The *Tale of Peter and Fevroniia*: The Text and the Icon

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The enigmatic *Tale of Peter and Fevroniia* brings us face to face with the problem of how to read a medieval Russian text. We have certain clues which are frequently not available in medieval Slavic tradition. Scholars (Rzhiga 1926, Klibanov 1959, Dmitrieva 1979) have identified its author as Ermolai Erazm, a monk serving in one of the Kremlin cathedrals under the direction of Metropolitan Macarius. R. P. Dmitrieva believes he wrote the tale shortly after Peter and Fevroniia's canonization in 1547.[1] She has classified and published what she claims is an authorial version of the text as well as its variants (1979: 50–79, 209–325). The author provided the tale both with a theological introduction, presenting the protagonists as saints and a concluding oration which ends with a prayer for their intercession. A rich tradition of miniatures illustrates manuscripts of the tale and served as the basis of an iconographic tradition portraying the saints (Dmitrieva and Belobrova 1985).

Yet despite these factors pointing to a religious reading of the text, scholarship has not been able to more than hypothesize its sacral meaning. The unusual fact that the tale is constructed of folklore motifs (Dmitrieva 35–49) has set researchers off the mark. Searching for its higher level of organization, they have come up with explanations which suggest that it is an anomaly in its time. Dmitrieva (1979: 3–5) concluded that the tale has no religious content, and is similar to a Western-style novella, with the love story of Peter and Fevroniia as its denouement.

A tradition of scholarship sees the tale as an example of a Christian humanism uncharacteristic of Muscovite spirituality. A. I. Klibanov's well-

Elementa, 1997
Vol. 3, pp. 291–308
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known article (1959: 315) proposes that the tale elucidates the ideals of the peasant rebellions of the seventeenth century. Implicitly, Ermolai Erasm's Christian humanism is a "progressive" secularizing trend within a conservative authoritarian Muscovite culture. In a similar vein, R. Picchio (1984: 498) has written of the tale's egalitarianism, "perplexing" for "church and state dignities." N. S. Demkova (1995: 18) reads the tale as a religious "parable" (*pritcha*) which "develops on various levels the ethical and theosophic ideas of a Russian humanist. The tale is dedicated to the problem of the moral formation of the person and to the defense of such conceptions as justice, dignity and love. The result is the good of the state." She compares it to the new icons created after 1547 which elicited the objections of the *d'iak* Viskovatyi. Forgetting that Metropolitan Macarius defended the traditional nature of these icons, she argues that he must have viewed the tale as untraditional and for this reason did not include it in his *Great Book of Hours*.[2]

D. S. Likhachev reads the tale as an anomaly from a diametrically opposed perspective. He, like Dmitrieva, sees it as the love story of "the Murom Prince Peter for a simple peasant girl Fevroniia." Its style of "psychological contemplativeness" (*psikhologicheskaia umirotvorennost'*) places it in the age of Andrei Rublev. In *The Development of Russian Literature from the Tenth to Seventeenth Centuries* (Likhachev 1973: 15), he suggests that the tale emerged in the fifteenth century.

Only Maria Pliukhanova (1995: 217–32) has defended the place of the tale in the larger corpus sponsored by Metropolitan Macarius. She shows that it uses two central mythologems of the theocratic state — "battle with the serpent" and "divine wisdom." In her view, the tale represents a special genre of princely fable (*basnoslovie*) used to convey the holiness of the ruler in the time of Ivan IV (1995: 270; see also Pliukhanova 1994). However, her analysis leaves unexamined the tale's inner system of meaning.

All the scholars who see the tale as an anomaly either completely ignore the hagiographical introduction (Klibanov, Likhachev, Haney, Demkova) or assert that it is generically unrelated to the narrative (Picchio 1984). They do so even though Dmitrieva's textological analysis has shown that the introduction was part of the authorial text. In the same way, they have ignored the iconographic tradition interpreting the tale. Since this tradition emerged after the tale's completion, it could be argued that it superimposes meanings not inherent to the original narrative.

In this study I show that the tale is a religious text which contributes to the ideological corpus of the metropolitan. The introduction is a key to a

sophisticated metaphorical structure. This structure is derived from a network of subtextual associations set in play by biblical clues (Picchio 1977). It provided a basis for an early iconographic interpretation of the saints. This interpretation crystallizes the archetypes illuminating the narrative, bringing to light the hidden meaning of the text. The text and the icon complement one another, each filling out the other's function as divine revelation.

The introduction presents redemption as the organizing theme of the text. The archetype of this idea is the Creator in Trinity who "in wisdom brings everything to completion."[3] After he created humankind as "king" (*tsar*) over creation, he did not abandon them when they lost their royal dignity and became subject to sin and death. He "has mercy on sinners hoping to save all and bring them into knowledge of the truth." God gave humankind a second chance through the incarnation and crucifixion of his Son, who "suffered for us in the flesh, nailing our sins to the cross, and redeeming us from the ruler of this world and deceiver *at the price of his honorable blood* "(209–10 — my italics).[4]

The archetype for the saints is embedded in a call to humankind borrowed from St. Paul: "*Don't be slaves of men for you were bought at a price*" (1 Cor. 7:23; my italics). This admonition serves as a biblical clue to a metaphorical structure modeling the "cost" of redemption.[5] It tells us that Christ's victory over death "at the price of his honorable blood" was a challenge to redeem a debt. The saints are implicitly those who have repaid the price of redemption with their own "blood." The resulting freedom gives them the image and likeness of the Creator.

The introduction describes God as "sovereign," (*svershaiushchemu . . . i stroiashchemu svoim samovlastiem*), "autonomous," (*iskoni samosil'no*) and undetermined, or "doing what he wishes" (*prosveshchaiushemu . . . ezhe khotiashchu*) (209). Implicitly, he is free from any external necessity when He creates and then redeems his creation. He does it solely out of sacrificial love.[6] Yet, this love places humanity in Christ's debt since it restores to them their potential to be free of sin and death. By repaying this debt in kind, the saint's own sacrificial love enables him to transcend the laws of material necessity so that he too is sovereign over death, king over creation.[7]

The archetype of the saint's sacrificial love is Christ's crucifixion. When Christ voluntarily subordinated himself to the laws of necessity and died on the cross, his inner freedom came to its apotheosis, making him sovereign over death. By voluntarily submitting themselves to suffering for Christ, "in griefs and afflictions, stripes" the saints are also "in the holy

spirit and undeceptive love . . . in the power of God" (211). Just as Christ demonstrated his kingship by the victory of the cross, so the sacrificial suffering of the saints demonstrates their kingship in Christ.

The introduction presents the glorification of the saints as part of a continuum of grace beginning with the creation of humankind, including the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, and climaxing with the "enlightenment" of the "whole universe" through baptism. The saints are those who live up to the commitment of baptism and contribute to the creation of the universal church: "'In as much as you are baptized in Christ, you have taken on Christ.'" (210–11).

The archetypes of the introduction show us what to look for in the narrative. They tell us that the tale is about Peter's and Fevroniia's contribution to the "completion" of God's redemptive work. They imply that by repaying their debt to Christ and taking on the way of the cross, Peter and Fevroniia will become God's partners. They will mirror his kingship, revealing his grace through the action of their will. Their mystical marriage with the Creator will reveal the wisdom of God, the providence in the creation.[8]

The introduction presents Peter and Fevroniia as an extension of the continuum of those who realize the power of baptism to redeem the world (211). The narrative is open-ended to signify divine providence, the inner purpose in the continuum of time. It begins before the saints are called to rule, with the reign of Peter's brother, and implicitly continues after their death through the grace emanating from their tomb. Its metaphorical structure resonates with the archetypes of the introduction and invests the protagonists with universal significance.

Peter's older brother Paul, and Paul's wife — king and queen of Murom — have been virtually ignored by scholarship. Yet the narration opens with them and defines Peter as their helper (211–13). It describes Paul as an "autocrat" (*samoderzh'stvuiai*) in Murom. Paul as *samoderzhavets* is analogous to the Creator as king, an image of ontological freedom. Paul's sovereignty is not complete, however, because a serpent keeps secretly seducing his wife in Paul's own guise, corrupting her with lust. Thus the narrative confronts Paul with the archetypal challenge to overcome the "tyranny of the ruler of this world and the deceiver." Implicitly, this battle is not with a simple material serpent but with the archetypal serpent of Genesis, a symbol of the passions of lust and pride which "enslave" humankind.

The king and queen rise to meet the challenge "not to be slaves" and

enter into a battle of wits with the serpent. Paul requests his wife to trick the snake into answering the question "By what death will he die (*ot chego emu smert' khoshet byti*)?" Her question alludes to a biblical clue (John 12:31–3). Jesus, on entering Jerusalem to be crucified speaks a prophecy:

> 'Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.' This He said, signifying by what death He would die (*koeiu smertiiu khotiashe umreti* [*Biblia* 1891]).

The presence of the phrase "by what death he would die" in both the scriptural subtext and the narrative indicates a correlation. When the snake tells Paul's wife that he will die by Peter and Agric's sword, Peter and his sword symbolize the power of Christ's crucifixion to "cast out" the "ruler of this world."

The medieval reader/listener is familiar with John, chapter 12, from its broader context in the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (Mother Mary and Ware 1969; *Mineia* 1894). He/she hears its echoes in the opening sentence of the small vespers: "Lifted high upon the Cross, O Master with Thyself Thou hast raised up Adam and the whole of fallen nature" (1969: 131). John, chapter 12, is also the first gospel reading of the matins service. In the liturgy, a citation from 1 Corinthians 1:18–24 frames the gospel readings about the crucifixion: "... but we preach Christ crucified ... unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1969: 161). Thus, the question that the queen asks the snake opens the reader's mind to the rich elaboration of John 12:31–33 in this liturgical feast. When a bright youth leads Peter to the Monastery of the Exaltation of the Cross to find his sword (212), the reader receives further confirmation that he should read the action through the prism of this feast. This reading brings into play an associational network which ties the narrative to the archetypes of universal redemption in the introduction, beginning with the wisdom of God.

The conversation of the queen with the serpent alludes to a key passage in the service. Punning on the root meaning deception — *lest'*, — the narrator describes how she deceives the deceiver (*glagol s lestiiu predlagaet ... On, zhe nepriiaznivyi prelestnik, prelshchen dobrym prelshcheniem ot vernyia zheny* [212]). His wordplay echoes a passage in the liturgy which brings together the central archetypes of the tale:

> "For he who by a tree *deceive*d our forefather Adam, is by the Cross himself *deceived*. He who by tyranny gained possession of the creature endowed by God with royal dignity, is overthrown in headlong fall. By the blood of God the poison of the serpent is washed away" (1969: 134).

> [*"praottsa bo adama prel'stivyi drevom, krestom prel'shchaetsia i padaet nizverzhen padeniem strannym, muchitel'stvom uderzhavyi tsarskoe zdanie: kroviiu bozhieiu iad zmiev umyvaetsia"* (1894: 137)].

Implicitly the queen is outwitting the serpent-deceiver with the wisdom of the cross (according to 1 Corinthians 1). Her willingness to get the serpent to tell her how he will die is testimony to her own sacrificial love. Her return on Christ's bloody sacrifice is a payment of a debt and a guarantee of redemption, making good the ontological significance of her queenship. The matins portion of the service alerts us that her victorious battle with the serpent places her in a world-historical continuum.

> Moses set upon a wooden pole a cure against the deadly and poisonous bite of the serpents: for crosswise upon the wood — as a symbol of the Cross — he placed a serpent that creeps about the earth, and thereby he triumphed over calamity (Mother Mary and Ware 1969: 145).

The same passage compares Moses' "victory" through the cross with Constantine's, "the holy *king* and upholder of the faith. Through it [the cross] deceit was overthrown and the divine faith was spread to *the ends of the earth*" (Italics are mine.) Thus, the king and queen's allusion to Christ's "lifting up on the cross" reveals them to be "martyr-warriors" for Christ. Their question "overthrows" the tyranny of the snake. It realizes humankind's potential to restore its "royal dignity," and be "lifted up" on the "Tree of Life . . . whereby our nature, lifted from its fallen state on earth is made a citizen of heaven" (Mother Mary and Ware 1969: 157).

The episodes with King Paul and his queen explain Peter's role as their helper. The exchanges between the king and queen and the serpent embody the end Peter seeks to achieve — universal redemption; they present the problems inherent in achieving these ends — the battle with pride and lust; they offer the solution to this problem — the wisdom of the cross. Peter's path is implicitly a spiral, realizing the potential within the marriage and kingship of Paul to achieve an ontological wholeness, renewing the world: it occurs in two cycles of departure and return to Murom. Thus the initial episodes of the narrative foreshadow its future development. At the same time they provide the keys to the symbolic structure creating the metaphorical integrity of the tale.

The symbolism of the narrative confirms the link between the queen's victory over the serpent through the wisdom of the cross and Peter's miraculous sword. Peter finds the sword in the altar wall of the church of the Monastery of the Exaltation of the Cross. It is presumably in the place where the relics of a saint were traditionally kept. In the case of a church

devoted to the Exaltation of the Cross, the relics would have been the wood of the cross itself. The sword by association therefore comes to stand for the cross of Christ. Implicitly, Peter's sword alludes to Moses lifting up the serpent and leading his people to the promised land. It alludes to Christ's power to lead the people into the New Jerusalem by being "lifted up" on the cross in the Old Jerusalem. And finally it alludes to the emperor Constantine's power to spread Christianity over the whole world.

Peter's defeat of the serpent with this sword contains the potential of the ensuing narrative. It symbolizes an ongoing battle begun by his brother and continuing throughout his own life. The narrative comprises its stages, each of which mark his repayment of his debt to Christ at the "price of his (mystical) blood." Each contributes to the process of his "lifting up" on the cross through the defeat of pride.

The original victory over the snake is at a price — his poisoning with the snake's blood (213). This humiliating affliction involves him in a another battle — with, the implicit serpent of his pride. Overcoming this serpent, he searches for a healer in a neighboring land. His healer exacts a terrible price, an unequal marriage to a peasant (215–17); paying this price involves a second battle with his pride. Once he defeats it and marries Fevroniia he must again pay a price. He fights with the serpent in his boyars, which makes them unable to endure a peasant queen. He defeats this serpent by an act of kenotic self-humiliation when he "voluntarily" agrees to give up his kingdom instead of abandoning his wife (218–19).

Peter's action attacks the serpent on two fronts, the individual and the collective. If Peter had left Fevroniia he would have made her a fornicator, a victim of the serpent like Paul's wife had been. This is implicit in a warning he remembers from the Gospel of Matthew when he is about to make his decision: "... *iako zhe bogoglasnyi Matfei v svoem blagovestii veshchaet reche bo, iako izhe ashche pustit zhenu svoiiu ... preliuby tvorit*" (219). If Peter had not abandoned his people, they would never have rid themselves of the snake. By absenting himself, he enabled them to see the fruits of their corruption and repent. They pay the price of their redemption, humiliating themselves before their former rulers, begging them to rule again (220). In a reciprocal and loving sacrifice, Peter and Fevroniia forgive them. The mutual reconciliation of rulers and people is the final victory, laying the serpent low. All implicitly wear the martyr's crown.

The tale's concluding oration (222) presents these moments of battle as feats of martyrdom, testifying to Peter's military valor as a warrior for Christ: "Rejoice Peter, that by bearing sores and ulcers on your body, you have *valorously* endured affliction ... rejoice glorious Peter that you have

voluntarily given up your rulership for the sake of God's commandment not to leave your wife." The oration praises him for the *voluntary* nature of this sacrifice because it is the analog to Christ's voluntary death on the cross testifying to his freedom and kingship. Christ's passion comprised the doubts he felt about the higher providence of his sacrifice: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Peter experiences an analogous passion when he doubts the validity of his sacrifice: "What will become of us, for I have *voluntarily* forsaken my rulership (*Kako budet, ponezhe voleiu samoderzh'stva gonznuv*)?" Peter's endurance of his passion makes him a victor over the "tyrant"; in this way he is similar to Christ, according to the service of the Exaltation of the Cross: "By the blood of God the poison of the serpent is washed away."

A miracle links the reconciliation between rulers and people to the victory of the cross. Just before the boyars beg their rulers to return, Fevroniia restores pieces of wood into a leafy tree (219). This tree symbolizes the rulers' and peoples' mystical "lifting up" on "the Tree of Life" so that all become "citizens in heaven" (Mother Mary and Ware 1969: 157). Implicitly, Peter and Fevroniia's reentrance into the city fulfills the prophetic sense of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem to be "lifted up on the cross" according to John, chapter 12.

Another miracle, marking the end of their reign, again alludes to this "lifting up" to mark the saints' power of universal redemption. When the boyars, against the saints' wishes, separate their bodies after death, Christ miraculously draws them together in one tomb (221). This tomb is in the church of the Nativity of the Mother of God, the cathedral church of Murom. "God gave [it] for the enlightenment and salvation of the city: and whoever approaches the tombs with their relics with faith receives full healing" (222). By "drawing all peoples" to Peter and Fevroniia, this tomb also draws them to the resurrected Christ. In death, Peter and Fevroniia help fulfill the prophecy that Christ made on entering Jerusalem that he would "draw all peoples to himself" when "lifted up" on the cross.

By the end of his path, Peter has fulfilled the archetypal significance of the battle initiated by King Paul. Peter's ongoing battle with the serpent represents a movement from part to whole, linking the community to the fate of its rulers to be kings in the ontological sense. Peter's path actualizes the archetypal potential of Paul's marriage as well as his kingship. At the end of the first cycle, his battle with the serpent makes way for a marriage which implicitly involves a crowning. This crowning likens this marriage to the rulership of the reigning king and queen.[9] At the end of the second

cycle, when the boyars invite him back and he wears the crown again, Peter returns truly "married" to his people.

Peter's new relationship to the community is analogous to his wife's relationship to him. When Peter forgives and takes back the repentant people of Murom, he is mirroring Fevroniia's forgiveness of him before their marriage (217). He also mirrors King Paul's forgiveness of his wife the queen as he takes her back after the serpent has corrupted her. Finally, Peter mirrors the Creator's forgiveness of humankind after the fall, when by the incarnation, he made possible a marriage between himself and humankind. Thus Peter's reconciliation with his people is a mystical marriage which realizes the potential of the ontological "marriage" between the Creator and his creation.

The saints realize the full implications of their "marriage" to their people only at their deaths when it becomes a symbol of the eucharist (221). Peter agrees to wait to die until Fevroniia finishes sewing a coverlet (*aer*) for the eucharistic chalice. She has finished the face of the last saint but the hem of his/her garment is incomplete (*"uzhe be edinogo sviatago riz esche ne shiv, litse zhe nashiv"*). Yet, Fevroniia prefers to die with Peter rather than finish the hem. By reaching out to each other, they make their deaths a symbolic eucharist, a loving offering of their own bodies and blood. This last act adds the final touch to their communion in Christ's blood. By finishing their process of "taking on Christ" they symbolically complete the hem of the garment in the aer. Their deaths tie off the thread (*"i presta, i votche iglu svoiu v vozdukh, i preverte nit'iu eiu zhe shiiashe"*).

The symbolism of the aer links this scene to the archetypal structure of the tale. The aer derives its significance from its role in the liturgy (*The Orthdox Liturgy* 1968:58–61). During the offertory, the priest takes the aer from the deacon's shoulder and covers the cup and the paten with it, saying: "Down from the tree the honourable Joseph took thy most pure body and, wrapping it in a clean linen cloth with spices, laid it in a new tomb." He then censes the holy things, saying, "O be favourable and gracious unto Sion: build thou the wall of Jerusalem." He and the deacon exchange blessings, the priest saying, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee,"and the deacon responding, "The same Spirit shall work with us all the days of our lives." The deacon then leaves the sanctuary and enters the nave to pray with the faithful. He ends by commanding them to follow the examples of himself and the priest when they exchanged blessings at the altar: "Let us love one to another, so that with one mind we may acknowledge . . . the Father, the

Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Trinity consubstantial and undivided." (The names of the Trinity are sung by the choir.)

The association of the aer with Christ's burial alludes to Peter's and Fevroniia's burial as well. Their deaths implicitly contribute to the "building of the New Jerusalem" accomplished by the crucifixion, ascension and the descent of the Spirit. The blessings which the priest and the deacon exchange refer to the saints' own mutuality in the Spirit. Moreover, the deacon's command that the faithful love one another (by analogy to himself and the priest) implies that Peter's and Fevroniia's love is a model for their people. Just as the deacon and priest pass the Spirit to the people in the nave, the saints will pass this Spirit to the faithful who worship at their tomb. Their grace is an extension of the liturgy and is eternally present to the faithful of the city. Its outflowing implicitly likens the city to the universal Church.[10] Moreover, the love within this church creates a unity which mirrors the Trinity. This unity gives the people the likeness of God as well as of the saints.

Still one more level of symbolism equates the saints' marriage to each other with the marriage between humankind and God. It derives from the feast giving its name to the cathedral church in Murom, the Nativity of the Mother of God (Mother Mary and Ware 1969: 98–130):[11]

> and having ordered all things in His own wisdom He has wrought salvation for all mankind. She who was preordained to be the Queen of all and habitation of God. She is the divine sanctuary of the eternal Essence, the Bridal Chamber of the King, wherein was accomplished the marvelous mystery of the ineffable union of the natures which come together in Christ. (1969: 100–1, 106–7)

The feast interprets the Mother of God's miraculous birth from the barren Ann by analogy to the flowering of the cross. Implicitly, its "flower" is the grace made available through baptism.

> For lo, she who was foreordained as Receiver of God, comes forth in birth from a barren woman: a flower has blossomed from Jesse. So in the Church, that once was barren, the wood of the Cross has put forth flower, filling her with strength and steadfastness. (Mother Mary and Ware 1969: 105, 113)

This symbolism enriches the miracle of the leafy tree which presages the "marriage" of rulers and people. By way of the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, this tree already symbolized the imminent rebirth of Murom as an image of heaven on earth. Now, retrospectively, the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God makes the leafy tree a symbol of the rebirth of the Church through grace. In both meanings the tree is prophetic of the saints'

universal power, fully realized through the grace emanating from their tomb.

At his death, Peter has come full circle. He has realized the potential of the beginning — of the narrative and of the introduction. His circle has been a rising spiral, a movement from part to whole making him the image of the introduction's archetypes.[12] In the process of "bringing all to completion," Peter's path reflects the archetypal path to kingship in the book of Revelation: battle with the snake, sacred marriage and enthronement in the New Jerusalem. By initiating him into the wisdom of the cross, his path embodies divine providence, the wisdom of God.

When read through the prism of the introduction and subtexts, the tale reveals the higher purpose of human life, history and the church to unite archetype and image. But did people, in fact, read the text this way? The iconographic tradition interpreting the tale helps provide an answer. Icons were accessible to those who attended the church and could have influenced their perceptions of the tale. It was in the nature of the icon to crystallize the tale's hidden meaning. The icon by definition is an image of a prototype (Zhivov 1982). Its job is to symbolize the eternal and universal within the specific time and space of the tale.

An icon of Peter and Fevroniia's life from the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries (Dmitrieva and Belobrova 1985; Podobedova 1957) reveals that the tale's sacral meaning was not lost. We will direct our attention only to its central part, or *srednik*, leaving unexamined the forty-four surrounding *kleima* scenes which detail the story's narrative (*Murom* 1971: plate 58).[13] Instead of focusing on the saints as would be expected, this *srednik* portrays the city and certain events taking place within its walls (see figure 1, based on *Murom* 1971: plate 62–63). However, it acknowledges what would have been its conventional content by portraying an icon of Peter and Fevroniia in prayer before the Savior/Emmanuel in the church of the Nativity of the Mother of God.

Podobedova (1957), Dmitrieva and Belobrova (1985) describe the events within the city's wall as a narrative. This narrative, however, concerns only the beginning and the end of the tale which are respectively portrayed on the right and left hand parts (from the viewer's perspective) of the *srednik*. The *kleima* fills out what is missing and portrays Peter's entire path. The *srednik's* unusual content faithfully reflects the tale's archetypal meaning.

Our eye first moves to an enlarged image of King Paul, slightly to the right of center, ruling (*"samoderzhavstvuiai"*) in Murom. His presence defines the right-hand space which will crystallize the archetypal significance of the two narrative cycles. With his hand raised and his subjects on

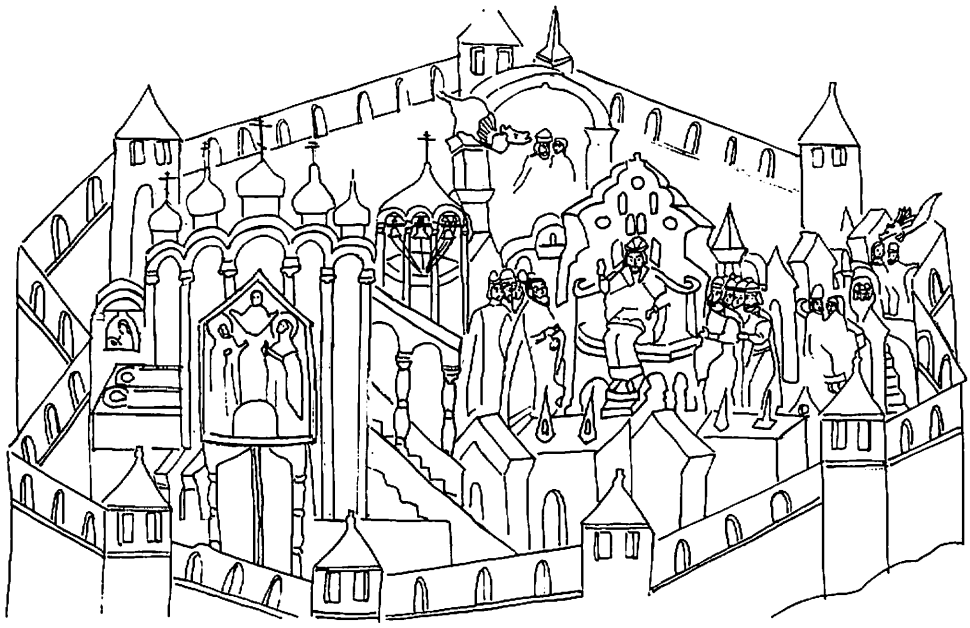

Figure 1.

either side heeding his council, he is the image of the just and pious ruler — an archetype of sovereignty. Yet the position of his right hand signifies the work that must be accomplished before this will be completely true. His hand points upwards to a scene portraying a serpent who has intruded through the city's walls. The serpent then appears a second time in the guise of Paul and seduces Paul's wife. The subjects who surround the real Paul listen intently to his story of his wife's corruption as if her fate concerns them all. Their presence alludes to the universal significance of the problem.

The image of the serpent directs our eyes downward and to our right. There Paul is telling his wife to ask the snake the pivotal question "by what means it shall die" and implicitly prophesying its defeat by the cross. A crowd gathers in a doorway intent on overhearing the secret of redemption, alluding to the universal implications of the solution. Immediately beside them, on the upper right, Paul's wife again sits next to the serpent in the guise of her husband and tricks him into bringing about his own death.

The four scenes in which the royal couple outwit the serpent embody the human wisdom which defeats the "ruler of this world" and manifests the power of the cross. These scenes describe a helix-like spiral which unites image and archetype by solving Paul's problem. As it returns to Paul, it rises up along his raised hand to "complete" his initially imperfect sovereignty. Implicit in its rising are the two narrative cycles through which Peter realizes Paul's potential, portioned out in the scenes of the *kleima*.

Our eye then moves to an enlarged image slightly to the left of center, the cathedral church of Murom with the large icon of Peter and Fevroniia in its interior nave. Immediately to our left we see Peter and Fevroniia lying together in a common tomb in the altar space. An icon of the Mother of God of Tenderness is above them.

This icon is the archetype of the saints below. The Mother of God with her divine child symbolizes the reciprocity between humankind and God. Her compassion for the divine child who will be crucified inversely mirrors God's compassion for fallen humankind. Her compassion reveals her likeness to the eternally merciful Creator incarnate in her arms. This icon reveals that Peter and Fevroniia's divine likeness consists in their compassion for each other and for their people, to whom they are "child-loving mother and father" (220).[14] This scene builds on the archetypal implications of their death as a symbolic eucharist, conveyed by the symbolism of the aer. It portrays their bodies in the altar, the place of the eucharistic sacrifice. Their implicit offering to each other of their body and blood correlates them to the mutually loving mother and child above. Image and archetype are one despite their differences.

The large icon in the adjoining scene portrays the saints themselves united with their archetype. It implies their identification with the mother and child by inverting the smaller icon. Instead of the Mother of God looking down on the child, the child looks down on the saints. He is the risen glorified Emmanuel. Standing before him, the saints symbolize their own mystical resurrection (by analogy to the assumption of the Mother of God). While the first scene focuses on the eucharistic sacrifice — the death which defeats death — the second scene focuses on the ensuing resurrection in its cosmic implications. With hands open to us as well as to our saintly intercessors, the Emmanuel embodies the outflowing of redeeming grace to the universal Church. We who stand before this icon within an icon, wherever and whenever we may be, are spiritually resurrected, and mystically present at the tomb in Murom. We are the image of the archetypal saints and Divine Child.

A triumphant cross on the central cupola of the church symbolizes this power of resurrection. It crystallizes the Tale's dominant archetype of the loving act which redeems the world and sets it free, when taken on equally by God and man. It brings together the two sides of the *srednik* in a mystical marriage — the front-facing Emmanuel on the left and the front-facing Paul on the right — symbolizing the mutual sovereignty of man and God.

The large church building is also a symbol condensing the icon's two halves, filling its missing center. It is an archetype of wisdom's house, the place where humankind reflects the saving grace of the Creator, a unity of archetype and image. The icon of Peter and Fevroniia is the open door to wisdom's house. This icon inversely mirrors the actual closed door of the church immediately below. The open and closed doors embody the mystery by which the saints, like the Mother of God, are a "gateway of the Only-begotten Son of God, who passed through this gate, yet kept it closed . . . having ordered all things in His own wisdom "(Mother Mary and Ware 1969: 101). King Paul in his turn abides in a palace whose shape, mirroring the icon of his brother and sister-in-law, is a "door" to wisdom's house. He, by analogy to Peter and Fevroniia raises his people to God. (His front-facing posture with arm raised mirrors that of the Emmanuel, just as Peter and Fevronii with arms uplifted implicitly mirror the Emmanuel above them).

Between these two "doors" is a third — a bell tower crowned by a cross. It contains three bells, each with red ropes streaming down toward a center. It symbolizes the action of the Trinity sending its grace through the "doors" of the Emmanuel, Peter, Fevroniia and Paul. While these latter "doors" point up, the former streams down to signify the marriage between God and humankind in wisdom's house. This mystical marriage is a center of transcendent wisdom, overcoming oppositions (up and down, open and shut, man and God).

The white walls which surround the city are also a "door" to Wisdom's house. Their corners reflect the shape of the large icon and of Paul's palace. The wall forms an implicit circle around the cross and the church which occupy the symbolic center of the city. The turning of this circle brings God down and humankind up through wisdom's door (in opposing spirals). It draws the city into the transcendence of the center, transforming the likeness of the Old Jerusalem into the likeness of the New, that is, Murom into wisdom's house.[15] It necapitulates the dynamism unitng archetype and image in the tale.

The city in the *srednik* does not, however, correspond to the historical Murom, which had a wooden kremlin. Instead its walls correspond to the stone Moscow kremlin as it was portrayed in the illustrated chronicle compendium (*Litsevoi letopisnyi svod*) produced during the reign of Ivan IV. Similarly the cathedral corresponds to the miniature illustrations of the cathedral of the Assumption in the Moscow kremlin from the same source (Dmitrieva and Belobrova 1985: 160). The city thus implicitly stands for Moscow as the image of the New Jerusalem. By analogy, King Paul and his brother embody the universal providence in the Muscovite tsar. Thus the icon alludes to the tale's contribution to the messianic ideology of the state. It reflects the tale's evocation of the wisdom of God, the overarching paradigm in the symbolic corpus of Metropolitan Macarius and Ivan IV (Hunt, 1993).[16]

The iconographer's choice of what to portray reveals his awareness of the tale's hidden metaphorical structure. He chose not to follow the conventions for a *srednik* because he understood that the tale was about the providence of the kingdom. He highlighted King Paul's reign because he knew that it was the key to the meaning of the kingdom and the fate of humankind. His analogy between the saints and the Mother of God in the church of her Nativity, his interpretation of Peter and Fevroniia's death and of the city of Murom testify to their archetypal meaning in the tale. He was willing to create an unusual *srednik* in order to read the text as its author meant it to be read, through the prism of John, chapter 12, the feasts of the Exaltation of the Cross and the Nativity of the Mother of God, the liturgy and the other archetypes in the introduction.

The iconographer, like the author created a dynamic and open-ended structure through the interplay of archetype and image — wisdom's house. Iconographer and author worked in a shared symbolic world and poetics of revelation. They directed their message to the living Church, defined as those initiated by the liturgy into knowledge of the truth. These included, first of all, Tsar Ivan IV himself. Ermolai Erazm directed his tale to the tsar (Dmitrieva 1979: 75–79). The tsar may have sponsored the original icon and even influenced its interpretation (Dmitrieva and Belobrova 1985: 178).

Within the partnership of text and icon, the word comes first and the image illuminates its sacred sense. But the image enjoys no less honor for that. As an object of prayer and a source of healing, the icon makes real and present the tale's power. Sending its message to all the corners of the Church, the icon is the spirit of its word. To the mind of the Church, text

and icon are as indivisible as the divine persons of the Son and the Spirit. Together they are a fullness of revelation, fulfilling the ontological destiny of the Russian state to be the kingdom of God.

Notes

1. According to Dmitrieva (50–79), there are no datable manuscripts of this widely copied text from earlier than the mid-sixteenth century.
2. Dmitrieva and Belobrova (1985: 144, note 20) describe a manuscript of the text in a compilation entitled "Minei chet'i mitropolita Makariia" for the month of June (RNB, f. 1.294). At the same time the "Velikaia mineia chet'ia na iiun'" (RNB, Sofiiskoe sobr. no. 1322) does not have the tale.
3. All translations are mine, taken from the authorial version of the text (Dmitrieva 1979: 209–223). Page numbers cited are from this edition.
4. The tale closely mirrors the worldview of Maximus the Confessor's *Mystagogia*: "God brought all things into existence by His infinite power, and now sustains, coordinates and limits them. With His foreknowledge He links both spiritual and material things to each other and to Himself" (1982: 65).
5. In Picchio's own article on the tale (1985: 496–99), he identifies a citation from Galatians 3:28 as a biblical clue to the introduction's hagiographical meaning: "those who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." He does not attempt to relate it to the narrative.
6. "for He is uncaused, absolutely free and independent" (Maximus the Confessor 1982: 64).
7. "He did not want men to be without tillage of the soul's vineyard, a place which the evil one and his deceit despoiled in its beginnings, an occupation which pays the spiritual denarius of being the image and likeness of God, king of kings" (Maximus the Confessor 1982: 62).
8. "This blessed and immaculate wedlock is a consummation of that awesome mystery of unity through which God will become one flesh and one spirit with His Church, the soul; and the soul with God. . . . In Him all the reasons for existing things subsist in one single form. . . . [the soul in] her espousal to the Word is conveyed to God, comprising in Himself every thought and every cause He created" (Maximus the Confessor 1982: 80–81).
9. Although scenes of Peter and Fevroniia's crowning and of their life with the king and queen are absent in the text, their presence is implicit. For this reason both these scenes are richly portrayed in traditions of miniatures interpreting the text, which themselves served as a basis for the peripheral scenes in icons of their life (Dmitrieva and Belobrova 1985: illus. 18 and 28; Murom 1971: pl. 57).
10. "In the Orthodox understanding, the Church exists so that each of her parts can live in fullness and be an incarnation of the fulness of that Church — so that . . . each part can live by the *whole* and *wholly*" (Schmemann 1988: 99).
11. God moves Fevroniia's body from the monastery of the Exaltation of the Cross to the church of the Nativity of the Mother of God. The two feasts are interconnected and represent one metaphorical whole. The feast of the Exaltation of the Cross occurs immediately after the feast of the Mother of God's Nativity and fulfills its meaning.
12. "At that time [the consummation of all things] the present-day man will rise with the world, as a part with the whole or the small with the larger, acquiring everlasting incorruptibility, then a single divine power will be manifest to all" (Maximus the Confessor 1982: 85).

13. The reproduction of the *kleima* is too poor for analysis.
14. In a *kleima* scene portraying the reconciliation of the rulers and the people of the Murom, a member of the clergy holds this icon of the Mother of God of Tenderness above the saints (Dmitrieva and Belobrova 1985: illus. 21). Although it is not the *kleima* of the icon under discussion, and derives from a different tradition of miniatures, it may reflect a generally accepted interpretation of Peter and Fevroniia's compassion.
15. The turning of this circle archetypically expresses Maximus the Confessor's idea of the marriage of the invisible and visible: "For this visible world is verbally present in the world of thought; the world of thought is present in visible images. Their end result or work is all one, 'as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel,' says Ezechiel (1:16)" (Maximus the Confessor 1982: 70).
16. The studies of both Pliukhanova (1995) and Hunt (1993) elucidate how the specific system of metaphors signifying wisdom in the tale reflects the larger system of the metropolitan.

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