

Neomythologism in the Structure of V. Pelevin's Early Novels

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ABSTRACT

Viktor Pelevin is an established modern writer. An analysis of the poetics of his texts allowed most critics to classify V. Pelevin as a postmodernist prose writer. V. Pelevin became known in the early 1990s as the author of fantastic works that caused many critical responses. Basically, the reviews were reduced to a reaction to the non-literary aspects of the writer's work, his behavioral strategy.

Among such reviews, one should highlight the reviews of R. Arbitman, D. Bavilsky, A. Nemzer on the novels "Omon Ra" (1992) and "The Life of Insects" (1993). According to critics, early stories, novels, novels demonstrated the main trends in the development of the prose of this author, made clear the desire to create a series of pictures of modern life and consciousness with varying degrees of authenticity. At the same time, the writer postulated the variability of views on the surrounding reality, the so-called "individual myths". [1. p. 3]

More ambiguous were the reviews of the novel "Chapaev and Emptiness" that appeared in 1996. A. Genis described it as a literary work widely popularizing the Buddhist worldview, A. Kursky correlated the conflict of the novel with a system of archetypal images and mythological motifs, I. Rodnyanskaya, V. Kuritsyn, S. Kornev, D. Bykov noted the freshness of the writer's approach to influential modern dichotomies and myths, the fascination of the plot and the courage to deal with some "literary conventions". In turn, S. Kuznetsov, P. Basinsky, A. Arkhangelsky, N. Alexandrov developed the thesis about the failure of V. Pelevin as a prose writer due to the low quality and obvious opportunism of his texts.[2. p. 3]

The last novel of the writer, "Generation 'P'" (1998), aroused especially high reader interest and, for this reason, the maximum number of publications in periodicals. I. Rodnyanskaya, S. Kostyrko, A. Royfe defended the merits of this work by V. Pelevin, pointed to its innovation as the reason for rejection by most critics. However, even A. Genis and V. Kuritsyn admitted that the novel was "underdeveloped" and that the author was too oriented towards reader tastes. Perhaps, there were almost no neutral points of view, with the exception of the position of L. Pirogov, repeatedly reproduced in his publications, including those dedicated to V. Pelevin.

On the whole, only very recently a tendency has begun to take shape for a thorough understanding of V. Pelevin's contribution to the modern literary process. Works relating to his work are still reduced mainly to critical publications in periodicals, but there are - albeit insufficiently complete - reviews in studies on contemporary Russian literature ("Russian Literary Postmodernism" by V. Kuritsyn).[3. p. 3]

"Neo-mythological consciousness" is a property of the cultural mentality of the entire twentieth century. Mythological plots, motifs, structures are actively used in the course of creating works of art. The myth begins to be perceived as existing not only in an archaic version, but also as a property of human consciousness. Postmodernism, by definition, is characterized by an interest in myth mainly in the latter sense. The theorists of the direction introduce the concept of postmodern sensitivity as an awareness of the deliberate unjustification of any hierarchies that claim to be absolute systems of priorities, the impossibility of the existence of any authentic picture of the world, the mythological nature of any authoritative "view of the world" (D. Fokkema, D. Lodge). V. Pelevin creates the artistic world of his texts from the mythologemes perceived as such.

Traditionally, neomythologism is understood as the orientation of the artistic structure of the text to archaic mythologemes, however, in a broader sense, neomythologism can be legitimately defined as any borrowing of mythological structures, including recently formed ones.[4. p. 3]

V. Pelevin's work is characterized by neo-mythologism as a special kind of poetics, structurally oriented towards the plot-figurative system of myth, a kind of intertextuality, which is defined (accepting the definition of I.P. Smirnov) as "<...> a component of a broad generic concept, so to speak, internality, which means that the meaning of a work of art is fully or partially formed by reference to another text that is found in the work of the same author, in related art, in related discourse or in previous literature.

The analysis of neomythologism as a feature of the poetics of V. Pelevin's novels is relevant, since neomythologism is involved in structuring the artistic world of works and creating the image of the narrator, that is, it is an active element of the system of "means of expression", which, for example, M.L. Gasparov, giving the following definition of the concept of "poetics" for the encyclopedic dictionary: "<...> description of a literary work with the help of means of expression, which allows you to create an individual system of aesthetically effective properties of the work <...>. The final concepts to which all means of expression can be reduced are: the "image of the world" (with its main characteristics, artistic time and artistic space) and the "image of the author", the interaction of which gives a "point of view" that determines everything important in the structure of the work. ". Neomythologism can rightly be called one of the main features of V. Pelevin's poetics and one of the main means of manifestation of the author's presence in the text. The artistic specificity of the novel as a genre creates the most acceptable conditions for the productive use of neomythologism. The novel assumes the most complete reproduction of the author's worldview concept, as well as the presence of some extraordinary events, which, according to Yu.M. Lotman, there is a specific feature of being a person in an epic context, "a novel form of understanding an event as a violation of the usual, "uninteresting" movement of life, during which the hero meets and interacts with a reality that is outside of his past experience, "the character moves across the border of semantic fields».[4. p. 3]

A myth is a secondary structure that is not fully subject to consciousness, any attempt to comprehend which leads to the creation of a metalanguage. It ceases to be a myth, giving rise, in turn, to a myth about itself. R. Barth in his work "Myth Today" says the following: "In myth we find the same three-element system <...>: signifier, signified and sign. But the myth is a special system and this feature lies in the fact that it is created on the basis of a certain sequence of signs that exists before it; the myth is a secondary semiological system <...>, the material carriers of

the mythical message (language itself, photography, painting, advertising, rituals, any objects, etc.) <...> are reduced to the function of meaning". Thus, any action ultimately entails the generation of a mythologeme. The human consciousness unconsciously uses it at a convenient moment, explaining what is happening with the help of learned structures into which the new fits. The acquisition of the characteristics assigned to them, the act of "writing in", as well as previously perceived structures involved by consciousness - in the aggregate, all this becomes a newly created myth about the next event.

V. Kotyrev in his work "Ecological Crisis, Postmodernism and Culture" speaks of the need for mythology to stabilize through the ritualization of relations within any society. "Totems, taboos, commandments, religions, moral standards, legal prescriptions - all these are specific cultural forms of regulating the passions, desires and behavior of individuals in society."

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are structures, texts, insisting on total compliance with the most acceptable behavior in objective reality. At the same time, acceptability, characteristics of behavior are imposed by these formations based on the pre-existing structures that influenced their formation. Thus, the enumerated "specific cultural forms" turn out to be secondary and generated exclusively by the consciousness of adepts, and so on.

Speaking about the poetics of mythologization, let us turn to the term "prefiguration". EAT. Meletinsky understands it as the use of traditional mythologems, as well as "<...> literary images, historical themes and plots previously created by other writers<...>". On the other hand, the researcher argues that prefiguration cannot be reduced to "<...> a reflection of the latest artistic practice" (E.M. Meletinsky himself, using this term, refers to T.D. Winner and D. White, noticing, however, that it is they who practice such "reduction"), i.e. to what is usually called intertextuality as a device.

It is obvious that the traditionalist understanding of the myth as an ancient legend, which is "<...> an unconsciously artistic narrative about important, often mysterious natural, physiological and social phenomena for an ancient person<...>", is accepted as only one of several possible.

Myth, in the sense that we recognize as denotative, is most correlated with the metanarrations, metadiscourses, and metanarratives of Jean-Francois Lyotard. The fact is that by "postmodern" in the most general sense, the scientist means "the state of knowledge in today's most developed societies" ("simplifying to the extreme" this "distrust of metanarratives").

The French theorist of postmodernism says the following about the origin, awareness and isolation of these structures:

"Science has been in conflict with stories from the very beginning. By her own criteria, most of them are fiction. But since science is not limited to the formulation of instrumental laws and seeks the truth, it must legitimize its own rules of the game. And by virtue of the fact that it holds a legitimizing discourse in relation to its own status, it calls it philosophy.

I.P. Ilyin refers to the authority of J. F. Lyotard, speaking about the demand for the commercial aspect of culture in the postmodern era. "<...> Artists, art gallery owners, critics and the public flock to where "something happens". However, the true reality of this "something is happening" is the reality of money: in the absence of aesthetic criteria, it is possible and useful to determine

the value of works of art by the profit they provide. Such a reality reconciles all, even the most contradictory trends in art, provided that these trends and needs have purchasing power.

An important, if not the leading role in supporting this “cognitive eclecticism” is played by the mass media, or, as Lyotard calls them, “computer science”<...>”.

The French theorist of postmodernism refers to meta-narratives as “specific types of discourse-narrative”, which are verbalized explications of certain fragments of “knowledge”, which refers to the entire positivist corpus of traditional scientific, socio-political, cultural, strictly hierarchized discursive practices.

The authors of the encyclopedia "Postmodernism" define metanarrative as "the concept of the philosophy of postmodernism, fixing in its content the phenomenon of the existence of concepts that claim to be universal, dominance in culture and "legitimize" knowledge, various social institutions, a certain way of thinking."

Frederic Jameson, developing the theory of J. F. Lyotard, argues that "story", "narration" in this case is not so much a "literary form or structure, but an" epistemological category ", and, like Kant's categories of time and space, can be understood as one of the abstract (or “empty”) coordinates, from the inside of which we cognize the world, as an “empty form” imposed by our perception on the unformed, raw stream of reality <...>: in other words, the world is accessible and opens to a person only in the form of stories, stories about him."

V. Pelevin is characterized by a detached attitude to any "meta-narratives", an awareness of their existence and controllability along with the ability to control. "A story about the world", "metanarrative" reveal the identity of the concept of "myth" in the meaning we have adopted.

“In other words, the narrative opens and interprets the world to the same extent as it hides and distorts it,” continues the interpretation of the idea of F. Jameson I.P. Ilyin. – This allegedly manifests a specific function of narration as a form of “narrative knowledge”: it serves to implement a “collective consciousness” aimed at suppressing historically emerging social contradictions. However, since this function, as a rule, is not realized, Jameson calls it the "political unconscious".

Unlike Lyotard, the American researcher believes that metanarratives (or "dominant codes") do not disappear without a trace, but continue to influence people, while existing in a "scattered", "dispersed" form, as an everywhere inherent, but invisible "power of the dominant ideology."

The "political unconscious" of the late Soviet era becomes the object of the narrator's attention in V. Pelevin's first novel "Omon Ra". This focus of mythology (the "unconscious") on the "removal of contradictions" in Soviet society is constantly emphasized by the narrator. The changing "collective consciousness" of the post-Soviet period is explored in the writer's three subsequent novels - "The Life of Insects", "Chapaev and the Void", "Generation 'P'". The most influential mythological formations are in the field of attention as "pretexts" in the structuring of all four novels by V. Pelevin.[5. p. 273]

The range of literature on the problem of modern mythology is quite wide, but the work of V. Pelevin in its aspect remains actually studied.

V. Pelevin, as an author of popular literature, resorts to the use of modern mythologems, which obviously should facilitate the perception of the writer's texts by the majority of the audience.

"Teleological" for any work of popular culture is the desire to create a sign system that is comfortable and attractive for the recipient. The imagination of those who have consumed such products gets the opportunity to create a certain visual range illustrating the specified system. Yu.M. Lotman wrote the following: “The area of the visible, previously innocently identified with reality, turns out to be a space in which all transformations allowed by the language are possible: conditional and unreal narration, a set of actions in space and time, a change of point of

view.” This statement concerned the perception of dreams by the human consciousness, but is of interest as correlated with the interaction of the same consciousness and the perceived, then deconstructed and newly structured cosmos of a work of art. Thus, the transformation of the visible into the narrated inevitably increases the degree of organization. This is how text is created. The process of storytelling drives out the real imprints of the dream from memory, and the person is imbued with the conviction that he really saw exactly what he was talking about. In the future, this verbally retold text is deposited in our memory. However, this is only part of the memorization process: the verbally organized text is tipped back into visual images preserved in memory and remembered in visual form. This is how the structure of the visible narrative is created, connecting the sense of reality inherent in everything visible, and all the grammatical possibilities of irrealty. [6. p. 143] And if it can be argued that this happens with any fact of empirical reality outside of consciousness, including with texts of works of fiction, then in the case of its popular variety, it is the picture of the objective world drawn by a single reader that is important. Identity is no less significant, equally harmonious and comfortable for as many consumers as possible. “In literature, the need for a myth-simulacrum is expressed in the popularity of quasi-epics, game sagas such as C. Lewis's Narnia and R. Tolkien's adventures of hobbits. Finally, the postmodern type of mythologies is perfectly manifested in the phenomenon of "cult texts" that combine several works of different arts under one name with the same characters / film and sequels, book and sequels /, the industry of souvenirs / toys, T-shirts / and sweets of the same name / chewing gum chocolate/, support in the form of computer games /allowing the recipient to become the subject of a myth himself/etc. and so on. Vivid examples of "cult texts" are "Twin Peaks" and "Jurassic Park", "The Lion King" and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles".

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