

Dickens' Christmas Story as an Intertexteme in Leskov's Yule Short Story

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Abstract

The aim of the article is the investigation of inter-textual relations in the process of genre transformation of the Christmas story into the Yule short story from Charles Dickens to Nikolay Leskov. For this purpose the typical elements of both genres are examined, the conclusion that the Christmas story by Ch. Dickens is a special intertexteme in the Yule short story by N. Leskov. Thorough the comparative analysis of three key ideological, meaningful, and poetic points and spheres (realization of concepts, categories of values and socio-cultural environment) has been made. The categories of values are depicted through the vertical relationship “a man—God”, as well as the opposition of humanity and self-absorption, moral and legal laws. Socio-cultural environment is considered as the image of household items of different classes (the merchants, the peasants, the nobles, the clergy, and the officials in the works by N. Leskov and the bourgeois and the workers in the works by Ch. Dickens) and socio-cultural symbols through the traditions of Christmas celebrating.

Keywords: Leskov, Dickens, Christmas story, Yule short story, genre, concept “home”, concept “family”, categories of values, socio-cultural environment

1. Introduction

The creative heritage of Nikolay Leskov is based on the writer's unconditional contribution to the development of the majority of Russian realist literature genres of the second half of the XIX century, such as novel, story, chronicle, “prologue” legend, drama and publicism.

The Yule short story occupies the particular place in the writer's work among the variety of small epic forms. There are more than twenty works of this genre. Leskov has already shown interest to the “Yule” theme since the beginning of the 1860s. The author systematically introduced episodes coincided with Christmas and Yule-tide in the early novels and stories, e.g. “The Life of a Peasant Woman”, “No Way Out”, “Islanders”, etc. The first short story “The Sealed Angel”, subtitled “the Christmas Story”, was published in 1873, the last one—“Pustoplyasy”—was created two years before his death, in 1893. Also Leskov united twelve stories in a special Yule collection in 1886.

The frame of Leskov's Yule stories is heterogeneous: some of them were created as Yule; others were “adapted” to Yule as a result of further mostly formal reduction (in connection with their inclusion in the collection in 1886). However, separate stories ceased to be Yule, as the author put them out of the genre.

As a whole, the Yule short story as a genre of Russian literature (a genre refers in this study to a meaningful art form, a historically developed system of work organization), is familiar, despite the diversity of various epochs and different writers. Leskov has made attempts to identify the characteristic features of these works. In “The Pearl Necklace” (1885) he wrote: “It demands from the Yule story to be coincide with Yule evening events—from Christmas to Epiphany; it should be a little bit fantastic, have any morals, at least as a disproof of a harmful prejudice, and finally—it should be ended up merrily without fail... it must be a true incident” (Leskov, 1958).

Hence, by the general definition of S. I. Zenkevich, we understand the Yule story as a story about miracle happened during the winter holidays, which is conceived by an author in the context of a particular literary tradition (Zenkevich, 2005). That is chronological occasional, presence of “the miraculous element” in a story

line, presence of the narrator (different from the author's point of view) and specific author's intention (author's wish to "enter" the text in the genre context) are typical Yule story features.

Undoubtedly, the definition of the genre—the Yule short story—contains a reference to its distant sources. Yule-tide, i.e. holy days, are "twelve days from 25 December (7 January) to 6 (19) January, established by the Christian church in memory of Christ's birth and christening". After coming to Russia with Christianity, Christmas merged with the ancient pagan celebration of the sun birth, which our ancestors celebrated in the winter solstice day. Christmas celebration was merry, serious and passionate as all ancient folk festivals. However, celebration assumed a quiet family nature with the emergence of urban way of life. E. V. Dushechkina determines the Yule short story to the genre of so-called "calendar prose" for its chronological attitude to Christmas and Yule (Yule chronotop), with the main category of time: a "calendar" text is "provoked" by a specific calendar period, which is associated with this period by content and plot (Dushechkina, 1995).

In Russia the Yule short stories appeared in the first half of the XIX century with the advent of the development of periodicals (magazines and newspapers). The genre is formalized within the framework of the romantic prose, with its interest to the historical sources, the national antiquity, customs and sacraments. Stories by N. Polevoy about events in Veliky Novgorod were the first Yule stories published on pages of "the Moscow Telegraph" in 1826. "Christmas Eve" by N. Gogol is the classical example of the Christmas story genre of that time.

However, the Christmas story genre was not as popular in the Russian literature in the first half of the XIX century as it was in the second half of the XIX century. The historical epoch determined the development and popularization of the genre. The middle of the XIX century is the boundary period in Russian history, a time of great economic and social changes in society. In "chaos is given rise by clash of social institutions, old cultural life with modern civilization, chaos, appeared in the course of destruction and disorderly assimilation of the first ones" (Kotelnikov, 1989) samples of morality and virtue gave people hope for the future. Christmas story is a sample of human spiritual purity, embodiment of Christian love, penance and goodness.

In addition, the successful translations of Charles Dickens undoubtedly contributed to the spread of the Christmas story genre in Russian literature. A collection "Christmas Stories (translated by F. Rezener)" of the English writer appeared in 1875 and included Christmas stories created in the 40's: "A Christmas Carol" (1843), "The Chimes" (1844), "The Cricket on the Hearth" (1845), "The Battle of Life" (1846), "The Haunted Man" (1848). A particular response in Russian literary groups got so-called Dickens's "Christmas philosophy", humanistic ideas underlying not only his "Christmas stories", but the whole writer's work. This philosophy is based on the writer's Christian outlook because Dickens "was a realist who forecast a new urban society and considered its ideals and dreams, a psychologist who made his readers understand all the troubles of the world from poor children view, a peacemaker who tried to explain a strange reality" (Lary, 1973).

Speaking about the architectual presence of Dickens's Christmas prose in Leskov's works, it is necessary to distinguish the dominant features of these literary genres. Though they are often confused in literature, these genres are not identical, as V. N. Zakharov remarked without bias, the "native West European "Christmas story" and Russian "Yule story" convey different things—the last one is about the Christian commandments and virtues and the other—about the trial of human by the Incubus" (Zakharov, 1994).

So, Christmas prose is quite canonic in its form—the action coincides with Christmas holidays and it is usually set in the only Christmas night. The introduction of a dream motive delimits normal and Christmas chronotop. Thanks to fantastic events in the framework of the latter characters experience an emotional metamorphosis. A motive of death is also presented here, in the context of a written work the death is reversible and therefore symbolizes a spiritual degeneration itself when a character wakes up in the morning after night dreams and returns from the "imaginary" back to "real" world. The main types of characters are a rich misanthrope and a "little man". Each of them changes in his own way under the influence of the striking events in their lives. This typical couple usually makes up an opposition in the context of a story. Besides, the image of misanthrope refers to a motive of child as a symbol of heartlessness and a "little man", a positive ideal medium, reflects to a motive of light as a virtue symbol. Another important plot scheme is a story of a poor family with many children where an "imaginary" element also organizes a storyline. However, the "miracle" does not mean an appearance of spirits, ghosts, fairies or other fairy creatures but these are the changes in the heart of a main character that influence positively the future of the whole family. The key image is a child who portrays spiritual purity and symbolizes God's presence. He joins his family and relieves its hard weekdays. "A reverse side of this image is a wild child with empty and dead soul, who presents an allegory of human disgraces" (Perschina, 2013). The Christmas story has an obligatory happy ending that is strongly connected with a holiday reason. This holiday and its necessary attributes (holly decorations, a big holiday banquet with a turkey, a flaming fire and a family

joined together) reflect the triumph of good over evil and the beginning of a new happy life in co-assistance and agreement.

As for the content, Christmas stories are deeply didactic as follows from the genre traditions. A denouement of each of them contains the clearly expressed moral message of the author concentrated in the words of a character. The same morality and instructiveness (not always clearly defined in this case) are the ideal dominant of the early Leskov's short stories, that conception, however, is based on the truisms of the Christian moral theory. Opposed to Dickens' works, they are often marked by the Lord's presence.

The very construction of these short stories is rather different from the Christmas stories organization. Christmas chronotop has an official function only, marks the possibility of a "miracle" that reduces to the one amazing experience in the life of characters in the framework of a story in story. A Christmas story is often told by a character-teller, a representative of a certain social group or a class, hence a voice and a view point of the author separates from the one of the teller and as a result Christmas wonders are presented as a real fact of the people world perception that is expressed in myths and legends. The "miracle" at the end of it gets a quite realistic interpretation. Their meeting with a righteous man serves as an incitement to the inner development of characters, so in the end of the Yule story there is a couple of characters: a righteous man with a "changing man", the latter, reborn morally, conquers evil in his heart in the end of the story.

A plot scheme of the later Yule works of Leskov changes significantly under the influence of a realistic approach to depicting life events. The author tries to show true stories happened to ordinary people who are forced to choose between good and evil. Thanks to their moral behavior characters of these stories are also subjected to inner changes. However, "now this is not regeneration as it was in the early works but awakening resources to which a man derives from his heart. The meeting with a righteous man is no more an incitement to the transformation here but the deliberate choice of a character faces evil and imperfection of the world and he finds resources in himself to resist the evil in his heart" (Pershina, 2013). An important through image of a child as a symbol of a God's envoy becomes the evidence of a good start awakening in the characters' hearts in the stories. The moral idea of this type of the stories does not meet a direct expression; there is no didactic conclusion but simply topical and interesting for readers stories get to a happy end according to the prevalent tradition of the genre.

Thus, the genre of Dickens' Christmas stories is not generally a precedent for Leskov's Yule short stories, however, the architextual ties of authors' literary works shadow on the ideological level expressing similar ideal and moral content of texts of both types. Though unlike canonical nature of Christmas prose the Yule short story evolves constantly, submits new plot schemes and overgrows by new images that get further development in author's works. Yule and Christmas genres take for their purpose Christian virtue breeding in readers' hearts that is reflected in made-up situations and a certainly happy ending.

2. Discussions and Results

2.1 Concepts "Family" and "Home" and the Ways of Their Realization

"My house is my castle" is a widespread idiom emerged in the XVI century. In British literature it was actualized in the 40s of the XIX century when a European novel was considered as an epic work about private life where everyday routine and emotional experience of people were depicted in details and a lot of attention is paid for family as a part of society. Dickens and many British writers of the Victorian age apprehend the joyous Christmas festival only as the family holiday. In this case the comparison between Dickens and Leskov seems to be well-taken because, according to D. S. Likhachev, "Leskov is so-called Russian Dickens" (Likhachev, 1988). It is not because Leskov is like Dickens in general manner of writing but because both of them are "family writers". They are the authors who were read by the whole family, they were discussed by the whole family, the authors that played an important role in the development of people's morality. They rear the person in the youth and maintain him (her) all his (her) life with the best childhood memories" (Likhachev, 1988).

N. N. Starygina notes that in the XIX century in Russia Christmas became a family holiday, the holiday of good neighbourliness, brotherly love and merciful attitude to each other (Starygina, 1992). It was the most pure and bright festival. It was the memory about the Golden Age, the zenith of the feeling of the home that is decreasing nowadays. The hearth means comfort, family happiness that gathers all the members of the whole family. "Kindly marry me off! Save me from unbearable boredom of loneliness! Lonely life has grown hateful to me, I am bored with gossips and provincial nonsense—I want to have homely home, I want to sit with my dear wife near the fire. Kindly marry me off!"—said the character of Leskov's Christmas-tide story "Zhemchuzhnoe ozherelie" ("Pearl Neckless"). Undoubtedly, it is the position of Leskov, because he considered home life is "gathering the whole family around the table, around the pale lamp with abat-jour hand-made by woman to read

or to talk tranquilly” (Leskov, 1954).

Dickens made fireplace with fire an attribute of friendly, loving family. Leskov shows hearth in round table, lamp and abat-jour, but for Dickens fireplace, stove, fire is the center that gathers all the nearest and dearest. Peerybingles are sitting near the fireplace watching the fire. Meanwhile, in a gloomy house of lonely Scrooge “it was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter night” (Dickens, 2010). But when he reincarnates he asks his servant: “Make up a fire and buy another coal-scuttle” (Dickens, 2010). The warmth of fire makes John feel better when he becomes suspicious about Mrs. Peerybingle and a stranger. The symbol of a fire place turns into a certain concept in the papers of writers. This is both the absolute and a place of family unity, rather than coziness and warmth of home, happiness in family life, love and wealth.

Dickens creates the image of home coziness in Peerybingles’ with the help of certain details: shearer on the clock, cricket behind the stove, boiling water in a tea-kettle and also the fire place itself. The house of Caleb looks miserable: “a little cracked nutshell of a wooden house, which was, in truth, no better than a pimple on the prominent red-brick nose of Gruff and Tackleton” (Dickens, 2010). But there is the cricket living in his house too and this means that love and care also live here. Living in such a miserable house Calebs create beautiful dollhouses which helps them to implement their dream about a beautiful house. Numerous Noah’s Arks protecting them from problems of outside world look symbolic. Caleb protects his blind daughter from severe reality just the same way, creating artificial world of a nice house. The house in Leskov’s “Zapechatlyonnyy Angel” in opposed to hostile world outside it. There is no description of a Christmas family home, but the effect of a locked Christmas room praised by Dickens is achieved here. Uniting people of different nationalities and social classes in one place Leskov visionary broadens the borders of home to the whole Russia.

The keeper of a hearthside is always a woman. Dickens’ ideal of a woman is realized in the images of Mrs. Peerybingle and Cratchit’s wife: kind, attentive, loving and patient. Suffering from a lack of love and attention in the childhood and being unhappy in his marriage Dickens glorified home coziness in his works. Leskov’s ideal of a woman is a savior and Christian. For example, a grandmother in a short story “Nerazmenniy Ruble” (“The Inconvertible Ruble”). She is a symbol of life wisdom and experience: “Remember that it’s not so easy to differentiate useful from useless thing as you think” (Leskov, 1989). The grandmother personalizes love, home kindness and wisdom that she wants to give to her boy.

Christmas and children, children’s frankness of understanding the holiday, children’s belief in miracles, their mercy and sympathy is a leading idea of the Christmas prose in the world literature. In the Christmas context a child coincides with the image of the God Christom. The classical example of this which presents the idea of kindness and bravery, a child that is able to change the whole world is the image of Tiny Tim in “A Christmas Carol” of Dickens. The creative effect of many Yule short stories by Leskov which are constructed as child’s memories is determined by the image of a child narrator. Singularity of such works as “Nerazmenniy Ruble” (“The Inconvertible Ruble”), “Zver” (“The Beast”), “Ghost in an engineer castle”, “Pugalo” (“The Malkin”) and others is created by the events shown through the eyes of the child.

“Be like a child”—this is a precept of Jesus Christ which was important both for Leskov and Dickens. A child is the symbol if the idea of a happy home, the basis of love, happiness and Christmas cakes and ale.

Thus, in the Christmas works by Dickens and Leskov home is considered as a concept. It’s revealed in the image- symbol of hearthside as a place that unites the whole family, the warmth and coziness.

In Dickens’ works hearthside is personalized by the image of a fire place with the cricket behind it, in Leskov’s works—in the image of a lamp with abat-jour and a round table. The keeper of the hearthside is always a woman. She is a Christian necessarily. The basis of family love and the main hope for a miracle is a child. Dickens depicts children in a very realistic way while Leskov-Christian-like.

The concept of home is realized through the image of the family. This is the core of this concept. Dickens considered family is the cornerstone which united the whole society. So did Leskov, though he understood it through the prism of Christianity.

2.2 “Man-God”: Subordination or Hierarchy?

In the Christian world mapping there is a definite vertical relationship of a man and God. In a literature work such relationship can be expressed in different ways. In the works by Ch. Dickens this vertical connection coincides with people’s personal life as it is connected with their inner feelings, their relations with relatives and other people. The works by N. S. Leskov are based on the Orthodox tradition, which states that such vertical relationship “man-God” runs through all the spheres of human life. In Russia “the isomorphic model created in “Domostroy” (the ancient collection of social, household and religious rules for living of a person and a family):

God in the universe, a tsar in a state, a father in a family reflected three degrees of submission of a person and copied the religious system of relations on the other social levels” (Lotman, 2000). For N. S. Leskov, the world which is based on the hierarchical principle is ideal and can be made real only by the righteous men. Although such an ideal always faces with an opposite phenomenon: during the dethronement of the vertical relationship “a man-God” the hierarchy is replaced by the subordination. The difference of hierarchy and subordination is that **subordination** is a conditional order, submission of the young to the old, which is based on the rules of official doctrine, “military submission and obedience” (Dal, 1998). On the other hand, **hierarchy** is the holy power.

Since the introduction of Christianity the power in Russia was based on the hierarchical model and thus it received some holy and faithful features. A tsar was on the top of state and religious power, a part of a holy hierarchy, Lord’s anointed. His image caused religious feelings and service became the holy service (Lotman, 2000). The concept of the public service meant the lack of any contradictions between the parties: a man had to devote himself to the service and a tsar was mercy to him. At the same time an agreement is typical only for humans (“human” is opposite to “God”). In European tradition “agreement is neutral: it can be good or bad” (Lotman, 2000).

Two different spheres of social relations can be identified: subordinational and hierarchical. In the first sphere the law regulates social behavior of a person, though the relations of this person with a state are considered as a service under the treaty. In the second sphere the precepts that dictate social and religious behavior of a person are of a bigger importance. What is more, a man gets special obligations and his role in the society is considered as a service. The relations of such a type are not an agreement, they are a gift. Rights of a person are social and law categories, which are external, the categories of civilization. At the same time person’s obligations are cultural categories, which are internal and can be realized only with a help of free will. The righteous responsibility of a person is a religious category which is based on precepts as obligatory conditions of saving the image of God inside of him (Nepomnyashiy, 1999). The concepts of subordination and hierarchy determine different conceptions of the world and a man in it (Mikheeva, 2009).

Both Ch. Dickens and N. Leskov bring the Christian conception of the universe into their works. In the works by Ch. Dickens according to the vertical relationship “a man-God” (as a feature of private life) the hierarchical world model (connected with the state and bourgeoisie) and typological elements of the subordination conception (two of three parts: God in the universe and a father in a family) can be clearly revealed. In the writer’s works a state has the features of subordination structure, while the opposite is a private life of a person with a vertical relationship “a man-God”. For N. Leskov the existence of both world models is immensely important. In his works two worlds, subordination and hierarchical (represented by the righteous men), clash. Here a righteous man can be both a poor person and an official who serves a tsar and his motherland and lives according to the precepts. For example, count Mordvinov in “ZhidovskayaKuvyrkollegia” (“The Jewish Disorder”) “who was not rich but was honest” and incorruptible. In the collected works “Pravedniki” (“The Righteous Men”) the hierarchical world model is constructed by the images of the governor Ryzhov (“Odnodum”) and the head of the military school Perskiy (“The Cadet Monastery”).

The antimony of hierarchy and subordination in Leskov’s works can be illustrated in different ways. One of them is the problem of the moral choice and the service duty. For example, the short story “Figura” depicts an event in the life of its main character Vigura at the time of his service, when he accidentally gets a slap in his face. As a noble man he is full of doubts: on the one hand, “if you were beaten, it is a shame but if you beat back, it is right and good” and on the other, he remembers a precept “Do not kill! That is what I understood.... Jesus Christ! You were beaten but you forgave... And I am just a worm, a nobody! I want to be yours: I forgave! I am yours...” (Leskov, 1989). The choice was made and the offender was forgiven, though the inner conflict of the story turns into the service one. The wonderful hierarchical world based on the precepts clashes with the subordinate one. The chief of Vigura found his choice unacceptable: “A military man should find Christian rules in his oath” (Leskov, 1989). Leskov depicts contradiction between an oath and precepts. Subordinate model of the world in this story is achieved by the actions of Vigura’s commander and a count Saken: “Saken knows church rules—this is true, but he’s still following the military ones”, his proclamation: “Duty is above all, not heart”. The conflict of hierarchical and subordinate values leads Vigura to retirement: “I was calm because I knew that my will is the most precious thing for me, the opportunity to live according to just one set of rules, not arguing, not lying and not proving anything to anyone if he does not understand it himself” (Leskov, 1989).

Thus, the antinomy of hierarchy and subordination is realized through the different ways of law understanding. For Leskov the concepts of legal truth and moral truth are different. Despite the fact that the European culture has a different perception of the law, for Dickens the subordinate world model with its’ soullessness and leading to the cult of law is unacceptable. The image of Clemency is equal to the image of Leskov’s righteous man. The

moral precept of Clemency is: “Do as you would be done by” played by lawyers “Stop at nothing” (“The Battle of Life”). The shift from humanity to self-absorption shows the change of values.

With the image of lawyers Dickens introduces the motive of false mirror “We, lawyers, are just mirrors. Only angry and quarrelsome people need our advice” (“The Battle of Life”) (Dickens, 2010). The counterbalance in the hearts of Dickens’ righteous man is reflected by humanity and love Such as Milly in “The Haunted Man”, Grace and Marion in “The Battle of Life” and Mag in “The Chimes”. At the same time the officials in “The Christmas Books” by Dickens have poisonous influence on people: “whose dreadful wig had made a man’s hair stand on end ... anxious visitors felt themselves, by a cruel enchantment, obliged to spell backwards and forwards” (Dickens, 2010). In Leskov’s Short story “The Old Genius” the challenge to subordinate structure is cast by a tiny old woman landholder.

Thus, the true system of values for both Dickens and Leskov is the axiological keynote “a man—God”. In the works by Leskov it is revealed through the trinity of hierarchical world model (God—a tsar—a father) and in the works by Dickens—through the unity: God and a father. A father is a head of the family and a keeper of home hearthside. Religious basics of the hierarchical vertical relationship “a man- God” are formed in a family.

2.3 The World of Things as Reflection of Socio-Cultural Extent

The term “sociocultural extent” can’t be exactly defined. Sociologists who study the “sociocultural extent” emphasize the concepts of “extent” and “sociocultural extent” taking into account its geographic and biological properties. P. V. Sorokin thinks that the most substantial contribution to studies of this phenomenon was of sociological and sociocultural schools. They studied three components: the characteristics of sociocultural phenomena, repetitive forms of sociocultural processes, interrelations between different classes (Sorokin, 1992). Sociocultural extent consists of “social extent” and “cultural extent” which form the united extent of existence. However, sociocultural extent is not only a sum of social and cultural ones because, firstly, it is a part of social one, secondly, it can be a part of cultural one, thirdly, it is bordered by values and norms, interactions connected groups which contain social, cultural, individual aspects.

We point out that in the 19-th century Russian society was divided into several estates: merchants, peasants, noblemen, clergy, intellectuals (not belonging to the gentry in the 19th-century Russia), and officials. N. S. Leskov wrote about people from almost all the estates in his works and Christmas stories.

Creating the world of things which characterizes the mode of life of estates Leskov pictured a thing as a part of interior by different means. The writer formed the symbolic plan of narration to recreate the mode of life and the nature of sociocultural extent by reproducing sociocultural symbols that existed in the society or by creating his own images for thing’s symbols.

The author paid special attention to chronotops. The events illustrated in a majority of Leskov’s stories are of Christmas period. As a rule, there is a direct author’s reference to this fact. The events of Christmas, New Year usually form a framework of a main story which is memories of the character. For example, the tale “The Selected Grain” is about the author’s celebration of New Year in a wagon where he was overhearing his companions’ conversation. The story told by one of them doesn’t have any link with Christmas. The tale “The Deception” similarly begins telling: “We’re going to south on the eve of Christmas and are reasoning”. “Zhidovskaya Kuvyrkollegia” (“The Jewish Disorder”) begins so: “It was on Christmas after the great Jewish massacre. Everywhere these events were the topic for vivid and very strange talks on the same matter: What to do with the Jews?” In the tale “The Small Mistake” characters were talking about belief and disbelief in one Christmas evening. One of the speakers told a curious story disconnected with Christmas.

In his Yule short stories events usually unfold in the environment of merchants in main character’s stories (“The Pearl Necklace”, “The Scarecrow”, “The Christmas Eve Offense”, “The Selected Grain”, “The Darner”, “The Small Mistake”). Therefore, the picture of living in a merchant’s house is logical. The mode of life of peasants is pictured in tales “The Scarecrow”, “The Selected Grain”, “The Deception”, “The Fool”, “Idlers”, “The Jewish Disorder”. The mode of life of noblemen is pictured in tales “The Selected Grain”, “The Jewish Disorder”, “The Beast”, “The Old Genius”. The clergy is pictured in tale “Christ as a man’s guest”. The tale “The Deception” pictures also the officials. Images of domestic things form images of sociocultural environment of states, create an illusion of authenticity of what is pictured. Moreover, there are sociocultural symbols of certain estates in Christmas tales. For instance, the general concept “jewel” is a traditional symbol of merchants. A necklace itself is a jewel in “The Pearl Necklace”. A box with money from redwood and a ring with sapphire are jewels in “The Scarecrow”. One gold chain and gold watches are mentioned in “Christmas Eve offense”. A gold medal and a silver scoop are mentioned in “The Selected Grain”. Furthermore, a fur coat represents a symbol of wealth in tales “The Scarecrow”, “Christmas Eve offense”, “The Small Mistake”.

There is the same food in each tale: tea (“The Pearl Necklace”, “The Scarecrow”, “The Small Mistake”, “The Darner”), cabbage soup (“The Pearl Necklace”, “The Scarecrow”, “The Selected Grain”), vine and champagne (“The Pearl Necklace”, “The Selected Grain”, “The Small Mistake”, “The darner”). An active mentioning these products in tales contributes to the reader’s formation of the idea about estate’s traditional life, sociocultural environment and space habitat of characters.

Thanks to things’ world, images created systematically by the author, constant mentioning or description of things in tales of series “Christmas tales”, it forms the idea about all Russian estates, consequently, the idea about whole Russia.

3. Conclusions

Dickens creates an image of the same social and cultural environment of his characters using the same, in essence, methods and techniques, as in the works of Nikolay Leskov. However, special attention is given to the description of the English writer’s celebrating Christmas.

Inherent attributes and symbols of Christmas in England began to serve turkey and punch. Assemble the fireplace family established itself in the minds of the British thanks to Dickens. Thus, the category of comfort has become one of the dominant features of the world Christmas writer. G. Chesterton notes that the ideal of home comfort is purely English virtue, along with charity, and “is typical for Christmas, especially Christmas of Dickens’ (Chesterton, 1942).

Thus, the socio-cultural space of the family is most often depicted as, for example, in the story “A Christmas Carol” and “Cricket on the Hearth”. In “A Christmas Carol” the writer created an image of miserable Scrooge, the embodiment of selfishness, greed, callousness bourgeois businessman. He is closed to the interests of his office and money matters, lives alone, but does not suffer from this. He spent his days in a cold office, and his evenings in a cold house. But Scrooge changed after the appearance of the spirit and his soul was reborn as a miser kind and sympathetic uncle who buys a turkey and sends it to the house of his nephew to celebrate Christmas. We see that in the story a traditional symbol of Christmas table—turkey—the image-pointer to socio-cultural environment of the family is also involved.

“Cricket on the Hearth” was originally subtitled “Family Tale”, hence the conclusion that the story also shows the socio-cultural environment of the family. The family of Peerybingles—John and Mary, and their small child and his 13-year-old nanny Tilly Slowboy—live happily in their house, which is guarded by the cricket, the “spirit” of the family hearth.

Dickens worried about how to improve the society, so he developed his program of moral re-education, believing in the possibility of moral degeneration of the bourgeois. Class contradictions were evident among the society, and among ordinary people the writer found the true sincerity, kindness and humanity, which is reflected in his works. In the story “The Chimes” for the first time in the writer the image of a working farm Willie, who, when faced with injustice, delivers a speech in defense of the poor, appears. But his protest to a greater extent is the appeal to the owners, the expression of hope for their responsiveness.

Thus, Dickens, and a line in his Christmas stories appear in different socio-cultural environment and the representatives of different social classes, which required the creation of images of a particular social and cultural environment. Naturally, the “content” of images of corporeal worlds is determined by socio-cultural situation in which the characters existed in his works. However, it is clear that, in contrast to Leskov, Dickens paid special attention to the image of an English family as a great Christian value and—in fact—the tradition of celebrating Christmas. It largely determines the specificity of the artistic image of the socio-cultural environment in his Christmas stories.

Dickens’ Christmas novel is an intertexteme in a Yule short story by Leskov. This is confirmed by the presence of similar genre elements, as well as realization of the concept of “family”, “home”, attention to the Christian value categories (e.g., the vertical relationship “a man—God”), and in an effort to recreate the image of social and cultural environment of life of the characters of Yule short stories and Christmas stories through the image of everyday objects and socio-cultural symbols. Naturally, in the substantive content of their Christmas works each writer is original and independent. It can be explained by the difference in social and cultural situations in which they stayed.

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