

MYTHOPOETICS OF THE MODERN RUSSIAN NOVEL (ON V. PELEVIN'S PROSE MATERIAL)

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Abstract: This article analyzes the strategy of artistic transformation of mythological material in mythopoetics elements of the author's text in Pelevin's novels. In particular, we investigate specifics of animal images interpretation in "Numbers" using comparative historical method and method of integral analysis of literary work. It is established that by beating the images of animals from different mythological traditions, V. Pelevin in "Numbers" constructs his own neomyth, part of which becomes the central character of the novel as a new mythological hero, taking a series of tests. We have discovered that in "The sacred book of the Werewolf" novel the author leads to play with meanings, new understanding of archetypal images and motives by rethinking the myth using postmodern techniques.

Key words: Russian Modern prose; V. Pelevin; novel; myth; mythopoetics; neomyth; motive; device.

1 Introduction

Appeal to mythology, the rethinking of mythological images and plots presents as one of the key features of modern Russian prose. As O. Osmukhina rightly notes, "the mythological" component "becomes a part of poetics of the author's work" (Osmukhina 2013, p. 228). It is precisely "the artistic transformation of the original mythological material (antique, Christian etc.) into myth-poetic elements of the author's text" that is characteristic of Russian prose of the turn of the XX-XXI centuries (novels by V. Sorokin, Boris Akunin, D. Lipskerov etc.), where use of "allusions, intertextuality, citations, play with pretexts" (Osmukhina 2013, p. 228-230; Osmukhina 2012, p. 186-189) leads to creation of a very specific author's neo-myth.

Myth-poetics is traditionally referred to as the conscious turn of artists of the word to various artistic techniques of "mythological genesis", its images and themes, "subjected to creative rethinking and, accordingly, moving from the mythological into the myth-poetic sphere, that is, becoming part of the poetics of the artistic work" (Soldatkina 2009, p. 8). It is the artistic transformation of the original mythological material into myth-poetic elements of the author's text that seems most significant, since this is the aspect where myth-poetics demonstrates ability for global generalizations at content related and structural levels of a piece.

2 Materials and methods

Mythology in the literature of the turn of the XX-XXI centuries is a very special phenomenon, which is both an artistic medium and a certain outlook, which becomes one of the key ways of perceiving reality by one or another artist. In this connection, numerous myths of the "new time" are created, according to D. E. Maksimov's fair observation, processed "through individual consciousness with its introspection and author's free attitude to the depicted" (Maksimov 1986, p. 203). Thus, "neo-mythologism" is created (Mintz 1978, p. 76), numerous author's neo-myths, which are not at all aimed at recreating mythological thinking, but seek to reveal the internal structures and mechanisms of modern socio-cultural consciousness.

The study of myth has a long history in science (not only in literary criticism, but also in philosophy and culturology) the myth looked at as one of the universal categories of human existence, the fundamental component of human thinking, and, at the same time, as one of the determinants of the existential norms in the existence of an individual in society, (Shafranskaya 2008, p. 473-481). At the same time, artistic literature is

analyzed by Russian and Western mythology researchers - E. M. Meletinsky (Meletinsky 2012), M. Adamovich (Adamovich), M. Eliade (Eliade 1976) and R. Barths (Barths 1972). They view literature not just as an indirect realization of myth, but also as an area of movement of images, motifs, plots, myth-genesis techniques from mythological into myth-poetic sphere, as their conscious use and rethinking by poets, prose writers and playwrights.

3 Literature Review

Results of the study of mythological images and plots transformation of into author's text in V. Pelevin's prose appear to be original and new since no one before us has studied this aspect of the problem. In a generic context, O. Osmukhina (Osmukhina 2013; Osmukhina 2012), Ya. Soldatkina (Soldatkina 2009), E. Shafranskaya (Shafranskaya 2008), M. Adamovich (Adamovich 2002), A. Tsyganov (Tsyganov) looked at it. The domestic experience in studies of the author's neo-myth in general and neo-myth in Pelevin's prose in particular can indeed be used in world science, especially in Slavic studies. The prospect of studying myth-poetics involves the use of scientific achievements of this article.

4 Results and Discussions

The most remarkable in the aspect of myth-poetics is the work of one of the most popular writers in Russia V.O. Pelevin, translated into all European languages. Virtually in all novels of the prose writer - from *Omon Ra*, *Empire V* and *Batman Apollo to Love to the Three Zuckerbrins*, *The Ranger and Lamps of Methuselah* - in the framework of postmodern poetics, philosophical and religious treatises, fairy tales and urban folklore, Celtic, Germanic and Scandinavian myths, Chinese fairy tales and numerology, Buddhism and Taoism, shamanism and yogic techniques, classical literature and mass culture (Ditkovskaya 2002; Safronova 2004; Chepelevskaya 2006; Tsyganov). At the same time, the writer addresses the content of myths, their heroes, using the hidden and previously unrealized potential of mythological thinking: synthesizing various mythological motives, "turning inside out" well-known stories, he constructs his own author's neo-myth.

In this context, V. Pelevin's novel *Numbers* is indicative. Already the main character of the novel *Muss* is similar to a cat: "Muss was a charming young woman, to the astonishment like a cat. She had big, as in fear, eyes and an amazing hairdo, which consisted of a short haircut and six "antennas" - tufts of hair woven with the strongest gel into long parallel needles ... These swaying antennas resembled Steppe's cat's whiskers, which seemed to him all the time-Muss is just meowing" (Pelevin 2016, p. 34-35).

Moreover, in the Latin script the name of the heroine is written "Meowth", which is phonetically consonant with the feline meow. About the feline nature *Muss* is also evidenced by her identification with the Pokémon *Meowth* - "this is such a cat, very cute. You will laugh, like *Muss* Julianovna. The same arrows stick out from the hairstyle" (Pelevin 2016, p. 265). In modern mass culture, *Meowth* is a villain from a series of games, manga and anime, and various animated and print adaptations of the Pokémon series, which looks like a cat (*Meowth*). Moreover, *Meowth* was a pupil of Team R boss Giovanni, whose name, incidentally, is also phonetically close to the Pelevin's "patronymic" of the heroine.

Note that the image of *Muss*, in addition, is quite comparable with the figure of the goddess-cat in Egyptian mythology. The goddess *Bast* patronized fire, the moon, childbirth, fertility, pleasures, embodied the feminine and maternal origin. Represented *Bast*, usually in the form of a woman with a cat's head, in her right hand contained a musical instrument - a sistrum, in the left - a mirror *Hator*. In addition, she had four

kittens at her feet. Bast was a defender of evil spirits. It is important to note the external similarity between Muss and the goddess Bast, as well as her need for pleasure and the continuation of the family. Muss, as well as Bast, protected Stepa from evil forces. Noteworthy in the Pelevin's heroine is the synthesis of the character traits of the masscult (Pokemon Meowth) and mythology (the goddess-cat Bast). As in other novels of the prose writer (*The Sacred Book of the Werewolf*, *t, Empire V*), the mythological images in the *Numbers* are turned inside out and rethinking paradoxically, and the point here is in the prose writer's orientation to the modern reader, whose consciousness is formed in originally given coordinates, similar to the reality in which Pelevin's characters participate. The ironic tone of the narrative and the "routine" of Step's spiritual quest, his obsession with the "magic of numbers", game contamination of various mythological images, with which Stepa and his surroundings are fully correlated, reflect the futility of any quest in the hope of self-acquisition by the hero himself, dissolved in games with reason higher powers or the very law of being as a whole.

Present in the novel is a goldfish, in which Stepa asks for help. The image of a goldfish fulfilling its desires is correlated here not only with Pushkin's fairy tale, but also with Finno-Ugric and Slavic folklore. The image of fish, for example, is one of the key in Mordovian folklore. So, in the Mordovian folk epic *Mastorava* it is described in detail that it is on three fish that the earth holds (Mastorava): "I created Nishkepaz great water, / I created the largest water, / And in that great water to Nishka. / Wise good Scuba put three fish, / Oh, three fishes are native to each other: / All three fishes are blood sisters. // <...> The elder sister, the big fish, / To the rest of the sisters told the rest: / <...> For that, we came into the world, / In order to be born, born / To keep the three great burdens / To carry them on your own on the backs. // Three beginnings are at the Mastorava, / There are three chasms at the Mastorava // " (Mastorava 2012, p. 37).

Moreover, in the myth about the fisherman, Andyamo, the notions of "great waters" are associated primarily with the possessions of Vedava and Vedyat, filled with "free fish": "There are many fish here / With radiant eyes: / Many good fish of God, / Together with her - the Shaitan fish. Who is the master of fish? Who owns the fish? / White Sarage is their master, / Murasei is a strict holder // " (Mastorava 2012, p. 100). It is noteworthy that, on the one hand, in mythological representations, fish is clearly associated with the underground and underwater world as the realm of the dead and therefore endowed with the magical power inherent in otherworldly beings.

It is not by chance that in fairy tales the fish caught for eating is unusual and golden, which in mythopoetic symbolism appears as a sign of "another" world. On the other hand, in many cultures of the early-natal structure, fish was considered an animal ancestor and patron of the genus and, accordingly, an object of religious veneration. In a number of myths, fish acts as a demiurge, i.e. takes part in the creation of the world. For example, fish brings from the bottom of the primeval ocean the mud from which the land is created, or it serves as the support of the earth. The ancient Semites had the deity Dagon (Dag), which meant "fish", "guardian" or "Messiah", which was depicted in the guise of a fish.

In V. Pelevin novel a goldfish rescues hero from death, while being "in a hollow between his wet legs, next to a string of seaweed and a piece of plastic". In the future, the characters treat the fish as a symbol of life, abundance and luck (according to Chinese mythology): "the chef's assistant returned to the kitchen and poured water from the tap into the boat. "Come on, - he said, placing the rook on the counter in front of Stepa. Stepa at the second attempt picked up the fish in the palm of his hand and let it into the boat. Nervously wagging its tail, the fish swam first to one end of its new universe, then to the other and froze in place" (Pelevin 2016, p. 48). In fact, people who have just committed murder take care of the life of the fish.

As well as in mythology, the main character believes in the miraculous power of the fish, its ability to fulfill desires and appeals to her for help: "In the yellowish water before the Stepa's eyes hung a large goldfish with a forked tail - shaking its fins, she mysteriously looked at Stepa with a round eye-key. <...> Stepa thought that just right it would be to ask for something goldfish. "Fish, fish," he whispered inaudibly, "make me live and healthy from here ... Eh, I would give any money" (Pelevin 2016, p. 43-44). The final phrase of the hero plays a fundamental role: it turns out that the fish will fulfill his desire, because she was promised material rewards. Thus, the initially sacrificed image of the fish sets the reader to a special perception of it in the "Numbers", but V. Pelevin profanates his original semantics.

Writer refashioned and mythological significance of animals, the patron of heroes. As we know, animals could be represented in the image space zone (in Egyptian mythology, for example, the sky depicted as a cow); connected the underworld, the human world and the heavenly world (Amerindian cosmic serpent); he restored the original structure of the universe after the fall of heaven to earth (Eastern-Bolivian mythology). Thus, animals often acted as Creator of the universe. Sometimes the animal-demiurge is in conflict with another animal. So, the Indians of the Northwest coast of the Pacific Ocean believes that there is a myth about the Raven who stole the Gray eagle of the sun, moon, stars, fresh water and fire, strengthened the luminaries in the sky, and dropped it to the ground. The Tlingit Raven, Eel wins wolf Hanwha and takes away his fire and water, becoming then a tribal deity.

According to the myths of the Nenets, people learned to use fire due to the polar bear. In some myths, there is a motif of metamorphosis; the transformation of the animal into man, man into animal, animal into another animal. This kind of transformation sometimes characterizes animal-trickster, which often play the role of cultural hero (Meletinsky 2012). For example, in Egyptian mythology, the gods were represented as follows: Ra in the image of a golden calf, Anubis in the image of a dog, Horus in the image of a falcon, Hator in the image of a cow, etc. In ancient Greek myths, the transformations of gods in animals were plotted deterministically: Zeus turned into a bull, eagle, swan, ant; Dionysus appeared in the guise of a goat, a lion, a panther; Poseidon took the form of a horse, etc.

Remarkable and reinterpretation by the prose writer in the *Numbers* of the image of the donkey. With the donkey in the novel, the antipode of the main character identifies himself - George Varfolomeevich Srakandayev. Note that the donkey is a very dualistic image: if in a number of mythological traditions it symbolizes stupidity (it is enough to recall the donkey ears of King Midas), meanness, lust, violence, then in the mythology of Buddhism, the donkey, on the contrary, is a symbol of asceticism, humiliation. In Hebrew mythology, the donkey is a symbol of peace and salvation, in Egyptian mythology he is one of the incarnations of the solar deity, in the image of the donkey, Seth was also the god of deserts, the symbol of evil, the lower world of Egypt was filled with demons with donkey heads. In some mythological traditions, the donkey acts as a mount of any deity (the Ashwinian chariot is harnessed by an ass, or by several donkeys, by means of which the Ashvins won a competition for the Soma and Surya weddings). According to ancient Greek mythology, the donkey is a symbol of stupid idleness, lust and laziness (it is no accident that Bacchus and his intoxicated suite rode on donkeys); In the guise of a donkey, Priap was depicted - the ancient Greek phallic deity of the productive forces of nature.

The donkey in many myths is a contradictory way: it can perform both good deeds and blasphemous, depending on who saddles it. For example, Messiah's donkey with the colt is the sign of the humble peace of the King of Kings, while the giant donkey carrying Dajjal symbolizes the threatening power of the Muslim Antichrist. The color of the donkey also played a significant role: white served the leaders, kings, prophets, the gray donkey was subordinate to the lower classes.

In the novel *Numbers* G.V. Srakandayev calls himself "Donkey seven cents" (Pelevin 2016, p. 137). Indeed, Srakandayev is only an antipode, a mirror duplicate of Stepa. He liked to humiliate himself, and for sexual games he used a "bandage bandage with two long white ears" (Pelevin 2016, p. 202), posing as an ass and complementing this image with the corresponding sounds of the animal. White ears - a symbol of the fact that Srakandayev already obeys Stepa, immediately recognizes his supremacy. Donkey - Srakandayev - according to Stepa, was his enemy, who has no place in this world. But Stepa could not kill him. The hero found another way to defeat the rival. He had the opportunity to "saddle" the donkey. In the process of coition, Stepa turned from a pokemon into a wolf: "Pikachu was a small, quiet mumps," Stepa thought, "but the evil people broke his heart. And he became a wolf! He is now a wolf!" (Pelevin 2016, p. 208).

It is necessary to emphasize that the wolf in the Pelevin bestiary is one of the key characters - he appears in both "The problem of the werewolf in the middle lane" and the *Sacred Book of the Werewolf*. At the same time we will make a reservation that the image of a wolf in mythology is very ambiguous. The mythology of North-West and Central Eurasia shares a story about the upbringing of a city or a tribe by a wolf. Thus, in Roman mythology, the she-wolf fed Romulus and Remus, who then founded Rome; in Chinese mythology there is a story about the only surviving boy of the exterminated tribe, who was nurtured by a wolf, who later became his wife and gave birth to ten sons. In Mongolian mythology, there is a similar plot about the wolf as the progenitor of the genus. Often, the leader of the tribe acted in the image of a wolf, could take its shape, for example: Dolon in Greek mythology, a fiery wolf in Slavic mythology. Hence the connection with folkloric ideas about werewolves in all mythological traditions (werewolf in German mythology). In addition, the wolf had a connection with the gods of war in Indo-European mythology: the cult of the god Mars in Roman mythology, the wolves of Gehry and Freka, who accompanied Odin. In Egyptian mythology, the bellicose deity Vepрут was depicted as a wolf, which is a symbol of courage; in Roman mythology to see the wolf signified the successful outcome of the battle. However, the wolf could bring destruction. For example, in the "Senior Edda" there is a story about the wolf Fenrir. According to the myth, the giantess Angrbod created the wolf Fenrir to destroy the world and the gods. In order to avoid a catastrophe, by order of the gods, a special chain was made to hold Fenrir, with whom he at the time of the last battle of the Aesy with the Yotuns broke and swallowed the sun, thereby destroying the world.

V. Pelevin in the novel *Numbers* creates two opposite mythological images: the wolf symbolizing power, the Sun and being the essence of Stepa, and the donkey is a symbol of stupidity, humiliation, the Moon is the essence of Srakandayev. The prose writer refuses from the usual duel between animals, familiarizing the mythological motif and transferring it to the sphere of the "corporal bottom" (M.M. Bakhtin). His heroes enter into sexual intercourse, during which the wolf-Stepa understands his true nature (a similar interpretation will be present in the *Sacred Book of the Werewolf*), takes it and overcomes the donkey-Srakandayev: "And the Stepa Wolf realized that the Donkey was overthrown" (Pelevin, p. 209). And here we note a characteristic feature not only for "Numbers", but also for all novels of the prose writer: Stepa (*Numbers*), and Peter Voidota (*Chapaev and Void*), and Vavilen Tatarsky (*Generation P*), and Rama (*Empire V*), and fox A Huli (*The Sacred Book of the Werewolf*) carry out the spiritual path, an ascension to the heights of higher wisdom, absolute knowledge and gaining absolute freedom. True, often the spiritual quest for a hero or their result is presented in a "reduced" version, as, for example, in the novel *Empire V*, where Rama eventually becomes "Ishtar's friend, the head of glamor and discourse, a komarin muzhik and the god of money with oak wings" (Pelevin 2009, p. 408), or here, in the *Numbers*, where the "elevation" and "enlightenment" of the hero is obviously reduced, is realized through coition and transmitted through images of the "close lower".

The decisive battle of the antagonistic characters takes place at the club "Perekrestok", the name of which is very symbolic. Let us make a reservation that in the mythology the intersection is a symbol of choice, and at the same time a symbol of the unity of opposites. It is considered a point of collision of time and space, a place where the evil forces gather - demons and witches. At the crossroads, suicides, vampires were buried, so they got lost and could not chase the living. The intersection is connected with Ganesha, Janus and Hecata, who were sacrificed to the dog in this place. In ancient Greek mythology, Hercules makes the choice between virtue and pleasure precisely at the crossroads, and prefers virtue. While Stepa in the *Numbers* chooses pleasure.

According to V. Pelevin, the intersection is the place of choice for the heroes. Here Stepa decides to abandon the murder of Srakandayev, replacing him with a more "pleasant" way of defeating his rival. In addition, the very battle of the wolf and donkey took place in the "borderland", the room behind the mirrored panels: "I walked quickly to the mirror wall. Stopping near her, he looked around the reflected hall" (Pelevin 2016, p. 197). And this is by no means an accident. Mirror in many mythological traditions is considered the boundary between the worlds through which the otherworldly forces can pass into the real world; man by means of a mirror, can penetrate into the world "supernatural", thus appearing in the looking-glass.

In mythology, ideas about the mirror are connected with the soul. It was believed that the soul can separate from the body and travel to other worlds. Also, the mirror is capable of reflecting the true essence of a person or his counterpart, which is repugnant to him, but with which one should not be at enmity, but to make friends. The mirror in Pelevin, thus, marks the opposite of Stepa and Srakandayev. In addition, according to folkloric ideas, mirrors reflect negative energy: if a person who has conceived something bad looks in the mirror, then it will direct this energy against the beholder. In the *Numbers* this happened with Stepa, who could not commit the murder, thereby losing as a man, but having defeated as the Wolf; the mirror marks the metamorphosis that has occurred with the protagonist. The mythological properties of the mirror reveal and reflect the true essence of Srakandayev and Stepa, thereby helping to win the Wolf victory over the Donkey. This is evidenced by the exchange made by the heroes: "On the table lay the crumpled ears of Srakandayev - a memorable gift that Stepa received in exchange for the red lingas of victory" (Pelevin 2016, p. 211).

In the novel *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* the key motifs that the prose writer expands and reinterprets are the motives for transformation, duality, kissing power, and turnaround. The construction of the text of *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* - without division into chapters or indications of chronological stages characteristic for the diary of confession - creates a feeling of a ring composition. The plot level is complemented by the philosophical-symbolic: all the details of the work, performing a certain role at the level of plot development, work on the main idea of the work. Already the title of the novel sets the perception vector - it contains not just the text content compressed to symbols.

The phrase "*The Sacred Book*", taken from the cover, taken from the sacred culture, immediately outlines the difference with this culture: on the one hand, for the Western socio-cultural consciousness only the Bible can be considered a holy book; on the other hand, this phrase refers the reader to the East (more precisely, the Far Eastern cultural area), in which it traditionally defines the circle of classical Chinese texts, as T. I. Chepelevskaya pointed out for the first time (Chepelevskaya 2006, p. 234). Accordingly, the pre-determined opposition sacred / secular pre-sets the reader to a special perception of this semantic signal. However, the prose writer introduces into the title the notion of werewolves, borrowed from a completely different, mythological, cultural tradition, thereby achieving an oxymoronic semantics: potentially religious, the sacred appears next to the mythological. Opposition East-West finds the potential for simultaneous functioning in different semantic fields of the work as a common or internal frame.

The narrative in the novel is conducted on behalf of the main character, a werewolf fox, engaged in virtual prostitution and generating in the minds of the client the illusion of intimacy. It has the ancient name A Huli (in translation from Chinese "huli" is a fox, "A" is a diminutive suffix put to the beginning), which can be translated as "Fox". However, the heroine also has a "modern" pseudonym fixed in a false foreign passport - Alice Lee, who can be perceived as a common Korean surname, and as a hint of her "unauthenticity", an imaginary essence visible to others, but mistaken for a genuine, - "Alice is it?" (Pelevin 2007, p. 20). And here the allusion to *Alice in the Looking Glass* by L. Carroll, where the genuineness of the main character is being questioned by Trulyal, is insisted that she is "not at all", she is "not real" but "just dreaming" (Carroll).

Returning to the novel by V. Pelevin, we emphasize that the heroine's game of authenticity / imaginarity (none of the surrounding people even suspects who the mild-tempered girl is with the appearance of the nymph) generates the motives of duality (concealment of a real person under a different name as a result of crushing each other -equivalent names) and werewolves (concealment of the true essence under a false form). The vicissitudes of the virtual prostitute's life reduce A Huli with the FSB General Alexander. A young general handsome, magnificent lover and part-time wolf-werewolf, is another major character in the novel. In addition to the central werewolf characters, other creatures of "inhuman" origin from different clans are mentioned: foxes are A Huli's sisters (E-Huli and I-Huli), wolves from the flock of Alexander (the leader of the pack is Colonel Lebedenko, werewolf "out of the ordinary" - Mikhalych). And, if the characters-people of the novel seem to be real animals with their limited minds and desires, the werewolves symbolize what should be correlated with man - they are characterized by a rich inner world, a deep knowledge of life, an excellent education (the same properties, by the way, will inherent in vampires as the highest race, invisibly controlling the world of people, in *Empire V* and *Batman Apollo*).

Werewolf in the novel includes a huge mythological layer of culture of the East and the West. "The motif of werewolves is correlated with the archaic concept of "mutual engraving" of all sides and manifestations of reality" (Neklyudov 1992, p. 235), and hence determines the existence of real and "reverse" worlds. This allows V. Pelevin to develop the idea of co-existence of different worlds in a single space-time continuum and to continue the traditional topic of the possibility / impossibility of transition, crossing the spatial and temporal boundaries between these worlds. By the way, the prose writer resorts to Chapayev and Void, where the past / future coexist as the only possible reality of the protagonist, in *Empire V* and in *Batman Apollo*, in which the world of vampires is "included" in everyday reality, and in novel *Love for the Three Tsukerbrines*, where the "profane" world and the world of spiritual insights of the characters, overlapping each other, are nothing more than one of the levels of the game *Angry Birds*. At the same time, consideration in the *Sacred Book of the Werewolf* as a metaphor for concealing the true essence allows V. Pelevin to introduce the theme of a superscore, which is important for the ideological content of the whole work.

Fox A lives at the junction of different worlds, not belonging to any of them, and freely moves in this border zone. In the real world, it falls into a chain of semi-criminal situations, which, as we have already noted, deduce it to the special services and lieutenant-general of the FSB Alexander (Sasha Gray). He, in turn, turns out to be a werewolf, sending the reader not only to V. Pelevin's early story *The Problem of Werewolves in the Middle Strip*, but also to the well-known folklore character (in the novel the last parallel is played out in the episode when A Huli himself is to Alexander in a red cloak with a hood and a basket of pies, and he immediately tells her an anecdote about Little Red Riding Hood and Wolf (Pelevin 2007, p. 157). Noteworthy in this connection is the "rapprochement" of the eastern and western cultural contexts: werewolf foxes are most often associated with the East, occupying one of the key places

in the legends of China, Korea and Japan (it is enough to recall Kumicho from Korean folklore or the history of kitsune in Japanese mythology etc.), while the stories about werewolves are more widely distributed in the European cultural space - from mythology to mass culture.

The image of the wolf in folkloric representations, as we have already noted, was traditionally close to the mythological dog and was associated with the cult of the leader of the fighting squad and the ancestor of the tribe. Moreover, many myths about wolves unite "the idea of the transformation of man into a wolf", when he simultaneously becomes both "a victim (an outcast, a persecuted) and a predator (murderer, persecutor)" (Myths of the peoples of the world. Encyclopedia 1992, p. 242). Wolves attributed ambivalent properties: on the one hand, ferocity, cunning, greed, cruelty, and on the other - courage, loyalty, the will to win. The images of the wolf and foxes in mythological representations often had a negative connotation, but both animals could be transformed into beings of a completely different nature.

If Fox A's ability to werewolves is innate, then Alexander acquired it: his story, described in the story *The problem of werewolf in the middle lane*, claims that he "went out of the way" after a certain sign-signal, sleep, in which he saw a wolf. He is one of those who are called "elected", but his "choosiness" was the result of numerous trials, after which he gets the ability to transform, and was not given at birth. In Pelevin's novel the representation of characters capable of metamorphosis is somewhat different from the traditional ideas about werewolves: they are not evil spirits, they have never been subjected to sorcery spells or curses, they are quietly living among people visually from nothing different from them.

However, having a special, "unreal" component, Pelevin's werewolves could safely do without "games in people", they do not need to live a different life, but they do not. And this is the most important reinterpretation by the prose writer of the traditional mythological motif: werewolves are a different "race," they are stronger and more powerful than humans, they are given secrets that people are trying to unravel, because they are the representatives of the "other" world and already act in other conditions for a person. In the novel there are heroes who are formally werewolves who live in harmony with human being (despite their secret life). In the final, one of them remembers his destiny, and the other, "humanizing" in emotions, hesitates in the choice: "The marvelous power received from you as a gift, I will send to serve my country. Thank you for her" (Pelevin 2007, p. 367). Or: "I will go to the very center of the empty morning field, I will gather all my love in my heart, I will be dispersed and I will climb up the hill. And as soon as the wheels of the bicycle come off the ground, I will loudly scream my name and stop creating this world. There will come an amazing second, like no other. Then this world will disappear. And then, at last, I find out who I really am" (Pelevin 2007, p. 381).

The Pelevin's fox-werewolf, on the one hand, is a typical representative of its clan (it is cunning, hypocritical, insidious, capable of sending a wand, creating complex illusions in the minds of "clients"), on the other hand, carries features that sharply distinguish it from its own companions. She is beautiful, intelligent, not devoid of humanity and philanthropy; in contrast to her sister "T", she is "virtuous", for she respects the heavenly laws: "A virtuous fox must earn only by prostitution and in no case should use her hypnotic gift for other purposes - it is the law of heaven" (Pelevin 2007, p. 41). In addition, A Huli, although cunning, but good: "Your heart is not evil. It's as cunning as all foxes," the Yellow Master tells her. - A cunning heart is difficult to heal, forcing him to follow moral rules. Precisely because it is cunning, it will certainly find a way to get around all these rules and fool everyone" (Pelevin 2007, p. 344). The heroine, unlike fox-werewolves, does not live in a "pack", does not approach the cemeteries, uses its tail not for the purpose of kindling the fire (like mythological kitsune), but for creating a daze that plunges into illusions. This emphasizes her great "human" nature.

In addition, Pelevin's werewolves are capable of loving spiritually, and not bodily, only in the guise of a person, which also brings them closer to ordinary people. For A Huli, love becomes the guide that made her remember her own not imaginary, but true essence and mission. Thanks to love, she became overreact and realized that truth is in love; it is love that turns out to be the "key" to the heroine for understanding the essence of things and the world that she was looking for two thousand years. V. Pelevin again reinterprets the traditional myth about foxes, who appear as evil demons, granting the heroine not only the ability to philosophize, the ability to deeply love, but also a sense of remorse: "The fox feels the full weight of his dashing deeds; a stream of remorse, horror and shame for what was done" (Pelevin 2007, p. 179). Thanks to love, Fox A gains inner freedom, and therefore enters the Rainbow Stream with a lightened soul, and not with sorrowful experiences.

Werewolf Alexander (Sasha Gray) also appears more human than the "beast". His ability to werewolves acquired, so the human remains in its essence in a larger volume: he is simultaneously brave, responsible, independent, cruel and cunning. After the heroine's kiss, an amazing metamorphosis takes place: although he gains abilities that make him more powerful, a kiss does not bring him happiness. The prose writer, and this obviously, beats and "reduces" here the famous fairy tale motif of turning a monster into a prince from *The Scarlet Flower* and the motive of the resurrecting force of a kiss, subordinate, however, to the logic of reversibility from *Tales of the Dead Princess - A brute Aulic essence, the cruelty of Alexander is replaced by despair, a balanced fury, which even more transforms him into a beast: "Love does not transform," Alexander says bitterly. "She's just tearing off the masks. "I thought I was a prince. But it turned out ... Here it is my soul"* (Pelevin 2007, p. 283).

The image of Alexander with all evidence refers to the characters of Scandinavian mythology, personifying the elemental forces. Firstly, to the monstrous wolf Fenrir - the creature of Locke, an eerie beast from the Nordic bestiary, who was once tied up by the gods and put on the magical chain of the Gleepnir, but when he breaks free, he will swallow the sun, and this will mark the death of the gods. Secondly, the allusion to the werewolf Sasha Gray is the dog Garm - the mythological twin of Fenrir, who, in the final battle, fought with the god Tyr: "Garm barking loudly / at Gniphaheller, / the leash will not last - / the Greedy <...>" (The Elder Edda: The Epos 2001, p. 33). At the same time, the destructive forces of the mythological wolf and dog are intertwined with the qualities of Alexander the Werewolf and Alexander the Man, as a result of which the image of the dog P...as a watchman of Russia appears in the novel. Drawing a parallel between Garm and Fenrir as chthonic monsters and the dog P...ts, Pelevin emphasizes that in essence they are all guards (Garm - the underworld, P...ts - Russia), and with the onset of hard times will bring the same outcome. However, the dog will have a different fate from Pelevin than Garm or Fenrir: if Fenrir is killed in the last battle of the gods and giants ("The son comes here / the Father of Victories, / Vidar, for battle / with the beast of the corpse; / sword he pierces / for his father, he / Hodrudung's son rages in his heart" (The Elder Edda: The Epos 2001, p. 36)), the dog P...ts will come "to the offending country, and then fall asleep again in the snow, as the super-werewolf is immortal. Dog P...ts takes over the duties of both Fenrir and Garm, promising that he will change the world until he changes completely or dies himself. Alexander stubbornly searches for the truth, tries to understand things that are inaccessible to him, but when secret knowledge is ready to open to him, the hero turns out to be loyal to other values: the loyalty of the "pack" and the public duty becomes fundamental to him. Alexander as a demonic creation serves good, but resorts to unworthy methods. There is no desire to sacrifice everything for the sake of harmony for oneself and others, he is not able to distinguish love from selfishness or experience joy for another, and therefore can not enter the rainbow stream and acquire that higher knowledge that is accessible to A Huli. In the final of the novel, thus, it is emphasized that both wolves and foxes, and Alexander and A Huli have a different fate. Therefore, love between them is

impossible - it is tragic and knowingly doomed. However, it is love (the Christian postulate "love your neighbor as yourself") becomes dominant for the *Sacred Book of the Werewolf* written by the hero-werewolf) helps the heroes to comprehend their true self.

5 Summary

Thus, in the novel *Numbers*, a reinterpretation of animal images from various mythological traditions (the Meowth mass culture character and the cat from Egyptian mythology, the dualistic image of the donkey, the goldfish from folklore of Finno-Ugric peoples, the wolf) through postmodern techniques (irony, play, intertextuality) leads to V. Pelevin constructing his own author's neo-myth, not just possessing a "set" of myth-poetic archetypes, allusions and reminiscences, but offering the reader a holistic myth-poetic image a part of which becomes Stepa as a new mythological hero, passing through a series of trials and striving for higher "knowledge".

In the novel *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf*, the rethinking of myth by means of postmodern methods leads not only to playing with meanings, but also to a completely new understanding of archetypal images and motives. Through the playing of the motives and images of the Chinese (the motif of werewolves, the images of werewolves) and North German mythology (the images of the dog Garm and the Wolf Fenrir ironically bifurcating in the images of the dog P...ts and the main character of Alexander) Pelevin creates his own author's neo-myth, allowing, firstly, to comprehend the philosophical and cultural opposition East-West, "remove" the differences between which only the power of love is capable; secondly, the "eternal" problems of good, evil, love, death, and thirdly, to reconsider one of the key themes of his creativity "inter-transitions" between worlds.

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