



DEMONOLOGICAL IMAGE IN RUSSIAN FOLKLORE

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13164752>

Abstract: The article examines the demonological image in Russian folklore and reveals the nature of their interpretations of famous images in fiction. Folkloristics had the opportunity to observe the process of extinction of the traditions of “classical” folklore throughout almost the entire two-century history of its existence. Literally before the eyes of collectors, performing schools and entire folklore genres disappeared from the sphere of living existence and continue to disappear. Today there are fewer and fewer regions on earth where one can still hear the performance of oral epics, fairy tales, and ritual songs in natural conditions

Keywords: demon, image, folklore, demonic creatures, folklore genres.

1 INTRODUCTION

Folk demonology has always been of interest to researchers and ordinary people, which is confirmed by the use of demonological motifs in works of art and the popularity of these works. One of these motifs is demonological images, which are an important part of mythology in the traditions of the people.

Demonological images - a component of medieval culture, excite the consciousness of contemporaries, as evidenced by films: *Dracula*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *Time of the Witch*, *The Witch*;; music: the Gothic genre involves the use of demonological images in song lyrics; literature: N. Konstantinin “Vampires and Werewolves”, E. Rise “The Vampire Chronicles”, J. Rowling “Harry Potter”, S. Mayer “Twilight”, etc. [1].

It is noted that it was in the era of romanticism, at the beginning of the XIX century, that interest in demonological images increased, the number of interpretations of demonological images increased, which is confirmed by the presence of the above elements in the works of A.S. Pushkin “The Undertaker”, N. V. Gogol “Evenings on the Farm” near Dikanka”, A.K. Tolstoy’s “Ghoul”, etc. As a result of the authors’ interpretations [3], ideas about the appearance and qualities of many demonological images became blurred, losing their original appearance.

2 Literary review

Folk demonology interested researchers from the first works on folklore dictionaries on Slavic mythology by A. S. Kaisarov, M. D Chulkova, and was further developed in works on Slavic antiquities A. N. Afanasyev, F. I. Buslaev, V. I. Dal, S. V. Maksimov, A. A. Potebnya [1].

Collections of epics and superstitious stories were of great importance in the development of Slavic mythology (V.P. Zinoviev, N.A. Krinichnaya), as well as scientific works whose purpose was to summarize

research (E.S. Efimova, N.K. Kozlova, N.A. Krinichnaya). A new stage in the study of folk demonology is associated with the publication of the work of S. A. Tokarev and E. V. Pomerantseva [5].

The folklore of individual territories also aroused interest, for example, there are scientific works devoted to the study of the mythology of Polesie (L. N. Vinogradova, E. E. Levkivskaya, N. I. Tolstoy, S. M. Tolstaya), mythology of the Far East, Ukraine (O. A. Poritska, V. N. Voitovich, V. F. Davidyuk, A. A. Kononenko) [4].

Among the studies devoted to the study of demonological images, a special place is occupied by the monograph by A. A. Afanasyev “The Poetic View of the Slavs on Nature,” which serves as the basis for modern research. The work is devoted to a historical and philological analysis of the language and folk art of the Slavs in inextricable connection with the language of folk art of other Indo-European peoples. The author adhered to the position of connection between language and legends; the foundations of Russian consciousness were recreated [2].

Lyudmila Nikolaevna Vinogradova’s monograph “Slavic folk demonology: problems of comparative study” analyzes folk beliefs about supernatural beings, highlights the connections of demonological ideas with the folklore and mythological tradition of the Slavs, proposes a structure for describing mythological images, consisting of the following components: titles, names, interpretation, hypostasis, appearance, “social status”; attributes, satellites; relationships; genesis; loci; time (appearance, activation); properties, abilities, preferences; characteristic actions and behavioral habits; functions and predicates; guardianship actions; patronage; other predicates; objects, addressees, recipients; modes; human communication; the most

typical motives; characteristics of the source from which the information was obtained.

Erna Vasilyevna Pomerantseva in her study “Mythological Characters in Russian Folklore” analyzes oral stories, characterizing mythological characters, the transformation of these characters in records of oral prose.

A. V. Nikitina in his work “Russian Demonology” characterizes the characters of “lower” mythology, creating integral images of a brownie, a goblin, a merman, a sorcerer, etc. The accumulated data on the characters of “lower” mythology did not have a complete design for a long time, and after the work of D.K. Zelenin [2], in which he fundamentally analyzed the image of the mermaid, research in this area has advanced significantly.

The issue of the use and interpretation of demonological images by writers of the XIX century was considered by many researchers. Thus, Kristina Georgievna Katsadze in the monograph “Multidimensionality of N.V. Gogol’s prose: extra-fabular characters and unreal forces” notes that unreal forces are one of the most important ways of creating the multidimensionality of Gogol’s artistic prose.

Yulia Vladimirovna Vetchinkina, exploring “one’s own or another’s” in N. V. Gogol’s “Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka,” emphasizes that folklore and mythological ideas play an important role, determining many of the motives and images of “Evenings,” and is fundamental to the cycle, determining the motivation and the figurative structure of artistic space and time, their axiology, determines the relationship of the characters, determines the artistic philosophy of the writer [6,7].

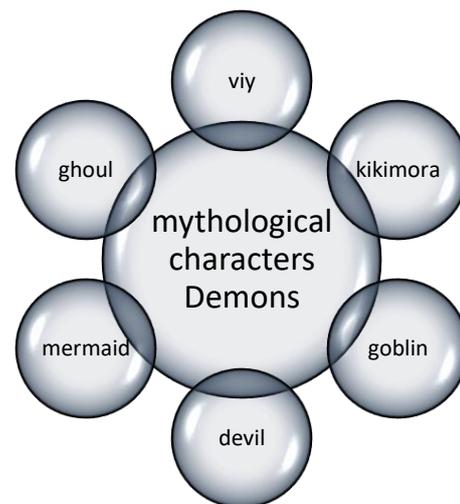
Olga Borisovna Kostyleva, dividing O. Somov’s prose depending on the dominance of the real or the supernatural, or their equality in the artistic world, noted that the use of O. Somov’s folk demonological characters not only relies on folklore traditions, but also actualizes the opposition “friend or foe” , and the supernatural has a very real motivation, because the text contains a certain parallelism of the mystical and everyday aspects; for the author, the most valuable thing is the dynamics of the interaction of the supernatural and the real in the artistic space of the text.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is a well-known fact that demonological images and beliefs, reflecting reality, somewhat modifying it, so that they are associated with ideas about time and space, have penetrated into all aspects of the everyday and spiritual life of the Slavs, they are actively reflected in folklore, ritual and speech genres, becoming an important part of various kinds of rituals, including

family, calendar, etc. It seems that demonological images are reflected in various folklore, ritual-communicative and speech genres, permeating all aspects of human life, since they reflect ideas about the natural world , about natural phenomena, about people’s health, more precisely about the causes of illness, and also reflect ideas about the fate of man. As we see, demonological images depict virtually all aspects of human life, especially what could not be explained by the ancient Slavs. Being an integral part of the life of the Slavs, demonological images are actively used in fiction, recreating the picture of the world as much as possible.

E.V. Pomerantseva, studying Russian folk stories about mythological characters, focuses on the fact that they are underestimated as a unique phenomenon of art, as a vivid manifestation of the artistic diversity of oral folk prose, arguing that they are interesting not only as a document testifying to the beliefs and convictions of the Slavs , but also arouse interest with their form, which is why writers so often turn to them [7].



In scientific literature there is also the concept of “lower” mythology, which implies such mythological characters as spirits (demons), these include the witch, viy, kikimora, home, goblin, mermaid, ghoul, devil, etc. E. E. Levkievskaya notes, that in ancient Russian books denouncing pagan beliefs, the gods and lower mythological creatures worshiped by the Eastern Slavs are listed [3].

L.N. Vinogradova in her work says that if we take historical evidence as a basis, then the most widespread and having a large number of interpretations will be the images of “ghouls”, “wolves” and “walking dead”, as well as people endowed with superknowledge: magi, witches, sorceresses [1].

The systematization of the character sphere of East Slavic mythology was compiled by L.N. Vinogradov,



presenting it in the form of a certain sequence of mythical characters located on a conventional scale of “human” - “non-human” (demon). Closest to the “person” pole on this scale are:

- ✓ mythological images of people who have surreal abilities (they can tell fortunes, cast spells, cure diseases, remove damage, etc.);
- ✓ people who have been influenced by evil spirits (possessed, possessed, cliques, holy fools);
- ✓ people who were kidnapped by evil spirits or those who were turned into animals;
- ✓ images of people - “double-minded”, having a second “demonic” soul (for example, from the characters of Carpathian folklore: zhora, bosorkanya, planetnik, warlock), and those who purposefully came into contact with evil spirits to acquire demonic properties (witches, sorcerers, sorcerers, healers, wizards, etc.);
- ✓ the souls of deceased relatives or (also remembered by their specific names) or sinless parents-ancestors visiting their homes on special memorial dates;
- ✓ harmful “host” dead (suicides, deceased sorcerers and witches, “walking” dead, ghosts and ghosts);
- ✓ characters who have certain demonological characteristics (possessing very specific demonological characteristics), whose existence is associated with the category of souls of the dead (vampire, mermaid, etc.).

L.M. Vagurina, when compiling her dictionary-reference book “Slavic Mythology”, took as a basis the three-volume work of the famous researcher and collector of folklore A.N. Afanasyeva “Poetic views of the Slavs on nature” and divided mythological characters into 6 groups.

1) **Slavic gods:** Volos, Gromovnik, Dazhbog, Didilia, Dnieper, Svarog, etc. Unlike Greek mythology, the life of the Slavic gods did not become the subject of description. Rod and Rozhanitsa never received the category of personification, but over time they received proper names. So, Svarog is the male embodiment of the Family, he is the Father-Sky, the progenitor of all gods. It is noted that the functions of the Slavic gods are not highlighted, but E.E. Levkieskaya emphasizes that the functions of the gods were often mixed, and the same one could be attributed to several deities [3]. It is assumed that some of them are lost;

2) **cloud maidens:** Bereginya, Bolotnitsa, Vodyany, Kikimora, Forest maidens, Mermaids, etc. These characters are quite important in the pantheon of Slavic gods, since the ancient Slavs believed that there were deities whose main function was to protect all kinds of

places and types of nature. But their image is ambiguous, since in folklore there is various information about them: they can help heroes by destroying the magic of others, but they can also bewitch a person themselves; can deliver the souls of babies to earth and at the same time send souls to the other world. These images acquired evil negative traits and an unsightly appearance during the period of demonization of pagan gods;

3) **fire snakes and birds:** Basilisk, Gorgonia, Firebird, Serpent-Gorynych, Koschey the Immortal, Nightingale the Robber, etc. Snakes and birds are “mythical representatives of storms and thunderstorms”. Folklore describes the snake as a character with heroic powers, who knows the healing properties of herbs; he can also transform into a handsome young man who can make a girl fall in love with him and persuade her to enter into an unlawful relationship, which gives reason to associate his image with the image of the culprit of unchaste passion and fornication. The ancient Slavs associated the bird with a storm, the rising sun, the wind, and death; the evil spirit left hell precisely in the form of a bird;

4) **undead and spirits:** Anchutka, Auka, Babai, Bagan, Baennik, Barabashka, Demons, Viy, Vodyanoy, Dvoedushnik, Brownie, Leshy, Devil, Shishiga, etc. An entity that does not have flesh and soul and does not have a human appearance is called undead. The undead have a polar attitude towards people: there are those whose goal is to harm, and there are those who treat people “good-naturedly”. The undead live in different places, but there are especially large numbers of them in “unclean places.” The basis for this statement was the popular belief that when Satan was driven out of heaven, unclean spirits fell into various places. L. M. Vagurina notes that the undead also have fears, for example, they are afraid of crosses, roosters crowing and even numbers, etc.;

5) **prophetic husbands and wives:** Vakodlaki, Vampire, Varkolak, Sorcerer and Sorceress, Witch, Volkodlak, Magus, Sorcerer and Witch, Werewolves, Ghoul, etc. Priests, magicians and magicians were called prophets. Their main function was to help people in troubles, illness, bad harvest, etc. Prophetic people have the ability of prophecy and foresight, they can heal from illnesses and heal with words. “Closely related to sorcerers, witches and werewolves are ghouls or vampires. Slovenes call ghouls prophetic, that is, they recognize them as sorcerers and witches” [7];

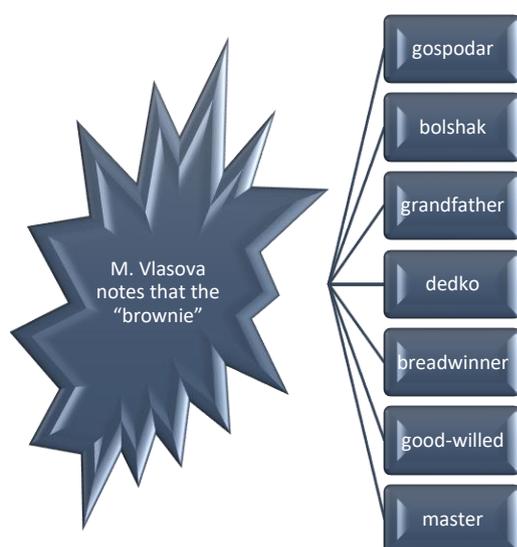
6) **giants and dwarfs:** Bogatyr, Giant, Mountain Dwarf, Dubynya, Lyudki, Beast, etc. In fairy tales we can see the image of a giant, they are taller than the forest, they have a tree in their hands instead of a stick,

they can cross any swamp, they do not consider people their equal. Dwarfs, on the contrary, are small, but their height is recorded in different ways; in some sources, it is equal to the height of a one-year-old child, in others, they are so small that they can enter a home through a keyhole. The people endowed them with the following character traits: resourceful, cunning, ready to do anything for their own good, but kind dwarfs are also present in popular beliefs [6];

It would be wrong to ignore the territorial correlation of images, because the composition of properties, characteristics, descriptions of the appearance of the same demonological image varies greatly in regions. Each image in a different area acquires a different set of main and secondary features, so L. N. Vinogradova notes that each specific image in a particular area has a special composition of features and motifs (of which some are leading and predominant, while others are peripheral) : in one territory, only two or three characteristic features inherent in this image are known, and in another, ethnographers record a whole range of motives and characteristics with the help of which this character is described [3]. The author also notes that the East Slavic “mermaid” is capable of shapeshifting to the greatest extent and the most common images that she can take on are:

- ✓ birds: swans, magpies, geese, large birds;
- ✓ domestic animals: cow, horse, calf, cat, dog;
- ✓ small wild animals: squirrel, weasel, hare, rat, frog, etc.;
- ✓ objects: wheel, haystack, ball of thread, etc.;
- ✓ can also become a peacock, a haystack, a butterfly, a moth [1].

There are also frequent cases of transformation of the demon's name.



The second example is the situation with the term “ghoul” a distorted form like “volkolak”, “vurkolak”, which appeared in Russian literature in the XIX century thanks to A.S. Pushkin [7]. “Volkolak” is a Little Russian or Belarusian word, literally meaning wolf fur, werewolf, and among the Serbs the image of a ghoulish is mixed with the image of the werewolf “vukodlak”. So, a ghoulish is “a dead man who emerges from the grave at night to suck the blood of sleeping people” [6].

So, we see that folklore reflects the beliefs of the Slavs in various sectors: agriculture, cattle breeding, etc., which allows us to quite fully restore the Slavs’ ideas about the world around them and provides information about the spirits that, in their opinion, inhabited the earth. Various genres of folklore include demonological images, describing not only their appearance and habitat, but also their functions. The researchers presented classifications of demonological images of Russian folklore, developed on the basis of the similarity of appearance, features of the functioning of demonological images in folk mythology.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the artistic image as an aesthetic category of world exploration, being a means of cognition and reflection of reality in works, performs the following functions: cognitive, communicative, aesthetic, educational. It is noted that an important condition for performing all the functions of an artistic image and for understanding the world reflected by the author is not just reading the image, but comprehending it, understanding it, taking into account all the cognitive components. An artistic image can be classified taking into account different aspects of the concept: stylistic aspect (realistic, romantic images, etc.), generic aspect (lyrical, epic, dramatic images). Taking as a basis for differentiation the complexity of the sign that forms the core of the image, we obtain the following classification: stylistic figures, tropes; images-details; landscape, interior; image of a person; figurative systems.

Demonological images are not just an image of otherworldly forces, they are an excursion into the culture and literature of our ancestors; this is a reflection of the world surrounding the ancient Slavs. In contrast to the gods of world religions, Slavic mythology distinguishes representatives of “lower” mythology: the witch, the viy, the brownie kikimora, the goblin, the mermaid, the ghoulish, the devil, etc. It is assumed that the most static images are those of “ghoulish”, “wolves”, “dead people” and witches, sorceresses, etc. The basis of the classification proposed by L. N. Vinogradova is the opposition on the basis of “human” - “non-human”,

and L. M. Vagurina divides mythological characters into 6 groups: Slavic gods, cloud maidens, fire snakes and birds, undead and spirits, prophetic men and women, giants and dwarfs.

In our field of view, within the framework of this study, were the demonological characters found in the works of N.V. Gogol, O. Somova, M. N. Zagoskina: witch, dead man, ghost, mermaid, devil, demon. Thus, the image of a witch has undergone some transformations: at first, a witch was a knowledgeable woman who has enormous knowledge and helps people, but later she is already classified as a demonic creature that brings harm to people. Descriptions of the appearance of a witch, like mermaids, are also quite varied, sometimes opposite: a witch can be a woman of indescribable beauty or an unattractive woman, mermaids can also be scary, unsightly, or a girl in white clothes, long hair and an almost transparent body. Not only is there no single idea in the description of the mermaid, but they also call her differently in different regions: jokers, devils, vodyani, loskotukha, kupalka, smolyanka. A deceased person is a person who has died but continues to exist. In depicting the image of a deceased person, the important thing was that he almost corresponds to a real person, literally, materially existing in this world. It is noted that a ghost, on the contrary, does not have flesh, but is a spirit. The images of "devil" and "demon" are identical, since it is believed that the term "devil" is a pre-Christian name for "demon". In popular ideas, this image is often correlated with images of "lower" mythology: the goblin, the brownie, the merman, but the devil has much more skills, since he kidnaps children, seduces women and constantly hunts for the human soul. The feature of the devil is the ability to shapeshift, but even in this case it is possible to recognize him by special signs..

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