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Modern Infernal Culture Hero as an Element of Religious Mythology

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In this article we examine the reasons of the appeal of modern religious mythology to infernal creatures. We consider the main lines of myth-making and their peculiarities. We prove that the mythological narrative of modernity has a profoundly archaic structure. We study the reasons of attractiveness of an infernal hero through the example of S. Meyer's "Twilight" tetralogy. In the article we define this phenomenon, indicate special characteristics of the infernal hero connected with the modern mass culture.

Keywords: myth, religion, religious mythology, fairytale, culture hero, archetype.

Introduction. Modern pop culture, cinema, music images, images in fiction at the end of the XXth – beginning of the XXIst centuries is the remythologizing in the sphere of infernality. Negative connotations existing in the archetypical ideas of witches, vampires, werewolves are endued with opposite meanings, turning these figures into modern culture heroes. N.V. Kuznetsov calls it "involution", interpreting the term as "the removal and separation from the original integrity represented by tradition".

Materials and Methods. Let us consider the basic features of such a myth-making, and then we'll pass to the loci of the main heroes. To these features we refer: 1. Creation of a writer (screenwriter) his or her own model of infernal world which is, however, subject to the general patterns of binarity of the myth; 2. Presence of a romantic storyline of passionate love between

a human (male or female) and an infernal hero: vampire, wizard (male or female). Upon that the author-mythmaker refers either to the ideals of the Middle Ages – chivalrous notions of honor, dignity, manhood, or to the ideals of the XIXth – beginning of the XXth centuries – the ideal man "complete gentleman"; 3. Ethical line (struggle between good and evil). Here we see an inversion – what traditionally was considered evil appears to be good and vice versa; 4. Religious line (ideas of retribution after death, reasoning about the soul with no repose, "living dead", zombies, necromancers, about the origin of the infernal creatures). This line is the part of religious mythology; it is narrative, not deep, attractive, but we take further particular interest in it; 5. Philosophical-anthropological line (reasoning about the meaning of life, love, death and immortality, a human role in this world);

6. Aesthetic line (witches and vampires represent perfect images of beauty and grace, combining such aesthetic categories as ‘beautiful – ugly’, ‘tragic’, ‘dramatic’, ‘low – elevated’); 7. Gender line is in the framework of the modern female studies; 8. Mythological-historical line (where infernal creatures come from) – myths about myths are created (like a mirror is reflected in the mirror); 9. Secular line – people are unsuspecting of the fact that the infernal creatures live beside them until they begin to closely interact with each other; 10. Political-legal line – even the infernal world has its laws and rules, fight for power, its ‘punishers’, its slaves and striving for liberation; 11. The line of a ‘wonder story’ – travelling to the worlds, dying and rebirth in a new look, growing up and changing of the main hero, shape-shifting; 12. Humanistic line – the value of a human being is underlined, that’s why the nutrition of demonic heroes becomes either dietary – they drink animal blood, or they take food from the blood bank, or they spare lives of donors.

Thus, we see that there are lots of lines of mythical-sense narration. Now we move over to the basic mythologemas, which build mythical schemes. Thereto let us point out that any myth as the universal symbolic complex (USC) is built from mythemes (mythologemas, archetypes), which contain dyads and triads in their structure. Thus, the structure of a myth as the USC may be presented in the following way:

USC (myth) → mythemes (mythologemas, archetypes) → dyads and triads → symbols → signs.

Archetypes as a constituent of the USC are common behavior and thinking samples, dominant ideas surrounded by images, ‘skeletons’ further enfolded with the help of image system, ideas, motifs etc. In this case archetypes, from the point of view of C.G. Jung, represent: 1. Fixed crystallization of human experience with the course of time; 2. Concentration of the experience

according to the inborn schemes and sanction of the further experience. Images originated from the archetypical structures involve a person into searching of the analogies in the world around. Human imagination and fantasy, expressed by the archetypical structures, go by the well-known plotlines, according to Jung. He believed, that all human beings possess the common psychological inheritance, which exists in any time, space and culture. That is why the archetypes of ancient myths may quite be important for the modern myth-making, filled with new meanings.

An archetype, thus, is a psychological formation in the USC, inheritance, which, according to Jung, a human gets genetically, but interprets it in accordance with his (her) emotional experience. Parallels to the position of archetypes of Jung can be traced in cognitive psychology of J. Piaget and in structuralism of C. Levi-Strauss. J. Piaget writes about the ‘schemes’ which are inborn and lie at the root of perceptual motor activity and getting knowledge. These schemes are able to bring the perceivable environment into their circles and are analogous to the archetypes by their innateness, activity and their need in the conformity to the environment. C. Levi-Strauss within the area of anthropology, like Jung, decided to find out the nature of collective phenomena. In his approach to the structure and meaning of myth he concluded, that the present phenomena is a transformation of the earlier structures or infrastructure, ‘the structure of primitive thoughts is present in our consciousness’ (Levi-Strauss, 1983, p. 137). Thus, it is important for our research to conclude, that the theory of archetypes introduced by C.G. Jung shows the existence of mythologically given correlates of behavior not only in archaic societies, but in the thinking and behavior of the modern human. Such sequence ‘thinking → behavior’ is intentionally underlined, so in this connection a myth as the USC represents the expression of

latent supersensual realities through the visible, emotionally important (for a person) structures having the everyday, empirical clarity.

Nowadays in modern cultural anthropology together with the notion of archetype they use the notion ‘mytheme – mythologema’, which more exactly orients to the social correlates of mythical thinking, but not only to its psychological content. Any mythologema is built on the principle of binarity (a dyad) and its dialectical extension – a triad. Thus in the archaic myth the integrity of attitude towards the world is comprehended through splitting of one whole world into the pairs of opposites:

$$\text{World} = (A \wedge A) \wedge (B \wedge B) \dots (M \wedge M)$$

The archaic myth developed a definite system of binary characteristics (dyads) as the means of perception and description of the world; a stencil which a human used while classifying the outer world. Such sets of classifications involved lots of pairs of contrary characteristics, to one of which they ascribed positive qualities, while to another – negative. This system determined the whole conduct of representatives of the archaic community.

According to L.Y. Sternberg, “dualism of higher religions and that strange ambivalent idea about gods in mythology, according to which the same divine beings... appear to be now gods of the good, and then demons of the evil... trace their origin to the primitive differentiation of beneficent animals, worshipped by man, and hostile, evil”(Sternberg, 1993, p.70). This is confirmed by the data of psychology and ethnography. In 1983 V. Turner singled out a certain physiological basis of nature of binary oppositions – colour-grade. His findings about the meaning of colour lightness correspond to the distinguished by this author opposition of black and white associated with the antithesis

of good and evil, health – illness, luck – bad luck (Turner, 1983, p.86). To primitive man the world of social relations with other communities was presented as divided into two camps. This is already a spatial dualism. The division was present on intercommunity, intertribal levels and out of the bounds of community (‘ours – good’: all the positive moral qualities – peace, stability, security; and ‘alien – bad’: all negative qualities – witchcraft, danger, war). At that, in the perception of the world natural and social opposition were bound together. Thus, dyads in myth served as the way to explain the world; one of the main functions of the myth, emphasized by many of the mythological schools, is explaining the obscure in a clear, accessible way (aetiological). If a dyad contrasts, splits, repels opposites, then archetypes (a triad) connect, splice, resolve contradictions between the opposites.

$$[A - (x) - A] \wedge [B - (y) - B] \dots$$

The manifestations of the triad were being searched everywhere: beginning, middle, end; spirit, soul, body; thought, will, action; principle of affirmation, perceptibility and conciliation. All kinds of movement in the world take place under the influence of three forces: positive, negative, and directing. Germanic-Scandinavian mythology (the Vikings) has its own triad: power, fame, and honor. In the Japanese world view of ikebana the triunity is raised into the artistic-aesthetic principle (heaven, earth, man; birth, life, death; body, mind, soul).

Thus, the third element of the mythologema adds stability and dynamic balance to the binary world situation. The unity of the world is split into three elements: active, passive, and their union as a result of their interaction. Dyads and triads form the dynamics and logic of construction of the myth, ‘logomythia’.

Let us come back from antiquity to modernity. We have mentioned, that modern myths are also built according to the given logomythic structures, filled with new existential senses.

So what is the system of dyads in the modern infernal religious myth, where we find such mythical heroes as vampires? It is: death-immortality, temporality of being – eternity, dynamics of life – freezing, weakness of the physical body – the power in a new body, warm – cold, good – evil, masculinity – femininity, ordinary physical capacities – superpowers (the ability to hypnotize the victim, foresight, telepathy, etc.), reality – ‘otherworld’ (“Vampire Academy”, “House of Night”, “The Kingdom of Night”). This is how the ‘other world’ is described by the creator of “The Vampire Diaries” (and a large number of novels about the infernal cultural heroes) L.J. Smith: ‘The Night World isn’t a place. It’s all around us. It’s a secret society of vampires, werewolves, witches and other creatures of darkness that live among us. They’re beautiful and deadly and irresistible to humans. You’re high school teacher could be one, and so could your boyfriend’ (Smith, 2010, p.5).

Another important notional dyad is ‘dying – reanimation’. The conflict resolution is achieved by the initiation ritual, in which the participant of the ceremony kind of ‘died’ for the uninitiated, like a little son for his mother, and ‘rose’ through torments for the life in a new social role – a courageous hunter or warrior, demand from whom is great regardless of age. “Mature initiation is primarily a revelation of the sacred – and for the primitive world the sacred means not only all that we mean by religion, but also the whole body of the mythological and cultural traditions of the tribe... Each element of the initiation scenario – painful tests, etc – has the religious significance” (Eliade, 1998, p.281). At this, the blood may not just spill out from different wounds after the

painful ordeals, but also mix with water inside the common ritual bowl, from which each participant of the rite takes a sip. Thus another tried arises – ‘death – drinking blood – life’. In this way the text of the religious myth is composed.

Results. Let us analyze the peculiarities of the religious myth construction and the features of infernal culture hero by example of Stephenie Meyer’s vampire saga “Twilight”. This work induced a mixed reaction among literary critics, but the readers immediately accepted the new interpretation of a culture hero vampire ready to defend his beloved from all troubles. The seriousness and importance of this character in modern culture is proved by the presence of many discussions on philosophical topics (Twilight and Philosophy, 2010). At first, let us turn to the very image of the culture hero created by the writer. Here is every indication of a mythological sense formation, in particular – the inversion through the binary oppositions. If a vampire from the classic literature assume the similitude of a man usual for XIXth century Europe, of marriage age – from 27 to 40 years, lifewise, bored skeptic (even if to remember novels of B. Stoker and R. Mead); the age of S. Meyer’s hero is 17 years old, not much older are his adoptive parents. “Vampire completely transformed from a demonic creature filling with mortal terror into the ‘guy from next door’ – school friend and classmate – lonely, more likely unusual, and very attractive, but at the same time safe, because he strictly controls himself” (Gorkovsky, 2010, p.238). In contrast to classic vampires he never sleeps (they sleep during the day in their shelters from the sun), is not afraid of sunlight (but avoids it because he ‘shimmers brilliantly’ in the sun). Having become not a human but ‘a monster’, as he calls himself, he is suffering and would very much like to turn back into a human despite the acquired qualities of power, immortality, ethereal beauty.

But traditional features of vampire description are also preserved. In the novel of T.P. Prest and J.M. Rymer “Varney the Vampire, or the Feast of Blood” (1845) the appearance of this hero is described as follows: “That portrait is of a young man, with a pale face, a stately brow, and a strange expression about the eyes, which no one cared to look on twice” (Prest, Rymer, 2002, p.5).

The background of the image appeared in 70-80 years of the XXth century both in fiction and cinematography. “The New aesthetic concept turned vampires into ordinary soldiers of large and mixed army of the universal evil, having shifted the focus of the viewers and readers’ interest to their personality” (Gorkovsky, 2010, p.234). Viewers and readers were invited to think about the following questions: if vampires exist in modernity, by what features these culture heroes are different from the people, what are the principles of coexistence with them, what is their physiology, how many of them there are, where they have come from, and by what rules they live. Answers to the questions were of a great variety (we have already described different author storylines in religious myth-making). For example P. Gorkovsky, a researcher of the myths about vampires, counted seven points of view present in folklore resources and modern fantasy for the origin of these infernal characters (Gorkovsky, 2010, p.243). Here they are: 1. Vampires is a separate species form, which has created its own civilization, existing parallel to mankind; 2. This is a side branch, which arose in the course of human evolution, so they have a number of physiological differences from Homo sapiens; 3. They are the descendants from another planet looking like humans, but very different in the physiological parameters; 4. Vampires is a hybrid form of human and animal, or human and demon, or human and extraterrestrial; 5. Vampires are created artificially by a scientific,

medical or alchemical experiment; 6. Vampires are guests from parallel realities; 7. Vampires are ordinary people, whose physiology has changed dramatically due to various reasons. This version goes back just to the archaic mythology, to the rites of initiation, death and resurrection in a new social role, and a great part in this process belongs to the shedding of blood. We may also mention some more versions of vampire origin. Lisa Jane Smith gives her version in the spirit of religious fantasy, recounting how in a witch clan a rebel was born, who performed the first magic ritual with the shedding of infant blood, as a result of which such a creature appeared. If we turn to the traditions of religious culture, the transformation of the dead into a terrible infernal bloodsucking creature was seen as a kind of postmortem punishment for extramarital affairs, unjust life, suicide, or for non-fulfillment of the most important Christian sacrament – baptism. They believed that these creatures were tormented by constant unbearable thirst – in spring or summer they drank the moisture right out of the ground, draining fields and ruining crops. Archaic myths transform into modern, the image of a modern cultural hero, a vampire, is formed, absorbing the basic mythologemas of ancient myths.

So what kind of mythologemas does S. Meyer use in her work? The first mythologema (archetype) is “ingenuous”. This mythologema realizes fairytale desires to be happy, to do right. E. Hemingway once said that all American literature was a search of paradise on Earth – ‘the most beautiful place’. Life in these places is always easier: there is no death, pain, suffering, and one shouldn’t work hard to survive. This mythologema forms the external background of the whole S. Meyer’s ‘vampire saga’ and is especially evident in the final book – “Breaking Dawn”. Human Bella marries the beloved vampire (commonly a fairy tale should finish at this), bears a child, she deliberately chooses to turn

into a vampire to stay forever with her beloved and his family, and even her parents reconcile with that. And eventually all the characters are happy. Remember 'not disastrousness' of a fairy tale – consolation by a happy ending. No matter what journeys and adventures the hero has made, what monsters he has fought – the end of a tale is always the same: good wins and evil is punished. The end filled with positively oriented emotions sets a person, turning to a fairy tale, for a positive solution to the vital issues. "My story is also going to end well." This is how the archetype of "ingenuous" works. The second mythologema (archetype) is "lover". Lover archetype controls all forms of human love, from parental to friendly and spiritual love, but most of all it is reflected in romantic love. Lover archetype has inspired the whole genre of romantic writings. Young heroine meets the hero, but some life circumstances or trouble separate them until, after love suffering and rueful feelings, they ally with each other to lead a happy life forever. This theme appeals to deep archetypal desires to experience true love. Besides, mythologema of lover is gender oriented – it is the story of Cinderella, in whom every woman recognizes herself; it is the story of Little Red Riding Hood, who met a toothed raptorial vampire in a dark forest and made a human of him; it is the story of Little Mermaid ready for the sake of prince to abandon human joys, her family and to change through sorrow. The next archetype is "careful". This archetype appeals to the protection, support, assistance, and, as emphasized by the researchers of this archetype, the care can show even 'demonic' character. The behavior of the culture hero is marked as follows: "With me you are safe". In S. Meyer' works the archetype of careful is revealed through all actions of the main character, vampire Edward. He is the embodiment of woman ideals of any era – "painted in bold strokes concentrate of masculinity", "the perfect man – his eyes are

unsleeping, eternal, and faithful" (Twilight and Philosophy, 2010, p. 148). He can be called a new type of Byronic hero of the XXI century. Each Byronic hero has a secret – so does Edward Cullen – this teenager is actually an old vampire. Byronic heroes are brave, intelligent, and dangerous, so is our hero. In addition Byronic heroes are caring. Edward decided to 'protect' his beloved in every possible way, even by watching where she was going and whom she visited. In the second part of S. Meyer's saga, "New Moon", Edward decides to leave Bella, explaining it only by care about her normal, human life. He thinks that all the time he endangers her life. "...taking you away from the world you belonged in, risking your life every moment I was with you"(Meyer, New Moon, ch. 23). Through this archetype S. Meyer created the quintessence of woman dreams – a fabulously perfect man, enigmatic, defending, strong, caring, courageous, beautiful, rich, keeping family values, monogamous knight-gentleman. Edward is a defender and protector, "the lion fell in love with the lamb". That is why the female audience, focused on feminist ideals, having suffered from its own independence in the late XXth century, returned to the romantic praise of masculinity, no matter what kind of a man we see – a human or a vampire.

Why can we refer the work created by S. Meyer to the genre of religious mythology? And what does faith of the writer have to do with "The Twilight Saga"? After all, the characters have little to say about religion, and they think about romantic relationships more. However, S. Meyer explains it on her website: "My religion has a huge influence on who I am and my perspective on the world, and therefore what I write (though I have been asked more than once, "What's a nice Mormon girl like you doing writing about vampires?")" Let us consider S. Meyer's mythmaking from this point of view. 1. Immortality of the cultural hero (a vampire) and turning his beloved wife

into the same creature. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints pays great attention to family values and the indissolubility of marriage. Marriage bonds are eternal – in life and death. Love does not die, and the lovers do not die in eternity. Theme of faithfulness and eternity is always present. Moreover, the Mormons confess marriages with the dead. They are the ‘gateway’ for achievement of the highest degree of salvation – transformation into gods (Dvorkin, 2002, p. 143).

2. Family values and attachment. Here emerges another culture hero – vampire Carlisle Cullen, founder of the family. And again in her mythmaking S. Meyer creates a new image of the modern hero – he possesses the gift of compassion for people. Carlisle came from the family of an Anglican priest, who fought against witches and vampires all his life. When Carlisle discovered that he had become such a being, he left population aggregates and formulated the philosophy of vampire ‘vegetarianism’. He further created his family, the transformation occurred only with those people who didn’t have chances to live a normal human life. The Cullens become the family based on care, compassion, and responsibility.

3. Bella’s dreams-visions may be symbolically seen as predictive. Theme of visions is also very popular among the Mormons. Visions occurred with the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – D. Smith, and played an important role in his life.

4. “Imprinting”. The Mormons call their wedding ceremonies “Sealed marriage”, after it a Mormon can claim his planet (Dvorkin, 2002, p. 143). Imprinting occurs in the pack of other infernal characters, vampire antagonists – werewolves. The triad ‘vampire-human-werewolf’ or love triangle ‘Edward-Bella-Jacob’ is resolved by werewolf’s imprinting (eternal love) with Renesmee, the daughter of Bella and Edward.

Conclusion. The vampire as a modern culture hero of religious mythology is a polysemantic phenomenon. The era of political correctness has taken away the aura of vice, horror, and evil from this hero. Although there is inequality among these heroes (there are “good vampires” and “vampirez – bad vampires”, there are “vampires vegetarians” and their opposition, there are “vampires” and “dhampirs” – vampire hunters), these characters have become quite a material phenomenon and are constantly present in the pages of books and the press, computer monitors and television screens, in films, in the design of clothing and accessories, in gothic style of clubs, shops, restaurants, etc. There appears many examples of literary imitation to Stephenie Meyer’s heroes (e.g. trilogy by E. Usacheva “Appeal -Desire-Revelation”, but the action takes place in Russia and vampire hunters use pagan traps). In the religious mythology the permanent Bella’s exclamation “Myths come true” works as a spell that connects the infernal world with the human one, and there arises reader’s (or viewer’s) empathy to the mortal women trapped inside the myth. According to the words of J. Campbell every person follows the way and the journey of the Hero; the key elements of this way are the following: The Hero begins his life in the real world; the Hero hears the call of adventure, but almost rejects it; the Hero finds himself in a special world where he undergoes the ordeal, finds friends and enemies; the Hero confronts enemies, gets a sword and returns with an elixir. It is possible that on looking at the new heroes of modern myth-making through new mythemes and mythologemas there arises rethinking of existential values of life and death, love and friendship, the sense of life, gender ideals and freedom of choice.

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Современный инфернальный культурный герой как элемент религиозной мифологии

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В данной статье проанализированы причины обращения современной религиозной мифологии к инфернальным существам. Рассматриваются основные линии мифотворчества и их особенности. Доказывается, что мифологическое повествование современности имеет глубоко архаичную структуру. Исследуются причины привлекательности инфернального героя на примере тетралогии С. Майер «Сумерки». Автор дает характеристики этому явлению, указывает на характерные особенности инфернального героя, связанные с современной массовой культурой.

Ключевые слова: миф, религия, религиозная мифология, сказочный герой, архетип.
