

**PARADIGM TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE VAMPIRIAD
OF THE END OF THE XX – THE BEGINNING OF THE XXI CENTURY
IN THE DILOGY “EMPIRE ‘V’” – “BATMAN APOLLO” BY VICTOR PELEVIN**

Andriy Gurduz

Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, Postdoctoral Student,
Berdiansk State Pedagogical University, Ukraine
e-mail: gurdai@ukr.net, orcid.org/0000-0001-8474-3773

Summary

The modern vector of transformations of the artistic image of a vampire is of special interest and agrees with what we have seen since the end of the XX century – the tendencies of consistent sympathy of writers to legendary-mythological images with traditionally negative symbolic meaning. V. Pelevin’s diology “Empire ‘V’” – “Batman Apollo” is organic to the tendencies of the modern world vampiriad and reflects the paradigmatic changes of this corpus of interpretations.

The purpose of our article is for the first time to define the paradigmatic transformations of the artistic vampiriad of the end of the XX – the beginning of the XXI century and to determine of their reflection in the diology “Empire ‘V’” – “Batman Apollo” by V. Pelevin. Also we identify two interrelated basic clusters in the evolution of the vampire image for the first time: the justification and exaltation of this image in the literature, and the embodiment of aspects of national identity in it. V. Pelevin combines artistic and documentary discourses, in his fantasy world he paradoxically synthesizes historiosophical reflections on the fate of the people and appeals to various moments in the history and modernity of his country. The novelty and politicization of the Pelevin’ text is an innovation for the vampiriad, although in the fantasy genre the reception of national social realities is now becoming typical.

Keywords: fantasy, legendary-mythological image, interpretation, adaptation, superhero, national identification.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23856/4604>

1. Introduction

Active development and genre flexibility of modern fantasy cause its functional universalization, the appeal to the potential of legendary-mythological structures in artistic modeling contributes to this. Perhaps the most productive in this sense is the image of a vampire, which has paradigmatic changes in the end the XX – the first decades of the XXI century. They have not been studied and are of scientific interest, as they are to some extent a component of the fantasy structural transformations of this time. In connection with the relevance of the problems of national myth-making (which are fully revealed in fantasy), it is important the systematic study of the modern metamorphosis of one of the key concepts in this genre of already the XXI century – vampirism, which is metaphorically used by writers in revealing of a wide spectrum of spheres – psychosexual, gender, political, artistic etc. Representatively, the conceptual changes in the modern functioning of the vampire image are reflected in Victor Pelevin’s diology “Empire ‘V’” – “Batman Apollo”, in which the key image, in addition, acquires a clear gender and national labeling.

The purpose of our article is for the first time to define the paradigmatic transformations of the artistic vampiriad of the end of the XX – the beginning of the XXI century and to determine of their reflection in the dilogy “Empire ‘V’” – “Batman Apollo” by V. Pelevin. Also we identify two interrelated basic clusters in the evolution of the vampire image for the first time: a) the justification and exaltation of this image in the literature, and b) the embodiment of aspects of national identity in it. The comparative nature of our article determines the appropriate leading research method, which is logically supplemented by mythopoetic, hermeneutic and gender methods.

The artistic parameters of the image of a vampire in V. Pelevin’s philosophical dilogy (as well as the dilogy) are extremely superficially designated (*Polotovskiy and Kozak, 2012; Osmukhina, 2016*). The plot of “Empire ‘V’” was compared with “Harry Potter” by J. K. Rowling aspectually (*Dyakova, 2007*), but the nature of the evoked similarity was not determine.

The formation of the image of a vampire in literature and cinema with a dotted analysis of individual basic works (*Beresford, 2008*) is revealed from the current methodological positions to a certain level, its functioning in folklore and English literature until the end of the XIX century is defined, but about a thorough coverage of this figure in the XX century is harder to say, in the first decades of the XXI century – impossible: here we have a sporadic research of certain problems of transformation of the vampire image on the material some literature and cinema works. Exceptional adaptive data of the vampire-character and the rapid growth of the corpus of its interpretations in the end of the XX – the first decades of the XXI century did not lead to a fundamental study of the evolution of the “avatar of horror” (*Hollinger, 1997: 225*) during this period. B. Nevskiy tries to trace the patterns of vampire image modification (*Nevskiy, 2009*), M. Leavenworth and M. Isaksson research the overcoming its classical canon (*Leavenworth, Isaksson, 2013: 2*). Consideration by these researchers of the image in a much limited artistic field without taking into account the metamorphoses of such traditional structures makes it impossible to see the logic of the laws of transformations of the vampire-character in the context of movements of legendary-mythological structures of this type.

We note the practical absence in the analysis of Western European and North American scientists of the Eastern European artistic vampiriad (as in «Encyclopedia of the Vampire: The Living Dead in Myth, Legend, and Popular Culture» (*Encyclopedia of the Vampire, 2011*)).

2. Justification and exaltation of the image of a vampire

The evolution of the modern vampiriad is indicative in the context of the dynamics of socio-cultural transformations, and its key image undergoes radical changes in the end of the XX – the first decades of the XXI century. The mass non-classical interpretation of the image of the vampire contributes to the formation in the minds of modern culture of a new paradigm based on the “justification of the vampire” (*Senf, 1988: 6*) and its elevation. We consider this tendency as a fragment of systemic shifts in the interpretive corpus of traditional images in general.

The reflections of V. Pelevin's characters reflect the transformation of a vampire from the category of “evil” to the category of “good”. Thus, in “Empire ‘V’” the innocence of a vampire in his nature is emphasized, which stimulates the sympathy of the recipient: “You can not... condemn a mosquito for being a mosquito” (*Pelevin, 2006: 117*). Pelevin’s Hera and Rama ponder in unison: “...there has been a PR-campaign for the rehabilitation of vampires in the world for many years” (*Pelevin, 2006: 163*) – “...just a fountain of compassionate understanding and love was poured out on vampires...” (*Pelevin, 2006: 163*). The transition from

“evil” to “good” in the vampiriad is gradual and conditional: from the depiction of the actions of the classic vampire, we observe a movement in favor of the psychological development of the motivation and emotion of the image, and this leads to empathy and prepares a recipient for acceptance version of “good” vampire (*“Interview with the Vampire”* by A. Rice, *“Blood Price”* by T. Huff). Psychological deepening of this image promotes the division of vampires into positive and negative.

Due to the philosophical approach, V. Pelevin’s dilogy most conceptually depicts the civilization of vampires. “Empire ‘V’” reflects the growing popularity in literature and cinema of the love affair between a vampire and a human, as we see in “The Vampire Diaries” and “Night World” by L. J. Smith, “Vampire Kisses” by E. Schreiber, “Underworld” by dir. L. Wiseman, “Twilight” by S. Meyer and others. Following Bella Swan by S. Mayer, Lada marries a vampire from the “Legend of the Night” by Y. Lazareva. The love of vampires for their peers in “Empire ‘V’” and “Batman Apollo” also can be found in “Twilight” by S. Meyer, “Vampire Academy” by R. Mead, “Vampire Nation” by dir. T. Chapkanov, “Watches” by S. Lukyanenko (in a broad sense) and others. We note, that the image of groups of vampires which secretly exist among humans (as in *“Interview with the Vampire”* by A. Rice) and which refer to human neutrally (as Cullens in “Twilight” by S. Meyer) contributes to the emergence of vampire social communities, that openly position themselves among people and are not seen as to be destroyed: so, the idea of the coexistence of man and vampire arises. Among such artistic works are “Guilty Pleasures” by L. Hamilton with her vampire Church of Eternal Life as an instrument of “voluntary vampirism”, and also “Vampire Nation” by dir. T. Chapkanov. We consider the “symphony of people and vampires” repeatedly emphasized in V. Pelevin’s novel to be the principal moment (Pelevin, 2006: 91, 164).

The revolutionary thesis about the soul of a vampire is varied by S. Meyer in “Twilight”, V. Vasilyev in “Black Palmira’s Face”, B. Stableford in “Empire of Fear” and some others writers. This position finds a conceptual form in Pelevin’s metaphorical sense: in “Empire ‘V’” – “vampire spirituality” (Pelevin, 2006: 81), and in “Batman Apollo” – “vampidentity” (Pelevin, 2013: 271); “God-seeking vampires” are discussed here (Pelevin, 2013: 100). Some vampires of the dilogy choose the “spiritual path” (Pelevin, 2006: 366) and conclude: “God is present in us” (Pelevin, 2006: 364). Such cultural “phenomenon” is consistent with the world practice. In T. Huff’s “Blood Price”, the vampire Fitzroy is baptized and reads a prayer; a vampire monastery with a priest is depicted by Y. Lazareva, S. Grahame-Smith (*“Abraham Lincoln, Vampire Hunter”*) etc.

The associative-linguistic demythologization of Batman’s name and its transformation in the second part of the Pelevin’s dilogy into the supreme image of the vampire world in general are correlated with Brooker’s position about changing the character of this superhero in the end of the XX century (Brooker, 2001: 319).

Similarly, unusual talents and the superpowers of vampires in “Twilight” by S. Meyer, “Vampire Rising” by J. Henderson, etc., combined with the emergence of non-human morality indicates the approach of a modern vampire to the figure of a modern superhero. Let’s compare Pelevin’s accent with the hints at the modern superheroes in the Meyer’s intertext in connection with the emphasis on the power of vampires compared to humans: these are hints at the figure of Spider-Man and Superman (Meyer, 2009: 79). At the same time, Bella Swan’s desire in the first book of “Twilight” to become a superman is connected with a transparent gender imperative: «I can’t always be Lois Lane... I want to be Superman, too» (Meyer, 2009: 413).

We consider the ability of a vampire in the literature of the turn of the XX–XXI centuries to give or return life as a precedent. In vampire family from T. Litovchenko’s novel a son is

born; vampires in the “Night World” by L. J. Smith are able to continue the genus too. After the appearance in the literature of the figure of a dhampire, the ability of vampires to procreate is key in the evolution of the analyzed image and brings it closer to the man. The “humanization” of vampire-characters includes the birth of people in their families (as in “*The Dark Knight*” by E. Schreiber).

Pelevin’s vampires create their own kind by implanting a so-called tongue into humans, and speak of humanity as a result of their genetic experiments, acting like its own parents. Moreover, in the context of the “undead” reinterpreted here, it is stated that, compared to the upper class of vampires, “...people... are simply dead” (Pelevin, 2013: 75). Since V. Pelevin represents contemporary Russian prose, the eastern cultural vector, expressed in the intertext of his dilogy (Dracula talks about his path of enlightenment and the agreement of vampires with Buddha (Pelevin, 2013: 284–287)), probably corresponds to the general position of “noticeable” orientalization”” Modern Russia (Demchuk, 2014: 229).

As in some other contemporary writers, it is systematically emphasized in Pelevin’s novels the superiority of the vampire over man from the vampire’s point of view (Pelevin, 2006: 17, 79). For example, in “Twilight” by S. Meyer, vampires are likened to gods (Meyer, 2009: 312, 261, 277). At the same time, in the dilogy the figures of non-humans are rethought on a formal basis; according to S. Polotovskiy and R. Kozak, these are allegorical “real masters of Russia” (Polotovskiy, Kozak, 2012: 172).

Thus, in the analyzed novels by V. Pelevin a new tendency of depicting vampires of the end of the XX – the first decades of the XXI century is presented: here vampires are able to form a majority in society, to displace people and become a new type of society. If in “Day-breakers” by dir. P. Spierig and M. Spierig humanity is a source of blood for vampires, in Pelevin’s “Empire ‘V’” and “Batman Apollo” humanity supplies vampires with energy (Pelevin, 2013: 17, 79), and vampires here are “psychic” (Beresford, 2008: 156).

In such a systematic vision of rethinking the image of a vampire, we take into account the range of its incarnations with a tendentious variable actualization in modern literature and avoid the categoricalness of some researchers who absolutize popular transformations of this image (as Z. Sazonova do).

3. Aspects of national identification in the image of a vampire

Rethinking the image of a vampire in line with the relevant world tendencies of transformation of the end of the XX – the first decades of the XXI century, V. Pelevin turns to it with a certain ideological purpose. The high saturation of the text of the dilogy with foreign vocabulary and the representation of the Russian national element in a characteristic satirical tone (as in playing the name of the current president of Russia (Pelevin, 2013: 74) or its state symbols (Pelevin, 2013: 172)) are the way to contrast the writer’s rejection of pro-Western movements in Russian culture. We are talking, for example, about “...the most vulgar sign of our time: the habit of giving foreign names to shops, restaurants and even novels written in Russian, as if to say – we... are advanced, offshore, renovated. It has long caused me nothing but nausea” (Pelevin, 2006: 75). The writer addresses in the dialogue of generations to the Solzhenitsyn spirit (Pelevin, 2006: 15, 76, 291) and contrasts his national culture with others (in particular: “I literally felt how the light French mind was bent... under the monstrous pressure of Russian discourse” (Pelevin, 2013: 244)). V. Pelevin critically assesses the state of spirituality of the modern fellow tribesman (“The “spirituality” of Russian life means that the main... product in Russia is not material goods, but show-offs” (Pelevin, 2006: 83)), he states the reason for

Russia's "eternal youth" ("this youth was obtained at the cost of a complete rejection of identity...") (Pelevin, 2006: 386). V. Pelevin also diagnoses the modernity of his country: "The recent history of Russia has corrupted the people once and for all, without any hope of cure" (Pelevin, 2013: 304).

The specifics of the intertext of the Pelevin's dilogy, revealed by us corresponds to the world tendency of the first decades of the XXI century on the reflection in the fantasy of national socio-political realities (as in "Half-Life" by S. Green, "Pan's Labyrinth: The Labyrinth of the Faun" by G. del Toro and K. Funke, "The House in Which Time Was Lost" by V. Granetska, A. Nikulina and M. Odnoroh and others).

Defining through Rama the ambivalent essence of Russian life "...as a combination of European sophistication and Asian lawlessness..." (Pelevin, 2006: 210), V. Pelevin forms the image of his modern homeland, referring primarily to the concepts of poetry "Le Bateau ivre" by A. Rimbaud (Pelevin, 2006: 292), "The mind does not understand Russia..." by F. Tyutchev and the film-cycle "Alien" by dir. R. Scott, J. Cameron, and others (Pelevin, 2006: 385–386). The fixation in Hera's remark of the futility of the search for a "national idea" ("They painfully grope, and every time at the last moment it jumps off" (Pelevin, 2006: 302)) exactly corresponds to the definition of the atmosphere of time in scientific discourse.

S. Meyer also emphasizes the Americanness of her characters through national opposition in "Twilight". And the Cullens' Americanness is emphasized by their love of baseball («It's the American pastime» (Meyer, 2009: 303)).

Despite the pessimistic summary of the wise vampire Enlil Maratovich from Pelevin's dilogy that "the Russian mind is a European mind lost between cesspools and police booths without any hope of salvation" (Pelevin, 2013: 316), the writer hopes in a good future for Russia.

Against the background of modern writers turning to the image of a vampire to emphasize the female gender, analyzed novels by V. Pelevin resonate with clear accents of the male gender. The clear superiority towards women here is reminiscent of similar intentions in S. King's prose. "Killed and intimidated" (Pelevin, 2013: 92), the Pelevin's man is forced to survive in the circumstances of "female sexual terror" (Pelevin, 2013: 91), and his remarks addressed to the woman are cynical, offensive (Pelevin, 2013: 92, 436). Dracula is a "misogynist" here (Pelevin, 2013: 121). Let's compare this with Bella Swan's feminist views in S. Meyer's "Twilight" (for example, the heroine is working on a study on the possible misogyny of W. Shakespeare (Meyer, 2009: 124)).

What is new in V. Pelevin's dilogy is the systematic emphasis on the obligation to observe tradition in cultural development. The writer places a metaphorical discussion of the appropriate questions among vampires focused on their nationality ("Be proud, Rama, that you are Russian. Russian vampire...") (Pelevin, 2013: 319) and conscious of their citizenship ("I'm not just a vampire. I'm also a citizen of his country" (Pelevin, 2006: 278)).

The motif of national pride is pervasive in the dilogy and is combined at the same time with criticism and sympathy for the people: "The Russian mind... gave birth to the world's greatest artistic culture, which in fact is the reaction of the soul... extremely strong and incomparable in its meaninglessness of suffering" (Pelevin, 2013: 317). The failure of Russia in the "ideological" market (Pelevin, 2013: 297) and the remark of the American vampire about Russia as a "police state" (Pelevin, 2013: 111) are dissonant here. The painful reaction of the protagonist – the vampire Rama to criticism of all things Russian is also characteristic (Pelevin, 2013: 111, 407). It is asserted in one of the appeals to Rama, that Pelevin's contemporaries are physically deprived of the opportunity to know the truth because of the conditions in which

they live: “Your generation no longer knows the classical cultural codes. [...] The era of quotations from mass culture has come...” (Pelevin, 2006: 273).

As we can see, V. Pelevin combines artistic and documentary discourses, in his fantasy world he paradoxically synthesizes historiosophical reflections on the fate of the people and appeals to various moments in the history and modernity of his country.

It is noteworthy that this type of modeling of national image acquires typicality in modern fantasy: for example, in English literature by distinction (as opposed to the French) and criticism of Englishness by S. Clark in “Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell”, S. Green in “Half-Life”.

4. Conclusions

The modern vector of transformations of the artistic image of a vampire is of special interest and agrees with what we have seen since the end of the XX century – the tendencies of consistent sympathy of writers to legendary-mythological images with traditionally negative symbolic meaning. V. Pelevin’s dilogy is organic to the tendencies of the modern world vampiriad and reflects the paradigmatic changes of this corpus of interpretations. In his philosophical and metaphorical artistic world, vampires have spirituality, love and shape society, higher than human, as well as approaching the level of superheroes and “deities”, they give life. But the gender bias of this dilogy is polemical. The novelty and politicization of the Pelevin’ text is an innovation for the vampiriad, although in the fantasy genre the reception of national social realities is now becoming typical. In forming the image of his country, V. Pelevin follows the classical path; in his critique of the modern state of his nation we see love and hope.

The proposed article is able to enter into a larger study of V. Pelevin’s prose in a fantasy context. Such a study is perspective, because the writer is original and productive as a representative of the Joyce-type of myth-making, also in his novels V. Pelevin continues an intensive search for solutions to current problems of modern national and European identity.

A systematic study of the ideological component of the fantasy of the XXI century, in our opinion, will help to understand the universality of this genre and the way of reflection in modern literature of urgent socio-cultural questions. The principal task also is to unify the fantasy terminology.

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