



ARTISTIC FEATURES OF THE NOVEL "CHAPAEV AND EMPTINESS"

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Annotation

"Chapaev and Emptiness" is a novel by Viktor Pelevin, written in 1996. For the first time the novel "Chapaev and Emptiness" was published in No. 4-5 of the Znamya magazine. The author himself characterizes his work as "The first work in world literature, the action of which takes place in absolute emptiness." In 1997, the novel was included in the list of contenders for the Small Booker Prize. Laureate of the Wanderer-97 award in the "Large Form" nomination. Many Russian critics did not fail to call the work the first book in Russia written in accordance with the philosophy of "Zen Buddhism".

Keywords: surrealism, pop art, postmodernism, illusion, philosophy, fantasy, Pelevin V.O., "Chapaev and the Void".

The very title of the novel is conceptual. Emptiness here is both the surname of the protagonist (Peter) and Emptiness as a broad physical or philosophical concept, meaning the absence of content, also ambiguity, lack of understanding, a term close to "nothing", and at times coinciding with it. Also, emptiness is Shunyata - the central concept of one of the Buddhist schools, meaning the absence of a permanent "I" in a person and in phenomena, or the absence of the own nature of things and phenomena (dharma) due to their relativity, conditionality and interdependence. This concept is the most difficult in Buddhism, not amenable to simple description and definition. The realization of "emptiness" is an important goal of Buddhist meditation.[1. p. 63-72]

Thus, Chapaev appears in the work as a person and as a myth. Already in this, quite Buddhist logic is manifested: "A is not A. This is called A." Hence: a person is a myth, but since a myth is not a person, then "Chapaev is not Chapaev. This is what they call Chapaev." Emptiness is a surname - and emptiness is a concept, hence: "a person is not a person. That's what they call personality." The action of the novel covers two periods - Russia in 1918-1919 and the mid-1990s. beginning and end of the century. There are four patients



in one ward of a psychiatric hospital. Each in turn tells his story or, more precisely, not a story, but describes his world.[2. p. 36-41]

In the work, one can isolate the storyline of Peter the Void, simply Mary, SemyonSerdyuk, Volodin. All four are undergoing a course of rehabilitation according to the method of TimurTimurovichKanashnikov. At the beginning of the story, TimurTimurovich explains to the newly arrived Void that his method of rehabilitation consists in a "joint hallucinatory experience" - four patients, being in the same ward, are united by a common goal of recovery. Hallucinations of Professor Kanashnikov's patients are also woven into the fabric of the novel. But in terms of their structure, they represent complete (even at the graphic level, since they are printed in a special font in the book) texts with an intensive type of organization of artistic space and time, distinguished by centripetal composure of the action, during which the hero is tested, tested with the help of some one situation. "Chapaev and Emptiness" consists of ten parts, which are a strict sequence of events, reminiscent of the swinging of a pendulum. But the step of the pendulum is increasing and increasing, and its movement from the beginning to the end of the century, to the end of the novel, turns into something resembling a circle. The pendulum ceases to be a pendulum, temporal boundaries are erased, the end and beginning of the century, at first difficult to compare both in the minds of the reader and in the minds of the protagonist, at the end merge and form a certain cycle. [3. p. 5-9.]

No wonder the novel begins and ends with the same episode: Peter's visit to the "musical snuffbox" - poetry reading - shooting - meeting with Chapaev - the beginning of a new path. Even the words with which the first and last episode of the novel begins are the same: "Tverskoy Boulevard was almost the same ... - it was February again, snowdrifts and haze, strangely penetrating even into daylight. Old women sat motionless on the benches ... "

The main character, Pyotr Void, lives in two illusory realities, in two parallel worlds: in one he is fighting with VasilyIvanovichChapaev and Anna on the Eastern Front. It shows the relationship between VasilyChapaev and the decadent poet PyotrPustoty (later the author himself admitted that the combination of such "incompatible" personalities became one of the main tasks assigned to him), in another world - he is a patient in a psychiatric clinic. From his personal file we learn the following:



“The first pathologist. rejected. recorded at the age of 14 years. He stopped meeting with his comrades - which he explains by the fact that they tease him with the surname "Emptiness". Along with this, I began to intensively read philosophical literature - the works of Hume, Berkeley, Heidegger - everything where, in one way or another, the philosophical aspects of emptiness and non-existence are considered.[4. p. 167.]

Peter exists in these worlds alternately. At the beginning of the book, we see the main character in Moscow 18 - 19 years. Peter meets his friend Grigory von Ernen (Fanerny), finds himself in his apartment, and when von Ernen tries to detain Peter, a fight occurs and Peter kills his friend. All this reminds him of "dark Dostoevism", then, by a strange coincidence, Peter is mistaken for von Ernen and he finds himself embroiled in a political adventure, after these events he wakes up in a completely different place and time. This is a psychiatric clinic, 90s. One reality gradually transforms into another: “The last thing I saw before finally falling into the black pit of oblivion was the grate of the boulevard covered with snow - when the car turned around, it turned out to be very close to the window.” And then the author writes: “Actually, the lattice was not close to the window, but on the window itself, more precisely, on a small window, through which a narrow ray of the sun fell right in my face. I wanted to pull away, but I didn't succeed... it turned out that my arms were twisted. I was wearing a shroud-like robe, the long sleeves of which were tied behind my back - I think such a shirt is called a straitjacket. Transitions from one reality to another continue throughout the novel.

Postmodernism is based on such concepts as deconstruction (the term was introduced by J. Derrida in the early 60s) and decentration. Deconstruction is a complete rejection of the old, the creation of the new at the expense of the old, and decentration is the dissipation of the solid meanings of any phenomenon. The center of any system is a fiction, the authority of power is eliminated, the center depends on various factors. So, in the novel, Peter Void finds himself in completely different systems. These worlds are so intertwined that sometimes the hero cannot understand where the real center is, on which he can rely. But still, he is more inclined to believe that the real world is the one where he is the commissar of the Chapaev regiment. Chapaev, presented in the novel as a Buddhist teacher (bodhisattva) Petra, tries to convince him that both worlds are unreal.



As a result, the main character understands that there is no center, that each person is able to build his own universe with his own rules. The hero realizes that he exists in a void that has no center. Everything that surrounds him is only in his mind, and he himself, it turns out, does not exist anywhere. Thus, in the aesthetics of postmodernism, reality disappears under a stream of simulacra (Deleuze). The world turns into a chaos of simultaneously coexisting and overlapping texts, cultural languages, myths. A person lives in a world of simulacra created by himself or by other people. Thus, the novel describes the "weavers" sent to war: "They were deceived from childhood ...". Various worlds-illusions coexist in the void: "As if one scenery was moved, and the other was not immediately installed in its place, and for a whole second I looked into the gap between them. And this second was enough to see the deceit behind what I always took for reality ... ". According to Pelevin, "the world where we live is just a collective visualization, which we are taught to do from birth", "this whole world is an anecdote that the Lord God told himself."

Peter Void - admits to the attending physician: "My story from childhood is a story about how I run from people." It is no coincidence that life for him is a "mediocre performance", but his "main problem is how to get rid of all these thoughts and feelings himself, leaving his so-called inner world in some garbage heap."

At the end of the novel, the bifurcation ends, the lines merge, and the liberated, suddenly enlightened (satori) Peter, on the armored car of the teacher of the spirit, Chapaev, leaves for Inner Mongolia. Piotr Void learns about Inner Mongolia from Jungern von Sternberg, the protector of Inner Mongolia. "Where is this place? - That's just the point, that nowhere. It cannot be said that it is located somewhere in the geographical sense. Inner Mongolia is not called that because it is inside Mongolia. It is inside the one who sees the emptiness, although the word "inside" is completely inappropriate here ... it is very worth striving for there all your life. And there is nothing better in life than to be there." Inner Mongolia is the inner world of the protagonist: "And soon, soon the sands rustled around and the waterfalls of Inner Mongolia, dear to my heart, rustled around."

The life of the heroes of the novel is rather ordinary and insufficient to become the plot basis of the novel.



But this everyday, non-creative existence is overcome on an aesthetic level: patients of a psychiatric hospital admitted there with a diagnosis of “false personality” become the heroes of a “literary work” created by Petr Pustota, but which, as the author’s preface says, is a “fixation of mechanical cycles of consciousness for the final cure of the so-called inner life. Pelevin depersonalizes his heroes. Heroes become certain rational/irrational clumps of the author's will (that's why there are so frequent references to Nietzsche, Freud, Jung in Pelevin's novel). In this work, the hero is an escape from the hero, hence such a vivid depersonalization.

Let's take a closer look at other plot lines with which the central line of Peter the Void is directly connected. Mary's world. Maria is one of Professor Kanashnikov's patients. He explains his strange name by the fact that he was named after Erich Maria Remarque and R. Maria Rilke. "- Who you are? "Mary," the voice replied. - What's your last name? -

Simply Maria. - How old are you? - They give eighteen, - the voice answered. The “false personality” of Mary is a woman who, having met Arnold Schwarzenegger in her illusory world, thinks about some kind of “alchemical marriage”. They fly on a fighter plane, moreover, the plane was designed for one person, and Maria has to fly sitting on the fuselage. As a result, she gets scared and Arnold throws Maria from the plane with the words "You are fired". Maria falls on the Ostankino Tower and hits her head. A well-informed reader can recognize in this whole story with Maria the events of 1993 in Moscow - the “Shooting of the White House”.

World of Serdyuk. Semyon Serdyuk is drawn into the war between two Japanese clans - Taira and Minamoto, and tries to commit suicide.

Between the lines of Maria and Serdyuk, a symbolic theme of the future of Russia can be traced, the author’s supposed “alchemical marriage” of the country with the East or West.[5. p. 148-151]

World of Volodin. Vladimir Volodin - entrepreneur, "new Russian". It says about itself that it is a "heavenly light." "I had two assistants ... I made it a rule to talk with them about lofty matters. And once it so happened that we went to the forest, and I showed them ... Everything as it is ... And it had such an effect on them that a week later they ran to report ... Vile instincts of today's man, I tell you. From his hallucinatory experience, we learn about this story



in detail. Volodin, along with Shurik and Kolyan, sit in the woods by the fire and, under the influence of fly agarics, talk about the release of the inner "I" in the jargon of the "new Russians". The fact that having freed yourself from the gang of false "I", you become the one who "rushes from the eternal buzz." Volodin tells his "assistants": "We have all the buzz in the world inside. When you swallow something, or prick something, you just release some part of it. There is no high in a drug, it's just a powder or mushrooms ... It's like a key to a safe. Understand?". And to Shurik's question: "- Can I take this safe?" replies: "You can ... You have to devote your whole life to this.

Why do you think people go to monasteries and live there all their lives? Morning, afternoon, evening. - What are they running from? - Differently. In general, we can say that this is mercy. Or love." The author seeks to show the reader that "the world surrounds us, is reflected in our consciousness and becomes an object of the mind."

We should also mention the concept of intertextuality, when the created text becomes a fabric of quotations taken from previously written texts.

As a result, an infinite number of associations arise, and the meaning expands to infinity. Thus, in a kind of preface to the novel, the author himself points out that his text is "the first attempt in world culture to reflect the ancient Mongolian myth of the Eternal Non-Return by artistic means." An indication is directly given to Furmanov's text "Chapaev", which is declared a fake. In the novel, Pelevin widely uses folklore about Chapaev as a source of specific images, creates his own myth about Chapaev, seeing in the jokes about Chapaev an analogue of the Buddhist sutra (koan, gong-an), a similar dialogue form of a koan that does not have a logical answer, and an anecdote containing absurd answer. And for the protagonist, the anecdote is a means of creating a myth-reality.[6. p. 48-51]

PelevinskyChapaev has a very distant relation to the anecdotal hero of the civil war. Despite the formal signs - a cloak, a checker, an armored car - he is not at all a red commander, but a Teacher, revealing the true nature of the world to his orderly Peter Void ("Petka"). In the course of reading the novel, associations arise with Bulgakov's "Master and Margarita", caused by the word "consultant" (about an employee of Soviet censorship), with Bulgakov's "White Guard" when describing Plywood's apartment (tiles, bamboo beds -



"an inexpressibly touching world, carried away into non-existence"), and the fate of Grigory Plywood himself is somewhat reminiscent of the fate of Grigory Melekhov (moving from one camp to another, sincerely surrendering to one or another illusion in search of his own truth). In the "Literary Snuffbox" the drama of Raskolnikov and the old woman is played out, the reader is taken into the world of dark "Dostoevism" pursuing the Russian people.

In Serdyuk's obsession, Kavabata shows a Russian conceptual icon of the beginning of the century by Burliuk - the word "god" printed through a stencil with stripes of emptiness left from the stencil. In the novel, modern cinema appears with the participation of Schwarzenegger - the "American myth" is resurrected in the mind of the reader. The heroine of the Mexican television series "Just Maria" turns into the legendary Virgin Mary, an iconic face from millions of screens, embodying the world's kindness and compassion. The novel does not forget the teachings of famous psychologists Jung and Freud.

A special case of intertextuality is the "oriental" characteristic of some of Pelevin's works, especially the novel "Chapaev and Emptiness". The exaggerated worship of the East contains self-irony about the "oriental fashion" of the 70s and 80s. Often expressed by grounding Buddhist theories. But this understanding is highly ambiguous. It can be assumed that this topic refers to Russia's misunderstanding of its place in the world, its eternal conflict in the desire to live in a Western way and think in an Eastern way. As a result, the country is not moving either towards economic prosperity or towards spiritual perfection. "Eastern" intertextuality appears in the novel "Chapaev and Emptiness" in an indirect citation of the text of Eastern thinkers. For example, in Chapaev's speech: "Everything that we see is in our minds, Petka. Therefore, it is impossible to say that our consciousness is located somewhere. We are nowhere simply because there is no place where we can be said to be. That's why we're nowhere."

The main thing when reading the texts of this author is to clearly distinguish between irony in relation to "home-grown" mystics and a serious interpretation of Eastern philosophy.

The list of favorite authors played by Pelevin remains unchanged: the "alternative" title of the novel "The Garden of Divergent Petek" refers to



Borges, and the Bashkir Golem refers to Meyrink. However, the main material to be parodied and / or rethought is mystical and religious literature: from Carlos Castaneda and Chuang Tzu to Seraphim Rose and Scandinavian mythology. [7. p. 241]

In the eclectic world of Pelevin's novel, there is a place for everyone: the lads, killed with weapons in their hands, end up in Valhalla, where they sit and warm themselves by the eternal flame, escaping from a pentagram symbolizing the mercy of the Buddha; the judgment "all women are bitches" reflects the illusory nature of the world, for "a bitch is an abbreviation for "succubus", and Anka strikes enemies with a clay machine gun - the left little finger of Anagama Buddha, hidden in a lump of frozen clay: everything he points to, acquires its true nature, that is, it turns into emptiness.

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