

MSC 2020**International Scientific and Practical Conference «MAN. SOCIETY.
COMMUNICATION»****DOSTOEVSKY AND THE IMAGE OF FROST IN RUSSIAN
LITERATURE**

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Amotorin@yandex.ru**Abstract**

The article is dedicated to the study of the image of Frost (in Russian – Moroz) in the works of Dostoevsky and other writers of his time. Relating to the supreme gods of the pagan Slavic pantheon, Frost (hypostasis of Veles) occupies an important place in the pagan worldview, preserved in oral folk art. The attention to the folk mythology that arose in the 18th century and intensified during the time of Dostoevsky, expressed in folklore, attracted the attention of writers and philologists, whose works inevitably reflected the opposition of pagan mythology and the Christian worldview. Some writers, like Nekrasov and Ostrovsky, were captivated by the revival of the artistic possibilities of pagan mythology, while others, like Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, preferred Orthodox criticism of paganism which was being revived in the artistic work. The image of Frost was very popular in the course of this literary dispute. Confronting in particular Nekrasov with his poem "Frost, Red Nose" and Ostrovsky with his "spring tale" "The Snow Maiden", Dostoevsky opposes the revival of paganism in Russian literature and reminds the already raging, erring and losing the Orthodox faith Russian consciousness that there is a true God in the world, Christ, and frost is only one of the natural forces subordinate to Christ and called to awaken shame in society (the writer was aware of the root kinship of this word with "stud", "stuzha" ("cold"), as Gogol had previously realized and emphasized such kinship in "The Overcoat").

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1. Introduction

The ancient mythological consciousness, its features and its reflection in the Russian literature of the New Age attracts researchers more and more. Such an approach inevitably entails attention to the problem of the correlation of paganism and Christianity in the work of Russian writers. This problem is relevant and, one might say, topical. Modern literary scholars write, in particular, about the “charm of the pagan, pre-Christian era” in the works of writers (Antyukhov & Sharavin, 2019, p. 148), about the Gnostic opposition of paganism to Christianity (Ivanova et al., 2017), (Bystrov, 2019), about life of individual pagan deities in the artistic consciousness of the New Age (Koshelev, 2019), (Dolgikh, 2016), (Molnar, 2016), on the “mythological thinking” of writers based on archetypes of pagan consciousness (Maslova, 2018), on the reflection of ancient mythological motifs in the literary work of the New Time (Gavrilov, 2019), (Vorobyeva, 2015) , about the features of the “neomythological novel” (Bogdanova, 2017), about the mythologization of the images of the writers themselves, in particular, Dostoevsky (Bogdanova, 2016). Attention is also drawn to the “mythological image of Moroz in the Russian folklore and literature of the 19th – early 20th centuries” (Martynenko, & Avdeyev, 2015).

At the same time, while researching Dostoevsky and other writers, the features of the Orthodox worldview are being actively studied (Aizikova, 2015, 2016, 2017; Anisimov, 2016; Asheulova, 2016), in particular, in its confrontation with the pagan magic (Bulgakova & Sedelnikova, 2018; Snegireva, 2019).

2. Problem Statement

The artistic revival of pagan mythology, as well as the creative opposition to such a revival on the part of Orthodox writers, has a powerful impact on public consciousness, and this effect, being captured in a written word, extends to the life of future generations. Dostoevsky, like other great writers, used the mythologized image of Moroz with the goal of spiritual and moral education of society in a certain (in case of Dostoevsky, Orthodox) way.

3. Research Questions

The revival of pagan mythology in the literature of Modern age was methodologically based on the teachings of magical societies, primarily Freemasonry. Since the 18th century, these teachings penetrated the system of public education (especially university and gymnasium) and determined the consciousness of the younger generations, whose voices became the writers. The Orthodox faith was relatively little reflected in the system of public education, and many prominent writers had to fill this gap in their understanding of the world by studying the Bible, theological works, and the lives of saints. This article traces some features of F.M. Dostoevsky’s passage of this path.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to study the image of Moroz in the works of Dostoevsky and other writers of his time in the light of the opposition expressed in the artistic images of the conflict between the revived pagan mythology and Christian belief system.

5. Research Methods

The subject of the study determined the use of appropriate philological methods: hermeneutical, cultural-historical, and comparative-historical.

6. Findings

“It seems that having composed “The Little Boy at the Savior’s Christmas Tree” Dostoevsky, of course, understood that educated readers would immediately recognize the eventual source of his Christmas story, which was published in the January issue of the “Writer’s Diary” for 1876 (Dostoevsky, 1981, p. 14) – this source was the famous poem by F. Rückert “The Christmas tree of the orphan”. To practice adaptation of someone else’s narrative, even with the good purpose of exposing the ulcers of modern Russian reality, is too small for a great writer who did not suffer from the stagnation of his creative imagination.

In order to understand the innermost and, perhaps, the main reason for Dostoevsky’s suddenly linking Christ with the “terrible frost” (Dostoevsky, 1981, p. 14), it should be remembered that earlier, in 1863, the excerpts from Nekrasov’s unfinished poem “Frost, Red Nose” appeared in brothers Dostoevsky’s journal for the first time. Fully printed in “Sovremennik” in 1864, this poem shocked the public consciousness. Of course, it struck Dostoevsky as well, no doubt, particularly with its “fantastic” ending.

Since that time, Dostoevsky reflected deeply on the fundamental issues of Russian self-consciousness, in particular, on the modern difficulties of the Orthodox faith which is forming for Russia. He could not help but notice in Nekrasov’s poem another attempt in the history of new Russian literature of an artistic revival of Slavic paganism. Numerous attempts of this kind date back to the 18th century, and by the middle of the 19th century they had received a significant source study support in the mythological school’s philological works. The revival of paganism in the understanding of Dostoevsky meant replacing the very essence of the Russian people (the writer, as is commonly known, saw this essence in Orthodoxy).

Through the nineteenth century to Dostoevsky’s “Writer’s Diary”, a long series of figural suggestions stretches, in their spiritual essence transmitting a pagan idea of the divine Frost (or Winter as another personification of the animate and miraculous power of the cold). The conventionality of fiction, as always in such cases, is overcome by the inspiring force of vivid images. Here are some famous phenomena from this artistic row: the description of “mischiefs” of the “sorceress winter” and “frost” in XXIX - XXX stanzas of the seventh chapter of “Eugene Onegin” by A. S. Pushkin (“Here is the north, driving on clouds ...”), the tale “Moroz Ivanovich” (1841) by V. F. Odoevsky, “By enchantress winter ..” (1852) by F. I. Tyutchev, “Frost, Red Nose” (1863) by Nekrasov, “The Snow Maiden” (1873) by A. N. Ostrovsky. Russian folk tales, proverbs, sayings, riddles about Moroz, published (and thereby revived for educated contemporaries) by A. N. Afanasyev, V. I. Dahl and other collectors, can also be included in the same row.

At the base of all this reviving activity lay, it would seem, a well-meaning desire to restore the unity of national self-consciousness, the people's memory of their spiritual roots. However, preference was given to those verbal reproductions of ancient folk beliefs in which “pure” paganism was preserved, which was not connected in any way with the Christian worldview. Thus, the natural course of the spiritual development of the people was not so much restored as destroyed, because the diverse and extremely

important phenomena of the interaction between Christianity and paganism — the gradual transformation of pagan spirituality into Christianity — remained out of attention.

The image of the divine Frost occupied a very special place among the Russian pagan ideas. In the XIX century, it attracted, fascinated both supporters and opponents of Christianity among writers. It still retains its charm for us, for example, connecting, as it would seem, unnaturally, with the feast of the Nativity of Christ. The Russian "Father Frost" on Christmas tree cannot hide the signs of his pagan origins, unlike St. Nicholas (Santa Claus) of Western Christmas. How is such a combination possible? Obviously, by way of believing in the spiritual transformation of the pagan essence of Frost, similar to what happened to the Magi from the gospel narrative. The Magi brought as gifts to the baby Christ the symbols of earthly values, and together with these, their humble refusal of proud hopes for the power of magic which grants power over this world. The mystically transfigured Frost is no longer a pagan god, but a kind of personification of a good angel of God, the lord of one of the natural elements.

The image of the Slavic Frost was especially prepared for such a transformation. As one of the main – winter – manifestations of the powerful pagan god, Veles (Ivanov & Toporov, 1982, p. 176), Frost designated some of the essential properties of the primitive Slavic righteousness, the righteousness, partially anticipating Christian morality.

Frost-Veles was considered the god of wisdom, creative powers, and he was especially responsible for the connection of the temporary earthly world with the eternal otherworld. The Indo-European basis of the single-root words “freeze” (merznut’) and “frost” (moroz) (* merg- * morg-) is associated with the concept of “exhaustion”, “destruction” (Chernykh, 1994, p. 524); in Russian: "pestilence, exhaust, dead" (mor, morit’, myevty). Later borrowing from the French – “morgue” – apparently dates back to the same ancient root. The name of the ancient Slavic goddess of winter and death – Morana is formed from this root (Dyachenko, 1993, p. 1047). This root combines the concept of death as an extinction of temporary life with the concept of transition to the other world of eternity.

The veneration of Frost in Slavic paganism is connected to the soul's aspirations close to Christianity: to taming, cooling burning passions; to the transformation of the incinerating material fire into a non-burning radiance of divine light; to the preservation of not only a unique disembodied soul, but also a unique material body for the future life (by killing, transferring from this world to another, Frost shows the power of his miracles, visibly preserving bodies, as if for the future resurrection already anticipated by Christians; on the contrary, ordinary pagan pantheism involves the destruction of a private soul and body for the sake of merging with a faceless deity and the birth of something new as a new temporary part of this deity). The veneration of Frost inspired faith in the absence of a gap, a hitch between the temporary life and the eternal life (a freezing person contemplates blissful visions, and his last temporary sleep insensibly passes into eternal sleep, into another life).

Thus, veneration of Frost could have contributed and actually contributed to the transition of the Slavs from paganism to Christianity, but this veneration, being, like any weapon, double-edged, in other cases also contributed to the preservation of paganism or a return to it. In particular, any artistic reproduction of the positive possibilities of “pure” frost-worship in the new literature essentially contributed to the revival of paganism.

In the depths of their creative consciousness, Russian writers of the mystical Orthodox course understood the peculiarities of “frosty” images in their native literature and in their own way opposed attempts to pagan revival. For many of them, as, for example, for Pushkin, this path was not easy, full of deep contradictions, reflecting the general complexity of spiritual formation. In a number of their works, frost no longer appears to be an independent pagan god, but a spontaneous animated force of nature created by the true Lord and subordinate, serving Him. In such cases, the image of frost is somewhat closer to the Christian concept of angels as personifications of elemental divine forces.

Thus, in “The Overcoat” Gogol speaks of “our northern frost,” which gives “clicks” to proud “noses” and indicates “sins” both in the outer human garment and in the inner garment of the soul. In the light of such ideas, the “overcoat on big bears” (Gogol, 1994, p. 23), which Chichikov puts on in “The Dead Souls” when he starts his own sinful enterprise in the middle of the warm season, is understandable.

The image of Frost in line with the mystical worldview can be interpreted as a manifestation of not only angelic, but also evil spirits, that is, the powers of former angels who voluntarily lost their godly dignity. This interpretation corresponds with the original Christian attitude to the images of pagan gods. It recalls a folk tale of two Frosts, Red Nose and Blue Nose, presenting Moroz already with a latent Christian reinterpretation of paganism as an animate element, unkind to people, but capable of harming only sinners, in particular, those who acquired unjust wealth. Such a morally meaningful limitation of the possibilities of Frost is correlated with the Christian idea of the actions of evil spirits that God allows as a punishment for sinners (let us compare the image of the dead man tearing off the rich people’s outer clothing in the cold in Gogol’s “The Overcoat”).

Dostoevsky was particularly offended by the “frosty” works of his contemporaries and rivals – Nekrasov and Ostrovsky. A. N. Ostrovsky made his attempt at an artistic revival of paganism later than Nekrasov: in 1873, in “The Snow Maiden”. Obviously, he thereby revived Dostoevsky’s past impressions from reading Nekrasov’s “Frost ...” Ostrovsky holds his own revival of paganism as if bypassing Christianity, as if not noticing the new Russian faith. A different story is Nekrasov, who in his poem consciously belittles Orthodoxy and, in the end, tries to replace it with paganism, as if drawn from the primordial depths of the national soul – those depths that are exposed in the utmost grief, on the border of life and death. Nekrasov’s Frost is a powerful deity, the master of death and eternal life which opens after death. Ostrovsky, in comparison with Nekrasov, belittled the image of the divine pagan Frost and thereby entered into a creative dispute with the poet, preserving, however, the main alliance directed against Orthodoxy.

The history of intense rivalry between Nekrasov and Ostrovsky in connection with “Frost ...” and “The Snow Maiden” requires a separate thorough consideration. It is curious that in the year of the creation of “The Snow Maiden”, Dostoevsky, in the “Writer’s Diary” which he then started, chapter “Vlas”, exposed the unkind, mocking attitude of Nekrasov to Orthodoxy while Orthodoxy is the essence of the Russian people (this attitude was clearly indicated in “Frost, Red Nose”). And in the same chapter of the “Diary”, as if by chance and by accident, Dostoevsky noticed that Ostrovsky did not know the true soul of the Russian people. According to Dostoevsky, the Russian people “know Christ <...> and bear Him in their hearts from time immemorial,” that appeared in the era of Baptism and subsequently, up to the present moment, is the key to overcoming and transforming pagan superstitions. Dostoevsky’s opinion about

Ostrovsky as a very superficial, not affecting the spiritual depths, descriptor of Russian life was stable in the years between the appearance of "Frost ..." by Nekrasov and "The Snow Maiden" (see, for example, his letter to N. N. Strakhov from 6 (18) of April, 1869.

It was in the tragic Frost of Nekrasov, and not in the comically reduced Frost of Ostrovsky, that Dostoevsky caught the danger of pagan temptation. This Nekrasov's Moroz insensitively and painlessly translates the "dead" souls into the world of eternity and bliss. He does not burn souls in the fire of pagan ecstasy, like Yarila, but he preserves them for eternity. And besides, he preserves (freezes) the bodies, as if preparing them for the coming resurrection, like Christians hope for. During the baptism of Rus, these "pre-Christian" features of Slavic paganism associated with the image of Moroz-Veles softened and facilitated the transition to the new faith. Nekrasov, on the contrary, took advantage of these features for the artistic presentation of the question of uselessness, excessiveness of Christianity. Nekrasov's frost seemed to give man everything that Christ promises, but only surprisingly easily, not requiring any effort.

Dostoevsky in "The Little Boy at the Savior's Christmas Tree" seeks to remind the already raging, erring and losing the Orthodox faith Russian consciousness that there is a true God in the world, Christ, and frost – however much praised by the writers – is only one of the natural forces subordinate to Christ and called to awaken shame in society. The writer was aware of the root kinship of the word "styd" (shame) with "stud", "stuzha" ("cold"), as Gogol had previously realized and emphasized such kinship in "The Overcoat" and in "The Dead Souls".

A mystical-symbolic attitude to frost was prepared in the same January 1876 issue of the "Writer's Diary", with a series of notes preceding "The Little Boy at the Savior's Christmas Tree": "The Christmas Tree at the Artists Club ...", "The Golden Age in Your Pocket", "The Boy with a Pen". In the first two, the writer boldly depicts a "golden age" essentially pagan and opposed to the biblical Paradise which the sinful humanity strives to revive, turning a blind eye to its vices. Sarcastically, he suggests the elite of society to reveal their spiritual "secrets" (Dostoevsky, 1981, p. 12), in a speculative sense to expose themselves and "to walk in a golden age suit with a leaf of bashfulness" (Dostoevsky, 1981, p. 13), that is to finally remember their sins, first of all, the original sin of apostasy committed by the first people in Paradise, and remembering, finally, to see the sea of human suffering outside the ghostly man-made paradise.

Since the insightful writer was aware of the futility of his appeals, in the next two chapters: "The Boy with the Pen" and "The Little Boy at the Savior's Christmas Tree", he first resorts in his own way to the power of the "terrible frost" created by God (Dostoevsky, 1981, p. 13), and then to the power of Christ Himself. The power of frost appears here created to expose a hardened society, to penetrate through the shell of warm clothing that hides human shame and conscience. Frosty patterns help the writer to draw an image of the city, perishing in debauchery, both evident and secret. The beggar "boy with a pen", freezing on the street, is already experiencing the harmful effects of society. However, being in the grip of frost, suffering, he, like any beggar, is in extreme proximity to God and in extreme distance from the depravity of adults. On the contrary, in the warm, tavern and basement world of adults, "vodka, and dirt, and debauchery, and most importantly vodka" reign (Dostoevsky, 1981, p. 13). And the boy collects charity, by the will of adults, first of all on vodka, moreover, "for fun, they sometimes pour a half-bottle of vodka in his mouth and laugh when breathless, he falls almost without memory to the floor" (Dostoevsky, 1981, p. 13-14).

In these lines, each word becomes a profound symbol: a half-bottle of vodka (“kosushka”) is a symbol of “crooked” (“kosaya”) death and the crafty deviation from the paths of righteousness, “numb breathing” is a break in life itself, and in combination with a fall and loss of memory, a pantheistic frenzy inherent for the rituals of many pagan religions (such, for example, is the condition of a shaman at the peak of rituals). Actually, vodka as a kind of drug is a divine spirit-bearing substance, from the pagan point of view (that is why its basis is called in Latin “alcohol” – “spiritus”, “spirit”). Vodka, “fiery water”, like any magically meaningful drug, is designed to contribute to the erosion, burning of the private human soul in order to merge with the universal divine element: taken “inside”, it helps to dissolve the soul in this element. To become a “god” in this way, a person must agree to self-destruction, suicide. Dostoevsky felt keenly the suicidal self-worship, pagan, anti-Christian at its core. This understanding was especially vividly reflected in the novel “Demons”, where one of the demons, Kirillov, teaches: “He who dares to kill himself is a god” (Dostoevsky, 1974, p. 94). In one of the associated plots (1870 - 1872), the writer defined: “The emptiness of the soul of today’s self-murderer” (Dostoevsky, 1975, p. 8). The pantheistic thirst for self-deification inspires precisely the devastation of the soul, the abolition of its unique spiritual content, personal identity.

In “The Boy with a Pen”, at the level of the most general artistic symbolism, flowing, burning and corrupting vodka is contrasted with the frost-binding force that protects against vices as a beneficial element.

In “The Little Boy at the Savior’s Christmas Tree,” the “frosty” denunciation of public evils reaches its limit. Frost appears as the elemental principle of Christ's world and loses the slightest signs of pagan understanding, becoming an instrument of God's judgment and retribution.

Another, completely negative, but also Christianly meaningful, image of the frosty element appears in Dostoevsky’s last major work, the novel “The Brothers Karamazov”, and it is in the “fantastic” part, that is, where the devil appears to Ivan. This phenomenon is framed by a description of a frosty blizzard, in which a drunken “peasant” who was “defeated” by Ivan’s “frantic” push (Dostoevsky, 1976, p. 68) onto the “frozen ground” (Dostoevsky, 1976, p. 57) almost freezes. It is noteworthy that the peasant was very drunk, which means that he was in the grip of an unclean spiritual element, which rocked him and, in the end, threw him at Ivan, and the demon of “fury” began to enter into Ivan with frost. As if the external frost kindling anger gradually enters Ivan’s body and soul. First, “convulsions” reduce his hands (Dostoevsky, 1976, p. 57), and then, after talking with Smerdyakov, he felt “infinite firmness” in his soul (Dostoevsky, 1976, p. 68), although he began to “wobble” with his body, and then, marking the appearance of the devil, “something icy suddenly touched his heart” (Dostoevsky, 1976, p. 69). At the same time, the author-narrator defines Ivan’s state as “delirium tremens” (Dostoevsky, 1976, 70), a mental illness inherent in hardened drunkards who destroy and devastate their souls. A drunkard freezing after staggering turns out to be a mirror of Ivan’s emotional experiences. During communication with the devil, Ivan was in a kind of numb-frozen sleepy state, which was discovered when he tried to get out of it: “as if suddenly his legs and arms were tied” (Dostoevsky, 1976, p. 84).

The frosty element in “The Brothers Karamazov” turns out to be the bearer of definitely evil spiritual power, being in direct accordance with the imagery of “Demons” by Pushkin. Late Dostoevsky seemed to put an end to his innermost objections to the charming image of Moroz given in Nekrasov’s poem. At the same time, such a gloomy end to the frosty imagery in the writer’s work correlates with the general

Orthodox historiosophy: the evil in the world and in the Russian reality is steadily multiplying over time, the sins of particular people, the sins of entire nations grow, bringing closer the construction of a new Babylon, or the kingdom of Antichrist. So the elements of nature, in particular, the frost, according to God's permission, are increasingly appearing in an evil-demonic manifestation as a retribution to sinners.

A similar gloomy interpretation of the frost was outlined (but not quite expressed) already in the January, one might say, Christmas issue of the "Writer's Diary" for 1876. As mentioned above, the image of frost here helps to highlight and expose the entire depth of the spiritual and moral decline of society. Moreover, in the January issue this fall is exposed with increasing force: the worship of wealth, the "golden calf", spread throughout the whole nation, while reverence for the unclean spirit of vodka is shown (in particular, a terrible sign is given: Russian people prefer to save not a church, but a tavern). Even priests in the modern Russian world are corrupt. They refuse to unselfishly bring the light of spiritual enlightenment to fallen people. It is significant that this is stated in the chapter devoted to the description of the colony of juvenile delinquents, which was created with big charitable money with an internally deceitful goal, according to Dostoevsky, to show the public concern for the stumbling members of society. In the general frosty-revealing spirit of the January issue, the story of the colony, which is supposed to be a man-made paradise on earth, is preceded by the words: "What a charm – forest in winter, covered with snow." The word "charm" ("prelest") here, as in Pushkin's "Winter Morning", acts by its root, nourished by the Orthodox faith, meaning: pre-lest (pre-flattery, flattery, deceit).

All images of paganism, rising from the depths of the popular subconscious, are naturally crowned in the January 1876 issue of the "Diary" with the image of spiritualism spreading in Russia like a pestilence. Concluding the issue, the writer, in the best traditions of romantic irony, or rather, sarcasm, explains to his spiritually dumb and exhausted by unbelief contemporaries that they are rapidly falling into the worst of pagan superstitions, in fact submitting to the power of "devils" that are not recognized in words.

Frost in the January Christmas issue still serves God, being a means of conviction, punishment, but also saving people. However, people do not feel it, they are not enlightened, and thus, it is as if they reject supernatural help and create conditions for completely different, spiritually destructive, hellish manifestations of frost, one of which is described in "The Brothers Karamazov".

7. Conclusion

Using the artistic possibilities of the mythological image of Moroz, Dostoevsky in his mature work carries out Orthodox criticism of modern public consciousness which forgets the teachings of Christ, loses the Orthodox faith, outwardly immersing into the soulless complacency of positivism and materialism, and in the hidden innermost essence of its development - returns to pagan magic.

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