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Yury Buida and Fyodor Dostoyevsky: Types of Intertextual Connections

Yury Buida y Fyodor Dostoyevsky: tipos de conexiones intertextuales

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ABSTRACT:

The essay addresses various forms of dialogue with F.M. Dostoevsky in the cycle of stories by Yuri Buida 'The Osor'ins Chronicles'. The authors show that this dialogue is manifested through intertextual connections, allusions, details, narrative techniques defining the inner subplot of the cycle associated with the types of characters, philosophical problems inherent in Dostoevsky's works (freedom and lack of freedom, crime and punishment, passion and lust), and also with the prophetic forebodings of the writer.

KEYWORDS: Allusions, Existentialism, Freedom, Intertextuality, Motifs..

RESUMEN:

El ensayo aborda diversas formas de diálogo con F. M. Dostoievski en el ciclo de historias de Yuri Buida "The Osor'ins Chronicles". Los autores muestran que este diálogo se manifiesta a través de conexiones intertextuales, alusiones, detalles, técnicas narrativas que definen la trama interna del ciclo asociado con los tipos de personajes, problemas filosóficos inherentes a las obras de Dostoievski (libertad y falta de libertad, crimen y castigo, pasión y lujuria), y también con los presentimientos proféticos del escritor.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Alusiones, existencialismo, intertextualidad, libertad, motivos..

INTRODUCTION

Fyodor Dostoyevsky is one of those artists who were endowed with a prophetic gift and whose ideas are very important for the understanding of modernity, the fate of an individual and mankind at large. No wonder his creativity is constantly referred to in modern fiction. One of those Russian authors who constantly directly or indirectly alludes to the works of the classic is Yury Buida, a prominent Russian novelist (born 1954), a laureate of many prestigious awards, whose works have been translated into many foreign languages. Several

of his works were published in England and were warmly received by the critics (Mozur: 2003; Blacker: 2015; Villalobos et al.: 2018; Ramírez et al.: 2019). The first English translator of Buida's books Oliver Ready in his interview to *The Baltic Philological Currier* claims that it is high time Slavonic scholars included Buida's works into their teaching courses (Ready: 2015).

The aim of our essay is to define the nature and forms of Yury Buida's reception of F (Deweese & Muminov: 2008). Dostoyevsky as reflected in "The Osor'ins Chronicles", where this dialogue with the classic acquires most interesting and diverse forms.

METHODS

"The Osor'ins Chronicles" (2013) – a cycle was comprising nine stories, which trace the fates of the Princes Osor' in from the ancient times up to the 1970s. The heroes of Buida's cycle read Dostoyevsky's novels, reflect on them, quote his works, study his works professionally, write about them, give lectures on Dostoyevsky, and finally, in one of the stories the writer appears himself. In our research, we have used comparative, typological, dialogical and intertextual methods of analysis, based on the works of Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin: 1979), Yuri Lotman (Lotman: 1996), Vladimir Bibler (Bibler: 2012) and Julia Kristeva (Kristeva: 2004) as well as Kazan scholars V.R. Amineva., M.I. Ibragimov, E.F. Nagumanova, A.Z. Khabibullina (Amineva: 2015), R.F. Bekmetov (Bekmetov: 2015).

RESULTS

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Like Dostoyevsky Buida often portrays the characters of ideological perverts, a most striking and at the same time monstrous example of which is given in the story "The Case of Count O.". The story is written in the form of a letter to Count Alexei Petrovich O. by some unknown addresser. It contains the characteristics of the Count, the description of his crimes and the sentencing of the offender. Among many cynical crimes of the Count described in the letter the addresser highlights the most savage and sophisticated one, which clearly shows that the Count's inherent sensuality is not just animal instinct, but a conscious ideological position (Cohen et al.: 2013, p.119). Once Count Alexei Petrovich invited an Italian painter to his estate. This artist had a remarkable gift: he could control life through art. He was given an opportunity to "test the power of his brush" over the "lovely eleven-year-old girl" Elmira. He portrayed her as "a blooming girl of seventeen, in all the delights of bodily forms", as "a lush black curly-haired girl"; 'a gaunt nun, a luxurious Fleming, a diminutive Chinese (...). She forgot everything, losing herself, forgetting even her own name, forgot her mother, the loved ones..." (Buida: 2014). After one of these monstrous experiments, the Count took advantage of her, and in due period of time, during which the artist particularly often changed her nature, Elmira gave birth to a "bald-headed, scaly little monster". By order of the Count, the groom chopped it with an axe into small pieces and dumped the remains in the gutter. But experiments over the girl continued. She was thirty years aged, and finally, one morning, the mangled corpse of the eleven-year-old Elmira was found in her bed' (Buida: 2014).

Here like his great predecessor, the author exploits the motif of crossing the threshold, making its functions more complicated. Firstly, it is associated not only with the sin of permissiveness but also with the sin of self-deification, which Dostoyevsky considered one of the most dangerous diseases of civilization, leading to the crisis of humanistic values. Secondly, the motif of threshold in this story is related to the question about the possibilities of art and moral responsibility of an artist for the fate of his creation (Nordrum: 2020).

Abused Children: Victims And Accomplices

The above-mentioned story is closely connected with the theme of “abused children” – victims of violence, which was so important for Dostoyevsky. According to T. A. Kasatkina, Dostoyevsky first declared the theme of violence and abuse in the novel “Crime and Punishment”, which established a kind of gradation of the severity of this phenomenon: “Rape, argues Dostoyevsky, is not as bad, as seduction, precisely because violence is an external impact on the body and soul of a person, insult and shame, but not distortion and corruption. Violence turns the person into a victim (Mamaeva et al.: 2017, pp.84-89). Corruption makes one an accomplice in the sin” (Kasatkina: 2009). This gradation makes it possible to single out two types of “wronged children” in “The Osor’ins Chronicles”: victims of violence in the stories “Boris and Gleb”, “Elephant”, “The Case of Count O.”, “The Tale of Prince Alyoshenka”, “A New Don Juan”, “The Ages of Abraham and His Flocks”; and the children who become “accomplices in the sin”.

We first encounter such a character in the story “Clean, but not White”. It is Sofochka, the daughter of the landowner Yaishnikov. Her father, retired Lieutenant Yaishnikov, a drunkard and lecher, bad-tempered into the bargain represents another variant of Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, while in the character of Sophochka we see a mixture of the angelic and the demonic. Underlining this, Buida combines two groups of intertextual allusions: the image of Sophochka is simultaneously referred to Sonia Marmeladova and Nastasya Filippovna (Aleksandrovna: 2020).

Yaishnikov’s estate, “neglected poor and dirty”, produced a pitiful impression on Alexei Alexeyevich Osor’in. Seeing a “pained glance” cast by the girl at her father, Alexei realized that he could not leave her there, “among this dull abomination, among this depressing raggedness and shabbiness” (Buida: 2014). He took her to his house, and she became Alexei Alexeyevich’s “terrible secret”, “point faible” (Buida: 2014). But the atmosphere of debauchery that prevailed in her father’s house contributed to the early corruption of Sophochka. This creature, which impressed the Prince by the “infant face, baby lips and quite feminine forms”, was more demonic than angelic (Karkina et al.: 2019, pp.575–58). Pretending to be an innocent victim, she seduced Aleksey Alekseyevich and then having waited until he was captured by love – “ruthless, obsessive and crazy”, tried to get hold of his wealth. Osor’in was saved from complete bankruptcy and degradation by the fire in Yaishnikov’s house, resulting in the death of the father and daughter (Maralova et al.: 2016, pp.10569-10579).

DISCUSSION

Dostoyevsky and His Demons

The type of Superman becomes the main object of artistic study in “The Tale of Prince Alyoshenka”, which occupies a special place in the cycle because in it apart from a variety of intertextual allusions to the works of Dostoyevsky, and reflection on his heroes, the writer himself appears as an active character. At first, the name of the main character of “The Tale of Prince Alyoshenka” seems to be associated with Alyoshenka Karamazov– one of the most Christ-like heroes of Dostoyevsky, who is distinguished by moral purity and chastity, the wisdom of heart rather than the mind. But Buida endows his Prince Alyoshenka with all the characteristic features of Stavrogin who embodies the Antichrist element acting as a spiritual seducer. Obviously, Buida needed such a paradoxical combination of an emblematic name with the true nature of the character to focus on the confrontation between angel and devil in the human soul, so important in the works of Dostoyevsky, which is also one of the prevailing themes in “The Osor’ins Chronicles”. As a matter of fact, this topic is central to understanding the tragedy of Stavrogin himself (Mead & Doecke: 2020).

“The Tale of Prince Alyoshenka” is structured in the form of a dialogue, both participants of which know Dostoyevsky very well, often refer to his works, and both agree that Prince Alyoshenka is a “regular Stavrogin”. In his interpretation of this hero of Dostoyevsky Buida, in our opinion, followed N. Berdyayev who in 1914 wrote his famous essay “Stavrogin”. According to Berdyayev the tragedy of “Demons” is a tragedy of “demonical possession”, when an individual ‘dries up in the madness of chaos, the madness and fury of

passion, revolutionary and erotic and human abomination as such” (Berdyayev: 1994, p.510). Still, Yuri Buida echoing Berdyayev and even quoting him is looking at Stavrogin from the twenty-first century, when all the consequences of the demonic possession became even more apparent.

It is notable that Berdyayev in his characteristics of Nikolai Stavrogin uses the word “mask”. Buida’s hero is also accompanied by the motif of mask and role-playing. His acting manifested itself to the full during Prince Alyoshenka’s meeting with Dostoyevsky. In this “performance” he expressed himself both as a director and as an actor who knows the works of the writer very well and offers his own version of them. The meeting was preceded by a terrible exposition, played out as a kind of coup de théâtre, which set the key theme of the “play”, illustrating what Berdyayev called “the fury of passion [...] and just human filth”. Half an hour before coming to the apartment of the writer, Osor’in-Turovski raped and killed in Radulovskii Baths Dostoyevsky’s maid Varya, who accompanied her master with a basket of linen. Moreover, during the investigation, he did not even conceal that the murder was part of his game. However, from acting directly Prince Alyoshenka was prevented by his constant playacting, so he kept changing his evidence and did not make it clear why he came to Dostoyevsky: whether he wanted to kill the writer, or to talk about the novel “Crime and Punishment”, in which in the main hero Raskolnikov he saw his own portrait.

Justifying his life principles Prince Alyoshenka also refers to the gospel story, to the characters of Pilate and Jesus Christ. Buida’s character expresses a cynical justification of his right to crime. For this, he appeals to the image of Christ treating his teaching in his own way and distorting it beyond recognition. He insists that its meaning is “to be yourself”, and argues that his whole life was a search of his “true self”. Prince Alyoshenka argued that taking the evil deep into his soul he followed Christ, who took the sins of the people upon himself, he cynically declared that he wanted “to become evil, to banish it forever for the sake of the Golden age, for the sake of universal happiness” (Buida: 2014).

Like Stavrogin’s Buida’s hero’s “way of evil” in the story was also interrupted by his suicide. Modern Reception of “Crime and Punishment” Finally, in the last story of the cycle “The Age of Abraham,” Buida finalizes his dialogue with Dostoyevsky, which has run throughout the cycle. Its characters, and first and foremost Alexander Osor’ in, an outstanding Slavist, the author of two volumes on the evolution of the language and style of Dostoyevsky, are actively involved in the dialogue with the great writer. Buida makes Alexander Osor’ in his mouthpiece, who articulates the author’s assessment of the godless world:

“People have lost the basic need – the need to feel shame, sense of guilt, which distinguishes man from animal. (...) Such are the realities of the godless world in which personal guilt is replaced by the fiction of collective responsibility, in which crime and punishment become just bloodless fictions” (Buida: 2014).

However, Buida places him in the situation of the hero of “Crime and Punishment” when Osor’in commits murder “for a ‘test’ and then reports himself to the police:

On December 18, 1963, in London, the execution of Sir Alex Osor’ in – Prince Alexander Ivanovich Osor’ in, Professor at Oxford University, Slavonic scholar of international renown, who raped and brutally murdered Fanny Brown, an orphan, a cripple and a fool, known by the nickname of Blessed Fanny (Savory Fanny) – took place. During the investigation it was found that there were two more murders under his belt – that of Ingrid Dominguez, a student of St. Anne College, and Ellen Jones, a Portland prostitute (Buida: 2014).

Eventually, it becomes clear that all three crimes had the same origin. But after each murder, he lacked the mental strength to call the police. And only when he killed the cripple and fool Savory Fanny, “a pure and holy creature”, his hand did not flinch when dialling the number.

He perceived his death sentence as a “harmonious convergence of human laws, state laws with the laws of God”. This finally allowed Osor’ in to feel free; therefore he concludes his confessional letter with a quote from the epilogue of “Crime and Punishment”, which expresses Raskolnikov’s feelings when he finally liberated his soul from the burden of criminal theory. However, the price of such liberation was three human lives. Dostoyevsky leads his hero to the resurrection of the soul, but in the godless world where Buida’s hero lives, there is no more place for such spiritual transformation.

CONCLUSION

So engaging in a dialogue with Dostoevsky in the cycle of stories “The Osor’ins Chronicles” Yuri Buyda interprets and creatively develops the themes, motifs, images and symbols indicative of Dostoevsky’s works, actualizing them in the context of new times – the early twenty-first century.

Our analysis proves that in Buida’s cycle of stories the intertextual connections with the works of Dostoevsky determine the range of key themes – freedom and self-will, crime and punishment, self-deification; the sins of lust and corruption; the motives of devilry, homelessness, threshold, acting, nothingness. In Buida’s stories, we also encounter the types of heroes characteristic of Dostoevsky’s novels. The dialogue with Dostoevsky manifests itself through direct and indirect citations, allusions, reminiscences, referring to Dostoevsky’s key works – “Crime and Punishment”, “Idiot”, “Demons”, “The Karamazov Brothers”.

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