Theseus Loses his Way: Viktor Pelevin's *Helmet of Horror* and the Old Labyrinth for the New World

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, and Viktor Pelevin's 2005 novelette *Шлем ужаса* (*Helmet of Horror*) as a contemporary version of the labyrinth myth. Pelevin's novelette is set in a future Moscow, where the Minotaur has escaped from the labyrinth and is terrorizing the city. Theseus, who is now a tourist guide, is hired by a mysterious organization to kill the Minotaur. Pelevin's novelette is a satirical critique of Russian society, but it also presents a contemporary version of the labyrinth myth. This article argues that the labyrinth in Pelevin's novelette is a metaphor for the Russian mentality, and that the Minotaur represents the Russian mentality's fear of the Other. The Minotaur's escape from the labyrinth represents the fear of Theseus and the Minotaur. Pelevin's ending of the myth, however, can tell us that the Minotaur is not the only thing that should be feared in the labyrinth, but that Theseus should also be feared. This article argues that Pelevin's novelette is a satirical critique of Russian society, but it also presents a contemporary version of the labyrinth myth, which can be read as a cautionary tale about the Russian mentality's fear of the Other. Finally, some suggestions are provided for how contemporary myth-interpretation and myth-retelling can be used to help us understand our own contemporary world.

1. Introduction

Viktor Pelevin's novelette *Шлем ужаса* (*Helmet of Horror*) (2005) is a satirical critique of contemporary Russian society, but it also presents a contemporary version of the labyrinth myth. The novelette is set in a future Moscow, in the aftermath of a terrorist attack, which has left the city in ruins. The Minotaur has escaped from the labyrinth and is terrorizing the city. Theseus, who is now a tourist guide, is hired by a mysterious organization to kill the Minotaur. Pelevin's novelette is a satirical critique of Russian society, but it also presents a contemporary version of the labyrinth myth. This article argues that the labyrinth in Pelevin's novelette is a metaphor for the Russian mentality, and that the Minotaur represents the Russian mentality's fear of the Other. The Minotaur's escape from the labyrinth represents the fear of Theseus and the Minotaur. Pelevin's ending of the myth, however, can tell us that the Minotaur is not the only thing that should be feared in the labyrinth, but that Theseus should also be feared. This article argues that Pelevin's novelette is a satirical critique of Russian society, but it also presents a contemporary version of the labyrinth myth, which can be read as a cautionary tale about the Russian mentality's fear of the Other. Finally, some suggestions are provided for how contemporary myth-interpretation and myth-retelling can be used to help us understand our own contemporary world.

2. The Myth in Antiquity[1]

The myth of Theseus and the Minotaur is one of the oldest myths. No one has required to name a single author of this myth, and it has been retelled many times in many different versions. The myth of Theseus and the Minotaur is also an offshoot to the Minotaur and the Maze myth, which is a somewhat more complicated story. The myth of the Minotaur and the Maze is a story about the Minotaur, who was the son of Pasiphae, the wife of King Minos of Crete. Pasiphae was cursed by the god Poseidon to fall in love with a bull, and she gave birth to the Minotaur, who was half-human and half-bull. The Minotaur was a monster, and King Minos had Daedalus, the inventor, build a labyrinth to house the Minotaur. The Minotaur was kept in the labyrinth, and he was fed human sacrifices. Theseus, who was a hero of Athens, was sent to Crete as one of the sacrificial victims. However, Theseus was able to kill the Minotaur with the help of Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos, who suggested to Theseus that he should use a ball of thread to find his way out of the labyrinth. Theseus killed the Minotaur and escaped from the labyrinth with the help of Ariadne, and he went back to Athens with Ariadne as his wife. However, Theseus left Ariadne behind and returned alone. Ariadne was then rescued by the god Dionysus, who married her and made her a goddess. The myth of the Minotaur and the Maze is a story about the Minotaur, who was a monster, and King Minos, who was a tyrant. The myth of the Minotaur and the Maze is also a story about Theseus, who was a hero, and Ariadne, who was a princess. The myth of the Minotaur and the Maze is also a story about the Minotaur's fear of the Other, and the fear of the Other is a common theme in myth-retelling and myth-interpretation.

The myth of the Minotaur and the Maze has been retelled many times in many different versions. The myth of the Minotaur and the Maze has been used as a metaphor for many different things, such as the human mind, the human body, the human soul, the human heart, the human mind, the human body, the human soul, the human heart, the human mind, the human body, the human soul, the human heart,