather than for her daughter: when Polyxena offers to join her in servitude at the home of Ulysses, Hecuba does not notice that Polyxena is sacrificing the only benefit she has left, her freedom, but praises the gods for their kindness to herself. Even in relation to the chorus of Trojan women, whom Hecuba leads in Euripides' two plays, Ozerov's queen displays a marked disdain. Although like her they weep for lost husbands, sons and daughters, she orders them to silence their lamentations since they disturb her peace [Стенник: 121]. Since this is the first and last time the chorus of Trojan women speaks on stage, Hecuba's command appears to have robbed them of their only emotional outlet.

Thus, it can be suggested that Ozerov's transformation of Hecuba into a broken old woman is caused by her role of lending increased psychological complexity to Polyxena. Since in all three Classical dramas, Polyxena's sacrifice was determined by the will of the Greek host rather than by her own decision, Hecuba's role did not entail problematising her daughter's death (by being a factor which Polyxena needed to consider before her suicide). In

Ozerov's tragedy, however, since Polyxena's sacrifice is voluntary and caused primarily by her desire to be united with her husband Achilles, Hecuba is transformed into a helpless old woman whose role it is to make Polyxena's choice to die all the more unbearable and so her sacrifice all the more tragic. Even as she climbs Achilles' mound, Polyxena looks back with pain at her deserted mother, who, she knows, will be lost without her, yet whom she must abandon in order to be united with her lover in a marriage beyond the grave. The psychologically intolerable choice which Polyxena is forced to make in Ozerov's play serves to emphasise the strength of her marital affection for her deceased beloved.

Ozerov's most striking innovations lie in his representation of Polyxena, the central driving force of his novel psychologisation of the legend. In almost every Classical source analysed in this article, Polyxena is given a mute role and is portrayed as a helpless, passive victim (even in Seneca's *Troades*, where Polyxena is on stage, she is silent). Her sacrifice, in accordance with theatrical conventions which prohibited scenes of death on stage, takes place away from the audience's eyes and is narrated by other characters. Even in Euripides' *Hecuba*, where Polyxena is allowed to speak on stage, the semantic centre of her mythological plot, her sacrifice, has to be narrated by a foreign messenger. In contrast to his Classical sources, Ozerov presents the scene of Polyxena's suicide on stage and endows his princess not only with a voice but also with a complex psychology, which leads to her being torn between duty to her mother and love for Achilles, pity for her fellow Trojans and her own fear of death. In transforming his heroine, Ozerov is primarily concerned with depicting her psychological struggle between feelings (love and fear) and duty (to her mother). Polyxena faces an impossible psychological choice: to succumb to her love for Achilles and discharge her duty to her Trojan subjects, or to remain true to her mother and so yield to her fear of death.

In contrast to the Classical tradition where the choice between feelings and duty is swiftly and invariably determined in favour of duty, Ozerov 'departs from heroic canons, towards a deeper psychological revelation of the conflict between an individual and his surroundings' [Родина: 134]. Before Polyxena understands that Agamemnon's conflict with Pyrrhus will result in the slaughter of innocent Trojans, she, according to Classical conventions, prioritises her duty to her mother and chooses to live for her sake, concealing her true feelings [Бапцукова: 111]. However, as soon as Polyxena comes to the realisation that the Trojans are threatened and her duty lies equally with

them, she succumbs to her feelings and sacrifices herself on her husband's tomb, both to save her citizens and, more importantly, as her final and so most crucial words on stage show [Вилар: 144], to be reunited with her beloved: 'Прими меня, супругъ, ты ласковой рукой / И утоли мой плачъ, и въ гробъ успокой!', 'Accept me, husband, with a tender hand / quench my lamentation and give me comfort in the grave!'. Since all the living characters on stage, including her mother and sister, have caused Polyxena nothing but pain and grief, Achilles remains the only one who can console her and reward her constancy with a soothing hand. Ozerov's Polyxena rejects life, which crushes individuals like herself and her mother and spurns their spiritual needs [Озеров 1960: 99], in favour of a death which serves as a protest against violence and pain and permits her at last to find peace.

Ozerov endows Polyxena's character with heroic traits, which transcend the boundaries of traditional Classical representations. Although in both Euripides' *Hecuba* and Ozerov's *Polyxena*, the princess underlines her royal heritage, the two dramatists endow her claim with a different function. In Euripides' play, Polyxena asserts that since she was born noble ('My father was the king of all the Phrygians...I was queen over every woman of Ida, admired among all maidens, equal to a goddess', 349–356) but must now live a slave, she prefers to die rather than endure humiliation. Thus, in essence, the Greek Polyxena is forced to die because of her royal pride. In Ozerov's play, on the other hand, Polyxena recalls her royal status in order to remind her mother of propriety and prevent her from grovelling before her captor, Ulysses. For the Russian Polyxena, her noble status is not a reason in itself to die, but rather a constraint which requires her and her mother to retain their dignity. Even Pyrrhus, one of the mightiest Greek heroes and the sacker of Troy, commends her dignity and courage, acknowledging that she is a worthy match for his father, the greatest epic hero of antiquity.

A comparative analysis of the innovations of *Polyksena* in relation to its Classical hypertext (the *Iliad*, Euripides' *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* and Seneca's *Troades*), has made it possible to determine the extent of Ozerov's originality in lending enhanced psychological complexity to the eponymous heroine of his play. Whereas in Classical accounts Polyxena's sacrifice is traditionally caused by Achilles' greed for plunder or by Pyrrhus' ruthlessness, in Ozerov's play her death is motivated by her love for Achilles, which has transcended death. Ozerov's innovative psychologisation of Polyxena is brought to the forefront of the play both by his innovative choice to centre the

dramatic action upon the figure of Polyxena and by the prominence which he gives to her character: 'одна и везде Поликсена главным предметом нашего сострадания, нашей боязни', 'Polyxena is always the one and only object of our compassion and our fear' [Мерзляков: 30]. In contrast to the Classical hypertext preserving the Polyxena myth, Ozerov's play endows her with a developed, autonomous spirit torn between fear of death and longing for Achilles.

Despite its extraordinary originality and creative intricacy, Ozerov's *Poliksena* (1809) presents a mystery which has not been solved to this day: although Pushkin considered it to be 'the most perfect composition created by the playwright's talent and the best tragedy ever written in the Russian language' [Пушкин: 237], it was only performed twice (in May 1809) and was then struck off the repertoire. Scholars have tried to explain this enigma in various ways: according to Ilja Serman, *Poliksena* was banned on the orders of Tzar Alexander I [Серман: 21], while Mikhail Gordin suggested that the play was withdrawn by the author himself, who was dissatisfied with the financial arrangements with the director of the Emperor's theatres [Гордин: 193]. The puzzling fate of *Poliksena* has been explored in studies on its production, on its role in its author's biography and his untimely death at the age of 46 [Karlinsky; История русской драматургии; Озеров 1960; Стенник; Mirsky; Барсукова]. The spiritual turmoil undergone by Polyxena and Hecuba, unprecedented in works of antiquity, has been regarded by some critics as the cause of the play's failure on stage (it was retired to theatrical archives after its second performance). Members of the general public, as Ozerov himself feared¹, were not able to appreciate his innovations, whilst pedantic supporters of Classical purism called for strict adherence to Classical sources and claimed that traditional canons such as the power of fate in the myth of Polyxena were deformed [Мерзляков: 29].

Ozerov's approach to the adaptation of Classical models is exemplified in the manner in which he altered the focus of the legend: although it is based on the fate of a Classical epic heroine, it is imbued with the spirit of contemporary literary movements, Sentimentalism and Romanticism.

¹ 'Я сам что-то не надеюсь на успех сей трагедии. В собрании, при первом ее представлении, едва ли будет сто человек, которым Гомер знаком', 'I don't really expect this tragedy to be successful. I do not think there will be a hundred people in the audience before whom it will be first performed, that are acquainted with Homer' [История русской драматургии: 144].

Ozerov's Polyxena is closer to a romantic than to a Classical heroine, since she, both rejecting and rejected by society, isolates herself from the 'structure of civilisation' [Salusinszky: 119] and voluntarily parts with life in order to be united with her beloved. Thus, Ozerov's syncretic combination of Classical and contemporary literary models is, without doubt, his greatest contribution to Russian theatre since it integrates a psychologically motivated and highly original conclusion into one of the most tragic myths of antiquity.

A broader artistic rationale can be proposed for Ozerov's transformation of the legend of Polyxena, based on the idealisation of human qualities. Ozerov's innovations in the adaptation of the mythological plotline of Polyxena and the transformation of individual characters to encompass new psychological traits unprecedented in Classical accounts of the Polyxena legend serve to reveal his desire to revolutionise the canonical approaches to mythology by preceding Russian dramatists and pave the way for a new direction in Classical reception. It is possible to suggest that in his choice of Classical myths, used to develop the emotions of passivity and melancholy and create self-sacrificial characters, Ozerov came closest among all his literary predecessors and contemporaries to the radical reinterpretation of mythology in Russian Silver Age drama, which goes back directly to Classical Antiquity, bypassing preceding European heritage. Following in the footsteps of Ozerov, Russian Silver Age dramatists were most drawn to the Hellenistic age, where they believed mythological plots did not exist in moralising, aetiological or religious hypostases [Анненский: 212], but functioned as sources of poetic inspiration, enabling the revitalisation of mythological narratives [Анненский: 185]. Russian Silver Age dramatists, most notably Innokenty Annensky, maintained that a poet or playwright who adapts a Classical mythological plotline must offer a new reconceptualisation of Classical mythology, filling the shell of a legend with innovative psychological content, adjusting it to a contemporary readership [Анненский: 433].

In their interpretation of mythology, Russian Silver Age dramatists aimed at uniting the poet and the theurgist and at merging imaginative cognition with artistic creation, 'an internal fusion with the myth-creating soul of the nation' [Иванов В.: 48]. By resurrecting the genre of mythological drama, Silver Age poets attempted to create new dramatic forms for the Russian stage, transforming tragedy into an aesthetic and emotional experience, which would not only have the function of entertainment but also produce a cathartic effect on modern audiences [История русской драматургии: 559–598].

Neo-mythological plays were characterised by a shifting focus from *fabula* as the connecting and driving force of tragedy to the psychological characteristics of self-sufficient heroes, who define themselves against the constraints of their surroundings. Developing the innovative tendencies of Ozerov, dramatists working within the Neo-mythological genre projected the plots of Classical myths onto contemporary culture and psychology, which resulted in the creation of highly original dramas, born within the context of modern life, its *realia* and literary styles.

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