

Title: A Guy with Dollars and Others: Mythical Characters in Russian Internet Folklore (Based on materials from bash.org.ru)

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This paper examines materials posted on bash.org.ru, a popular Russian site that invites the posting of humorous quotes from chats and various other forms of electronic communication. Bash.org.ru can be viewed as representing a genre of contemporary folklore characteristic of a specific subgroup in Russian society, namely young people who use computers for both work and entertainment. The postings reflect not only the values held by this group, but also a kind of modern mythology in the making. The paper identifies a number of modern mythological characters that have arisen on bash.org.ru in our times, independently of the influence of former folkloric tradition in Russia, and examines their function, attributes, and origin. Among these characters are: The Guy with Dollars, an epitome of bad luck; An Old Man in a Green Lada, a Robin Hood on wheels; Onotole, the god of wisdom; Chuck Norris, the god of destruction, A Neighbor with a Hammer Drill, a harmful character that can be pacified by magical means, and others. Due to the globalizing effects of computer use, the set of mythological characters of bash.org.ru is eclectic — it includes characters with specifically Russian roots as well as those borrowed from other, mainly English-language online traditions.

One can question the sincerity of the belief in the magical powers of modern mythological characters. However, even nonbelievers can spread stories about them for various reasons, such as the fascination with the stories themselves or the wish to demonstrate one's membership in a group and to show one's creativity. Moreover, in certain postings, the issues addressed with the help of modern pantheon can be very serious, indicating at least partial belief in it.

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