

# Mythological Images and Symbols in Russian Literature

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## **Annotation:**

The article explores mythological images and archetypes in Russian literature, their influence on plots, symbolism, and characters. It analyzes key archetypes such as the hero, trickster, wise old man, and shadow, as well as the use of folklore and biblical motifs. Special attention is given to the works of Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Bulgakov, where mythological elements play a crucial role. The study examines the interaction between pagan and Christian traditions in literature, as well as the influence of the collective unconscious on literary texts.

**Key words:** mythological images, archetypes, russian literature, mythological motifs, folklore, pagan mythology, biblical motifs, collective unconscious, hero, trickster, wise old man, shadow, Baba Yaga, Zmey Gorynych, Domovoy, Leshy, good and evil, apocalypse, martyr, symbolism.

Mythological images and archetypes play an important role in Russian literature, being not only artistic devices, but also a kind of code that allows for a deeper understanding of the philosophical and philosophical ideas of the works. Over the centuries, Russian literature has absorbed elements of folklore, pagan beliefs, and Christian traditions, creating a unique layer of artistic heritage filled with symbolism and universal motifs. It is relevant because mythological archetypes continue to influence literature and culture in general. They underlie many works, helping authors create complex, multi-layered images that are easily recognizable and resonate with readers. The study of mythological images in Russian literature allows us to better understand the ideas and motives of works, identify hidden meanings and trace how mythological thinking forms the structure of the

text. The analysis of archetypes helps to reveal the inner logic of literary works, their connection with tradition and cultural context.

Archetypes are universal symbols and behaviors that exist in the collective unconscious. Russian writers, starting from folk folklore and ending with the works of the XIX–XX centuries, actively used mythological motifs to convey philosophical ideas, reflect the national character and deepen the artistic meaning of the works. Mythology, as a source of plots and images, allowed the authors to create deep, multi-layered works that were understandable and relevant in different historical eras.

Russian literature is closely related to folk tales, epics, and pagan beliefs. Many mythological characters have become the basis for literary heroes. For example, Baba Yaga is an archetype of a witch associated with the trials of a hero. In Russian literature, her image is transformed, for example, in the fairy tales of Alexander Pushkin. Snake Gorynych is a multi-headed dragon, the embodiment of chaos and evil, often acts as the main opponent of the hero. Brownie and Leshy are spirits associated with the natural elements, which reflect the mythological perception of the world. Such images were actively used by Nikolai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Mikhail Bulgakov and other authors.

With the advent of Christianity, biblical archetypes entered Russian culture, which became an important part of literary works. The image of God and the Devil – the eternal struggle of good and evil – is represented in Dostoevsky's novels, especially in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The motif of the Apocalypse – the end of the world – is found in the works of Andrei Platonov. The image of a martyr, a suffering hero who sacrifices himself in the name of a higher goal, is represented in the image of Prince Myshkin from Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. Biblical motifs add philosophical depth to the works and reveal the religious and moral searches of the authors.

Great Russian writers used mythological images to convey meanings. Mikhail Bulgakov in *"The Master and Margarita"* builds the plot on the interaction of Christian and pagan mythology [1, 93]. Fyodor Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment* expresses the archetypal struggle of light and darkness through the characters Raskolnikov and Sonya [2, 66]. Nikolai Gogol in *"Evenings on a farm near Dikanka"* saturates the narrative with mythological characters – devils, witches, sorcerers [3, 74]. Alexander Pushkin uses elements of pagan mythology and epic in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* [4, 122]. Archetypal motifs help authors uncover the deeper meanings of their works and create characters who are close to readers at the level of the collective unconscious.

The term archetype was coined by the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, who argued that archetypal images are passed down through generations and are reflected in myths, legends, religious teachings and literature [5,98]. There are several key archetypes in Russian literature. Firstly, this is the hero – the central character who passes the tests, performs a feat and fights evil. In Russian mythology, his prototypes are heroes such as Ilya Muromets or Dobrynya Nikitich. In literature, this archetype is found in the image of Prince Igor in *The Tale of Igor's Regiment*, Pierre Bezukhov in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and even in Raskolnikov from Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

Another important archetype is the trickster. He is a cunning, dexterous character who uses deception, cunning and manipulation to achieve his goals. In Russian fairy tales, the trickster is often Ivan the fool, who at first glance seems to be a simpleton, but thanks to his wit and luck he defeats enemies and receives a reward. In literature, trickster traits can be found in the image of Ostap Bender from the works of Ilf and Petrov.

The archetype of the sage is a character with deep knowledge and experience who mentors the hero. In Russian mythology, this image is embodied in the figure of the Robber Nightingale or the old Magus [6, 147]. In literature, this archetype is found in the images of elders and philosophers, such

as Zosima in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* or Woland in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*.

Another important archetype is the shadow. This is the embodiment of the dark side of personality, chaos, evil. In Russian literature, this image is especially evident in Gogol's works, for example, in "Portrait" or "Viye".

Thus, mythological images and archetypes remain an important part of Russian literature, linking it with the world cultural heritage. They allow the authors to convey timeless ideas, create symbolic images and reflect the spiritual quest of society. Russian literature, using folklore, Christian and universal mythological motifs, retains its identity and depth, remaining relevant to readers of different eras.

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