

Natalya V. GORBUNOVA¹

Olga M. USHAKOVA²

UDC 821.111

**“REPASTS” OF THE REVOLUTION: PERSONAL ASCETICISM
AND COLLECTIVE SACRIFICIAL FEASTS
(F. M. DOSTOEVSKY’S *DEMONS*,
J. CONRAD’S *THE SECRET AGENT: A SIMPLE TALE*)**

¹ Cand. Sci. (Philol.), Associate Professor,
Department of Russian and Foreign Literature,
University of Tyumen
natvlagor@yandex.ru; ORCID: 0000-0002-8583-1385

² Dr. Sci. (Philol.), Professor,
Department of Russian and Foreign Literature,
University of Tyumen
olmiva@yandex.ru; ORCID: 0000-0002-0656-3774

Abstract

This paper presents a comparative analysis of food patterns as the elements of political discourse in the novels by Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) and Joseph Conrad (1857-1924). The stereotypes of food behavior and the gastronomic symbols, associated with the revolutionary activities, appeared simultaneously with literary nihilists. In Dostoevsky’s *Demons* (1871-1872), the issue of accomplishing social harmony (which was discussed in polemics with T. Carlyle and J. S. Mill) is connected to metaphorical images of repast. The “culinary” episodes are quite limited; this “poverty” of gastronomic motives could be explained by the “industrial era” ideology, when a meal ceased to stay among existential foundations. The “revolutionaries” destroying Russian traditional life are depicted as instruments of suicide or destruction. Heroes are eager for spiritual food but can only “devour each other”

Citation: Gorbunova N. V., Ushakova O. M. 2021. “‘Repasts’ of the Revolution: Personal Asceticism and Collective Sacrificial Feasts (F. M. Dostoevsky’s *Demons*, J. Conrad’s *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale*)”. Tyumen State University Herald. Humanities Research. Humanitates, vol. 7, no. 2 (26), pp. 144-159.

DOI: 10.21684/2411-197X-2021-7-2-144-159

or be devoured; the “Idea”, which destroys individual organisms, turns entire social organisms into “porridge”. The abstract characters of feasts and the absence of any specific meal details symbolize “emptiness” of human existence. This rejection of “basic” elements of life can develop into “sacrificial” feasts with human victims. In Conrad’s novel *The Secret Agent* (1907; a dialogue with Dostoevsky), the revolutionary “sacrificial meal” appears through the “kitchen” metaphors and “slaughterhouse” symbols. The remains of an idiot sacrificed by new “apostles” resemble butcher’s by-products. The “secret agent” (Verloc) having satisfied hunger with meat (like Verkhovenskiy who is constantly hungry) is murdered with a kitchen knife as a sacrificial animal. Another expressive “gastronomic” trail is Conrad’s parody on stereotypical food asceticism of fighters for the Idea: fat anarchist Michaelis eats only raw carrots. Thus, in Dostoevsky’s and Conrad’s novels, important models of individual food behavior and culinary “bloody triune” metaphors are associated with nihilistic behavior and revolutionary activities. Food metaphors help writers to express their negative attitude towards the destructive activities of nihilists. The main ideas of the paper were presented at the BASEES Annual Conference 2018 (Fitzwilliam College — Churchill College, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom).

Keywords

Food symbols and metaphors, meal in literature, nihilism, revolutionary sacrifice, F. M. Dostoevsky, Joseph Conrad.

DOI: 10.21684/2411-197X-2021-7-2-144-159

Introduction

For the last decades, food has emerged as an important topic of academic literary studies. British literary scholar Joan Fitzpatrick, one of the authors of the book *A History of Food in Literature. From the Fourteenth Century to the Present* (2017), mentioned:

“Literary critics who write about food understand that the use of food in novels, plays, poems, and other works of literature can help explain the complex relationship between the body, subjectivity, and social structures regulating consumption” [13, p. 122].

The literature of the second half of the 19th — early 20th centuries was formed in the context of the developing “industrial era”. The relative “poverty” of gastronomic motifs in the works of this period is quite understandable: the “repasts” as such are no longer perceived as the fundamental basis for the human existence of any estate and status. At the same time, the image of the “repasts” in literature acquires more and more symbolic meaning than before.

This paper presents a comparative analysis of food patterns in the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) and Joseph Conrad (1857-1924). The research aims to consider such patterns, as food behavior, kitchen metaphors and images, gastronomic and cookery symbols, and other food textual codes as elements of the social-political

discourse in the Russian and English literature. The main idea of this work is that the food patterns presented in the novels adequately and fully reflect the philosophical views of the authors and their attitude to their contemporary political realities.

Results and discussion

Russian porridge and other “edible” ideas in F. M. Dostoevsky’s Demons

For F. M. Dostoevsky (1821-1881), the gastronomic theme is not central, the limitations of “culinary” quotations are evident in his novel *Demons* (1871-1872). However, N. A. Berdyaev in his work *Dostoevsky’s Worldview* noted: the “dirty taverns”, in which the characters of his works “are talking about world issues”, are merely “symbolically mapped moments of the human spirit”, and all his work is “a real repast of thought” [1]. The novel *Demons* also did not become an exception. It can be considered as a kind of polemics with the representatives of the English philosophical thought of the 19th century. That includes primarily T. Carlyle (1795-1881; *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, 1840) [3] and John S. Mill (1806-1873; *On Liberty*, 1859) [16]. One of the most urgent questions was about the origins, capable of uniting people, who wished to live in a harmoniously arranged society and — as a consequence — on the essence of individual freedom and its boundaries.

The 19th century — “a dead century”, “an unbelieving century” [3] — did not just reject the “heroic” beginning. The vector of movement to some unified “democratic” standards was set: “now read the same things, listen to the same things, see the same things, go to the same places, have their hopes and fears directed to the same objects, have the same rights and liberties” [18, p. 68]. In the context of Dostoevsky’s reflections, perception of the current ideas of European liberalism in the course of development of the Russian thought and life acquires an extremely tragic character. It is no coincidence that his “underground man” gives his time an even more severe characterization: “blood flows down as a river <...> like champagne. That’s all our nineteenth century...” [10, p. 65]. The mechanical transfer to the Russian ground of initially alien “Western” ideas can lead to a complete elimination of the “national” identity. Unsurprisingly, Dostoevsky compares a person, carried away with the ideas of liberalism and socialism, with an “erased coin”: “it can be seen that silver, and no stigma, nor the year, nor any nation, whether French, Dutch or Russian, is unknown” [7, p. 113]. This universal “standard” leads to even more tragic consequences, as it gradually destroys the basic “strength of the people” — the faith in their “special” God, who determines their system of moral concepts. It is no accident that one of the most dramatic dialogues of the novel *Demons* — the conversation between already “willy-nilly revolutionaries”, Shatov and Stavrogin — reveals a thought, principled for Dostoevsky himself:

“Every nation has its own concept of evil and good and its own evil and good. When the notions of good and evil begin to become common among many peoples, then <...> the very difference between evil and good begins to fade and disappear” [8, p. 251].

The novel *Demons* became Dostoevsky’s answer to the question on the prospects of liberalism and socialism in Russia. The central characters of the novel are people of very different origins, ridden by a thirst for all kinds of changes “by all means” for many reasons. Every one of them is “obsessed”, similar to the “demons” in a biblical parable, with their own ideal of a happy future, and this obsession affects even the natural foundations of their everyday life. Some details, which characterize the attitude of the novel’s characters towards food or the process of its consumption, prove that. Food and everything related starts being regarded more as an addition to life, rather annoying than necessary. Actual “dinner” ceases to be perceived by companions as a kind of “magic rite”, which testifies to the “sacred” character of the very process of living, as it used to be before. However, food is a kind of a marker — not of “abundance” or “attachment to the material” anymore, but of “security of life”, “connectedness” with a being, or its absence. The appeal to “gastronomic” details allows focusing on the ideas that Dostoevsky also reflects in his other famous works (*Notes from Underground*, 1864; *Diary of the Writer*, 1870s).

“Revolutionaries”, like the rest of the population in a fictional provincial town, are depicted as beings who are keenly eager for spiritual food. However, they literally either “feed on each other”, or get absorbed by the “idea” of their own. The “idea” is sometimes completely alien being brought into consciousness from the outside. Such an “idea” not only destroys a single human organism, but also transforms the whole “social organism” into a “porridge”.

In particular, this concerns the situation of a conscious choice between “us” and “them”. It is no coincidence that the “revolutionaries” of different views and ages, presented in the *Demons*, have almost a painful predilection for dishes and drinks of “foreign origin”, which appeared relatively recently in the context of Russian cuisine of the 19th century. Thus, the person of the “generation of Chaadaev, Belinsky, Granovsky and Herzen”, a “liberal of the forties” [8, p. 20, 317], Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky demonstrates an extreme degree of irritation when talking or thinking “about the daily bread” and an extreme degree of arrogance in relation to Russian “peasant pancakes” and “vodka” [8, p. 608-609]. However, this does not prevent him from thinking about the “beautiful future” of Russia, when he almost daily drinks champagne or wine, generously paid for by his patroness Stavrogina. A more curious nuance is revealed here: the bread as the embodiment of the “toxic environment”, as a basis for the “Russian taste”, and any other traditional food and drinks (e. g., vodka) act in this case as a kind of indicator of “us”, which, for various reasons, is perceived as hostile, as “them”.

Another “liberal thinker”, dreaming about transformations — “a great writer” and “the cleverest man in Russia” (as translated by Constance Garnett), Mr. Karmazinov — reflects in all his works on the fate of his fatherland, yet spends most of his life abroad. It is no coincidence that the details of his daily morning meal are listed in detail by the narrator, not without irony: “a small cutlet with half a glass of red wine” and “a small cup of coffee” [8, p. 358]. These seemingly insignificant details reveal the general character of Mr. Karmazinov’s “foreign” attachments, and the peculiarities of his ambiguous attitude both to his compatriots, and to the events taking place in his homeland.

A diverse audience, younger and simpler, gathering in the house of a small official in the Virginiato, discuss the most radical ideas for restructuring of Russian life — “ours”, as the narrator calls them ironically — painfully waiting for dinner, but only tea and snacks are offered to them (“two samovars <...> and a basket with plain French white bread, cut into many slices” [8, pp. 378-379]).

Thus, the desire for a change is manifested primarily in the rejection of the traditional gastronomic repertoire for the “former” Russia. This, in turn, gradually leads to rejecting everything that connects with the unloved fatherland: the traditional way of life, the Orthodox faith, and family relations, which have been sanctified by centuries. But above all, the image of the main “revolutionary”, Pyotr Verkhovensky, vividly demonstrates the triumph of the destructive “European” ideas in Dostoevsky’s novel. His meal at the tavern in the presence of Liputin is a blatant demonstration of “alienation” to everything that surrounds him in the city. He is not just hungry and eats a lot, but he “absorbs”, “devours” a beefsteak: “Pyotr Stepanovich did not hurry, ate with taste, called, demanded another mustard, then beer...” [8, p. 531]. Everything in his diet is “alien”, and in a literal and figurative sense, starting from the origin of dishes, seasonings, and drinks and ending with the food itself, often intended for another character.

Pyotr Verkhovensky being the main “ideologist” of the revolution as total destruction fits into a variety of associative contexts. He does not simply resemble the Old Testament’s “nation of fierce countenance” from the Book of Deuteronomy: “he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed” [6, p.1641]. He dreams of creating a “porridge” from life in Russia, mixing everything that is possible, making relative and lowering to the lowest level all values for the sake of the idea of universal “equality” elevated to the absolute.

However, porridge is a traditional dish of Russian cuisine, and it seems nonrandom. The symbolism of mentioning “porridge” as a kind of primitive formless mass as the ideal outcome of Verkhovensky’s activity is obvious. In this regard, it can be assumed that even the most liberal, initially “alien” idea in the context of a principled rejection of “one’s own”, taking into account the special “Russian sympathy” [9, pp. 124-125], becomes in the end an integral part of the Russian life, which this same Russian life eventually absorbs without a trace. However, there’s another possible assumption as well. The return to the “primordial national values” which Verkhovensky preaches for, can also testify on the immersion into the archaic foundations of people’s nature and a more ancient “Dionysian” element, as well as the immersion of the original being-chaos, devoid of images and limits.

It is noteworthy that the more radical “revolutionaries” capable of reinforcing the idea with action are basically consciously seeking to reject food — not only the “nationally oriented”, but food in general, as one of the most essential necessities of life. Every one of them, driven by the desire to change in many ways the archaic foundations of Russian life, is portrayed by Dostoevsky as a person who “broke away from nature, from organic roots and declared self-will” [2].

This “separation from the natural, organic life” (N. A. Berdyaev) in Dostoevsky’s work is revealed, for example, even in how and what the protagonists of the *Demons*

are going to eat. They are not shown in the process of eating as such: in the “reform novel”, we can see only lunch, “snacks”, tea or coffee — just something that should be, is expected, or has already been completed. Conversations or, more precisely, passionate monologues about the future and a certain “harmonious” arrangement of society practically replace food.

Such, for example, is the engineer Kirillov, who has returned from America and is considering the prospects and limits of mankind’s development: he is constantly waiting for dinner or tea; on the eve of his suicide, he shouts to Verkhovensky about the “boiled chicken with rice”, which “he has just eaten” [8, p. 584], although the text itself does not mention him touching either food or drink. It is no accident that Pyotr Verkhovensky notes in the last conversation with Kirillov: “You did not eat the idea, but you ‘were eaten by the idea’” [8, p. 560].

It is noteworthy that in addition to Verkhovensky the novel depicts only a runaway convict Fedka equally selflessly absorbing food, who became a victim of Verkhovensky’s intrigues, similar to Shatov and Kirillov. On the eve of his premeditated murder, Fedka sees in front of him on the table “half-stout, bread, a cold piece of beef with potatoes” [8, p. 536]. Moreover, other victims of the destructive elements embodied in Verkhovensky, Shatov, and Kirillov, are also forced to engage in “food and cuisine” literally on the eve of death. This also recalls the ancient rite of saturation of criminals before execution as a ritual sacrifice before murder, which is approved by the public interest (James Fraser).

In general, the image of the meal and the specifics of its use in the text of the novel are closely correlated with reflections on the Idea that feeds the “revolutionaries”. The image of “bread of the spiritual” takes on extreme clarity and expressiveness in a literally “food” context, at the level of reference to the theme of “earthly bread”. It is no coincidence that the student Shatov, who unwittingly became a kind of a “ritual sacrifice” for the sake of the lofty idea of “renewal of Russian society”, after the murder, appears to have carried two or three “empty” pieces of paper in his pocket, one of which is an “old foreign tavern account”, paid two years prior [8, p. 577]. Thus, perhaps, Dostoevsky “explains” to the reader the inevitability of understanding both the meaninglessness of the murder itself and the ephemeral nature of the idea for which it was committed. He, in fact, too, like Kirillov, “was eaten by the idea”.

In Dostoevsky’s novel, especially in the context of understanding the “revolutionary” ideas associated with “social change”, a shared meal loses its usual functions. This idea as if disconnects people, reveals hostility and even the characters’ hatred towards each other (it is no accident that only one at a time eats while the others observe). Conversations during the meal are rather complex interrelated monologues, when everyone listens to the other and agrees to disagree. Paradoxically, the “repast” often precedes death in Dostoevsky’s novel, as if putting a symbolic point in the life of a character.

The abstract enumeration of conditional “feast forms” or individual “dishes” and the lack of details when describing the meal are meant to testify about the symbolic “emptiness” of being. This can be perceived as a kind of a warning: a person, who

worships the “idea”, rejects the “basic” elements of the life process and perceives them over time as unimportant, “irrelevant”; in any case, they risk becoming a part of the “sacrificial” meal in the most extreme meaning of this concept.

“Sacrificial Feasts” in Joseph Conrad’s The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale

The images of nihilists and revolutionaries created by Russian writers have become archetypes and symbols finding their own place, status, and meaning in other cultural and literary contexts. The type of a nihilist “invented” in Russian literature was reincarnated and mythologized in the works of English writers (see [21]). The roots of Russian Nihilism in Western literature have been drawn from the novels by I. S. Turgenev and F. M. Dostoevsky since the time of Oscar Wilde (e. g., *Vera, or the Nihilists*, 1880). The cult of Dostoevsky and Russian culture in turn-of-the century Europe awoke not only the “Russian fever”, but also the paranoia of the imminent threat coming from Russia. *Demons* as an anti-ritualistic pamphlet-novel aimed as an attack on radicalism and terrorism was perceived as a warning by many Western intellectuals. Thus, in T. S. Eliot’s story *On the Eve* (1925¹; published in *The Criterion* journal with the title pointed to the eve of revolutionary events and alluded to I. S. Turgenev’s novel), the protagonists are discussing some familiar anarchists who are ready to destroy the civilization: “their one interest and amusement is to pull down and shatter England” [12, p. 279]. It is no coincidence that the heroes of Eliot’s story quote Dostoevsky’s *Demons*, comparing English anarchists to *Gadarene swine* [12, p. 280].

Russia has played a very important and fatal role in Joseph Conrad’s life and works. His personal experience (exiled as a child to Vologda with his parents) and actual geopolitical issues of the time (Russian-Polish “issue”) defined his hatred towards the Imperial autocracy and Tsarist regime. Russia for him was associated with suffering and horror. Conrad’s attitude towards Russia was never indifferent but passionate and personal. He described Russia in his novels, short stories, essays, etc. Very often Russian people in his fiction have been presented as muted victims of the autocracy hostile to everything independent, honest, noble:

“The images of Russian people, from ordinary men to tsarist dignitaries, bear the terrible stigma of centuries-old slavery. Barbarism (‘Byzantine-Tartar barbarism’) was the word around which Conrad’s concepts were grouped and consciously conjugated with the image of Russia” [19, p. 33].

The image of Russian autocracy was central in the novels *Secret Agent: A Simple Story* (1907), *Under Western Eyes* (1911), and several short stories. The image of Russia was also paired with the image of Revolution and such group of Russian people as revolutionaries. The Russian revolutionary movement gave Conrad the hope for a change in Poland’s fate. This explains his attention to those people who dared to fight against the Russian autocracy. On the other hand, Conrad could not but realize

¹ The authorship of this story is questioned.

the destructive individualism of fighters against the state, and the specter of Revolution was for him a sign of the future decline of the Western civilization.

There is a block of Conrad's works that could conventionally be called “political” or “anti-nihilistic”. The satirical and melodramatic line in the depiction of Russian nihilists (Alexander Ossipon, Kyrilo Sidorovitch Razumov, Victor Haldin, etc.) was mainly presented in the *Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*. Russian scholar Elena Solovyeva in her monograph *Joseph Conrad and Russia* (2012) gives a detailed and thorough analysis of the theme of “Russian students”, “Russian revolutionaries”, and other Russian social groups in Conrad's novels. In her words:

“Conrad carefully and intensely pondered the phenomenon of a Russian revolutionary, tried to understand what motivates a young man to come to the revolutionary struggle; what makes old people remain faithful to the convictions of their youth, how fanaticism and practicality, sincerity and falsehood, nobility and baseness are intertwined in this movement” [19, pp. 103-104].

It is difficult to say to what extent Conrad used documentary material, and to what extent reworked images of nihilists created by Turgenev and Dostoevsky. The details from the Russian revolutionaries' lives, as well as their reflection in the novels by Russian writers, were refracted in the mind of the writer, but it is obvious that a generalized portrait of Russian anarchists was built on this basis. The facts, obtained from various sources, were melted into an integral model of the world being torn apart by the tragic contradictions between an individual and the state, the Christian morality and anarchic permissiveness.

It is well-known that Conrad's attitude towards Dostoevsky was actively hostile. Conrad, who wrote the foreword to Edward Garnett's monograph on Turgenev (1917), emphasized that he put Turgenev's genius much higher than Dostoevsky. He bewailed that “it is not the convulsed terror-haunted Dostoevski but the serene Turgenev who is under a curse. For only think!” [4, p. ix]. Anyway, most researchers noted a paradox: Conrad admired Turgenev and did not like Dostoevsky, but he was influenced mostly by Dostoevsky, not Turgenev. Although there is no direct evidence of this influence, Russian and western researchers mention the parallels demonstrating that Conrad actively used Dostoevsky's discoveries (e. g., the comparison of Razumov and Raskolnikov) but never recognized this. Thus, American scholar of Conrad's works David R. Smith in his essay *Dostoevsky and Conrad* confirms this paradox: “What had been anti-Dostoevskian has become Dostoevskian” [18, p. 10].

Dostoevsky's idea that a political fanatic refusing the “basic” elements of the life process risks becoming the “sacrificial” meal was developed by Conrad in his *The Secret Agent*. This Conrad's novel could be considered as a dialogue with Dostoevsky. But compared to Dostoevsky in Conrad's novel, the demons, sinister leaders of underground are brought out in a caricatured form. The novel reflects the fear of the dynamic-throwing anarchists disturbing England in the 1880s, the time of anarchist activity. The idea of this novel was prompted by a real event, an attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory on 15 February 1894 (*Greenwich*

Bomb Outrage), prepared by a group of conspirators. The investigation showed that Martial Bourdin, who accidentally blew himself up and was killed by the bomb, was mentally disabled.

In Conrad's novel, the revolutionary "sacrificial meal" appears through the "kitchen" metaphors and "slaughterhouse" symbols. The remains of Stevie, an idiot-boy, sacrificed by new "apostles", resemble butcher's by-products (Chapter 5):

"And meantime the Chief Inspector went on peering at the table with a calm face and the slightly anxious attention of an indigent customer bending over what may be called the by-products of a butcher's shop with a view to an inexpensive Sunday dinner. All the time his trained faculties of an excellent investigator, who scorns no chance of information, followed the self-satisfied, disjointed loquacity of the constable" [5, p. 107].

"Sunday" dinner could be associated also with the sacrament of the Eucharist and the Resurrection, which gives the theme of the innocent victim's religious semantics.

Conrad shared Dostoevsky's negative attitude towards revolutionary rhetoric. Lacking a clear religious outlook, he nevertheless opposed the immorality of nihilistic philosophy to Christian moral position expressed in the image of Stevie, an idiot in Ossipon's words. The coincidence of the images of Stevie and Prince Myshkin is evident. The nature of the boy was love, which he shared with his closest one. Stevie dies in a world built on lies and malice. It was Verloc who became the cause of his death putting a bomb in his hands and betraying the boy's love. It is symbolic that a boy who loves everyone just because they exist died for anyone and for everyone. The horror of Stevie's remains evokes the image of Revolution as a meat grinder and carnage devoid of any heroism and romanticism.

There is a certain logic and morale in the fact that the organizer of this crime, Verloc, in his turn, also becomes a victim. And the scene of his murder is described in the same butcher shop stylistics (Chapter 9):

"Mr Verloc got up at once, and staggered a little before he sat down at the table. His wife, examining the sharp edge of the carving knife, placed it on the dish, and called his attention to the cold beef. He remained insensible to the suggestion, with his chin on his breast" [5, p. 184].

The "secret agent" (Verloc), having satisfied his hunger with meat (like Verkhovenskiy who was constantly hungry):

"On this delicate impulse Mr Verloc withdrew into the parlour again, where the gas-jet purred like a contented cat. Mrs Verloc's wifely forethought had left the cold beef on the table with carving knife and fork and half a loaf of bread for Mr Verloc's supper. He noticed all these things now for the first time, and cutting himself a piece of bread and meat, began to eat" [5, p. 212].

The process of eating is represented in psychological terms, it is simultaneously an internal holding and a manifestation of nervous tension.

Verloc cannot get rid of obsessive vision and unpleasant associations in any way:

"The sensation of unappeasable hunger, not unknown after the strain of a hazardous enterprise to adventurers of tougher fibre than Mr Verloc, overcame him again. The piece of roast beef, laid out in the likeness of funeral baked meats for Stevie's obsequies, offered itself largely to his notice. And Mr Verloc again partook. He partook ravenously, without restraint and decency, cutting thick slices with the sharp carving knife, and swallowing them without bread" [5, p. 117].

The reminiscence of Stevie is natural because Mr. Verloc is murdered with a kitchen knife as another sacrificial animal.

The kitchen knife becomes a symbol of revolutionary terror ("He really believed that it would be upon the whole easy for him to escape the knife of infuriated revolutionist") and the instrument of sacrifice. Mrs. Verloc takes revenge on her husband for the fact that she herself has sacrificed her future for him. The kitchen becomes a universal altar of revolutionary bloody sacrifices (Chapter 11):

"By the position of the body the face of Mr. Verloc was not visible to Mrs. Verloc, his widow. Her fine, sleepy eyes, travelling downward on the track of the sound, became contemplative on meeting a flat object of bone which protruded a little beyond the edge of the sofa. It was the handle of the domestic carving knife with nothing strange about it but its position at right angles to Mr. Verloc's waistcoat and the fact that something dripped from it. Dark drops fell on the floorcloth one after another, with a sound of ticking growing fast and furious like the pulse of an insane clock. At its highest speed this ticking changed into a continuous sound of trickling. Mrs. Verloc watched that transformation with shadows of anxiety coming and going on her face. It was a trickle, dark, swift, thin... Blood!" [5, p. 236].

Conrad employs caricature, a certain kind of black humor and comic sense that resembles Dostoevsky's writing. One cannot fail to notice the intentional decrease of the revolutionary rhetoric pathos: the bloody sacrifice was not made on the fields of revolutionary battles, but in the kitchen and the subject of the rage is not a revolutionary but the deceived wife turned into an angry fury. It is an impressive universal "kitchen" metaphor of the ordinariness of evil and mediocrity of political destruction and destructors.

Professor Tolmachev, the editor and commentator of Russian translations of Conrad's "Russian novels", reveals a thorough mythological parallel in this kitchen scene:

"in the novel, the ghost of the revolution foreshadowing the decline of civilization and the death of Belshazzar at a feast (this image was originally played by Conrad in the scene of the murder of Verloc) are associated not only with explosives, anarchists, emigrants, double agents, but also with the end of patriarchy, rebellion and the revenge of women and gender" [20, p. 519].

Belshazzar blasphemes against God and his feast becomes his last repast, Verloc's dinner, where everything resembles the innocent victim (Stevie, whose name reminds about the first Christian Martyr, Stephen), doomed in a metaphysical sense.

Another expressive “gastronomic” trail is Conrad’s parody on stereotypical food asceticism of fighters for the Idea: fat anarchist Michaelis. Conrad uses the external features of famous Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin’s appearance to create a portrait of Michaelis: a huge belly, painful puffiness of the face, and puffy pale cheeks. Bakunin’s health suffered greatly in solitary confinement. Michaelis eats only raw carrots (Chapter 13):

“The Perfect Anarchist had even been unbending a little. ‘The fellow didn’t know anything of Verloc’s death. Of course! He never looks at the newspapers. They make him too sad; he says. But never mind. I walked into his cottage. Not a soul anywhere. I had to shout half a dozen times before he answered me. I thought he was fast asleep yet, in bed. But not at all. He had been writing his book for four hours already. He sat in that tiny cage in a litter of manuscripts. There was a half-eaten raw carrot on the table near him. His breakfast. He lives on a diet of raw carrots and a little milk now’” [5, p. 263].

Michaelis in Conrad’s novel is a victim of his own idea, a fanatic of freedom, a lone thinker, fenced off from life first by prison walls and then by his own illusions. Conrad creates a picture of anarchism as an ideological system that controls the minds of so different people, and as a structure that has a theoretical center and practical embodiment at the level of propaganda and everyday behavior. The figure of Michaelis living in emphatically ascetic conditions and aloof from everything vain and material reflects the inhumanity of a political fanatic who is ready to sacrifice the lives of others.

The theme of sacrifice helps to understand that “the real hero is an idiot who trips and blows himself up. Yet the infected corpse of society dragged out into the open by Conrad is at all points shown to have been violated — by pretence, egomania, hypocrisy, lust, prostitution, greed” [17, p. 36]. The gastronomic metaphors, images, and scenes help the author to visualize political ideas and dig up their true meaning.

Conclusion

Paradoxically, the food discourse in the novels reveals similarity of philosophical and political views of Polonophobe Dostoevsky and Russophobe Conrad, their general Conservatism and rejection of any terror and radicalism. It is no coincidence that Martin Seymour-Smith ironically states that Conrad’s novel “could easily be a shortened version of *The Devils* by an anglicized Pole, as anyone who reads the two books in succession may see” [17, p. 12].

Thus, in the novels by Dostoevsky and Conrad, important models of individual food behavior and culinary “bloody triune” metaphors are associated with nihilistic behavior and revolutionary activities. Such cookery images as “porridge” (Dostoevsky) and “butcher’s by-products” (Conrad) reveal the bloody, destructive, and merciless nature of the revolutionary terrorist actions. Paradoxically, the “repasts” often precede deaths in both Dostoevsky’s and Conrad’s novels, and the kitchen space is associated with the ritualistic altar of revolutionary bloody sacrifice. Kitchen

metaphors, characters' food behavior, diets and gastronomic tastes of political activists presented in a comic caricature form reflect the skeptical attitude of both writers to anarchist and socialist ideology. The “ideas” not only destroy a single human organism but can transform the whole “social organism” into a “porridge” and “butcher’s by-products”. Food metaphors help Dostoevsky and Conrad to express their negative attitude towards the destructive activities of nihilists and warn of impending global disasters.

REFERENCES

1. Berdyaev N. A. “Chapter One. Spiritual Image of Dostoevsky”. In: Berdyaev N. A. Dostoevsky’s Worldview. Accessed 9 April 2021. http://az.lib.ru/b/berdjaew_n_a/text_1921_dostoevsky.shtml [In Russian]
2. Berdyaev N. A. “Chapter Two. A Human”. In: Berdyaev N. A. Dostoevsky’s Worldview. Accessed 9 April 2021. http://az.lib.ru/b/berdjaew_n_a/text_1921_dostoevsky.shtml [In Russian]
3. Carlyle Th. 1840. “Lecture Six. The Hero as King”. In: Carlyle Th. On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History, pp. 181-224. London: Chapman and Hall. Accessed 3 April 2021. <https://archive.org/details/heroesheroworshi00carl/page/4/mode/2up>
4. Conrad J. 1917. “Foreword”. In: Garnett E. Turgenev. A Study, pp. v-x. London: W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd.
5. Conrad J. 1984. *The Secret Agent. A Simple Tale*. London: Penguin Books.
6. Deuteronomy. *The Old Testament*. In: *The Books of the Bible*, pp. 140-214. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
7. Dostoevsky F. M. 1993. “Bookishness and literacy. Article second”. In: Dostoevsky F. M. *Collected Works in 15 vols. Vol. 11*, pp. 105-145. St. Petersburg: Nauka. Accessed 9 April 2021. <http://rvb.ru/dostoevski/01text/vol11/1861/78.htm> [In Russian]
8. Dostoevsky F. M. 2007. *Besy*. St. Petersburg: Azbuka-klassika. 704 pp. [In Russian]
9. Dostoevsky F. M. 2011. *Writer’s Diary*. St. Petersburg: Azbuka-Atticus. 464 pp. [In Russian]
10. Dostoevsky F. M. 2012. *Notes from the Underground*. St. Petersburg: Azbuka-Atticus. 256 pp. [In Russian]
11. Dostoevsky F. *The Possessed, or The Devils*. Translated by C. Garnett. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/8117/8117-h/8117-h.htm>
12. Eliot T. S. 1925 (1967). “On the Eve. A Dialogue”. *Criterion*, no. 10, January. Reprinted in: *The Criterion. The Collected Edition. Vol. 3*, pp. 278-281. London, Faber and Faber Ltd.
13. Fitzpatrick J. 2012. “Food and Literature. An Overview”. In: Albala K. (ed.). *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*, pp. 122-134. London; New York: Routledge.
14. Kaye P. 1999. *Dostoevsky and English Modernism, 1900-1930*. Cambridge University Press.
15. Meyers J. 2014. “Portraits of a Terrorist: Dostoevsky, Conrad, and Coetzee”. *The Antioch Review*, vol. 72, no. 1, *Generations: Passing the Torch?* (Winter), pp. 61-80.

16. Mill J. S. 1859 (2001). "Chapter 3. Of Individuality, as One of the Elements of Well-being". In: Mill J. S. *On Liberty*, pp. 52-68. Kitchener: Batoche Books. Accessed 3 April 2021. <https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/mill/liberty.pdf>
17. Seymour-Smith M. 1984. "Introduction". In: Conrad J. *The Secret Agent. A Simple Tale*, pp. 9-36. London: Penguin Books.
18. Smith D. R. 1991. "Dostoevsky and Conrad". *The Conradian*, vol. 15, no. 2 (January), pp. 1-11.
19. Solovyeva E. E. 2012. *Joseph Conrad and Russia*. Cherepovets: ChGU. [In Russian]
20. Tolmachev V. M. 2012. "Joseph Conrad and His 'Russian Novels'". In: Conrad J. *The Secret Agent. A Simple Tale. Under Western Eyes*, pp. 477-534. Moscow: Ladomir: Nauka. [In Russian]
21. Ushakova O. M. 2016. "A Russian Nihilist as a Hero of English Literature of the 19-21st Centuries". In: *Perm University Herald. Series "Foreign Languages and Literatures"*, no. 1, pp. 106-117. [In Russian]

Наталья Владимировна ГОРБУНОВА¹
Ольга Михайловна УШАКОВА²

УДК 821.111

**«ТРАПЕЗЫ» РЕВОЛЮЦИИ: ИНДИВИДУАЛЬНАЯ АСКЕЗА
И КОЛЛЕКТИВНЫЕ ЖЕРТВЕННЫЕ ПИРЫ
(«БЕСЫ» Ф. М. ДОСТОЕВСКОГО,
«ТАЙНЫЙ АГЕНТ» ДЖ. КОНРАДА)**

¹ кандидат филологических наук, доцент
кафедры русской и зарубежной литературы,
Тюменский государственный университет
natvlagor@yandex.ru; ORCID: 0000-0002-8583-1385

² доктор филологических наук, профессор
кафедры русской и зарубежной литературы,
Тюменский государственный университет
olmiva@yandex.ru; ORCID: 0000-0002-0656-3774

Аннотация

В данной статье представлен сравнительный анализ пищевых тропов как элементов политического дискурса в романах Федора Михайловича Достоевского (1821-1881) и Джозефа Конрада (1857-1924). Стереотипы пищевого поведения и гастрономические символы, связанные с революционной деятельностью, появились одновременно с литературными нигилистами. В «Бесах» (1871-1872) Ф. М. Достоевского проблема достижения социальной гармонии (полемика с Т. Карлейлем и Дж. С. Миллем) связана с метафорическими образами трапезы. «Кулинарные» эпизоды весьма ограничены; эту «бедность» гастрономических мотивов можно объяснить идеологией «индустриальной эпохи», когда еда перестала оставаться одной из экзистенциальных основ. Революционеры, разрушающие русскую традиционную жизнь, изображаются как орудия самоубийства или разрушения. Герои жаждут духовной пищи, но могут только «пожрать»

Цитирование: Горбунова Н. В. «Трапезы» революции: индивидуальная аскеза и коллективные жертвенные пиры («Бесы» Ф. М. Достоевского, «Тайный агент» Дж. Конрада) / Н. В. Горбунова, О. М. Ушакова // Вестник Тюменского государственного университета. Гуманитарные исследования. Humanitates. 2021. Том 7. № 2 (26). С. 144-159.
DOI: 10.21684/2411-197X-2021-7-2-144-159

друг друга» или быть поглощены; «Идея», разрушающая отдельные организмы и весь общественный организм, превращает всё в «кашу». Абстрактность застолий, отсутствие каких-либо специфических деталей еды символизируют «пустоту» человеческого существования. Этот отказ от «основных» элементов жизни может перерасти в «жертвенные» пиршества с человеческими жертвами. В романе Джозефа Конрада «Тайный агент» (1907), который можно рассматривать как диалог с Достоевским, революционная «жертвенная трапеза» проявляется через «кухонные» метафоры и символы «бойни». Останки идиота, принесенного в жертву новым «апостолам», напоминают продукты мясника. «Секретный агент» (Верлок), утолив голод мясом (постоянно голодный подобно Верховенскому), убит кухонным ножом как жертвенное животное. Еще один выразительный «гастрономический» след — пародия Конрада на стереотипный пищевой аскетизм борцов за Идею: анархист Михаэлис тучного телосложения ест только сырую морковь. Так, в романах Достоевского и Конрада важные модели индивидуального пищевого поведения и кулинарные метафоры «кровавой триединой» связаны с нигилистическим поведением и революционной деятельностью. Гастрономические образы помогают писателям выразить свое негативное отношение к деструктивной деятельности нигилистов. Основные положения работы были представлены на ежегодной конференции Британской ассоциации славистики и восточноевропейских исследований (BASEES) в апреле 2018 г. в Фицвильямском колледже Кембриджского университета (Великобритания).

Ключевые слова

Пищевые символы и метафоры, трапеза в литературе, нигилизм, революционная жертва, Ф. М. Достоевский, Дж. Конрад.

DOI: 10.21684/2411-197X-2021-7-2-144-159

СПИСОК ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ

1. Бердяев Н. А. Глава I. Духовный образ Достоевского / Н. А. Бердяев // Бердяев Н. А. Мирозерцание Достоевского / Н. А. Бердяев. URL: http://az.lib.ru/b/berdjaew_n_a/text_1921_dostoevsky.shtml (дата обращения 09.04.2021).
2. Бердяев Н. А. Глава II. Человек / Н. А. Бердяев // Бердяев Н. А. Мирозерцание Достоевского / Н. А. Бердяев. URL: http://az.lib.ru/b/berdjaew_n_a/text_1921_dostoevsky.shtml (дата обращения 09.04.2021).
3. Carlyle Th. Lecture Six. The Hero as King / Th. Carlyle // On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History / Th. Carlyle. URL: <https://archive.org/details/heroeshoroworshi00carl/page/4/mode/2up> (дата обращения 03.04.2021).
4. Conrad J. Foreword / J. Conrad // Garnett E. Turgenev. A Study / E. Garnett. London: W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1917. Pp. v-x.
5. Conrad J. The Secret Agent. A Simple Tale / J. Conrad. London: Penguin Books, 1984.
6. Deuteronomy. The Old Testament // The Books of the Bible. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 140-214.

7. Достоевский Ф. М. Книжность и грамотность. Статья вторая / Ф. М. Достоевский // Достоевский Ф. М. Собрание сочинений в 15 т. / Ф. М. Достоевский. СПб.: Наука, 1993. Т. 11. С. 105-145. URL: <http://rvb.ru/dostoevski/01text/vol11/1861/78.htm> (дата обращения 09.04.2021).
8. Достоевский Ф. М. Бесы / Ф. М. Достоевский. СПб.: Азбука, Азбука-классика, 2007. 704 с.
9. Достоевский Ф. М. Дневник писателя / Ф. М. Достоевский. СПб.: Азбука, Азбука-Аттикус, 2011. 464 с.
10. Достоевский Ф. М. Записки из подполья / Ф. М. Достоевский. СПб.: Азбука, Азбука-Аттикус, 2012. 256 с.
11. Dostoevsky F. *The Possessed, or The Devils* / F. Dostoevsky; translated by C. Garnett. URL: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/8117/8117-h/8117-h.htm>
12. Eliot T. S. *On the Eve. A Dialogue* / T. S. Eliot // *Criterion*. 1925. January. No. 10. (Текст рассказа имеется в полном собрании всех номеров журнала, осуществленном в 1967 г.: *The Criterion. The Collected Edition*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1967. Vol. III. Pp. 278-281.)
13. Fitzpatrick J. *Food and Literature. An Overview* / J. Fitzpatrick // *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies* / edited by K. Albala. London; New York: Routledge, 2012. Pp. 122-134.
14. Kaye P. *Dostoevsky and English Modernism, 1900-1930* / P. Kaye. Cambridge University Press, 1999.
15. Meyers J. *Portraits of a Terrorist: Dostoevsky, Conrad, and Coetzee* / J. Meyers // *The Antioch Review*. 2014. Winter. Vol. 72, No. 1. *Generations: Passing the Torch?* Pp. 61-80.
16. Mill J. S. Chapter 3. *Of Individuality, as one of the Elements of Well-being* / J. S. Mill // *Mill J. S. On Liberty* / J. S. Mill. Pp. 52-68. URL: <https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/mill/liberty.pdf> (дата обращения 03.04.21).
17. Seymour-Smith M. *Introduction* / M. Seymour-Smith // *Conrad J. The Secret Agent. A Simple Tale* / J. Conrad. London: Penguin Books, 1984. Pp. 9-36.
18. Smith D. R. *Dostoevsky and Conrad* / D. R. Smith // *The Conradian*. 1991. January. Vol. 15. No. 2. Pp. 1-11 .
19. Соловьева Е. Е. *Джозеф Конрад и Россия: Монография* / Е. Е. Соловьева. Череповец: ЧГУ, 2012.
20. Толмачев В. М. *Джозеф Конрад и его «русские романы»* / В. М. Толмачев // *Конрад Дж. Тайный агент: Простая история. На взгляд Запада* / Дж. Конрад. М.: Ладомир: Наука, 2012. С. 477-534.
21. Ушакова О. М. *Русский нигилист как герой английской литературы XIX-XXI вв.* / О. М. Ушакова // *Вестник Пермского университета. Российская и зарубежная филология*. 2016. № 1. С. 106-117.