

MYTHOLOGEMES IN THE NOVELS OF V. PELEVIN

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Annotation. The paper aims to determine the role of a boundary topos by analysing mythological spatial poetics in postmodernist literature (using V. Pelevin's prose as an example). **Scientific novelty** of the research lies in applying the results obtained in the field of folklore studies to postmodern creative work. The re-search findings have shown that V. Pelevin utilises a boundary topos (we analysed the image of the forest, mountain and river) in order to distinguish between reality and irrealty and have identified the connection of boundary topoi with thanatological, initiative and onomastic motifs.

Key words: V. Pelevin; space of a literary work; boundary; myth; folklore; novels.

Introduction

We see the author's appeal to recognizable mythologemes. At the same time, the author does not set himself the task of retelling or preserving the story in its original form, the myth acts as a material, a source of inspiration and can be reconstructed or completely transformed within the framework of the work he created in accordance with the author's intention.

We see a similar attitude to mythological material not only in literature, but also in society, as the sociologist and cultural theorist A. Reckwitz (2022) notes: "New religious, often fundamentalist communities are spreading around the world, in a special way related to Christianity, and Islam, which claim a kind of exclusivity outside of the official churches" (p. 10). The same is true for mainstream cinema. Mythologies become the basis of the plot and the starting point, but the myth is not preserved in its original form: in the films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe and comics, Loki is the son of Odin, and not his brother, Hel is the sister, not the daughter of Loki, etc.

Researchers turned to the mythological component in V. Pelevin's work, revealing both the specifics of the implementation of the author's myth and the inclusion of mythologemes in the structure of the narrative (Dmitriev, 2002; Wagner, 2007), which proves the prospect of studying myth modifications reflected in the artistic world late works that have not yet been studied in detail, as well as to the author's mythology.

Interest in the works of V. Pelevin, both on the part of researchers and the readership, does not weaken, however, in order to get a more complete picture of both the topographic organization of the text and Pelevin's work as a whole, we consider it necessary to turn not to "virtual features" of the postmodern space (Melnikova, 2009), but to consider spaciopoetics in the context of mythology and folklore, which determines the relevance of the study.

To achieve the goal, the following tasks were formulated: to identify all topoi in the selected works of art; identify and characterize locations that mark the boundary between the world of people and another world; designate the motives of death and initiation associated with locations, identified in the analysis of scientific literature, and also consider the onomastic motive.

The key research methods are system-typological, as well as the method of structural analysis.

When preparing the article, we turned to a number of scientific works, the theoretical base was made up of works on folklore and mythology (Propp, 2020; Barkova, 2019; 2022; Eliade, 1999), studies of onomastic and spatial motifs (Losev, 1998; Toporov, 2004), as well as works devoted to the study of post-modernism (Khaustov, 2020) and the implementation of mythologemes in a work of art (Zainullina, 2004).

The sources of illustrative material in the article were the novels by V. Pelevin "The Invincible Sun" (M.: Eksmo, 2020), "Secret Views of Mount Fuji" (M.: Eksmo, 2020), "Generation P" (St. Petersburg: Azbuka-Atticus, 2015), "Empire V" (M.: Eksmo, 2006), "The Sacred Book of the Werewolf" (M.: Eksmo, 2004).

The work has practical significance: the results can be used as the basis for further research not only on the mythological topos, but also on the whole spaciopoetics of V. Pelevin's works, as well as in a comparative analysis of the author's methodology in studying the work of Russian postmodernists. The materials of the work can be used by teachers and students of universities in the humanities in preparation for lectures and practical classes on postmodern Russian literature, literary criticism, as well as when conducting seminars on mythology and folklore. The data obtained can be used in the process of educational and methodological activities in the creation of textbooks and teaching aids, where the results of research in the field of philology and literary criticism will be presented.

The main provisions of the article will also be of interest to readers who are far from philology, since the description and organization of topoi will help to dive deeper into the works, understand deeper levels of narration and "unravel" the author's game.

Main part

Myth as a tool in fiction

Many researchers turned to the definition of the concept of "myth". E. M. Meletinsky (1998) defined myth "as a description of a model of the world", the key form of myth is a narrative in which acting characters are endowed with clearly defined roles and characteristics. R. Barth (1994) defined myth as a communicative system, a form of communication expressed orally, in writing or visually, as well as a semiotic system, each sign of which has a specific meaning. According to R. Barth, myth is designed to replace reality. A.F. Losev (2001) formulated the definition of myth more poetically, understanding myth as a form of thinking: – the brightest and most authentic reality" (p. 36).

The myth becomes a "raw material" for various genres and literary movements (Yermolenko, 2020), including actively used by postmodernism. The inclusion of mythologemes in the narrative structure allows the author to turn to cultural memory and reconstruct archetypes (Sokol, 2017). The use of mythologemes allows you to build an artistic reality and the author's mythology. I. N. Zainullina (2004) points out that "myth is an eternal way of artistic reflection of human existence" (p. 3).

D. S. Khaustov (2020) reveals the instrumental function of myth, naming the elements that make up the mythological and ideological discourses (speaking of Pelevin's work, we can supplement the list with cultural, political, social, religious discourses), forms and interpretations, "that converge and diverge in the great melting pot of language" (p. 114). The author is free to use mythologies and mythologemes as a tool that has a specific purpose, and not as its preservation. Complementing the above, we note that the same is true for folklore.

"Forest", "mountain" and "river" in V. Pelevin's great prose of the 2000-2010s

Let's proceed directly to the study of creativity V. Pelevin. The material for structural analysis was four novels - "The Sacred Book of the Werewolf", "Empire V", "Secret Views of Mount Fuji", "Invincible Sun", which made it possible to identify three boundary topoi, which we will consider in the article - forest, mountain and river. The methodology is not new: researchers have previously identified mythological and folklore elements in a work of art (which is reflected in the articles of the second section of the collection "Myth, Folklore, Literature: Aesthetic Projection of the World" (2015)), however, in the work of V. Pelevin, the marked topoi have not been previously studied.

The image of the forest is repeatedly found in the artistic prose of V. Pelevin:

1. "Empire V": in the forests not far from the Rublevsky highway is Heartland, the habitat of the divine being of the Great Mouse, the forest serves as a "watershed" between the world of vampires and the world of people.
2. "The Sacred Book of the Werewolf": the forest appears in several episodes: there is a bunker in the forest where the main characters are hiding. Having survived the transformation, there the main character explores his new possibilities; after the reincarnation, the main character leaves the chase in the form of a fox.
3. "Secret views of Mount Fuji": the main character Tanya finds herself in the forest twice - during the ceremony, after which she gains strength, and after meeting the main character.

Exploring fairy tale motifs, E. M. Neyolov (1986) notes that the forest is dangerous for the protagonist, as it serves as a barrier and a boundary between "one's own" and "them" (however, in the literary tradition, the danger of the forest is reduced or may be completely absent), and mentions the motives of initiation and death associated with it. In various cultures and ritual practices, the forest acts as a place for performing the ritual of initiation (Eliade, 1999, pp. 37, 42). In the monograph "Slavic myths. From Veles and Mokosh to the bird Sirin and Ivan Kupala" A. L. Barkov (2022, p. 31), considering the image of a bear, calls him the owner of the forest - the other world.

In conjunction with the forest in the novel "Secret Views of Mount Fuji", the image of a bathhouse appears in three episodes of the meetings between Ta-ni and Fyodor, which in reality are a recursion and repetition of the first. In folklore, the image of a bath is a meeting place with evil spirits and, in general, the inhabitants of the "other" world, as well as a place of power and a transition between worlds. Wedding and birth ceremonies were held in the bathhouse, the spacium is closely associated with funeral rituals, divination and the future (Barkova, 2022, pp. 96-99).

The image of the bath associatively refers us to F. M. Dostoevsky's novel "Crime and Punishment", namely to Svidrigailov's reasoning: "We all see eternity as an idea that cannot be

understood, something huge, huge! But why must it be huge? And suddenly, instead of all this, imagine, there will be one room there, something like a village bath, smoky, and spiders in all corners, and that's all eternity" (Dostoevsky F.M. Complete works: in 30 t. L.: Nauka, 1973. T. 6. S. 221). The image of a bathhouse with spiders in Dostoevsky's poetics embodies the space of another world, the afterlife: "... the presence of spiders indicates that this is not life, but death, that this is not paradise, but purgatory ..." (Bogach, 2017, p. 10).

The image of a "bathhouse with spiders" appears in the novel "Generation P": "What is eternity is a bathhouse, // Eternity is a bathhouse with spiders. // If this bath // Manka forgets, // What will happen to the Motherland and to us?" (p. 14). The topos embodies not only a folklore, but also a literary image through an allusion to the novel by F. M. Dostoevsky.

The character and the spacium surrounding him exist interconnectedly, the topos and the acting hero influence each other (Toporov, 1983). We also find a reflection of this idea in the work of V. Pelevin: a specific topos is associated with certain motives and actions of characters. Thus, in folkloristics, the motif of initiation is associated with the forest (Propp, 2020, p. 69), which is also true for the work of V. Pelevin: after meeting with Fyodor, Tanya goes into the forest, where she meets a mushroom picker, who appears in the folklore image of the guardian of the forest. The man gives her the following characterization: "...now you are dead. Therefore, it is completely new and strong" (Secret Views of Mount Fuji, p. 159), which can be interpreted as a symbolic death and rebirth. We also find the connection between initiative and thanatological motives in other works.

"The Sacred Book of the Werewolf". The main character Alexander does not formally die, but in the epilogue we learn that Alexander abandoned the human form, which can be interpreted as the death of the human component of his essence, since initiation (and the transformation of Alexander into a qualitatively new state can be called initiation) is conceived as a symbolic death (Kapishin, 2017).

If we consider the transformation of a wolf (Sasha Sery) into a dog (Sasha Cherny), we will see the initiatory pair "death" - "resurrection": the pack does not accept Alexander in a new guise, he is attacked, after which he is forced to hide and acquires a marginal status, which corresponds to the thought of A. E. Kapishin (2017): "Any initiation in a traditional society begins with social death", which is a violent death. Significantly, Alexander is studying his new state in the forest - a topos, which we characterize as a "space of initiation." Subsequently, the hero assumes his new form and returns to the "flock", which completes the initiation with a "new birth" (Eliade, 1999, p. 15).

Empire V. A person becomes a vampire after a "language" is placed in his head - a living entity that enters into symbiosis with the carrier and gives him special powers (immortality, special cognitive abilities, etc.). After this initiative transition, the person changes his name and is already called the name of the pagan god. A. L. Barkova (2019) speaks of the initiatory experience as a temporary death, which we see in the image of the man Roma turning into the vampire Rama. We know the "human name" only of the main character, while the rest appear under the names of

"vampire" (ie divine). Identifying the hero through the name, we find an allusion to the ancient Indian epic "Ramayana" and its main character Rama.

In the considered examples, we see the motif of changing the name, which is an initiative marker in Pelevin's work. A.F. Losev (2016) notes that naming is not just a set of phonemes, the pronunciation of which in a certain order corresponds to a certain physical object or abstract concept: "... a name is not just a sound, but also something completely different, incommensurable with any sound" (p. 10). V. N. Toporov (2004), considering the transformation of the name in the mythopoetic aspect, notes the motif of continuity, and A. O. Belokoneva (2012, p. 66), exploring the specifics of anthroponyms, identifies two models: the embodiment or rejection of this image, embedded in the name.

The first physical transformation of Rama is associated with the Heartland - the habitat of the Great Mouse, the abyss underground, which is located in the forest. The abyss is a dichotomous pair with the topos "mountain".

The image of a mountain, or rather its peak, is also often found in the work of V. Pelevin: this is Mount Fuji ("Secret Views of Mount Fuji", "Empire V"), and Arunachala Hill in India, which is actually sacred, where Sasha sees the dancing god, in the episode there is an obvious allusion with the dance of Shiva ("The Invincible Sun"), and a clearing on Elbrus where the ritual is performed (the story "Iakinth", the collection "The Art of Light Touches").

The worship of mountain and the sacralization of the topos are found in the religious practices of different peoples: "The sacred mountains are considered as places of revelation, as the center-axis of the Universe, the source of life, the path to heaven, the abode of the dead, the temple of the gods, places of hermitage and reflection" (Batomunkueva, 2011, p. 255). Mountain worship is a common motif in a number of spiritual practices, beliefs and religions (Fujiko, Shinto-Buddhist syncretism, Taoism, etc.), in which climbing a mountain was considered a way to gain spiritual strength. The top of the mountain is the true spiritual reality. V. Pelevin transfers this idea to the structure of a work of art.

Being a sacred place, the mountain, and especially the peak, already belongs to another world or serves as a transition from the material world to the world of spirits, the other world and is associated with the motive of initiation. The thesis is also confirmed by A. L. Barkova (2019, p. 22), who considers the world mountain as the embodiment of the world axes and boundary topos. Thus, the mountain and the forest are not just a boundary between worlds: they often refer to the "other" world.

In the novel "The Invincible Sun" the image of a fiery river appears, which is also a separation of reality and unreality. The main character, choosing the direction of travel, hears the words of the song coming from the coffee house, and notes the phrases "fiery river" and "edge of the volcano". After that, she sees a panorama of Istanbul in a coffee shop and decides to go there.

Istanbul is the twin of Moscow, "the city beyond the river of fire", a dream space: "... it was not Moscow, but that version of it that you sometimes see in a dream" (Invincible Sun, p. 86).

A fairy tale motif is connected with Moscow and Istanbul: for example, the author in the novel refers the reader to the tale of the frog queen. In the mythologies of the peoples of the world, the

frog, regardless of whether it is viewed in a positive or negative way, is associated with water, which is interpreted as the ability to change, flow and transform (Zhuchkova, 2014). Thus, the tale turns out to be connected with the motive of transformation and again brings us back to the image of the river.

A. L. Barkova (2019) notes that for the mythological picture of the world, the fiery river is the border of the “world of the living and the world of the dead” (p. 18), that is, it separates reality from an alternative space, which is also confirmed by a number of other studies of folklore, religious and mythological material: A. M. Petrov (2014) in the article “The Plot Functions of the Fire Element in the Russian Folk Orthodox Culture”, considering the functions of fire, also highlights the image of the fiery river as the boundary between the worlds, however, the author notes, in the Christian tradition we are talking about the division of the world of sinners and the world of the righteous. It is appropriate to recall the river as the border between the world of the living and the other world in Sumerian, Egyptian, Greek mythology, as well as the river of boiling blood in the spaciopoetics of Dante's Divine Comedy.

The fairy tale “Go there, I don’t know where”, which the main character recalls, is also connected with a different, otherworldly space where Sasha goes - that is, to Istanbul. The purpose of the journey is to find one's place in life and change the existing routine, which is associated with an initiatory motive.

A. N. Belarev (2019) addresses the study of the border topos in a work of art in his dissertation “Topos of the border in the artistic world of Paul Scheerbart”. We also note the study of the border in the work of A. Akhmatova, conducted by L. G. Kikhney and E. V. Merkel (2012). The authors define the functionality of the topos-mediator as a distinction between one’s own and someone else’s space (internal and external) in early work and the combination of these (in later works), the distinction between historical eras, and also the designation of a turning point, while V. Pelevin follows the folklore tradition and focuses on the delimitation of spaces external to the hero, separating the world of people from another world by means of a topographic mediator.

The appeal to the boundary topos and the embodiment of the spatial mediator in the text are not unified, the specifics of its implementation depend on the author's method.

Conclusion

Thus, after analyzing some of the works of V. Pelevin, we noted the implementation of folklore and mythological motifs. Border topoi (forest, mountain, river), identified by researchers on folklore and mythological material and described in detail by them, are reproduced in postmodern literature with the preservation of functionality, however, one cannot fail to note the author's method of reconstruction, in which mythological images, legends of the peoples of the world become part of the author's narrative, which is often clothed in satirical discourse.

The author refers to the myth as a tool for creating a work of art and constructing the artistic world in order to build a connection with the world literary tradition. This task is especially important in postmodernism in the context of one of the fundamental postulates that modern authors cannot create something original and are not authors, but retellers of stories told earlier: mythology

embeds the text into the system not only of the author's artistic world and artistic universe of his narrative, but also in the totality of written texts as a whole.

Like postmodernism in general, myth-making and mythology become tools for expressing the author's position and participate in the construction of the artistic world. V. Pelevin works with myth in a postmodern way: he is characterized by playing with political, social mythologies of reality, as well as archaic mythological plots and connection with ideologemes. On the basis of already existing mythologemes, the author creates his own mythology, often they are intertwined. Initiatory, onomastic and thanatological motifs turned out to be typical for the author's myth.

Further study of the topic and expansion of the empirical base, as well as a comparison of mythological and folklore motifs implemented in earlier and more popular works (in the novels "Generation P", "Chapaev and Void", "Life of Insects", etc.), with the results obtained in the study of later works, coolly received by critics, seem to us promising and interesting.

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