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## Transformation of the myth of the Minotaur in “Gene” by Stel Pavlou

### Transformación del mito del Minotauro en Gen por Stel Pavlou

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Written by:

**Andrey Gurduz<sup>111</sup>**<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8474-3773>

#### Abstract

Fantasy of the XXI century becomes more attentive to the socio-political realities of our time. The resultant vector of the genre's problematic spectrum becomes a widely understood problem of memory - from generic, national civilization. The genre potential of fantasy gives the writer high opportunities, primarily mythological. Stel Pavlou interprets the issues of personal and cultural memory in an original way, touches the actual problem of the “beast” in man in the novel “Gene” - a representative work of Minotaurianism of the first decades of the XXI century. The purpose of our article is to determine for the first time the features of the author's version (associative model) of the Minotaur myth in the novel “Gene” by S. Pavlou against the background of the typology of modern Minotaurians, the specifics of the author's picture of the world and the accompanying philosophical subtext. In the interpretation of the key legendary-mythological image “Gene” we turn to the teaching of C. G. Jung. We show that the reinterpretation of the Minotaur's image is organically relevant to modern trends, actualizing the question of the meaning of existence, memory, man's choice of the future. In “Gene,” man comprehends his essence (the Minotaur as unconscious) and recognizes the animal in himself as evil, suffers disappointment in himself and history, but must endure through love and forgiveness. We see the precondition for this original approach in Minotauri in the universalization in the twentieth century. (J. L. Borges, R. Sheckley, S. Sherrill, etc.) of the Image of the Labyrinth. Further study of the prose of S. Pavlou promising as an important component of the new world fantasy.

#### Resumen

La fantasía del siglo XXI. está más atenta a las realidades sociopolíticas de la modernidad. El vector resultante del espectro problemático-temático del género se convierte en una problemática de la memoria ampliamente entendida, desde lo genérico, hasta la civilización nacional. El potencial de género de la fantasía ofrece al escritor grandes posibilidades, en primer lugar, mitológicas. Stel Pavlou interpreta las cuestiones de la memoria personal y cultural de una manera original, toca el problema actual de “la bestia” en un hombre en su novela “Gene” - una obra representativa de Minotauro en las primeras décadas del siglo XXI. El propósito de nuestro artículo es determinar por primera vez los rasgos de la versión del autor (modelo asociativo) del mito del Minotauro en la novela “Gene” de S. Pavlou con el trasfondo de la tipología de los Minotauros modernos, las particularidades de la imagen del mundo del autor y el subtexto filosófico que lo acompaña. En la interpretación de la imagen clave legendaria-mitológica “Gene” acudimos a la doctrina de C. G. Jung. Mostramos que la reinterpretación de la imagen del Minotauro es orgánica a las tendencias contemporáneas, actualizando la cuestión del sentido de la existencia, de la memoria y de la elección del futuro por parte del hombre. En “Gen”, el hombre comprende su esencia (el Minotauro como inconsciente) y se da cuenta de que el animal que hay en él es malvado, sufre una decepción en sí mismo y en la historia, pero debe perdurar a través del amor y el perdón. Vemos la condición previa para este enfoque original en Minotauri en la universalización en el siglo XX. (J. L. Borges, R. Sheckley, S. Sherrill y otros) de la imagen del laberinto. La investigación de la prosa de S. Pavlou prometiéndolo como un componente importante de la nueva fantasía mundial.

<sup>111</sup> Candidate of Philological Sciences Associate Professor Doctoral Student at Department of Ukrainian and Foreign Literature and Comparative Studies Berdyansk State Pedagogical University Ukraine, Ukraine.



**Keywords:** fantasy, memory, Minotaur, concept, Shadow, interpretation, myth.

## Introduction

Fantasy authors of the first decades of the XXI century become increasingly attentive to the sociopolitical collisions of modernity and the XX century, directly reflecting on national identity, tolerance and gender, totalitarianism (“Half Bad” (Green, 2014), “Not people, people, non-humans” (Lishchynska, 2018)), the Holocaust (“Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children” (Riggs, 2013)), among others. In fantasy, topical aspects of the state variety were originally actualized for the United States (in “modern living mythology” (Kripal, 2011, p. 330), including Superhero), the UK (in “Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell” (Clarke, 2017)), reflected anti-regime performances in Ukraine (“Not people, people, non-humans” (Lishchynska, 2018)). The unifying factor of all named thematic vectors becomes the problem of memory, comprehended in a wide spectrum - from generic to national civilization. The genre potential of fantasy in this case gives the writer high opportunities, primarily mythological.

Intensive studies of mythopoetics and author’s myth at the end of the XX - beginning of the XXI century show the main vectors of development of myth-making - the key parameter of the current literary process, which largely determines the actual and perspective artistic discourse. Such studios are especially productive on the material of corpus interpretations of legendary-mythological structures (Faust, Don Juan, vampire, etc.), first of all - in the fantasy genre.

English novelist Stel Pavlou (2005) in his novel “Gene” originally treats the issues of personal and cultural memory, touches the actual problem of the “beast” in man, outlining the possibility of exit from the crisis of the contemporary. This work is representative in the world Minotaurian of the first decades of the XXI century.

**The purpose of the article** is to determine for the first time the features of the author’s version (associative model) of the Minotaur myth in the novel “Gene” by S. Pavlou against the background of the typology of modern Minotaurians, the specifics of the author’s picture of the world and the accompanying philosophical subtext.

The proposed article actually contains a theoretical substantiation of the author’s myth research model, which can be practically applied

**Palabras-clave:** fantasía, memoria, Minotauro, concepto, Sombra, interpretación, mito.

to the analysis and other reinterpretation of the Minotaur figure or other correlative legendary-mythological structure in general (centaurs, vampires, etc.). Accordingly, the theoretical and practical importance of the results of our work are conditioned.

## Theoretical Framework

Despite its high artistic value, the best-selling novel *Gene* by S. Pavlou (Pavlou, 2005) has not been researched by literary scholars and is satisfied with sporadic remarks from critics.

Because it has a pronounced Minotaur image and complex, and because the novel itself presents a modern kind of philosophical-psychological Minotaurian, along with the texts *The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break* by S. Sherrill (Sherrill, 2000), “Helm of Terror: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur” by V. Pelevin (2010) and several others, then comprehension of the subtext “Gene” is possible if one turns to the experience of analyzing the Minotaurian of the late twentieth and early decades of the twenty-first century. It, contrary to the relevance and relevance of the Minotaur image in the cultural space of that time, has not actually been studied. The latter is evident along with numerous studios about the interpretive clusters of Donquixotiana, Donjuaniana, Robinsoniana, Faustiana and the like.

The lack of coverage of the paradigmatic transformations of the Minotaur image, in particular, is due to the overwhelming (and exclusive) attention to the dominant figures of Theseus and Ariadne in the context of the corresponding myth L. Burnett (2017) generally speaks of “the Cretan myth of Ariadne”). Among the newest, but “narrow” in this area is the study of N. Kuznetsova (2008), to a certain extent - T. Ziolkowski (2008) and some others.

The upper boundary of the Minotaurian study is the end of the twentieth century, the exception is the attention to the named work of V. Pelevin. Ziolkowski (2008) argues about the symbolism of interpretations of the figure of the inhabitant of the Cretan labyrinth in the literature and art of the twentieth century on the cultural and political background. Despite the limited literary context (attention is focused on the most famous Western European interpretations of the figure of the man-

man-man), the section of this English monograph contains the only thorough analysis of the literary minotaur of the 20th century (with a structure: poetry - prose - drama and the study of the role of the image in the work of Picasso) that is currently perfect in modern methodological coordinates. Not systematically observing the choice of analyzed material, Kuznetsova (2008) considers a small number of reinterpretations of the Minotaur's image mainly in the literature and painting of the 20th century, selectively speaking about separate works of the beginning of the XXI century.

Connected to the outlined problem-thematic complex theory of functioning of legendary-traditional images and plots also belongs to the priority directions of modern literary comparativism and literary studies in general.

### Methodology

In the process of considering and interpreting the plot logic of the realities combined in the novel (ancient Greece and modern USA) and the concept of memory, we involve cultural-historical and hermeneutical methods of analysis.

In interpreting Pavlou's reinterpretation of the myth of the Minotaur we apply the mythopoetic method of analysis and understanding the confrontation of the personality and the bull in the work with their subsequent communication as a personality and its shadowy aspect requires turning to the psychoanalytic method of research. Since the study of legendary-mythological structure - the image of the Minotaur - involves considering the experience of interpretation of this image by other artists, in the article we also apply comparative (typological) literary analysis. Since S. Pavlou's reinterpretation of the figure of the Minotaur is associative and philosophical. Pavlou figure of the Minotaur is associative and philosophical, it is reasonable to assume that in the novel "Gene" the patterns of reinterpretation of the mythological image, used by artists in other similar interpretations (for example, in "Helm of Terror: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur" by V. Pelevin (2010)) are effective. The latter forms the hypothesis of the study.

### Results

#### **Interpretation of the Minotaur image and complex in "Gene" by S. Pavlou. Tendencies of artistic reinterpretation of the Minotaur image in the late XX and early XXI centuries.**

The dynamic problem-thematic complex of the

minotaur changes depending not only on the time of the work, but also on the meaning the author puts into the word "minotaur". In contrast to the samples of early Minotaurian (like "House of Asterion" (Borkhes, 2002) and others), in the mostly rare references of researchers to the individual modern interpretations of the Minotaur image the due attention is not paid.

In the literature of the late XX century and the first decades of the XXI century dominate the interpretations of the Minotaur image of two types: 1) the Minotaur as a hero/character in the reinterpreted context of ancient mythology or alternative mythology/history ("Minotaur Maze" (Shekli, 2005), "The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break" (Sherril et al., 2000) or 2) as an associatively chosen writer symbol, sign of objective realities, possible situations, features of the character's psyche ("Seduction of the Minotaur" by A. Nin (1961), "The Hunger Games" by (Collins, 2010). We also note the presence of an intermediate type of interpretation, where the Minotaur is the embodiment of the worldview and philosophical position of the author, the connection with the antique context in such works is predominantly associative. This includes "Helm of Terror: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur" by V. Pelevin (2010), "Gene" by S. Pavlou (2005), etc. The greatest interest from this perspective consists of the first and intermediate types of interpretations of this image (although it is not always possible to identify these variants in their "pure" form). Working directly with the Minotaur prison figures, the authors gravitate toward two tendencies. The first (less pronounced) is a description/reference to the image in its classical sense: the Minotaur is a monster who devours/destroys his victims. The second tendency is a partial or complete reinterpretation of the image with endowing it with intelligence.

In philosophical and psychological Minotaurianism in the first decades of the XXI century the reinterpretation of the ancient image of the Minotaur becomes more complex, and "the Minotaur" is more often an embodiment of the author's idea, concept. So, a peculiar complex of the Minotaur can be found in the representative and typologically similar in the reinterpretation of the image of the man-bull "Helm of Terror: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur" by V. Pelevin and "Gene" by S. Pavlou, as well as in "The Hunger Games" by S. Collins, where the metaphorical Minotaur is a tyrant president whose totalitarian system is opposed by the heroine (Collins, 2010).

The trend of artists gradually moving away from the figure of the Minotaur as a concrete image (Borkhes, 2002) to “a kind of Minotaur” (Suenvik, 2003) and on to the Minotaur-*abstraction*—an idea, a symbol, etc. (Nin, 1961; Pelevin 2010; Pavlou, 2005) is also a distinctive feature of the discussed literary corpus of the late XX and early XXI centuries. And this transition is “laid down” in a certain way by J. L. Borges (“La casa de Asterion”). We assume that the outlined dynamics of the image(s) of the Minotaur(s) is based on the motif of duality. Notable in this context is the motif of mirroring the Minotaur or the essence of the bull in a man and/or wearing a character's corresponding mask. A man may see himself in a mirror with a bull's head (mask): Detective North in “Gene” by S. Pavlou; in *Helm of Terror: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur* by V. Pelevin Ariadne, wearing a hat with a veil, sees her reflection with a helmet-mask, and the novel goes on to comment on the main idea of the work with this episode: “Theseus looks in the mirror, and the Minotaur is what he sees, because he is wearing a helmet of terror. [...] Without Theseus the Minotaur forum” (Pelevin 2010, p. 176). The Minotaur's own psychological mask is realized by the heroine of “The Minotaur's Seduction” A. Nin (Nin, 1961).

Mutual relations and, finally, the communication of the hypostasis of the hero and the Minotaur (symbolized by the mask or mirror reflection) is also a metaphor for the combination of the beginnings of good and evil in man, which we also record in the *Vampiriadis*, the *Devoliadis*. In essence, however, the situation depicted by V. Pelevin and S. Pavlou, has a long practice in literature.

The important role of the image of the labyrinth, “the central metaphor of postmodern literature ...” in *Minotaurian* (Hoffmann, 2005, p. 414). In cases of the associative model of reinterpretation, the metaphor of the labyrinth is typical: it is also the labyrinth of the soul/thoughts/fate of the characters.

V. Pelevin and S. Pavlou in the interpretation of the problem of man-beast go the opposite way: they expose the animal in man. In the interpretation of S. Pavlou's interpretation, this animal appears to us as evil. In “Gene” the image of the Minotaur, which is created by innuendo, is not named (but the Minotaur Cyclades asks Nero, symbolically) the hypostases of the monster and the hero (the classic Minotaur and Theseus) in Pavlou's character are combined and often change roles (both the Minotaur and his potential

murderer seek each other and run away from each other). In the same way the images of the Minotaur and Theseus (and even Ariadne) in Pelevin's *Helm of Terror: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur* (“The Minotaur is the animal part of the mind and Theseus the human part” (Pelevin, 2010, p. 162)) are “fused” as such. In R. Sheckley the Minotaur and Theseus are not connected in one image, although to a certain extent they “exchange” features of mythological prototypes.

### **The principles of the associative model of the author's myth S. Pavlou**

An original and revealing interpretation of the Minotaur's image in “Gene”, where it serves as a key to the disclosure of the worldview, philosophical position of the authors. This novel synthesized elements of historical, detective, adventure, love, fantasy, and philosophical genres. Uncommon in English literature, the title work for the first time illuminated in mythopoetic, psychoanalytic, and intertextual plane.

The image of the Minotaur in the novel is realized in a system of associations, symbols, and sub. This is one of the most original reinterpretations of the named legendary and mythological image in the English literature of the early XXI century. A resident of a modern city, detective James North, experiencing a psychological crisis, comes to himself and the situation by self-absorption, revealing and overcoming his fears; a kind of key to such a saving step is the image of the Minotaur (originally - a bull), which the hero sees in his imagination (a variation of such a concept is found in “Helm of Terror: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur” (Pelevin and others, 2010).

The multidimensionality of space-time of “Gene” is determined by the peculiarity of the construction of the work: through the bull North comprehends the history of the confrontation between his ancient Greek ancestor - the warrior Cyclades and the Babylonian wizard Athanatos, who haunted each other from the Trojan War until the present day. Seeking immortality, Athanatos kills Cyclades' wife in Troy, and the latter, having received the gift of rebirth from the goddess Cybele, pursues Athanatos through time (as a moral monster, a man subdued by evil) for revenge and justice. Athanatos, on the other hand, reproducing his memory in his descendants with an elixir, seeks to acquire the genes of Cyclades (to fuse with him) in order to seize his gift and be reborn naturally. Coveted by the

Sorcerer "... a hybrid that was the body of Cyclades but the mind of Athanatos" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 329) metaphorically embodies the inverse image of the Minotaur, because the monster here is "consciousness", that is, figuratively speaking, the head. The opposition "hero/monster" in the XXI century corresponds to a similar one: North is looking for a criminal associated with antiquity. Throughout the novel and related to Knossos (Crete) and its cult, the image-symbol of the bull haunts the man (Cyclades and all who possess his memory) and possesses her (realized as a personal horror image of the "victims" of the bull), forming a conventional image of the Minotaur. The bull here symbolizes evil and at the same time - the shadow side of the personality. On a mythosymbolic level Cyclades represents a force which fights evil, and in the hero's soul, next to the desire for revenge and justice ("I'm wrath" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 430)), united feelings of love for Moira, killed in Troy. Immortal love thus struggles with death: Athanatos (his name speaks for itself) sows' death in his path and seeks unlimited power.

By conducting the duel of Cyclades and Athanatos for three thousand years and endowing new people with the memory of these characters in each time, S. Pavlou achieves universality of the old confrontation: it is no longer a matter of two individuals, but of civilization in the direct (the memory of Cyclades possesses the representatives of his genealogical tree, and Athanatos creates dozens of doubles in all rebirths) and figurative sense (the struggle against evil and tyranny is always relevant). Moreover, it is also the confrontation of good and evil in man: in the finale of the novel Athanatos manages to combine with his memory the memory of Cyclades by means of genetic engineering, and the latter finds himself facing a choice: kill the enemy and with him - himself or save his life, but - and the enemy.

Central to the book S. Pavlou becomes a mythopoetic motif of the road. The latter traditionally "...unfolds "in two directions - horizontally and vertically. Variants of the horizontal way are pilgrimage, journey, etc., that is, material movement in material space. The vertical path, on the other hand, is a "journey of the spirit" ... [...] means discipleship" (Korolev, 2005, p. 487). In the novel the path is meaningful in both planes: horizontal (relocation of key characters in different countries, etc.) and vertical (revival of Cyclades and Athanatos in new epochs; comprehension (as spiritual ascent) by Cyclades bearers of "memory responsibility

for the establishment of justice". The ring principle of the construction of space-time conceptualizes the dominant mythomotive of the road in "Gene": the beginning of events in the modern stage takes place in the museum as a "meeting place" of the experience of humanity of all times. It is at New York's Metropolitan that Cyclades-Gene immerses himself in memories of his Trojan past. The main components of the mythopoetic motif of the road in the work of S. Pavlou are the concepts of memory, myth, and labyrinth. S. Pavlou pays special attention to the issues of memory as a particularly important component of postmodern art (Bal, 2018, p. 231) - in the conventional and mystical sense. Pavlou pays special attention to.

According to S. Pavlou, memory genetically motivates behavior, subconscious preferences, or antipathies. The important problem of choice in the work is articulated by the doctor and scientist Porter, the writer's spokesman: "Memories are who we are. Not what we are. They give fate its voice. You are an orchestra whose strings are being plucked by forces that you cannot see and do not know" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 292). Thus, the personality can accept the social mask (role) formed by its memory. In a broader sense, according to S. Pavlou, memory expresses a person's destiny, and consequently the problem of choosing a social role becomes more complex: in the case of Cyclades disobedience to the commands of memory is tantamount to abandonment of destiny. The Oracle rhetorically addresses him: "You dare deny your fate?" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 381), and in the finale the hero confirms, "I can't run from my fate" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 430). The above statements frame the text as years of motif variations; a similar role is played by the scenes where Gene perceives his laboratory analysis as "the puddle of fate" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 231) and when in the bloody "the cruel puddle" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 383) fate is given to Cyclades in Hades.

It is memory, the writer asserts, which inscribes the personality in the historical and social context of the era; the memory of the family, generations ensure the immortality of man - his spiritual and material achievements. Touching upon the question of preservation and transmission of memory as information complex (embracing both the plan of events in the world and the personal emotional plan of a certain person), S. Pavlou focuses on mankind's finding immortality in ancient times and, next to the museum, describes the library - the foundation of civilization: "... This was the way that mortals were supposed to remember their past. This was

their immortality” (Pavlou, 2005, p. 187).

The narrative panorama of comparable works consists of text fragments “told” mainly on behalf of different characters, in particular North and Cyclades. Because of this multiple focus and levelling of the linearity of time in the novels there is an organic to their mythopoetics effect of relativity and poly dimensionality of time, space-time. The present and past of New York detective James North are the future of Cyclades, the long-standing Greek, and his hypostasis in posterity, but at the same time they are known to the oracle to which Cyclades turns. And the present of Cyclades, though the past of North and others with the memory of the ancient hero, enters the lives of Cyclades' descendants as their present and determines their future and the like. In *Gene*, any historical era is mythological when it is perceived by a person from another time. In the manipulation of the categories of real and mythical achieves the effect of leveling the line between reality and myth: all the same mythical Ancient Troy for Detective North and the megalopolis of the XXI century. - for the archaic consciousness of the Cyclades, while both eras are real for their representatives. *Gene* appears as the last of the depicted incarnations of Cyclades consciousness. In *Gene*, the genetic vertical is formed by representatives of the genus in the broad sense, with a pronounced male dominance.

The intertwining of times in “*Gene*” appears as a synthesis of mythologies in human memory. The symbol of memory in S. Pavlou the gene, and the man who has absorbed the memory of civilization and is the last of the incarnations of Cyclades in the XXI century, is the hero with the name-cipher “*Gene*”, and only he is given to comprehend the information about humanity, which in the subconscious carries everyone. The cyclic nature of time, combined with the binary-positional structure of the novel, the reconstruction of cultic actions (the sacrifices of Cybele, the rites associated with the cult of the Knossos bull, the appeal to the oracle, etc.), historical events and fragments of life of historical and legendary-mythological figures (creation of the Trojan horse and the fall of Troy, the labyrinth of Knossos, the feast of Nero and Rome during his reign; Odysseus, Menelaus and Helen the Beautiful, Aeneas, Laocoon; Charon, etc.), the introduction of a reinterpretation of an array of ancient mythology (relevant in the minds of Cyclades) and the author's mythmaking make for the dominance in “*Gene*” of the atmosphere of myth in its broad, non-classical sense.

The panorama of the ancient component in the

text of “*Gene*” is due, in particular, to the corresponding interest of the writer, half-English-half-Greek by birth. The ancient Greeks' conception of the world order, particularly of the world of the dead, is depicted classically, the ascent of the Cyclades into which is presented in a Dantesian spirit. The artist's appeal to the works of Aeschylus, Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Virgil, and other ancient authors is reflected in the system of epigraphs to the parts - the “books” of the novel.

“*Gene*” is built on binary oppositions inherent in mythological thinking: the objective boundaries of time and space of the work - the present (New York of the XX century) / the Past (Ancient Troy) subjective for the narrator contemporaneity / the past (the narrator's memory) reality / the unreal world (myth, mysticism) with their frequent diametrical reinterpretation; moment (or human life) / eternity; good (love) / evil (hatred) crime (deeds of Athanatos) / punishment (the goal of Cyclades), with Cyclades and Athanatos positioned as Person and Shadow order (in the broad sense - chronology of world history and human life, laws of succession; in the narrow sense - order in modern New York) / chaos (human interference in world harmony, pursuit of immortality, irresponsible genetic experiments), etc. In the XXI century, some characters' names, place names and events are parabolically understood as projections of the past: *Gene*'s mother, Cassandra Dibbuk, is treated in a clinic for the mentally ill and then lives in New York City's Troy neighborhood; the name of Athanatos' assistant is Megera, etc.

S. Pavlou develops Plato's theme of the world spindle of the goddess Ananke, placing the “spindle of Inevitability” (from the Greek name Ananke) next to Hades and modifying the functions of the parks: “... weaving the threads of destiny, Clotho spun the threads of the Past, Lachesis measured and weaved them in the Present, and Atropos sliced them off when their times had come” (Pavlou, 2005, p. 382) (comparing with the functions of the Moira, the Roman parks). Through the parallel use of ancient Greek and Roman versions of the names of the goddesses of destiny, the writer combines a later version of the myth of the three moirs (in the novel - the Parks) and an earlier one (in the novel - Moira, the wife of Cyclades), also indicating the Zeus dependence on the moirs (Pavlou, 2005, p. 382). Thus, the Parks in the novel hold the lives of humanity in their hands, and for Cyclades in the person of his beloved Moira (she also becomes the Oracle in Hades) his

love and destiny, or love as destiny, are united. If Aeneas in Virgilio's or the narrator in Dante encounters the shadows of the dead heroes in Hell (in Book VI of "Aeneid" and the individual songs of the first part of "Divina Commedia" respectively), Cyclades sees in Hades the torments of only simple people, the dead interests of kings: "These were not the kings of Greece who led the way to Troy, nor the heroes of the war songs sung in their godlike honor. These were the anonymous men, the faceless men, the fathers of stolen daughters, the husbands of captured wives (Pavlou, 2005, p. 380).

Original reconstructions of images of historical and legendary figures and realities: Nero, Odysseus, Menelaus, Helen the Beautiful, Aeneas, Laocoon, etc. Depicted are the creation of the Trojan Horse and the fall of Troy, the Labyrinth of Knossos, Nero's Rome, and the like. Nero is surprised to question a man from the past - Cyclades in the reincarnation of a gladiator.

Note that the dialogue of different historical eras presented in the novel is typical for fantasy prose.

Given the numerous woven into the text of "Gene" ancient Greek and Roman realities, facts, names, characteristics of legendary and historical figures, in the novel form a systemic unity, we can talk about the presence in this work of ancient code, the concept of it is formulated by M. Menshchikova: "... ancient images and motifs, creating a certain conventional system, can be considered ... as a single code that unites, expresses the connection between the past and the present and constructs the future" (Menshchikova, 2012, p. 162). Peculiar "references" in the novel about the mythical Minotaur (included in the dialogues of the characters) are traditional for works with a reinterpretation of legendary-mythological structures and facilitate the reader's perception of the text.

S. Pavlou puts the facts of ancient mythology into his contemporary urban context: in the novel the events take place, in particular, in the laboratory of Athanatos, called the labyrinth (a chapter of the novel is devoted to it – "In the heart of the labyrinth"), the motel corridor maze (Pavlou, 2005, p. 259), in the "Troy" district of New York. Accordingly, in the night city "... North drove through the darkness, taking turn after aimless turn ... He was immured in a labyrinth that was neither of his own making nor one he had entered of his own choosing" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 333). Indeed, the labyrinth of his fate arose because of the desire for revenge of his progenitor Cyclades.

Wandering in a mosaic of fragments of cultures (a kind of their labyrinth), in many ways the gametic hero Cyclades-Gene must find himself and make a choice between good and evil (because it is in Gene Athanatos who managed to combine his memory and Cyclades' ability to rebirth). The image of the labyrinth in the novel appears both literally (prison (Pavlou, 2005, p. 429)), and figuratively: it is one of the main concepts of the work, and its key mythologem, and a symbol of modern human existence (a maze of cultures, times, memory, city, intrigue, etc., here the persecution of the hero and the monster hypostases takes place). Cyclades spends his childhood in the Labyrinth of Knossos (where he cannot - for cultic reasons - remove the mask of the bull (Pavlou, 2005, p. 429)), and - already in the temporal labyrinth - all his life, where for thousands of years he looks for a way out and a means to overcome the bull (as aggression, "dark force") in himself. It is noteworthy that Cyclades admits that he has built himself this prison from which he cannot find a way out (Pavlou, 2005, p. 429), and that in the twenty-first century Cyclades-Gene imprisons in the labyrinthine building of Athanatos. It is no coincidence that North, like other people with Cyclades memory, seems to be possessed by a horrible bull (Pavlou, 2005, p. 259).

In the context of S. Pavlou's myth in "Gene" is sublimated by motifs of return to one's own essence, love, and revenge, as well as immortality as a genetic memory.

In the nature of the perception of the labyrinth, the introduction of it into the work, S. Pavlou approaches (Borkhes 2002; Shekli, 2005; Sherril, 2000), V. Pelevin (Pelevin, 2010) and some other writers. In order to achieve the "temporal labyrinth" effect R. Sheckley ("Minotaur Maze") and V. Pelevin ("Helm of Terror: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur") construct a virtual computer maze in their works, and S. Sherrill ("The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break") makes his man-bull an immortal traveler; by the way, as a symbol of the animal element in man, the bull in the novels of S. Pavlou and V. Pelevin). Life in the worlds of the lonely Cyclades can be defined as a version of the modern Robinsonian.

A powerful intertextual layer of the novel deserves separate consideration. The motif of duality (in the tradition of EA Poe's "William Wilson") and the idea of collective memory in the novel point to relevant literary experience (vivid, for example, in J. Wyndham's "The Midwich Cuckoos"), while the Leitmotif theme of smell and its role in human life refers to "Das

Parfum. Die Geschichte eines Mörders” by P. Sūskind. S. Pavlou consciousness of the hero as a battlefield of two hostile forces is a close corresponding motif in “Asleep in Armageddon” by R. Bradbury.

The consciousness of Cyclades and Athanatos is reincarnated in their descendants. Gene (the last of the Cyclades' descendants depicted) seeks to define himself in the world and understand the meaning of existence, solving a somewhat Hamletian dilemma “... does the man consume his past, or does the past consume the man?” (Pavlou, 2005, p. 430). Thus, comparing the past and (subjective for each of the characters) the present, the bearer of Cyclades memory in the XXI century realizes the genetic connection with the ancient ancestor.

The key mythical image of comparable novels functions, in particular, as “a kind of concentrate of common cultural memory” (Nyamtsu, 2007, p. 22): the image of the bull “unites” the descendants of Cyclades, haunting them. Let us fix the primordially of the genetic factor for the transition of memory in the English work.

Since memory is presented here as one of the priority values, we think it is important that in the English novel the male superiority is emphasized in the preservation of memory “Although women could not create genetic memories, they kept traces of their fathers” (Pavlou, 2005, p. 329), a feature, typical for the prose of S. Clarke or S. King.

Before the divorced detective North realizes the cause of his mental suffering, he is haunted by nightmarish dreams, visions, some of which are accompanied by naturalistic scenes. On the verge of a nervous breakdown the hero meets a doctor and at the same time a scientist-psychologist Porter, who explains the cause of North's misfortunes. Remarkably, Porter, who explains to the New York detective the state of affairs, the hero at first does not like, and later, unable to confront the upset psyche, the detective finds the doctor and takes his salutary advice.

The type of storytelling in the novel is partly inverse. In “Gene”, the setting of events in the present takes place in a museum.

Characteristically, in S. Pavlou's cross-cutting detail is the drawing of a bull: the “victims” of a terrible vision, particularly North, are usually drawn by the survivor to reduce nervous tension.

We find an associative model of Pavlou's version

of ancient myth: having subdued his life to the idea of revenge (for his wife Moira, killed by Athanatos), the hero (Cyclades and his future incarnation, in particular North, Gene) finds himself in a temporal labyrinth, where he seeks the Minotaur (Athanatos, a moral monster, an evil bull embodied); in parallel, in the 21st century North detective pursues a mysteriously antiquated criminal whose actions are terrifying). The Minotaur, in turn, seeks the hero. But when they meet - that is, when the hero realizes the truth - the resulting opposition, the latter merges with the monster, “becomes” the Minotaur. Subtextually, the hero discovers the evil in himself: after all, the sinister bull in the novel symbolizes aggression, revenge, rising from memory - from human history - and which must be defeated in oneself; compare with Pelevin's: “To defeat the Minotaur ... can only be defeated within oneself” (Pelevin 2010, p. 162).

The question of choosing between good and evil in the twenty-first century for S. Pavlou is of paramount importance (not for nothing the novel is called “Gene”). The element of myth strengthens the moral accents of the work, universalizing their sounding. Gene refers to the preservation of the bull cult in Knossos (the same point is played by M. Renault (Theseus), E. Helm (suggesting an anachronism in the Cretan Heifer) and A. Yernov in Theseus), but the image-symbol of the bull not just represents an ancient cult but passes into the modern paradigm as part of Pavlou's interpretation of the myth of the Minotaur. Spending all his life in the labyrinth, Cyclades is both a hero (the hypostasis of the ancient Theseus) and a human bull, the Minotaur; he pursues himself (the bad in himself) and escapes from himself.

### **The Problem of Consciousness and Shadow in “Gene”**

In the process of analysis, we find that the concept of “Gene” by S. Pavlou reflects the structural component of C. G. Jung's teachings on the relationship in the psyche of the conscious and the unconscious, in particular the Shadow (Jung, Franz, Henderson, Jacobi, Jaffé, 1988, p. 62). Such a psychological factor embedded in the novel evokes the presence of analogues of the ancient Greek labyrinth in the text as well (Jung, Franz, Henderson, Jacobi, Jaffé, 1988, p. 170).

Aware of his millennial history, man in S. Pavlou (Cyclades), having caught up with the monster, discovers with horror that he is part of it, that is, he comprehends his unconscious, the Shadow (North reasoning: “Running from the Bull.



Running from the animal. Is that what I truly am?" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 276)). The frustration and shock associated with the fact that the hero S. Pavlou struggles with a part of himself - his animal, which is rooted in the subconscious (Gene and North are embodiments of Cyclades in the XXI century), Make him suffer, and this is the tragedy of the modern individual. Porter's symbolic words to the frightened vision with the bull North, that there is no point in running away from the bull, because he is in our memory of the ages, our subconscious. The image of the hero vibrates: Athanatos (his name is symbolic) and himself seeks the Cyclades, and the bull as the generation of the memory of the reincarnations of the ancient Greek warrior also himself breaks into the consciousness of these Cyclades hypostases - in both cases Cyclades and his reincarnations become victims of the bull. Thus, the memory of Cyclades is eventually united with the essence of Athanatos; North realizes his kinship with Gene the "criminal", and the hero/monster opposition is removed.

Note the similar artistic decisions of contemporary S. Pavlou authors Nathan Byrne in the English "Half-Life" S. Green first confronts his predatory dark beginning, but then reconciles with it.

After the bull inhabits North (according to Porter, the bull "it's very real" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 276) in the real world), the detective (Cyclades- North) sees the beginnings of horns in his reflection in the mirror (Pavlou, 2005, p. 259)-conventionally "becomes" a half bull (Minotaur).

Since in the classical myth Ariadne gives Theseus the ball out of love for the hero, and Cyclades pursues Athanatos, guided by love for his murdered wife and the desire for justice (this is the "red thread" in Cyclades' life), it is obvious that the "thread of Ariadne" for the hero S. Pavlou could be love as all-forgiveness. It is not for nothing that Moira, as destiny of Cyclades and Oracle in Hades, calls the hero to find peace and glorify love (Pavlou, 2005, p. 384). It is a way of spiritual rescue of the contemporary from civilization deadlock (we can draw a parallel of Moira in S. Pavlou with the figure of Beatrice in Dante's Divine Comedy).

Thus, entering his novel with a thematic metatext of transformations of the Minotaur's image, S. Pavlou is mainly within the appropriate interpretative paradigm, while putting new actual socio-psychological accents.

The analysis of S. Pavlou's interpretation of the

image of the Minotaur. Pavlou testifies to the originality of the English artist's approach to the ancient myth. In modern Minotaurianism humanization of the image of man-beast and the author's sympathy to him is carried out by spiritualizing the Minotaur, showing his suffering, endowed with the consciousness of the human in himself. In interpreting the problem of the man-man, S. Pavlou exposes the animal as evil in the common man. It is that part of us, the memory of our bloody history (wars, revenge, aggression, fears, etc.), which is usually suppressed by consciousness and about which man does not want and is often afraid to know. And the awareness of this by an individual who considers himself a humanist--according to S. Pavlou, - shows the individual bull in it and is experienced as a tragedy (the image of Detective North, etc.). That is, if in the XX century and first decades of the XXI century Minotaurian tendency we have specified. the suffering and/or sacrifice of the man-bull is more often the result of endowing him with spirituality and weakness, then in S. Pavlou the man-baby is the figurative definition of an individual who suffers because he recognizes the inferiority in himself and the tragic discrepancy between the cultural pedestal he claims to be on and his nature. In both the former and the latter, the man-baby suffers - and this is the similarity between the authors of the Minotaurian of the period in question and S. Pavlou. But in the cause of this suffering is the specificity of the authors' approaches to the problem.

Moreover, in the novel S. Pavlou's image of the man-beast is universal, as a universal understanding of the image of Cyclades. Because the latter is a representative of civilization ("eternal man", "the man who remembers": the hero's name, Cyclades, derived from Cycle, "cycle": "I am the snake eating his own tail" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 430), the abstract man (Cyclades), remembering his way (history and the burden of his civilization sinfulness) and seeking himself, making mistakes (war, aggression, etc.), considers himself as an absolute creature, does not want to notice the shadow side of his psyche. etc.), considers himself an absolute creation and does not want to notice the shadowy side of his psyche (in the novel - running away from the bull), seeks eternity in confrontation with death (the name Atchapatosis points to the ancient Greek god of death). However, this animal beginning seeks to take a place in the consciousness of man (through the mouth of the psychiatrist - symbolically - Porter, the author speaks of the futility of fleeing from the bull) and, if ignored by the individual,

"... can become dangerous ..." (Jung, Franz, Henderson, Jacobi, Jaffé, 1988, p. 239). The individual, the conditional man-bull, suffers here, realizing the inferiority in himself and the discrepancy between the cultural pedestal he claims to be on and his nature. It is not for nothing that S. Pavlou says that his novel is "about human nature". (Pavlou, 2004).

It is not for nothing that M.-L. von Franz observes that "when a person attempts to see his or her own Shadow, he or she begins to notice, to his or her shame, those qualities and impulses in himself or herself which he or she would normally deny..." (Jung, Franz, Henderson, Jacobi, Jaffé, 1988, p. 168).

As a result, the hero (North-Cyclades) faces a choice: to destroy a part of himself that contains evil (the memory of Athanatos in Gene-Cyclades) or to find a way to control himself, suppressing the "dark" and finding peace in his soul, glorifying love (as Moira calls Cyclades): "The battle that had raged for over three thousand years was within him. He had become the battlefield" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 330). At the same time, the futility of aggression and the emptiness of revenge are emphasized: ("Revenge is the snake that eats its own tail. It is a circle. And a circle is always empty". (Pavlou, 2005, p. 430). One of the main hermeneutic keys to "Gene" (as for the mentioned work of V. Pelevin:" ... The Minotaur is a projection of your mind, and therefore none other than yourself" (Pelevin 2010, p. 166)) is the ancient imperative of self-knowledge as a condition for the spiritual development of mankind. The epigraphs to the first and second "books" of the novel echo dialogically: according to Plato's "Know thyself" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 9) and Goethe's "Know thyself? If I knew myself, I'd run away" (Pavlou, 2005, p. 67).

S. Pavlou creates an image of the Minotaur in hints, without naming him (although Cyclades asks Nero about the Minotaur (Pavlou, 2005, p. 315). Moreover, the hypostases of the monster and the hero (the classical Minotaur and Theseus) in Pavlou's character are united and often switch roles (both the Minotaur and his would-be assassin seek each other and run away from each other). Such a variation of this theme has obviously never been seen before in world literature. Even in the original works of R. Sheckley, V. Pelevin, and S. Sherrill the Minotaur and Theseus are different figures, when to a certain extent they "exchange" features of mythological prototypes, they are not united in one image.

By the peculiarity of the dominant philosophical and psychological component, the comprehension of reality and personality in it "Gene" similar to "Seduction of the Minotaur" by A. Nin "Lillian had felt the existence of the labyrinth beneath her feet ... Yet now ... the Minotaur resembled someone she knew. It was not a monster. It was a reflection upon a mirror, a masked woman, Lillian herself, the hidden masked part of herself unknown to her, who had ruled her acts" (Nin, 1961, p. 107). The vivid image of the "cave Minotaur of conscience" from the work of F. Nietzsche's "Jenseits von Gut und Böse" (Nietzsche, 1999, p. 55).

## Discussion

Drawing on Kermode (2000), who argues for the easy transformation of fiction into myths (Kermode, 2000, p. 112), we argue that in the novel Gene, S. Pavlou forms an authorial myth. The parallel term in literary studies "private" mythology (Cuddon 2013, p. 454), we think, does not quite reflect the essence of the concept under consideration, because the functions of mythmaking in the broad sense are recognized by modern science for each individual (Frye, 2002, p. 65). The concept of the individual myth is more peculiar to the sphere of psychoanalysis, where it correlates with the term of the collective myth (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 204).

For today the actual problem of defining the author's myth has not been definitively solved, and we fix as the key criterion for distinguishing concepts in this plane the independence, the autonomy of the functioning of the work, claiming to be called the author's myth. The criterion for considering a work as an authorial myth is the following reinterpretation of it by later artists as a certain invariant model (Nyamtsu, 2007, p. 31). From the point of view of the opposite position, the phenomenon of the author's myth does not need the following strange treatment for its recognition, immediately being a "full-fledged" myth (neo-myth) (Hrabovych, 1998, p. 169). We consider the second position to be credible and adhere to it because, for example, the authorial myth of J. Joyce in "Ulysses" (Joyce, 2003) does not need "cultural mythologizing" (Nyamtsu, 2007) (although it can be reinterpreted) as the literary neo-myths of Don Quijote or Faust once did. In the artistic world of S. Pavlou's artistic world is formed in this way, the author's myth.

Given the concepts of fantasy by leading scholars in particular (Mendlesohn, 2008; Gates, Steffel, & Molson, 2003) and the compromise position in

the current theoretical crisis of the genre (James, Mendlesohn, 2012, p. 2), we classify the novel "Gene" in urban fantasy with a notable role for the historical subgenre.

### Conclusion

The unconventional image of the Minotaur S. Pavlou reflects the complexity and inconsistency of modern life, contributes to a new representation of the confrontation of good and evil in the world, actualizes "eternal questions" of the meaning of existence, memory, human choice of the future path, etc., emphasizes the humanistic orientation of the work. The comprehension of the Minotaur complex as the main formation on the mythopoetic level of "Gene" determines the completeness of the parabolic reading of the novel, where the idea of saving man from the cruel world - like the thread of Ariadne - the all-powerful love.

Interpretation of the key legendary-mythological image of "Gene" is organic to the trends of its transformation in modern literature. Original multidimensional reinterpretation of the Minotaur image defines the Parabolic of the novel, emphasizes its humanistic orientation, reflecting the complexity of modern life and actualizing "eternal questions" of the meaning of existence, memory, human choice of the future path.

Stel Pavlou defines as a minotaur an ordinary man in crisis and actualizes the problem of self-knowledge; the solvability of the crisis of the contemporary, who needs to look at himself objectively and choose in life good and love, is emphasized. The prerequisite for this original approach in Minotaurian we see in the universalization in the XX century (J. L. Borges, R. Sheckley, S. Sherrill, etc.) of the image of the labyrinth. The mythologem "Ariadne's thread" in the English novel is decoded: it is our love and to us.

In the associative and philosophical interpretation of the figure of the Minotaur S. Pavlou appeals, among other things, to the general patterns of reinterpretation of the mythological image, which are used by artists in other similar transformations (in particular, V. Pelevin in "Helm of Terror: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur") (2010)).

Further study of the fantasy prose of S. Pavlou is promising as an important component of a new literary process that comprehends the history of nations and humanity as a whole from a modern

perspective, looking in tune with psychology, sociology, and other human sciences for a way out of the disastrous situation of the lonely modern individual. Undoubtedly, the most promising are the studies of the novels of S. Pavlou novels in mythopoetic, psychoanalytic, intertextual, and comparative planes.

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The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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